

MORPHEUS TALES

REVIEWS

From Page to Screen (or how I could not think of a catchy title for this column) By Trevor Wright

You ever stop for a moment, look around and ask yourself, "How the hell did I get here? How did it all get to this point?"

I did.

Once.

I was sweating to death, in an unventilated basement, holding a boom mike over a man-I-just-met's bare ass as he was dry humping a girl half his age. Did I also mention, this bare assed man was clad in a Hawaiian shirt and welding mask (yes, that's right: Welding. Mask), while the poor girl writhing under him was covered in equal parts Karyo syrup and saliva (courtesy of the bare assed man's unwieldy tongue on her face)

Hey, I never said the answer was pretty.

But, let me back up a bit.

Like, I don't know... 10 years prior.

Trust me, this is gonna be fun.

PART ONE: IN THE BEGINNING ...

I was a twenty-one year old college drop out.

(Fine. They kicked me out. Did I mention it was Community College?)

And I was living at home.

And I was working at K-Mart.

I know what you're thinking.

Wow. Just wow. And you'd be right.

But in my mind, I was so much more. I wasn't Trevor Wright, K-Mart Associate. I was Trevor Wright, screenwriter extraordinaire.

I lived inside my mind more often than in the outside world. And let me tell you, my mind was awesome! All I needed was a three pack of canary yellow tablets and a couple medium point black pens and watch out! I was unstoppable. That is until my mom would call me down for dinner and break my concentration. But I digress ...

Success was on the horizon. I could feel it. I could taste it. I had story ideas coming out of my ears and, man, did I love to write.

But then, my world fell apart.

I awoke one morning to my mom telling me goodbye.

"Trevor? Wake up."

"What? It's too early. Ahhh."

"I'm leaving."

"Bye."

"No. I mean I'm really leaving."

I opened my eyes. "Where?"

"I'm moving to Ohio."

"Huh?"

"And I'm taking your brother and sister with me."

"Huh?"

"I can't stay with your stepfather anymore. But don't worry, you'll be fine."

"HUH?"

"Call me if you need anything."

So there I was, twenty-one years old and forced to grow up. Forced to get my own place. Forced to pay bills, get a better job, you know, do things that normal people do. But I was far from normal. I was Trevor Wright, screenwriter extraordinaire! No. This would not stand. I would not sink into a life of quiet normalcy. I would rise up! I would show the world the literary equivalent of the second coming of Christ!

How dare my mother mess up my future plans of success because she couldn't stand to be married for the rest of her life!

Didn't she know that I needed to live in her house until I was 30 or at least until I signed my first multi-million dollar Hollywood contract?

But no bother. I would do this on my own. It was time to write my masterpiece, the script that would get me noticed the world over.

Just one teensy weensy little problem... how the hell do you write a screenplay?

TO BE CONTINUED...

STAIRWAY TO HELL By Charlie Williams
<http://www.serpentstail.com/>

I approach all new authors (new to me anyway) with a mixture of trepidation and excitement, wondering whether this new bloke is likely to be added to my list of authors to collect, or to go in the pile for the charity shop.

Charlie Williams is neither, but not through any fault of his own.

Let me explain...

Stairway To Hell is told by our erm... hero (which he truly is, although unconventional) Rik Suntan, a moustachioed singer and winner of the Pub Idol contest two years in a row. Rik delights his fans with his renditions of Cliff Richard classics at the Blue Cairo in the small town of Warchester, whilst waiting to hit the big time.

But one terrible night Rik gets hit with a bottle thrown at him while he's performing on stage, he gets the sack and his girlfriend dumps him. To top it off he's attacked by a midget.

As if things couldn't get any worse, Rik finds out that his body is, in fact, home to the stolen soul of David Bowie, and he joins a group of other interred souls to try to get back into their proper bodies, by any means necessary. Even if that does involve murder, robbery, and black magic.

Stairway To Hell is in some ways perfectly modern, but in some ways completely retro. It has the feel of returning to a British seaside town you used to visit when you were young, it's familiar, it's fun, and it feels comfortable. It harkens back to a yesteryear that never really existed except in your own rose-tinted memories.

