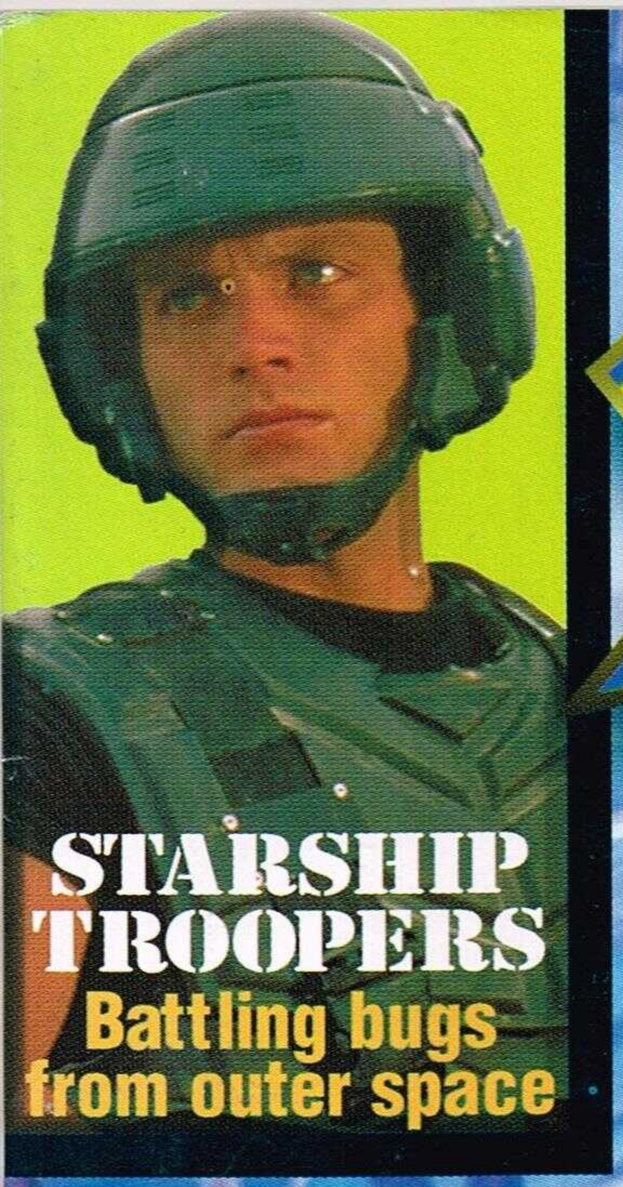


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NUMBER 244
NOVEMBER 1997
THE SCIENCE FICTION UNIVERSE®



Adam MacArthur (John Corbett) has returned to Earth from his otherworldly experience with strange new powers. He's *The Visitor* (see page 42).

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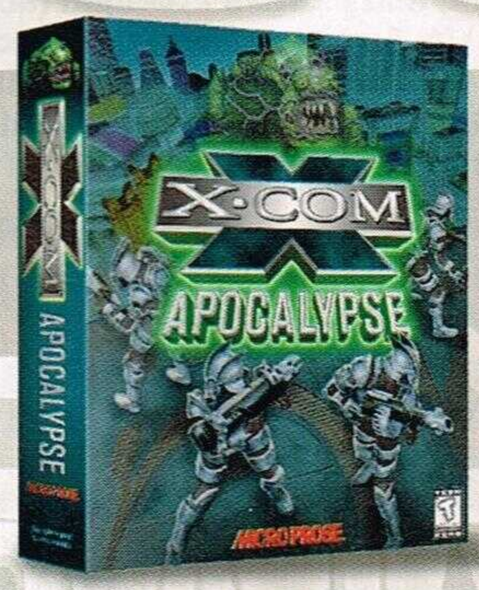
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**NEXT ISSUE ON SALE NOVEMBER 4**

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# MEDIALOG

## A TASTE OF KRYPTONITE

It's 40 years later and the death of TV's Superman, George Reeves, is still enigmatic. Was it suicide due to typecasting fears or murder?

Reeves' friends and fans have long been divided on the controversial matter. The 1996 book *Hollywood Kryptonite: The Bulldog, the Lady and the Death of Superman* by Sam Kashner and Nancy Shoenberger delineates the murder scenario (allegedly, Reeves was killed by a studio exec whose wife he was having an affair with). Now, there are plans to dramatize the whole sad story. Producer David (*Face/Off*) Permut and Citadel Entertainment are developing a film version of *Hollywood Kryptonite*.

Meanwhile, shooting of Tim Burton's *Superman Reborn*, originally intended to be underway now, has been delayed to early 1998. That's all to allow for script retooling.

**Updates:** Pierce Brosnan has replaced Christopher Reeve as the voice of King Arthur in the upcoming animated feature *Quest for Camelot*.

*Dark Empire*, previewed last issue by director Alex Proyas, is getting a few changes. Instead of an October release, New Line Cinema has shuffled it off to January. It will also return to its earlier title—the latest one conflicts with Lucasfilm's use of the term—*Dark City*.

*Sleepwalkers*, the new NBC adventure fantasy, won't premiere until November 1. At presstime, other new TV series debut dates were possibly shifting—including *TimeCop*. Its star, T.W. King, talks about the show next issue.

Mariah Shirley as Bryn is the new character being added to the second season of *The Adventures of Sinbad* (replacing Jaqueline Collen's Maeve).

**Character Castings:** Omar Sharif and Diane (*Wolfen*) Venora co-star with Antonio Banderas in *Eaters of the Dead*.

In a subsequent genre entry, Banderas will play a Jesuit missionary proselytzing in deep space in *The Sparrow*.

Among the X-cast of recurring actors in *The X-Files Movie* are Mitch Pileggi, William B. Davis and John Neville. Genre vets Martin Landau, Blythe Danner, Terry O'Quinn, Jeffrey DeMunn and Glenne Headly also star.

Denise Crosby's latest activities include *Pumpkin Man*, a one-hour Halloween family film, and Quentin Tarantino's *Jackie Brown*. Crosby plays the public defender who represents Brown (Pam Grier). The *Brown* cast also includes Robert De Niro, Bridget Fonda, Samuel L. Jackson and Michael Keaton.

When the world almost ends in *Armageddon*, Bruce Willis, Liv Tyler, Billy Bob Thornton, Ben Affleck and Steve Buscemi will be on hand to try to save it.

**Genre People:** Ben Bova's *Mars* novel—a realistic look at a Mars mission—has now been acquired by Threshold Entertainment, the makers of *Mortal Kombat*, as a possible TV show.

Special FX legend Ray Harryhausen will, appropriately, have a cameo in the *Mighty Joe Young* remake.

**Sequels & Remakes:** Ray Walston, formerly *My Favorite Martian*, is also in the now-shooting film version which stars Christopher Lloyd, Jeff Daniels and Daryl Hannah.

John (*Ladyhawke*) Wood is in the *Avengers* movie.

Kate (*Set It Off*) Lanier has scripted the *un*eagerly-awaited movie based on *The Mod Squad*. It'll be out next spring; Scott (*johns*) Silver directs. And there's a movie based on *Charlie's Angels* in development, too. Really.

A film version of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* (already, of course, a TV series) is in the works. And actually, it *might* be good since it's being scripted by Oscar winner Horton Foote (known for *Tender Mercies*, *The Trip to Bountiful* and adapting Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*).

Jonathan Hensleigh will now direct the *Incredible Hulk* film for producer Gale Anne Hurd and Universal Pictures. Hensleigh—who scripted the project—succeeds Joe (*The Rocketeer*) Johnston as director. It's sort of based on the Marvel comic, *not* on the TV series (which was substantially different from the comic). Apparently, though, the film will take its own liberties with the material. Shooting begins shortly for a possible summer release. And the Hulk himself will be entirely created by CGI.



**Steven Spielberg directs Anthony Hopkins (as former President John Quincy Adams) and Morgan Freeman (abolitionist Theodore Joadson) in *Amistad* (due out in December). A true story, it chronicles the 1839 mutiny by slaves being transported on the slave ship *Amistad* and the subsequent American courtroom battles to determine their fate.**

**Genre Television:** CBS has gone forward with a TV series version of *The Magnificent Seven*, the beloved Western movies derived from *Seven Samurai*, which also inspired an SF version (*Battle Beyond the Stars*). The series will feature the highly regarded Elmer Bernstein theme music as well as three actors (Anthony Starke, Rick Worthy and Arnold Kavovit) mostly unfamiliar to SF fans. But the others? They're four well-known fan favorites, all previously interviewed by STARLOG, namely Michael (*Terminator*) Biehn as the leader (the Yul Brynner role), Eric (*Dark Skies*) Close (in the Steve McQueen part), Dale (*Time Trax*) Midkiff and Ron (*Beauty & the Beast*) Perlman. So for those of you who don't like Westerns—what's *wrong* with you?—there are four reasons to watch this one.

*—David McDonnell*


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# LOGLINES

## X-CUSES

After four years of investigating the unknown on *The X-Files*, Gillian Anderson has emerged as a true believer. And Anderson believes she knows how she would react to *The X-Files* were she not its co-star. Would she even watch the genre series?

"Probably not. I'm simply not a television watcher. I don't make appointments to watch television. I don't like scary shows. So, *The X-Files* probably wouldn't be what I would tune into. It's weird, very weird and ironic to be on a show that's all those things."

*—Ian Spelling*

## A LOST ROMANCE

Jonathan Frakes yearned to direct *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and he did so. He hoped to one day graduate to feature film directing, and he did that, too, with *First Contact*. But Frakes wished the *Next Generation* writers had done something, anything, with the Riker-Troi (Marina Sirtis) relationship, and that wish was never granted. "They *never* did justice to it, never even approached doing it justice," he sighs.

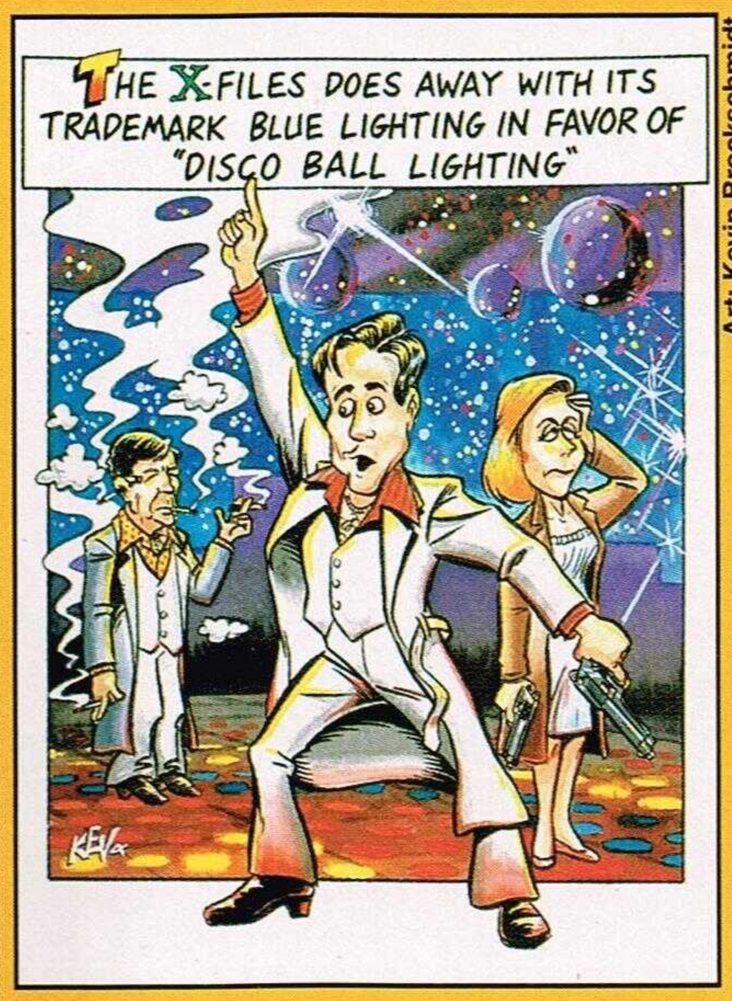



Art: Mike Fisher

"I keep hoping they'll tackle it in one of the movies. It's a totally missed opportunity. I always thought Riker and Troi should have gotten married and had kids. They could have been the family on the ship, which would have been interesting to watch. It would have added another dimension to the show."

Frakes, who's in line to direct the next *Trek* film, is delighted that Michael Piller is scripting it. "I was surprised they brought in Piller. The logic in it is good. He was one of the greatest *Star Trek* writers we had during the whole run of *Next Generation*. He knows the characters intimately. *Star Trek* is a very tough language, and Piller speaks it fluently."

*—Ian Spelling*




Art: Kevin Brockschmidt

## FACING OFF

John Travolta and Nicolas Cage may get their faces sheared off and ingeniously switched, but that, apparently, doesn't necessarily make *Face/Off* science fiction.

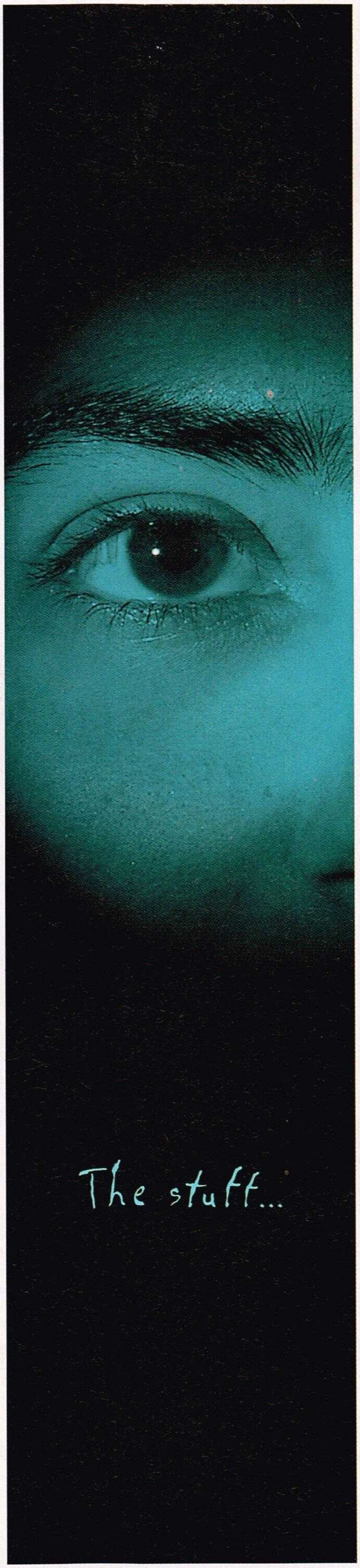
Just ask director John Woo. Is his film SF? "I don't think so," he announces. "The original idea was totally SF, and then I changed it. I took out 90% of the SF themes. I tried to make the concept of the story and the characters believable. In the original script draft, it was a futuristic movie, set 200 years from now. I moved it back to today. I never like SF things. I found this story so human. I would rather focus on the emotional side of it rather than the SF."

*—Ian Spelling*

## VULCANS WHO LUNCH

What might *Star Trek*'s Tuvok and Spock chat about if ever the Vulcans were to sit down over lunch? "Oh, a theoretical question," notes Tim Russ, who plays *Star Trek: Voyager*'s Vulcan. "Interesting. I think they would enjoy a fairly healthy debate about social issues in their society. Tuvok's name is different from what had been established in terms of S's and T's in Vulcan names. So, I suppose they would talk about that and maybe other changes on their homeworld. It would certainly make for an interesting scene."

*—Ian Spelling*



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# VIDEOLOG

## CREATURE FEATURES

There is Halloween horror aplenty in Universal's ultra-classic Monster Collection, which draws mostly from the Silver Age of Horror, some of which are new to home video. Three volumes of double-feature entrees from the *Inner Sanctum* series starring Lon Chaney Jr. bring to your home such titles as: *Calling Dr. Death, Strange Confessions, Weird Woman, The Frozen Ghost, Dead Man's Eyes* and *Pillow of Death*. Each *Inner Sanctum* cassette is marked at $14.98 in VHS. There are also several individual horror classics at $14.98 each, including one of the few horror Westerns, *Curse of the Undead*. Look also for: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood, The Strange Door, The Climax, The Black Castle, Black Friday, Night Monster* and *Murders in the Zoo*.

Universal also has several triple-tape boxed sets, most notably the complete Creature trilogy—*Creature from the Black Lagoon, Revenge of the Creature* and *The Creature Walks Among Us*—nicely packaged for $44.98. Other boxed sets include: the Classic Monster Collection with the original versions of *Frankenstein, The Wolf Man* and *Dracula*; and the Mummy Collector's Set including *The Mummy, The Mummy's Ghost* and the last of the series, *The Mummy's Curse*.



**Run—don't walk—to stores now for the new laserdisc edition of *Logan's Run*.**

Laserdisc editions go a bit deeper into the repertory with the Invisible Collection boxed set ($99.98 in CLV), which features: *The Invisible Man's Revenge, The Invisible Woman, The Invisible Man Returns* and *Invisible Agent*. The Mummy Collection laserdisc boxed set ($99.98 in CLV) includes four films: *The Mummy's Hand, The Mummy's Tomb, The Mummy's Ghost* and *The Mummy's Curse*.

Back in the 1960s, Boris Karloff hosted the *Thriller* TV series, from which Universal Home Video has selected six episodes priced at $12.98 each in VHS. They are: "The Grim Reaper," "The Incredible Doktor Markesan," "Masquerade," "The Prediction," "The Premature Burial" and "The Terror in Teakwood." The *Thriller* laserdisc boxed set includes all six for $89.98 in CLV.

**Laser:** *Logan's Run*, starring Michael York and Jenny Agutter, is getting the deluxe treatment featuring a new digital widescreen transfer, Dolby Digital sound, audio commentary by York and director Michael Anderson, two featurettes, stills of deleted scenes, theatrical trailers and a reprint of the original June 1976 *American Cinematographer* article on the movie for only $69.98 from MGM/UA Home Video. Effects artists L.B. Abbott, Matthew Yuricich and Glen Robinson won an Oscar that year for the film's FX.

Another classic re-issue from MGM/UA Home Video is *The Invisible Boy*, starring Robby the Robot in his second screen appearance after his splashy *Forbidden Planet* debut. Richard Eyer co-stars; producer Nicholas Nayfack and writer Cyril Hume re-team from *Forbidden Planet*.

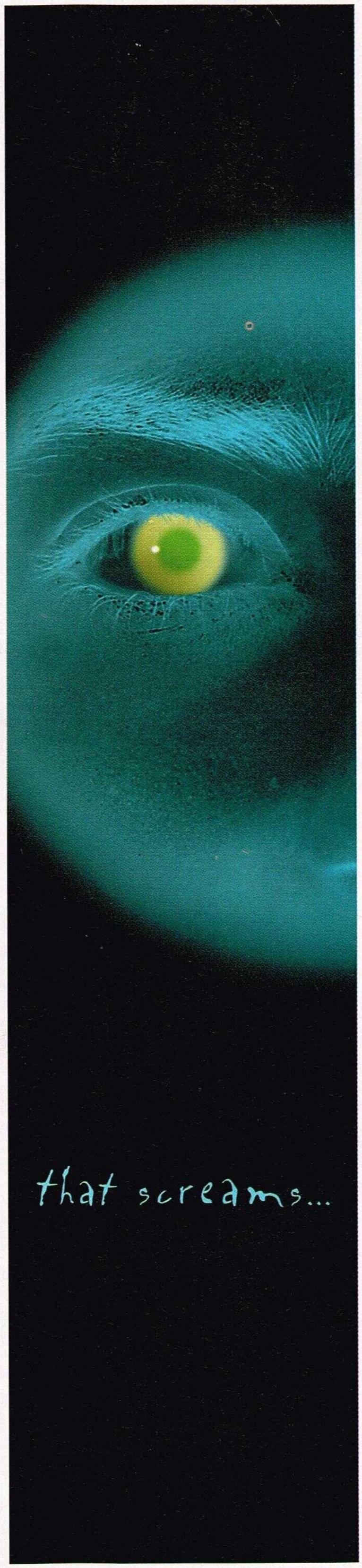
*Warriors of Virtue* ($39.95 in CLV, widescreen) from director Ronny Yu features lush production values and first-rate cinematography by Peter Pau. In this fantasy adventure, a young boy is transported to a mystical dimension where five half-man, half-kangaroo warriors lead a battle against outrageous evil (i.e. actor Angus MacFadyen). Animatronic characters created by FX-meister Tony Gardner are a stand-out.

One of the most-requested Disney animated classics has at last surfaced in a deluxe CAV package loaded with extras. *Sleeping Beauty*, Disney's 1959 70mm Technirama widescreen extravaganza, was a departure from the studio's usual style. Color stylist Eyvind Earle's distinctive use of flat color and two-dimensional patterns for the background art forced the animators into unusual character designs which reversed the studio's trend towards developing softly rounded, three-dimensional forms. Still, the highly geometric, stylized characters seem more than appropriate for this medieval tale. Composer George Bruns was nominated for an Oscar for his clever re-arrangement of Tchaikovsky's famous ballet, which is used throughout the movie. Many of Disney's vocal veterans make up the cast, including Verna Felton, Bill Thompson, Candy Candido and Eleanor Audley as the terrible Maleficent. This CAV pressing also includes a bonus "Making-of" featurette as well as Disney's Oscar-winning CinemaScope short "The Grand Canyon" and "The Peter Tchaikovsky Story" in addition to the usual rich assortment of concept art, storyboards, theatrical trailers and other rarely seen materials from the Disney archives. *Sleeping Beauty* is mastered in Dolby Digital Surround Sound (DDSS) and comes with the THX stamp of approval for $99.95.

**Cheap:** With the popularity of widescreen editions, the cost of pan-and-scan laserdiscs is dropping. You can now find *Star Trek II* and *V* priced at $24.95 and even lower. *Time Bandits, Godzilla vs. Monster Zero* and *Robotech Masters* are priced at only $19.95 in CLV. *Jurassic Park* is now marked to a low, low $9.98 in VHS.

*—David Hutchison*

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# AUDIOLOG

## GOING BATS

The war of the Batman music albums heats up with the release of three new titles. The most fun of the bunch is Varese Sarabande's *Batmania: Songs Inspired by the Batman TV Series* (VSD-5821). This one's a collection of the various single recordings made in the mid-1960s to cash in on the cult hit. Stars Adam West, Burgess Meredith and Frank Gorshin (his song written by Mel Tormé!) share the spotlight here with artists such as Al Hirt, Peggy Lee and Jan & Dean. The Brothers Four's comic spoof "Ratman and Bobin in the Clipper Caper" is also included in this compilation of classic camp.

*Shadows of the Empire* composer Joel McNeely commands the power of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Chorus in three suites culled from *The Batman Trilogy* (VSD-5766). If you don't have all the film



Photo: Copyright 1966 Greenway Productions & 20th Century Fox TV

**Do the Batusi! But which Bat album should this caped crusader caper to, old chums?**

soundtracks, this album presents a good sampling of the Danny Elfman/Elliot Goldenthal scores. Also included is the original TV series theme.

Razor & Tie Records has reissued Neal Hefti's music inspired by the TV series on *Batman Theme & 19 Hefti Bat Songs* (RE 2153-2). Although he composed the famous title tune and the dance craze "The Batusi," Hefti did not score the series, but allegedly only the studio's presentation reel. Hefti cashed in on the national obsession with the LP, *Batman Theme & 11 Hefti Bat Songs*, which was reissued in 1989 on CD by RCA simply titled *Neal Hefti* (3573-2-R). This new album also includes eight additional cuts from the follow-up album *Hefti in Gotham City*.

**Space Jazz:** Also new from Varese is a real curiosity, *Sketches on Star Wars* (VSD-5794). The Trotter Trio performs 10 jazzy versions of John Williams' classic themes from the trilogy. Some of the music, like "Luke and Leia," really lends itself to this new format. Very relaxing!

**New Scores:** What can we say about *George of the Jungle* (Walt Disney 60806-7) other than it's a scream? The album includes three versions of the original title song, the best by "Weird Al" Yankovic. Score cuts by Marc Shaiman and John Cleese's performance of Ape's "My Way" are also included.

While a score album is planned to follow, you can hear two cuts from Elfman's score on *Men in Black-The Album* (Columbia/Sony Music CK 68169). Will Smith's terrific title tune leads off this collection with 13 other urban tracks.

Brent Spiner performs four songs as the stuffy shipboard cruise director on the soundtrack to the Walter Matthau/Jack Lemmon comedy *Out to Sea* (Milan 35822-2). *The Phantom*'s David Newman composed the film's score.

Newcomer John Powell, who worked on *The Lion King* under Hans Zimmer, makes his feature film debut scoring the John Woo action adventure hit *Face/Off* (Hollywood Records HR-62125-2). Mark Mancina, also a Zimmer protegé, co-composed the music for Nicolas Cage's other summer hit, *Con Air* (HR-62099-2), with Trevor Rabin, formerly of the rock group Yes. No word yet on if there will be a score album to Mancina's *Speed 2*.

**Reissues:** One Way Records has unleashed the music and dialogue album to Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* (MCAD-22192), while Razor & Tie has done likewise with *The Producers* (RE 2147-2), which features Brooks' classic "Springtime for Hitler."

Jerry Goldsmith's long-out-of-print *A Patch of Blue* is back thanks to Intrada Records (MAF 7076) and Rhino Records has captured some of the rare Miklós Rózsa, Max Steiner and Franz Waxman music on *Murder is My Beat: Classic Film Noir Themes and Scenes* (R2 72466).

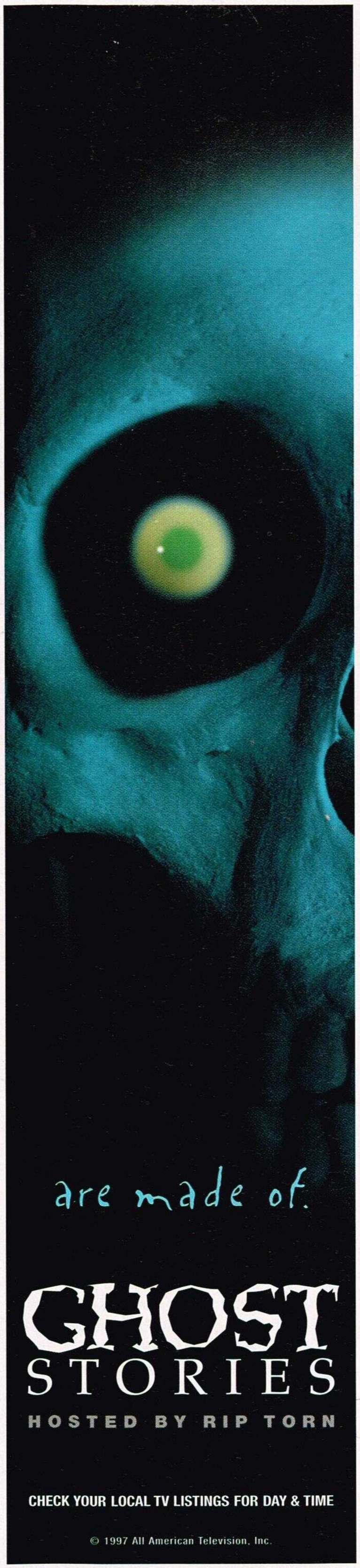
**Imports:** Belgium's Prometheus Records has released Mark Snow's music to the Michael Caine *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* mini-series (PCD 143), which was performed by the Utah Symphony Orchestra.

**Promos & Awards:** John Debney asked this columnist to contribute liner notes to his two latest promotional CDs, *The Relic* (JDCD 006) and the Fox telefilm *Doctor Who* (JDCD 005). Debney was nominated for an Emmy for his theme and pilot score to *The Cape*, which he co-wrote with fellow *Who* composer Louis Febre.

Joseph LoDuca (STARLOG #243) also earned a nomination for his "Destiny" score for *Xena*, as did Mark Snow for *The X-Files'* "Paper Hearts," Michael Hoenig for the *Dark Skies* main theme and Laurence Rosenthal for *Young Indiana Jones: Travels with Father*. Alf Clausen was nominated for the song "We Put the Spring in Springfield" from *The Simpsons* episode "Bart After Dark" and the score for "Simpsoncalifragilisticexpiali (Annoyed Grunt) cious."

**Questions?** Contact dhirsch918@earthlink.net

*—David Hirsch*

# GAMELOG

## ALIEN ADVENTURES

Here's a roleplaying game you may not know about, even though it's based on the biggest blockbuster film of 1997. But that's OK—only a select few of you should know about *Men in Black: The Roleplaying Game* ($20), the latest release from the folks at West End Games. The others...well, *they'll* just make you forget.

As a member of that mysterious quasi-government organization designated to police the 1,500 aliens living on Earth, you have no identity other than the one given to you. No identifying marks of any kind. Anonymity is your name, and silence is your native tongue. Get the picture? Good, because you're gonna have to rise to the occasion while protecting Earth from the scum of the universe.

This 140-page book is more informative than anything you'll find in the *Globe* or the *Weekly World News* (believe it or not), as it basically tells you everything you need to know to make it as an MiB agent—just make sure no one else hears this stuff, or they're gonna have to be neuralyzed. You'll learn what kind of field agent you want to become, what your objectives are, what skills to develop and see how well you use 'em during a solitaire mission. Of course, you'll also be briefed on all sorts of alien equipment and vehicles at the MiB's disposal, including the Neuralyzer, sunglasses that expand your field of vision and the ultimate holdout weapon, the Noisy Cricket.

Most important, as an MiB operative, you'll become educated to the reports of known aliens such as the intelligent, worm-like Annelid (they make great coffee), the tall and muscular Arquillians, the little Baltians inside human body suits, and the dangerous galactic trash known simply as the Bug. And if you're not supposed to know about them, then please look right over here at the Neuralyzer, thank you very much.

**Fox Fire:** Of course, some of you may feel more comfortable fighting your aliens on their own turf. Case in point: *Star Fox 64* for the Nintendo 64 ($69.95), a new sequel to the Super-Nintendo megahit from a few years back. Like its predecessor, you control ace pilot Fox McCloud, who's out to free the Lylat system and stop the evil Dr. Andross from taking control of the universe. Also like the original game, you're aided and abetted by three Star Fox fighter pilots on your mission: Peppy Hare, who analyzes enemies' weaknesses and gives tips on how to survive each level; Slippy Toad, who brings with him each level boss' power meter; and Falco Lombardi, who leads the path to more challenging game areas.




**You'll never forget *Men in Black: The Roleplaying Game*—unless they want you to.**




**Make a 'Mech of things in *BattleTech: Maximum Tech*.**




**Get ready to "Rumble" with *Star Fox 64*.**

Nintendo has outdone itself again with *Star Fox 64*, with plenty of challenges in this terrific 15-level space-shooter. Besides the breathtaking graphics, colors and sounds, the game offers non-stop action, and pulls out all the stops in creating the atmosphere for game play. More than 700 character voice samples are included in the cart, as well as an advanced artificial intelligence engine and three different types of multi-player games, which allows up to four players to battle each other on a split-screen.

The game also offers two different types of spatial movement: 3-D scroll mode, in which all of the action moves in a forward path, requiring split-second player reaction; and the all-range mode, in which players move in complete 360-degree motion, as well as perform somersaults and U-turns in the Arwing fighter plane. And for those of you who want to fight in other conveyances, you'll also be introduced to two new vehicles—an anti-aircraft, land-based tank called the Landmaster and a submarine—the *Blue-Marine*—for underwater action.

One more outstanding feature included with *Star Fox 64* is Nintendo 64's new Rumble Pak, an immersive, vibrating accessory for the game system's controller (which is also sold separately for $19.95). Creating various short vibrations when players use the turbo boost or brake, hit a wall or the ground or are hit by enemy fire, the Rumble Pak puts you right in the game more than ever.

**Manual Tech:** There are some people who prefer to do their intergalactic fighting with both feet on the ground, and you won't get any down-and-dirtier than in the world of *BattleTech*. Of course, to get the edge on the battlefield, you must be well-read beforehand. Enter FASA Corporation's *BattleTech: Maximum Tech* ($15), a 136-page advanced rulebook offering dozens of optional new Level Three rules for players who want to tailor-make their *BattleTech* scenarios and get more out of them.

The book's "Terrain and Movement" section includes additional terrain types and expanded movement rules, while "Combat" offers new physical and weapons attack options. Expanded "Vehicles" and "Infantry" sections make the BattleTech units more effective and realistic, while "Construction" and "Equipment" contain extensive lists of new weapons and components for BattleMechs and vehicles, followed by a "Costs" list. The final section, the "Battle Value System" measures the 'Mech capabilities and helps create opposing forces of equal strength. The tables at the end of the book list the values of all previously published 'Mechs and vehicles, reference tables and new record sheets for the new weapons and rules.

If you think some of the material in *Maximum Tech* looks familiar, it's probably because you saw much of it in the now out-of-print *Tactical Handbook*. Be assured that the material has been revised for improved playability. If you haven't seen it before, then just kick your 'Mech into high gear and have fun.

*—Michael McAvennie*

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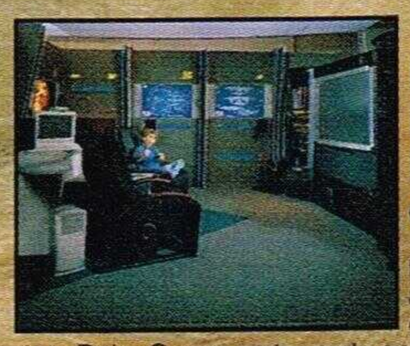
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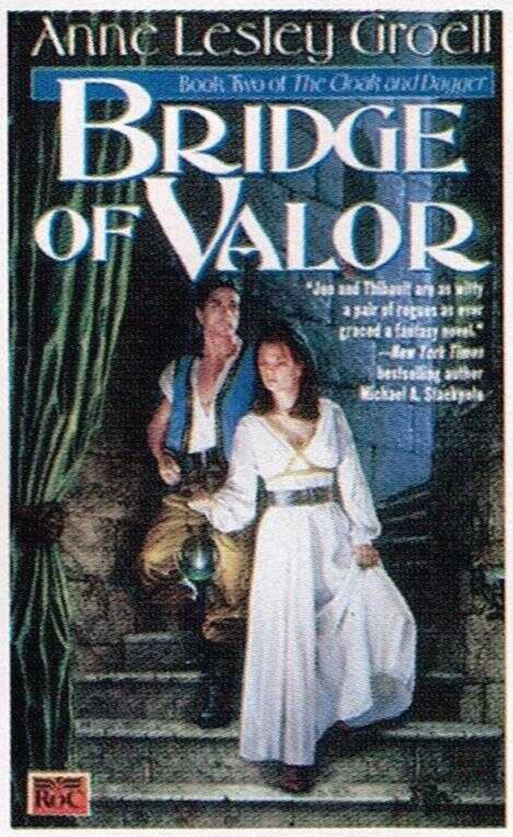
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# BOOKLOG

***Bridge of Valor: The Second Book of the Cloak and Dagger*** **by Anne Lesley Groell (Roc, paperback, 427 pp, $5.99)**

It seemed like such a simple assignment—find the mage who put a curse on the noble's estate and put an end to it before his long-absent fiancé arrives. Of course when Cloak and Dagger




are involved, the simple becomes complicated. For example: Dagger impersonates the fiancé, the spirit of a dead mage begins to walk the estate and a sheep's head turns up in a guest's bed.

Yes, the charming Jen and Thibault are back and hip deep in romance, magic and political intrigue in this delightful sequel to *Anvil of the Sun*. Groell again displays her talent for well-rounded, distinctive characters (including the villains), bright dialogue and perfect pacing. New readers can easily jump on board for a fun-filled (and at times deliciously chilling) ride, while fans of *Anvil* will delight in being reunited with the most enjoyable assassins on the racks today.

*—Penny Kenny*

***The Broken Crown, The Sun Sword: Book One*** **by Michelle West (DAW, paperback, 768 pp, $6.99)**

There's an Oriental flavor to Michelle West's book. *The Broken Crown* builds leisurely, allowing readers time to savor its tale of women trapped in a society that allows them no power, although they hold the world's destiny in their hands.

The story's main focus in Diora, a girl who has a powerful gift of Voice—following her growth from child to young woman. As she matures, a plot hatched by demons who intend to return to the physical world begins to interweave and Diora becomes a pivotal player in a scheme she doesn't fully comprehend.

Ultimately, what might attract, or repulse, readers from *Crown* is its slowness, its cast of thousands, and its many layers of political and emotional intrigue.

*—Penny Kenny*

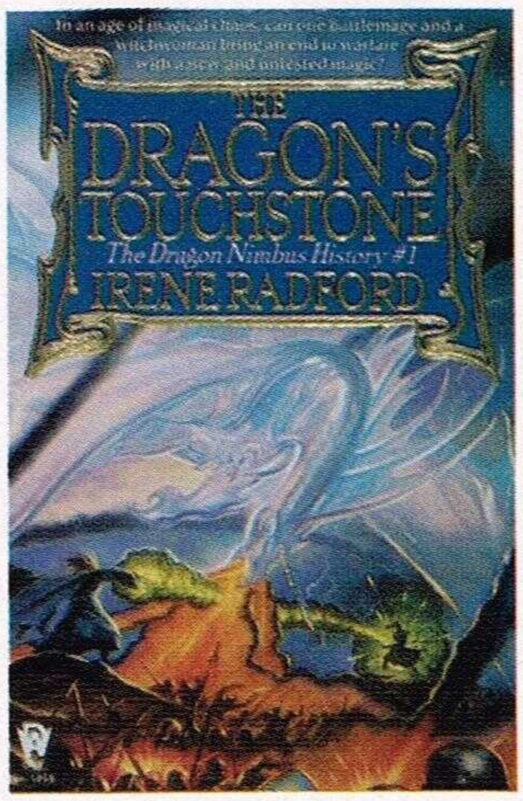
***God's Dice*** **by Andrew Swann (DAW, paperback, 348 pp, $4.99)**

This novel will drive booksellers mad. Is it SF, fantasy or a psychological novel? Actually, all of the above.

As a child, Richard Brandon created a fantasy world. As an adult, he and three alternate versions of himself are drawn into it to confront the Adversary who's ravaging the land. But if they destroy the Adversary, the world and everyone in it dies. And if the Adversary defeats them, they die.

While it's difficult to synopsize, Andrew Swann pulls *Dice*'s various storylines together nicely. The interplay between the four Richards is handled well, though they tend to be one-note types. (only one comes across as a fully-developed character). The action scenes work well and the story moves briskly. And if some plot points are weaker than others, it's still fun.

*—Penny Kenny*




***The Dragon's Touchstone: Book One of the Dragon Nimbus History*** **by Irene Radford (DAW, paperback, 380 pp, $5.99)**

It begins with the birth of twin dragons destined to teach humans a new form of magic. Twenty years later, the battlemage Nimbulan envisions mages working together to peacefully unite the warring kingdoms of Coronnan. The two events are tied together by Myrilandel, whose memory of her past is dim, but whose magic is strong. Nimbulan's dream could be achieved with her help—if she's not destroyed by demon hunters first.

*Touchstone*'s epilogue is its strongest section. It will leave readers gasping for the next volume. Radford's development of the characters throughout the book is what gives the end its punch. Her differentiating of the many characters, their various psychological scars and torn loyalties are all well done.

*—Penny Kenny*

***God's Fires*** **by Patricia Anthony (Ace, hardcover, 370 pp, $22.95)**

*God's Fires* begins satirically, but quickly grows ominous. The talk of miracles and omens suggests that something odd is happening in the Portuguese village of Quintas in the 16th century, but it all sounds like tabloid UFO nonsense. Then, in rapid succession, a spaceship crashes; two strange survivors appear; and three visitors arrive: the half-witted but gentle King Afonso, Monsignor Gomes of the Inquisition, who suspects demons are afoot, and his clerk Bernardo.

The fate of the aliens and the humans linked to them is horrible. The flawed Jesuit Manoel Pessoa almost becomes the book's hero as he lies and connives to save the accused heretics. Ultimately, Afonso represents humanity: he knows the new visitors signify something wonderful, but he can't understand what's happening or defend them from ignorance, superstition or tyranny.

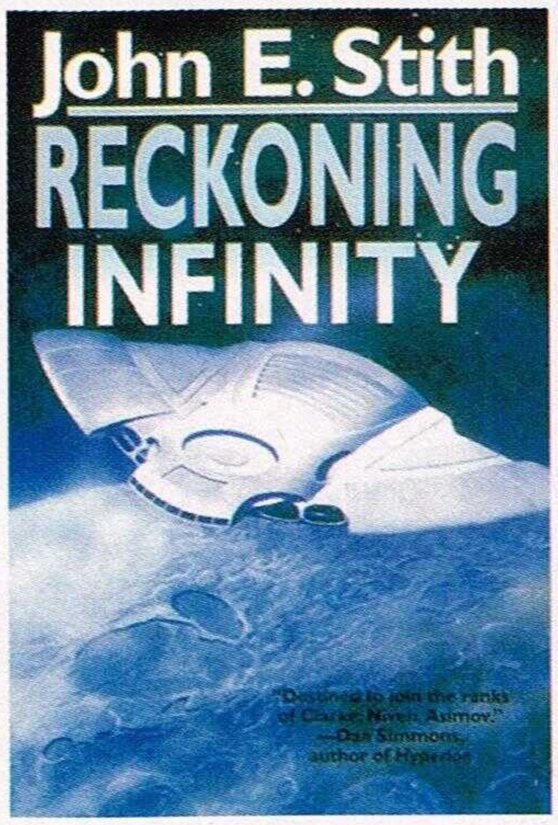
Brilliant and tragic, rich in character and historical detail, this is Patricia Anthony's best novel yet.

*—Scott W. Schumack*

***Reckoning Infinity*** **by John E. Stith (Tor, hardcover, 383 pp, $23.95)**

A strange object enters the solar system and a research spacecraft intercepts it, but the more the crew of the *Ranger* learns about the thing dubbed "Cantaloupe," the weirder it seems. Is it a small planet, or a living ship? Is it natural or artificial; a machine or living thing; dead or alive? These questions become serious when the explorers are trapped inside Cantaloupe—with death rapidly approaching.

John E. Stith strikes a fair balance of adventure and characterization in this novel. Leading the expedition into Cantaloupe are Alis Mary Nussem, who has been bitter ever since a disaster left her with artificial limbs and organs, and Karl Stanton, who was unjustly blamed for causing her injury. As their mission becomes a fight for survival, Alis




reclaims her humanity, Karl proves that he is not a jinx and they stumble from mutual antagonism to comradeship and something more.

*Reckoning Infinity* covers familiar ground in both its adventure and its human drama, but is still satisfying and well-crafted.

*—Scott W. Schumack*

***Legacy of the Darksword*** **by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman (Bantam, hardcover, 336 pp, $23.95)**

Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman forged their own mix of fantasy and SF with the "Darksword" series, and they've finally returned to the medium of their earlier work. The alien Hch'nyv are attacking Earth's colonies, but a newly created Darksword might be able to ward them off. Saryon, Reuven and Mosiah become swept up in the quest to locate the sword, returning to the world of Thimhallan, source of ancient magic. Along the way, they must

Bridge Art: Borris Zlotsky

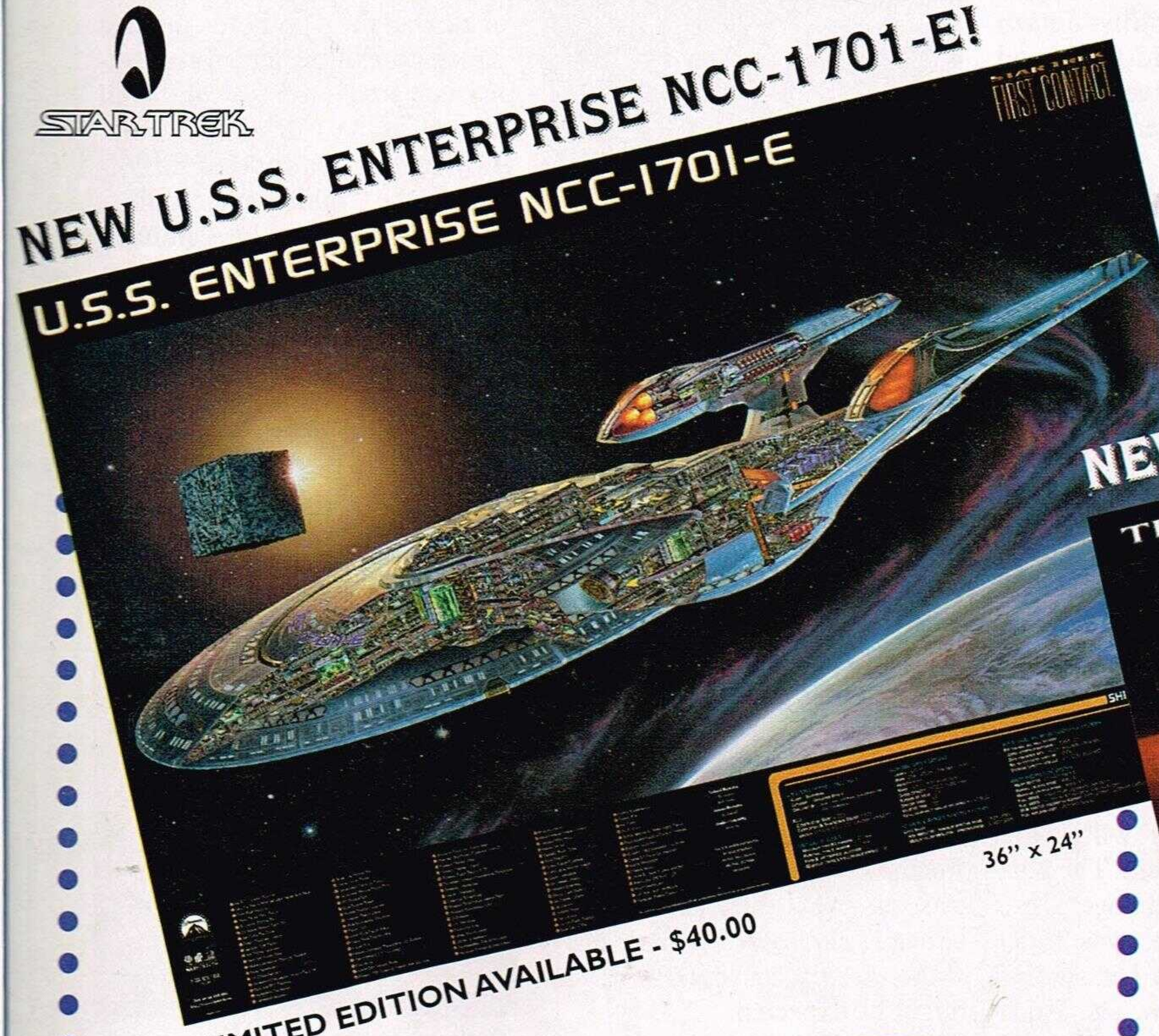
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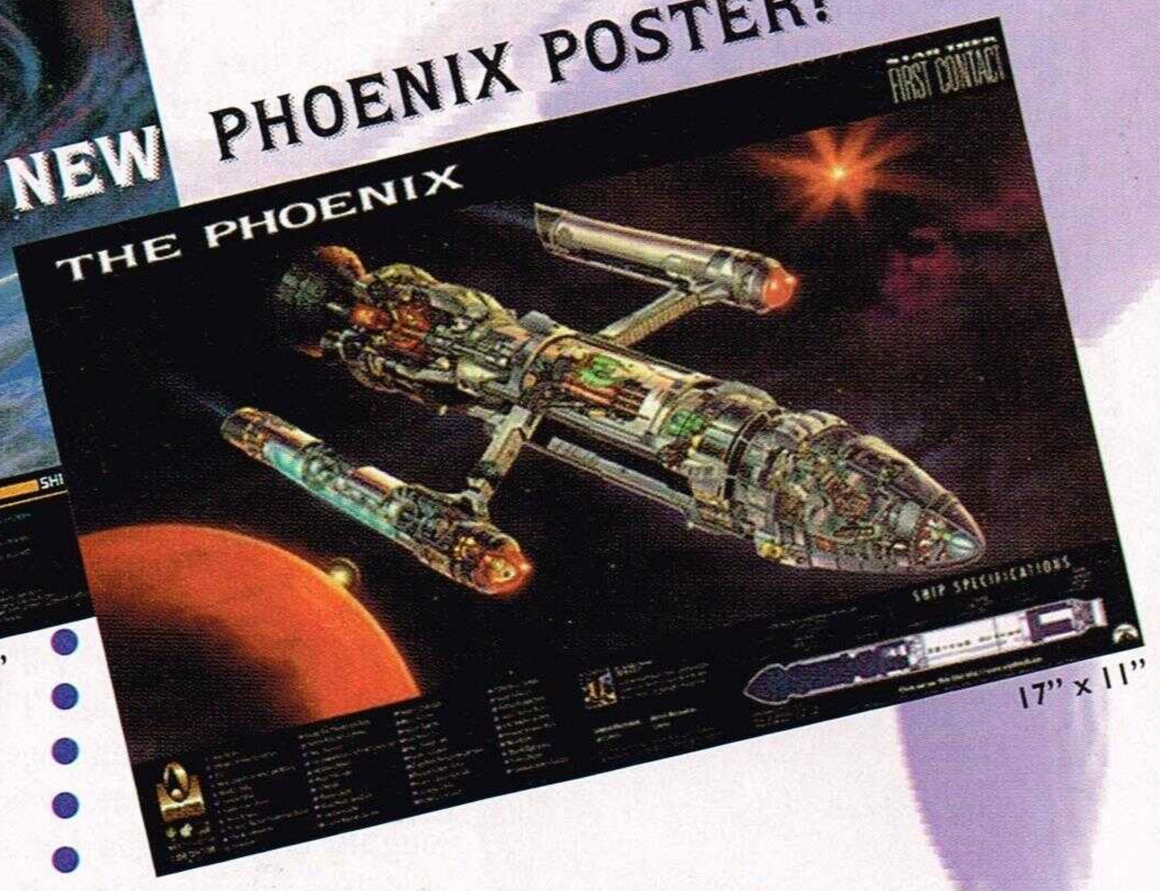



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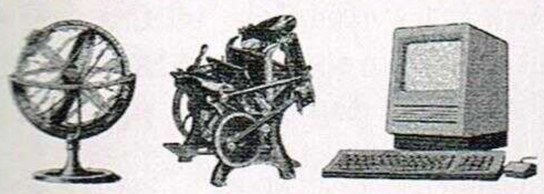
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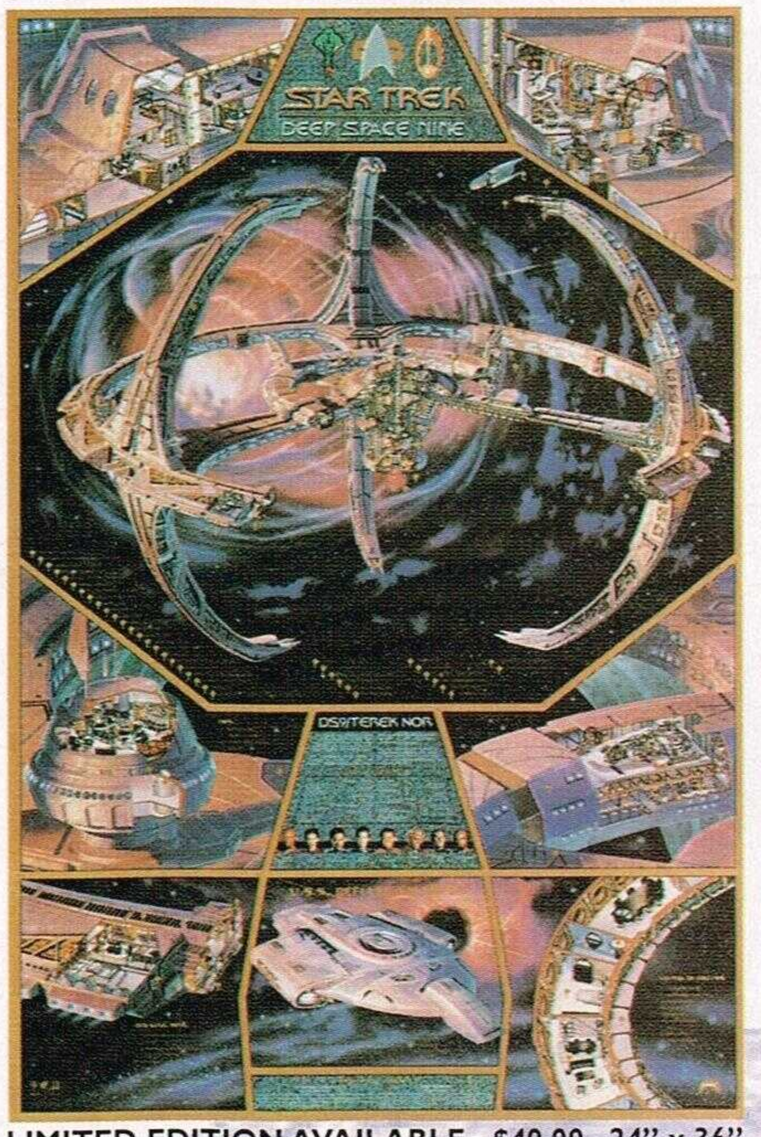
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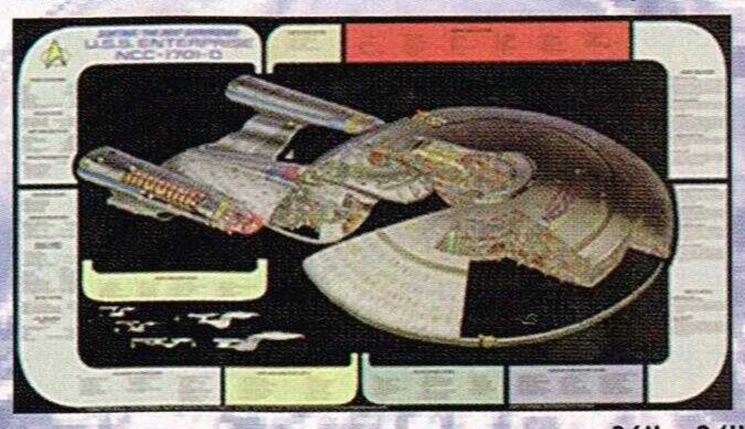

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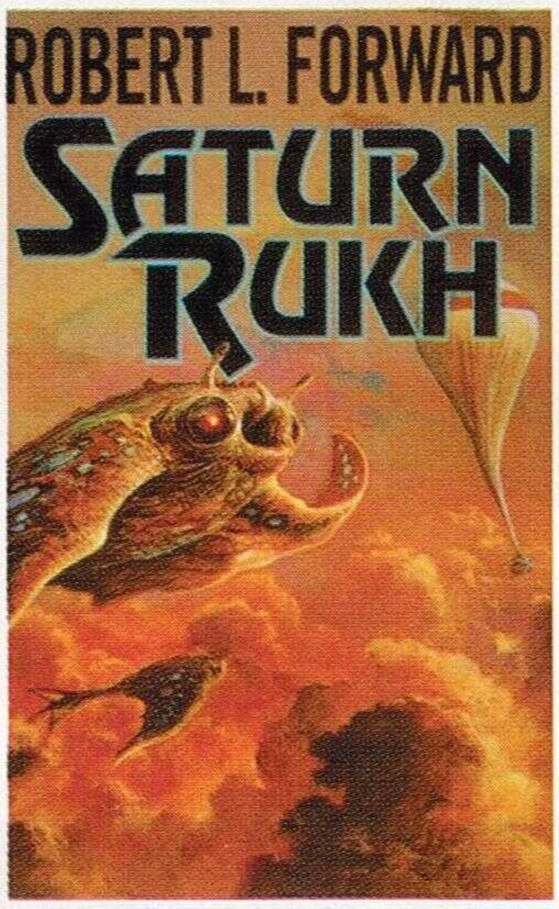
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contend with the threat of the Technomancers: sorcerers who wish to use the Darksword for their own purposes.

