

THE GENESIS

MATRIX

(ReBooted)



The Magazine Of
Genesis Sci-Fi
July 2013

**Chairman:**

Paul Russell

Vice Chairman

David Offen-James

Treasurer:

Matthew Greet

Events Secretary:

Paul Belsey

**Membership
Secretary:**

Louise Stanley

Honorary President:

Jeremy Bulloch

Website:

www.genesis-sf.org.uk

E-Mail:

info@genesis-sf.org.uk

July 2013**Design & Editing:**

Jeremy Ogden

Contributors:

Jeremy Ogden

Paul Russell

Louise Stanley

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KEEP CALM?!

WE'RE 49 FOR 9!!!

GOLD CHANNEL

Summer is finally here it would appear, hope everyone was caught as much or as little sun as they desired. Hoping it's not too hot here today for everyone.

Extending a big thank you to Tony for last month's programme, many new and interesting fan programmes - where does he find them ? And a difference to the quiz as well, that's two different styles of quizzes in as many months!

This weeks programme shall be brought to you by Steve, which has a 1970s theme.

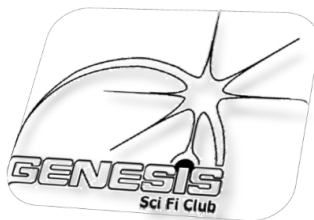
Due to unforeseen circumstances the Genesis trip to The Royal Observatory at Greenwich had to be postponed until later in the year. Details will follow when we get them (ie, when we've figured them out).

I do not believe we have any future slots requiring filling as far the programme person is concerned, however now we are more than half way through the year we will soon be badgering people to put their name down for next year. So let the badgering commence.

As always we are looking for articles to fill these august pages (*and September, and October, and Nov— Oh, right, see what you mean. Carry On—Ed*), also looking for suggestions on what if any events members would like to see or go to. Remember this is your club and as a card-carrying member we really on your input to help point us in a vaguely right(ish) direction.

As always.

**Prus
Chairperkin**



Club Events For Your Diary



Nine Worlds is a new convention which might be a tad ambitious in its aims. According to the organisers, it's about 'gaming, film, cosplay, fandom, literature, science, geek culture, meeting people and having a really big party'. The event was funded via Kickstarter, so a lot of people already have advance tickets, but regular tickets have now gone on sale. The convention takes place from **9-11 August** at the **Radisson** and **Renaissance Hotels**, Heathrow, and you can find out more at nineworlds.co.uk.

This is **ArmadaCon's** 25th Anniversary year; guests already announced include Doctor Who make-up supervisor / guru Neil Gorton, and the weekend will also feature the filming of the ArmadaCon 25th anniversary short film. Find out more at www.armadacon.org.

Cinema Trips

Films being released over the next few months which we may be going to see...

- > *The World's End* (Out Now)
- > *The Wolverine* (26th July)
- > *The Hobbit: Part 2—The Desolation Of Smaug* (13th December)

MEETING DATES FOR 2013.....

| | Pub | Book Club | Main meeting | Program/ Quiz |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| August | 15th August | 17th August | 25th August | Mark Sinclair |
| September | 12th September | 14th September | 22nd September | Paul Belsey |
| October | 10th October | 12th October | 20th October | Matthew Greet |
| October / November | 31st October | 9th November | 10th November | The Committee |
| December | 5th December | 7th December | 15th December | Robert Green |

Pub meetings are at the Queen's College Arms on the A340 between Basingstoke and Tadley until further notice.

The Genesis Book Club is at South Ham Library, Basingstoke, on the dates listed above, from 10.00 am to mid-day.



SUPERMAN / BATMAN CROSSOVER FINALLY GETS GREEN LIGHT

Superman and Batman are to appear in the same film for the first time, it has been revealed, to the delight of many fans of the popular characters.

The surprise announcement was made by Zack Snyder, who directed the most recent Superman film *Man of Steel*.

But speaking at a comic convention in San Diego, California, Mr Snyder said the script was still being written. Production is expected to begin next year and the film is scheduled for release in the summer of 2015.

Warner Bros confirmed that the two superheroes would team up for the first time. British actor Henry Cavill - who starred in *Man of Steel* - will again play Superman. However, an actor for the new Batman is yet to be cast.

"They're both alpha males," fan Benjamin Ha was quoted as saying by the Associated Press.

He added that he expected fireworks in the new film.

For many comic book enthusiasts it is a dream come true in what promises to be the ultimate superhero adventure, the BBC's Peter Bowes in Los Angeles reports.

The enduring popularity of Superman and Batman has seen the latest films featuring the two characters earn revenues of more than \$1bn (£655m) between them.

Source: bbc.co.uk

US SCI-FI SERIES OUTLANDER TO BE FILMED IN SCOTLAND

A major US science fiction series is to be filmed in Scotland, bringing about 200 new jobs and the construction of a new television studio near Glasgow.

Outlander will be adapted from American writer Diana Gabaldon's international best-selling series of seven books. It tells the story of Claire and James Fraser, using time travel to slip between 18th and 20th century Scotland.