The book draws you in completely, Rik's narrative is warm and funny, you can't help laughing with him as well as at him. A difficult trick for Williams to pull off.

This is what the BBC call "Light Entertainment", a kind of *Dad's Army* or *Last of the Summer Wine*, but with young people, and music, and madness, and black magic!

It's also got a bit of mystery going on to help things along.

This is not top of the heap comedy, it's not going to compete with Stephen Fry or Ben Elton, but who possibly can. But it is certainly funny, it'll make you smile a lot, and even a few chuckles and a lol!

This would make a perfect British Comedy film, and perhaps someone should send a copy to Richard Curtis, the maker of many a perfect British Comedy.

Williams should sit beside Tony Parsons and

Nick Hornby, he's not really as insightful as either of them, but he's funnier than both. In Rik Suntan he has created a legend in his own lunchtime, a character so realistic, so pathetic, so empathetic, and in the end so heroic, that you can't help but laugh at him and see a bit of yourself in him at the same time, as sad as it is to admit that.

Stairway To Hell is the perfect book for the man in your life who has everything, and everyone has one of those. Unique, funny, and in its own small way, brilliant.

By Stanley Riiks

LAW ABIDING CITIZEN (18)

A film some have said to be ridiculous and stretching the limits of believability. Director Gary F. Gray has previously directed the more light-hearted crime capers *Be Cool* (2005) and *The Italian Job* (2003) and Vin Diesel vigilante flick *A Man Apart* (2003). *Law Abiding Citizen* falls (flat) between the two categories in trying to be a vigilante caper, but unfortunately it doesn't have the plot twists, puzzles, or ingenuity of a caper, or the action/body count of a vigilante film. The targets get killed effortlessly; the question is how does Clyde Shelton (Gerard Butler) keep killing them from inside prison? This is never explained in its entirety.

The film doesn't really deserve an 18 certificate as there are relatively few killings, but there is one good gore scene (in the prison) and one good shock. The trailer seemed to promise a collision of the *Saw* franchise and *Punisher: War Zone*, but instead delivers a slack psychological thriller with Jamie Foxx's character letting the tension out. Too many punches have been pulled by not observing the rules laid down since *Last House On The Left* and its successors (*Night Train Murders*, *I Spit On Your Grave*): the nastier the crime the more graphic the punishment you are allowed to mete out. The home invasion at the start slips past, although Christian Stolte plays a great dirtball habitual criminal.

The real point of the film seems to be how far is too far and when does Shelton/Butler stop being a vigilante and become a serial killer? When does justice end and revenge start? *Punisher: War Zone* really raised the bar for the war-on-crime film and *Law Abiding Citizen* did not make the grade with an unwillingness to get truly nasty. That said the film is still an enjoyable watch, even if it doesn't live up to its own hype, Gerard Butler is fantastic as usual, having come a long way since playing a naval officer in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997). Filmed in Philadelphia the Del Frisco's Double Eagle

Steakhouse that provides the catered steak in the film can be found at 1426 Chestnut Street and was also used by the crew during filming and for the film's after-party at the Philadelphia Film Festival.

By Stone Franks

THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF BEST NEW HORROR 20

Edited By Stephen Jones

Constable and Robinson

www.constablerobinson.com

This book claims to be the best, it also claims to be mammoth. It is! This annual treasure trove of horror fiction is back with its latest edition, the twentieth! I cannot believe it has been twenty years since Stephen Jones started this epic journey.

Producing yet another huge book, Jones puts together regulars and some new faces, including top names Stephen King and Neil Gaiman. The only thing I would say is slightly disappointing is that there is no story by Kim Newman, a personal favourite of mine, although he does continue to help provide the Necrology.

The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror is always the definite collection of the year, this 20th edition is no exception. *The* horror anthology. The rest are mere imitators. Buy it or you are missing out.