This book requires reading the preceding works of the series to enjoy it fully. Given that, *Legacy* is a passable tale. Weis and Hickman weave enough of our recognizable Earth to offset the alienness of their fantasy world, often in a funny way. This will definitely satisfy anyone who enjoyed the original series, and perhaps interest those who haven't.

*—Michael Wolff*




Rukh Art: Bob Eggleton

***Saturn Rukh* by Robert L. Forward (Tor, hardcover, 302 pp, $22.95)**

This novel continues in the vein of earlier Robert L. Forward works such as *Dragon's Egg* and *The Flight of the Dragonfly*, combining scientific plausibility, a carefully planned space mission to an exotic location and memorable aliens.

An industrial consortium arranges for a six-person expedition to fly to Saturn and test a prototype for fuel manufacturing in the upper atmosphere. The crew must face the strange inhabitants of this mysterious new world, the life forms occupying the atmosphere. Among them are the enormous, intelligent rukhs, whose presence initially threatens the industrial pioneers, but soon provokes the necessity for mutual contact.

Like Jules Verne, Forward takes enormous pains to qualify his plot with scientific truths. And, like Verne, his weakness lies in character development. The characters who fly to Saturn exist mainly to illustrate the wonders of the mission, as well as the dangers that await future explorers. But this is only a weakness, not a liability. *Saturn Rukh* is a good old-fashioned space exploration adventure, and proof that the sub-genre is in no danger of dying out.

*—Michael Wolff*

***Jovah's Angel* by Sharon Shinn (Ace, trade paperback, 400 pp, $13.95)**

If Anne McCaffrey ever decides to retire, she might consider passing her crown over to Sharon Shinn. In books like *The Shape-Changer's Wife* and *Archangel*, Shinn has demonstrated a marvelous talent for creating charming characters and engaging situations.

Now in *Jovah's Angel*, Shinn returns to Samaria, the setting of *Archangel*. Delilah, the reigning archangel, is forced to give up her office after her wings are damaged in an accident. The post passes to Alleluia, an angel who, up to that moment, was thoroughly engrossed in her studies and her music. Now, she finds herself thrust into the position of chief intermediator between the people of Samaria and the god Jovah. Not only that, but custom demands that she locate a husband within the next few months.

Shinn takes the reader through Allelulia's trials and tribulations, which include learning to "touch the face of Jovah" and an involvement with a young inventor whose own faith is sorely lacking.

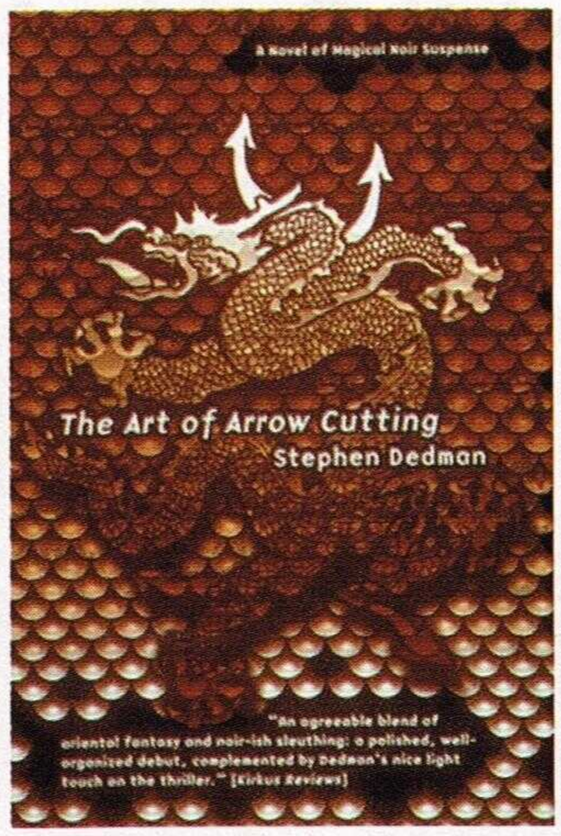
This is a wonderful tale, and a hopeful indication of Shinn's rising star.

*—Michael Wolff*

***The Art of Arrow Cutting* by Stephen Dedman (Tor, hardcover, 285 pp, $22.95)**

Stephen Dedman's first book, *The Art of Arrow Cutting*, starts off as a William Gibson-esque Cyber-redux, but thankfully transforms into a palatable, urban myth that entertains.

Michelangelo Magistrale, Mage, is a wanderer—casually sexy, womanizing, aimless and defiant. His sidekick is Charlie Takumo, a half-Japanese stuntman who behaves like a Canadian import of the Monkey King. He's full of inscrutable Asian wisdom, Jackie Channed up for the '90s. They're both protecting a lainyard of hair given to Mage by a troubled woman—a mysterious fetish that thrusts the two




men into a world of danger and intrigue.

Somehow mystical, obfuscatory Japanese references can't keep themselves out of this tale, but the story has its twists and the twist here is magic—particularly Japanese magic and fable—so Yakuza who hire *bakemono*, undead goblins, to do their dirty work aren't as derivative as might be expected.

True, the book stereotypes its female characters, and the subdued, methodical villain Tamenaga, with his *truly* wicked tattoos, is vanquished so quickly you wonder if the author ran out of ideas. But that doesn't mean *Art of Arrow Cutting* isn't a fun adventure—or one unworthy of note.

*—Keith Olexa*

***Owlflight* by Mercedes Lackey & Larry Dixon (DAW, hardcover, 304 pp, $21.95)**

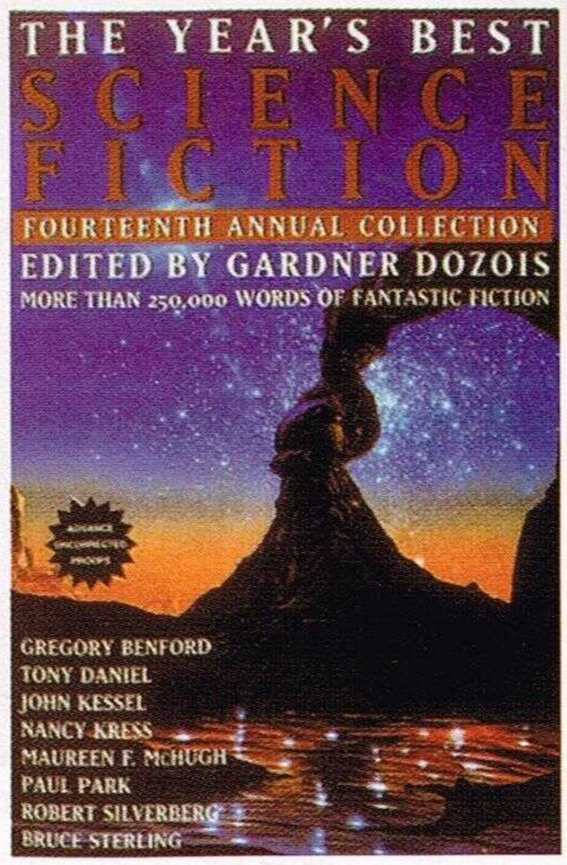
Mercedes Lackey and Larry Dixon have written a book with a unfortunately juvenile ring—but that's the only uncomplimentary thing one can say about *Owlflight*.

Now, on to the good stuff: Darian is a young man whose fur-trapping parents disappear into a dangerous magical forest. He is raised in a town that fears and hates him, by an old quasi-mage who barely tolerates his irascible behavior in order to train him to be a wizard. When the town is looted by a band of barbarians and the wizard killed, the boy flees to the forest, only to be saved by a group of mythical rangers, the Talyeras—bird-masters who decide to help the boy finish his training and come to terms with his loss.

The book is decidedly stock fare, with the outcome never in doubt. But Lackey and Dixon create a very sympathetic character in Darian, who holds interest exploit-to-exploit. The forest setting is also described with detail as rich as an old oil painting. *Owlflight* is yet another installment in the "Valdemar" tradition, and as such, even in its plainness, it still rises above and entertains.

*—Keith Olexa*

Arrow Art: The Chopping Block, Inc.




14th Art: Michael Carroll

***The Year's Best Science Fiction, 14th Annual Collection*, edited by Gardner Dozois (St. Martin's Press, hardcover, 624 pp, $29.95)**

Considering the growing number of outlets for science fiction stories, the process of selecting material for a "Best of" collection would probably make an interesting story in itself.

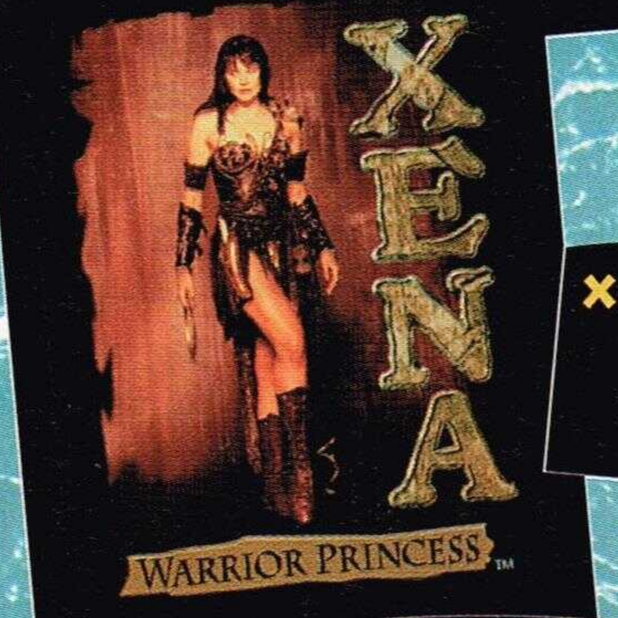
One can praise Gardner Dozois for his eye. Within *The Year's Best Science Fiction* are goodies such as Gregory Feeley's "The Weighing of Ayre," which proves once again that SF does not have to involve itself with either the future or the present. James Blaylock's "Thirteen Phantasms" is a warm, gentle tribute to the genre, while John Kessel's "The Miracle of Ivar Avenue" is a *noir*-ish mixture of SF and Hollywood history. Ian McDonald's "Recording Angel" is an all too brief premise worthy of expansion into a full-length novel, while Paul Park's "The Last Homosexual" touches the reader with a chilling dystopian sublimity, which is all too rare these days. These stories share space with fine works by such established pros such as Bruce Sterling, Robert Silverberg, Gene Wolfe and Steven Utley.

*—Michael Wolff*

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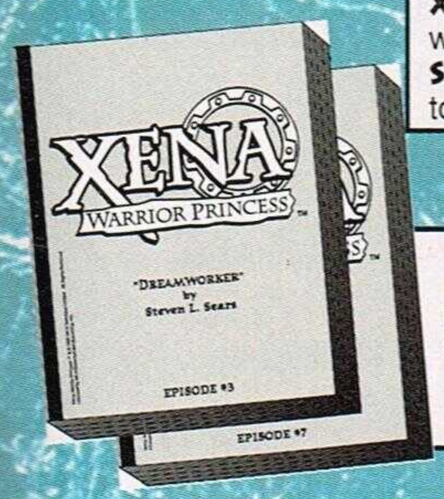

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PHOTO #49


PHOTO #52

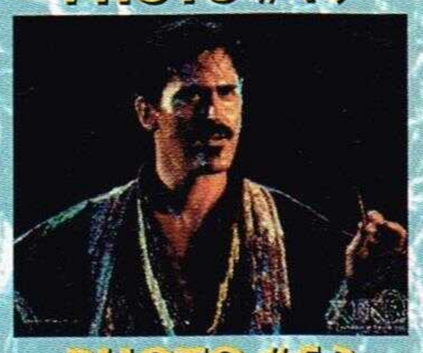

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# FANLOG

## SF DIRECTORY

Please note: Inclusion here does not indicate endorsement of any club or publication by STARLOG. And STARLOG is not responsible for information and spelling errors or changes in fees. Always write first to any organization, including a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) to confirm its continued existence.

Attention: Not listed here? It is not our oversight. You haven't sent information to us. Please write to SF Directory, STARLOG, 475 Park Avenue South, NY, NY 10016 or send via E-mail to communications@starloggroup.com. Provide all pertinent info on club/publication type, sanctioning (complete with a photocopy of the letter sanctioning the club's existence from the sanctioning party), mailing address, phone number (mandatory), yearly dues or subscription rates and membership kit. To facilitate inclusion, please provide info in the style that follows, carefully typed double-space. These will be listed free at STARLOG's discretion. Please note: STARLOG accepts absolutely NO phone calls re: fan clubs.

### THE OFFICIAL FRED MOLLIN FAN CLUB

A club for fans of the composer of such TV shows as *Forever Knight*, *Friday the 13th*, *War of the Worlds*, *TekWar* and *Beyond Reality*.
**Sanctioning:** Fred Mollin.
**Address:** The Official Fred
Mollin Fan Club
3326 NW 52nd Terrace
Gainesville, FL
32606-5852
**Dues:** Please send SASE (within U.S.) or one IRC (outside U.S.) for the latest information.

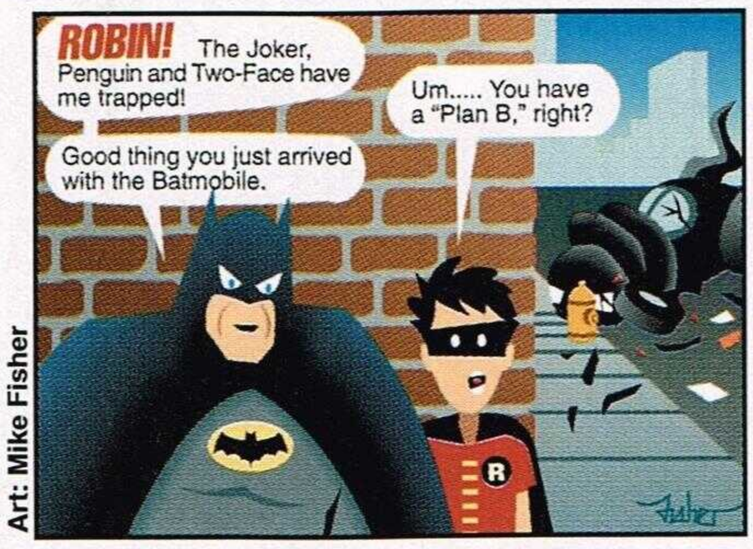
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### NATIONAL FANTASY FAN FEDERATION (N3F)

A general interest science fiction and fantasy fan club.
**Sanctioning:** None.
**Address:** William Center
1920 Division
Murphysboro, IL
62966-2320
**E-mail:** svanschuyver@okc.cc.ok.us
**Dues:** $18 per year.
**Membership Includes:** Two bi-monthly publications: *The National Fantasy Fan* and *Tightbeam*.

### THE ARON EISENBERG FAN CLUB

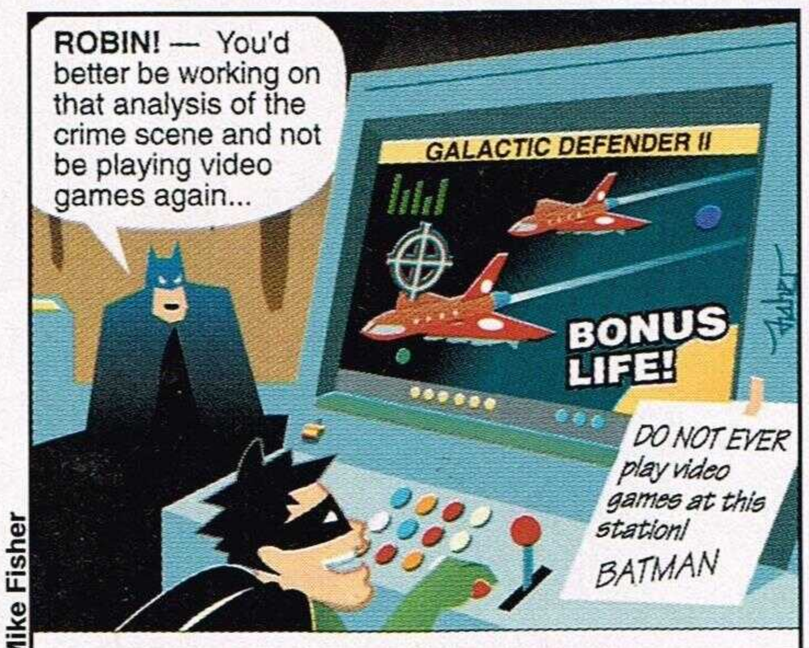
The official Aron Eisenberg fan club.
**Sanctioning:** Aron Eisenberg.
**Address:** Anita Campbell
c/o The Aron Eisenberg Fan Club
1659 Porter Road
Union, NJ
07083-4359
**E-mail:** x-comcentral@juno.com
**Dues:** $25 (U.S.).
**Membership Includes:** Two autographed photos, contests, newsletter, membership card.



Art: Mike Fisher

### THE KNIGHT WATCHMEN

A fanzine dedicated to the vampire in TV and movies. Crossover stories are welcomed and writers are wanted.
**Sanctioning:** None.
**Address:** The Knight
Watchmen
P.O. Box 39846
Philadelphia, PA
19104-9846
**Subscription Rates:** Send SASE for info.



Art: Mike Fisher

The downside of working with a teenage sidekick.

## CONVENTIONS

Questions about cons listed? Please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address listed for the con. Do NOT call STARLOG. Note: Con guests listed may not always appear and conventions may be cancelled without notice. Conventioneers: Send all pertinent info no later than four months prior to the event to STARLOG Con Calendar, 475 Park Avenue South, NY, NY 10016 or c/o communications@starloggroup.com (no hyphen in E-mail address). You must provide a phone number and (if one's available) an E-mail address. STARLOG makes no guarantees, due to space limitations, that your con will be listed here. This is a free service; to ensure a listing in STARLOG—not here, but elsewhere—contact Tim Clark (212-689-2830 x215) for classified ad rates & advertise there.

### OCTOBER

#### FALCON 3
**October 4**
**Lord Nelson Hotel**
**Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada**
Falcon 3
P.O. Box 36123
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3S9, Canada
(902) 445-2281
Fax: (902) 445-3311
E-mail: gtucker@fox.nstn.ns.ca

#### CREATION
**October 4-5**
**Civic Center**
**Dearborn area, MI**
Creation Entertainment
411 North Central Avenue
Suite 300
Glendale, CA 91203
(818) 409-0960 x225

#### CREATION
**October 4-5**
**Convention Center**
**Valley Forge, PA**
See earlier address
Guests: Renee O'Connor, Hudson Leick, Robert Trebor, Ted Raimi

#### ICON 22
**October 10-12**
**Best Western Westfield Inn**
**Coralville/Iowa City, IA**
Icon 22
P.O. Box 525
Iowa City, IA 52244-0525
(319) 355-1932
Guests: John M. Ford, Kaja Foglio
E-mail: icon22@sflis.org

#### NECRONOMICON
**October 10-12**
**Camberley Inn**
**Tampa, FL**
Necronomicon '97
P.O. Box 2076
Riverview, FL 33568
Guests: Joseph Green, Kevin J. & Rebecca Anderson
E-mail: ann@stonehill.org
http://www.stonehill.org

#### CREATION
**October 18**
**Masonic Temple**
**San Francisco, CA**
See earlier address
Guest: Renee O'Connor, Michael Hurst

#### MILEHIGHCON 29
**October 24-26**
**Sheraton Hotel**
**Lakewood, CO**
MileHiCon 29
P.O. Box 101322
Denver, CO 80250-1322
(303) 657-5912
http://www.eco-net.com/milehicon/
Guests: S.M. Stirling, Liz Danforth

#### ONE TREK MIND
**October 25-26**
**Stadium Arena**
**Grand Rapids, MI**
One Trek Mind Productions
P.O. Box 3363
Merrifield, VA 22116
(703) 280-5373
E-mail: onetrek@juno.com
http://members.aol.com/onetrek/

### NOVEMBER

#### VULKON
**November 1-2**
**Saint Petersburg Hilton**
Vulkon Conventions
c/o Joe Motes
12237 SW 50th Street
Cooper City, FL 33330-5406
(954) 434-6060
http://astonline.com/startrek/

#### SCI-CON 19
**November 7-9**
**Holiday Inn Executive Center**
**Virginia Beach, VA**
Sci-Con 19
P.O. Box 9434
Hampton, VA 23670
(757) 868-6738
E-mail: info@scicon.org
http://scicon.org

#### SOONERCON 13
**November 21-23**
**Oklahoma City, OK**
SoonerCon 13
P.O. Box 892687
Oklahoma City, OK 73189-2687
E-mail: chalker@inthenet.com
http://www.netplus.net/~soonercon.
Guests: Joe R. Lansdale, Larry Elmore

#### CREATION
**November 29-30**
**Pasadena Center**
**Pasadena, CA**
See earlier address
Guests: Andreas Katsulas, Peter Jurasik, Claudia Christian, Robert Picardo, Ethan Phillips

#### CREATION
**November 29-30**
**New York, NY**
**Location TBA**
See earlier address

## WEBLOG

This lists the various E-mail addresses and Web page sites for SF, fantasy & animation creators and their creations. Web site operators may add their sites to this list by sending relevant info via E-mail (no calls please) to communications@starloggroup.com

### X-FILES HEADQUARTERS
Fan site covering the Fox series.
http://members.tripod.com/~DanaScully/

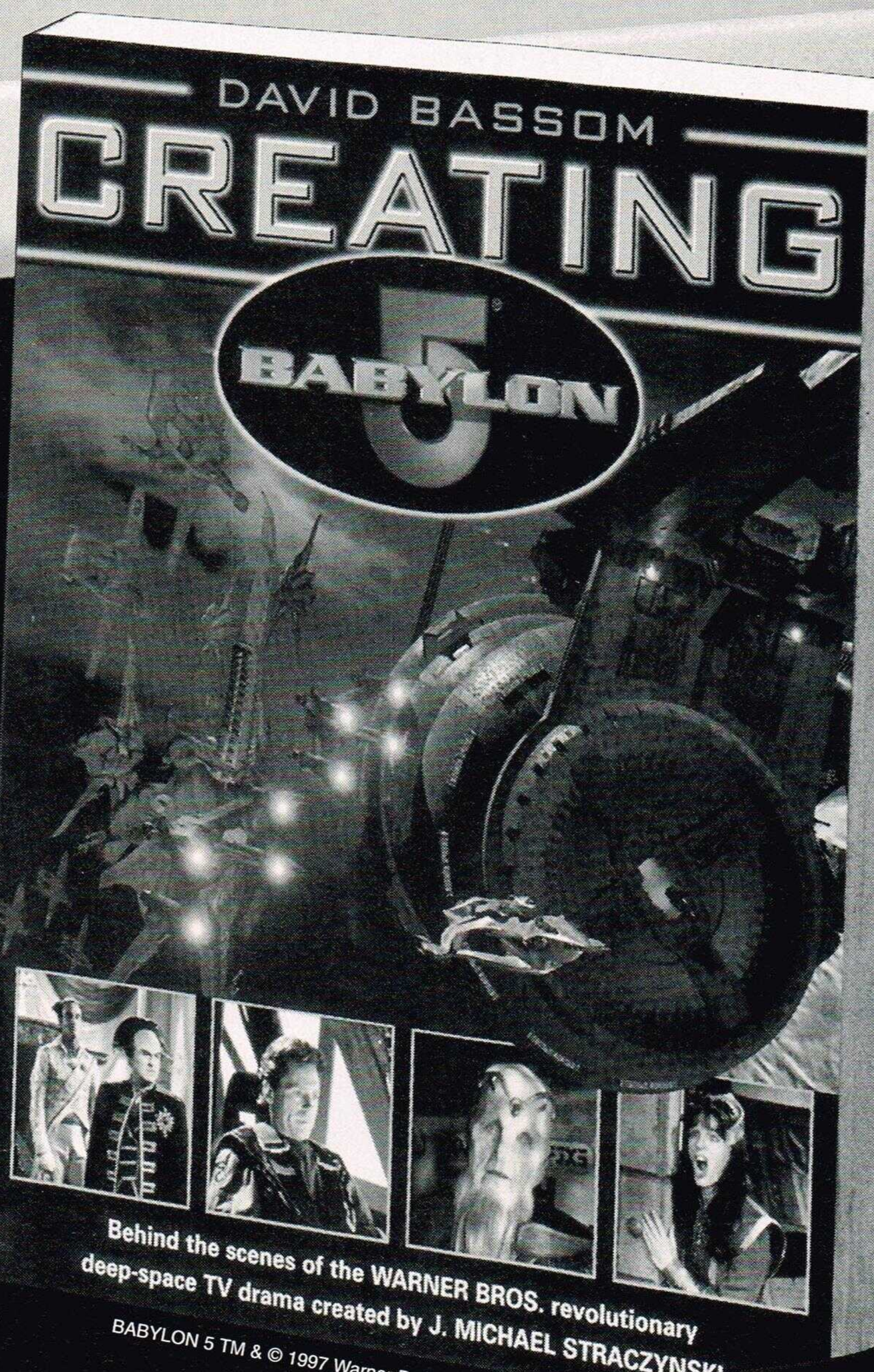
### THE PRISONER APPRECIATION SOCIETY
The official fan club site for the classic TV series *The Prisoner*.
http://www.netreach.net/~sixofone

### AUDIO SF STORIES
Sound excerpts of SF stories.
http://www.oldsfbooks.com/audver.html

### MICHAEL BIEHN FAN CLUB PAGE
Club page with info on the actor and his career.
http://www.cei.net/~ajohnson

### STARGATE SG-1
Showtime site featuring info on the cable TV series.
http://www.showtimeonline.com

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Art: Mike Fisher


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## BAD GUYS TO GO

...So, already there's talk of a *fifth* Batman film? Well, I think the next two villains should be Blackadder and Basil Fawlty. "Huh?" you say! Well, who better to play the gangly-legged Scarecrow than John Cleese of Monty Python and *Fawlty Towers* fame? And who better to play the conniving Mad Hatter than Rowan Atkinson of *Mr. Bean* and *Blackadder*?

These two are experts at dignified absurdity, and they are perfectly suited to these roles, physically and intellectually. Of course this would make the movie *very* Anglo-Saxon, what with Michael Gough as Alfred in the mix. But why must all the movies take place in Gotham? With the addition of Barbara (Batgirl) Wilson as Alfred's niece, having the next adventure set in their home country of merry old England to battle a couple of British baddies is a given! What does the rest of Bat fandom think? Maybe STARLOG can petition Joel Schumacher on this matter?

Mike Robinson
Address Withheld

## A LOSS WORLD

...In a time when SF, fantasy and horror are inundating TV, literature and cinema like never before—and the hype often seems to far exceed the result (i.e. *Independence Day*)—it's hard not to become a jaded, embittered genre fan. Although *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* was passive and disjointed at times, it offered elements one does not expect from a big-budget, FX-driven B-movie or a Steven Spielberg adventure.

The first film was, like its source novel, a decent idea trashed by dull characters, uninspired dialogue and a meandering storyline that substituted technobabble for drama. For a story about genetic engineering and dinosaurs, it swept the Frankenstein morality tale aside in favor of a paleontologist learning to like children. Many film adaptations and similar "science-horror" projects seem to forget the novel *Frankenstein* was as much about the suffering of the creature as the presumption of his creator. *Jurassic Park* didn't really portray the dinosaurs as science-exploited lab or zoo animals to sympathize with, but mere hi-tech images to gawk or shudder at. Sure, it was neat to see a Tyrannosaurus rex slam a velociraptor into a fossil display, but it was little more than a glorified cock fight for the FX-enthralled spectator, and just served to punctuate the indifference of the film to its darker themes.

Despite *The Lost World*'s expected lapses in the human character and plot departments (including some missing scenes probably destined to appear in a special edition one day), it took surprising care with its overall storyline and presented its reptilian stars in a way that was reminiscent of the artistry of Willis O'Brien, Ray Harryhausen or Jim Danforth. As a Spielberg summer movie, it was also unusual. The presence of children on the screen was kept to a minimum, and they weren't as precocious as in the director's previous works (aside from the "gymnastics incident"—even the poor velociraptor appeared outraged by it). The cute animatronic puppets were not milked for their endearing qualities either. The cinematography and musical score were subdued, a few subtle in-jokes popped up, and there wasn't even a fat character to laugh at this time.

Also, *Lost World* had a metaphoric, moral theme that one doesn't presume from a film designed for a Saturday matinee crowd. It was refreshing that it could acknowledge the darker reality of the world and tinge its happy ending with some cynicism about human nature.

Kelly Godel
2218 152 Street
Surrey B.C.
Canada, V4A 4N9

## HEAR OUR PLEA, AGAIN

...I am so tired of the internecine conflicts between the supporters of one genre show and those of another. Doesn't everyone realize that the wealth of SF offerings we are presently experiencing is cyclical and, once the numbers drop, will result in television's rediscovering the newspaper show, Western or (fill in the blank)? Enjoy your personal choices, send your complaints to the studios that produce them and let your rival show's fans enjoy their choices.

Earl L. Carter
Address Withheld

## PRESIDENTIAL CAMEOS

...*Contact* was very well done. It explored not only making contact with another alien race, but also examined the ever-controversial and on-going debate between science and faith. It was a very good movie, and a fitting tribute to Carl Sagan—who is now billions and billions of light years away from us.

However, director Robert Zemeckis and the producers made the mistake of using video clips of President Clinton without permission. It was wrong for them to use old video clips in order to make a profit for their movie.

In summer 1996, after President Clinton awarded the survivors of *Apollo 13* with the Congressional Medals of Honor, the President joked that if they ever made a sequel to Zemeckis' *Forrest Gump*, they wouldn't have to use a computer-generated image of himself because Tom Hanks had been there so much for various occasions.

So if the producers had just sought permission to use his image, I'm sure the President would have gladly given it. It's just a matter of good manners, nothing more.

Christopher Krieg
Address Withheld

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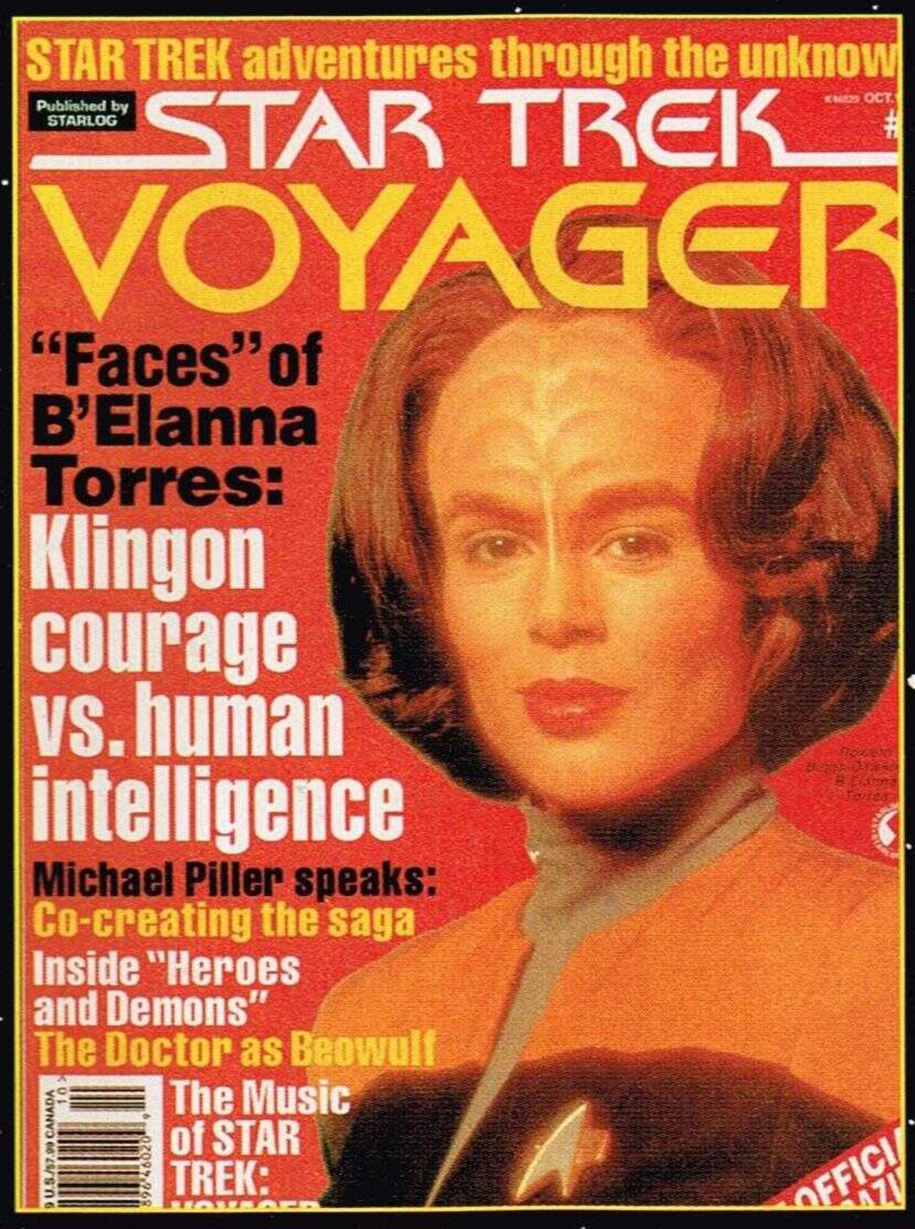
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# FROM THE BRIDGE

## Comic-Book Mentality

I grew up addicted to comics. I took them seriously. Whether my hero was Mighty Mouse or, later, Captain Marvel or, even later, Flash Gordon, I entered their world and was engaged by their passions and values.

Each month I waited eagerly for the new Captain Marvel adventure. I knew that when a crisis arose, young newscaster Billy Batson would slip away, where no one could see him, and utter that magical word: "SHAZAM!" A blinding bolt of lightning would instantly transform him from an ordinary boy into a superhero.

I knew that the magical appearance of Captain Marvel was not real—not even possible—but I accepted the rules of reality in that world and, panel-by-panel, I joined the story. I broke down doors, slugged the bad guys, even flew through the air. I fought evil alongside Captain Marvel. Comic books taught me that the power to be a champion of justice resides quietly within each human—just as it resided in Billy Batson.

It has always been difficult to explain the value of comics to parents who did not grow up addicted. Some people see this art form as garbage, and some actually see it as harmful. I credit comics with helping me build a strong sense of morality and a belief that I am capable of doing something to right the wrongs of the world.

This past summer was the best ever for new movies, and a couple of them successfully captured a perfect comic-book style. *Batman & Robin* gave me the feeling I used to get from reading comics. There was flashy action and moody quiet. At times, the dialogue was brisk, stylized and suggestive—such as Poison Ivy's line: "There's something about an anatomically correct rubber suit." During more tender moments, the dialogue was appropriately real, such as Bruce Wayne's affectionate tribute to Alfred: "Not all heroes wear masks."

The movie didn't try to turn these larger-than-life characters into everyday folks by "humanizing" them with flaws and foibles. Even the bizarre villains seemed real to me because I was engaged by the passions and the values of their world. In Gotham City, a creature like Freeze really says, "No matter what you've always heard, Mr. Bane, the size of your gun does matter."

*Men in Black* also set up its own stylized reality and, within those strange parameters, took itself seriously. Defending the planet against an assortment of ugly alien invaders without disturbing the day-to-day lives of unsuspecting citizens is simply a job for the MiB. Somebody has to keep those slimy aliens under control.

The big disappointment of the summer, for me, was one of the best movies, *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*. Steven Spielberg has always approached his projects with a fine-tuned comic-book mentality. He grew up addicted. His direction of this film is excellent in every way. Stan Winston, Dennis Muren and Industrial Light & Magic created special FX that are a miraculous marriage of technology and imagination.

My disappointment comes from the novel from which the story is partially derived. I have always admired the fact that Michael Crichton explores fresh territory with each new book. In this case, however, he simply cranked out another one, and that is beneath him. He doesn't need the millions *that* desperately.

But I also discovered this summer that Universal Studios brought *Jurassic Park* to 3-D life at their 400-acre Los Angeles complex with flawless comic book mentality.

The Stairway at Universal Studios must be the longest escalator ride on the planet, from the Upper Lot—a maze of colorful streets, thrilling rides, spectacular shows and shops—to the Lower Lot, where the new *Jurassic Park* river ride is located.

Seated with two-dozen other passengers in a raft, lap bar in place, we passed through huge wooden gates and glided peacefully into a jungle paradise. On both sides of the river, long-necked vegetarian dinosaurs munched tree branches and looked with mild curiosity at our tourist safari. Then, to the right, we saw a high wall topped by electric fencing that had been ripped and was sparking. Something was happening beyond the wall, and tree tops were jerking violently back and forth.

As we rounded a bend, we were startled to see a raft, just like ours, with no passengers—just hats, cameras and purses. A fierce predator stood watching us from the jungle, chewing with satisfaction. Suddenly, a truck is shoved off the cliff above us and drops into the river with a drenching explosion. Panel by panel, dangers grow greater until at last we enter a cave and, in the dim light, confront our worst nightmare.

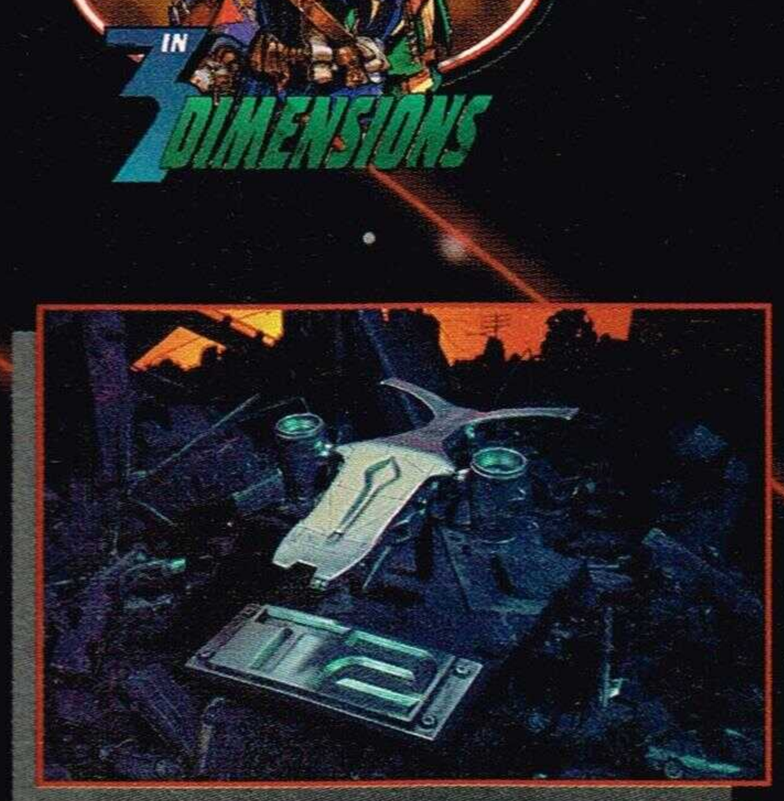
The ride ends with a "splash page"—a breathtaking plunge down an 84-foot vertical drop right into the river. Everyone screamed and laughed. Yeah. That's what I like about comic-book fear.

*—Kerry O'Quinn*

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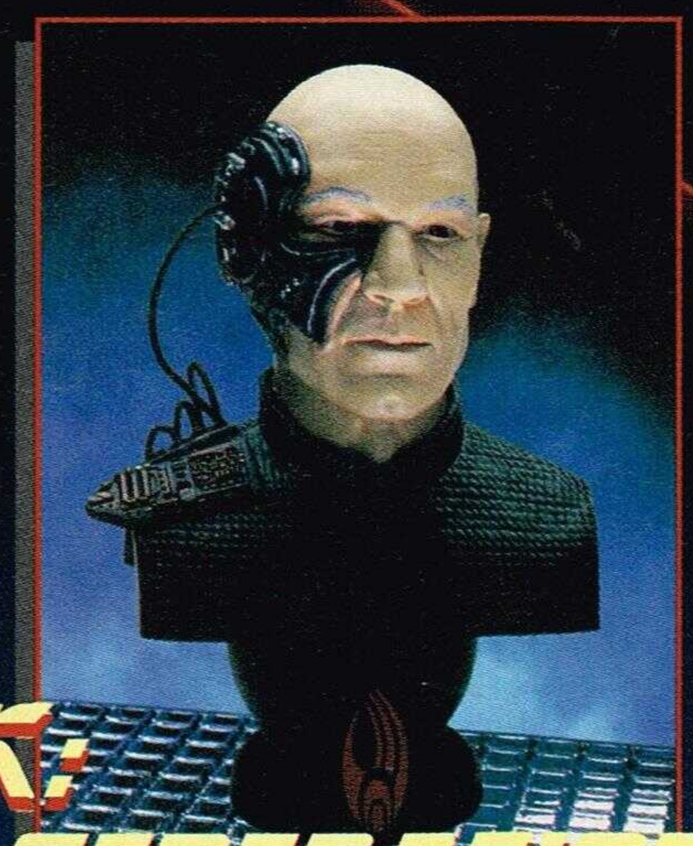


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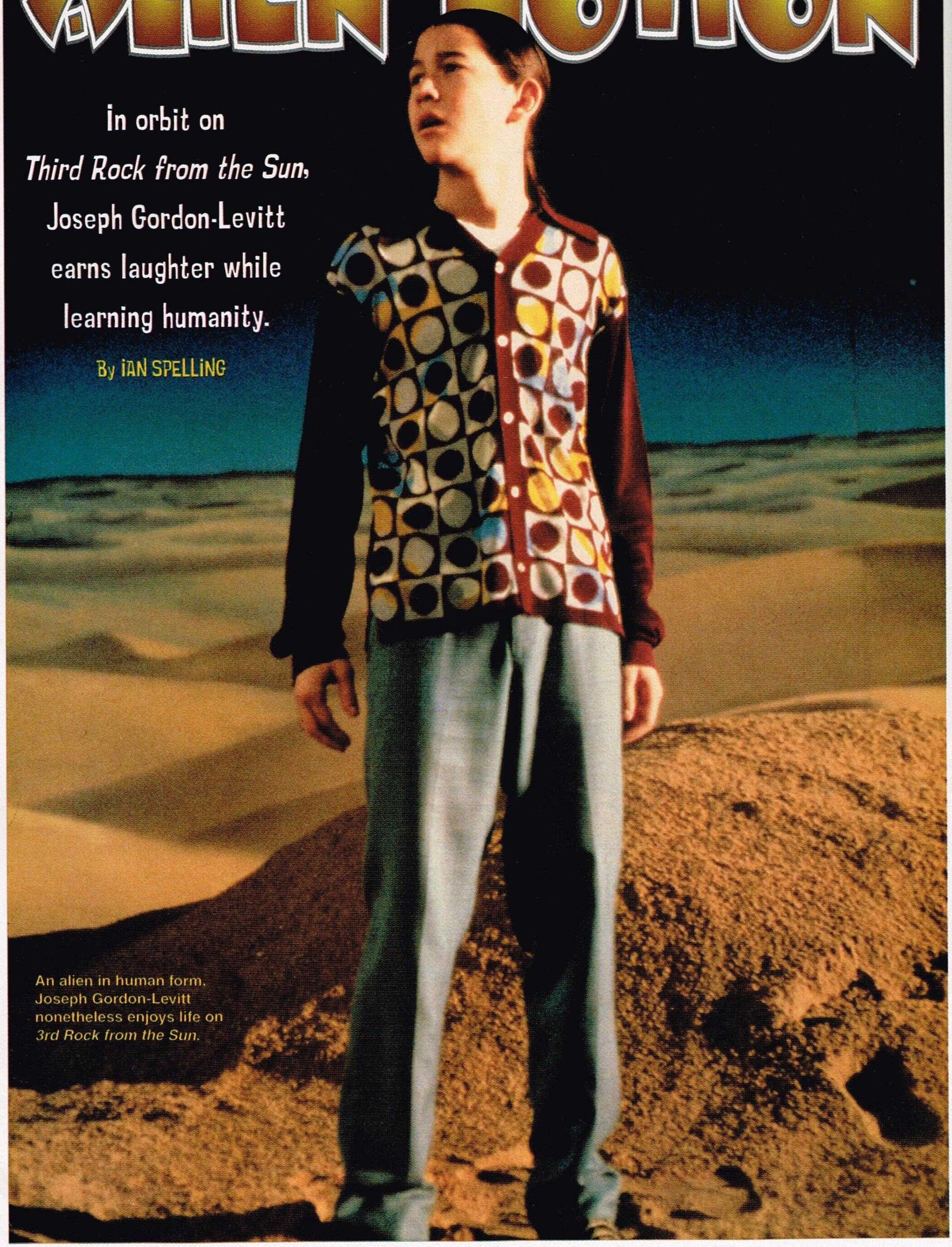
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# ALIEN NOTION

In orbit on *Third Rock from the Sun*, Joseph Gordon-Levitt earns laughter while learning humanity.

By IAN SPELLING



An alien in human form, Joseph Gordon-Levitt nonetheless enjoys life on *3rd Rock from the Sun*.

A quick glance at Joseph Gordon-Levitt's resume—which reveals such credits as *Quantum Leap*, the *Dark Shadows* revival, *Angels in the Outfield* and, of course, *3rd Rock from the Sun*—might sway one to assume that the actor is a huge SF and fantasy fan. Well, yes and no.

"From the time I was 11 to when I was 15, I read *all* the fantasy books. I read *The Hobbit*, and I played *Dungeons & Dragons* a lot," says the 16-year-old, who sounds far more mature than his years. "They didn't make too many fantasy movies. Thinking about it now, I was more into the fantasy thing than the SF thing. So, it's funny that I'm doing *3rd Rock*."

About to begin its third season (now on Wednesdays at 9 p.m.), *3rd Rock from the Sun* remains a hit show for NBC and a major source of laughs for the viewers who tune in every week. The series centers on a group of aliens posing as the Earth family Solomon. There's the oversexed Dick (John Lithgow), the undersexed Sally (Kristen Johnston), the blithely out-there Harry (French Stewart) and Gordon-Levitt's character, Tommy, the eldest alien, who happens to be trapped in the body of a dry-witted, horny teenager. Early episodes zoomed in on the Solomons' efforts to fit in, to figure out how their bodies worked, to understand how humans dealt with everything from puberty and racism to romance and SF conventions (complete with an appearance by George Takei).

Now, most episodes are devoted to the Solomons' interactions with each other and those around them, most notably Dr. Mary Albright (Jane Curtin), Dick's very human love; Officer Don (Wayne Knight), Sally's occasional boytoy; Nina Campbell (Simbi Khali), Dick's take-no-guff assistant; Mrs. Dubcek (Elmarie Wendel), the owner of the home in which the Solomons live; and August Loeffler (Shay Astar), Tommy's assertive girl friend.

## Inveterate Alien

"We've followed some logic, if you think about it. The Solomons were thrust into these human bodies and had to try to act like human beings. If that happened to you, the first thing you would think about would be your body," Gordon-Levitt notes.

"That body is probably the most different thing to you. Nobody knows exactly what these characters look like on their own planet, but they're nothing like humans, nothing at all like that. So, Tommy was just getting used to his body when the show started. He hit puberty and he was reacting to all these various attractions he was having to the opposite sex. Tommy had never experienced all these basic things that happen every second of a human being's life—which humans have learned to cope with and have gotten used to—and he didn't know how to cope with them. Now, after all this time on Earth, he has gotten a little used to all those things and he can exist more as a human and learn more about the subtleties of being human. That's where we're at with him.

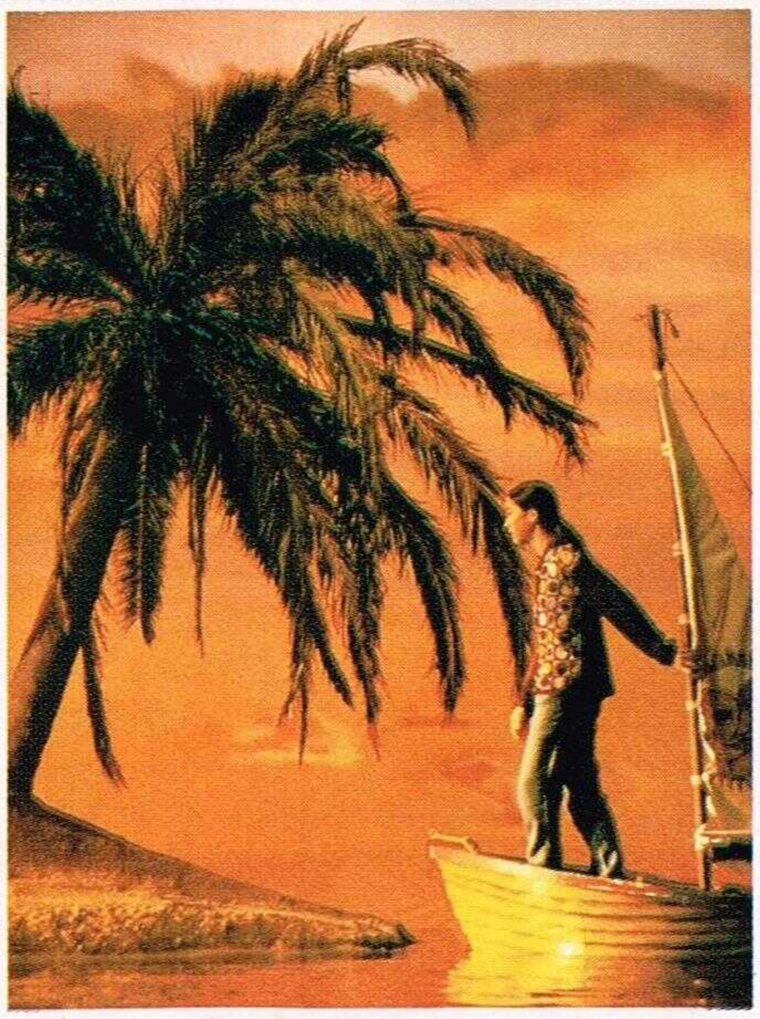


**Although the eldest alien, Tommy Solomon (Gordon-Levitt) is trapped in a teenage body, and must masquerade as the son of team leader Dick (John Lithgow).**

"I don't know if he realizes just how whipped he is by August. I guess that's part of her abilities, her power over him. He probably *does* realize it, but he's just so wrapped up and confused by her and his feelings for her. Again," he continues, "he has only been a human for a while, so he really has no idea what's going on. What's funny about her having him whipped is that he goes back and forth between acting like an old man and a teenager. When the old man in him surfaces, it seems that he knows what she's up to and thinks, 'I'm not gonna take this anymore.' It'll be fun to see where they go with the relationship."