One of the lead roles will be played by Scot's actor Sam Heughan, whose previous credits include *River City*. The 32-year-old, who was born in New Galloway, Dumfriesshire, graduated from The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, now known as the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

It is estimated that *Outlander* could generate as many as 2,400 supporting roles for other actors across the UK.

US cable network Starz and global television studio, Sony Pictures Television, are behind the new series, which is due to start filming this year. The series will be written and executive produced by Jim Kohlberg and Ronal D. Moore, who has worked on *Battlestar Galactica*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. It will be co-produced by Left Bank Pictures, Tall Ship Productions, Story Mining and Supply Company.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, said the production would benefit from a UK government decision last year to extend film tax reliefs to high-end television productions. This effectively provides a tax credit worth 20% of corporation tax.

Mr Osborne said: "I am delighted that *Outlander* will be filmed in Scotland, and welcome the extra investment that will be made to the Scottish television industry. "I hope that this series will make the most of the stunning landscape and the talented actors, crew and facilities that Scotland has to offer."

Source: bbc.co.uk

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE SEQUEL - TITLE REVEALED

Director Joss Whedon has revealed the title of his 2015 Avengers sequel - *Avengers: Age of Ultron* - at the Comic-Con convention in San Diego.

It follows on from the hugely successful first movie, reuniting stars including Robert Downey Jr as Iron Man and Chris Hemsworth as Thor.

Marvel villain Ultron is a rebellious artificial intelligence which creates an android that attacks the Avengers.



Whedon revealed the name after footage of the latest *Thor* film was shown.

The footage was introduced by actor Tom Hiddleston - who played villain Loki in the first Avengers film - in full costume, according to *Hollywood Reporter*.

Hiddleston stayed in character, making his speech and rallying members of the audience as they chanted the villain's name.

Source



THOR-ABRED



GENESIS AT THE MOVIES: MAN OF STEEL (NOT A REVIEW)

Went to see this on opening weekend, and the cinema was only half full for the 8pm 3D showing we went to see. Which seemed weird but then I had heard it had got some bad reviews. Luckily I don't read reviews, and I love to skip over trailers on TV so I do not get spoilers. As you will know if you have ever read one of my reviews before I do not give spoilers nor do I hint at more than the most glaring plot holes, I do however usually go on and on about my day, the weather and other similar irrelevant things. I would of course hate (cough) to disappoint you on these matters but today I shall.

I had been thinking it had been nearly 40 years since I saw Christopher Reeve take to the air (and I believed a man could fly) but in fact it is "only" 35. It therefore had a lot of ground to cover for a new audience telling bits of the back story and bringing in enemies for him to battle. Also they had to have the love interest and a great way to hide his alto ego, this was done by having the foresight to get Henry Cavill to play the Man of Steel and Kevin Costner to play Pa Kent.

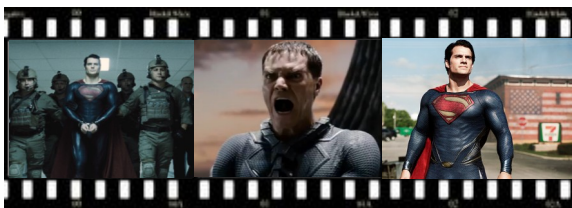
Personally I loved the film, it was 2.5 hours long of tight action superheroness

and at no point did I find myself looking at the time (except when my alarm went off). The pacing was as I said good, slower when it needed it, faster when that was called for and super-fast in the climactic last reel. (Do movies still have reels?) Now for the plot holes and the bits I was not so taken with. Krypton had a good mix of tech and bio-engineering, just the people were weird, maybe slightly under drawn, and I found not entirely believable, this of cause is a personal opinion, and people I went to see it with did have another take on them. The ending (after the big fight) was just a little contrived but then this is often the case with a retelling of a story, you just need to watch the 2009 *Star Trek* film to see that.

So all things considered I would give this film a star rating of maybe 4 out of 5. A hugely fun movie and once you gloss over the few niggly things I found annoying, none of which were enough to make me wish for my money back, or even to poke my eyes out with burning flamey stick like things. A pleasant way to spend a Saturday night sat in the dark.

***Prus
Chairlurkin***





GENESIS AT THE MOVIES: MAN OF STEEL (A REVIEW)

‘What are you smiling at, Captain?’

‘I just think he’s ...kinda hot.’

OK, lady, take it easy. He’s Superman. He’s spoken for.

This is a superb film. I’m woefully undereducated when it comes to superhero films, but I must say, the ones that have come out over the last eighteen months, while I’ve been going to the cinema a lot more regularly than before, have been thrilling epics with angsty backstories, devious villains with strong motivations and explosions sending whole cities into panic mode. Jeremy tells me that the film improves on the Christopher Reeve films, particularly deepening the Krypton story. So let’s take a look at what Chris Nolan has done to update the franchise.