By Adrian Brady

THIS BEAUTIFUL DARKNESS

By Chris

Ringler

www.createspace.com/3386414

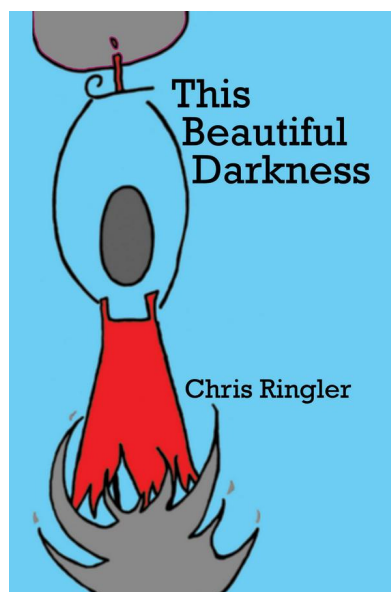
www.grimringler.wordpress.com

My reading time is valuable to me. I enjoy reading, it like the experience, I like the comfort, and I like the feeling of travelling in my mind to strange and scary worlds and meeting characters who are nothing more than words.

Finding a new writer is a fabulous experience, a new vision to be shared. Or it can be.

Self-publishing can work, unfortunately in this case it doesn't.

To be taken seriously, a collection of stories



should at least have a contents page. The formatting in this book is annoying and incomprehensible, spaces between some paragraphs and not others, no justifying, indentations on the left some of the time. The lack of decent punctuation doesn't help with the reading either. The book should be laid out properly, like a short story collection rather than an experimental poem. There are a few photos, some of which could vaguely be linked to the contents of the story they appear after, but some of which look like a failed attempt to sell the item on ebay.

The stories themselves, the ones I could bring myself to read - and I'm quite proud that my determination actually got me through 60 odd pages of this tripe - are actually not too bad. Although I was getting really bored, it was the lack of professionalism in the formatting and punctuation that was making it difficult to read. The stories all have similar plots, the same narrative voice with little change of pitch for male or female.

I would like to know if any of these stories has been previously published in a proper magazine, or if Ringler just put this book together rather than be published legitimately.

This is only the second book ever that I couldn't finish in my thirty three years.

Rubbish rubbish rubbish. Nothing to redeem it.

By Stanley Riiks

THE BOX (12A)

Based only loosely on the short story *Button, Button* by Richard (*I Am Legend*) Matheson, with the film extending the story to twice its original length. It could be said that this has over-inflated the story as by the end the film is dragging. On leaving the cinema my first thought was that it would have made a great *Twilight Zone* or *Tales From The Crypt* episode, only to find out that it had been a *Twilight Zone* episode in 1985. Initially creepy and *Phantasm*-like, the film loses pace and the end isn't particularly satisfying something that has generated a lot of bad reviews for the film. A lot of the focus is on the characters' morality and there isn't a great deal of action, the plot also takes some blind alleys which can confuse. Essentially a *The Fourth Kind* or *Paranormal Activity* for the 12A market. The film soundtrack is by the band Arcade Fire, but the film probably owes more to the score from *Saw* which was used on the trailer, as the trailer is without doubt better than the film.

By Stone Franks

BLOOD RED SPHERE By Lawrence Barker
<http://www.swimmingkangaroo.com/bloodredsphere.html>

Set mostly in the Burroughs Enrivodome in Mars, where we find Hamilton Helios, a drudger and seller of Martian artefacts, suddenly involved in more twisted plots than he can handle as his partner is killed, the most likely suspect is then killed, and Helios becomes the prime suspect. Add to this the disparate political groups on Mars, the Martian-haters, the off-world interlopers, the Earthlings, the Combine, a dwarf, a missing drudger, and Helios' cactus juice addiction, and you have a melting pot of plot striving towards an epic conclusion. Add to this some more, just to ramp up the tension, with human/ant hybrids called the Bastards, classic SF overtones, and simple straight-forward story-telling, and you have *Blood Red Sphere*.