While Tommy may come across as more and more human with each episode, he's still very much an alien. It's with that thought in mind that Gordon-Levitt plays the role. "Not only is Tommy an alien, but he's a military officer. So, I hold on to that. He's old, very old. I hold on to that, too," he explains. "Even though he's very wise in terms of his experiences in the universe, he's also very naive. So, I hold on to this naiveté when it comes to dealing with Earth customs and anything, really, that has to do with Earth."

Gordon-Levitt also enjoys performing with his co-stars. Lithgow and Curtin, of course, are the show's veteran actors, while Stewart and Johnston are relative newcomers. "John is absolutely tremendous. I can't say enough about how much I've learned from him, especially about acting and comedy, but also about everything else in life, too," enthuses Gordon-Levitt. "Even if he wasn't a great actor who I would want to emulate, he's a great guy otherwise. French is also a



**The alien Solomons must learn new wisdom while on Earth, lessons derived from their daily lives and relationships, even their dreams.**

tremendous actor. He has amazing comedy chops. He's really into silent movies, the classic slapstick stuff, the physical comedy that Buster Keaton did. He's great at that and I've learned a lot from him.

"Before *3rd Rock*, I had hardly done any comedy at all, and now I feel like I know what I'm doing. That's thanks to the entire cast, Bonnie and Terry Turner, the show's creators, and the various directors we've had, like Jim Burrows, Bob Berlinger and Terry Hughes. There's Kristen. She's just an amazing person and I love her to death. We have a lot of fun on the set. She takes a lot of chances and really goes out there. Unfortunately, I haven't gotten to do many scenes with Jane Curtin—maybe six or seven scenes with her over the course of 40 episodes. Jane is great. She does some-

thing a little different, because she's the ultimate straight man. Jane can keep a straight face like no one else. It's an amazing ensemble."

Beyond the fun of working with the *3rd Rock* cast, there's the challenge of shooting the series before a live audience. Back when he was 10, Gordon-Levitt was a regular on the short-lived political sitcom *The Powers That Be*, which also shot before a live audience. "I'm older now and I have a better idea of what I'm doing," he says, laughing. "Now, I can't imagine doing comedy without an audience. It gives us a certain energy and lets us know immediately if we're clicking or not. An audience gives you a colder-warmer mechanism. If they're quiet after a joke, you know you're cold and if there's a lot of laughter, you know you're hot. For comedy, an audience is great. I don't know if I would want an audience for a dramatic show. You play things bigger when an audience is around and drama is all about subtlety. I admire those actors who can do drama well in a theater."

## Industrious Teen

Asked which Tommy-oriented episodes he found hot, Gordon-Levitt quickly rattles off a few shows. "I really liked the race episode, where we dealt with ethnicity. We sang the blues and found out we were Jewish. That was a first-season show. This past season," he notes, "there was a show in which Dick discovered that there was all this stuff that went with being a proud father. So, Dick wanted his son to be the best and he sent Tommy to prep school. Tommy had to compete in a knowledge bowl quiz show. There was one scene where Dick was making Tommy study for this quiz show and they're talking in all these languages. I, as an actor, had to kind of BS my way through Cantonese, Russian and Greek. That was a funny show."

With *3rd Rock* now in its third year, there's the matter of keeping the series fresh. Gordon-Levitt insists that he and the cast remain as energized as ever and that the writers are too talented to let the show slip in quality. "It's really easy for us actors to say what the writers have written. It comes out funny. I'm definitely not worried about keeping it fresh," he says. "For as many concepts as you can think of about Earth or humanity, there's a 22-minute episode waiting to be made. There really is an infinite number of concepts we can cover. I don't think anybody is really worried about running out of good stuff to do."

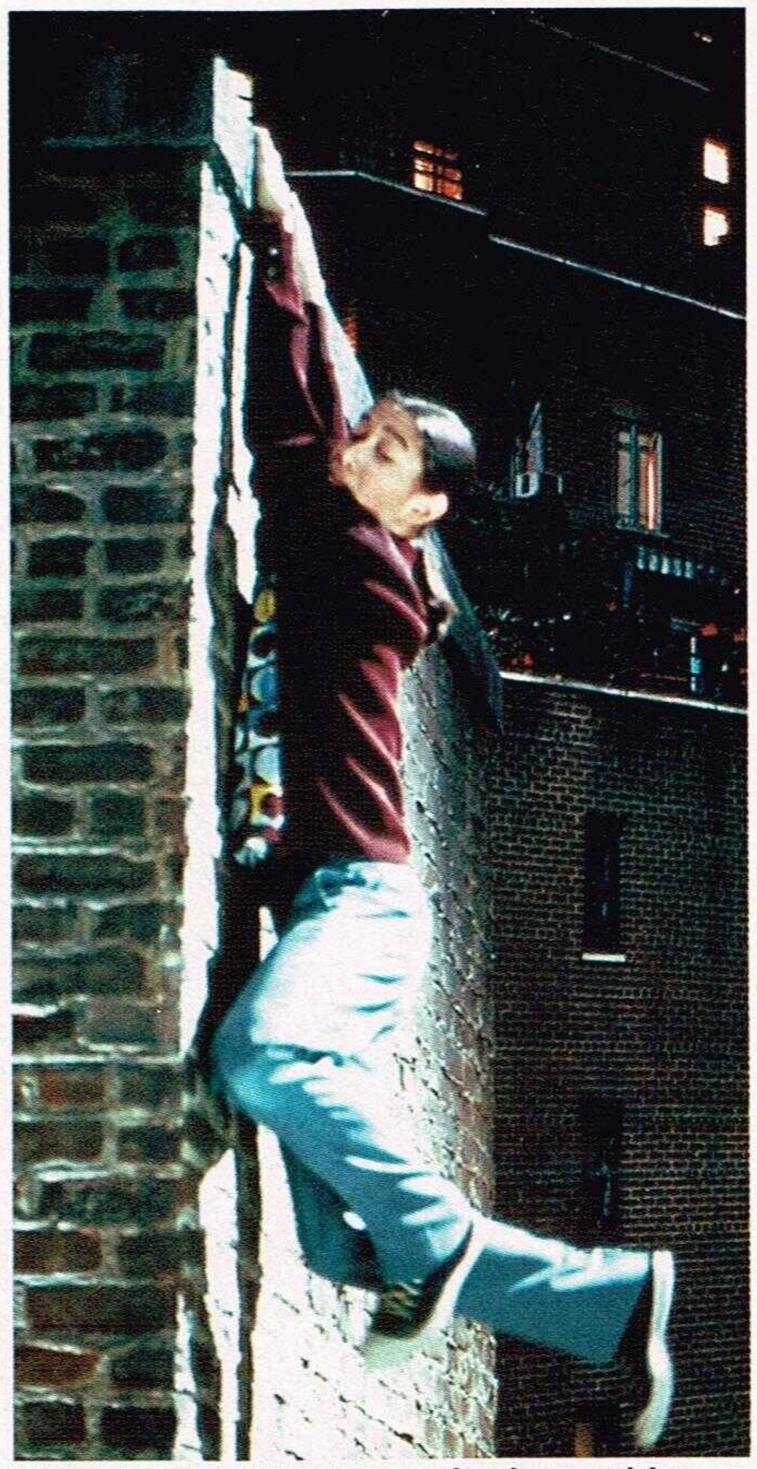
Gordon-Levitt has been doing good stuff for some time now. Born in Los Angeles, he started singing at a very early age and joined a choir/theater group. A local talent manager shared the rent on a building with Gordon-Levitt's music teacher and, as the actor puts it, "things just took off from there." He went on countless auditions, sometimes two a day.

Work began to come Gordon-Levitt's way. He acted in commercials, put in guest star appearances on such shows as *Family Ties* and *Murder, She Wrote* and became a recurring character on *Roseanne*. He acted in TV movies, among them *Gregory K* and *Stranger on My Land* with Tommy Lee Jones. *A River Runs Through It* in 1992 served as Gordon-Levitt's feature debut; he later acted opposite Demi Moore in the thriller *The Juror* and worked for director Leonard Nimoy in *Holy Matrimony*.

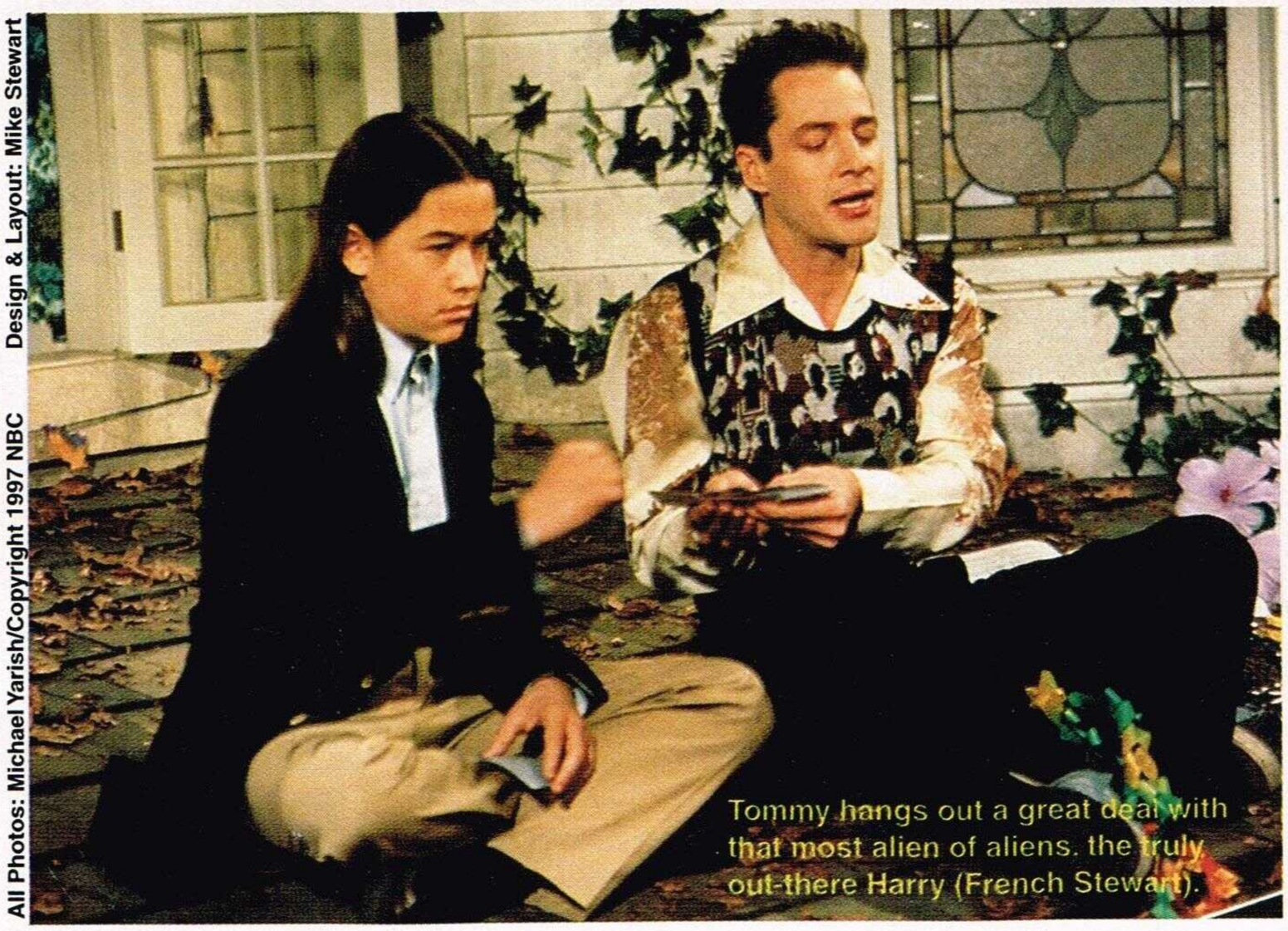
Of his genre efforts, Gordon-Levitt sounds most fond of *Quantum Leap*. "My show was the one in which Scott Bakula came back as a hairdresser," he says. "I was his girl friend's son. I witnessed a murder and Sam had to protect me from the bad guys who were trying to kill me. My character had polio, so I had to walk with a limp and a brace. I loved doing that show. Everybody was really nice. My episode was actually the first one that Scott directed, so that was cool."

Most recently, Gordon-Levitt completed an independent picture entitled *Lepers*. The film, "a low, low-budget" affair in which he co-stars with Samantha (*Broken Arrow*) Mathis, has yet to find a distributor. "It's about a woman [Mathis] who's a junkie and has just learned that she's HIV-positive. She's homeless and just in a terrible situation. Blah, blah, blah, everything bad," he says. "I play a kid who has full-blown AIDS and follows her out of the hospital after she recovers from a heroin overdose. The movie's about what happens to them over a few days. It's a very sad premise, but it's really about two people alone in the world who are then not as alone for a while. I hope it gets released."

Gordon-Levitt has no idea what he'll do next, either in the immediate future or in the long run. With *3rd Rock*, the young actor has tasted fame, really, for the first time. People recognize him on the street, stare at him in restaurants and interrupt him while he's out with his family or friends. And he's ambivalent about facing a lifetime of fame. "I really love to act, but I hate the spotlight with a passion. I like the cinema a lot, so I would like to write, probably a screenplay, but maybe even a book. If I could, I would like to try directing, too," Joseph Gordon-Levitt explains. "Right now, it's a trade-off. The show is a hit and I'm in the spotlight a bit. Everybody looks at everybody else as if that other person's life has no down side. I look at someone else and say, 'Wow, their life is cool. There's no down side to their life.' I'm an actor on a hit show. People look at me and think, 'That's really cool.' I understand that. It *is* cool, but there are huge down sides. I guess I think it's worth it. If I didn't think so, I would quit."



**Experiencing the human body provides some of the SF sitcom's humor. And for Tommy, that means puberty.**



Tommy hangs out a great deal with that most alien of aliens, the truly out-there Harry (French Stewart).

All Photos: Michael Yarish/Copyright 1997 NBC

Design & Layout: Mike Stewart

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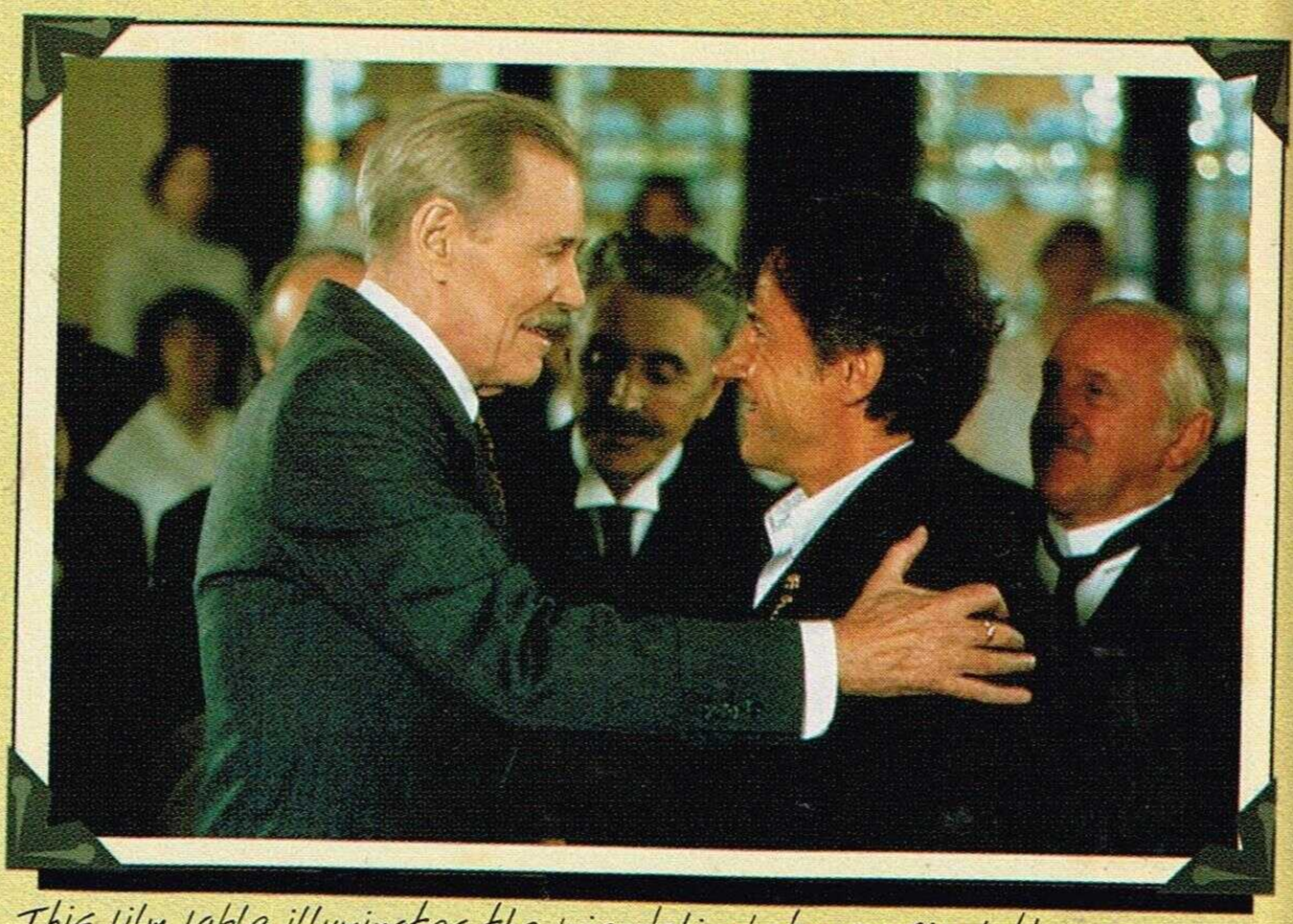
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# Telling Tales



This film fable illuminates the friendship between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Peter O'Toole), a true believer, and Harry Houdini (Harvey Keitel), the master of illusions.

By Maureen McTigue

## As director Charles Sturridge explains, there's more to fairy tales than just believing in fairies.

Eighty years ago, two young girls walked through the woods near their home. Not an extraordinary occurrence, but what they brought back with them created a stir in British society while intriguing two of the most popular and respected men of the time, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini. What unfolded would baffle the world for over half a century and help break up the friendship of these two remarkable men.



Design & Layout: Mike Stewart

*Could two wee girls succeed in photographing fairies in 1917? Director Charles Sturridge points out that the camera was then "an eye which didn't tell lies."*

In *Fairy Tale: A True Story* (due out this month from Paramount Pictures), cousins Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths make a grand discovery in the nearby Cottingley woods; they have photographed fairies and insist on their reality. The photos and accusations cause a stir that piques the interests of Doyle and Houdini, two figures of particular appeal to director Charles (*Gulliver's Travels*) Sturridge.

"I vaguely knew of the story, as many people do," notes the Emmy Award-winning director, "having half-heard something about it, and I didn't see it as particularly important. But the thing that first drew me to it was the presence of Houdini. I knew about Doyle. I knew he was a kind of apologist for the story, but I didn't know anything about Houdini or his relationship with Doyle.

"The presence of Doyle and Houdini in the story, these two such enormously exciting, potent and yet totally different characters—one, a 6' 2", aristocratic Englishman and the other, I think he was something like 5' 3", an immigrant New Yorker—gave a way," Sturridge notes, "into exploring the idea of what the two children set in motion by their photographs. It was the presence of those two giant figures that gave the story a dimension that I felt turned it into cinema as opposed to anecdote."

Doyle and Houdini are portrayed by actors as different behind the scenes as their characters were in history. Recalling his stars, Harvey Keitel (Houdini) and Peter O'Toole (Doyle), Sturridge laughs fondly. "It would be hard to conceive of two more different approaches to acting. Harvey is a detailed, investigative burrower into the text. Somebody who methodically examines all the possibilities of the words he's going to say, looks at all his parts and scenes; he likes to prepare in a minute way before each take.

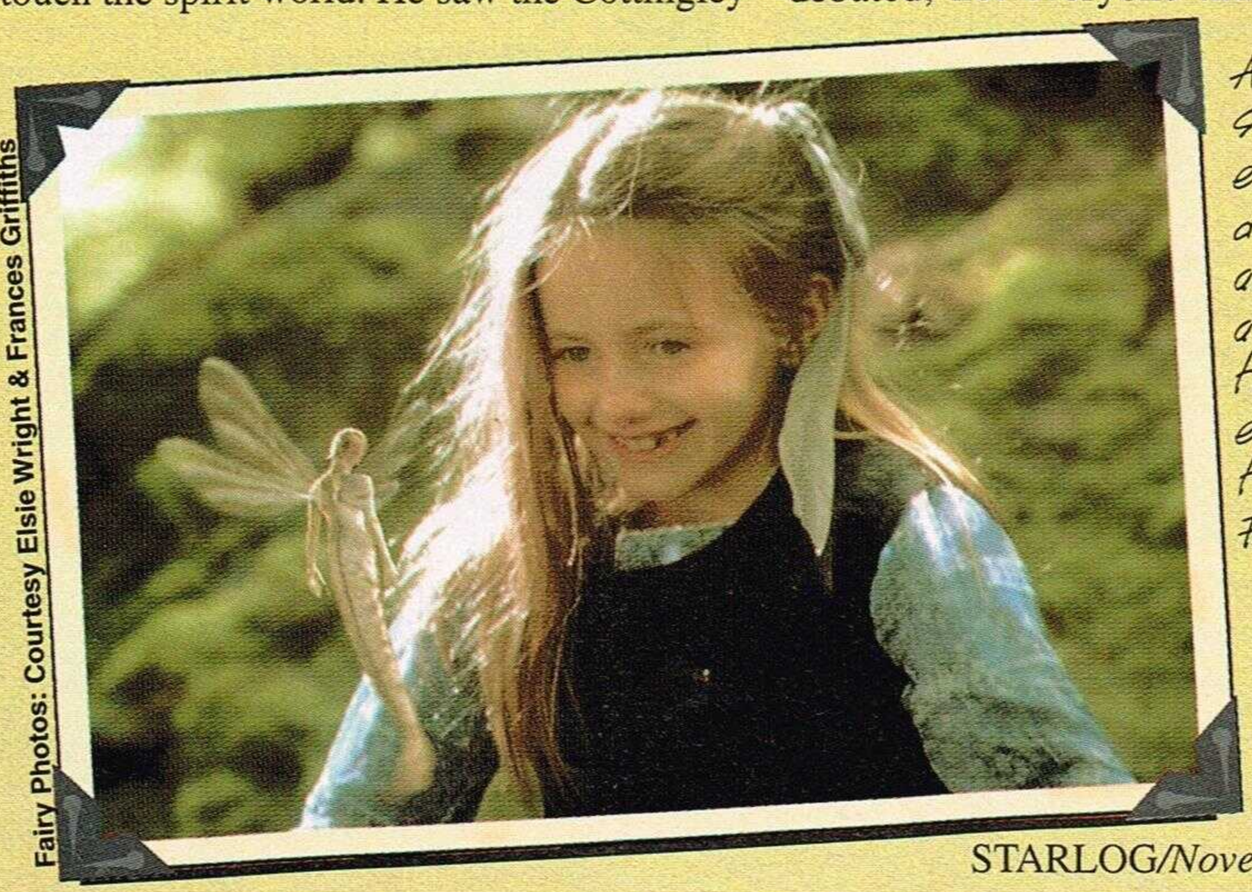
"Oddly enough, when I first rang him up to get him to come to England and play Houdini, Harvey said, 'I know all about Houdini because I was originally going to play him for Robert Altman in the first version of *Ragtime* [prior to the film being directed by Milos Forman].' Harvey had done a lot of work on Houdini, on escapology, so he had all this knowledge which he brought to the part. He spent a lot of time investigating the details of Houdini's life, his appearance, his manner, his voice—he listened to recordings. Harvey unearthed, in York, one of Houdini's assistants, who's an old lady now, and he talked to her about Houdini.

"Peter is the kind of actor who likes to walk onto the set after the clapboard has gone down," Sturridge laughs. "He brings with him the most extraordinary energy and talent, but he likes to treat a scene as though he's someone diving into a swimming pool. Harvey and Peter play totally different characters in the way their personalities and energies work, and they are indeed different as people and actors.

"Curiously," says Sturridge, "this chemistry helped to reproduce this strange relationship between Doyle and Houdini, extraordinarily close friends who, in effect, finally had this violent battle of real magic. Houdini felt, in the end, that magic was something you did for money on the stage. Doyle genuinely felt that we were at a momentous stage in mankind's development and that we were on the brink of being able to touch the spirit world. He saw the Cottingley fairies—the pictures the girls took—as one of the first factual threads showing the way the world was going."

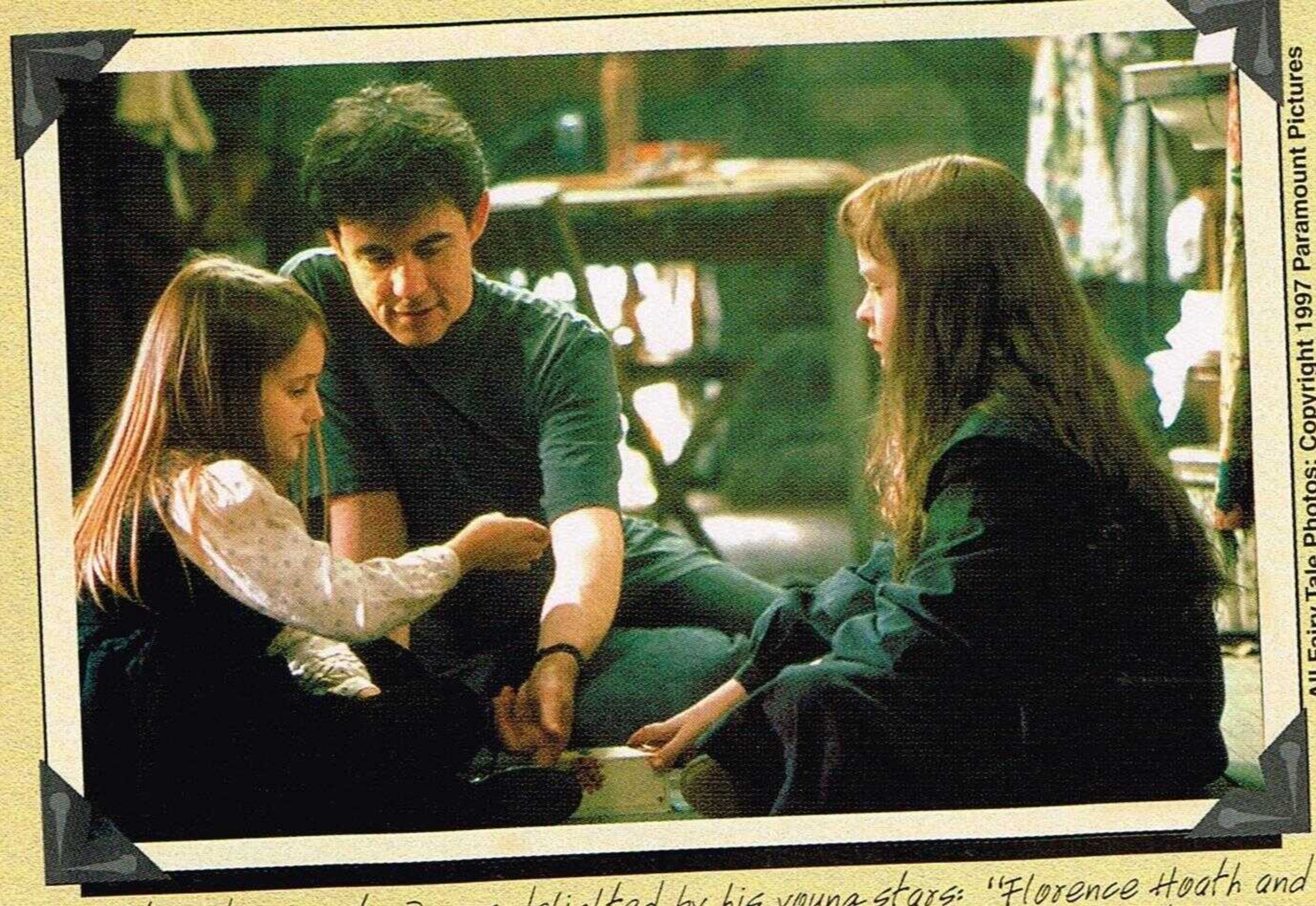
The historical account may seem outlandish—photos of fairies believed to be real by even the upper crust of society, so real they were published as factual proof in the *Strand Magazine* (famed home of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes yarns). In this day and age, something like this couldn't happen; people in our modern society wouldn't believe it. Or would they? "Well, I think we know it *does* happen today," Sturridge notes, "in a different context, whether it be alien pictures [the Roswell films], angels or whatever our particular interest is at the moment. The difference is that in 1917, photography was considered to [convey] the *truth*. It stepped beyond art, beyond painting, beyond representational images into an arena where you had a machine, a camera, which showed the truth. It would tell you what war was really like, what countries you hadn't been to were like; it was an eye which didn't tell lies.

"We are now much more sophisticated in how we treat images, much more suspicious of them, and don't accept them as quickly. Though in 1917, the Cottingley photos *were* debated, not everyone thought there were



Fairy Photos: Courtesy Elsie Wright & Frances Griffiths

*Among the fairies Sturridge rounded up were dancers, children and trapeze artists—all transformed into enchanted creatures by special FX magic.*



All Fairy Tale Photos: Copyright 1997 Paramount Pictures

Sturridge (center) was delighted by his young stars: "Florence Hoath and Elizabeth Earl brought curiosity, energy, charm and humor, exactly the qualities Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths had in real life."

fairies; there were many people who felt as Houdini did."

For their time, the fairies in the photos brought something to a society which was in desperate need of *anything*. Sturridge elaborates on this historical context in the film because of its importance and its connection to Doyle. "One of the great problems of the spiritualists [of that time] was that there were large numbers of people in this strange period of history, during the darkest part of the first World War and immediately after it, hungrily looking for some antidote to the enormous number of physical deaths they were seeing right before them, anything that suggested that death was not the end of life," Sturridge explains. "They found that the conventional churches' role was unsatisfactory in supplying this need and they began to look elsewhere. Spiritualism became an enormously powerful and popular movement. But finding a connection between spiritualism and science is what obsessed them. Because the girls used photography, i.e. a scientific act, this seemed to be finding the borderline between science and magic, and that's what excited them."

The 1996 *Gulliver's Travels* miniseries earned Sturridge an Emmy, and it was a great learning experience for him. "I came to *Gulliver's Travels* as a person who had never done a special effect in his life before, and I did this film where there were, I think, 437 of them," he recalls. "This is kind of a gluttonous education. Not so much with FX, but with our discovery that exposure, the act of a camera exposing the film, is no longer the end of the creation of the image the audience sees. There is so much that we can do to create pictures beyond the act of photography.

"For example, there's the opening sequence of *Fairy Tale*, when Houdini is hanging upside down above the crowd in London. If I had to do that scene five years ago, I wouldn't have been able to afford a crowd of more than 150 people or to shoot it in a wide shot; there would have been too many modern buildings and skyscrapers in the background. Now, I can take the same number of people—I think I had 120 extras in that scene—and duplicate them so they look like 1500 people. In the very wide shot of the opening scene, you're seeing 24 different pieces of photography stuck on top of each other. There were skyscrapers all around, but all those could be painted out and replaced with other buildings.

"We have access to a new palette in pictures, and that's the bit that has me excited. And, of course, that led to an interest in deliberately trying to do what the girls did. The girls presented a picture that was not only believable to the people who saw it but impossible to disprove. That was the great problem," Sturridge enthuses, "because in a sense it *wasn't* faked. They [the non-believers] expected it to be double exposure, and it turned out that it wasn't. And I wanted to use, if you like, my new experience to create a picture for today's audience that was completely believable. The film doesn't just let the audience follow a debate of what two children did 80 years ago, but it asks them to look at what they actually think themselves, what they believe, what they want to believe and *why* they want to believe it."

Creating and photographing fairies proved to be an enjoyable and interesting experience for Sturridge. "We are used to fairies that work in two dimensions. It's one of the most common images all over the world. If you sit a group of children down, as I did, and you ask them to draw a fairy, they all draw the same person. Say draw a spaceman, and they all draw a different one because everyone has different ideas about that. The fairy is completely shared, even in the most unlikely places, and I'm not just talking about upper-middle-class English girls," Sturridge says. "To make that figure something everybody would recognize and yet believe was moving through space and flying was the sort of challenge we sat down to work out."

With producers who loved the story—Wendy (*Forrest Gump*) Finerman and Bruce (*Braveheart*) Davey—behind the project, Sturridge had only to find a hook for himself. The director explains that he looked beyond flying fairies and famous men. In fact, with *Fairy Tale*, Sturridge "looked at people's need to believe things which, as a race, is one of our oldest hungers. It is the need to be able to conceive of an existence that operates beyond what we see. There are all sorts of forms from which this comes, from myth, religion, superstition, from, in this instance, magic and fairies. It's part of our yearning to believe that the universe is more complex than what we see with our own eyes."

Sturridge asked Davey about the possible participation of his partner in Icon Productions, Mel Gibson. "Gibson was asked if he wanted to be in the film, and he said 'yep' and that was it. He did it out of the goodness of his heart. I wanted to create a fairy tale; I just want the audience to go 'oh my God.' In every sense, I wanted to make something that both seriously looked at what a fairy tale was but that was also itself a fairy tale. Mel enabled me to do both things."

And for his part, the actor was happy to do the uncredited role. "I just show up. I'm just there. I don't even have any words to say," Gibson reveals before explaining his personal connection to the material. "One of the books my wife had when I first met her was about the little girls who photographed fairies out in the glen in 1917. They were amazing photos. Those kids got some serious credibility for their photos. People from Kodak analyzed the photos and said there was



Fate took a hand in Keitel's magical casting. The actor had already researched Houdini's life almost 20 years ago.

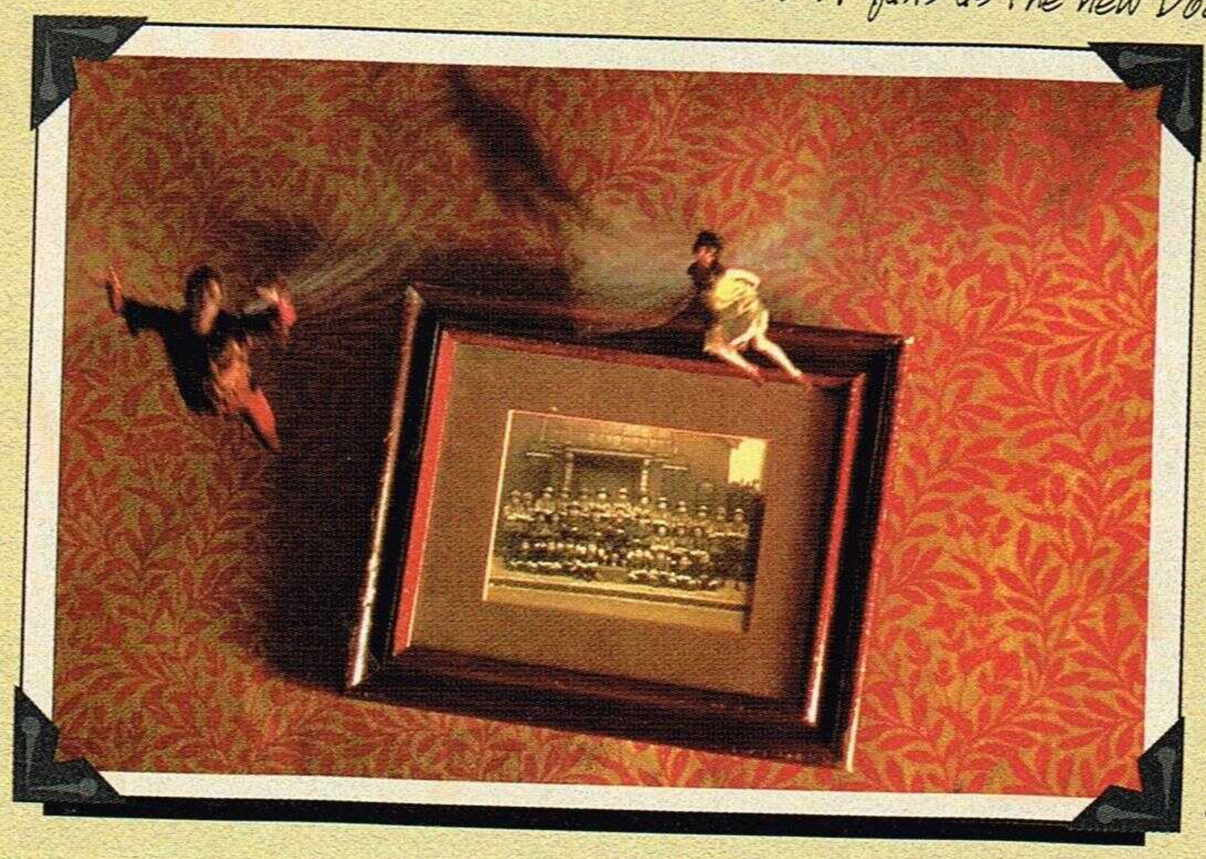
movement in the fairies' wings. How could the girls have done it with the equipment they had then? I just always thought it was an intriguing magic story."

In a marketplace crowded with big-budget, FX heavy sequels and cookie-cutter formula flicks, *Fairy Tale* is certainly different. Its differences have already made it a difficult movie to market. Still, Sturridge believes in this *Fairy Tale* scripted by Ernie Contreras (from a story by Albert Ash and Tom McLoughin). "Directors only make films about things that interest them. I try to create what I want to see in the cinema. When you make films, you make them from your own..." Sturridge pauses, looking for the right word, "soul. There's nowhere else. There's only you, it's only afterward when you can see if your hopes and fears and dreams and obsessions make sense to anyone else, but that's not what starts you off or sustains you while you're making it."



All Fairy Tale Actor Photos: Simon Mein

Elsie's parents are Polly (Phoebe Nicholls), who comes to believe, and the skeptical Arthur (Paul McGann, known to SF fans as the new Doctor Who).



"Here's a subject [the existence of fairies] that everybody assumed to be fantastical which, in this instance, was being argued as fact," Sturridge says.

While Sturridge "learned everything in terms of effects" on *Gulliver's Travels*, he has known for quite some time that there's more to a movie than pretty additions. "Effects are of very little *real* interest to an audience. The occasional minor sense of surprise can be achieved now and again in any film by the use of complicated technology, but we go to the cinema for *story*, to recognize ourselves, to be taken out of ourselves, to be surprised, to be moved, to feel. If you don't have something to say, you can have the largest effects budget in the universe and it won't do you any good at all.

"That isn't to say there isn't pleasure in watching that spaceship in *Independence Day*, which I love, but you have to [have a story]. When the first caveman sat by the first fire and said, 'Let me tell you what happened today,' if you're not hooked on a story, no amount of huffing and puffing, and banging and flying fairies will support you, not even for five minutes.

"I *think* I believe [the girls' story] in that I believe what Elsie and Frances said, which is they saw the fairies. I have children and I know that one of the things that's so important is that children are not so rigid in their compartmentalization of what they understand, sense or see. Children are not so concerned with what's true and what's not true, what's fantasy and what's real, what should happen and what shouldn't. They just suck information. That's part of the adventure of childhood."

The Cottingley photos are secondary to the actual story. They have been debated and disputed by experts for decades. The girls themselves eventually explained how the photos were faked using paper cut-outs. "When they finally talked about it, they were very old ladies; they told no one until they were in their mid-70s. They didn't agree entirely on the photographs. Broadly speaking, they both agreed that four of the five were faked because they were frustrated by the fact they couldn't get their parents to take them seriously. But neither of them ever changed the story that they *had* seen fairies."

After giants, Lilliputians and fairies, what's next for this fantasy filmmaker? "I've always got a next project," Sturridge laughs heartily. "One thing I'm talking seriously about at the moment is a book by a writer I've always loved, T.H. White, *The Sword in the Stone* [part of *The Once and Future King*, basis of the 1964 Disney animated film]. It's the story of a young King Arthur; which does have lots of effects in it," he laughs, "but it's also one of the great stories of all time, which is again about growing up, about a powerful, spiritual growth."

Sturridge is passionate about his stories. He believes that movies are an important part of our lives, of who we are, that they satisfy age-old needs and provide enlightenment. "Almost all films are about growth, about a central character beginning to learn who they really are. A film tends to take on the most important moments in someone's life, and you watch and go through that with them. When that person—Elizabeth Earl in *Fairy Tale* or James Stewart in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*—goes through that bit of their life, or a bit of their life teaches them who they really are, that's *why* we tell stories, and it's certainly one of the powerful reasons we go to cinema. You can see it in comic-strip form with Will Smith in *Independence Day*, or in agonizing detail in *The English Patient*, but the same underlying idea is there: Watching a character learn through action who they are."

And movies are also fairy tales, Sturridge agrees. "That's completely true. I mean, what are fairy tales—that actually is *exactly* right.

"Fairy tales were always a way of explaining what frightened us," he says. "What were the medieval fairy tales about? They were about deformed babies, about girls who disappeared in the woods, about people who got lost and never came back, and people told these stories to make these things less frightening. With the changeling, the fairies have taken the real baby and given one which is deformed; with the girl who has left the village and never came back, she has been taken by the fairies, so don't worry. They are ways of twisting our fears into something hopeful." That's Charles Sturridge's key belief in fairy tales, "That's what storytelling is: Making us feel more powerful rather than less powerful. It is a way of stopping us from being scared of the dark. It's a way of passing the time when the fire gets low and people start to get frightened. Somebody invariably says, 'Let me tell you a story.' "

# MIB



# ANIMATED AGENTS

By BILL FLORENCE



# Now, the Men in Black are protecting a cartoon Earth from animated aliens.

Columbia Pictures executives were so confident that *Men in Black* would be their biggest hit since *Ghostbusters,* they created an animated spin-off TV series nearly a year before the film was released. They weren't disappointed—*Men in Black* racked up $172 million at the box office by July 20, less than three weeks after hitting theaters.

"Very early on, we started hearing that this was going to be the hottest movie," says Jeff Kline, supervising producer of the *Men in Black* animated series, which airs Saturday mornings at 8:30 a.m. on the WB Network, beginning this month. "The internal buzz was very high."

That's when the film's co-producers, Amblin Entertainment's Walter F. Parkes and Laurie MacDonald (who serve as executive producers on the animated *Men in Black*) began to look at ways Columbia could keep the momentum going. "Columbia doesn't have the best library of franchise titles; it doesn't have a *Lethal Weapon* or a *Star Trek,*" Kline notes. "*Ghostbusters* is probably the biggest title in its library. So when it looked like *MiB* could become one of those [successful franchises], there was a focus company-wide to extend the brand. I read the movie script and agreed that the animated show was something we had to do."

Kline and executive producer Richard Raynis developed a concept for the series based closely on the movie. Then, they brought in story editor/producer Duane Capizzi to work their notes into a 40-page bible and head up the writing team. "I was first approached about the project in August 1996," says Capizzi. "When they pitched it to me as another property about aliens, I was going to turn it down. I felt the market was oversaturated with that kind of stuff. Then, I read the screenplay, and it floored me. I was intrigued by the characters and by the deadpan humor, even sicko humor, which is my forté. It had oodles of wild imagination. The script was so packed with ideas and so fresh that I became very excited about it."

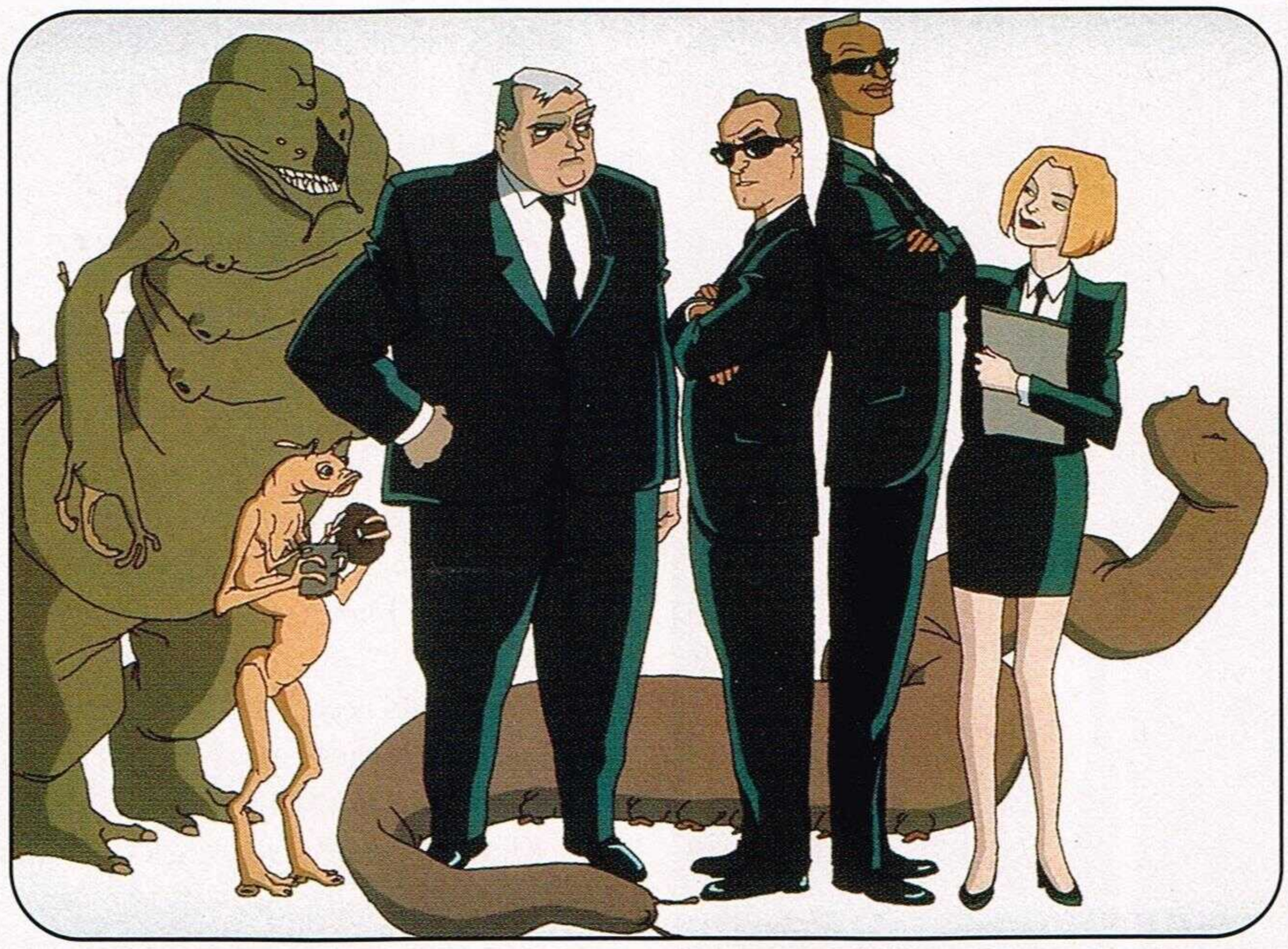
## Animated Agendas

Capizzi developed the series bible in September and October and got the go-ahead to pen a full season of 13 episodes in early 1997. Ed O'Ross, Keith Diamond, Jennifer Lien and Charles Napier were signed to voice the characters of K, J, L and Zed, respectively. "As principal photography on the movie was finishing and they saw what they had, they knew the material was just a natural for an animated series," says Capizzi.

That's a fair assessment, given the film's imaginative blend of laughs, scares, aliens and special FX. But the movie's poignant conclusion proved a dilemma for the TV series. In the movie, K retires from the MiB organization and returns to the life he left behind, minus his memories of chasing aliens. Dr. Laurel Weaver replaces K as J's new partner, L. The animated show's producers discussed whether the series should take off from this point, essentially becoming *Men & Women in Black*—or should a way be found to bring K back into the fold? Director Barry Sonnenfeld told STARLOG that a theatrical sequel *would* include K (Tommy Lee Jones). Ultimately, Kline and the other producers arrived at the same conclusion regarding Jones' character in the animated series.

"Forget the last five minutes of the movie as it exists, because our show picks up as if those five minutes *didn't* happen," Kline notes. "The movie presents us with a classic buddy relationship, where you have two guys with different personalities, the rookie and the veteran. You could do any cop story with this relationship. It's the core relationship of the movie, and it's the core relationship that people want to see every week. So, we had to make sure that we had both K and J and that their relationship was maintained. And because our series is about aliens and features bizarre technology, any story that feels a little tired suddenly has fresh life. That was the most appealing part of doing the *MiB* series, because we could service all the great requirements of the [cop show] genre and yet it felt new and fresh."

Capizzi elaborates on the decision to ignore the movie's resolution. "We considered getting K back by doing a sort of sequel to the movie, a transition episode that would explain how he's brought back into the MiB. I had a lot of that story worked out, but we ended up not using it in the pilot. Instead, we decided to just *ignore* the end of the movie and pick up with the status quo. So when our series opens, it's K and J on the MiB beat; J is the rookie and K, the senior partner. We decided this was cleaner than bogging down in a pilot episode and explaining everything. I think it was a good choice.



**These are the animated *Men in Black*: Zed (voiced by Charles Napier), K (Ed O'Ross), J (Keith Diamond) and L (Jennifer Lien).**

The K/J partnership preserved, Capizzi got to work exploring the nature of the characters' relationship. Primarily, he drew from the movie's first half, which is largely about J's introduction to an entirely new world. "It's one thing to make the decision to join MiB in the heat of inspiration, but now J wakes up every morning and has to face a Centauran-based, 37-hour work day filled with alien strangeness," Capizzi says. "Maybe it's not as easy as he thought. J is the audience's point-of-view. Even though he's cool, strong and heroic, he's still a rookie. Much of our series is about J coming to grips. It's also about his attempts to get to know his partner better. In several episodes, J learns a little more about K, but it's a tricky thing. We don't want to give away too much of K's mystery."

Their starting point established, Capizzi and Kline had some decisions to make regarding L. "She was an interesting problem," offers Capizzi. "We made her a part of the MiB organization, but she is not an agent. Her area of expertise is forensics, so she's in the lab. However, we play it where even though she's not officially an agent, she has all their capabilities. So, we find opportunities in most episodes to get her out on a case. But we were trying to avoid the 'pack mentality,' like *Scooby-Doo*, where it's the group of kids going everywhere. That becomes clumsy and awkward. We didn't want a pack of characters going around together. Leaving L back in the lab freed us up to mix and match combinations of characters. We have episodes featuring J and L, episodes featuring L with K, and so on."

J and L's flirtatious relationship in the film will surface in the series as well. "We're making sure there's time for L and J to interact so we can play that subtextual relationship, or at least attraction, between them," reveals Kline. "We like that part of the film. It will play under the surface in our series, but it's definitely there. It's a combination of mutual attraction and mutual competition. In a way, L wants to be like J. She wants to put on the suit and be out there. She appears to have a more convivial relationship with K because she does her homework and she's very bright. K is impressed by that in a way which makes J feel a little insecure. Whether or not children will get the romantic undercurrent, the older viewers will, and for us it's a great way to get a little more out of the characters."