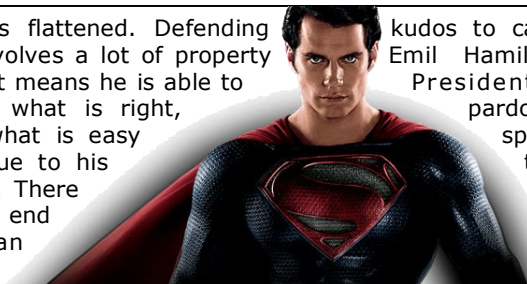
British actor Henry Cavill plays Kal-El, otherwise known as Clark Kent and then Superman, the strange child who grows into a man seeking out people to help anonymously, rescuing a group of oil workers from a burning rig, teaching a sexist trucker a lesson by twisting his lorry up in power lines, and conveniently being on scene to save Lois Lane (Amy Adams) from things that go bump in the ice. Russell Crowe plays his father Jor-El, whose consciousness, contained on a data key, is projected even after his death at the hands of Zod early in the film to guide and counsel Kal and fill him (and us) in on important plot info. It’s an info-dump, but tastefully done.

The spaghetti western-style fight in Smallville did run like a ten-minute ad for a whole host of American shops (hey! Come to 7-Eleven! Superman trashed us! Buy the commemorative plastic cup!); this is about the only quibble I have. (Think of what

might have been the case if Krypton had made the film. Ads for Growth Pods ‘R’ Us and Blizzatronic Codexes Inc might have been showing during the scenes with Zod and his minions as they flatten Metropolis, or plastered on the side of the World Engine...) Nothing wrong with this of course (films have got to be financed somehow), but it does get a little ridiculous. I’m not entirely sure I’d be happy eating at the International House of Pancakes (IHOP, a greasy-spoon favourite of my sister from when we first went to America in the 1980s) if I thought my dinner was going to be interrupted by a flailing guy in a red cloak and a badass female alien whose body was basically immune to the best ammunition the US Army can pony up for. At least most of it is confined to that sequence. The ads in Metropolis, in contrast, are for fictional companies, not least Lexcorp, suggesting that (a) there’s going to be another film, and (b) Superman will get to face off against his old foe Lex Luthor. Bring it on!

Superman is an uplifting, generous and surprisingly submissive hero. What I like about him is that despite his punch that can puncture metal (watch for the twisted fence post in the tractor yard during one of the flash-back scenes), he’s not a vigilante or just in it for the cool toys. He’s got substance and backbone to him, and as a Christian, the scene in the church is something powerful: the admission of a bigger picture to one man’s selfish desires, and the calmness with which one must face up to one’s foes. The trope of a superhero being misunderstood by the legitimate authorities is blasted into orbit by the army realising he’s on their side, even as

Smallville gets flattened. Defending his honour involves a lot of property damage, but it means he is able to stand up for what is right, rather than what is easy or what is true to his faction's aims. There is a dig at the end at American interests in Superman's



powers, but of course Superman makes a big deal of his background, and asks for the army's trust. Easy to do, I suppose, when you've just laid waste to what must be one of the DC!America's most influential cities (I guess there's always Gotham). Trust me or the skyscraper gets it. But the film goes out of its way to show the value in co-operation (Lois and scientist Emil Hamilton grapple to get the data-key to work), which is as important to the execution of the plan to defeat Zod as Superman's raw muscle-power and quiet, small-town dignity (the symbol of which has got to be Clark's mother picking through the ruins of her home after the Smallville battle).

Casting was one of the strengths of the film. Kevin Costner makes an appearance as Jonathan Kent, and Russell Crowe plays Jor-El with all the gravitas of a fantasy dignitary. (Having just seen *John Carter of Mars* at club a couple of months ago, there's a definite similarity between the depictions of Barsoom and Krypton, both worlds in much the same predicament.) I didn't think Amy Adams suited the role of Lois, but then again I've been spoilt by Teri Hatcher in *New Adventures*. Laurence Fishburne was amazing, and as a fan of *The West Wing*,

kudos to casting Richard Schiff as Emil Hamilton: so that's where President Bartlet sent the pardoned Toby Ziegler. And special mention must go to the state of Illinois, which stepped in for Kansas: the landscapes are breathtaking and the small-town America vibe all-pervasive.

That's got to be worth a Best Supporting Actor next year at the Oscars.

I think I'll go so far as to say there were few, if any, flaws in the whole film. Some of the latter stages were rather tedious, particularly the final battle between Superman and Zod. It was done to emphasise how powerful Zod actually was, and how tenacious he was, but the only feeling I got when they crashed through the windows of the umpteenth building was 'someone's going to have to

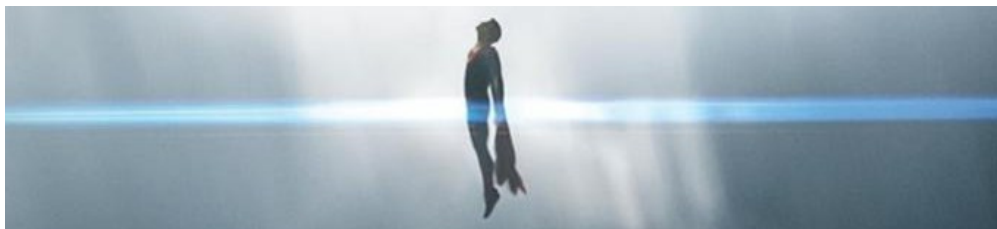


pay for that, take it outside, chaps!' Seriously, I would have thought Superman would have steered them both to Antarctica to fight somewhere where they wouldn't put people so much at risk. But that's just the nature of these kind of films: no point in a punch-up if no-one can

see it happening and nothing gets set on fire. So I'll give the film 5 out of 5 plutos. It's definitely a must-see if you enjoy superhero films, and for science fantasy fans the Krypton plot gives a new angle to the franchise.