Lawrence clearly enjoys classic SF, Edgar Rice Burroughs and Andre Norton to name but two, this novel revels in the history of genre literature. Its simple narrative style and many references are a boon for the educated reader. The plot is a kind of pulp detective story set on Mars, as Helios becomes the centre of attention through no fault of his own, the target of authorities, murderers, tricksters, liars and thieves, fighting not only to save his life, but to deal with his own demons and find the truth.

The book has enough modern depth and complexity that even the most decrying of modern fans will find something of interest, despite the simplicity of its story-telling.

Lawrence has produced a book that will entertain the broad spectrum of SF readers, hardened devotees and the casual fan. This has to go down as one of my favourite Martian books of all time.

By Stanley Riiks

LATE FEE

Starring J.D. Brown, Stephanie Danielson, Rick Poli, Written & Directed by John Carchietta and Carl Morano
www.latefeemovie.com

With the decline of brick-and-mortar video rental stores, due in part to such technological powerhouses as Netflix and Redbox, it would be a fair assumption to make that *LATE FEE* – though not a terrible movie – is awfully dated before it even leaves the gate.

After all, who has the balls to charge a late fee to this new generation raised on streaming videos and instant downloads? Well ... The Devil, that's who!

That's right. The Devil. Or in this case, the owner (Rick Poli) of a mom and pop video store dressed as The Devil on Halloween night.

Seems that Ol' Scratch loves a good costume party. But before he can close the store for his private in-store shindig, he must first contend with the last customers of the night, a young couple looking for the "scariest movies in town". They've come to the right place. (After all, what store boasts copies of both *WICKED LAKE* and *FLESH FOR THE BEAST* as "scary" without getting laughed out of town?)

The couple ends up picking out two movies: "The Pick Up" and "Damnation". Both of which, they are promptly informed, were not supposed to be on the shelves. But after about five minutes of pleading with The Devil to rent the DVDs, they are told that they can rent them on one condition: The DVDs must be returned before midnight or face a severe late fee. The couple agrees.

As the couple watches the movies, we too must also watch, thus turning *LATE FEE* into an anthology of sorts. A novel idea if not for one major setback: The two movies within the movie are awful!

"The Pick Up" is about a guy who picks up a hooker for a night of debauchery only to realize that she is much more than what she seems – yawn.

"Damnation" is a hodgepodge of torture porn, Satan worshipping and snuff film, but not nearly as exciting as that description.

After both stories, we return to the couple, who, of course, miss the midnight deadline and are now forced to deal with their very unusual "late fee".

With so many horror movies competing for space on the shelves of your soon-to-be extinct video store, or on your Netflix queue, movies like *LATE FEE* need to be awfully special in order to get notice. While the premise is an intriguing one, it's the two movies within the movie that fall incredibly flat – incredibly hard! A real shame considering that the flick has an incredible wrap around, two charismatic leads and some fine damn acting to boot.

In the end though, *LATE FEE* is exactly what it needs to be – a late night rental to be returned loooong before the due date.

By Trevor Wright

DIFFERENT SKINS By Gary McMahon

<http://www.screamingdreams.com>

This is one of those books that it is a pleasure to hold. It feels nice. It looks stunning, the cover and back cover by Vincent Chong are exquisite. Even the interior looks and feels nice, it feels like you're holding a good quality book in your hands. It feels very similar to the limited editions from Blood Letting Press, except in paperback.



OK, so it doesn't particularly matter what the book feels like, it's the content that really matters. Right? But my point is that it does matter, holding a book that feels nice just adds to the pleasure. And this book can be judged on its beautifully subtle and disturbing cover.

Introductions are normally a waste of time unless they're by the author, Tim Lebbon's intro doesn't stray too far from this. But he does mention that he read McMahon's stories as a writer would. I completely agree with him on this, although I probably read as a writer differently to Mr. Lebbon. McMahon's stories, two novellas in this collection, are packed with ideas and details and phrases that I wish I'd written, that I want to use in one of my stories. There are just so many "I wish I'd thought of that" moments!