## Cartoon Creatures

In other ways, too, the animated *MiB* aims to succeed on more than just a juvenile level. "We try to capture the movie's tone and scale in every episode," says Capizzi. "If anything, the series—while still as comedy-based as the movie—sometimes goes much darker. There are a handful of episodes on the dark side, with a dramatic thrust. When you're coming back to a set of characters on a weekly basis, you have to do something with them that's challenging. So, we run K and J through the mill. They get into some pretty difficult dilemmas.

"There are lots of monsters and aliens, both threatening and funny, and the heroes are very human yet bigger than life," Capizzi continues. "I'm approaching the show from the kids' point-of-view, because the 'cool factor' needs to be there and the action needs to be there. If not, kids will turn it off. But without question, *MiB* is also for the older market. The other producers and I are all character-driven and concept-driven when we approach stories, and I tend to write them more as little movies than as cartoons. There is a level of sophistication in *MiB* that I hope kids will like, but we're not necessarily writing for children."

Fans of the movie can look forward to appearances by Jeebs, the pawnshop owner, Frank the Pug, the Worm Guys and the Twins. Kline says working them all into the series has been a challenge. "Duane has done a great job balancing the show and bringing back the characters you want to see in ways that feel organic, not forced." Viewers will also meet U, a MiB agent who appears in a few episodes. "U is the Frank Burns of the organization, a suck-up who butts heads with J," Kline explains.

Other new characters are mostly villains. "People come back to TV for characters they love and characters they hate," says Kline. "So, we have a couple of villains who weren't in the movie," including the alien bounty hunter Buzzard (voiced by Sherman Howard); Alpha (David Warner), the original head of the MiB who went mad; and Forbus (Kurtwood Smith), a psychotic alien cab driver. The movie's Bugs will resurface



**The series preserves the movie's premise of rookie hero J learning all about alien law enforcement from old pro K.**

in one episode, in which Vincent D'Onofrio, who played the Edgar Bug in the film, will voice a new Bug character. Miguel Ferrer speaks for a nasty alien in the same episode.

Capizzi, a fan of Philip K. Dick, saw the series as an opportunity to emulate Dick's style. "I like speculative, strange, thought-provoking stories. As the series developed, we started to get more and more bizarre with our ideas. It all seemed to work, which was amazing. Just when we thought we were going too far for the network, they would call and say, 'We love it!' That gave me encouragement to keep on going. We've really got some wild stuff in this series," he says.

For example, in the pilot, J chases down an alien perpetrator, struggles with him, and finally shoots him. Unfortunately, the alien dies, and J discovers he's a marked man. K explains that the alien, a Skraaldian, is a member of a hive-mind race; seven billion aliens back on their home planet know what happened and now they're *all* out to get J.

"Originally, we were going to bring back the Bugs in the pilot, but we decided to save them for later," explains Capizzi. "The original screenplay played up the Bugs' hive mentality more than the movie did, so we used that. It's a concept that fascinates me. The whole episode is about how J commits this irreversible screw-up in his first week on the job. It's really hysterical. When J reports back to MiB that day, the word has gotten out because the Worm Guys are gossips and have spread it all over the place. People are walking up to J and giving him their condolences. He says, 'But I'm not dead yet!' He refuses to believe he's going to be killed, but reality soon sets in as the assassination attempts begin."

**"If there are real Men in Black, I hope they watch the series."**

In an episode featuring a rare excursion outside New York, J is sent to escort a criminal back from the West. When he gets there, he finds that handcuffs won't be necessary—the perpetrator in this case is a symbiont who must attach himself to another body in order to survive. Thus, J finds himself with a second head for most of the show. "It's a twisted version of *The Odd Couple/The Defiant Ones*, where halfway back J is stuck out in the desert," Capizzi explains. "He's on the run with the symbiont. They can't separate or the symbiont will die. They're being trailed by Buzzard, the alien bounty hunter. I thought he was a really cool concept until I found out *The X-Files* already has an alien bounty hunter. I guess there are only so many original ideas, but it's what you do with them that makes them unique."

Warner makes his appearance in "The Alpha Syndrome." Alpha preceded Zed as the MiB top dog and ultimately took a dark path, deciding to use alien technology and knowledge to his advantage. As Capizzi puts it, "He twisted his mind on some bad cosmic machinery and went mad. He went into deep space and we find out he spent the last 20 years traveling the cosmos, turning himself into a cosmic Frankenstein. The story deals with his return to Earth, and we find out he was a mentor to K. Warner did a terrific job playing the role. He's creepy. 'The Alpha Syndrome' is one of my favorite episodes."

Should WB renew the series for a second season, the writers may turn to Ed Solomon for ideas he couldn't fit into his screenplay. Says Kline, "We sat down with Ed once, after the movie was finished, but before we got into the nitty-gritty of the series. There were so many characters and ideas he had come up with but didn't use. Our hope is that we'll be able to use some of that stuff in the series. It's a potential treasure trove for us."

Although the blueprint for the TV show was the movie and not Lowell Cunningham's original comic book, Cunningham reads the scripts and offers comments. He visited during a recent recording session and handed out comics to the cast. "Lowell has been giving me the thumbs-up," says Capizzi. "He's enjoying the scripts, so I feel confident we're on the right track."

Some UFO buffs and conspiracy theorists believe in real-life Men in Black, based on accounts of such men mysteriously appearing at the scene of unusual incidents or UFO sightings. Duane Capizzi considers the idea briefly, then jokes, deadpan, "I'm convinced that the Men in Black are used car salesmen at the dealership across the street from my office."

Kline is inclined to remark wittily as well, but waxes serious. "Do I believe there's life out there? *Absolutely*. Do I believe it's a little silly of us to think we're alone and that we haven't been visited? Yes. It's egocentric to think we're the only ones in the universe. Whether my third-grade teacher was an alien or not, I'm not sure, but there were times when I definitely thought so."

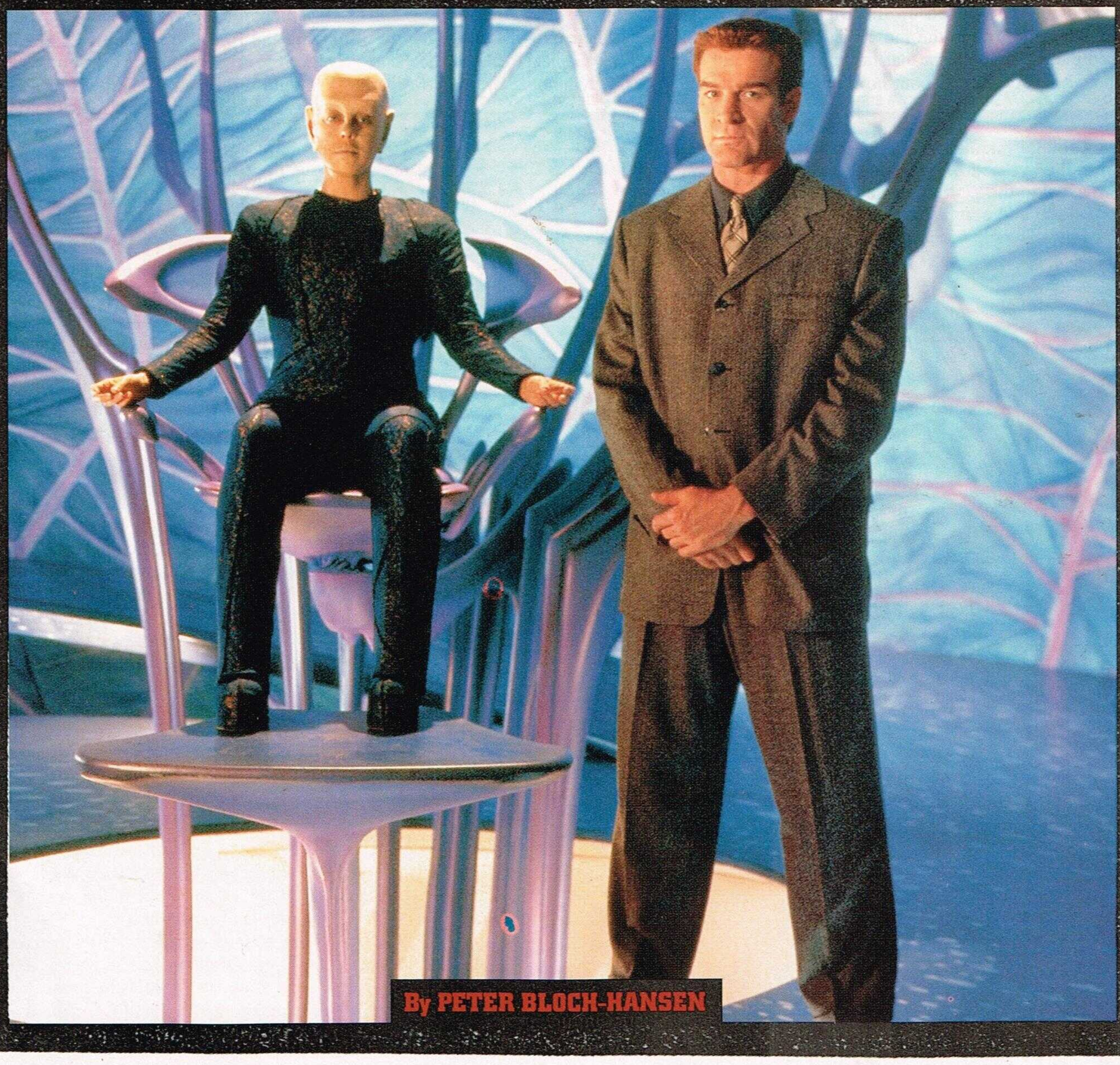
Then, tongue-in-cheek, Jeff Kline cannot help adding, "*If* there are real Men in Black out there, I hope they watch the series. It will be a fantastic recruiting film for the actual MiB organization."




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# GENE RODDENBERRY'S

# FINAL FRONTIER



By PETER BLOCH-HANSEN

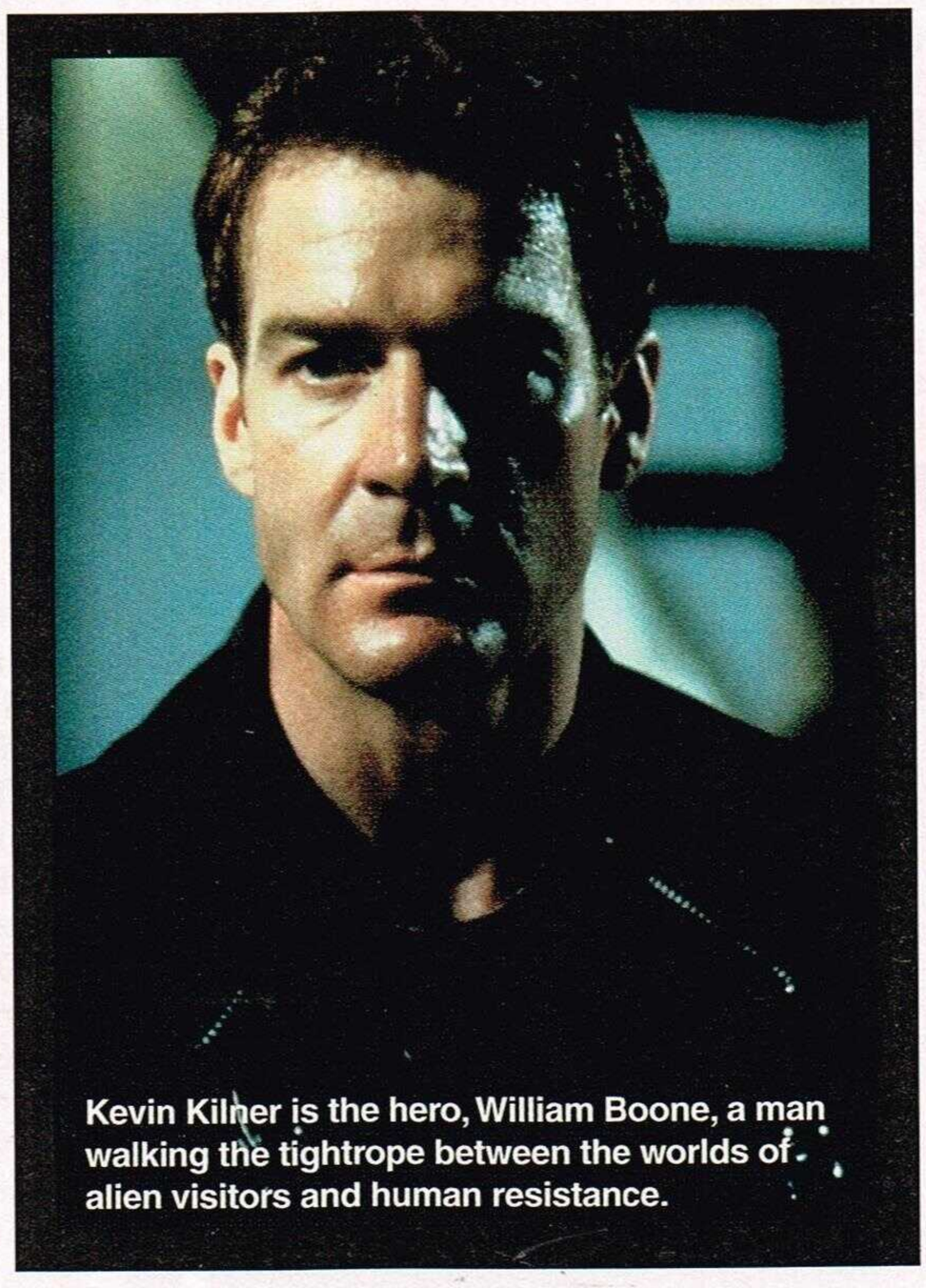
# At long last, it's time for *Earth: Final Conflict.*

As Majel Barrett Roddenberry quotes her late husband, her voice softens with affection: " 'No matter what the rewards for obedience or the punishment for noncompliance, there is always that part of humanity that will fight to the death for individual freedom, because fat and happy slavery is nonetheless slavery.' There's the whole theme for this show."

The show in question is *Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict*, now filming in Toronto under the stewardship of Atlantis Films and Tribune Entertainment. *Final Conflict*'s premise is that in 2008, 71 androgynous aliens called Taelons ("tay-lons") land on Earth. Dubbed "Companions" by human beings, they end war, famine, disease, poverty and, week by week, solve countless other human problems. Yet the Taelons themselves pose new enigmas for humanity, illustrated principally through ex-cop William Boone, who's chosen by Taelon leader Da'an ("duh-on") as her personal liaison officer. Boone, played by Kevin (*Almost Perfect*) Kilner, is assisted by Marine pilot Lili Marquette (*Highlander*'s Lisa Howard). After Boone discovers that the aliens are behind his wife's death, Lili recruits him into a secret resistance group headed by computer tycoon Jonathan Doors (*TekWar*'s David Hemblen).

Forced now to balance between alien and human agendas, Boone and Lili are scrutinized by FBI Special Agent Ronald Sandoval (Von Flores of *TekWar*) and assisted by a young, underground computer hacker called Augur (Richard Chevolleau). Leni (*Screamers*) Parker, under extensive prosthetic makeup and padded costume, portrays the mysterious Da'an. Roddenberry has a recurring role as Dr. Belman, a surgeon and confidante of Resistance leader Doors.

Originally titled *Battleground Earth*, the one-hour syndicated series was conceived by Gene Roddenberry in 1976 as part of a three-film deal with 20th Century Fox, but shelved when Paramount involved Roddenberry in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. "With Gene it was, 'out of sight, out of mind,' " Majel Roddenberry reveals. "I've always had the habit of running around after Gene, gathering up his papers in boxes. There were hundreds of boxes. I was sorting things, and I came across this thing again. We had the [pilot] script ready, though we had to change some things that really didn't make sense after 20 years. I took it all to various agencies, but settled on CAA. They introduced me to David Kirschner."



Kevin Kilner is the hero, William Boone, a man walking the tightrope between the worlds of alien visitors and human resistance.

Kirschner—the former head of Hanna-Barbera who helped create two disparate film series, *An American Tail* and *Child's Play*—shares executive producer status with Roddenberry. He is very happy with the collaboration. "My agents called and said they were handling the Roddenberry estate. I was one of six producers to meet with Majel. The others were major television players, but she and I got along very well. To show her my idea of what the series could be, I put together a piece [of videotape] taking from Steven Spielberg, Bob Zemeckis, *'V'* and other SF. She loved it. I went away with a host of things that she thought was the best [of Roddenberry's material]. There were just pages and pages of notes on everything. Maybe it would be a mimeographed piece of paper that he had scribbled on. I would take a magnifying glass and try to understand every word he was saying. I felt like Indiana Jones, going through that box. It excited me to think that for 30 years, Gene Roddenberry had taken us to the far reaches of outer space and now he was bringing those far-off concepts and designs right here to Earth."

## On the Battleground

Among the creative team, Roddenberry is the one principally responsible for seeing that the series remains faithful to her husband's intent. "We're going to use the same subjects that Gene always dealt with," she enthuses, "prejudice, environmental responsibility, intolerance, but mainly, the supremacy of the human spirit. We came across story ideas he had written down. Some of them would just be one-liners you had to flesh out, but one was 16 pages, ready to go into script. Some of them were in pencil, some were hard to read. Some were outdated, like one about a motorcycle gang, so we had to update them." In addition, new stories are being written for the series.

Once established in Canada, the

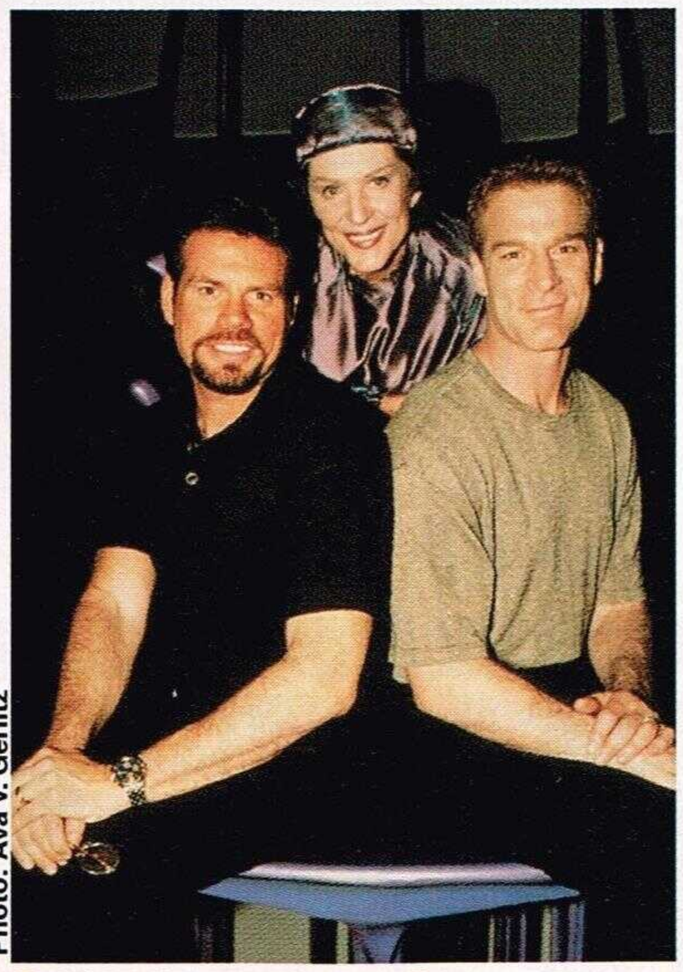


Photo: Ava V. Gerlitz

**Behind the scenes on *Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict*, executive producers David Kirschner and Majel Barrett Roddenberry pause with Kilner.**



Photo: Ava V. Gerlitz

**The most enigmatic of aliens, Da'an (Leni Parker) is the Companion whose beat is America.**

produ-cers, through funding partner Atlantis Films, brought Stephen (*TekWar*) Roloff on in February to design and produce the series. Shooting began in June after what Roloff calls an "arduous prep period."

Both Roddenberry and Kirschner credit Roloff for much of the creativity involved in fleshing out and executing the series' original conception. "To me," opines Roloff, "the distinction of Gene Roddenberry is that he said that in 250 years, we will become a more noble race, having resolved racism, sexism, famine and disease and our technology will be taking us out into the universe. But in my mind, there is a big question about whether we'll survive the next period of time. There is a lot of fear of the future, and the approaching millennium adds to that. That's what's driving science fiction right now.

"People want a vision of hope—that we *are* going to arrive at the state Gene envisioned. But the question is, how do we get there? We have to get through some painful transformations on the way. Chaos theory says you can't get from one state to another without going through a state of chaos. The aliens' arrival certainly introduces that."

## In the Balance

Alien arrivals are a common theme in science fiction. In the classic *Twilight Zone* episode "To Serve Man," based on a Damon Knight story, seemingly beneficent aliens arrive to harvest humans for food, an idea picked up later in the *"V"* TV saga. More recently, *Dark Skies* offered hostile aliens working secretly to subvert mankind. Films like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *E.T.*, *Cocoon* and *Contact* feature benign, super-advanced aliens, while *Invaders from Mars*, *War of the Worlds*, *Independence Day* and a host of others present aliens frankly bent on human extermination. According to those responsible, *Earth: Final Conflict* will steer a middle ground.

"This is best seen as a companion to the *Star Trek* shows," Roloff asserts. "Perhaps it can be seen as a prequel. We have a humanity torn by the arrival of these aliens. Our hero, Boone, who walks a knife edge between the human and alien worlds, is the show's moral center. He has to look at the situations this creates and decide what the moral choice is. I think that's what Roddenberry represents. Captain Kirk and the others in the Federation were always making moral choices. Through them, we address many issues surrounding the evolution of the human spirit. Those are the stories that people need to have told now. I think that's very 'Roddenberrian.'

"Da'an's principles are flawless in terms of the basic philosophies that relate to the unified whole, the collective unconscious. She thinks that individuality, which we worship, can be very destructive spiritually. But that doesn't make the Taelons the Borg. They have a spiritual unity which is alluded to in all of our world's religions. She's constantly questioning Boone about human frailties. So, it's not just about the aliens curing disease and solving problems. In 'Miracle,' the episode we're shooting now [penned by veteran *Trek* writer D.C. Fontana], Da'an says to Boone that on this planet, we're willing to kill each other over differences in belief. Boone asks if it's different on their planet, and



**Boone's assistant is Captain Lili Marquette (Lisa Howard), the Marine pilot who recruits him into the Resistance.**

Design & Layout: Mike Stewart



The series, conceived by Gene Roddenberry in 1976, has been updated and new characters added. Still, it focuses on the "moral choices" Boone must make in dealing with humans and Taelons.

Da'an replies that it's different on *every* other planet.

"It's not a simplistic action-adventure based on military occupation. The aliens are not here simply to consume us or conquer us. There are other agendas, some dark and some light, and the human response is dark and light. So what the aliens appear to be is *not* what they are."

Executive producer Kirschner echoes the thought. "It isn't about creepy-crawlies that climb inside your head and change your life," he insists. "The Taelons have been exploring the universe, but now they've spotted the most violent species they've ever come across, violent even to their own species. They've never seen that before. Da'an is amazed at the contradiction of a race creating such destruction and [something like] classical music. The Taelons are not capable of violence, but they are capable of subverting and manipulating."

But while hinting at their ambiguities, neither Roloff nor Kirschner will say what the aliens really want with humans. Says Roloff, "Many things they do are little experiments that have dark and light sides." Kirschner adds, "in the pilot, Boone's wife says, 'Why can't you just trust? Look at the wonderful things the Companions have done for us,' and he says, 'I can't trust something when I don't understand what their motivation is.' There are some weeks when he sees that what they're doing is truly incredible for humanity, and he must question if he's doing the right thing. Maybe Jonathan Doors is a megalomaniac, and maybe this is all just about power.

"There is another story called 'Avatar,' about Jeffrey Pike. He's basically Hannibal Lecter and the first person to get a cyber-viral implant [CVI] from the aliens. He escapes from jail to assassinate Da'an at a conference with religious leaders from all over the world. Why? Because he has been able to use his CVI to understand the Taelon language and he knows they're here for another purpose. The episode opens on him in jail. He has tied some of his hair to a stick and painted on the wall in his own blood this bizarre mural that speaks of truth and the liar."

## With the Aliens

So, while keeping their aliens as mysterious as possible, the producing team have a plan. "We would love to encourage speculation on the Net," says Roloff. "We know on a story level *exactly* where we're going. We know what the Taelons' long-term objectives are. On any series, you must start optimistically, thinking about a five-year span."

"We have a huge chart on the wall in the office," adds Kirschner, grinning.

No less ambiguous than the aliens' agenda is their gender. "Our intent," explains Roloff, "was to go right down the middle to an asexual look, so you have no idea how they replicate, or whether they even have sexuality. If a Taelon bonds with you, it will make the necessary changes in itself to accommodate that relationship. If you are male, for example, a femininity would come over it. They're almost like earthworms, as Majel says. We have a technique that deepens Leni Parker's voice without making it sound too treated. So hopefully, by the time we're all done, you will be asking, 'Is that a man or a woman playing that role?' "

Casting women as androgynous aliens is almost a Roddenberry tradition, pioneered when Meg Wyllie played the leader of the alien Talosian race in the original series pilot, "The Cage." "People were concerned about the asexuality, or bisexuality, of our aliens, but we explained the Roddenberry world and they accepted it," reveals Kirschner. "We will cast men if they look right, and have the right voice for electronic alteration."

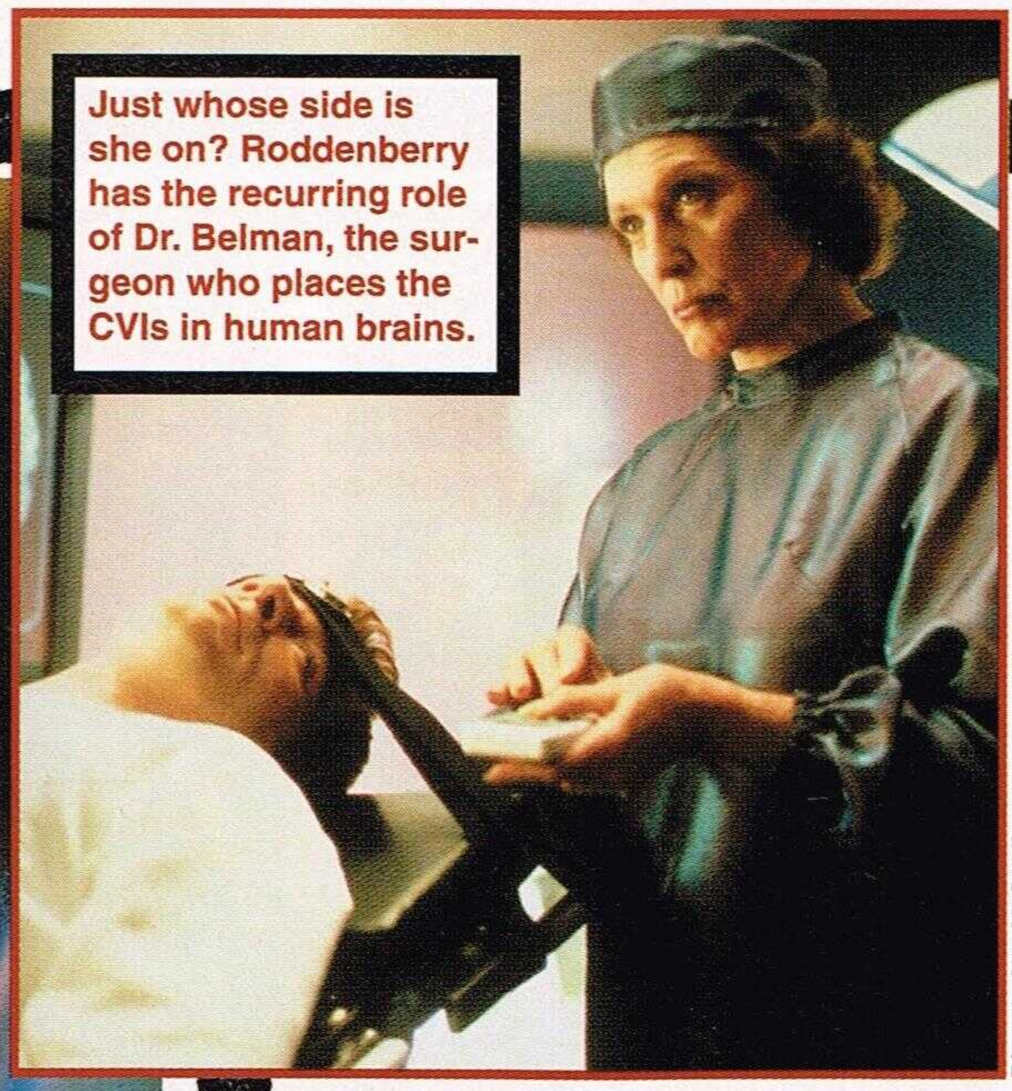
"Da'an observes that we have this method of reproduction," Roddenberry points out, "that seems to require very agitated co-operative effort between two individuals, and these two sexes really don't get along together. She thinks it's really ridiculous—why don't we do it the way the rest of the universe does it? I'm beginning to love our aliens very much. The reason they are unisexual is because



All Photos: Copyright 1997 Tribune Entertainment

Photo: Ava V. Gerlitz

FBI Special Agent Ronald Sandoval (Von Flores) wears a scrill, an alien creature which has merged with his nervous system and can be used as a weapon.



Just whose side is she on? Roddenberry has the recurring role of Dr. Belman, the surgeon who places the CVIs in human brains.

Photo: Ava V. Gerlitz

Gene always wanted to add homosexual characters. He felt this was controversial and no one was dealing with it. He kept putting it into all his projects, but it never really got all the way through. So, I thought, why don't we have somebody who can change gender, so I called it Dan/Dana. From that they called him Da'an."

After fleshing out their aliens conceptually, the more technical task of working out how they would look fell to veteran designer Roloff. The show's budget, in the neighborhood of $1 million-plus per episode, demanded certain economies. "We had to be lean and mean," Roloff discloses. "That was part of the early philosophy, in terms of realizing the show. I had to make a very distinctive mark in certain key areas—the aliens, their architecture and technologies—and back away in most others. The show is really about the fusion of alien and human worlds.

"When Gene first wrote it 20 years ago, the aliens were a little bit nastier, but that was before *'V.'* I loved the idea that the Taelons are a spiritually advanced and elegant race, with very highly advanced bio-technical skills. The question was how to reflect that in their physical appearance. I looked back to Egyptian pharaohs, Buddhist sculptures, images that invoke grace, intelligence, wisdom and compassion. I tried to find that face in an alien. So, we had Leni Parker, who had a long face to begin with, and we added to the top of her cranium and gave her long, sanguine ears and high, arcing eyebrow lines. Hopefully, that look will evoke Roswell. But I saw a documentary of bioluminescent jellyfish, and I got to thinking, if we could see *into* the creatures, see their organs pulsating aesthetically and gracefully, it would suggest beings living at a higher evolutionary level.

"I'm a fan of Arthur C. Clarke's theory of evolution," Roloff continues. "The first phase is learning to replace our body parts. The second is to replace them with better parts than the originals. The penultimate phase is when we're fully bioengineered, and the ultimate one is when we no longer require physical bodies at all. The Taelons map a skin over themselves, not to deceive us, but because they realize this makes us more comfortable with them. Da'an wears a covering which, when she is in her natural, bioluminescent, transparent state, you still see. It's like looking through a screen door into a lit kitchen.

"Neil Williamson at Calibre Digital Pictures, which also does the FX for *Sinbad*, incorporated motion-capture equipment into the prosthetic headpiece to help composite the 3-D CGI imagery. It has to be perfectly composited or it will look like it's sitting on top of the actor's skin instead of being inside it. The result is that when an alien experiences emotion, she 'blushes.' That is, the skin goes translucent, like a jellyfish. You see through the skin tone, to colored organs with lights pulsing."

Roloff's training as a civil engineer shows up in one other method used to suggest the aliens' technological superiority. "I wanted to suggest that Taelons design their buildings genetically," he explains. "They design genetic material like a seed that will grow into the desired shape of the building. So, I used organic principles in the architecture, which is an extension of modern architectural theories as we move towards intelligent buildings; microfibers for example, that depending on stress conditions, can heighten or relax the tension on the beams." This approach is evident in Roloff's design for Da'an's house in Washington, D.C. The large set has pale, gently rounded walls over 28 feet high, designed to glow softly with incised patterns suggesting the veins of leaves. Inside it, long, graceful ramps curve around the space, suspended from oddly

**"It isn't about creepy-crawlies that climb inside your head and change your life."**

arched supports. At the focal point, a large, complex chair rises from the floor, as if it had grown there, like a strange-looking plant. This is in sharp contrast to the cramped Flat Planet Cafe set, with its low ceiling, harsh, geometric lines, garish colors and walls lined with big-screen TV and virtual sex booths.

## Through the Conflict

For classic *Trek* fans, *Earth: Final Conflict* holds a few surprise references. Dr. Belman's office desk sports a photograph of Gene Roddenberry, and Roloff hints that William Boone may in fact be an ancestor of James Kirk. Kirschner invites fans to watch for what he calls "crackerjack surprises."

Despite an evident affection for Roddenberry and his work, changes have been made. One is in the character of Augur, invented by the producers. Augur is a youthful computer hacker who occasionally assists Boone with information and other services only his skills can provide. However, the Internet barely existed in 1976, and today's PCs, let alone the computers of 2008, did not exist at all. "Gene had a character that was great with mechanical devices," Kirschner confesses, "a *Mission: Impossible* kind of concept."

Another character change moved Dr. Belman from male to female so Majel Roddenberry, no stranger to medical roles, could play the part. "Dr. Belman is an intelligent woman but not without fun," the actress says proudly, her posture regal. "She's a go-between, between Jonathan Doors, head of the Resistance, and the rest of the world. She's his confidante, and although we'll probably never hit on it, not squarely anyway, almost certainly she's his mistress. She's a woman over 40, responsible and just enjoying herself. There are almost no depictions of women over 40 in commanding situations. So as long as I have anything to say about it, there will be strong women in the show. Belman's not just a doctor who stands around poking large needles into people's brains."

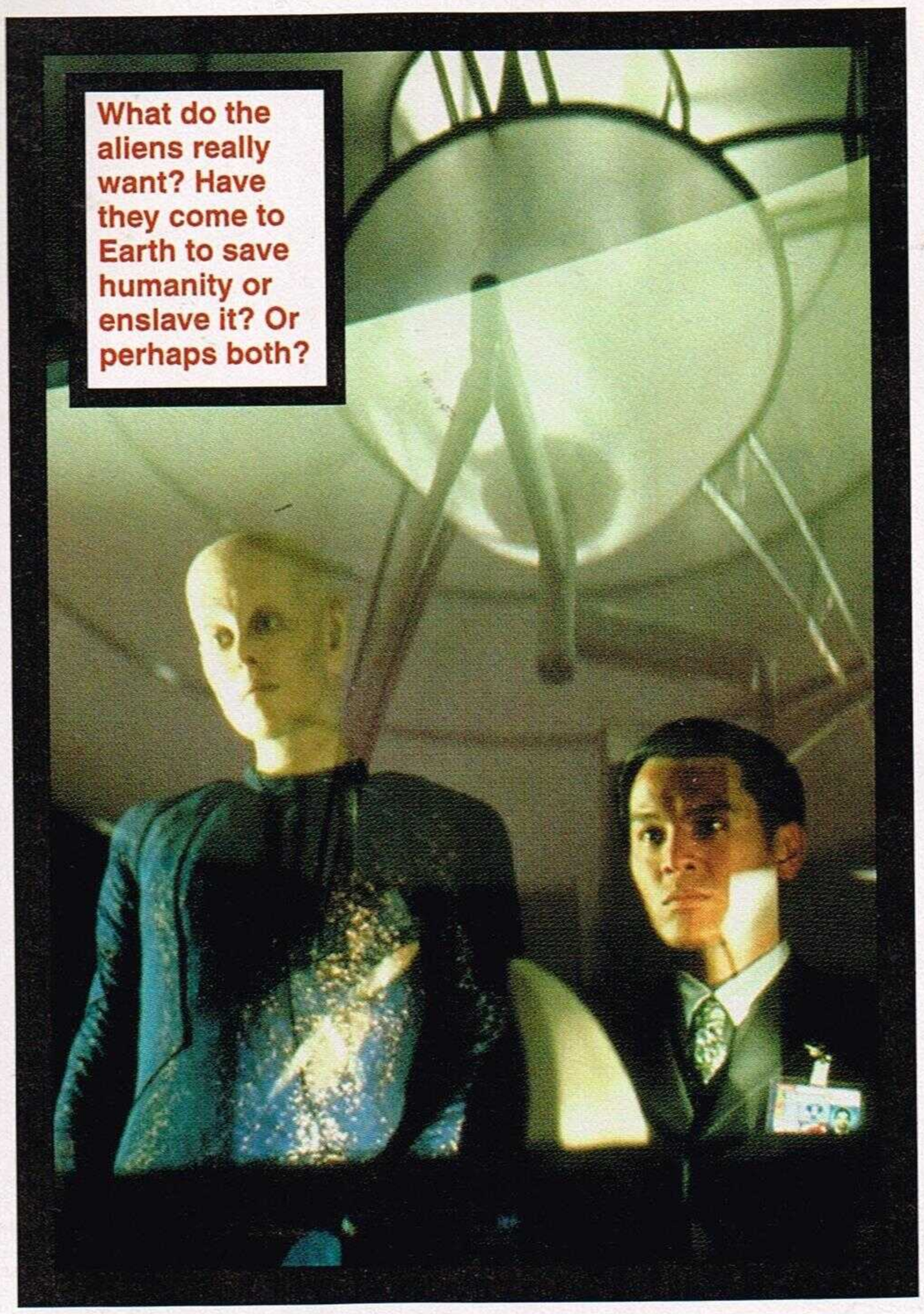
The needles in question are those used by Dr. Belman to insert alien CVIs into the brains of people selected by the Taelons to receive them. The CVIs greatly enhance mental abilities, but also program their recipients to exclusively serve Taelon interests. Boone and Sandoval wear them, though Dr. Belman has secretly altered Boone's to preserve his freedom of action. The CVI also enables its wearer to control an alien creature called a scrill. Scrill are flat, translucent, squid-like, symbiotic creatures which wrap around a person's arm and merge with his nervous system. They can produce powerful energy blasts for defense. Such devices, however, are not Roddenberry's main concern.

"We want to start exploring our characters right from the first," she asserts. "We'll see how these things the aliens are doing affect each of our individuals so you can get to know them. We'll change the gender of a character for an actor we like for the role. We've done that a lot. We cast whoever we think will work. [When casting the lead, Boone] they wanted to get somebody with a name, but I said, 'We've got a name. Let's get an actor. We're going to emphasize story and character. We need actors.' They were considering some young pretty-boys, but I said, 'Gene named him William Boone, and he was the head writer on *Have Gun Will Travel*, so you know he was thinking of the Paladin character [played by Richard Boone].' We needed somebody solid, with authority who could act. Kevin came first, and then everyone else fit into the family. If you want one word that characterizes this production, it's *passion*."

Despite the constant travel, and the daunting prospect of facing Canadian winters, California resident Roddenberry clearly relishes her role as executive producer on a series she still considers her late husband's. "I had never worked behind the camera before," she points out, smiling broadly. "I like it. I like it more than in front of the camera. I have so much to gain from my position now. I've never had a better time in my life. And I get to act on top of it. I do love acting.

"I'm in incessant meetings. In many of them, I'm a fly on the wall, learning. I'm not a writer, and I have many obligations in other areas. I look at the stories and make sure they have an uplifting, positive point-of-view. Each time a subject comes up, I keep asking, 'Is this the way Gene would have done it?' We have the image that Gene Roddenberry laid out. It's much more difficult to achieve that than just to say, 'This is the way I would do it.' I lean on David a lot."

For all their creativity and effort, the producers all know that *Earth: Final Conflict* will be met by audiences both skeptical and enthusiastic, looking for what they consider distinctive hallmarks of one man: Gene Roddenberry. Majel Barrett Roddenberry states firmly, "The market has bought Gene. They didn't buy the story; they didn't know the story. They didn't buy stars; they didn't know them either. They bought *Gene* and what Gene Roddenberry stands for, and that's what we're putting into this TV show, and that is exactly what we are going to give them."



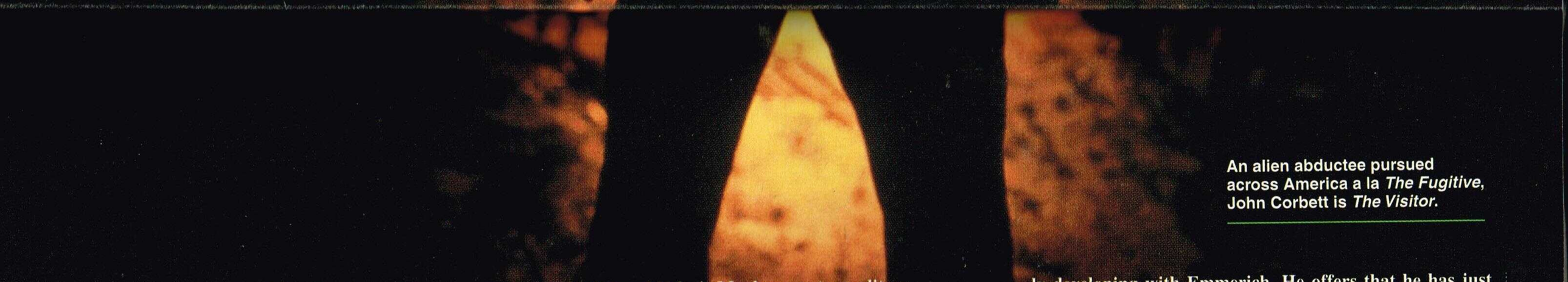
What do the aliens really want? Have they come to Earth to save humanity or enslave it? Or perhaps both?

Photo: Ava V. Gorlitz

# Visiting Hour

*ID4* creators Dean Devlin & Roland Emmerich humanize alien encounters, hosting *The Visitor*.

By MARC SHAPIRO



An alien abductee pursued across America a la *The Fugitive*, John Corbett is *The Visitor*.

In case you haven't noticed, despite the proliferation of genre entries, science fiction on television has become a hard sell. And Dean Devlin thinks he knows the reason why. "It has become a harder sell because the studios only tend to greenlight duplicates of something successful they've already seen," says the candid producer/writer who, with *Universal Soldier, StarGate*, *Independence Day* and *Godzilla* among his credits, obviously knows something about the genre. "That's why you've had so many *X-Files* rip-offs. But SF fans are the toughest fans to please because they have the highest standards. If they feel you're doing something cynically, they will just walk away from you."

Devlin admits to not being a big advocate of the small screen in any genre. "You've got to be a masochist to get involved in it. Working on television can be a constant headache. You're always taking it in the shorts."

Given that attitude, it may be a surprise to find that Devlin and his partner, director Roland Emmerich, are immersed in science fiction *and* television with *The Visitor,* an SF-chase adventure involving aliens, abduction, covert organizations and unusual powers. "We simply wanted to tell this story," says Devlin in defense of his seeming contradiction, "and it was a story we did not want to tell in two hours. It was a story we wanted to tell over the course of many hours. The concept was so rich and complicated that we felt television was the *only* way to do it."

*The Visitor* is Adam MacArthur, a man abducted by aliens in the year 1947. He manages, years later, to escape from the aliens and returns to present-day Earth. Then, he discovers that not only has he not aged a day since his abduction, but that he has also acquired some unusual powers. MacArthur's existence soon comes to the attention of the secret NSA government agency which sends out its top agent, Colonel James Vise, to bring in the man who may have the power to alter the course of human destiny. The series stars John (*Northern Exposure*) Corbett as MacArthur and Steven (*Lifeforce*) Railsback as Colonel Vise. Devlin and Emmerich, as producer/creators, have recruited executive producer John Masius and former *X-Files* associates Vivian and Valerie Mayhew as story editors.

According to Devlin, *The Visitor* began with a discussion he had with Emmerich during a mixing session on *Independence Day*. "We were watching a big destruction scene and talking about how many people were going to be angry with us for making the aliens so bad. The more we talked, the more we thought it would be interesting to explore the flipside of the *Independence Day* mythology."

Emmerich and Devlin wrote a pilot script in December 1996. Fox took the bait and the pilot, directed by rock-video veteran Kevin Kerslake, was shot in Utah earlier this year. "There's a lot of whiz-bang and a lot of special FX but, for the most part, *The Visitor* contains a very dense, thick storyline," offers Devlin. "The show is about heart, human potential and the type of human being we would all like to be."

The normally even-tempered Devlin takes an unexpected move to the dark side in regards to *Stargate SG-1,* the TV series based on *StarGate*. "The TV series is a horrible ripoff of Roland's and my movie. We hate it! We absolutely *hate* it! It's absolutely the worst thing that could have happened to us."

For all his wrath on the subject, Devlin acknowledges that the TV show producers did put out an olive branch and "initially we were interested in being involved in the series." But the congenial overture, according to Devlin, quickly changed. "We were told, 'Well, we'll let you write the pilot script and, if we like it, maybe we'll let you do two or three shows.' I told them, 'You want us to audition for a show that we *created*?' We passed on any involvement and, once we passed, we could do nothing to stop them from doing whatever they wanted with the show."

Devlin has seen the *Stargate SG-1* pilot, which debuted on Showtime to enormous ratings (for a cable network), and he isn't happy. "They just ruined *StarGate*!" he exclaims. "They've taken characters that we loved and stories that we loved and turned it into this cheesy, silly, horrible TV show."

As if to defuse his growing frustration, Devlin momentarily turns his attention to the other projects he's currently developing with Emmerich. He offers that he has just received the first draft of *Fantastic Voyage* "and it's great." He confirms that the epic *Supertanker* is still in active development. But he's quick to derail rumors of a certain rabidly discussed sequel. "At the moment, there are no plans for doing a sequel to *Independence Day*," he declares. "Unlike *StarGate*, which we initially intended to do as three movies, *Independence Day* was always planned as being *one* movie. Obviously, when you have a movie that does as well as *Independence Day* did, there's a financial reason for doing a sequel, and so we're taking the talk of a sequel to the film very seriously.

"But our attitude is, unless we can come up with something as original and fresh as what James Cameron did with *ALIENS*, there's no reason for us to just throw something out there. If we do a sequel, it has to be something special. We'll do it *if* we can do it right. But otherwise, no."

Devlin, likewise, feels their involvement in the long-rumored *ALIEN vs. Predator* movie is on hold. "For the time being, it is dead. We wanted to do it if they had not decided to do *ALIEN: Resurrection,* and now we're all just waiting around to see how that film does. If it really works, the studio is going to want to continue the franchise with just the Alien. If that were to happen, then we won't be involved at all."

Devlin returns the conversation to *The Visitor* and the fact that Fox has given the show a choice Friday 8 p.m. slot. "But, ultimately, we felt we could live with wherever they put us. Our feeling is that if people tune in, they're going to like what they see and they will come back. But whether or not people tune in...you never know."

But Dean Devlin feels—and Emmerich agrees—that *The Visitor* will draw a massive crowd. "And the reason I feel that," says Devlin, "is that this is a TV show that we're not seeing right now. There has been a tendency with science-fiction TV of late to try and be dark and shocking and ugly. Roland and I said, 'Man! That's *not* what we want to watch!' We felt it was time to watch something that would make us feel good about being human beings."

Photo: Michael Tighe/Copyright 1997 Fox Broadcasting Company

Design & Layout: Mike Stewart

His recent projects have called upon Patrick Stewart to inhabit characters who are "a little darker and more complex" than heroic Jean-Luc Picard.

# Role Reversal

## *Patrick Stewart sharpens his career, etching characters with a darker edge.*

**By LYNNE STEPHENS**

It's 1997, and Patrick Stewart's career blazes forth from a truism that might have been gleaned from such *Star Trek* episodes as "Mirror, Mirror" and "Crossover": Good guys make the world safe for democracy, but bad guys make an *impression*.

Many of his current choices for film and stage roles transport him out of the rigid, do-gooder Starfleet mold and into the roles of grey-shaded protagonists or arrogant, capricious villains, demonstrating his ability to portray a wide range of characters. "As you know," says Stewart, "during my first seven or eight years working in Hollywood, I acquired a reputation largely based on another character, who was the epitome of uprightness, honor, niceness and so forth." So when a variety of opportunities came knocking, each calling for Stewart to inhabit "someone a little darker and more complex," he was eager to respond.

*Conspiracy Theory,* this summer's Richard Donner film, interested Stewart principally due to its writing. "It's the script that appealed to me because it's in the line of movies that I had always loved, like *The Ipcress File*, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, *Three Days of the Condor*—movies that are thrillers but where you're *never* quite certain who the good guys or bad guys are," he explains. "People seem to be lying all the time, so in this movie you never quite know who's who until the last few frames.

"It has a very intriguing plot. New York taxi driver Mel Gibson is really 'out there,' " Stewart says. "And he is obsessed with a whole range of what sound like wacko conspiracy theories. He tries to persuade a young woman of the Justice Department, played by Julia Roberts, of some of his crazy theories. Unfortunately, one of his theories proves to be true, and he comes to the attention of Dr. Jonas, whom I play. We don't know, for a long time, whether the really bad, crazy, dangerous guy is Mel or me. And in the middle is poor Julia, who doesn't know whom to trust. It's a non-stop roller-coaster thriller and the two of them are brilliant in it."

Stewart enjoyed his working partnership with Donner, Gibson and Roberts, and notes that both Donner and Gibson strongly believed in having fun. "The set was always a very lively place to be. Mel has more energy than any other individual I've ever known. And I thought *I* was high-energy!"

### With Evil Intent

*Masterminds*, an early autumn release, stars Stewart as Rafe Bentley, a security expert hired to install a world-class security system into a private school for the children of fabulously wealthy parents. On the morning Bentley finishes the system's installation, he and his team take over the school and make hostages of the students in order to obtain huge cash ransoms. "Because he's the only one who understands the security system, Bentley's incredibly well-prepared," says Stewart, whose character's preparations include not only a complex computer system within the school, but also an escape tunnel. "It's underneath the school grounds to provide him with an escape. Unknown to him, a young man who had a bad reputation [with school administrators] has been forced to bring his sister to school that day. He's still on the premises when the hostage-taking happens, but no one knows he's there.

"So, the story is how a rather disaffected, unhappy teenager foils the plan of a criminal mastermind. It's a battle of wits between this hi-tech security criminal and a teenager. It's really fun, and it ends with a big action sequence where we chase one another on all-terrain vehicles through the tunnels and sewers underneath the city."