I'm certainly looking forward to the next one.

Louse Stanley





DOCTOR WHO PROM CELEBRATES OLD AND NEW



The Doctor Who Prom on Saturday 13th July night took fans on a journey back in time to celebrate the TV show's 50th anniversary.

The concert at the Royal Albert Hall featured surprise appearances from fifth Doctor Peter Davison and Carole Ann Ford, who played first screen companion, Susan, in 1963.

"Who'd have thought this celebration would be happening 50 years on?" said the 73-year-old actress. "It's amazing."

Both the Saturday evening concert and the repeat performance the following day, and both were filmed for broadcast later in the year.

Matt Smith and Jenna Coleman hosted the concert alongside a carnival of monsters from the series. Screams echoed around the auditorium as Cybermen trooped down the stairs to menace the crowds. There were Daleks too, as well as Judoon, Silurians, The Silence, Whispermen and a Weeping Angel. Not even the presence of an Ice Warrior helped cool the temperature inside the Albert Hall on a scorching hot evening. Smith told the crowd: "One of the great joys of playing this extraordinary, legendary Time Lord is the support and knowledge and love and brilliance of the fans - you really make the show what it is."

Popular sidekicks Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh) and Strax the Sontaran (Dan Starkey) also helped introduce some of the musical segments. As well as music from Doctor Who, the concert included other well-known pieces. The concert was performed by BBC National Orchestra of Wales and London Philharmonic Choir, conducted by Ben Foster.

Massive cheers erupted for the surprise arrival of Peter Davison, who played the Fifth Doctor from 1981-84.

"What amazing memories you all have," he said, surveying the thousands of fans. "Even though most of you weren't even born." He added: "My era is now called the classic series, that's a bit like the Championship is to the Premier League."

Davison introduced a medley of music from the classic era, including the ground-breaking work of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. The sequence kicked off with the iconic sound of the TARDIS, originally created by Brian Hodgson by scraping his mother's front-door key down a piano string. Music followed from stories across the decades Dudley Simpson, one of 20th Century *Doctor Who*'s most prolific composers, was in the audience to hear an excerpt from his own score for 1979 Tom Baker adventure *The City of Death*.



On stage, Carole Ann Ford recalled meeting the Daleks during rehearsals for the first time almost 50 years ago with William Hartnell's first Doctor. It was "far from terrifying", she said, as it was only bottom half of the Dalek being pushed along by the operator inside with their feet.

The climax of the Prom was the world premiere of *Song for Fifty*, a birthday anthem by Murray Gold, Doctor Who's musical director since 2005. Described as "a love song to a television series", the dramatic choral piece was sung by soprano Elin Manahan Thomas and tenor Allan Clayton, with the London Philharmonic Choir. It ended with the words "Happy Birthday. Doctor. You."

As the giant screens around the hall showed the recent cliffhanger ending with John Hurt introduced as "The Doctor", Matt Smith teased: "What does it all mean, eh? Only another four months until we find out."

Source: bbc.co.uk

Which incarnation fought in the Time War? What Was The Cartmel Master-Plan? How Did The Doctor 'Collect The Masters Remains From Skaro?' Some, more or fewer of these questions may be answered in.....

DOCTOR WHO



Season 6B theory? Wassat Then?

This may not be a familiar term for the casual viewer of *Doctor Who*, but it is a theory which does explain some knotty problems of continuity which the writers of certain stories from the 1980s backed themselves into.

I've been aware of this theory for a number of years, since a long and very entertaining thread on an old *Doctor Who* newsgroup about the Doctor's age, and how long each incarnation lived for. This was very much pre-new series and was contributed to be none other than *Doctor Who* novel writer Lance Parkin.

But apparently, and this is something I've only become aware of recently when researching this here item on the 'Intawebz', the origin of the theory actually is more deeply rooted in a weekly comic strip published in *TV Comic*. The gap between the end of *The War Games*, Patrick Troughton's final story as the Doctor, and *Spearhead From Space*, Jon Pertwee's debut, was about six months, and the show's annual TV output was about to be cut in half. But the publishers of *TV Comic*, Polystyle Publications, did not, understandably, want to put their *Doctor Who* comic strip on hold to allow the series to 'catch up', so for the intervening period, the strip continued, during which time the Doctor was indeed sent into exile on Earth and lived the celebrity high life, while apparently waiting for his Time Lord-imposed regeneration. During this time he

responded to calls and travelled the Earth, with not a UNIT soldier to be seen. But one night, while investigating a supernatural mystery in a remote farm, he was captured by scarecrows which had been animated by the Time Lords and forced to regenerate.

They then sent the Doctor on one final journey, leaving the reader to believe that when the Doctor arrived, he would fall out



of the TARDIS at Oxley Woods as the third Doctor, just as he did in the first episode of *Spearhead*. This comic remains to this day the only time when the *actual* moment of regeneration has been shown for a televised Doctor in print, and I'm not including the *Doctor Who Monthly* comic story when the Eighth Doctor appeared to regenerate into Nicholas Briggs! (It turned out to be all a

clever ruse, and the eighth Doctor returned a few episodes later).