The first story, *Even The Dead Die*, is a ghost story set in a London occupied by the dead, and it's so rich and powerful that it made me feel like a teenager again, discovering my first horror story. Every page sparkles with ideas and brilliance, it's like reading the very best of Neil Gaiman or Clive Barker. McMahon's London is dark and nasty and brutal, but it's also perversely beautiful. And so is his first story, dark, rich, tragic, powerfully and perversely beautiful.

The second story really shows the breadth of McMahon's skill. *In The Skin* is a very different story, a personal tale of loss and neglect, a story of life. The story of Dan, who goes on a business trip to New York and upon his return, finds that his son is not quite the same, that his wife is slightly different. His family is not who they were before he left. The second story in the collection is as different as it possibly can be, this is a much more personal tale, without the glitter and glamour, the brilliance or the ideas of the first story. And yet it touches you more deeply, more subtly than the first story. Its horror is all the more real for its understated openness and its horrible sense of loss. My favourite story of the collection was *Even The Dead Die*, then I read *In The Skin* and had to change my mind.

OK, so the services of a proof-reader wouldn't go amiss (although the typos have been spotted and will be fixed for the next print run), and there is no Charing Cross Road Station, but what you get when you buy this book is something much more than you will expect.

Despite its length and cost, it's a 120 page book for the price of an epic novel at £7.99, that quality I mentioned earlier makes reading this book worth more than any price you can put on it. I was shaken putting this book down, mentally and emotionally shaken. Reading the first story made me feel alive, reading the second made me feel empty. It is that power that I search for as a reader. It is the quality of the production and the contents of this amazing collection which pushes it beyond insubstantial things like money, it's like the *Lord of the Rings*, *Anansi Boys*, *The Thief of Always*, *Weaveworld*... reading this book is an epic experience that will touch you in ways that few experiences can.

I recommend *Different Skins* wholeheartedly and unreservedly, and will be seeking out much more of Gary McMahon's work.

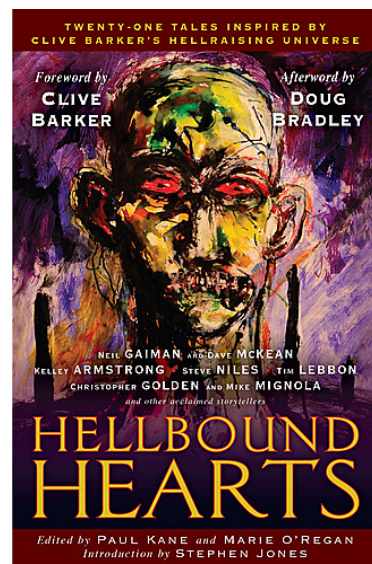
By Stanley Riiks

HELLBOUND HEARTS

By Paul Kane and Marie O'Regan

Pocket Books

I love collections, I love Clive Barker and I love *Hellraiser*! I love this collection! This book of stories inspired by Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* myths has some great stories from the likes of Tim Lebbon,



Christopher Golden, Conrad Williams, Simon Clark and many more. The number of British authors providing stories is amazing, and just goes to show the power of the horror genre in the UK. My personal favourite is Simon Clark's story, but I have to say that I really enjoyed the mini comic provided by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean, just a shame it's printed in grainy black and white. The original script is also included, providing a great insight into comic writing.

An original collection which goes to show the depth of Barker's *Hellraiser* universe.

By Adrian Brady

19 NOCTURNE BOULEVARD

<http://www.19nocturneboulevard.net/Episodes.htm>

I like audio books, having only recently discovered the "talking book" I immediately immersed myself, buying two collections and actually filling up my new iPod touch with them. I found audio book heaven at librivox.org where you can download loads of classics, including H.G. Wells, E. R. Burroughs, Andre Norton and more, all for free!

So when I was asked to review a series of Audio Dramas I was intrigued and a little worried. What I know about radio plays I've gathered from Charlie Chan and Abbott and Costello films. I haven't listened to the radio for over twenty years, and I'm not actually as old as that makes me sound! Radio plays, audio dramas were for the old folks when I was young, and now, surely I wouldn't be interested in anything like that.