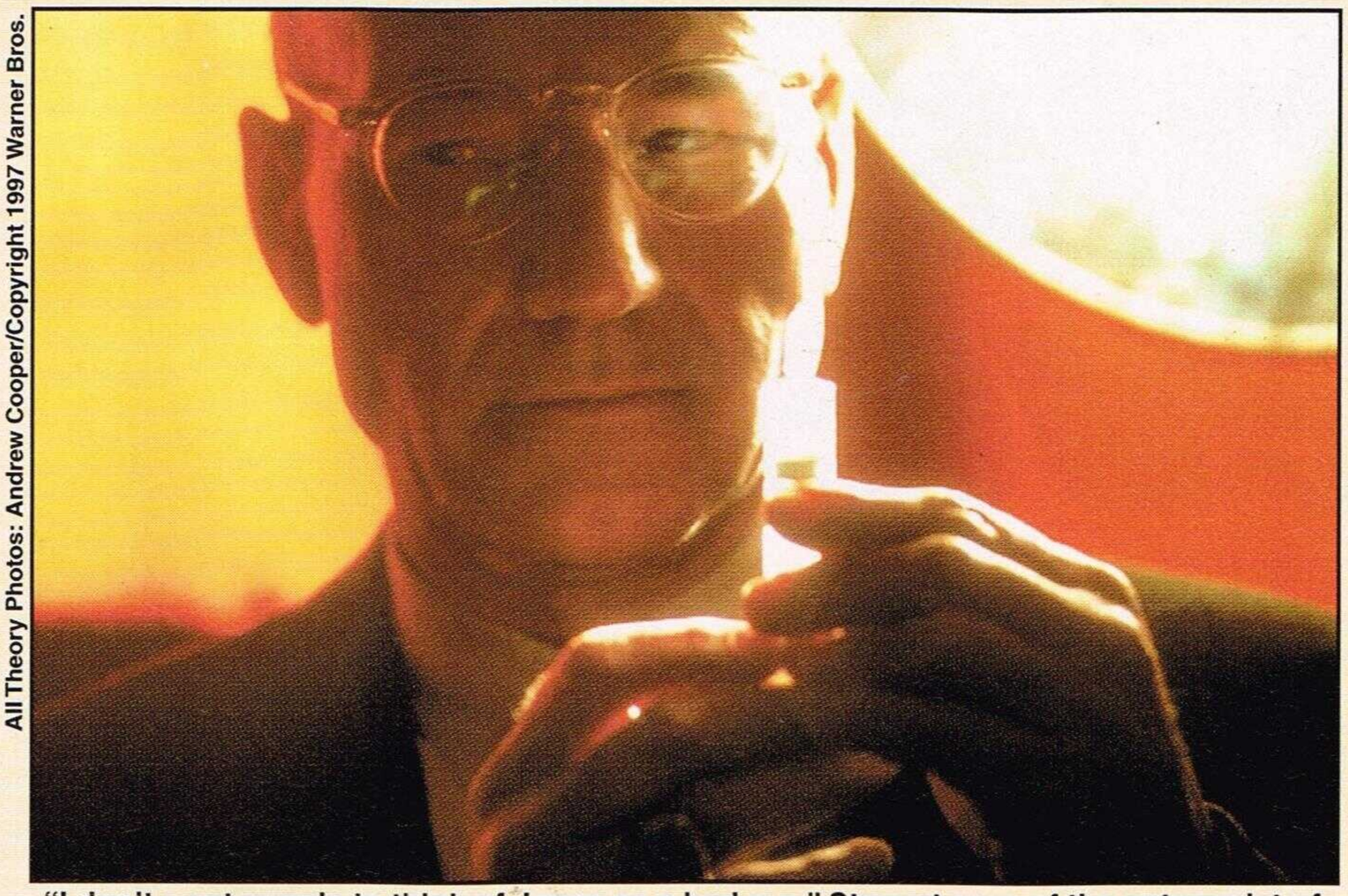
Playing the bad guy Bentley "was... just...grand!" enthuses Stewart. "This script was sent to me by someone whom I knew socially through a friend. Usually, most unsolicited scripts I get just go straight back to my agent, but this was somebody I knew, so it sat on my coffee table in New York, where I was working for a few weeks.

"Finally, I felt so bad that one afternoon I sat down [to read it], and by the bottom of the first page, I was hooked. I called [writer/producer] Floyd Byars right away and said, 'I really like this script, tell me, what's the deal?' Well, there was no deal; it was just him and a script," Stewart says.

In the typical Hollywood deal-making scenario, an actor of Stewart's caliber doesn't review a script unless someone, typically an agent, has already received provisional commitments from a studio and/or key creative individuals to move forward into possible production. However, in the case of *Masterminds* (then known as *Action Boy* and later as *Smart Alec)*, Byars had pre-arranged nothing. "Not a thing," Stewart states. "So, Floyd said, 'Can I go ahead and start to move it?' and I said, 'Yes,' never thinking for one moment that anything would come of it, because 99 times out of 100, movies under those circumstances *don't* get made. But here we are. So, I feel a real gratification that at last, something came about because an actor and a writer said, 'Let's try to do this.' "

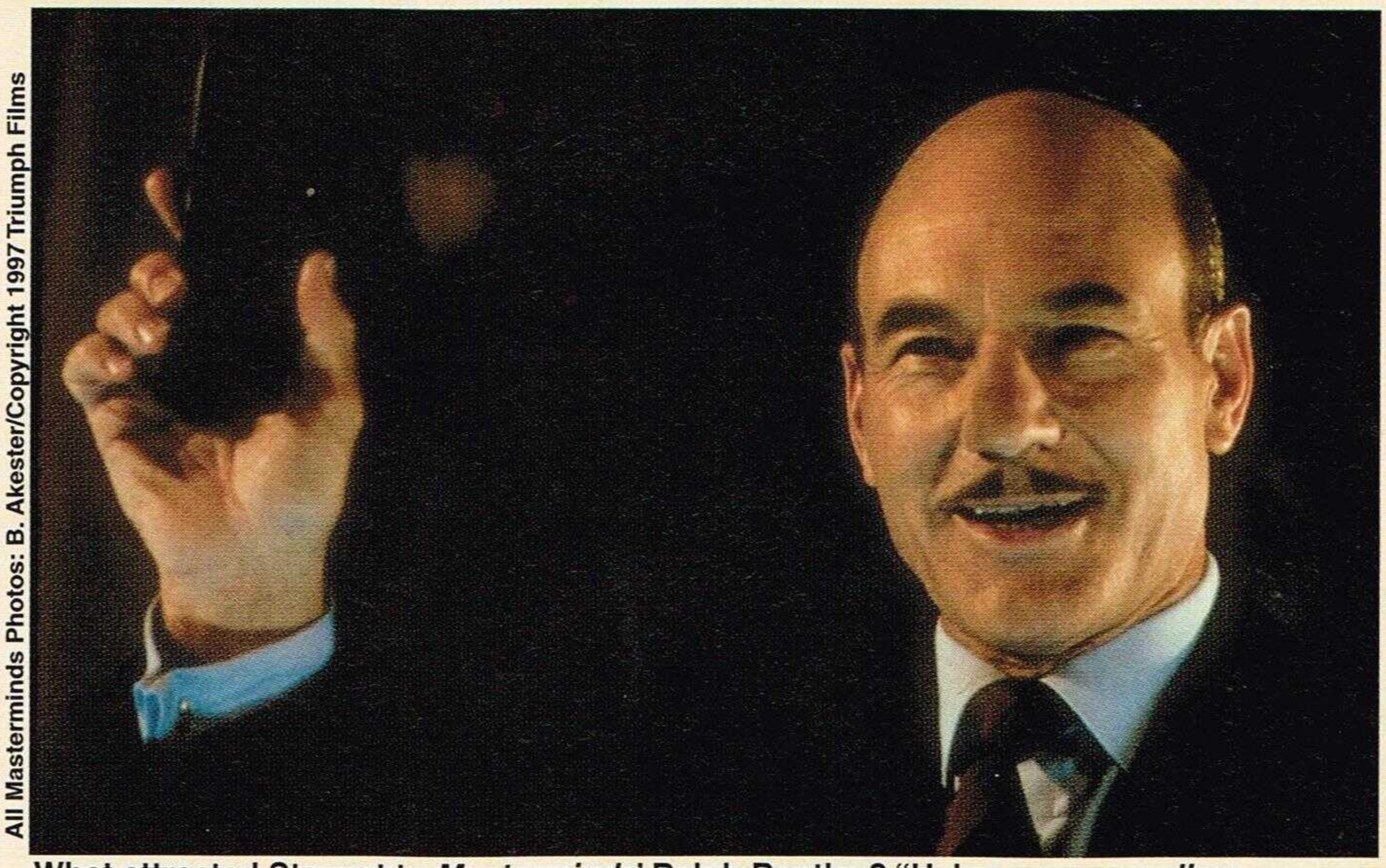


**After facing a legion of teens in *Masterminds*, Stewart will pursue the great white whale, sailing off for USA Network's *Moby Dick* mini-series.**



All Theory Photos: Andrew Cooper/Copyright 1997 Warner Bros.

**"I don't want people to think of Jonas as a bad guy," Stewart says of the antagonist of *Conspiracy Theory*.**



All Masterminds Photos: B. Akester/Copyright 1997 Triumph Films

**What attracted Stewart to *Masterminds*' Ralph Bentley? "He's so *creepy*, *slimy*, *pompous* and *self-confident*," he says.**

During the time it took to puzzle together the production, Stewart's character rolled through various nationalities. "The character that I originally read was called Dore, and he was German, and then for a while he became American. But I had just played an American role, and I was going to play another one, so I said, 'You know, why don't we just make this guy British?' " recalls the actor. "And as he was already a pretty obnoxious character, I said, 'I know how to make him *really* obnoxious. I can have a lot of fun with him being snooty about Americans.' So, that's the way it went.

"Oh, and we also had a lot of fun trying to invent a name for him," Stewart laughs. "I recall saying, 'We've got to find a name that's English, but which is *so* English it has to be phony.' It's obviously not his real name, and at one point I suggested that we call him Rolls Bentley or Bentley Windsor. Anyway, we finally ended up with Rafe Bentley.

"I had a lot of fun with him because he really is so obnoxious; he's so *creepy*, *slimy*, *pompous* and *self-confident*," says Stewart. "His self-confidence is part of his charm. He believes that he will get away with this heist of the century."

Stewart heartily agrees that the most captivating villains don't perceive themselves as villainous. "Not at all! No, Bentley feels totally justified in doing this kidnapping because some people irritated him; they *upset* him, so he's just getting his own back.

"The other thing that appealed to me about this movie was that I saw the potential for this to become a true family movie," Stewart says. "The script was articulate and intelligent; it wasn't stupid and oh my, you wouldn't believe how *many* stupid scripts I get! It was witty and took a novel view of the situation. I loved the idea that the hero was a teenager. I thought, and we all hope, that young people will identify with the character of Ozzie, played marvelously by Vincent Kartheiser."

In *Masterminds* and *Conspiracy Theory*, "I've now played two bad guys back-to-back, but I don't want people to think of Jonas as a *bad* guy because you never really know he's..." Stewart pauses. "The writer said, 'In this movie, we have good guys, and we have "good" bad guys.' "

This fall, Stewart will disengage from moviemaking to return to theater, playing the title role in *Othello* at The Shakespeare Theatre of Washington, D.C. from November 11 through January 4. As with many intriguing matches between player and play, this opportunity came about through a serendipitous chance encounter. In this particular case, it was a casual chat between Stewart and a longtime acquaintance, The Shakespeare Theatre's artistic director, Michael Kahn.

Phoning from an airport, Stewart told Kahn that he wanted to perform the role of Othello supported by an entirely African-American cast. "Kahn said, 'I'll do it,' right there on the phone," Stewart recalls. "It's a somewhat unusual, not to say controversial, idea for the production, but Michael said, 'That's for us.' "

## With Dark Concern

Stewart's run of august personages continues in DreamWorks SKG's first animated feature, *Prince of Egypt* (a 1998 release), where he voices pharaoh Seti. Stewart will be heard along with British actors Helen Mirren and Ralph Fiennes and non-Brit Val Kilmer. Fiennes and Kilmer "play the two boys, Ramses and Moses," Stewart says. "Of course, I haven't come face-to-face with any of them."

With most animated features, each actor records his lines independently of all other actors. Stewart found the isolation only slightly disconcerting. "I've done this before—a major character in the animated film *Pagemaster*. And again, I did all that on my own, although one of the other voices was Whoopi Goldberg. Given that I know Whoopi, I had a good idea how that would be.

"I recorded my first part of *Prince of Egypt* last October, but I keep going back to do lines here and there. It looks extraordinary. It's a beautiful film. The design and style of it, the way it is drawn, is unlike *any* animated movie I've seen before," he says. "It has a—I don't know how to describe it—a flair and elegance that looks more like art than animation."

Completed but in release limbo is *Let It Be Me* in which the actor dances with Leslie Caron (and which he discussed, along with *Star Trek: First Contact*, in issue #233).

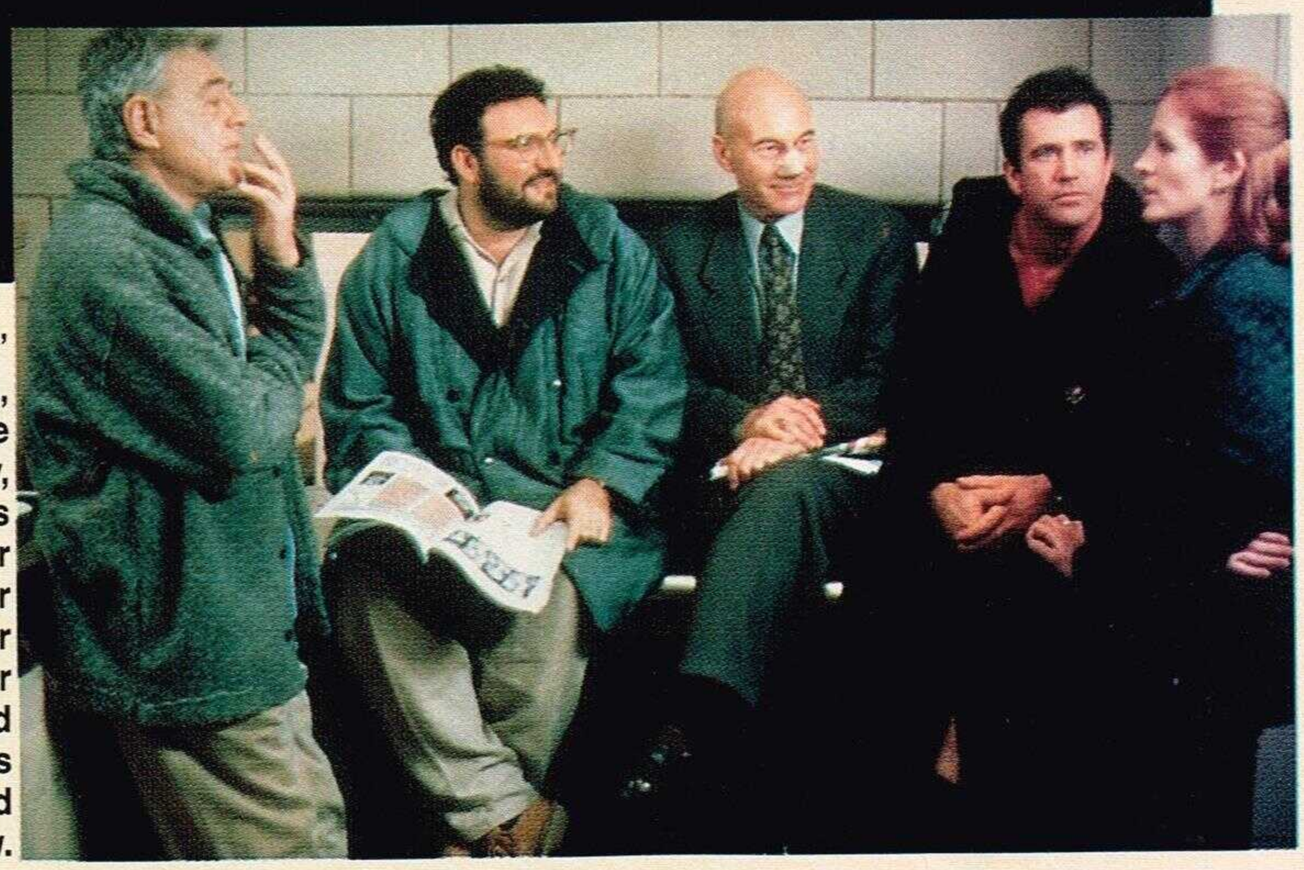
Audiences will find Stewart in *Dad Savage*, slated for American release in February. *Dad Savage* represents Stewart's first piece of British work since he came to Hollywood. "It's a small, independent work," the actor explains, "very much in the style of modern British movies like *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*. It's a revenge movie, the story of a man who is a tulip grower in Lancashire, one of the strangest parts of England. Lancashire has a totally flat landscape.

"It's about how two young men, employees, try to steal a lot of money from him, and his revenge on them. And what makes this



First Contact Photo: Copyright 1996 Paramount Pictures Design & Layout: Mike Stewart

Defeating the Borg has gained Stewart a three-year chance to develop other movies. And he will do so, emphasizing, "This is not a vanity deal."



**"We don't know," Stewart explains, "whether the really bad, crazy, dangerous guy is Mel Gibson or me." Director Richard Donner (left), producer Joel Silver and Julia Roberts have it figured out by now.**

story fascinating is its structure. It is told in a series of increasingly rapid flashbacks and flashforwards. It's way back, way forward, less back, less forward, then—bam—you're suddenly in real time. It's a novel construction. This movie is just five brilliant English actors and *me*. The old boy, the old guy. It was shot on location in Lincolnshire and in Twickenham Studios in London, and I loved it."

Stewart also delighted in performing the leading role of another unique film, which should also debut early in 1998. *Safe House* takes place in the Hollywood Hills. "It follows a man," Stewart explains, "who is obsessed with the idea that a retired admiral, now running for the presidency, is going to try to kill him. Therefore, he has surrounded himself with the most advanced home security system that an individual can own, as well as all kinds of weaponry and armaments. His family doesn't believe him, because this poor man is in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, which in his case is developing very rapidly. As this threat, which is actually very real, gets closer, he becomes less and less able to deal with it."

Stewart found the part a tremendous challenge. "It's the most intense film I've ever been in. Not only that, but in this film my character is on screen for most of the movie. There's one scene which I think you would call a relaxing scene, and the rest of it is at a high emotional level all the time.

"I *loved* the role," he says. "It's the best film role I've had. Again, it was an outstanding script. It was a very small, low-budget movie, almost entirely filmed in the director's own house. He had written the script around the geography of his own home. I remember when I first went to talk to him, having read the script, it was strange because it was like walking into the movie when you walked into his house."

Preparing for the part required research on Alzheimer's, including "reading books, watching videos, and talking—we had a doctor who was advising us very closely. And through the kindness of some of this doctor's patients, I talked with people who were really quite ill," Stewart states quietly. "And I think without a doubt they were the most important and helpful aspects of my research. They were very kind and generous to me in that respect.

"I did say to the producers afterwards, 'You know, in offering me this role you've taken away my peace of mind forever,' because it is a most brutal and cruel disease. And I'm delighted to see that, since I've finished the movie, there seems to have been some major advances in the development of drugs that can slow down this process.

"*Safe House* is a thriller; it's meant to keep you on the edge of your seat. My co-star is Kimberly Williams, a wonderful and beautiful young actress. This is *not* a romantic movie, I should tell you. It's not one of those movies where a 55-year-old guy is going out with a 19-year-old—I've seen too many of those," he says wryly.

It's then safe to imagine that May/December romances will not be core ingredients of Stewart's own film projects out of Paramount. His three-year development deal with the studio includes nurturing projects "for film, for television—all kinds of projects," Stewart emphasizes. "I want to look at *everything*! I told the studio, 'This is not a vanity deal.' " Stewart will instead be on the lookout for outstanding stories in which his participation might include acting, but may also focus on directing or producing.

Stewart will, of course, also cross Paramount's gates to reunite with his colleagues in the new *Next Generation* film, being scripted by Michael Piller for a projected spring filming start.

But before Patrick Stewart can even think of donning Starfleet togs again, he must first do epic battle with the great white whale in the USA Network's mini-series version of Herman Melville's classic *Moby Dick*. One of the requirements for playing Captain Ahab included relocating for several weeks to Melbourne, Australia. One could imagine the actor going slightly stir-crazy during the 16-hour air journey, but he demurs. "Qantas, like British Airways, always carries a really fantastic selection of 50 or 60 movies, and there's always stuff I want to see, so I catch up on movies. I saw two coming over and I'll probably see two or three when I go back [to finish the filming]. And I sleep, and I work a little. And I *always* have my Game Boy with me—it never leaves my side, so I can always play my little video games."



# SUPER TROOPER

## WITH HI-TECH WEAPON IN HAND, CASPER VAN DIEN PREPARES TO GO BUG-HUNTING.

By MARC SHAPIRO

MAYBE it's the four hours of sleep a night he has been getting since *Starship Troopers* began filming. Or maybe it's the very real dedication to military duty coursing through his veins. Whatever the reason, chatting with actor Casper Van Dien is like talking to a pinball between bumpers.

"I'm Johnny Rico!" yells the 27-year-old actor. "This is cool! This is wow! And, oh yeah, *I'm* Johnny Rico!"

Van Dien is waxing enthusiastic during a mid-morning conversation outside the cavernous studio where *Starship Troopers*' director Paul Verhoeven is prepping some major bug battles amid realistic alien caverns. It is here that Van Dien, as gung-ho soldier Rico, will spend the next four weeks doing imaginary battle with giant nasties—which will be added later in post-production by Phil Tippett and his FX team.

Van Dien, like most of *Starship Troopers*' regulars, read Robert A. Heinlein's book in his youth and, given his military family upbringing, thought, "Wow! This is great!" Consequently, he was delighted years later by the prospect of playing a brash bug-buster in the long-smoldering film adaptation of Heinlein's novel (due next month).

"My first reaction when they sent me the script was, 'Wow! I remember this!' I saw this as an incredible opportunity and I wanted to do everything I could to get this role. So, I redid my resumé and highlighted the fact that I had gone to military school and played football in high school. Then, I put together a tape resumé, showing clips of my more military and athletic activities, and had Van Halen music playing in the background. I really played up the fact that Verhoeven and I are both Dutch. It was a very corn-ball thing to do, but I wanted to prove to Verhoeven that I was *really* Johnny Rico. Fortunately, Verhoeven was able to look past the corn-ball stuff and cast me as Johnny Rico!"

Rico's odyssey from mercenary soldier to hard-boiled military loyalist plays central to the storyline in *Starship Troopers*. Upon graduating from school, Rico volunteers for the Mobile Infantry to do



All Troopers Photos: Copyright 1997 Sony Pictures Entertainment, Co.

As Johnny Rico, Casper Van Dien leads the troopers against the killer bugs. Soon, they'll be known as Rico's Roughnecks.



All Live-Action Troopers Photos: Stephen Vaughan

Director Paul Verhoeven demonstrates the fine points of alien dissection to his *Starship Troopers* lead, Van Dien.

the two years of Federal Service required to become a citizen. His motivation is not patriotic, but rather a self-centered attempt to win the heart of his girl friend Carmen Ibanez (Denise Richards) who has, likewise, signed on to become a starship D-pilot. In boot camp, Rico rises to squad leader. A training death pushes him to the brink of resignation, but the alien-bug destruction of his home town, family and friends ultimately turns him back into Earth's ultimate fighting machine.

"In a way, Rico's story is the classic war story," the actor says. "He joins for less-than-altruistic reasons; in this case because of a woman. Then, something happens and he realizes that the military way of life is what he *really* believes in. At that point, he becomes red, white and blue military."

## Infantry Novice

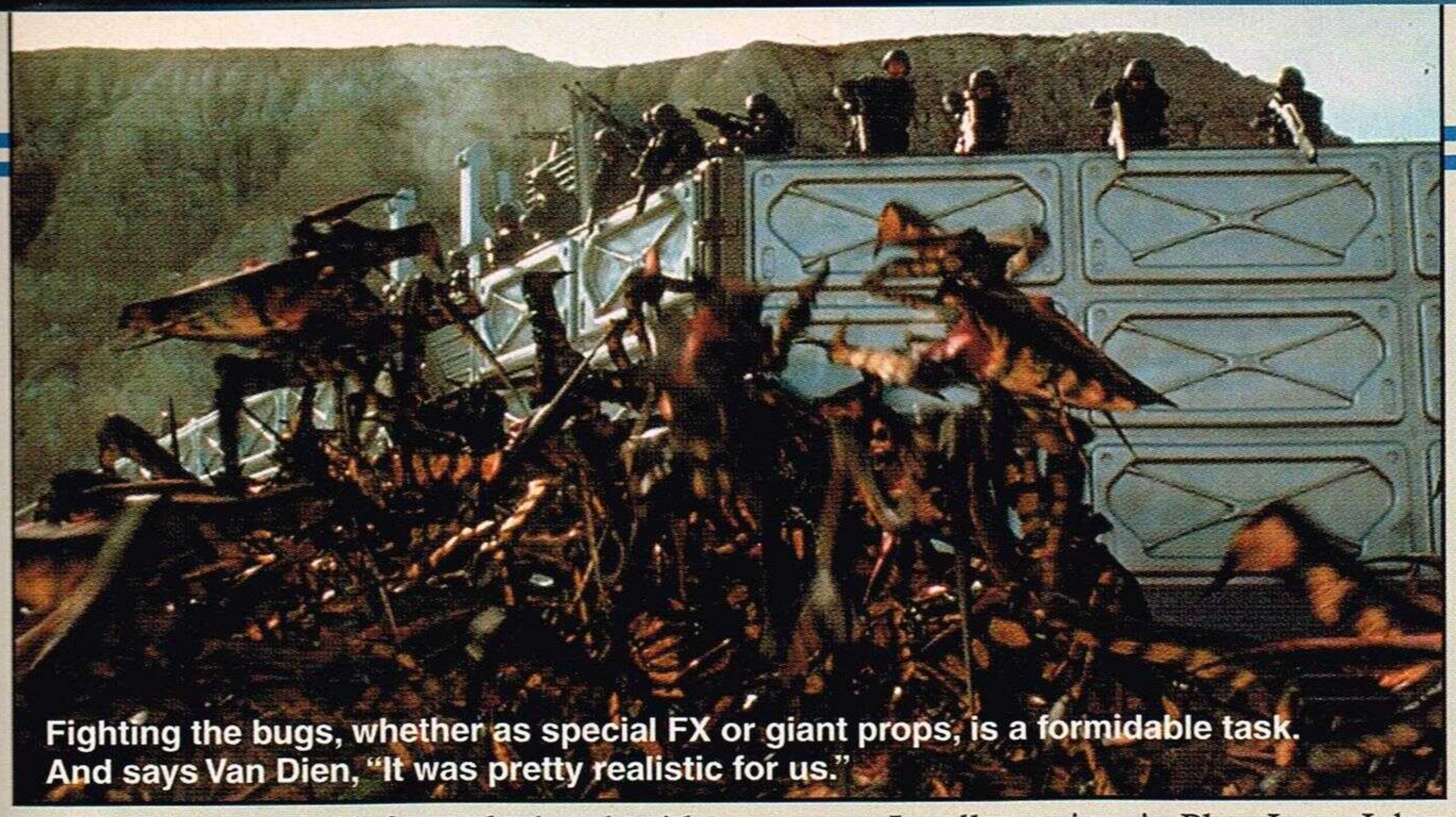
Once he landed the role, Van Dien went back to the source material for one more read and found that much had changed in *Troopers*' translation to the screen. "The Skinnies are not in the movie," he notes of the alien race whose conflict precedes the big bug war. "The power suits are missing and Dizzy, a guy in the book, has been turned into a girl and my love interest in the movie. In fact, the movie is more about the love story and *a lot* more about the bugs than the book is. But there's a good chunk of the book and the essence of the book in the movie."

And, in a surprising bit of candor, Van Dien offers that he's glad most of the novel's more fascist attitudes have made it to the movie. "I love the politics of Heinlein's story. I like the idea that if you do something wrong in Heinlein's world, society does not just wring its hands about your awful childhood, but just takes you out in the middle of the street and whips you. I've never believed in the concept of juvenile delinquents. I like the idea that in Heinlein's book, society does not really tolerate excuses and that you have to serve two years in the military to become a citizen."



"The movie is a lot more about the bugs than the book is," Van Dien says.

Design & Layout: Mike Stewart



Fighting the bugs, whether as special FX or giant props, is a formidable task. And says Van Dien, "It was pretty realistic for us."

Van Dien was fresh from playing the title character in *James Dean: Race With Destiny*, and in a non-buffed, lean and lanky physical state when he signed on with *Starship Troopers*. True to his word, the actor got in military shape. "I figured Rico to be this hard-charging soldier who was never out of shape and so I started working out every day, doing karate and aerobics. I got totally ripped for the first time in my life."

And it was a good thing, because the very Method-oriented Verhoeven, in order to get his actors combat-ready, set up an 11-day boot camp in the wilds of Casper, Wyoming, under the direction of military advisor Captain Dale Dye, just prior to lensing.

"We stayed out in the desert in these little tents called hooches," Van Dien chuckles. "We did a lot of marching and maneuvers, ran around in uniforms firing guns and throwing knives. I had gone through all of that stuff before in military school. I loved camping and besides, I was Johnny Rico! So, it was a lot of fun for me, but *not* for everybody else. The first night we were out there, two feet of snow fell on the ground. It just poured down on us. The next night we were hit by 80 mile-per-hour winds that ripped the hooches in half.

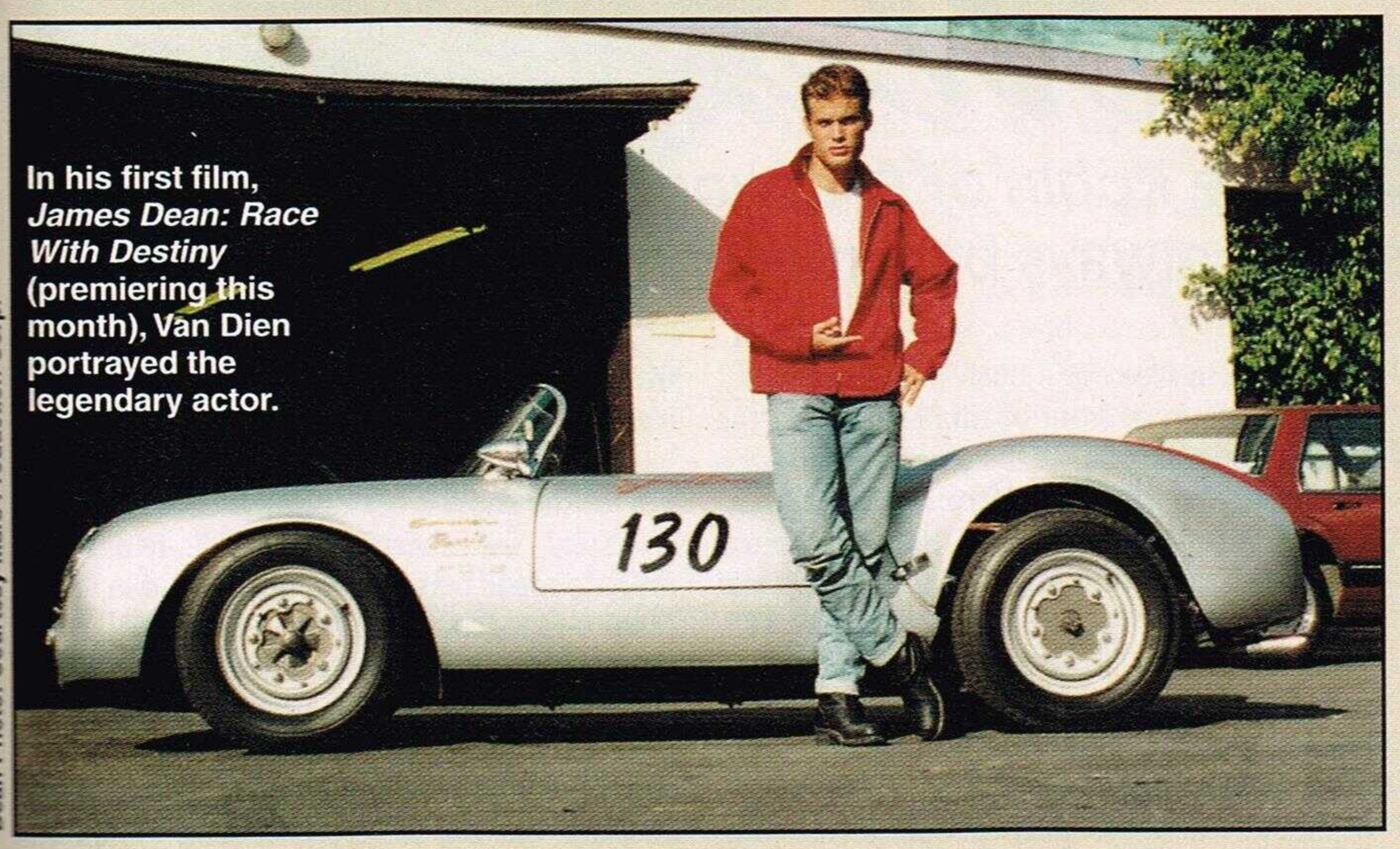
"People started going back to the hotel at night. We had actors with real military backgrounds who hadn't planned on this go back. As it turned out, I was the *only* actor to stick it out all the way through. I'm a Method actor, so I really got into it. Plus, I was Johnny Rico, so I couldn't wimp-out and be a total weenie."

## Military Vet

The end of this simulated boot camp marked the start of filming and, recalls Van Dien, a seamless, immediate transition to the horrors of interstellar war. "The first day of filming, we were marching through this incredible desert. We were hot, dusty and dirty. Then, we come upon Whiskey Outpost and discover that the fort's entire company of Mobile Infantry has been wiped out by the bugs. It was a real heavy scene to start the shoot."

Van Dien offers that the real fun on *Starship Troopers* came when the bug fighting sequences actually began. "It was great and we weren't just firing at the air or tennis balls on sticks. They had near full-sized giant bug parts, things like bodies and heads, that would shake violently and actually pick people up as we were firing at them. It was pretty realistic for us because they were moving and, in a big sense, they were *really* there in front of you."

The actor gives high marks to his fellow cast members, especially Michael Ironside. "He's amazing! He's always walking around with this intense look on his face and he's always growling. He looks like he's going to rip your head off, but he turned out to be quite sensitive and a real giving person."




In his first film, *James Dean: Race With Destiny* (premiering this month), Van Dien portrayed the legendary actor.

Dean Photo: Courtesy Mars Production Corp.




He read Robert Heinlein's novel as a kid and dreamed of being the hero. Now, Van Dien exclaims, "I'm Johnny Rico! This is cool!"

And then there's Verhoeven, who Van Dien describes as "An actor's director. I would be sitting there on the set watching this guy, and suddenly I would see a light bulb go off above his head. He was always thinking about ways to make shots better. With Paul, the wheels are always turning."

Making the leap to Johnny Rico wasn't difficult for Van Dien. "When I first read the script, I was amazed with the similarities I shared with Johnny. I don't quit at anything I do. I like to win and I don't like to lose at anything. That's the way I am and that's the way Johnny Rico is."

Those similarities started with Van Dien's real-life military background. He's the son of a U.S. Navy Commander and the grandson of a World War II Marine. So, it's no surprise that a young Van Dien dropped out of a formal high school education and transferred to the Admiral Farragut Academy, where he graduated Third in Command of his class.

He went on to Florida State University as a pre-med student. Deciding a Theater Arts class was an easy way to get some extra credits, Van Dien soon found himself "hooked on acting." He subsequently dropped out of Florida State and moved to Los Angeles where he landed recurring roles in the daytime soap opera *One Life to Live* and *Beverly Hills 90210*. *James Dean: Race With Destiny* was his motion picture debut. Next up for him is a swing as the Apeman in *Tarzan and Jane* (due out in February) to be followed by *On the Border*, a thriller co-starring Bryan Brown.

While the movie business is serious stuff for most, Van Dien can't help but lapse into the unbridled enthusiasm of a child when describing his exploits on *Starship Troopers*. "I'm living a dream that every kid has when he is young. I'm playing a variation of a character that I played a hundred times as a kid."

Casper Van Dien once again gets excited. "I'm running around in a space suit, with a big gun, yelling, 'I'm Johnny Rico!' " ★



# Merry Memories

## Once *Robin of Sherwood*'s Friar Tuck, Phil Rose will always be a merry man. By JOE NAZZARO

While working on a TV series based on the legendary exploits of Robin Hood and his band of Merry Men, it seems inevitable that one would receive viewer letters disputing historical accuracy. But what about complaints regarding inconsistent botany? According to Phil Rose, who for three seasons played Friar Tuck on the popular British series *Robin of Sherwood*, that's just what happened.

"One day, we ran out of time," Rose elaborates, "and they said, 'We'll have to go back to HTV [television studios] and film Marion and Robin in front of a bush in the car park.' They put them in front of this bush to do the dialogue, thank you, that's fine, and about a year later, we got a letter from this 92-year-old Edinburgh professor of botany saying, 'Dear sir, I am a big fan of your program and I think it's very good, but in episode #15, when Robin is talking to Marion in front of that bush, did you not know that the bush was not indigenous to this country until 600 years later? Thank you very much.' "

Not all *Robin* bloopers are quite as obscure; sharp-eyed viewers had a number of opportunities to spot continuity gaffes and various historical anomalies. Back in London, over a long, laugh-filled dinner, Rose is happy to offer up a few of the show's best. "In the episode where we steal the sheriff's nephew, Much the miller's son is being put in prison, and in a later scene I'm teaching the boy to cook, Will Scarlet's teaching him to use a knife, Nasir is teaching him daggers and Much the miller's son is teaching him—how can Much be there when he's in prison? Nobody twigged it until it was actually out on the telly! If you watch the 'Sheriff of Nottingham' episode, there's a

Selected Photos: Courtesy ROS/NAB

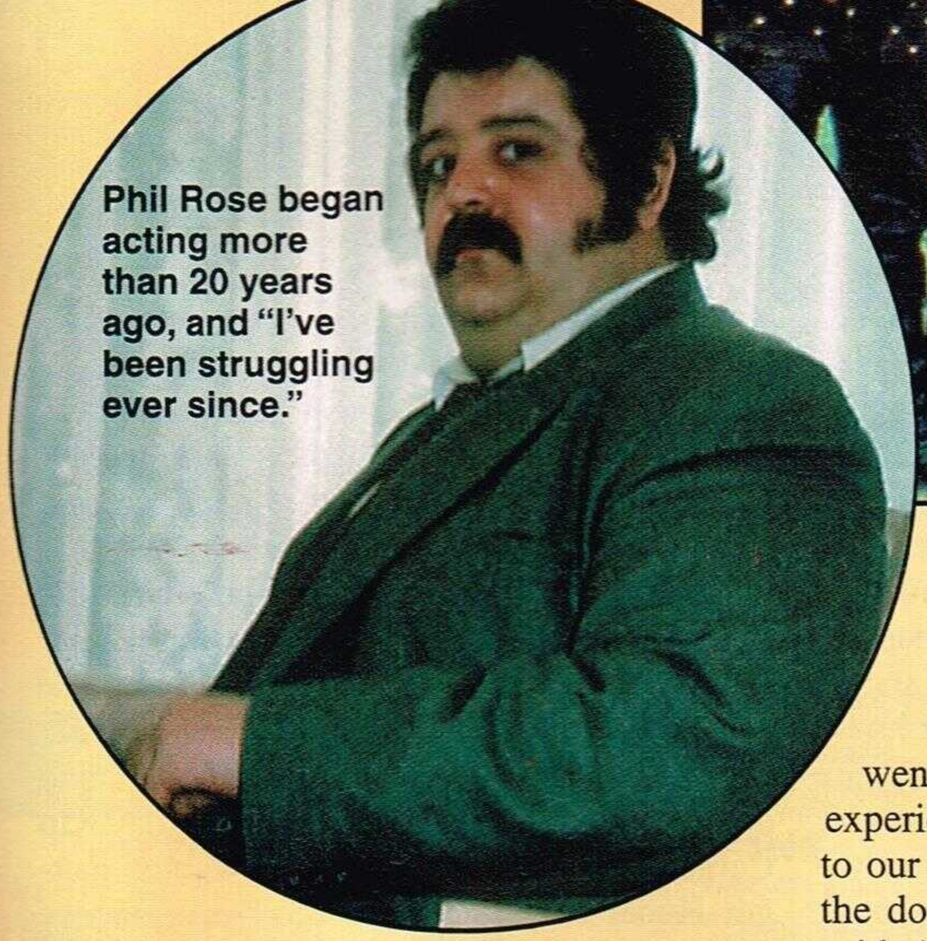
scene where he's talking to Robin Hood [Jason Connery] and there's a white flash going through the trees. If you freeze-frame it, you'll see it's a white *car*!

"We were filming one day, and it was me, Ray Winstone, Peter Llewellyn-Williams, Clive Mantle, Michael Praed; we all smoked, and we had just finished doing this scene and afterward they checked the gate to make sure the film was all right. The gate was OK, and we were getting ready to move on to the next set-up when Ray said, 'You'll have to do that again, boys.' He had done the scene holding a cigarette and nobody noticed!"

## Feature Friars

After more than 20 years of show business, Rose is accustomed to the more unusual aspects of life. While he was growing up in Manchester, England, acting took a sideline to less glamorous occupations such as selling encyclopedias, bricklaying and working at a center for artificial limbs and appliances. He finally applied to drama school, and after two years, went into weekly repertory work. "And I've been struggling ever since!" he jokes.

Rose's involvement with *Robin of Sherwood* came about as a result of *Memed My Hawk*, a film he had worked on in Yugoslavia with actor/director Peter Ustinov. "In January 1983, my agent rung me and said, 'You're going to meet with casting director Esta Charkham.' She later



Phil Rose began acting more than 20 years ago, and "I've been struggling ever since."

Photo: Jo Beth Taylor

became co-producer with Paul Knight. Esta had cast *Memed My Hawk* and she remembered me and wanted to see me about *Robin of Sherwood.*

"So, I went along, and Clive Mantle [Little John], whom I had known for a while, gave me a lift to Pinewood Studios where I met Kip Carpenter, the writer, Knight and Ian Sharp, who directed the first six. On the way home, Clive said, 'What do you think?' I said, 'Well, if we get it, we get it. I'm used to rejection, but it would be nice.' I thought it was another feature, and when my agent rung me and said, 'You've got it, and it's six hours this year and seven hours next year, and then they want to do a third year,' my bank balance went 'Whoopie!' "

Though *Robin of Sherwood* was filmed well over a decade ago, Rose can remember his first day as Friar Tuck as if it was yesterday. "We had all been to Pinewood for the reading, we had been for the costume fittings in London, and then we decided to get on the train to go to Newcastle together; there was Judi Trott, Clive, Peter, Ray, Michael and me.

"We got on the train, and went to the dining car—this is about 8:30 in the morning and we had each brought a bottle of champagne. The waiter said, 'If you're going to drink that, may I make a suggestion: why don't you have a bottle of Guinness with it?' So, we arrived at Newcastle, and fell out of the train, and they picked us up in a cab. They told us where we were staying, and 'at 6 tomorrow morning, you'll be picked up, and we'll do the first day's filming.'



Photo: Showtime

*Robin of Sherwood* **found its early success with Michael Praed (center with sword) as the hero. Rose still doesn't understand why Praed ankled off to America to be "a little minnow in the ocean."**

"The first day, it poured and we all went into the van to change. My very first experience that day was when we were down to our underpants, and there was a knock at the door. One of the dressers came in, and said, 'Put your clothes back on, you're all going to have to stand outside, because Mr. Valentine [Anthony Valentine, who played Baron Simon de Belleme] is here, and he wants to get changed.' So like a bunch of idiots, we all got our clothes back on, and stood outside in the rain under this big umbrella. He goes in, the dresser closes the door and we stood there for about five minutes. Then, old Ray knocked on the door, opened it and said, 'We're coming in.'

"We all piled in, and he said, 'Anthony, we understand you're a big star, but we are the Merry Men and this is Robin Hood. It's pissing down out there, and this is *our* changing wagon, so if you've got something we haven't got, we want to see it! Otherwise, stop it,' and with that, we just stripped and got ready."

## Missing Myths

Viewers took to *Robin of Sherwood*'s exciting mix of fast-paced action and mythology, enhanced by the haunting music of the Irish band Clannad, and a second season was commissioned.

If there was a downside to that success, it may have been that *Robin* could be accused of falling back on formula. "The thing about *Robin* that amazed me was you got to know people *too* well," explains Rose. "There was no mystery anymore. Certain directors relied on that, where the Merry Men would just nip together. Every episode, I would say 'Little Flower' to Maid Marion, which I hated saying; you knew that Ray and Clive would have a bloody barmy; you knew that Much would look thick as pig shit; you knew Robin and Marion would have a kissing/cuddling scene, and Nasir would be moody all on his own; it got *quite* monotonous."

Another constant, says Rose, was that Michael Praed stayed the good-looking, clean lead. "He only got his face dirty on two occasions: fighting Robert Addie in the mud in 'Alan O'Dale,' and the previous episode, 'Seven Poor Knights From Acre.'

"Shall I tell you a story about that mud fight?" laughs Rose, recalling what was arguably Praed's most unglamorous moment. "It was a long, hot summer, and that fight went on for ages. They must have been in the mud for six hours. The scene was sent that night to Reading for developing where it was eaten by the developing bath. They turned around to Robert and Michael and said, 'We're going to have to do it all over again!'

Design & Layout: Yvonne Jang



**Jason Connery assumed Robin's mantle in the series' second season—and Rose was the first Merry Man to glean the Hooded Man's new identity.**

"They went back the next day and the water level had gone down even more, because of the heat. They were there for eight hours, it was the only thing they did that day, and the boys were caked with mud everywhere. They came out, and were packing the film away, when Michael turned to the director and said, 'Send a little note with that package that if these get eaten by the bath, I'm coming to see the gentleman that should have bloody developed them!' "

As it turned out, the second season of *Robin of Sherwood* was also Praed's last. The actor had decided to seek his fortune in America, leaving the series without its hero. "About episode five of the second year, they got all the Merry Men into the porta-cabin, as well as Michael, Paul and Esta. They said, 'Michael is leaving at the end of episode seven,' so we had about five weeks to go. 'He's doing *The Three Musketeers* on Broadway,' and to be honest, my first thought was 'silly boy,' because if they wanted him that much, they would wait if he said, 'No, I'm doing another year of *Robin of Sherwood*,' because he knew another 13 episodes were on the cards.

"Michael, like many actors, thought the *only* place to succeed was in America. I totally disagree; I think you can succeed anywhere if they want you, and it's quite obvious with hindsight that he didn't succeed because they didn't think he was good enough on Broadway, so there's my argument answered. I would rather be a small fish in a little pond in Great Britain than a little minnow in the ocean if they didn't like me in America."

## Secret Spirits

Finding the right swashbuckling young actor to play the new Robin Hood was a difficult task. After testing several people, including Paul (the Eighth Doctor Who) McGann, the producers finally cast Sean Connery's son Jason. "They got Jason down to the set, and into costume, and we did a bit of dialogue with him from previous scenes. They would stick episode three in our hands and Jason would read Michael's dialogue, which was quite strange, because Michael was there. Right up to the last day of filming, they wouldn't tell us who they had picked."

The identity of the new Robin was kept a total secret—except from Rose, who happened to be hiding behind the right tree at the right time, a story he can finally recount with impunity. "On the last day, before we finished filming, they had this person locked in a porta-cabin at the base camp, dressed as the Hooded Man, and they taped paper over all the windows. It was the final scene needed to complete the series, where we were all shooting the arrows into the lake, and they had a stuntman come out from behind with the hood up and fire the arrow. So that was it, end of episode. Michael is now dead, and we head back in the van to the base camp until the next time they call us.

"It was only a quarter of a mile up to the base, and the van was a bit full, so I said, 'You all go up and I'll walk.' I got about halfway up this track through the forest, and I see the land rover coming back. In the front is the driver and the director, and in the back are Esta, Paul and Jason Connery with his hooded man gear on. I stood behind this tree as they drove past me, and then followed them down to the bottom of the track and I sat behind this bush a few feet away watching them. Jason comes out with his hood up, fires his arrow and puts his hood down, and I'm away like a rat up a drainpipe. I get back to the porta-cabin and everybody says, 'You missed it, they put us in here and locked the door so we couldn't see who it was and he's gone!' They had actually locked the actors up! I lied and said, 'They must have gone the other way, because nobody passed me!' "

As Rose recalls, Connery's arrival in Sherwood Forest was a potentially major event, illustrated with a story about a close encounter with the British press. "After we finished filming, we all got changed and went to the last-night party," the actor explains. "Everybody was talking about who the new Robin was, and asking Esta and Paul and they were saying, 'We can't tell you.' About six weeks later, I was in London, in a pub near Fleet Street, talking to Paul Nicholas, the head of freelance publicity for *Robin*. I said, 'I know who the new Robin is,' and he asked me who it was and I said, 'I'm not going to tell you.' He said, 'Hang on a minute,' and came back with this lady journalist who said, 'I work for the *Daily Mail*, and I believe you know who the new Robin of Sherwood is.' I said yes, and she said, 'Are you going to tell me?' I said no, and she went over to the phone and came back two minutes later and said, 'I'm authorized to pay you £1,000 if you tell me who it is.'

"I said no, and she went back to the phone, came back and said, 'I'm authorized to pay you £3,000.' When we got to £5,000, I said, 'Darling, if it was five *million*, I wouldn't tell you who it was. I am an actor, and you're not, and if I told you and it breaks, and the other actor isn't ready for it to happen, what do you think I'm going to be treated like when I go back to the new series—*if* I get back,' because what goes around, comes around. I didn't tell her, and for months, I kept that secret to myself.

"Jason started on May 1, and I said, 'Nice to meet you,' and that was it. We had 27 weeks' work on 13 episodes, and in the middle we had a fortnight off, so all the Merry Men went to Spain to meet Sean Connery, and I went to Blackpool to buy a hotel. Of course, the fourth series never happened, and to be honest, a part of my life went west."

After the demise of *Robin*, there was talk of bringing the series to a conclusion, possibly with Praed back in the title role, but those plans still remain in limbo. "For eight years, they tried to get the £15 million together to do the *Robin of Sherwood* feature that Kip Carpenter had written, and they wanted Rutger Hauer to play the baddie—or Terrence Stamp but in the end, it never reached fruition; the Americans didn't want it because of the glut of Robin Hoods."

While *Robin of Sherwood* may have joined other genre adventures in television limbo, Phil Rose still hopes he'll be able to take Friar Tuck's cassock out of mothballs one day. "There were some times when you might think it was a little boring, but then you think of the money, and maybe this wasn't so bad. There were times when you thought, 'This will last forever!' and other times when you thought, 'If this lasts forever, I wouldn't want to be in it forever!' We thought it would never end, but it did."