But soon, these comic strips were forgotten about in the pre-Internet age. Fans in possession of copies of these comic strips had no way of sharing these stories with a broader fan base, and they lay outside of the grasp of most fans for a few decades.

But after a number of years, as home video became more prevalent and it was possible to re-watch old stories at home, *Doctor Who* fans were doing what they do a lot – thinking about stuff, and a number of questions arose concerning certain stories:

- Why does the Third Doctor begin *Spearhead From Space* with several items

that the Second Doctor didn't have at the end of *The War Games*, such as a ring, a bracelet and a TARDIS homing watch?

- How, in *The Five Doctors*, does the Second Doctor know that the Time Lords had erased the memories of Jamie McCrimmon and Zoe Heriot? The erasure took place immediately before the Doctor is seen to "twirl around" at the end of *The War Games*, so that twirling must not have indicated regeneration.
- Why do the Second Doctor and Jamie appear older in *The Two Doctors*?
- How does Jamie know about the Time Lords in *The Two Doctors* unless *The Two Doctors* comes after *The War Games* for him?
- How come the Second Doctor is working, apparently willingly, for the Time Lords in both *The Three Doctors* and *The Two Doctors*?
- Why does the Second Doctor possess a TARDIS recall device of a type the Sixth Doctor does not have in *The Two Doctors*?
- In *The Two Doctors*, why is the Second Doctor's TARDIS control room of an obviously different design to that which he used prior to his trial?
- Possibly related to the above: How can the Second Doctor be confident of his ability to retrieve Victoria after *The Two Doctors* when he could never control the TARDIS during his own era?
- Why is the Doctor's recorder in the second console room in *The Masque of Mandragora*? We never saw him use the second console room on television, so he must've used the room at some point after *The War Games*.

The theory was given further weight by the book *The Discontinuity Guide* by Paul Cornell, Martin Day and Keith Topping, which gave these questions careful consideration, and was then embraced by 'fanon', eventually making its way into official BBC 'canon' in 2011, when excerpts from the book were reproduced on their website as part of their own official episode guide. The full text on the official position of the BBC on season 6B Theory is more extensive, but essentially the core of the

idea is something like this:

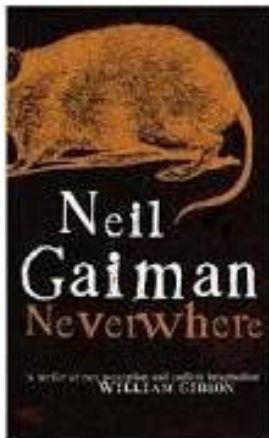
Rather than undergoing the regeneration shown starting at the end of The War Games, the Second Doctor was recruited to work for the Celestial Intervention Agency, a clandestine Time Lord organisation shown to exist in The Deadly Assassin. During this time, the Second Doctor regained Jamie and Victoria as companions, acquired a Stattenheim remote control device to summon his TARDIS and undertook an unknown number of missions, including that depicted in The Two Doctors. Eventually, the Doctor's association with the CIA ended for reasons not known and his full War Games sentence was executed at the beginning of Spearhead from Space.

But beyond being a theory that happens to explain certain gaps in continuity, what was really needed was someone to put the theory into action. Enter: 'Uncle Tawance' – Terrance Dicks, the man who basically created much of the discontinuity in the first place. His *Players* trilogy of novels, published right at the end of the BBC's past doctor novel series, did just that, with the final Second Doctor novel in the line, *World Game*, walking the reader from the end of *The War Games* to the beginning of the Doctor's association with the Celestial Intervention Agency, and his first adventure while acting on their behalf.

This novel was published after David Tennant had made his first appearance as the Tenth Doctor and basically rewrote the book on Patrick Troughton's era as the Doctor – at last there was something concrete (well, usually made of paper, but you get the idea), in print, bearing Troughton's likeness and the BBC's logo, which explained it all and made the detail that Cornell, Day and Topping had envisaged take on a life of its own, and gifted the brilliant Patrick Troughton's Second Doctor with an extra life

Jeremy Ogden

With grateful acknowledgement to tardis.wikia.com (The TARDIS Data Core).



BOOK REVIEW

***Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman**

Yes, you read that right, I am going to review a book. It's a rare event, which last occurred a few years ago when I wrote some waffle about *Prey* by Michael Crichton, so make the most of it as it may not happen again for a while.

Now, since the Genesis Book Club started nigh on a year ago, (which part of Essex has the time disappeared to?) I have read, to one degree or another, a variety of books. Some of the books I have read only in part before I propelled them into the 'take back to the library immediately; oh damn Book Club isn't for another ten days' pile. As a result I have concluded that 500 pages of epic fantasy twaddle (with maps), is not my thing, despite initially saying I may go back to it one day (who was I kidding?) and neither is anything committed to paper by Harry Harrison, someone who in an alternate universe may have been capable of writing something funny and compelling but in this one obviously wasn't. (I mean, even his proof-reader gave up on the book of his I attempted to read). But through the likes of *The Rivers of London* and *The Dresden Files* I have become acquainted with the sub-genre of what I would call 'urban fantasy', and while those two other books were both very good and enjoyable, I would rate *Neverwhere* just as highly, if not better.