Except that 19 Nocturne Boulevard produces some genre material, which my ears perked up at straight away. I started off with those recommended by the mastermind behind the programmes, Julie Hoverson:

"Where Are you Now?"

http://www.19nocturneboulevard.net/mp3s/19Noc_Where%20are%20you%20now.mp3,

"Making Book",

http://www.19nocturneboulevard.net/mp3s/19Noc_Making%20Book.mp3,

and the Lovecraft adaptation "The Temple",

http://www.19nocturneboulevard.net/mp3s/19Noc_the%20Temple.mp3.

My favourite of which is "Making Book", a very Twilight Zone-esque tale of a magical and dangerous book, which falls into the wrong hands with murderous results. The dramas are packaged nicely, download very easily and require no fiddling to stick them on an iPod. They also come in handy half-hour slots, perfect on the way to work.

Production values are high, and the finished

products are good quality with a professional sheen, despite the low budget. My one concern is that the medium feels quaint and old-fashioned, but that pulp-style works to highlight certain stories.

19 Nocturne Boulevard is the first of its kind that I've discovered, and the range of material available makes it an essential visit for anyone interested in audio dramas. I would certainly recommend that any iPod owner goes to visit the site and downloads a couple of programmes.

Great value for money entertainment at a price you have to love!

By Stanley Riiks

THE DESCENT: PART 2 (18)

If you don't like caves. If you're scared of the dark. If you're claustrophobic. If you don't like putting your head under water. If you don't like shocks. If you don't like being scared. If you don't like gore. Just don't. *Part 2* lives up to the first *Descent* movie which was the second big hit for Neil Marshall, a member of the "Splat Pack" of horror directors, and rumoured to be directing the new *Predator* reboot. Despite the four year gap the sequel picks up the pace fast and keeps the momentum going with the simple premise of entering cave = death. Marshall returns as executive producer while Jon Harris directs with the redesigned crawlers grabbing more screentime. Watch out for references to *Aliens* and *Driller Killer*.

This film is one that needs to be seen on a big screen, or in a cave, as nearly all of it happens in the dark and the action in the first film is hard to follow on the small screen. *The Descent: Part 2* is pretty much the perfect horror film: environment, monsters, bone-crunching and flesh-tearing effects, its all there. There are even some major plot twists that you won't see coming. The crawlers look set to become the best underground monsters since the graboids from *Tremors*, the only thing that seems capable of killing them off is a cash-in straight-to-DVD sequel. The ending adds the possibility of some back story/prequel in a third movie, which you will be burning to see by the time the credits appear. Horror film of the year.

By Stone Franks

2009 A Year in Reviews: The Stanley Riiks Column

I'm not into the whole *Twilight* thing. As I'm not a teenage girl I'm sure I'm not the target audience, but at the moment it just doesn't interest me. I love vampires, but I prefer mine to be mean and nasty and to have a bit of bite.

This year has actually been a pretty good year film wise. *District 9* was a huge highlight, bringing us a new take on alien contact. The new *Star Trek* was actually bloody good, despite it being *Star Trek*! *Watchmen* brought comics to the big screen as only Alan Moore can, amazing, intelligent, beautiful, sexy and retro! *Saw 6* continued to deliver in the only way that the *Saw* franchise can, blood and guts and puzzles! How can you not love it! Paranormal Activity left me, although with a cinema full of people, stunned into unmoving silent. Excellent low-budget film that is really creepy, and possibly one of the scariest films ever! It left me shivering in a hot bath while in my house all alone a couple of nights after watching it! Love it!

Of course there was some stuff that missed the target. *Terminator Salvation* was ok, *Transformers 2* was better than the first one (hardly an achievement) and Megan Fox was bloody marvellous, *GI Joe* wasn't actually too bad, and stared a couple of hotties. *X-Men: Origins Wolverine* promised too much and failed to deliver, mostly.