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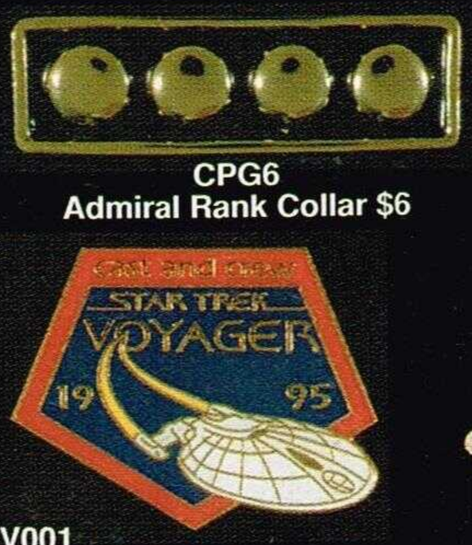


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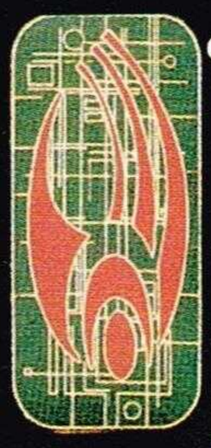

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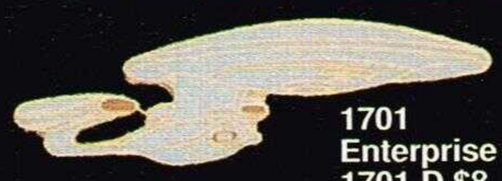


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Klingon Battle Craft Symbol $8



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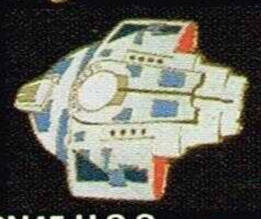
V020
Voyager Ship $6




30Y3
30th Anni. Logo $6



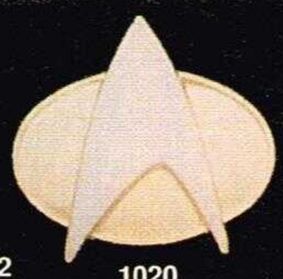
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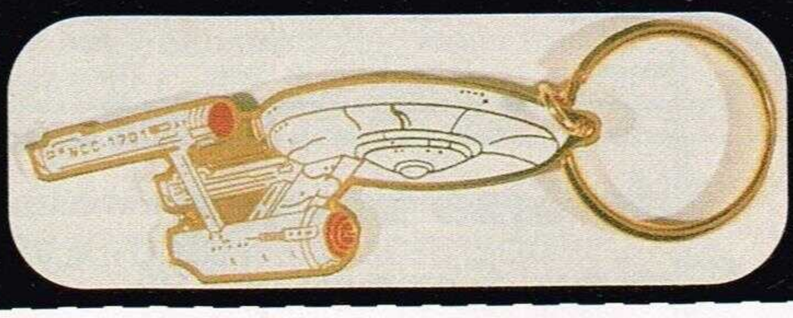


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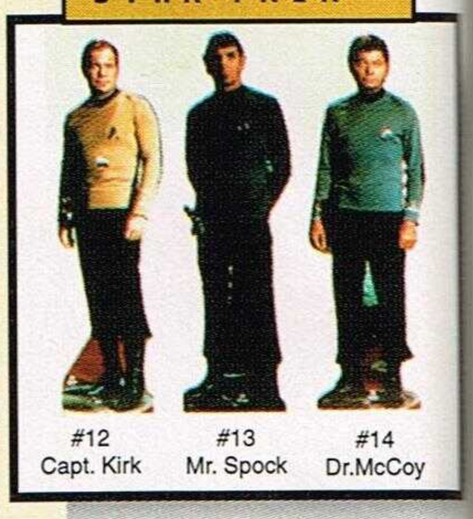
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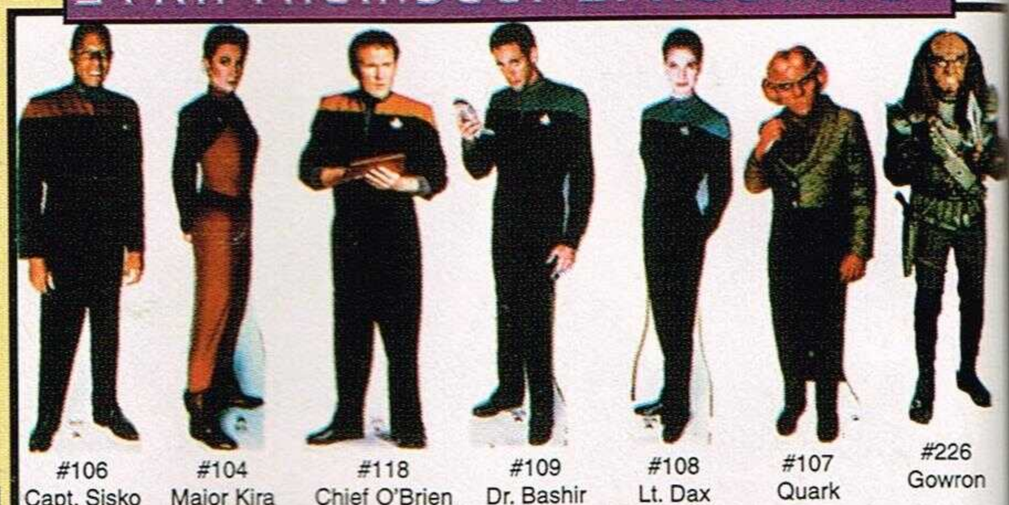
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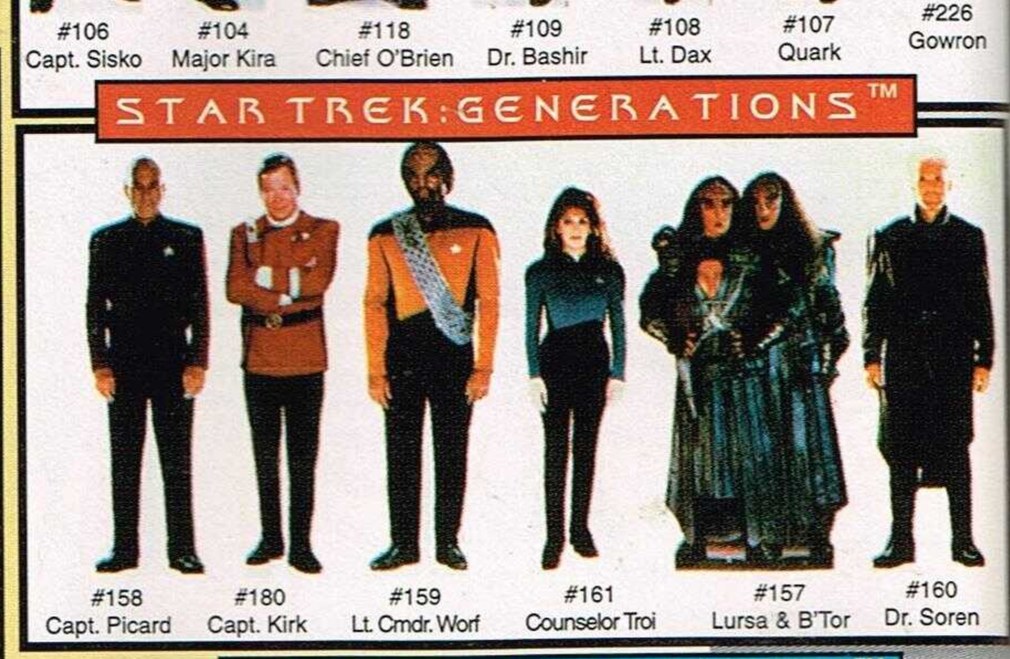
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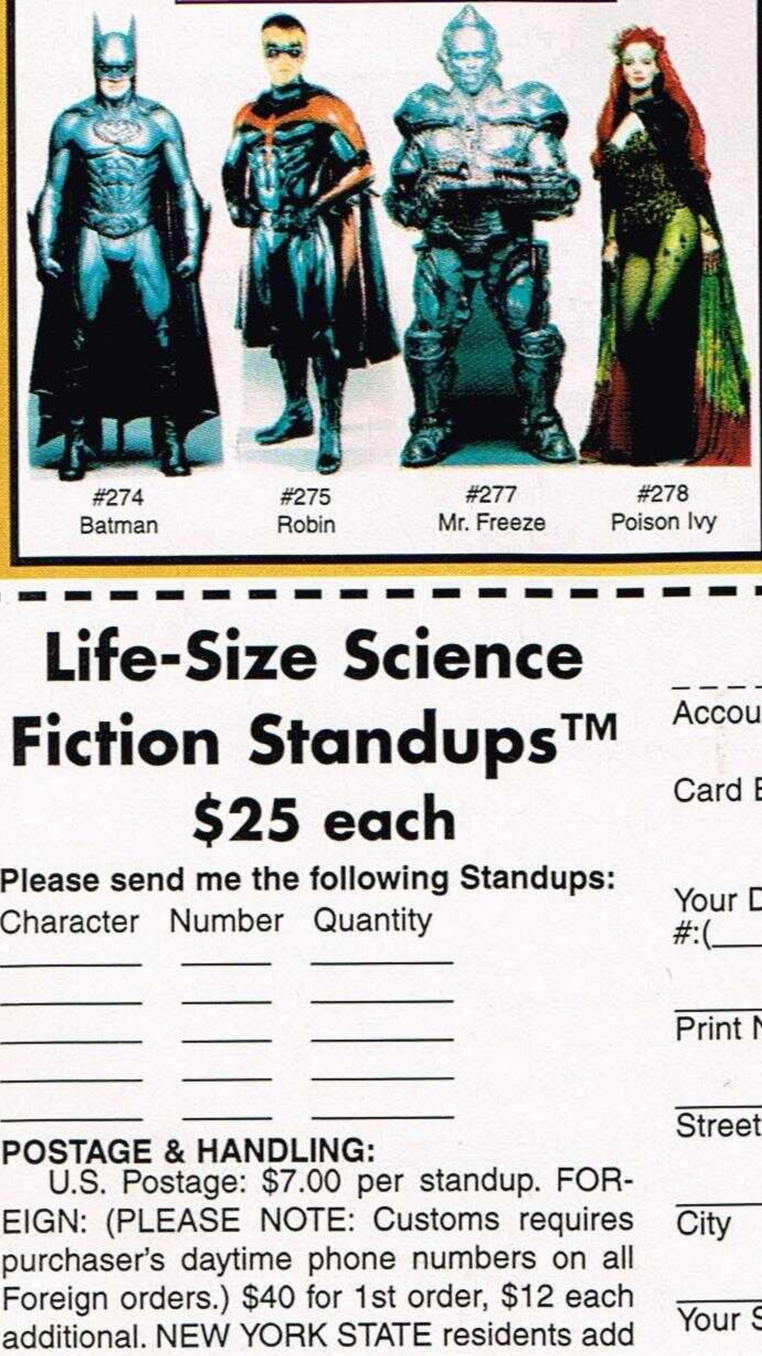
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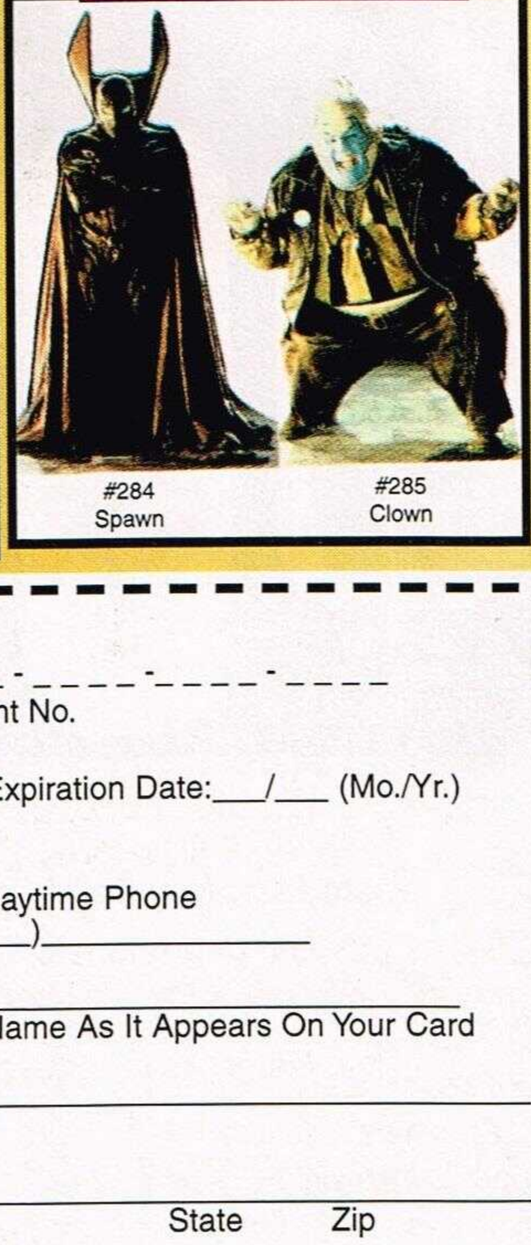
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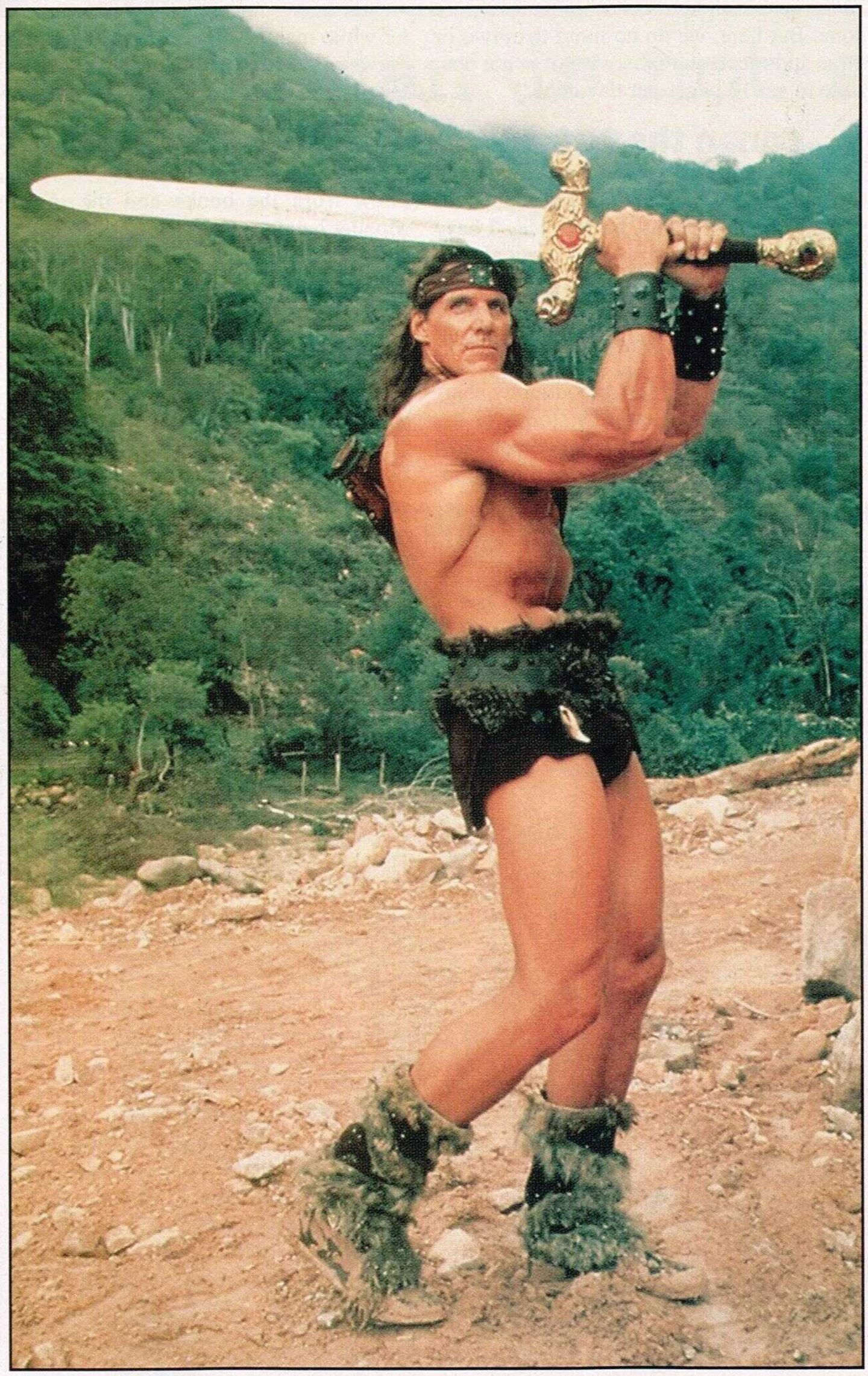
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IF IT TAKES A BIG MAN TO FILL THE BOOTS OF *CONAN*, THEN RALF MOELLER WAS BUILT FOR THE ROLE.

The German-born actor/strongman has all the necessary qualifications to portray Robert E. Howard's barbarian hero on the new syndicated TV series debuting this fall. He has the muscle expertise (as a 1986 Mr. Universe and a former boxing champion). He has the action movie experience (*Universal Soldier* and *Best of the Best II*). And he even has the blessing of an old pal, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who, of course, played the role in both *Conan* features.

Schwarzenegger, however, had nothing to do with the decision to cast his friend in this TV series. "I was called in by Columbia last year after Universal lost the feature rights to *Conan*," says Moeller. "Universal was doing *Kull the Conqueror* with Kevin Sorbo at that time, but Columbia found out that the TV rights to *Conan* had already been sold to Keller Entertainment. Keller called me up because they had heard that Columbia was trying to get me as Conan for a film. I did two screen tests and it worked out well, so I started studying in April with Kyoshi Yamazaki, who trained Arnold for his *Conan* movies—he's also my instructor and fight coordinator on this show."

## Conan the Samaritan

Alhough he wants to star in films, Moeller will undoubtedly be getting more exposure by playing the small screen Cimmerian. "Because Keller Entertainment teamed up with Western International Syndication, we'll be on over 80 percent of the TV markets in the U.S.—and the show is already sold in 86 countries," Moeller explains. "Right now, Western is trying to get the feature rights to *Conan*. My goal had always been to do films, but doing movies can be

By Kim Howard Johnson

# CONAN THE GENTLEMAN

**Kind of heart & caring of mind, Ralf Moeller strides forth as the syndicated barbarian.**

really hard because they have to be *good* to get people in the theaters. With television, we're doing 22 episodes that will be seen worldwide, so I'm getting great exposure."

Moeller and Schwarzenegger have been friends since their bodybuilding days, and Moeller says Schwarzenegger was delighted by his casting in *Conan*. "We are close friends—we play tennis and ride Harleys together," says Moeller. "Arnold thought it was a great idea for me to do the part, and said I should absolutely go for it. He thought it would be great to improve my acting abilities. On a feature, you shoot two pages a day. Here we try to do eight or 10 pages. Everything is faster. We would usually do at least six or seven takes on the films I've done. But here, we do no more than two or three and move on. Otherwise, it is not possible to get 10 pages per day done."

## Conan the Citizen

The actor, who still has a pronounced German accent, has continued to train, both verbally and physically, for the role. "I have a dialogue coach on the set so I can always work," he says. "I trained with weights for 16 years. I still work out every morning from 6:30 to 7 a.m., and then I'm on the set from 7:30 on."

While Conan is a less bloodthirsty character than he is in Howard's stories or the Schwarzenegger movies, Moeller maintains they have retained the essence of the character while making him accessible to younger viewers. "Conan is a Spartacus or Robin Hood character—my Conan is not so much a barbarian, but a *gentleman*. He cares about people, helps people and respects women. He's *a little* different from the Conan we know from the books and the movies," Moeller laughs.

"We have to do it differently, because it's a family series. It's not that violent, though there will be a lot of action in it, with lots of fights against monsters and bad guys," he adds. "But this show will be seen by six- and seven-year-olds, as well as older viewers, so we must be careful. With television, people invite you into their house, and if they don't like you, they switch the channel right



**Ralf Moeller's *Conan* cohorts include the Viking Vulkar (Andrew Craig), Otli the dwarf (Danny Woodburn), Karella the bandit queen (Aly Dunne) and the mute Zzeben (Robert McRay).**

All Conan Photos: Copyright 1997 Western International Syndication

# "My Conan is not so much a barbarian, but a *gentleman.*"

away! When you go to the theater and pay $7.50, you're stuck for two hours. But on television, you have commercials and remote controls, and people can switch channels any minute. It's a big challenge!"

The Schwarzenegger Conan was a more brutal and barbaric rogue than the kinder, gentler hero who will be seen in this new TV series. Moeller says his barbarian is a bit more civilized. "I know the hardcore fans will probably say that Arnold's was the best, but again, we're doing television right now," he explains. "Films absolutely have a different kind of look, so for television and family movies, you must be careful. You can't come up with too much violent stuff, cutting off heads or arms."

Legendary heroes like Hercules and Sinbad are currently thriving in TV syndication, but Moeller says *Conan* can offer something none of the other series can. "Right now, we don't have any guy who is 6' 6" with 275 pounds of solid meat on his body!" he laughs. "There are many successful shows like this around—*Tarzan*, *Xena*, *Hercules*. They're all good, but I think the difference will be Conan. I bring more beef back to the screen, like Arnold did, like Lou Ferrigno did in *The Incredible Hulk*.

"It is not only the muscles and the fights," Moeller says. "The series will also show Conan's [more civilized] side. As Conan, my partners include a big fat guy and a dwarf. What we want to get across to the audience is not to judge people by how they look, whether they're small or fat, black or red. On *Conan*, they will learn to respect any kind of human being. Many people make fun of the dwarf, Otli, until he teams up with Conan and proves to be very helpful. Of course, Conan never ends up with one woman—he has a lot of women, but they all disappear or die along the way.

"But he *respects* women," Moeller emphasizes, "while the other Conan took women whenever he felt like having a woman. Our Conan is more polite. Conan looked after himself first, but our Conan is teamed up with old friends and cares more about people."

Moeller began working on his sword-fighting skills early in 1997. "I started out studying the saber three times a week, two or three hours a session," he says. "Besides my workout, trying to get in my lines and working on my acting, I still go out two days a week to work out with the swords for two hours. The same thing goes for horseback riding. Even though I have a stunt double who does the dangerous stuff, I have to do most of my stunts myself. Right now, I weigh 275, but in a few more weeks, [because of all the stuntwork], I'll probably be down to 265! I've done fights on horseback. I have two different horses, a bigger one for when I go for a normal walk along the beach, and then it's good to have a smaller, more flexible horse when fighting alongside other people. One horse already trod on my feet, and I still feel it!"

## Conan the Thespian

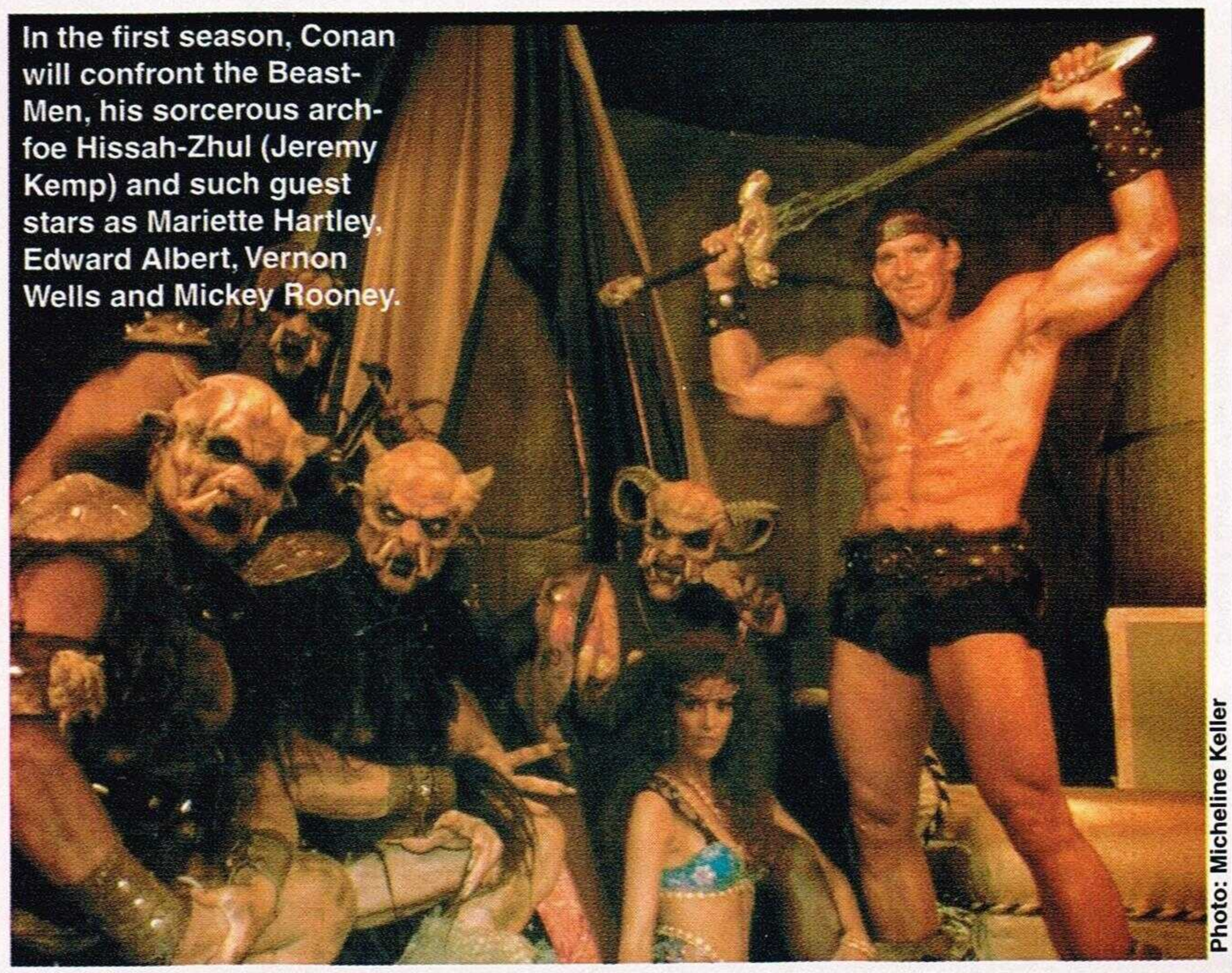
The series' shooting schedule will allow Moeller to do a feature film each year, even if *Conan* is hugely successful. "As soon as I am done filming in November, my people are trying to find a feature project for me to do in February or March," he says. "I've signed up to play Conan for three years. In the first half of the year, I can do a film, and then back to *Conan* for the rest of the year."

Even if the TV series is successful enough to lead to a *Conan* film, Moeller plans to continue pursuing other types of movie roles. "I would like to do a different kind of film so I don't get stuck with all the swordfights!" he laughs. "And it's always good to show yourself as another character."

For now, Moeller is exceedingly busy in Puerta Vallarta, Mexico, working 12-hour days six days a week in the 90 to 100-degree heat on the first of the series' 22 shows. "When you have to work six days a week, Monday through Saturday, 12 hours a day, the acting isn't the only challenge," says Moeller. "It's the physical kind of stuff here in Mexico. It can be 90 or 100 degrees here, very humid, and you have to drink like a camel. To keep my weight and muscles

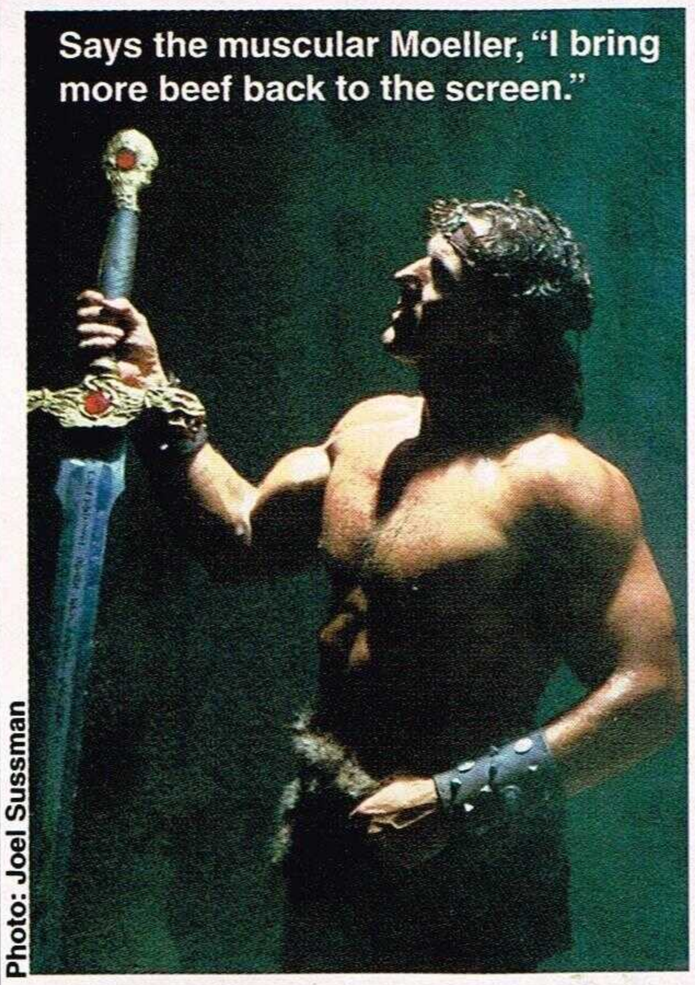


**Although they'll be mostly telling new stories, *Conan* premieres with a two-hour episode partially based on Robert E. Howard's classic "The Tower of the Elephant."**



In the first season, Conan will confront the Beast-Men, his sorcerous arch-foe Hissah-Zhul (Jeremy Kemp) and such guest stars as Mariette Hartley, Edward Albert, Vernon Wells and Mickey Rooney.

Photo: Micheline Keller



Says the muscular Moeller, "I bring more beef back to the screen."

Photo: Joel Sussman

right, I have to eat and drink right. I can't get stomach problems or I'll lose weight. Right now, it's not just the acting but the hard physical stuff I'm [trying to maintain] under difficult circumstances."

*Conan* is being filmed in Mexico to maximize a television budget, but Moeller says it actually works out better for his career. "Originally, the idea was to do the whole thing in Eastern Europe, but I'm much happier to be closer to Los Angeles," he admits. "I'm only two-and-a-half hours away, instead of filming in New Zealand or South Africa. My goal is to do features and one day become an action hero, a movie star on a big screen, and that means I can stay here and meet writers and directors. The only thing is, the best weather here is November through April, when we're *not* shooting!"

Moeller believes that the fantasy elements will help make the series successful. "With *Conan*, we have a big, big audience," he says. "Arnold did the last ones, and he's the number one action star today. In every article, they mention him. *Tarzan* and *Hercules* were both done many times, so I hope when we do *Conan*, it's really the right way. People like to dream. They like to see monsters and wizards and all of this kind of stuff. They like to sit back and let the fantasy play. And to bring some muscles back, like in the old days, to see some *real* action heroes!"

The TV series will include its share of menacing monsters and effective FX. "Conan will be fighting sea monsters," says Moeller. "Peter Chesney, who did *Men in Black*, *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* and *Waterworld*, is the FX guy creating our monsters. He has a team of people who used to work for Steven Spielberg. For most of our set and costume designers, this is their first television experience—they used to work in features."

Moeller says that FX work is part of a learning process for him. "The first FX for me here involved fighting something that isn't there against a blue screen," he laughs. "So far, I've only fought once against a monster that will be created by computer—when a sea monster comes up, the arms are coming toward me and I have to fight it. It's hard to act against something that isn't there, but eventually I'll get used to it!"

One of Moeller's favorite sequences allowed him to utilize his fast-improving swordsmanship. "I like being on a horse and fighting on a horse, and there was a scene that our second unit director came up with," says Moeller. "It's a great action scene where I'm on a horse, I have to go under the horse, come up with my sword and *bam*, kill this guy. What I enjoy a lot is my team, the rest of the cast, around me. I have scenes with Danny Woodburn who plays Otli the dwarf; Andrew Craig, the big Viking warrior Vulkar; Robert McRay, Zzeben the mute gladiator and Aly Dunne, Karella, the bandit queen. We've become real friends here, and you will feel it when you see us on television. It's really nice, this camaraderie and friendship."

Moeller is basing his interpretation of Conan on the films and a few of the books. "I read two or three books and of course I saw the movies with Arnold a couple of times," he says. "I loved them. I was a big fan of this kind of thing. I loved *Ben Hur* and *Spartacus*. I also like futuristic films like *ALIENS* and *T2*, but I would love to do period movies."

With an eye on the future, the newest Conan admits he would like to have a career like the *last* Conan. "Now it is far away," Ralf Moeller laughs. "It's like I'm on Earth and he has made it to Mars! There is only one Muhammad Ali and one Bjorn Borg and one Arnold Schwarzenegger. You have to develop your own personality and goals. In my mind, I always try to be the best and entertain people, and become successful and deliver positive messages to people. My goal is to be here, and that's why I moved over to the United States [from Germany]. I love it. That's why I live here with my wife Annette and my daughter Laura—our next child will be born here this fall. I love this country, and my goal is to become a movie star. It's that clear and simple!"



Photo: Joel Sussman  Design & Layout: Mike Stewart

Moeller has been working on his swordfighting skills for months, all to show this Conan's a barbarian who knows his way around a blade.

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By IAN SPELLING



Photo: Ken Staniforth

# Frank Spotnitz may tap a malignant muse, but as a writer/producer for *The X-Files*, he's dead on.

## Frank Spotnitz gave Dana Scully cancer.

Yes, it was *X-Files* writer/producer Spotnitz who came up with the notion of afflicting America's favorite flame-haired FBI agent with the deadly affliction. "That would be me," Spotnitz says, laughing. "The summer before the fourth season we were talking about where we might go that year. I had the idea that Scully would develop cancer. It seemed very organic to everything that we had seen before, especially in 'Nisei.' She had met these other women who were all dying of cancer. It seemed like a logical stitch to the story. We tabled it for a while, though, because we weren't sure about taking that step.

"Then, John Shiban, Vince Gilligan and I were working on the story for 'Leonard Betts' and we came up with the idea that Leonard would actually thrive on cancer, rather than be defeated by it like we are. John said, 'Here's the perfect opportunity to bring in Scully's cancer.' It just felt like the right moment to do it. It came up a good six months before we actually found the right way to use it in the series."

What will ultimately happen to Scully remains to be seen, but Anderson is back for a fifth season of *The X-Files* and she co-stars with David Duchovny in the silver screen version of the series, set to be released as the season concludes in May. So, suffice it to say she'll survive. Spotnitz explains that somewhere, somehow, there's a big, *final* picture being considered as he and the show's other writers craft each episode. That, however, doesn't stifle their collective imaginations. "We do have an idea of the end point. That has always been in Chris Carter's mind, from the series' beginning," Spotnitz notes. "He knows where the characters are going in the end. We've deliberately not mapped it out too clearly, though. You don't want to be *too* rigid. There are so many wonderful things that happen, that you discover about the characters as you go along. There are so many great things you read about in the papers or magazines or see on TV that inspire the show, and you don't want to restrict yourself."

### Lethal Shadows

Casting a critical eye on season four, Spotnitz is pleased with the series' overall arc. "There was a lot of nostalgia, especially for the fans who have been with *The X- Files* from the very beginning. That first season was so important because it defined the show—and it defined the show as an amalgam of different genres," argues Spotnitz. "Every week, when you tune in, you don't know whether you're going to get a murder mystery, a suspense thriller, an SF episode, an action story or a horror tale. The first season defined that very well, but I've got to say that the show has really gotten better every season. The sophistication, the ambition, the blending of new and old ideas, the development of the continuing storyline, gets more and more interesting as we go along."

And what does Spotnitz, who serves a similar writer/producer function on Carter's other Fox series *Millennium*, consider to be his role in all of this?

"I'm split between *Millennium* and *X-Files*, really. I'm doing the same thing on both, although I have different titles on each show. I like to do a little bit of everything, from casting and writing to coming up with stories or helping other people come up with stories, giving notes on scripts, rewriting other people's scripts, giving notes on the special effects or music," he explains. "I'm involved in *every* aspect of making a show go from paper to finished product. The part of the job I find the most satisfying is coming up with the stories. On both *X-Files* and *Mil-*



**Who dealt a deadly disease to Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson)? Frank Spotnitz admits, "That would be me."**



**Initially deemed to be too expensive, "Nisei" became a two-parter so Spotnitz could engineer his "train show" and send Mulder (David Duchovny) into danger.**

Design & Layout: Mike Stewart

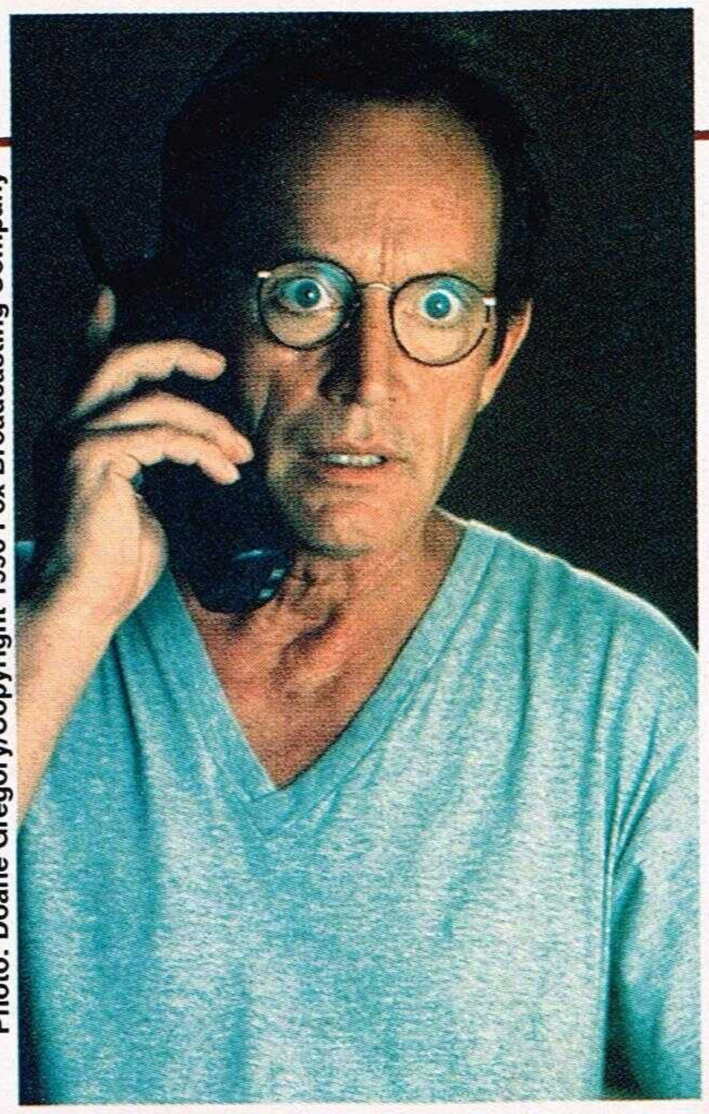


Photo: Doane Gregory/Copyright 1996 Fox Broadcasting Company

**Branding *Millennium* (which stars Lance Henriksen) "a very dark show," Spotnitz believes "it will take a while to build the audience *The X-Files* has."**

*lennium*, I spend a lot of time working with other writers, helping them to develop their stories, helping them come up with interesting twists and ideas that will make each episode new and interesting.

"Personally, I like the mythology shows. It's interesting to have these threads you can weave in new ways and patterns. I was very pleased with 'Memento Mori' because that was a mythology show, but it was also a stand-alone show. It synthesized so many threads we had established in all those two-parters over the years. The most fun I had on an episode this past year was 'Leonard Betts.' It was interesting, the scares that came from the monster, and also from Leonard and his EMT partner."

## Millennial Fears

Moving onto *Millennium*, Spotnitz expresses *his* surprise over other people's surprise that the series was renewed by Fox for a second season. He points out that the show's low ratings were comparable to those achieved by *The X-Files* in its first year and he's hopeful that *Millennium* will enjoy an *X-Files*-like rise in popularity during its sophomore season. "Actually, it's far more popular than *X-Files* was in its first year and its numbers really resembled those *X-Files* had during its second year. I remember being on *X-Files* during its second year and we were thrilled with those numbers," he recalls. "*Millennium* is a very dark show. It has a very specific voice and I think it will

# See Spotnitz Write

Frank Spotnitz offers brief comments on the episodes he wrote or helped write for *The X-Files*.

**"End Game"** "That's sort of a favorite child for me because it was my first show. That two-parter was also a big show for the series because *The X-Files*, up to that point, had not been that explicit about alien life and specific nature of the aliens that were being depicted. That had been by design. Chris, Glen Morgan and Jim Wong, Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa, who were really the primary creative forces behind the show the first season, had wanted to withhold a lot from the audience. There came a point when Chris decided that we *needed* to start giving the audience more, that they could be intrigued for only so long before they wanted to see what it is that we're saying is going on here. We've given more and more pieces, but that was the first big piece that really defined, clearly, our vision of what alien life was like in the *X-Files* Universe."

**"Our Town"** "I've always been morbidly fascinated by the idea of cannibalism and that's why I wanted to do that show. It actually proved to be, unfortunately, prophetic in its depiction of the crisis of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease being spread. It has become a real problem in Britain and other parts of Europe, but no one has suggested cannibalism as an explanation."

**"Nisei/731"** "I wanted to do a train show very badly. I wrote that as a single, stand-alone episode, but was unable to produce it because it was simply too difficult and expensive. So in a very short period of time, we reconfigured the story to be a two-parter and it ended up being better than it ever could have been as a stand-alone. I was pleased with those shows."

**"Piper Maru"** "I felt that after 'Nisei' and '731,' which were really pure actor shows, that I wanted to do a two-parter that was more intimate and had strong emotional current to it. Picking up on the death of Melissa and using that idea about the inability to bury the dead as themes to play through the two-parter really appealed to me. That was where we introduced the idea of the alien oil, which has proved to be important in the mythology of *The X-Files*."

**"Apocrypha"** "That was really the payoff of 'Piper Maru.' I was especially pleased with the way we continued the story about what happened on board that submarine. It was very hard, with flashbacks, to dramatize things in an interesting way, and I liked that we did it with that teaser where you saw the young Cigarette Smoking Man, young Mulder and, presumably, the young Deep Throat standing around this crewman's bed."

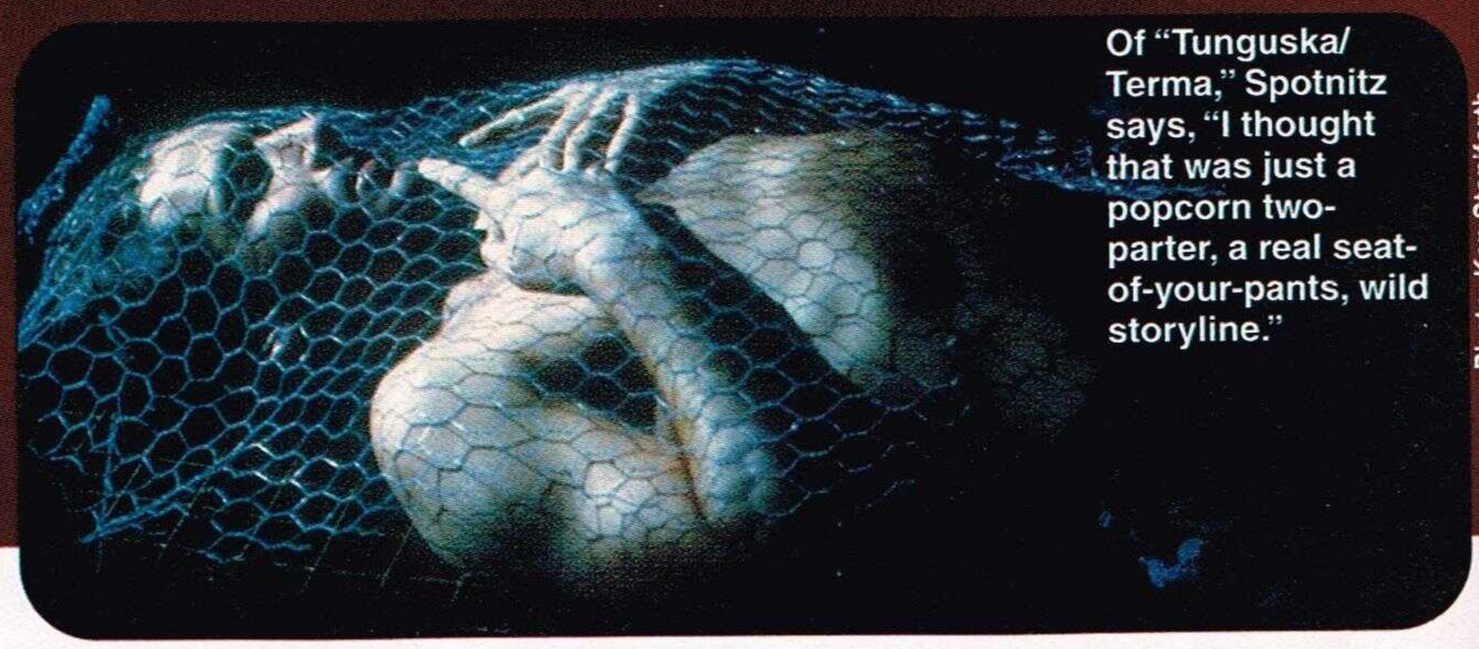
**"Tunguska/Terma"** "I thought that was just a popcorn two-parter, a real seat-of-your-pants, wild storyline. It was a lot of fun, but it gave me my fill of the action stuff. We've tried to go in different directions with the two-parters since then. I was particularly pleased that Krycek gets his comeuppance [losing his arm] in 'Terma.' "

**"Tempus Fugit/Max"** "I wanted to do a two-parter that was *not* a mythology two-parter, because we felt like we were falling into this pattern. We wanted to mix it up a bit. Chris had known since summer 1996 that he wanted to do something involving airplanes because that's such a potent source of people's fears. It just seemed like a perfect subject for an *X-Files* episode."

**"Zero Sum"** "I was very happy with that. Mitch Pileggi did a great job and Kim Manners, who directed it, did beautiful work. It was an interesting way to dramatize that idea we had established in 'Momento Mori,' about the Faustian bargain Skinner struck with the Cigarette



**" 'Gethsemane' really brought Mulder and Scully face-to-face with their own mortality," Spotnitz notes. Not that they hadn't been acquainted with death before.**



**Of "Tunguska/Terma," Spotnitz says, "I thought that was just a popcorn two-parter, a real seat-of-your-pants, wild storyline."**

Photo: Ken Staniforth

take a while to build the kind of audience *The X-Files* has built, but I have no doubt that it will build that audience. The shape of the show has become very clear and I think that everybody who works on the show [which now includes *X-Files* veterans James Wong and Glen Morgan] is excited about that."

The common denominator between *The X-Files* and *Millennium*, at least for Spotnitz, is that they both demand that he work under the gun. After so many years spent toiling in the worlds of Chris Carter, Spotnitz jokes that he's used to racing to the finish line each and every week. "Before *Millennium* existed, we always worked that way. We kept revising, revising and revising until we couldn't anymore because it *had* to go before the camera," he says. "Now it's doubly true because the time constraints on Chris are such that between the two shows he always has one that's about to be filmed. We're used to having to deliver on demand. Television has this voracious appetite for new material. It's actually a pleasant sort of pressure, having been an unemployed writer and now being an employed one. I would rather have that demand than not, if you know what I mean."

But there is one *X-Files* mystery left to solve. And, appropriately, it's a two-parter: Just who is Frank Spotnitz and how did he come to be such an integral piece of *The X-Files* and *Millennium* puzzles? Spotnitz is a young man who made his living for about a decade as a journalist, decided to attend film school and earned a Masters degree from the American Film Institute. Then, he started screenwriting. *The X-Files* marked his first big break. "I had met Chris when I moved to Los Angeles to become a screenwriter," the writer/producer remembers. "This was five or six years before Chris even thought of *The X-Files*. He kept tabs on me and he read my work. Being the *aggressive* Hollywood player I am, I did not have the guts to call him and ask him for a chance to pitch an idea until the end of the first season of *The X-Files*. I had made a point of watching the show from the very first episode. I was amazed at the quality and the variety of the stories. The show was also of a genre that I was just naturally drawn to. I finally pitched and then he asked me to join the show.

"I had nothing else produced before *The X-Files*," a grateful Frank Spotnitz says, "so it has been a dream come true."



Photo: Ken Staniforth

**"I had the idea that Scully would develop cancer," Spotnitz explains, "a good six months before we actually found the right way to use it in the series."**

Smoking Man."

**"Gethsemane"** "The title is from the Bible. It's the garden where Jesus prayed before going up on the cross. That show really brought Mulder and Scully face-to-face with their own mortality."

On the fifth season finale, which will have to segue into the *X-Files* feature film: "I'm sure Chris will write that. It's only right that he write it. We know what the movie is going to be, so we know where we need to be at the end of this season. We'll sort of put the pieces in place to build to that moment. It's a very satisfying and exciting time to be on this series because there's a *real* feeling of having nurtured it into something exciting and interesting to work on. It was exciting from the beginning, but there is a history to it now and it's fun to see how all the pieces will fall into place before the movie.

*—Ian Spelling*

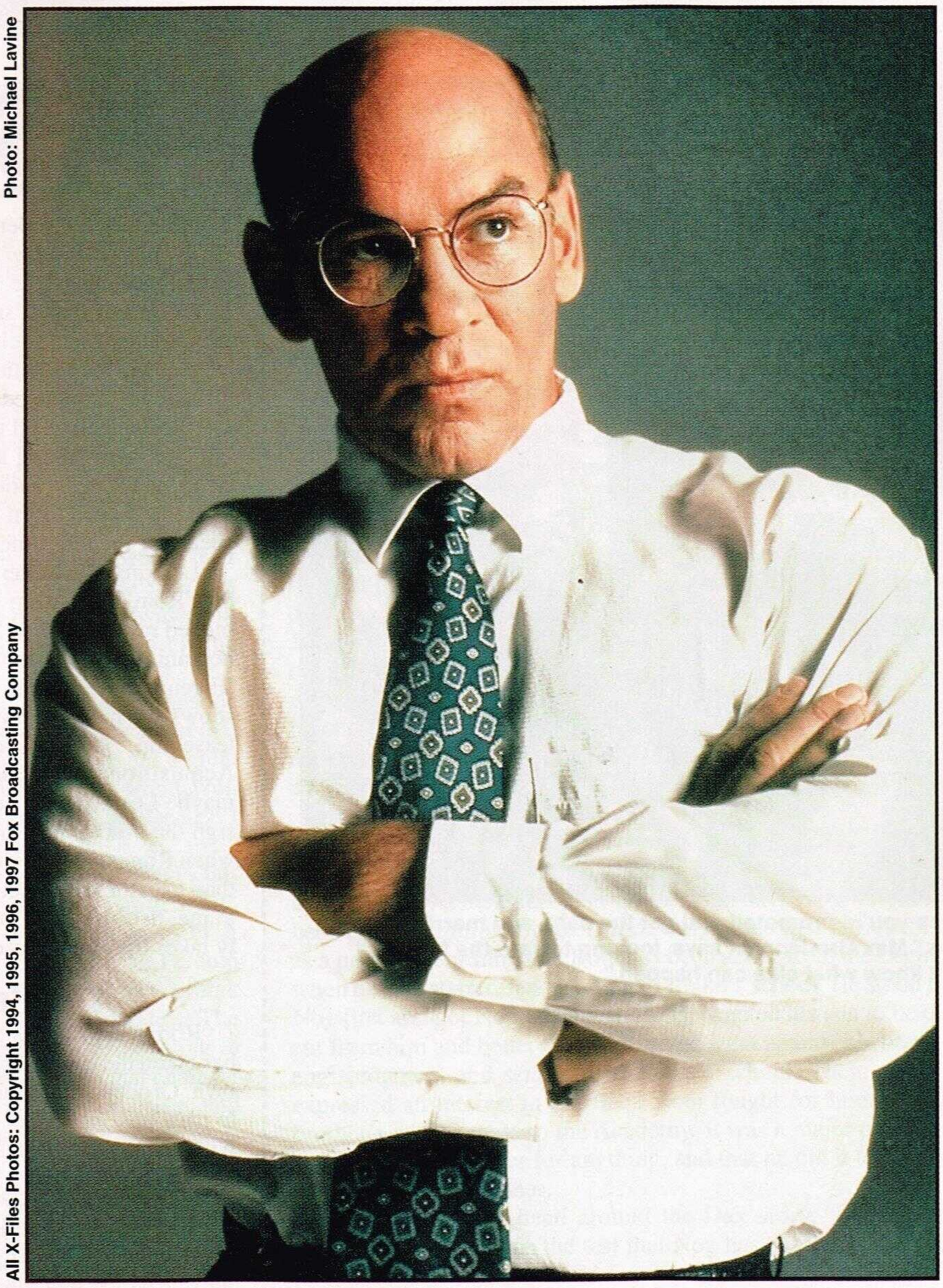


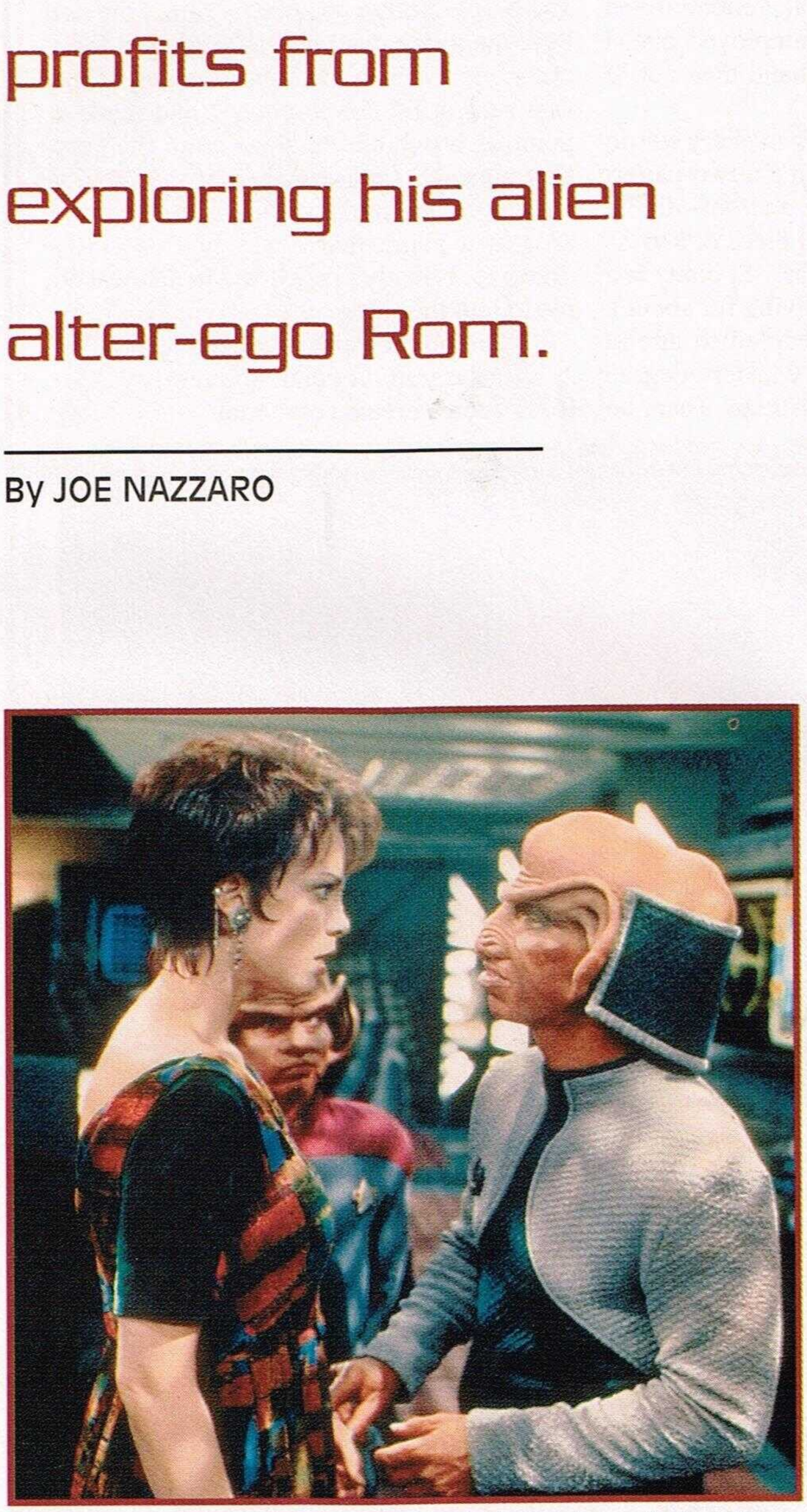
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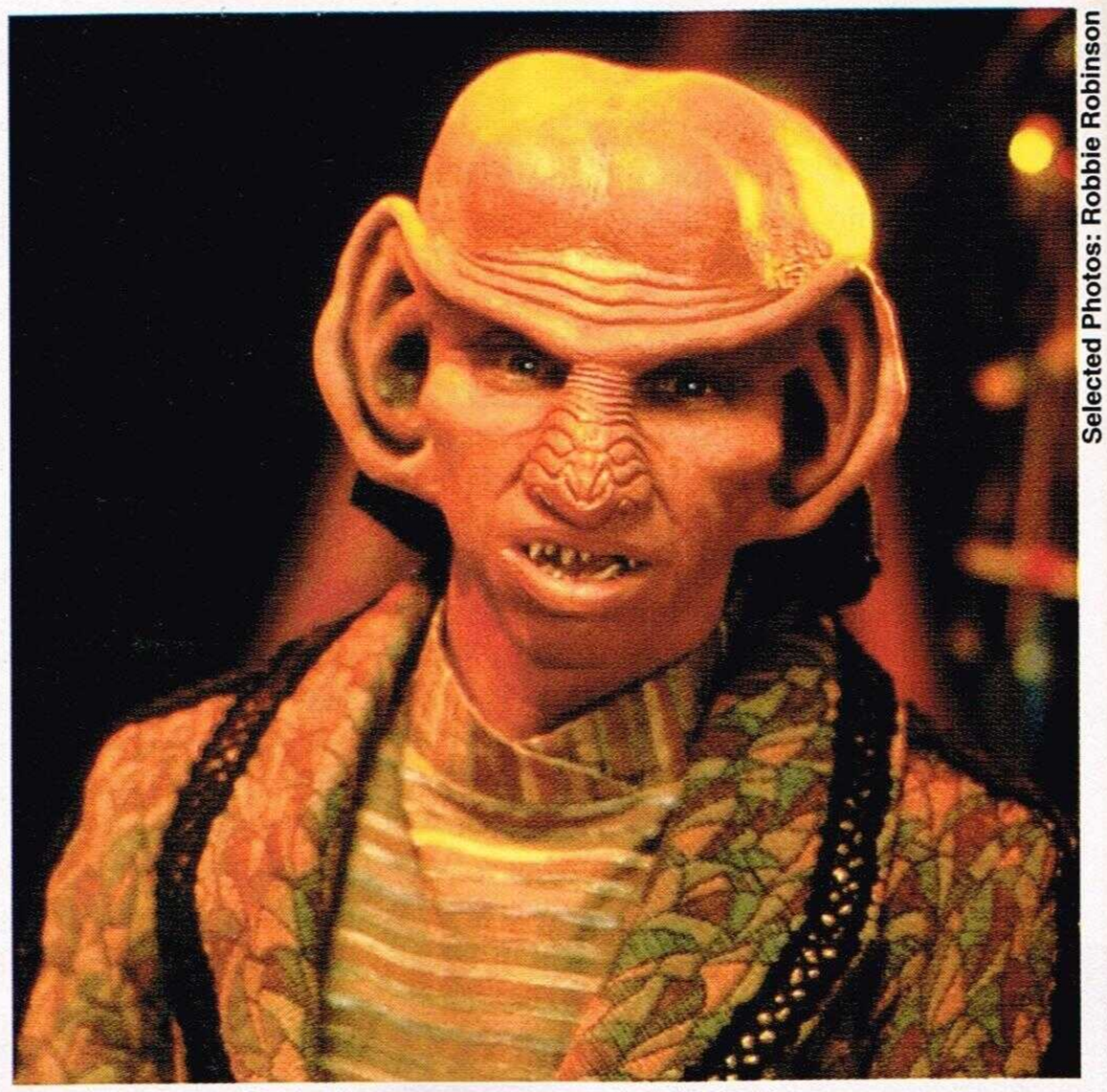
**"Zero Sum" explored the Faustian bargain Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) struck with the Cigarette Smoking Man.**

On *Deep Space Nine*, Max Grodénchik profits from exploring his alien alter-ego Rom.