Now, the edition of this book I have read was what Gaiman considers to be the definitive version, with all the bits

that he was previously unhappy with or which were dropped from the BBC series due to lack of budget and time, restored to how he wanted them. So now you can see the whole picture of Gaiman's London under world, as wide-eyed Richard Mayhew is thrown into a scary and occasionally magical journey filled with abandoned underground stations (and the *real* reason why you should always 'mind the gap'), floating markets, angels, revered rats, dangerous bridges and a couple of extremely nasty assassins, who make any *Bond* villain, 24 terrorist mastermind of the season you care to name, Spike the Bloody, Angelus, and possibly the Daleks look like Mary Poppins on Valium by comparison.

You probably know the outline of the story but in case you've missed out entirely, the general plot is that Richard Mayhew, a London office worker with a beautiful yet slightly domineering fiancée, Jessica, suddenly finds that after coming to the aid of an apparently injured young woman on a London street, that his life – his job, his flat and his girlfriend – are disappearing around him and he is being stalked by a couple of thuggish goons. To all intents and purposes he ceases to exist in the eyes of the rest of the world, and must seek out the young woman he helped (Door) in order to make sense of it all and, he hopes, get his life back. Door meanwhile is on a quest of her own, to find out who killed her family, and to do that she must seek out the Angel, Islington (that is one of many puns made out of London place names) and a very special key. With the aid of The

Marquis De Carabas, and Hunter (her bodyguard), plus, reluctantly (and the reluctance goes both ways) Richard, they embark on their search through the literally under-ground world of London Below.

They say there are only a very few types of story possible, one of which is a quest, as this one very much is, on a number of levels. Another is the 'fish out of water', and again this works on several levels, mainly for Richard who despite being in a relatively cushy job and home, always felt like something of an outsider in a city to which he moved to from Scotland (plus, did I mention the domineering fiancée who has the habit of dragging him around posh art galleries and expensive department stores) well before he finds himself trying to cope with a the strange underground World he encounters beneath the capitol, and which he is starkly at odds with.

Gaiman paints a rich picture of 'London Below', and although the picture is often a dark, dank, grim one, the story remains outside the realm of 'grim fantasy twaddle' territory due to some of the more surreal elements which are a signature of Gaiman's work, regular injections of a fair amount of humour, and a welcome lack of maps. Remember this was the author who brought you the cross-dressing pirate captain in *Stardust* (I'll never look at Robert De Niro in quite the same way) and two darkly surreal episodes of *Doctor Who*.

And I should devote a paragraph to talk

about the aforementioned very scary assassins, Mr Croup and Mr Vandemar, two characters who take an unhealthy amount of delight in inflicting pain, maiming, injuring and generally being unpleasant to anyone who gets in their way. They are genuinely creepy, while at the same time they are inexplicably enjoyable to read about, in a vaguely macabre and disturbing sort of way, and are certainly the boldest and most memorable characters in the book.



In various places these days I have noticed that there is a common theme of characters, at the end of a 'fish out of water' / quest type adventure, feeling that they could not go back to their old ordinary lives because they've seen another side to the world or the Universe, beyond their previous existence that, which will not let anything ever be the same again. *The Lord of the Rings* ends with this happening to the

hobbits, especially Frodo (yes, I know this was written a long time ago), and I'd like to think that the ending of *Neverwhere*, had some sort of influence on Russell T Davis when he was creating the new series of *Doctor Who* and the character of Rose Tyler.

So, time to give *Neverwhere* a Pluto-rating – my score is 4 and a half Plutos out of 5, and the only reason that it loses half a Pluto, is that although the end is left very obviously open for a sequel, so far there hasn't been one!

Jeremy Ogden

"It's one thing dying, but it's another thing dying underneath a flatulent ogre".



The Oracle

THE ORACLE

An Occasional Journey Into The Sublime, The Ridiculous and Stuff I've Learned

The Sublime:

A while ago I saw a picture of a very impressive sand sculpture posted on 'StalkBook', and I thought I would eventually find an excuse to put it into the magazine. Then recently I saw another one and thought, right, in it goes! These are absolutely amazing pieces of sculpture, I'm sure you'll agree.



The Ridiculous:

Say it five times fast: "Darth Vader-dressed dude dashes in Death Valley."

Don't try this at home, folks, although not even recent temperatures would quite match the sort of heat this guy had to endure, as *Star Wars* fan Jonathan Rice ran across Death Valley in 129 degrees of heat on 30th June - dressed as Darth Vader. As you do.

Apparently this is the fourth time he's attempted this mind-bogglingly pointless feat (he himself admits that it is utterly pointless, but 'completely fun'. I think he is 'completely nuts', and this is, I confess, the first time I've come across the little hobby of 'heat running'), and this time he had the added goal of setting a Guinness World Record for the hottest verified run. Well, I suppose it beats trying to set a world record for the number of clothes pegs you can put on your face. Not only was Rice dressed as Vader but his support crew also turned up in a variety of *Star Wars* Costumes such as Chewie, Leia and R2-D2.