As for books, it can never be a bad year when you discover some new and great writers. The Stanley Riiks Novel of the Year Award go to.... (drum roll please!) Shaun Jeffrey's *The Kult*. Small Press publishers are beating the big guys and producing better stuff than ever. *The Kult* is a detective thriller that will keep you on the edge of your seat and keep you guessing till the end.

The Stanley Riiks' Special Award for Excellence (which I've just made up specifically for this book!) must go to the last book that I will read in 2009, the absolutely fantastic fantasy novel *Kell's Legend* By Andy Remic, the first novel of the Clockwork Vampire Chronicles, can't wait until April when the second book comes out! The best edge of the seat ending ever!

The Stanley Riiks Collection of the Year Award goes to... (drums again) Gary McMahon for *Different Skins*. Beautiful, absolutely beautiful. Two stories, one nasty and dirty and fabulous fun. The other tense, poignant, and utterly disturbing. Special mentions go to Elastic Press, who sadly will be no more, Dean Koontz for the Odd books (finally read the first one of those!), the Black Library for their excellent Horus Heresy Series (which is going to keep me busy for months!).

This year I also bought an iPod and discovered audiobooks. Marvellous things, means I can read a book walking to work. And who says men can't multitask! www.librovox.org is an excellent site where you can download audiobooks for free, and finally I'm able to catch up on H. G.

Well, Andre Norton, Edgar Rice Burroughs and the like. Can't wait for them to start doing Robert. E. Howard and H. P. Lovecraft!

At Morpheus Tales we've managed to put out the entire year of magazines without dropping the ball once (woohoo! Finger crossed for this year!), we also managed to publish The Undead Special Issue, and the Flash Fiction Horror Special, we also got the Fantasy Femmes Special Issue ready to launch in February and we are working on finishing the Scream Queens Special issue too (just one thing to do and then it's done!).

This year, 2010, let's keep our fingers cross for even more good stuff and even less crap! You've gotta hope!

By Stanley Riiks

ETHEREAL TALES #5

www.etherealtales.co.uk

As my first introduction to Ethereal Tales I'm pleasantly surprised. The stories are all nice and short, which I really like, and the cover is spooky! There's a mish-mash of stories contained in this issue, a nice eclectic mix which will appeal to all. My favourite story was a wonderful vampiric tale from A. J. Cooper [whose fiction will appear in the Morpheus Tales Fantasy Femmes Special Issue. Ed.], although it suffers from a weak ending.

Ethereal Tales is one of those magazines that draws you in, you feel a sense of community when reading the stories. The editor obviously has a strong vision of what she wants, and as such has produced in the fifth issue a remarkably confident and visionary magazine.

Great fun, despite the poetry.

By Adrian Brady

THE BODY CARTEL By Alan Spencer

www.damnationbooks.com

I wanted to like this book, I really did. Alan Spencer is a pseudonym of Spencer Wendleton, whose excellent story 'Human Service, Inc' is due to appear in *Morpheus Tales* #10. I quite like the spooky and oddly beautiful cover image, of a pale bloody-stained woman holding a finger up to her lips in a "shhsss" gesture.

So on with the story.



Jericho and Maddy Healey move to a new house in Arizona, aiming to turn the local resort into their new family business. But they find their new dream home makes some very strange noises, and there's a foul smelling leak in the basement which appears to be causing some damage to the wall.

All nice and peachy so far.

The manager of The Toolbox, a local strip-club has taken over the family business which includes a nice sideline from the local drug barons, the disposal of bodies and those deemed a problem.

When the wall of the Healey's new home falls down, it appears there's a huge and hideous cavern full of dead bodies and not so dead victims of the drug cartel trapped down there...

The idea is not bad. The plot is quite good.

The problem comes in the execution. Spencer's writing is quite good, he's no literary god, but his narration serves its purpose of getting us through the story in a timely and enjoyable manner.

The problem really lies with the mistakes, the errors, the typos, and the bits where things are just a little unclear.