By JOE NAZZARO



**"Once you're promoted and get the babe and married on the show," Max Grodénchik says, looking toward the future, "I don't know what else can happen."**



Selected Photos: Robbie Robinson

# His

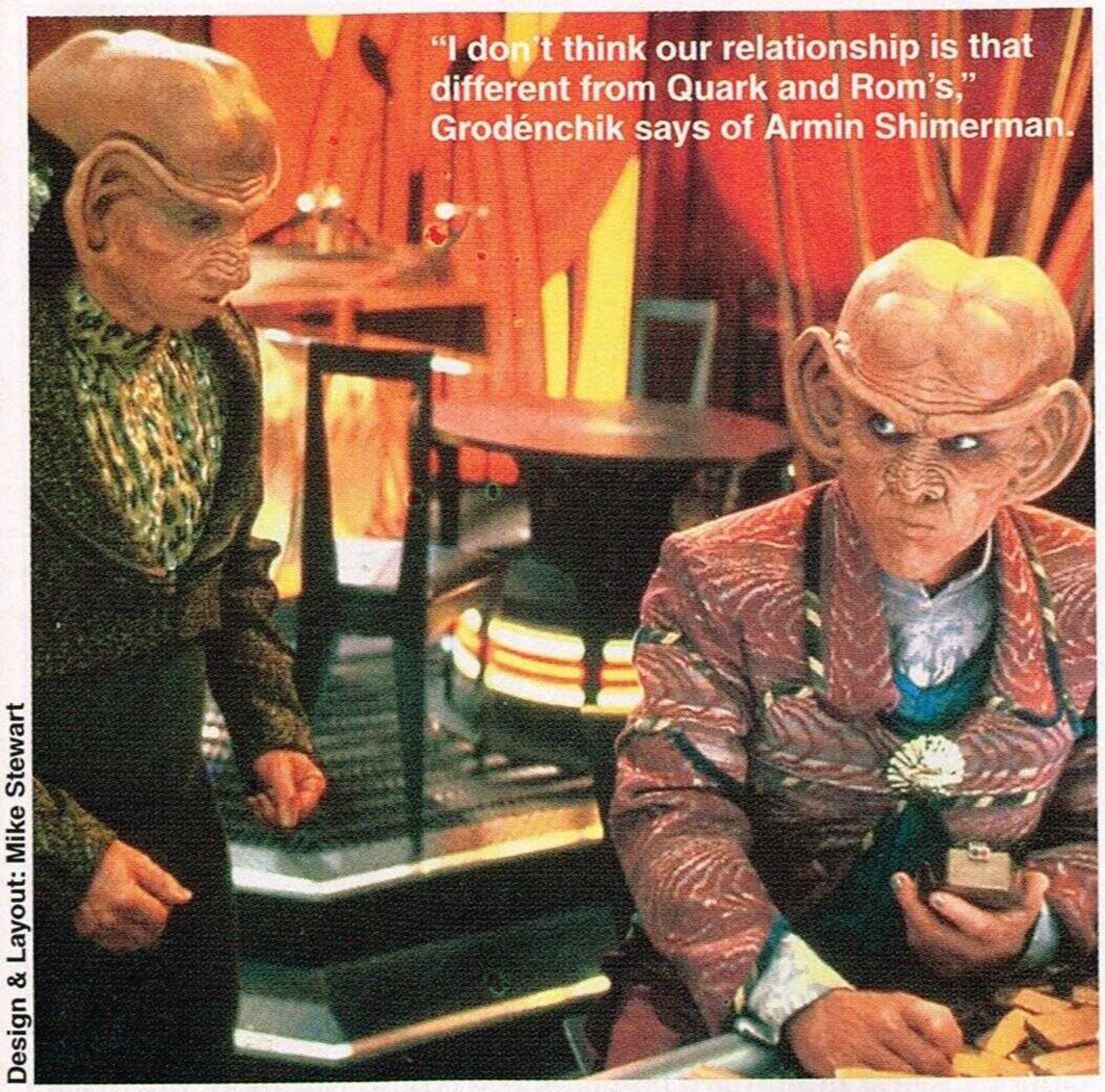
When Max Grodénchik signed on to play a Ferengi pit boss in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* five seasons ago, he had no idea Rom would continue to develop, eventually becoming one of the series' most popular supporting characters. Over the last year, that development has included a new job, a greater amount of self-respect and a whirlwind romance with Leeta, the sexy Bajoran dabo girl, which culminated in a hasty wedding ceremony in the fifth season cliffhanger, "Call to Arms."

"We were talking about who should have married them," jokes Grodénchik, "if it should have been Sisko or somebody else. I was thinking maybe Morn could have married them, and we hear Morn speak for the first time, 'I now pronounce you man and wife!' "

Looking back over the last season of *DS9*, Grodénchik admits that Rom's courtship of Leeta (Chase Masterson) seems to have moved rather quickly. "I was actually puzzled by that myself; at the beginning of 'Dr. Bashir I Presume,' he can't even ask her out, but in 'Ferengi Love Songs,' Rom announces his marriage to Quark. He shows off his new Bajoran earring to O'Brien and Dax, and they tease him, 'What is she doing for you—is she learning the Rules of Acquisition?' They don't mean to, but they plant the seed that maybe Leeta should do something for him, so he tries to get her to sign the Waiver of Property and Profit, or WPP. My favorite line is when Rom says, 'Chief, do you mind if I take a slightly longer lunch than usual; I need Leeta to sign this.' The word 'slightly' is so funny to me, because Rom thinks it's going to take a minute and it actually takes the entire episode."

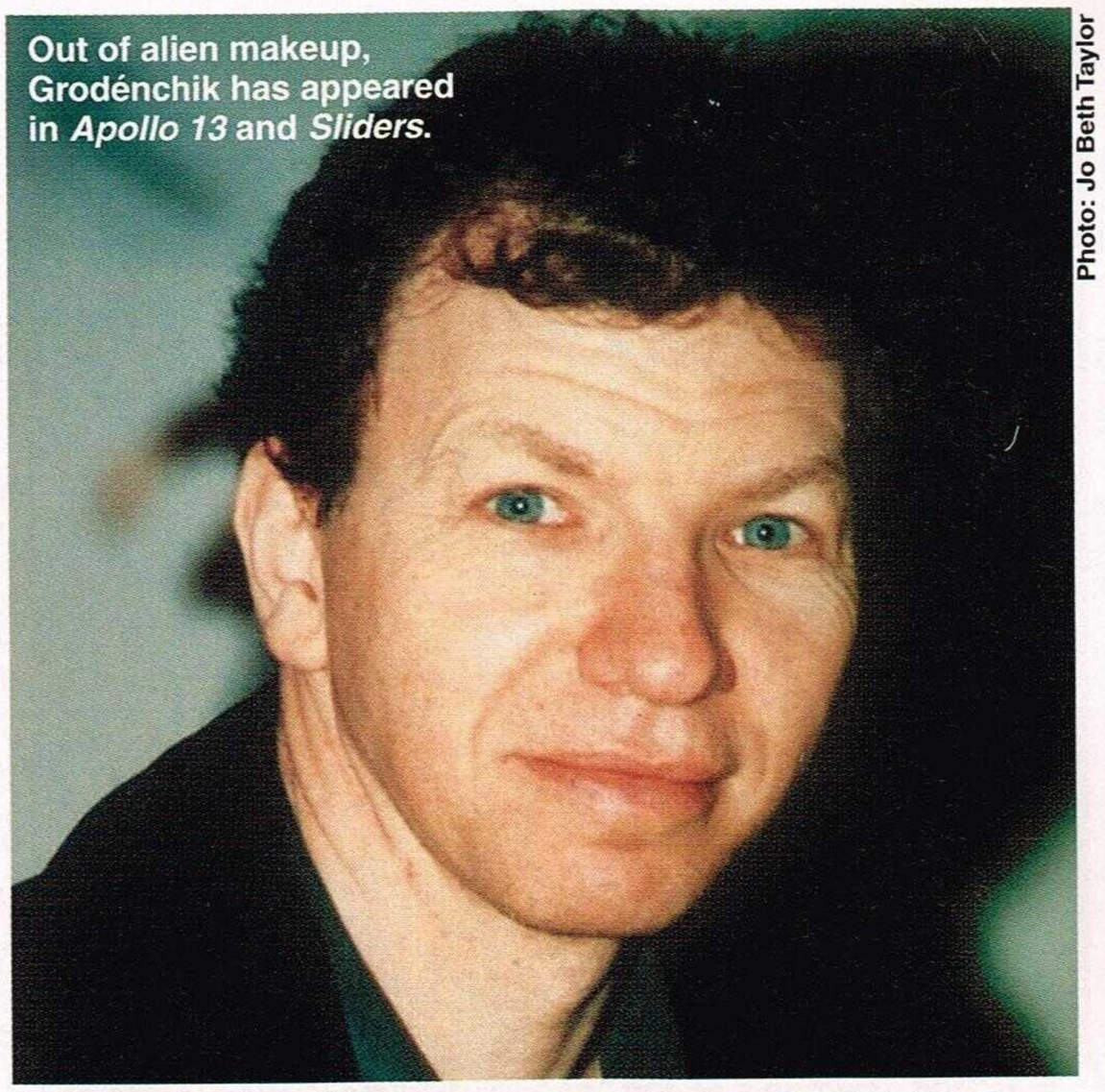
## The Ferengi Bridegroom

Rom's marriage is the latest development in a long-term arc that has taken the character out of Quark's Bar and given him a life of his own. Grodénchik found some of those events a concern at first, due to their possible effect on the Quark/Rom relationship and his work with Armin Shimerman, who plays Quark. The two actors have spent countless hours honing the chemistry between their characters, often rehearsing together during their off-camera time. "It helps us to work together, because you don't get a lot of rehearsal time when you're shooting," says Grodénchik. "I don't think our relationship is that different from Quark and Rom's. Armin doesn't yell at me like Quark does to Rom; well, maybe he does, so it's just as well that it comes out in character. He is somebody I look up to, just like Rom looks up to Quark, somebody I want to be like and



"I don't think our relationship is that different from Quark and Rom's," Grodénchik says of Armin Shimerman.

Design & Layout: Mike Stewart



Out of alien makeup, Grodénchik has appeared in *Apollo 13* and *Sliders*.

Photo: Jo Beth Taylor

# Ferengi Nature

learn from. There are many similarities.

"One of the things that scared me in 'Bar Association,' " says Grodénchik, "is that Rom decides to leave the bar and get another job, and I didn't know how that was going to play out. That scared me, because I love working with Armin. At first, I thought it meant I was leaving the show, but the producers assured me that I wasn't off the show. It's such a pleasure to go to Armin's house and rehearse. I don't think I'll be able to do that with anybody else."

Grodénchik disagrees with viewers who believe that the Ferengi are always used for comic relief, and that Ferengi episodes are traditionally comedic in nature. "I don't think an episode like 'Family Business' is a comedy, I really don't. Although there are some funny scenes in it, I see it as a drama about family. I think people hear 'Ferengi' and they think comedy; that's the problem we face, but it's *not* necessarily true. I know certain things are funny and always will be in Ferengi episodes, but there are funny moments in all the episodes."

In fact, the actor still considers the non-comedic early episode "Necessary Evil" one of his favorites. "I loved everything about that story—the Bajoran ghetto. I thought the art department did a great job on that and the play between Odo and Kira was wonderful. [Director] Jim Conway did a great job of shooting that, because I didn't know how it would shoot."

Over the past five seasons, *Deep Space Nine* has assembled a talented repertoire of Ferengi, including Shimerman, Grodénchik, Aron Eisenberg who plays Rom's son Nog, Jeffrey Combs as FCA investigator Brunt, and Wallace Shawn, better known as Ferengi leader Grand Nagus Zek. "When I think of Wallace Shawn, I think of a real trouper. I remember in the first Nagus episode ["The Nagus"] when the boys in the lab were working on him, trying to figure out the best way to do his makeup, and he was in that chair for something like six hours. He came in to show us the makeup, and we asked how he was doing, and he said, 'Oh, I'm fine,' but he was not fine. Wallace smiled and was trying to keep his chin up, and whenever I think of him, that's what I remember. He delivers the goods, and doesn't whine and complain like me. I look at actors like that who have been around for a while and try to take from them."

Another Ferengi favorite of Grodénchik's is Andrea Martin, who played Quark and Rom's mother "Moogie" Ishka in "Family Business." "I loved her," enthuses Max. "She came in and rehearsed with us and I felt horrible for her because she went through makeup hell. She really had to wear a lot of makeup and because the Ferengi females are naked, she had to wear it down below her shoulder area. I thought my makeup was tough, but hers was really difficult to wear. I don't think the makeup originally went down to her chest area, but they wanted to re-shoot those scenes. She came through it, and my hat's off to her. There was a great scene between Moogie and Rom where he eventually rests in her lap, and she says, 'Let me sharpen your teeth.' "

That family feeling is an element that has been somewhat curtailed due to Rom's newfound independence. It has meant fewer episodes like "Little Green Men," in which Quark, Rom and Nog crash-land on 20th century Earth, causing the infamous Roswell incident. "It was wonderful to work with the three of us together. I don't think we do enough of them. Aron has actually had more episodes than me this season, and I'm very happy for him. He and Jake are friends, and now Nog is in Starfleet. We move in separate circles, but it's very nice to come together. I remember the night that we were outside, shooting in the jeep as we were trying to get away from our captors. It was Armin, Aron, Rene Auberjonois and me in the jeep, and Aron starts singing, [Grodénchik sings in marine boot-camp rhythm] 'Three Ferengi in a jeep...' That was very funny."

## An Independent Ferengi

The turning point for Rom's new life can probably be traced back to "Bar Association," but Grodénchik says those threads have been quietly knitting together since early in the first season. "I see it as a part of everything that Rom has been about from the beginning, when he first started sending Nog to Keiko's school. He stood up for Nog first and got Nog an education. He wanted his son to be different from him and better than him, so he went against his better Ferengi judgment and sent him to Keiko's school. Then, when Nog expressed an interest in Starfleet, Rom fought for him against his brother's wishes to go to the Academy. It was a major point that he stood up to his brother for anything, and that he did it to defend his son and his son's wishes.

"That came to a head around the Dax story, 'Facets,' where Quark tries to sabotage the test that Nog has to take as a precursor to getting into Starfleet Academy, and Rom tells him, 'If you ever do that again, I'll burn the bar to the ground!' That's how important it is to defend his son. From there, he begins to stand up for himself, and that's what we see in 'Bar Association.' It's very true-to-life in

"People hear 'Ferengi' and they think comedy; that's the problem we face."

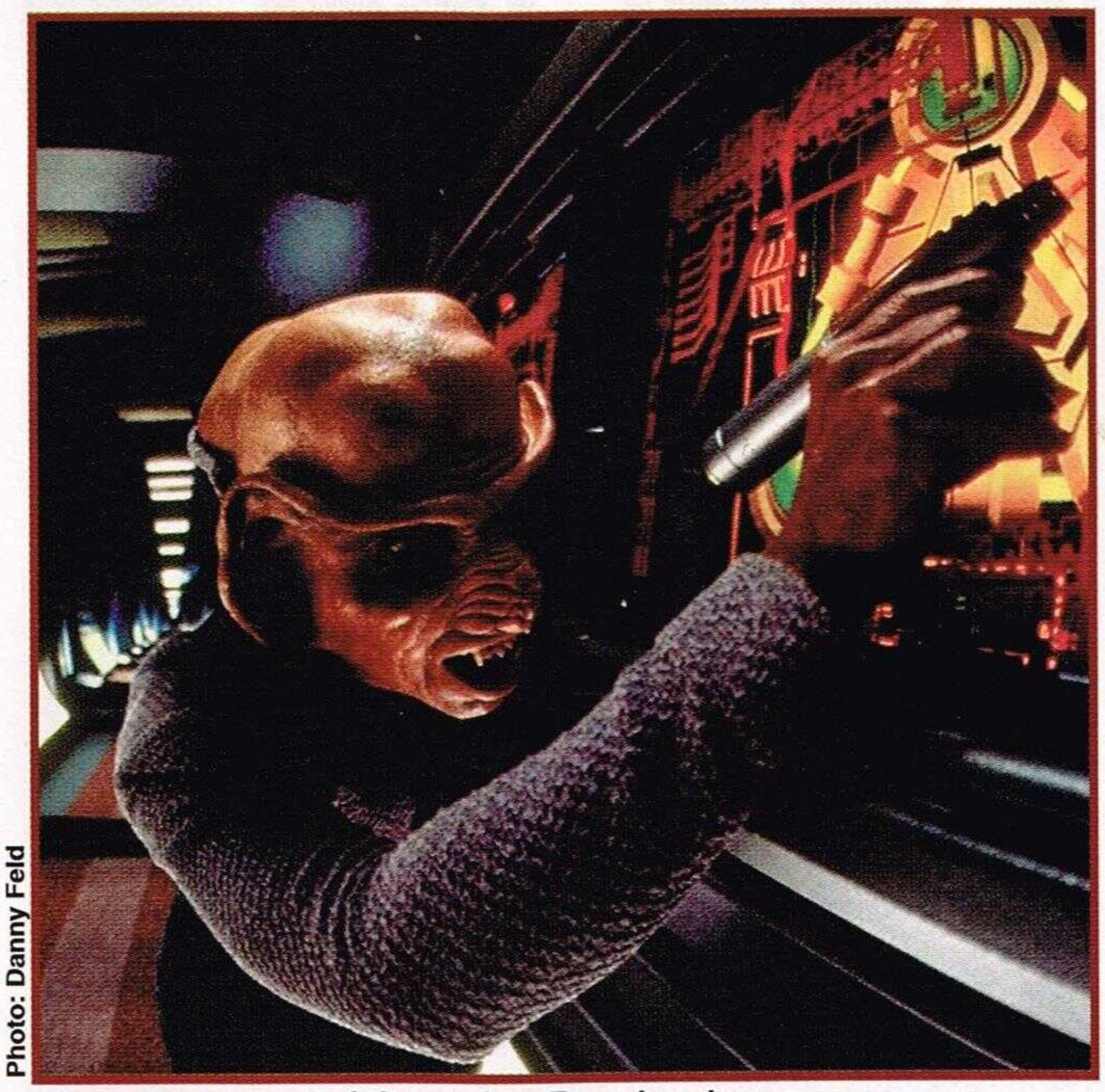


Photo: Danny Feld

**Over the course of the series, Rom has become more independent, standing up for what he believes in.**



**Quark's worst nightmare involves the Grand Nagus of his dream sequence: Rom.**

the sense that it's much easier to stand up for somebody else—I know if I'm with a friend and somebody puts them down, I can fight for him, but if someone puts me down, it's hard for me to stand up for myself.

"In 'Bar Association,' we see Rom following that line and standing up, and now he's going a step further and finally standing up for himself. Humorously enough, it's under the guise of standing up for the union. But in the end, when he leaves, that's himself he's standing up for. Rom looked somewhat vengeful there, and I didn't know if his motives were so pure. I was worried that he looked like he was trying to seek revenge on Quark for years of abuse.

"There was a line there, and I didn't know if Rom crossed it. I was thinking of Rom having these two strands in him: His Ferengi nature, and also the tremendous influence of being on this multicultural space station, so there's the influence of other cultures. Both these things are battling in him, and that Ferengi influence is really strong, but he realizes he's better off without it, and that's why he leaves his brother."

The bond between brothers is still strong, however. Witness "Body Parts," in which Brunt shows his intense dislike for Quark by closing down the bar. "We see Quark doing exactly what Rom did," Grodénchik says, "struggling with Ferengi culture, that you keep a contract no matter what, so he has to keep it even though it means death. He doesn't see any way around that. When they're restocking the bar with furniture and glasses at the very end, Quark has a line about Sisko, Bashir, Dax; 'These are my assets?' he says, and Rom says, 'Yeah, to name a few.' Yes, there *is* something besides profit that has value, and we see Quark beginning to learn that."

Grodénchik also got to play the ancient Nagus in a Quark dream sequence in that episode. "That old Nagus was very difficult to play. It was more makeup than I was used to and I really wasn't quite sure what they wanted, so I had to struggle with that. [Director] Avery Brooks was very helpful, but I didn't know if I was doing what he wanted, so I don't feel I really got a good line on what it was about. It was such a short scene, so there wasn't much meat [in that role] to figure out. It was helpful that it was a dream sequence. That could have been Quark's worst nightmare—that deep down, his brother is more of a Ferengi than he is. It was a tough day, and those Ferengi rooms are hell to work in, because they're tiny and round, and it's very fatiguing to work in them."

Reflecting on some his personal highlights from the last season, Grodénchik immediately cites "The Assignment," where Rom is promoted to the day shift after helping Chief O'Brien. "It's a very nice episode for Rom. He gets to help out O'Brien, which is really sweet, because O'Brien helped him out with the union situation.



Photo: Danny Feld

**Grodénchik looks up to Wallace Shawn (who plays Grand Nagus Zek). "He delivers the goods."**



All DS9 Photos: Copyright 1995, 1996, 1997 Paramount Pictures TV

**The actor views "Family Business," not as a comedy, but "as a drama about family." He loved Andrea Martin as Ishka.**

O'Brien was a real inspiration to him. It was interesting that Rom sort of figures out what's going on—I wondered how Rom could know all this stuff and O'Brien not see it. Then, I realized that O'Brien is in a high-pressure situation, where his every move is being watched, so there's so much tension going on in him that he can't think properly.

"It was also nice to get that promotion. Just when I think they can't do more with the character, they give him a promotion. I love the scene where Rom is filling in for someone who's sick on the swing shift and they all think he's nuts, but he's just so happy to be on the swing shift. It's another example of Rom moving up in the world, this continuous line of standing up for himself and moving on and getting a new job and getting promoted. After that, he falls in love with Leeta, who helped him organize the union, and now they've married."

## Ferengi in Love

A fun moment takes place in the "B" storyline of "The Ascent," where Rom and Sisko commiserate over the changes that have taken place in their sons Nog and Jake. "It was nice to work with Avery in that episode; he was very there for me. Now they've made up this thing where Nog is back doing his field training for the Academy. The heart of that 'B' story for me is the relationship between Jake and Nog, which is so crucial to what *Star Trek* is all about: the building of bonds between different cultures. Even Sisko's feeling about the Ferengi—he has a prejudice against Ferengi—changes when he gets educated by his son. The children will lead us, so to speak."

And of course there's "Dr. Bashir, I Presume," in which Rom finally tells Leeta his feelings, although it takes him an entire episode to do it. "He doesn't have the guts to ask her out, and finally when she's leaving with Dr. Zimmerman, he declares his love for her, so things are on the move. That episode is my first screen kiss, and you would think kissing would be an easy thing, but you throw those teeth in there, and a bunch of brown, Ferengi-colored makeup that gets all over her teeth and mouth, and she gets her lip caught on my tooth, and it's like a medical emergency; then you add the cameras and the lighting and it ain't as fun as it looks.

"Another interesting thing about 'Dr. Bashir, I Presume,' " the actor continues, "is that Quark points out what happened with Rom's first wife. That's something the fans wanted to know. He was so in love with his wife that he didn't have her sign anything when they got married, and his father-in-law took advantage of that and took all his money. That's why Quark is not a big believer in love."

Because Rom hasn't appeared in every episode of *DS9*, Grodénchik has had the opportunity to explore other acting opportunities (i.e. the lead in the horror yarn *Rumpelstiltskin*), including a small but rewarding role in *Apollo 13*. "It was cool to work with Ron Howard," the actor happily recalls. "It's funny, but where it has taken me several episodes to get comfortable on *Deep Space Nine*, Ron creates that atmosphere immediately. I'm glad he left me in his movie, because he cut his own father's lines, so I was thinking, 'If he cut his dad's lines, what does that mean for me?'

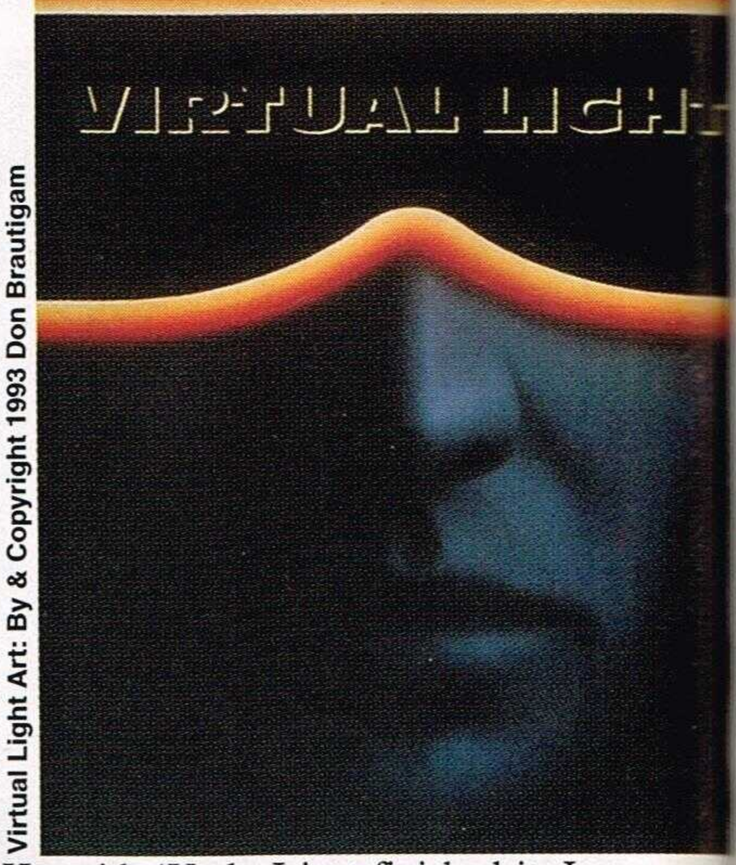
"I actually got scared, because I was in the middle of shooting 'The House of Quark' when they wanted me to come down and go to school—they had four days of schooling for everyone who worked in Mission Control. I thought I was going to lose the job, but they said come when you can. I wound up missing school, so I came in and spoke to the two technical advisors. They gave me a lesson on how to fly to the Moon, and then I looked at the tapes from the school, so it was a lot of work. One of the reasons the film has that look of authenticity is that every time we reached a trouble spot in the shooting, we asked the two advisors and they would write lines for us to say."

Grodénchik also made an appearance in *Sliders*, playing a shape-changing sorcerer's apprentice in "Dragonslide." His director was former *DS9* producer David Livingston, who had directed the actor in several episodes, including "The Nagus" and "Rules of Acquisition." "I read for something else and thought I did really well, and while they did not give me that job, they kept me in mind for this other part. I didn't have to wear makeup, either; I felt guilty, like someone was going to stop the camera any minute and say, 'Wait a minute, where's Max's makeup?' I felt I was getting away with something, because makeup took only 15 minutes. I must say the *Sliders* people were really lovely to work with, and I don't say that lightly. I'm pretty judgmental of other shows, and to get good work out of somebody, you should welcome them on your set. *Drew Carey* was like that, and so was *Sliders*."

With the new season of *Deep Space Nine* underway, Max Grodénchik is looking forward to finding out what the future holds for the now-married Rom. Pressed for a personal wish list of storylines he would like to see, the actor is simply content for now to wait for the next script. "I have everything I want. It's scary," he declares. "They'll probably run out of things to do for me; once you're promoted and get the babe and married on this show, I don't know what else can happen.

"If *Deep Space Nine* stops using me or kills off Rom, I would have to look into something else, but right now, I have enough to do, trying to keep my life together and get ready for the next show. I have no complaints, except I wish somebody had a manual to tell what to do with your life when you have everything you want!"

# WILLIAM GIBSON




Virtual Light Art: By & Copyright 1993 Don Brautigam

His novel *Idoru* may be based on a "celebrity who didn't literally exist," but SF writer William Gibson is a more substantial presence. Here's photographic proof.



Design & Layout: Mike Stewart

"I am not a Luddite," insists William Gibson, "but I'm not a technophile either." Despite being the acknowledged father of cyberpunk—the '80s SF subgenre that meshed punk aesthetics with a near-future gone digital—an impression has developed that Gibson is some kind of technophobe. It first arose when he confessed that he wrote his debut novel, *Neuromancer*, on a manual typewriter. "That's the result of too many Sunday supplement articles," he explains. "It has been foregrounded because it's too easy a lead. People forget that when I began, there were very, very few PCs around. The most sophisticated professional writing tool I knew of in 1984 was the IBM Selectric, with a change of type balls. Those things are moldering in landfills today."

Given the facts that *Neuromancer* was Gibson's first novel, represented a style revolution in science fiction *and* required a certain amount of effort on the reader's part, it may be surprising that he had little trouble getting it published. "Quite the contrary; it was commissioned," the writer confirms. "I had written five or six well-received short stories, but thought I was three or four years from being ready to write a novel. What happened was that editor Terry Carr was commissioning a series of first novels for Ace Books, and he got to me at an SF convention. He said, 'You'll write me a novel now.' I said, 'No, no, I'm not ready.' He replied, 'You're writing a novel, man, and I'm writing a check. You write the novel, I'll give you another check just like this one. You've got a year to do it.' It actually took about a year and a half, during which I lived in fear. And when I finished, I thought not only was it bad, but that it was probably the *worst* novel anyone had ever written. Terry, God bless him, was a very slow reader, so he had it for about six months and there was no response at all. Then, I ran into him at another convention and he was grinning widely. I said, 'Did you read my book?' He said, 'Yeah, I just finished it. I think it'll be OK.' "

## Neuromances

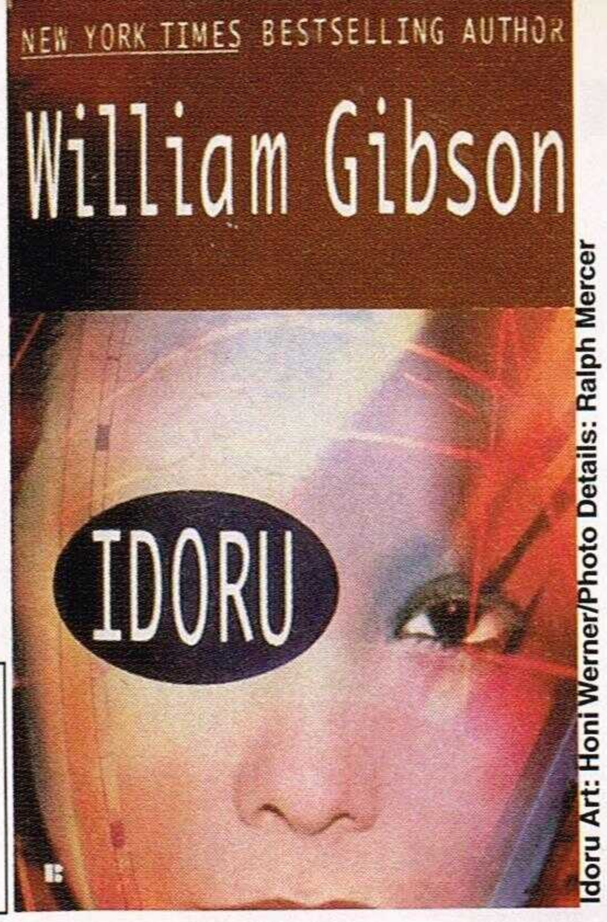
OK enough, it turned out, to win the Hugo, Nebula and Philip K. Dick awards. Not to mention spawning a whole new literary movement that has since spread its influence well beyond the genre. In view of his mainstream success, it's natural to wonder if Gibson—previously profiled in STARLOG #145 & #200—has a problem with still being labeled a science fiction writer. "Well, it's my native literary culture, such as I have one," he notes. "I'm certainly not ashamed of being from there, I just don't think that's necessarily what I do today.

"I'm aware that when I write a book, it passes almost instantly into a sort of myth machine," he adds. "There are people on the Internet who pay entirely too much attention to what I'm writing. I know that *anything* I write will go into that system, and there's no way of predicting how it will come out on the other side. Sometimes it can be quite dismaying. I try to avoid looking at the discussion groups on the Internet when people are talking about my work, because I can find it very disappointing. Often, their readings fall far short of the reading I'm trying for, in terms of the most naive possible interpretation of my work, which is that it's about the future. I've always protested that it's *never* about the future, because no one knows what the future is going to be. It's always in some sense about the present.

"I'm exploring the present, or trying to reach the present. The world we live in is so strange and changes so quickly that we walk around pretending things are more stable than they really are. We need to do that to stay sane. We all have those CNN moments where we turn on the television and see the unthinkable, and realize the world is never going to

As his future comes true, writer William Gibson remains focused on our present.

By STAN NICHOLLS




Idoru Art: Honi Werner/Photo Details: Ralph Mercer

Gibson's *Idoru,* now in paperback, explores the cult of personality through a celebrity so famous she's virtually real. Or not.

be the same again. That facade of the post-modern is what I'm trying to induce in my books. It's the manipulation of cognitive dissonance, in the same way SF writers deliberately induce cognitive dissonance. That feels valid aesthetically because I'm temporarily making people a little more aware of how weird the world already is. And I do this in the conceit of a fictional future."

Gibson can afford neither technophilia nor technophobia, he says. "I see it as my professional duty to be as profoundly ambivalent about this stuff as I possibly can be. One of the things I've been able to do fairly effectively is introduce the idea that often the most radical changes a new technology brings to us will be some inadvertent, unanticipated use nobody thought of. The people who invented beepers and cellular phones didn't expect to alter the ecology of drug dealing in American cities; cellular phones changed whole neighborhoods in Detroit and Los Angeles. The inventors of the video camera weren't thinking of Rodney King—of people using video cameras to police the police."

Science fiction, of course, has always had a rather spotty record at predicting the future. "My favorite is television," says Gibson. "The only example I know of a work of science fiction predicting anything that resembles the culture of broadcast television that we live with today was by a mainstream author: E.M. Forster's *The Machine Stops*. None of the genre guys got it right. Genre SF television was always a videophone, which is a technology we've actually had since the '60s but which no one wants to buy."

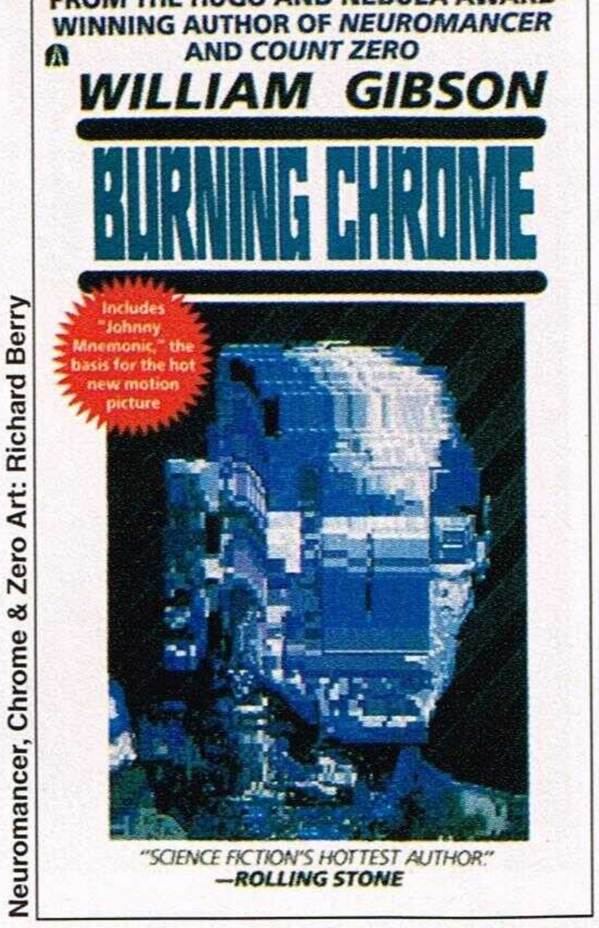
Gibson's seventh and latest book, *Idoru*, is set in the kind of hi-tech, corporate-dominated near-future all his novels occupy. *Idoru* translates from the Japanese as "idol singers," and learning about them inspired Gibson to write the book. "I ran across a magazine article a couple of years ago about the Japanese pop industry," he explains. "It described the Idoru scene, which involves the regular and rather relentless production of very disposable young girl singing stars, who usually have fairly brief careers and often don't really sing the records that are released. It's taken for granted, even by the audience, that this stuff is made up in [a kind of] Tin Pan Alley. This article mentioned one girl who didn't exist at all. They had sort of forgotten to lay on a person to physically represent the product. Nevertheless, she became very popular, perhaps because she didn't exist. She had an unusually long and active career in which she wound up having gallery shows of her watercolors and publishing several books of poetry. I found that delightful, and became fascinated by the idea of a celebrity who didn't literally exist." In the novel, Gibson goes the whole way and makes his Idoru a virtual-reality construct.

"I SUSPECT THAT ONE DAY ALL OF US WILL OWN JUST ONE BOOK."

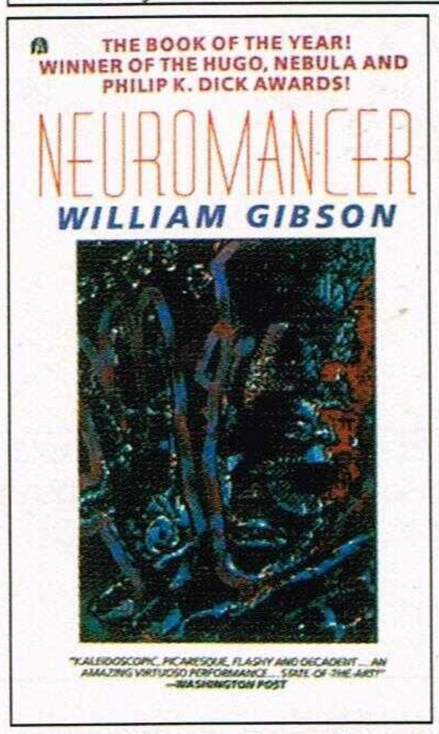
## Burning Chromes

One of the book's central characters, Colin Laney, is a net-runner—a researcher who surfs the electronic super-highway seeking information "signatures" left by celebrities he's paid to investigate. Laney's skill at this has become so intuitive that it seems almost supernatural. "That's deliberate to an extent," says Gibson. "I wanted to play with the suggestion that there's something post-rational about his talent. With hindsight, I've come to suspect that what I was doing unconsciously was trying to cook up a sort of fictional objective correlative to something I do when I write. What people sometimes mistake for my alleged predictive capacity is actually much closer to what Laney does with the nodal points in the net. I'm looking at flows of data, and the points I intuitively seize on for my fiction are those at which change seems more likely to emerge."

As it happens, Gibson's visit to London, where this interview took place, coincided with the launch of Safety Net, a code of practice put together by a group of Internet service providers designed to keep pornography off the net. It's a self-regulatory system reminiscent of the Hayes Office or the Comics Code Authority. But Gibson considers the technology, and the people using it, somewhat smarter than the regulators, and doubts Safety Net will succeed. "The nature of the Internet is such that I don't think it would work. There are now forms of encryption that allow you to bury a text, a piece of music, a picture, practically anything, into a graphic image. So, you could hide all the dirty bits of *Ulysses* in a postcard of the *Mona Lisa*, and as far as I know, there's no way to crack it. Put that out all over the




*Burning Chrome*, Gibson's first anthology, begins with "Johnny Mnemonic," a story that would eventually become the Keanu Reeves movie.



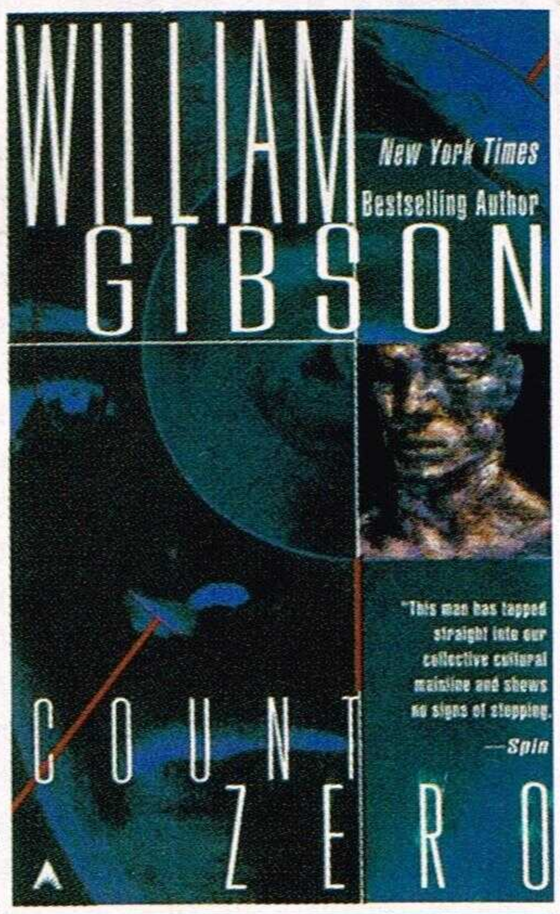

Neuromancer, Chrome & Zero Art: Richard Berry

*Though it's his vanguard, futuristic, Cyberpunk opus, Gibson churned out Neuromancer on a manual typewriter.*

Internet and the people who know what the image contains could download it. That's just one possibility.

"You have to remember that the Internet grew out of an American project designed to facilitate communications after a major nuclear war, with the assumption that most of society would be gone. So in a sense, it's designed to evade control. The Canadian government tried shutting down parts of the Internet a few years ago because there was a news ban on a murder trial; people in Canada were getting banned information on this trial through the net. The government was going in and actually shutting down sections. But people were still able to get this information because the system started to do what it was designed to do—it switched around the disabled nodes. The Internet is another of those unintended consequences of technology; no one really dreamed this thing up, it just sort of evolved itself, which I find fascinating. The Internet is transnational and, in some weird way, post-political. It's a very interesting phenomenon that hints at so many new possibilities. I'm loathe to see it crippled in any way or brought in line for the sake of 'family values.' "

Gibson agrees that the people who should be at the forefront of exploring ways of using the new technology are traditional book publishers. Yet they seem the most hesitant to jump on the bandwagon. This may be partly due to a failure to recognize the opportunities the technology offers, and partly because no one has yet come up with a way to make something like the Internet commercially viable. Essentially still a 19th-century industry as the world prepares to enter the 21st, book publishing runs a risk of letting the parade go by. "It's also such a cottage industry in terms of market penetration," Gibson points out. "I can't vouch for the accuracy of his figures, but somebody told me recently that one in 300 Americans will buy a new Stephen King novel. That's not much for someone who has the broadest and deepest market penetration, at least in the United States, of any living author. I bet more than one in 300 will buy the new REM album, or go see a new movie.




*"I'm always on the lookout," says Gibson, "for some particularly grotesque misuse of technology that I can add to the next book." Such as in Count Zero.*

"I suspect that one day all of us will own just *one* book, and that book will be whatever we choose it to be at a given moment. The book is such a perfectly evolved object, yet if you look at it in a certain way, it's a mass of decaying vegetable matter. We can't go on making books out of trees. We need trees more than we need books.

"So, I think we'll have to come up with an electronic equivalent that will provide all of the look and feel of a book, but if you want Charles Dickens, it's Dickens, and if you want *Idoru*, it's *Idoru*. That doesn't seem too far-fetched to me."

Gibson is obviously well up on developments in technology, but when he embarks on a new novel, is it enough to simply be aware of the implications of all this change? Does he also undertake any actual research? "I do research all the time," he answers. "It's an ongoing process. I'm always on the lookout for some new bit of technology or some particularly grotesque misuse of technology that I can add to my hoard of bits and pieces for the next book. But I don't systematically search unless I run into something that specifically requires it. What you have to do is just try to keep your eyes open all the time, or you might miss something."

As to his working methods, Gibson quotes W.B. Yeats. "He said, 'Literary revision is the only time in life a man has a chance to genuinely improve himself.' You can't talk about drafts any more, but I constantly revise the whole manuscript on disk. Every day I start from word one and go through twiddling with little bits. For me, more happens rewriting than writing. I'll discover implications I missed the first time and pursue them."

This system must work well, because William Gibson has never had any significant amount of outside editorial input on his work. Even his first novel, *Neuromancer*, had just one phrase changed. "And I've been very lucky ever since," he laughs. "I don't think I've ever had anyone who presumed to understand what I was doing sufficiently to demand big changes!"

"FOR ME, MORE HAPPENS REWRITING THAN WRITING."

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#93 Donner. Lithgow. John Hurt. Robert Englund. Simon Jones. *Dr. Who. Jedi* FX 5. Monty Python. $10.

#94 Doohan. Sayles. William Katt. John Barry. Michelle Pfeiffer. *V. Jedi* FX 6. $5.

#95 Grace Jones. Matthew Broderick. Butrick. Hauer. *Mad Max III. Cocoon.* $5.

#96 9th Anniversary. Peter Cushing. Jonathan Harris. Tina Turner. John Cleese. Moore. *Jedi* FX 7. $6.

#97 Mel Gibson. Ron Howard. River Phoenix. Chris Walken. Donner. Glenn. *BTTF.* $10.

#98 Michael J. Fox. George Miller. Dante. Jennifer Beals. $5.

#99 Anthony Daniels. Zemeckis. "Cubby" Broccoli. *Mad Max.* $5.

#100 Lucas. Nimoy. Carpenter. Ellison. Harryhausen. Nichols. Matheson. Cushing. Roddenberry. Irwin Allen. $6.

#101 Ellison. Ridley Scott. Sting. Roddy McDowall. Macnee. Takei. Fred Ward. $5.

#102 Spielberg. Mel Blanc. Michael Douglas. Irwin Allen 2. Alley. Doug Adams. Peter Davison. $5.

#103 Daryl Hannah. Hauer. Bennett. Bottin. Elmer Bernstein. $5.

#104 Peter Mayhew. Stephen Collins. Ken Johnson. *V. Outer Limits.* $5.

#105 Lambert. Colin Baker. Jonathan Pryce. Grace Lee Whitney. *Planet of the Apes. V* EP Guide. Japanimation. $5.

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#115 Kelley. Chris Reeve. Jenette Goldstein. Tom Baker. $150. Very rare.

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#132 12th Anniversary. Howard. Alan Young. Russ Tamblyn. Janet Leigh. Colin Baker. *Robocop. Roger Rabbit. Beetlejuice. ST:TNG* FX. $6

#133 Bob Hoskins. C.J. Cherryh. Roy Dotrice. Patrick Culliton. Sirtis. Goldsmith. Badler. *R. Rabbit. V. B&B.* $10.

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#135 *R. Rabbit. B7.* Patrick McGoohan. Jerry Sohl. Marta Kristen. Van Williams. *Alien Nation.* $6.

#136 Mandy Patinkin. Jock Mahoney. Carpenter. Sohl 2. *Trek: Lost Generation.* $5.

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#143 Perlman. Kelley. Robert Picardo. Tracy Tormé. *Indy. Batman.* SF costuming. $50.

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#145 Tim Burton. Moranis. John Rhys-Davies. William Gibson. Shatner 2. Dalton. Moranis. Cobb. *RR* FX 2. $6.