But Rice does apparently agree with the "This is an insane thing to do / don't try it at home, kids" sentiment. "This is a ludicrously dangerous endeavor. I don't support you doing it. I don't even really support me doing it," he says. His site is full of disclaimers about the dangers of heat running, such as heart attacks, heatstroke, and death.

Something I've Learned:

Actually this is something I've long suspected. Despite regular assaults with sheers and various pointy, cutting implements over the last few years, the buddleia trees in my front grass just refused to stop growing.

The winter before last it was subjected to a withering assault of saws, sheers and threatened with the ultimate assault from a mini-digger. It spent the last year hiding, lurking in a zero -room ready to burst forth again, and did so in the spring just gone with renewed vigor - until I dusted off the secateurs and attacked it again. I'm now waiting for it to bounce back into another incarnation.



As a result of all this I am now utterly convinced that the buddleia has in it's genetic make-up, Gallifreyan DNA, because I don't know how else to explain it's impressive and annoying powers of regeneration.

So there you have it folk, the Doctor will be regenerating into a buddleia tree this Christmas.

Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back

“‘Luke, I am your mother’s husband’

WARNING: SPOILERS!

Ah, the film that launched a thousand ships *wink* *grin*.

The last *Star Wars* film I reviewed, I called it ‘*Dungeons and Dragons IN SPAAAAACE*’. This one, given the ... interesting family story that starts to come out, could be seen as ‘*Game of Thrones IN SPAAAAACE*’. Did they? Did they REALLY? Did *she* really? And Han Solo is just the creepiest person in the whole saga (even giving Palpatine a run for his money) for the way he behaves to Leia during their stay on Hoth. You can just hear the opening titles to the TV epic of George Martin’s fantasy soap opera and see the little clockwork planets with various emblems popping up on a giant orrery. Fortunately Luke and Leia don’t know what’s going on, and presumably the original audiences didn’t quite cotton yet on either (although the bit at the end, with Luke and Leia connected by The Force, seems to give more of an obvious nod than Yoda’s comment about ‘there is another’ prior to the battle on Belspin), so let’s get all the jokes about incest (twincest*?) out of the way right now. This is a family-friendly magazine, after all.

All right. We all know how this one ends. I thought the big revelation came at the end of *Return of the Jedi*, but that just goes to show how little I know about *Star Wars* and how much watching it all

in quick succession has helped my understanding and appreciation of it. I did enjoy this film immensely, mostly because it had all the elements of a fantasy thriller but refreshingly few of the more simplistic moments that perhaps plagued *Episode IV*. I’m not joking when I call it *Game of Thrones in Space*, really, because it starts with an ice-world, has a few more complicated relationships and doesn’t really end on a particularly feel-good note, setting us up for the final episode in style. Jeremy told me how people tend to think it was the best of all six films. I’d like to wait until I’ve seen *Return of the Jedi*, possibly because I’m a completist and I don’t want to make too swift a decision lest I have to eat my words next month, but I’m moved to agree. I am not of the majority opinion on Ewoks though, just so you know: I was a sucker for the cartoon series as a child, so that may probably cloud my

judgement, in the same way I didn’t mind Jar-Jar Binks in the prequels. Every film series needs its furrballs.

Certainly, it’s a return to the complexity of the prequel series, and the origin of the themes in the prequels can be seen clearly during Luke’s training sessions on Dagobah. I think that was well done – it provided a bit of depth to Luke’s character, but it also gave a bit of nuance to Yoda. He gains a harder and less cuddly side, first of all with his ‘old buffer’ routine at the beginning of the scene, and then with his obvious



disappointment and perhaps even disgust at the end of that section. (By the way, the rigid pacing of the previous films has become a bit more fluid here. I could count in segments of 15 minutes during the first half of the film, but after that the scenes get a little bit less clearly divided and maybe slightly flabby.)

I'm going to give this one five Plutos out of five. There wasn't really much actually wrong with it, and it is pretty iconic. Some of the special effects have aged, particularly the bit where Luke is dangling off the bottom of Bespin and Leia and Lando come to his rescue, where his 80s hair is very noticeable against the chromakey background. On the other hand, it's enough

Han was delighted to discover that Leia had hung a pair of fluffy dice in the Millennium Falcon cockpit.



of a classic, and the enhancements are done very sensitively and seamlessly (including a wholly CGI scene interwoven seamlessly with the existing live action), that there's no real noticeable problems. Han's boorish behaviour towards Leia at the beginning doesn't go unchallenged, and I think this was pretty revolutionary for its day (Slave Leia is for next time)

Definitely an enjoyable and iconic piece of cinema, and a film that will probably never grow old.

Louise Stanley

*I dare you to go digging around on RPG.net for that one; it was in an archived thread about creepy gamers. No, I'm not going to give you a link.

HUBBLE TELESCOPE DISCOVERS NEW NEPTUNE MOON

The Hubble space telescope has discovered a new moon orbiting Neptune, NASA has confirmed.

Designated S/2004 N 1, this is the 14th known moon to circle the giant planet.

It also appears to be the smallest moon in the Neptunian system, measuring just 20 km (12 miles) across, completing one revolution around Neptune every 23 hours.