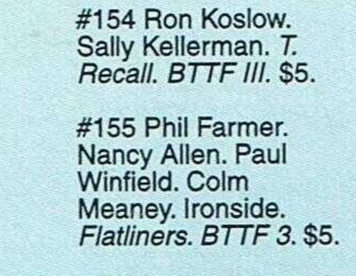
#146 Matt Frewer. Andre Norton. Phil Akin. Cesar Romero. Doohan. Takei. *Abyss. RR* FX 3. $10.

#147 Danny Elfman. Nimoy. John Varley. River Phoenix. Norton 2. Koenig. CD Barnes. *B7* Ep Guide. *RR* FX 3. $10.

#148 Tony Jay. Julie Newmar. Chaves. Biehn. Warner. *RR* FX 5. *B7* EP G 2. $100.

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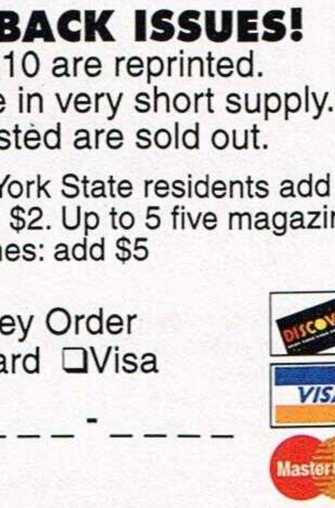
#167 Pertwee. Mary E Mastrantonio. *Creature from Black Lagoon.* $6.

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#172 Koenig. Brian Aldiss. *B7. B&B.* $6.

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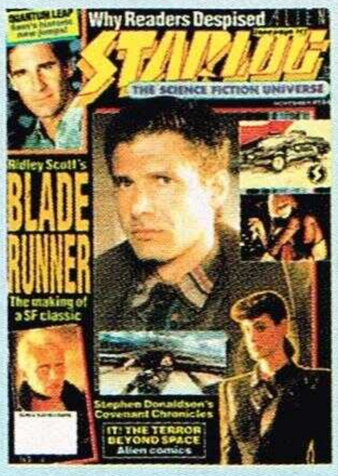
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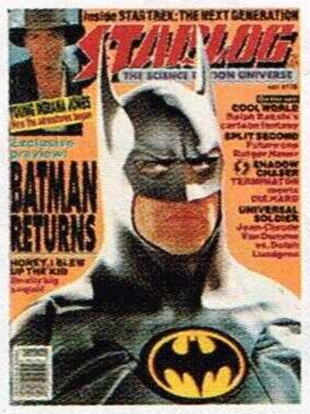
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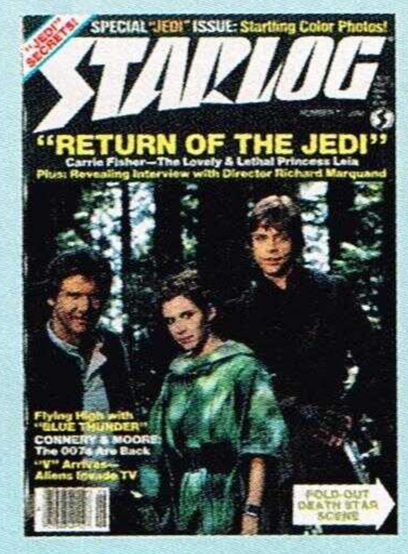
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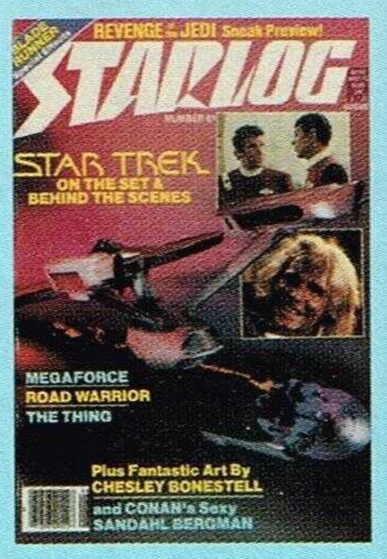
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# KNIGHT DRIVER



Meet the team of *Team Knight Rider*: Trek (Nick Wechsler), Erica West (Kathy Trageser), Duke DePalma (Duane Davis), Kyle Stewart (Brixton Karnes) and Jenny Andrews (Christine Steel).

Brixton Karnes is at the wheel of TV's *Team Knight Rider*.

By MARC SHAPIRO

Photo: Jim Cornfield

Design & Layout: Yvonne Jang

Brixton Karnes is a no B.S. kind of guy, which is why there's no B.S. in his description of the TV series that will, hopefully, catapult him from obscurity to stardom, *Team Knight Rider*.

"Hey, it's *not* Shakespeare!" Karnes roars, laughing easily as he describes the show. "*NYPD Blue* is safe at this point. You will groan and roll your eyes but, while you're rolling your eyes, you're going to be watching the show and liking it."

Karnes is talking about *Team Knight Rider* during a rare day off. The fantasy adventure series is churning out action at the breakneck pace of an episode every five days. In late summer, 11 episodes are already done. So, the actor admits that "it's all a blur at this point. It has action, *lots* of action," he chuckles. "There's just enough dialogue to advance the story to the next explosion."

*Team Knight Rider* focuses on a group of elite, specially trained undercover operatives who are called upon to solve problems that conventional law enforcement and government agencies can't. The five-person team is aided in their "*A-Team* meets *Knight Rider*" business, as Karnes describes it, by five specially designed talking cars that reflect the personality and demeanor of their drivers. The premise doesn't sound too deep or complicated and, according to Karnes, it isn't.

"We're the good guys and they're the bad guys," laughs the actor in explaining the complexity of the storylines. "And one way or another, we're pretty much saving the world every week."

## Character-Driven

This kind of action show has its ensemble group of divergent characters and, in the case of *Team Knight Rider*, just as divergent a group of four-wheel drives. Karnes portrays Kyle Stewart, the former CIA operative who leads Team Knight Rider from behind the wheel of a know-it-all sport utility vehicle called Dante. Christine (*Riven: MYST II*) Steel plays Jenny Andrews, a former Marine and martial arts expert whose cautious and driven life is countered by Domino, a red Mustang who's always tempting her to take risks. Duane (*Universal Soldier*) Davis is the former cop and boxer Duke DePalma who rides into action in the all-terrain vehicle called Beast. Kathy (*Little Girl Lost*) Trageser plays the mysterious con woman Erica West who wages a constant battle of wills with a hybrid, goody-two-shoes motorcycle called Kat. Nick (*The Lazarus Man*) Wechsler is the group's slacker techno-wizard Trek, who devises elaborate schemes with his computer-driven high-pursuit vehicle Plato.

The show, which is shot in a whirlwind of simultaneous first- and second-unit action all over Los Angeles, is produced by Gil Wadsworth and Scott McAboy and executive producers Rick Copp and David A. Goodman, the team behind the 1996 TV movie, *The Adventures of Captain Zoom*.

*Team Knight Rider* is another attempt, like the unsold TV movie pilot *Knight Rider 2000* before it, to update the successful early '80s *Knight Rider*, which starred *Baywatch*'s David Hasselhoff (STARLOG #78). But Karnes doesn't really know about any basic differences between that hit show and his current one. "I'm one of those freaks of nature who *never* saw the original show," he offers. "I know that's a freaky thing to say. I knew it starred Hasselhoff and that he had a talking car named KITT, but when it comes to that original show, I didn't have a clue."

Consequently, the actor had no preconceptions when he went in to audition for *Team Knight Rider*. "I went in and read some scenes. They liked what I was doing so they brought me back." Karnes offers that researching *Team Knight Rider* is pretty much limited to what's in the script. "You really can't research a show like this one. My character's backstory is that he's a former member of the CIA and leader of the team. They've given me a little bit more meat on the backstory by giving me a father who was also in the CIA and was a turncoat, so Kyle feels a great responsibility for making up for what his father did. That's it in a nutshell. I actually studied the CIA when I was in college, so that helped. I'm an athletic guy and I've always kept in shape and that really comes in handy on something like this. Knowing how to drive probably helped, too."

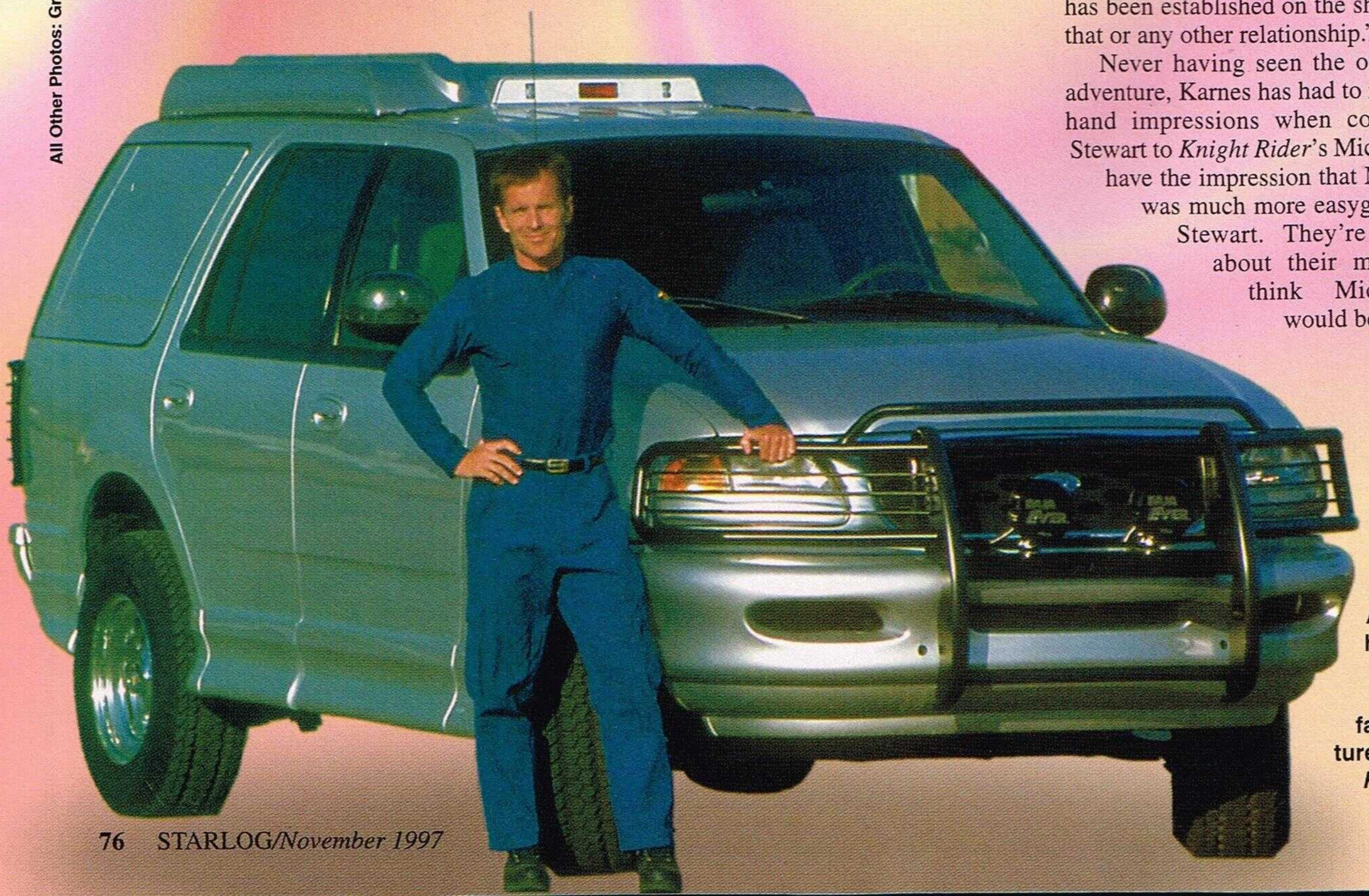
Stunts and car acrobatics are obviously the big draw on *Team Knight Rider*, but Karnes maintains that the actors are not being overshadowed by the autos. "There's a good balance between the action and characterization. We all have our histories and hang-ups. We've all got personalities that play into the stories. My character wants to do right and correct all the wrongs in the world. I'm the guy with all the angst."

**"One way or another, we're pretty much saving the world every week."**

With two female members of *Team Knight Rider*, the inevitable question is: Will romance ignite amid the screeching tires and smoky explosions? "There's a definite chemistry between Jenny and Kyle," Karnes relates. "They both know there's a job to do but, at times, they both notice each other in a non-professional way. Right now, nothing has been established on the show in terms of that or any other relationship."

Never having seen the original fantasy adventure, Karnes has had to rely on second-hand impressions when comparing Kyle Stewart to *Knight Rider*'s Michael Knight. "I have the impression that Michael Knight was much more easygoing than Kyle Stewart. They're both serious about their missions, but I think Michael Knight would be more likely to

All Other Photos: Greg Degler



**At the wheel of his sport utility vehicle Dante, Karnes finds fantastic adventure in this *Knight Rider* updating.**

All Photos: Copyright 1997 Universal Television Enterprises



**Wechsler and Karnes confer on a plot point, the actor noting, "Hey, it's *not* Shakespeare!"**

**Explosive stunts make up some of the series' action, but Karnes admits, "I'm *not* the one crashing through brick walls."**

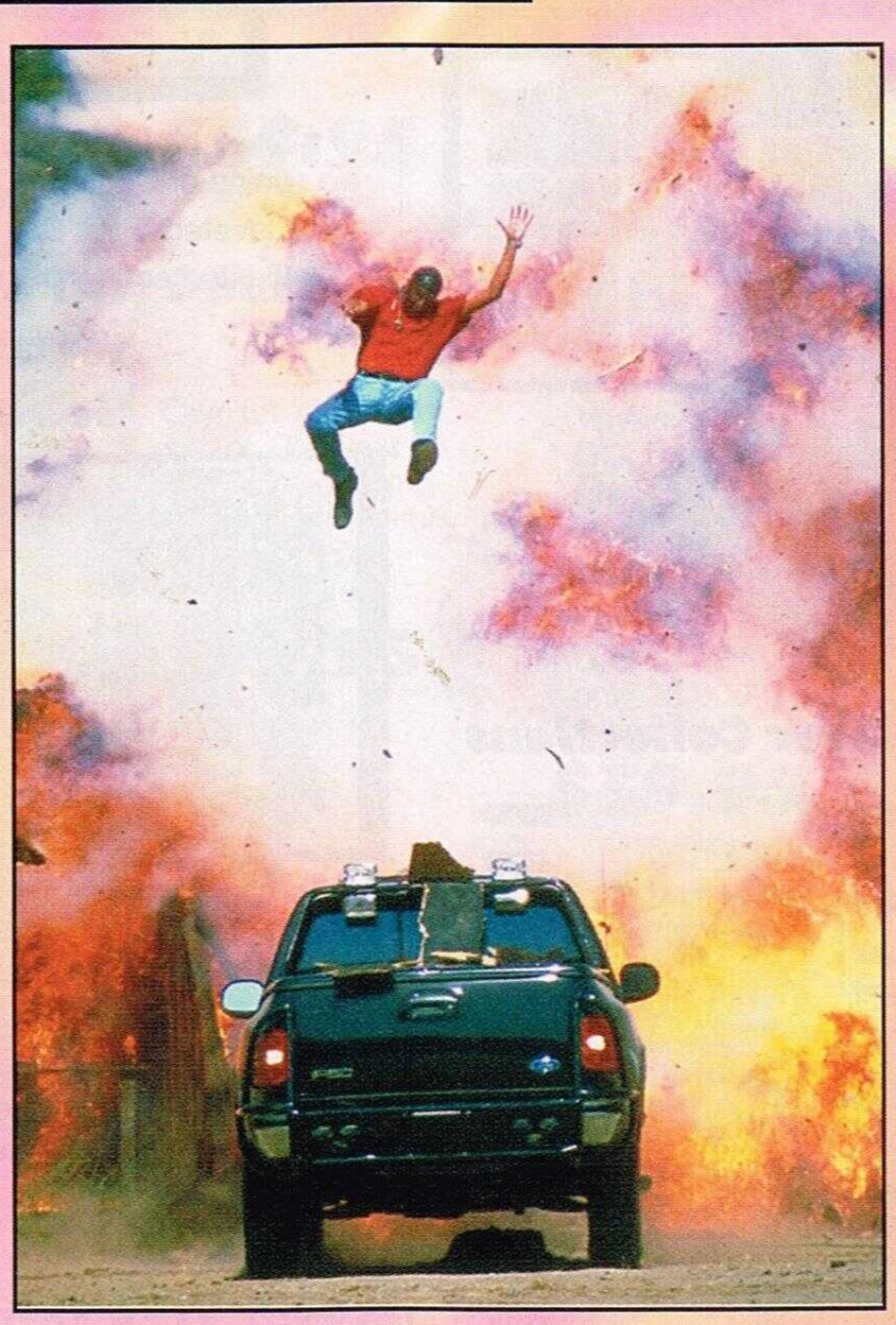
be the life of the party." Again admitting that "it's all a blur at this point," the actor offers a few examples of the storylines: "In the pilot, we're faced with saving the world from a nuclear disaster. There's a story about a guy with a non-gasoline driven car who's trying to destroy the world's auto supply. We have an episode where we save some villagers from being wiped out. But it's pretty much the same every week. When I get home from work every day, my girl friend asks me how it went and I'll tell her, 'The usual thing. I just saved the world again.' "

Karnes gets help saving the world from a battalion of stunt people. "I'm *not* the one crashing through brick walls. When a car goes flying through the air, it's not me. The extent of my stunt driving is hitting a mark, stopping the car and getting out."

But he's quick to point out that *Team Knight Rider* is not totally stuntman-driven. "We're all doing *some* stunts. I've been jumping on and off cars and I recently did a stunt where I jumped from a ramp to a car and then to another car. We have a lot of fights and we're always running around. We had an episode where I'm hanging from a helicopter and another where I jumped off a roof. We're not doing everything, but we're doing quite a bit.

"We have a great stunt team, but it's pretty flexible when it comes to us doing our own stunts. There have been times when I've had to talk myself into doing certain stunts because I wanted to do them so badly. And there have been other times where I just looked at what the script was saying and I told the stunt people, '*You* can do it.' "

*Team Knight Rider*'s primary SF element concerns the relationships between the humans and their cars. "It's not like Hal from *2001*," Karnes explains. "The relationship between the cars and their drivers is more akin to teammates conversing on how to solve a problem. What's interesting—and often funny—is that each of the cars seems to know just what to say to get their driver's goat. In a sense, they are the polar opposites of their human drivers so it often gets humorous. But hey! We talk to cars for a living. It doesn't *get* more humorous than that. I mean, there's *nothing* really heavy going on here. The cars keep us in line and we keep them in line. It's a lot more than, 'There go the bad guys. Go chase them.' "



## Career-Driven

Karnes, born and raised in Syosset, New York, was a three-sport guy in high school who seemed headed for a pro-baseball career when he developed some physical problems in college. "I had a rotator cuff injury which put an end to my baseball career. At that point, I sat down and decided what I did and did not want to do with my life."

He briefly considered journalism, but his adventurous nature led him to acting. "I knew acting was going to be difficult. But I also knew acting was an occupation where the challenge would never end. I liked the idea of not knowing where I was going to be."

Karnes moved to New York City where he paid the bills by doing commercials (he was the guy jumping off the waterfall in the Mountain Dew commercial) and did some theater "for very little money." But, by 1987, "acting opportunities had pretty much dried up in New York. So," he says, "I jumped on my motorcycle and came out to LA."

Karnes arrived cold. No agent. No contacts. But he persisted and, after a year-and-a-half of knocking on doors, landed an agent and began making the rounds. His television credits include a recurring role on *The Client*, guest shots on *The Father Dowling Mysteries*, *Murder, She Wrote*, *Silk Stalkings* and *Sisters* and semi-regular roles on the daytime soaps *Days of Our Lives* and *The Young and The Restless*.

His lone film credit, he laughs, was *Tank Girl*. "I ended up as a dead body in the sand. I shot for three weeks and had dialogue and a *real* part and you would have seen all that if the movie had been made as scripted. But what the script was and what actually hit the screen were two different things."

The actor, perhaps thinking he has found too much in his new job to laugh about, does insist that the process of making *Team Knight Rider* is *serious* acting business. "We're a talented ensemble group of actors. And we're committed to making the audience believe this is serious business and for that to work, we really have to buy into it. We're not looking outside what's going on, winking at the camera and saying, 'Isn't this stupid?' We're playing this deadly serious. If there's going to be any laughing done, it's going to be the audience laughing.

"We're not playing this as a farce, but there is some comedy," he continues. "We recently did a scene where I'm trying to take out a car being driven by this mad scientist. He's swerving, trying to knock me off. I finally open up his gas tank, pull out an AlkaSeltzer and drop it in the tank, stalling out the car and saving the world. There's a lot of that kind of thing going on."

Karnes laughs a great deal at the notion that *Team Knight Rider* is, in terms of tone, the equivalent of *Baywatch*. "Not hardly! It's definitely not that. You won't see me running slow motion with a musical montage playing behind me." But Brixton Karnes, ever the realist, does predict that *Team Knight Rider* will ultimately be a people's favorite rather than a critical one. "The initial reaction from critics is going to be to roll their eyes and laugh. I realize this show is going to be an uphill battle. I can just imagine what the critics are going to say. But they're critics. That's what they do."

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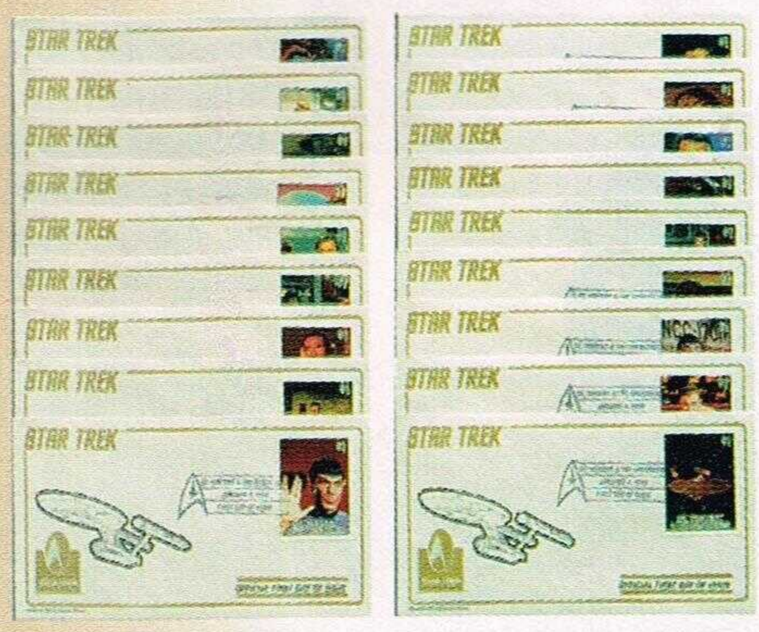
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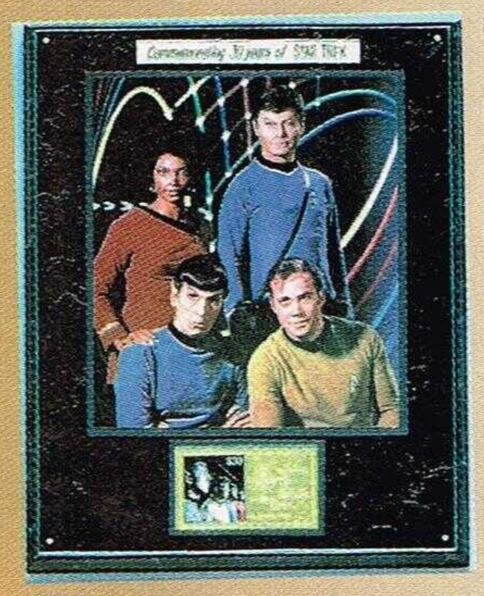
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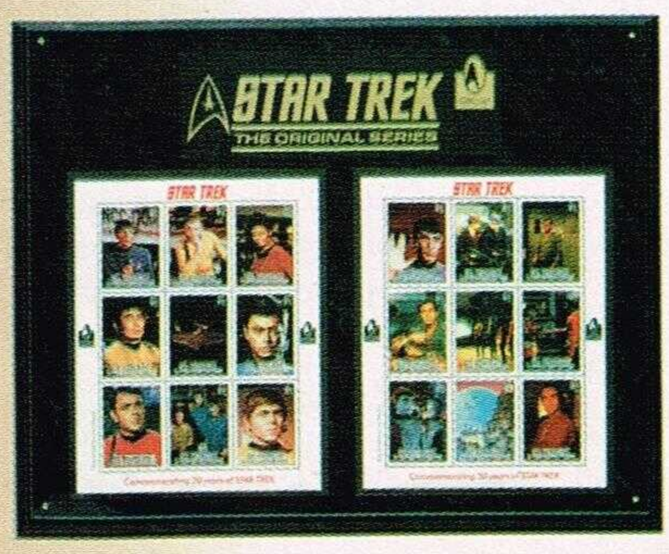


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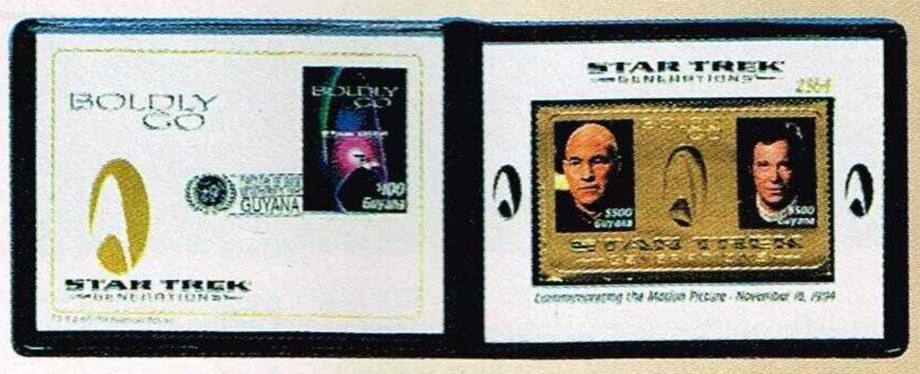
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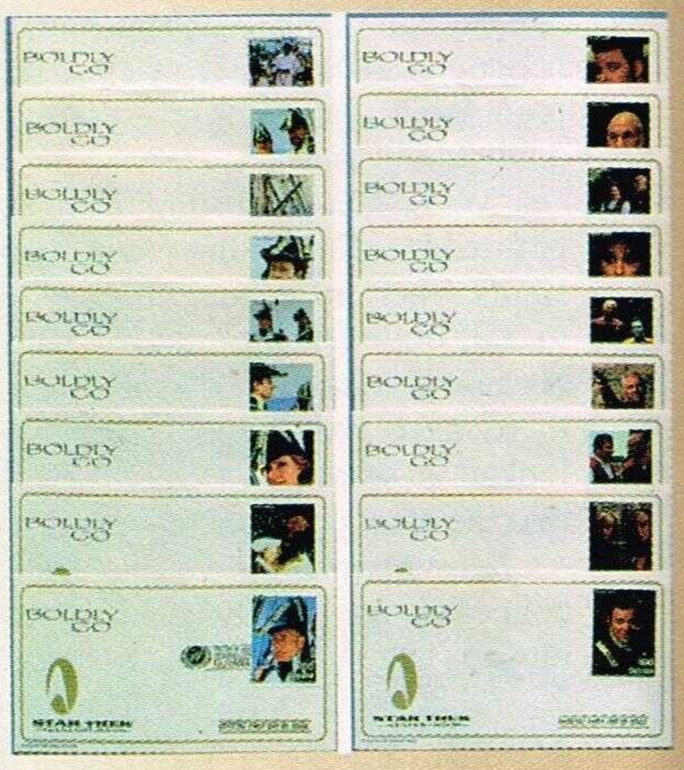
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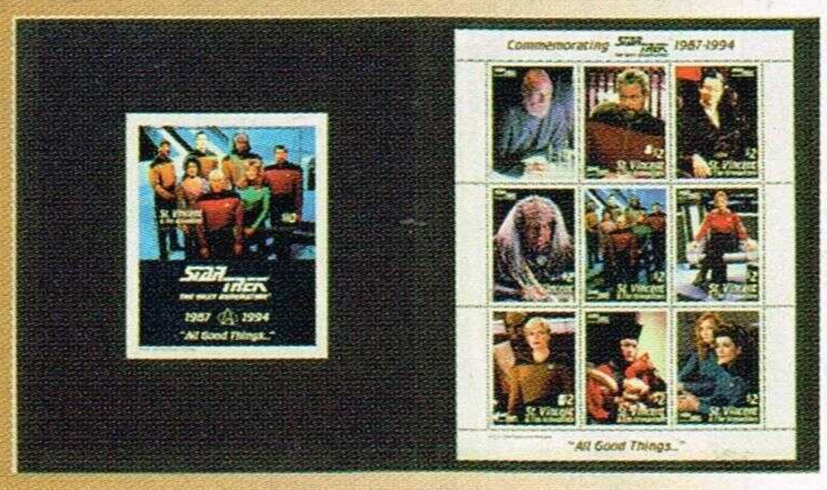
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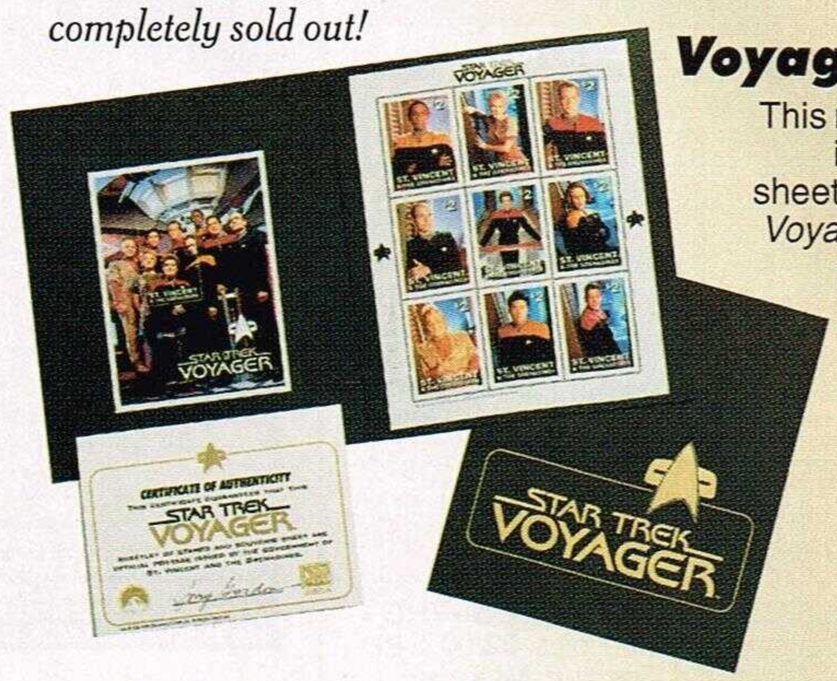
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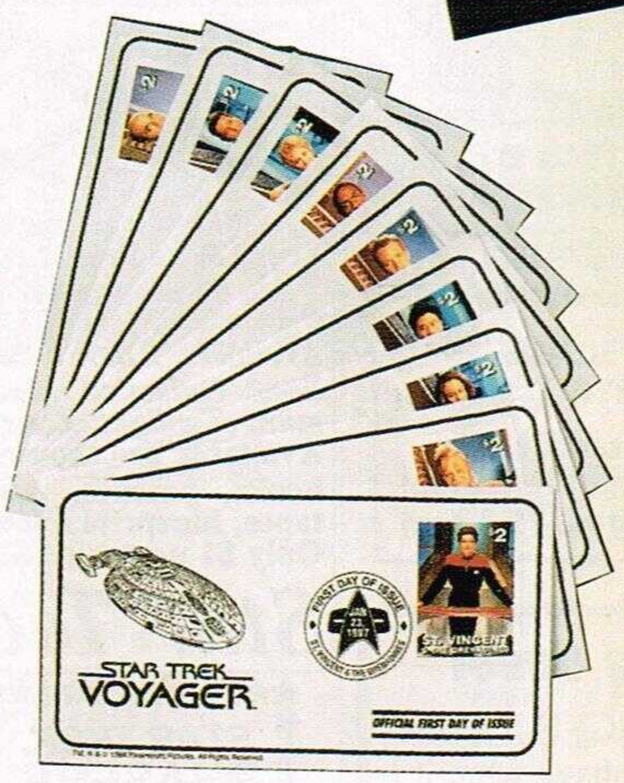
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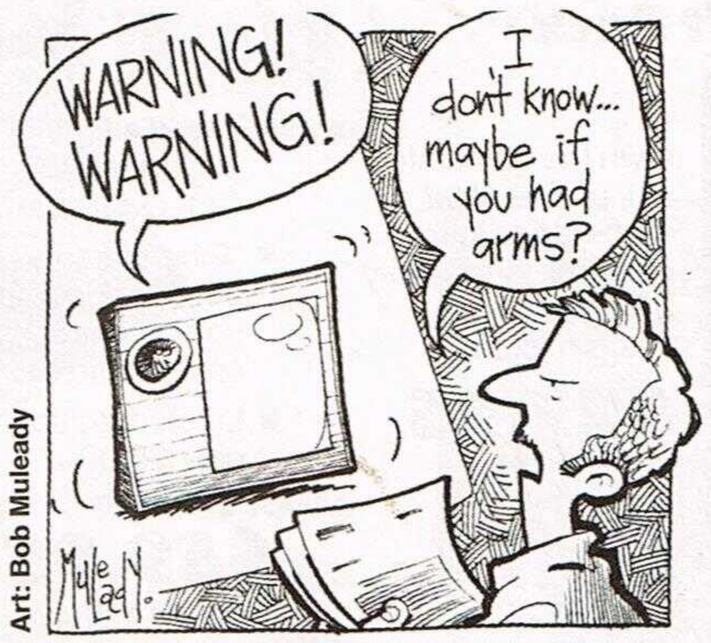
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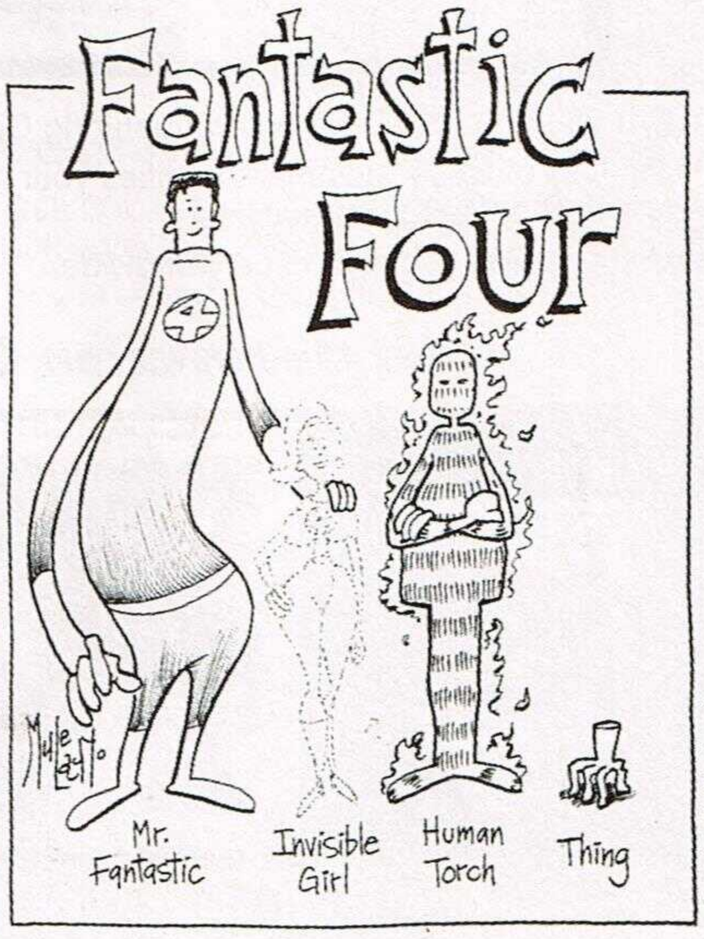



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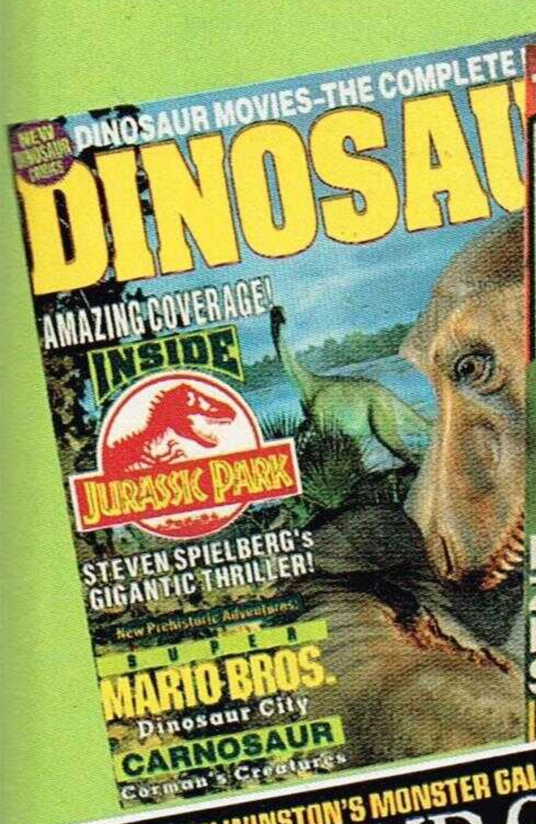
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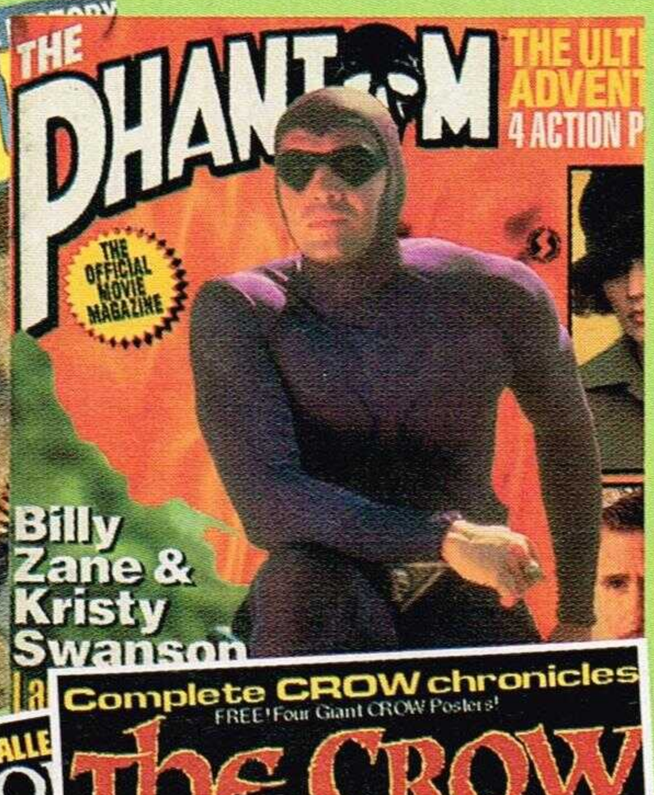
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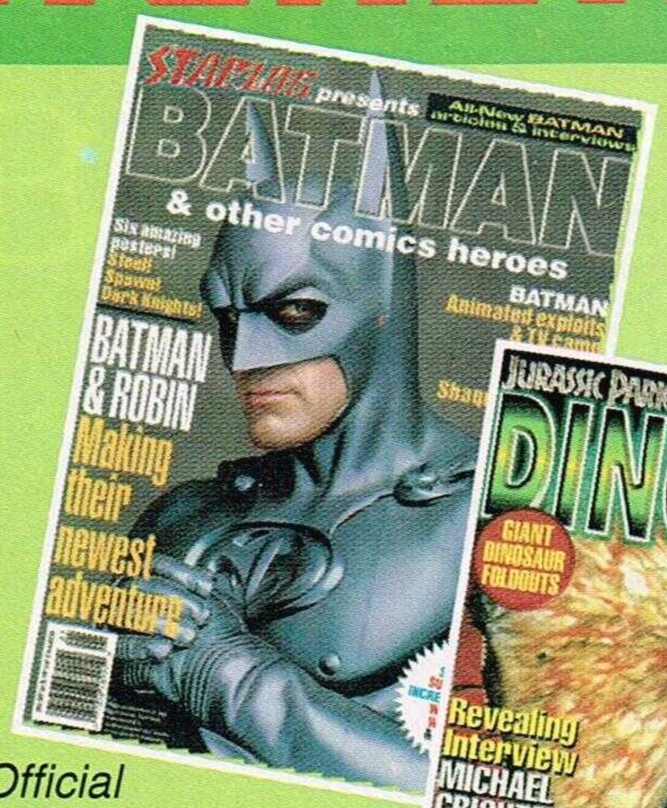















BATMAN AND OTHER COMICS HEROES

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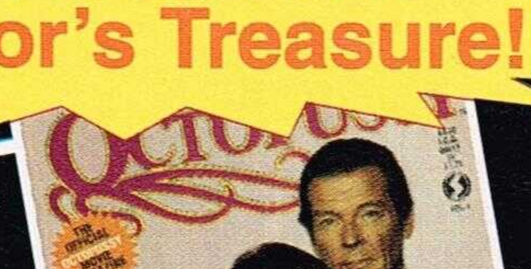
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"I'm not a swimmer. The production company [for *The Man from Atlantis*] had pretty well decided on me as the character before they knew whether I could swim or would sink like a rock. I've never done *anything* before. Well, I auditioned for *Star Wars*—but I didn't get it."

—Patrick Duffy

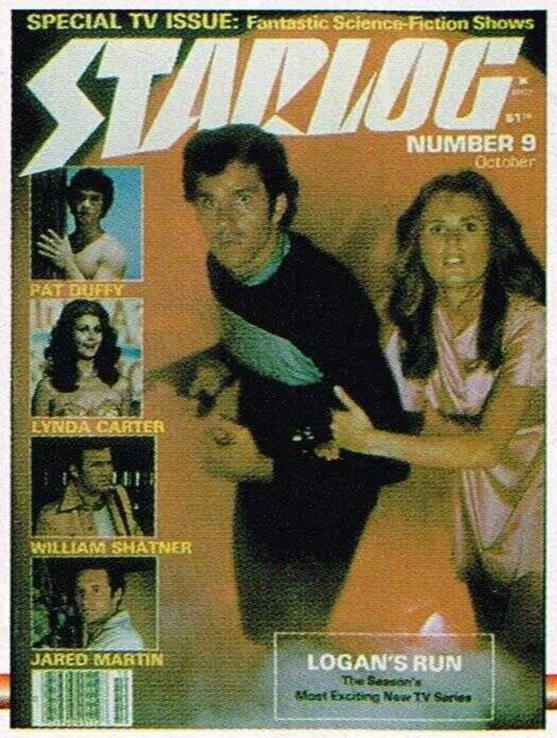
**Interview: David Houston, #9**

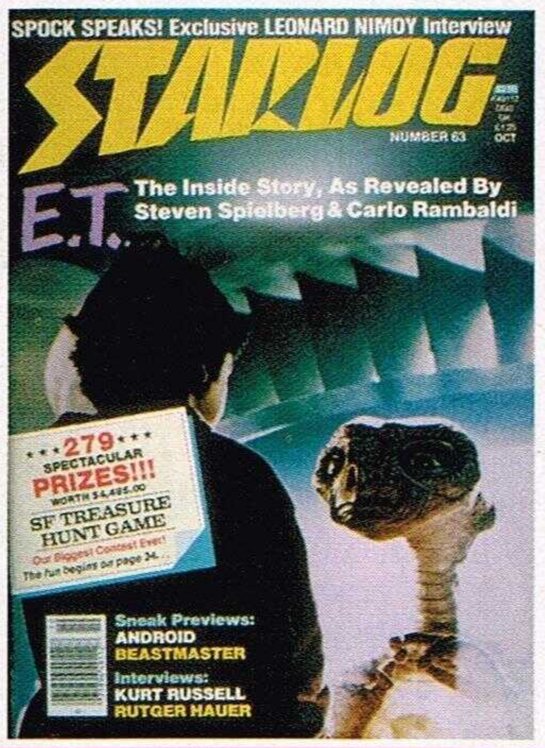
## 15 Years Ago

"I was always planning a sequel to *E.T.* There are many more stories to be explored. I would not want to let down a number of people who would have my hide if I *didn't* do a sequel."

—Steven Spielberg

**Interview: Ed Naha, #63**







my *ass*?' I've gotten a reputation because I see how a director is ruining a movie and try to make it better."

—Klaus Kinski

**Interview: Ed Naha, #63**

## 10 Years Ago

"Encounter at Farpoint," the premiere episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation,* completed its filming on Thursday, June 25, at about 6:30 p.m. The cast and crew immediately adjourned to a party at an adjacent soundstage.

**Column: David Gerrold, #123**

And how is Courteney Cox, who plays Julie in the film, supposed to return to normal life after her encounter with the *Masters of the Universe*? "That *is* the question, isn't it? Well, He-Man will take care of her. She can stay at my place."

—Dolph Lundgren

**Interview: Carr D'Angelo, #123**

## Five Years Ago

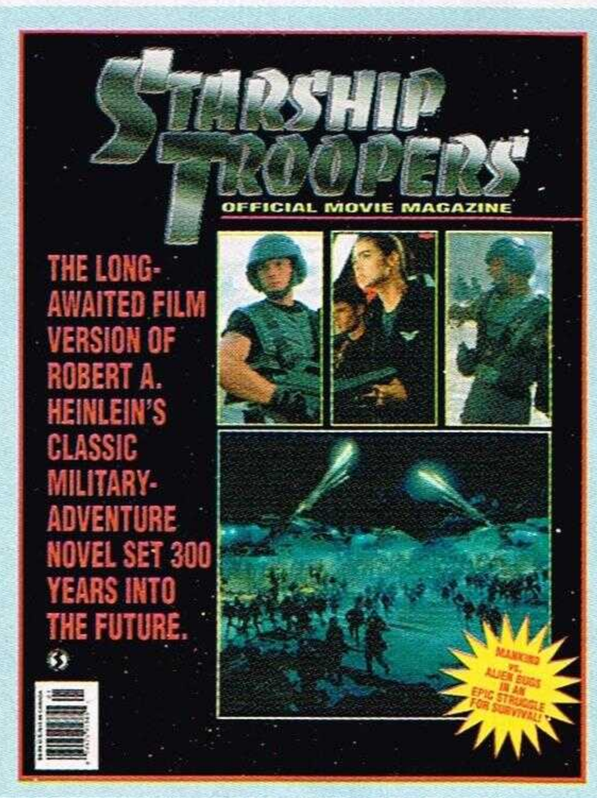
"I think Michelle Pfeiffer was kind of freaked out by it. When we had scenes together [as the Penguin and Catwoman in *Batman Returns*], I would always grunt and growl at her and look at her kind of funny. She tended to stay out of my way when we weren't doing scenes."

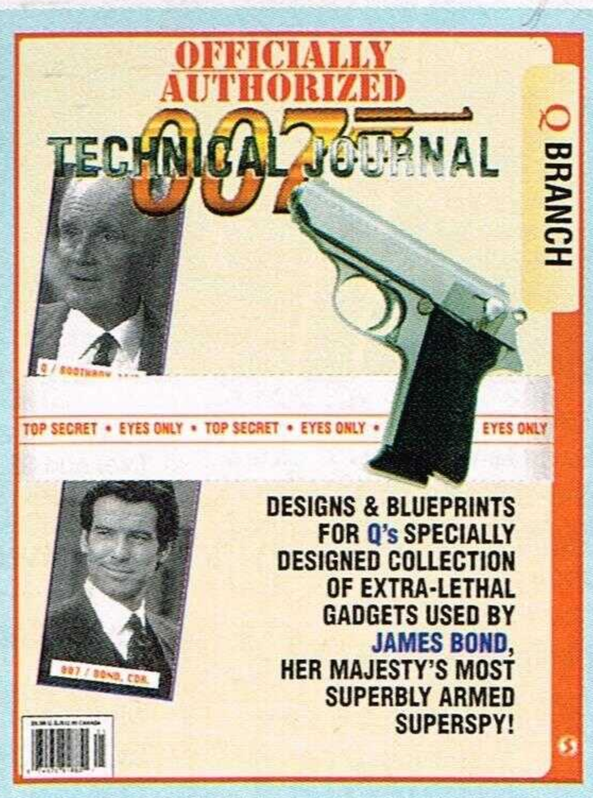
—Danny DeVito

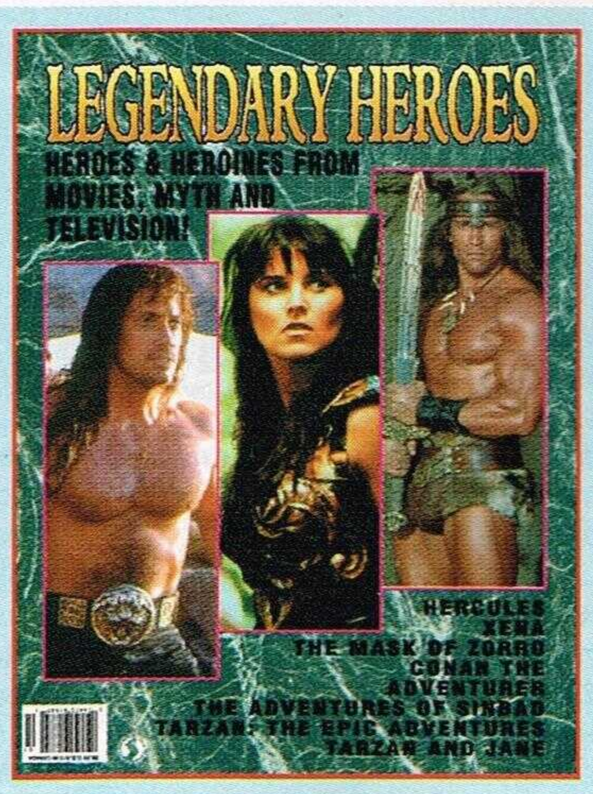
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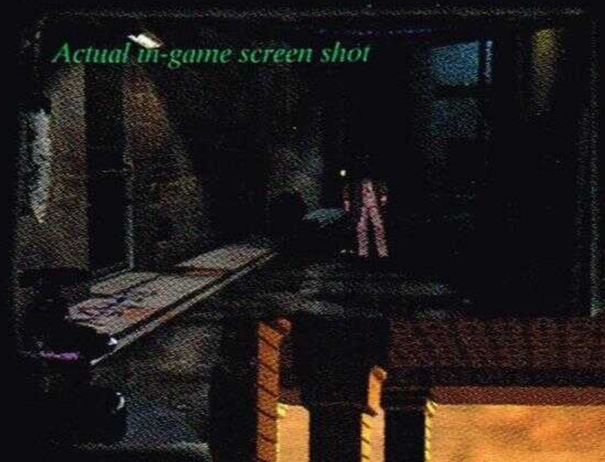
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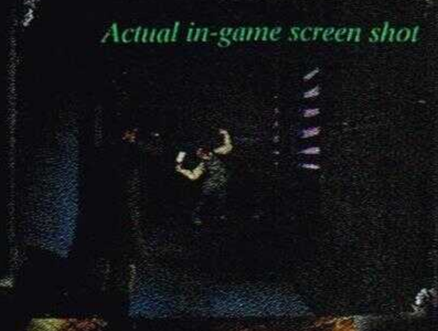
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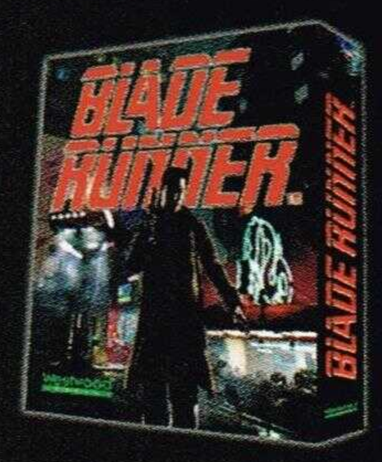
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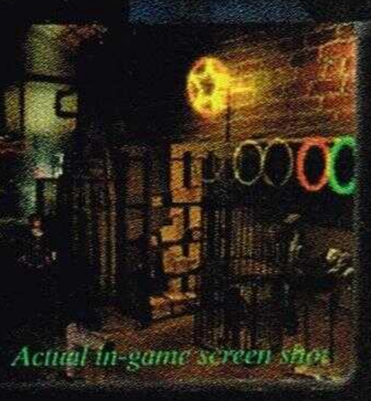




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