US astronomer Mark Showalter spotted the tiny dot while studying segments of rings around Neptune.

NASA said the moon was roughly 100 million times dimmer than the faintest star visible to the naked eye.

It is so small that the Voyager spacecraft failed to spot it in 1989 when it passed close by Neptune and surveyed the planet's system of moons and rings.

Mr Showalter's method of discovery involved tracking the movement of a white fleck appearing over and over again in more than 150 photographs taken of Neptune by Hubble between 2004 and 2009.

"The moons and arcs orbit very quickly, so we had to devise a way to follow their motion in order to bring out the details of the system," Mr Showalter explained.

"It's the same reason a sports photographer tracks a running athlete - the athlete stays in focus, but the background blurs."

Source: bbc.co.uk

FILIPOV TOLD ME EVERYTHING
WHEN I CAME OUT OF MY FEVER.

CHISLENKO IS
PUTTING THE EVIL
EYE ON PATIENTS...



NO-ONE CAN
DEFINITELY
PROVE WITCHCRAFT.

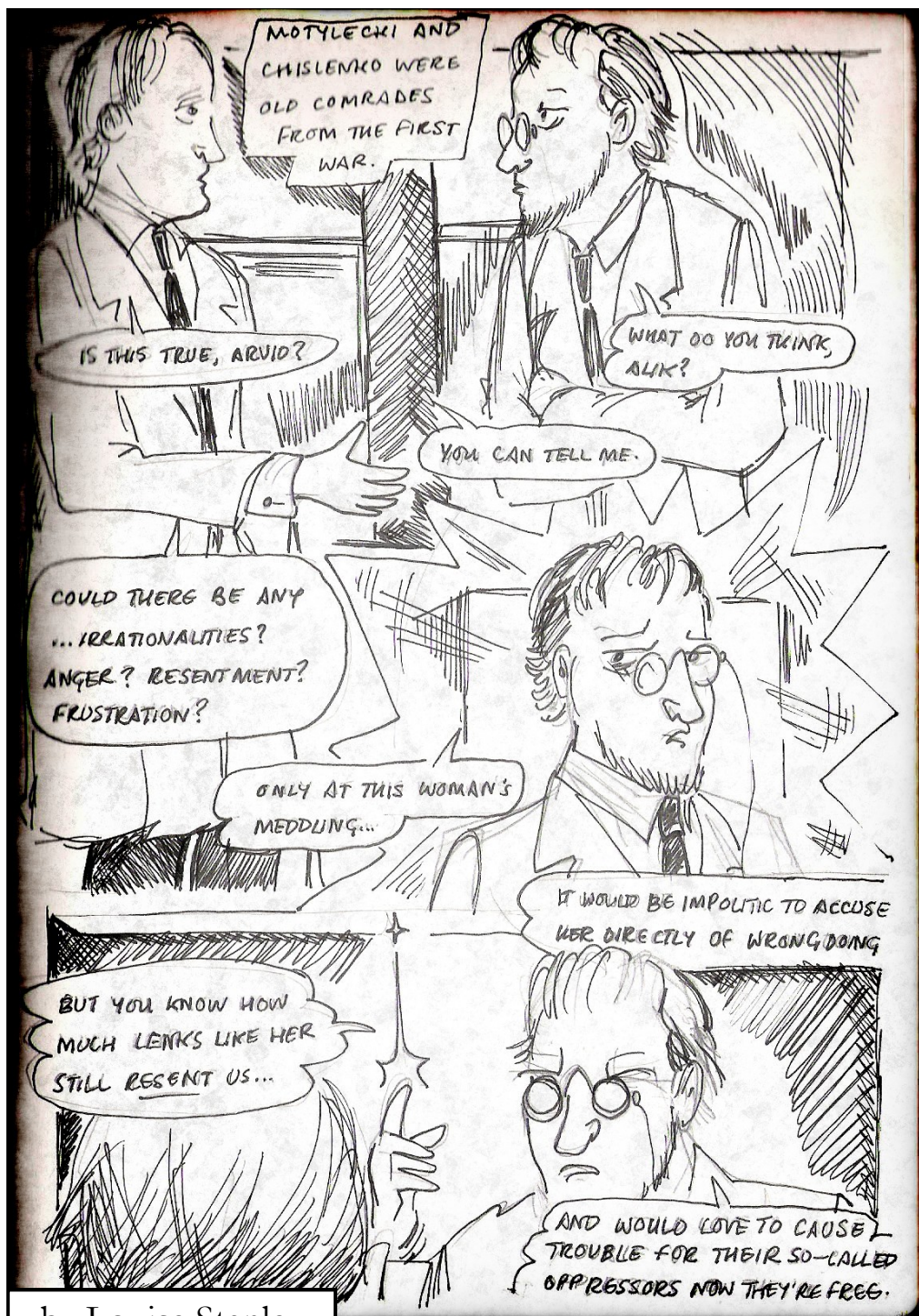
COME TO THE OFFICE,
AWAY FROM THE PATIENTS.



NIGHT TERRORS
ARE A PERFECTLY
UNDERSTANDABLE
PHENOMENON.

DON'T FORGET,
THESE MEN HAVE
BEEN THROUGH
HELL.





by Louise Stanley