The problem really lies at the doors of the publishers, who seem to have published a first draft. I don't believe this is a proof-copy of this book, but actually I've read better proofs. Why hasn't this novel gone through a proof-reader? Where is the editor's input? I'd actually like to see the original version that Spencer submitted and see if any work at all has been done to it. Because I doubt very much that it has.

Damnation Books have succeeded in ruining what could have been a good novel. There are certainly enough good bits in this book, particularly at the beginning and towards the end when things get all nice and nasty, to make it worthy of your attention. The complete failure on behalf of the publishers to prepare the text for publication comes as a shock to me. It feels like they've wrapped a cover round a first draft, and that's all they've done.

Ok, so maybe Spencer is to blame for not proofing his work better. But he's a writer, he would have worked on the novel for a while and sent it to a publisher only when he thought it was ready. It's the publisher's job to turn a manuscript into a book, and here they have utterly failed.

It's a shame that readers will find such fault with this book. Despite the problems it faces this is a good novel, it shows Spencer has a lot of merit as a writer, there are scenes reminiscent of Jack Ketchum in here. But because of the poor efforts of the publisher I find it difficult to recommend this book. I hope that the contract Spencer has with Damnation Books is limited and that he can take the novel to a

real publisher who can work through the problems, which are small, but regular enough to be more than annoying, and create a second edition of the book which is what it truly deserves.

By Stanley Riiks

BEYOND HAMMER: BRITISH HORROR CINEMA SINCE 1970

By James Rose

www.auteur.co.uk

I loved the Hammer Horror films, and since their demise, the UK horror film industry hasn't really existed.

This book looks at some of the few films that have been made, *Hellraiser*, *Shaun of the Dead*, *The Descent*, and

others, with a critical eye. So, the UK doesn't have a horror film industry, which is a shame, but the material that is produced and is critiqued in this book, is filled with richness and depth. Inspired, and inspiring. This book posits that British Horror Cinema is alive, and delves deep into the limited films that have been produced.

This book isn't really for the faint-hearted fan, only those truly worthy of the name will find this book interesting. It's not dry and academic, but it is aimed at those really and deeply interested in films and horror films in particular. This is the sort of book that all film students should read, it's also the sort of book you can get for your cousin who locks himself away in his bedroom for 20 hours a day watching horror films. Of course, if that's you, then you may well enjoy a copy! For me it was an enjoyable and insightful experience, as a horror film fanatic there are rare treats of film books, and this is definitely one of those.

By Adrian Brady

LA PETITE MORT

www.matador-film.de

Director Marcel Walz

If you're a torture porn fetishist then you'll love this. Think an ultra low budget German remake of *Hostel*, and you'll be heading along the right tracks. Three young Germans (played by



Beyond Hammer
British Horror Cinema Since 1970
James Rose



Andreas Pape, Ines Zahmoul and Anna Habeck) turn up in Frankfurt awaiting their flight to Mallorca, and stumble upon a strange and dingy bar.

Why oh why do some people think it's fine to walk down back alleys and into ruined industrial estates while visiting a new city? Born victims!

So when they upset a barmaid, the three of them suddenly find themselves at the mercy of the owner and mother, Madame Fabienne also known as Mamon (Manoush), who kills the man straight away in a cringe-worthy scene which will see many men wincing. Yes, they cut his penis off. Then the two girls, one blind, are sold to gentleman client who has the girls tortured for him, enjoying every ghastly minute of it.

This film is grotesquely over the top, the cheap special effects are laughably disgusting. This is definitely gross-out material, leaving little room for story, back-plot, or tension. The acting isn't terrible, and the film as a whole serves its purpose.

This isn't a bad film, and for the hardened fans of torture porn this is another classis example. Strong on violence, weak on story.

By Stanley Riiks

LIFE SERIAL By Trevor Wright

Check out this column's new title. LIFE SERIAL. F'ng awesome ain't it!

Thanks. I stole it.

Oh c'mon, it's not like it's the first time. And it's not like it even matters. I don't steal important stuff. Just titles. For instance, this title was stolen (with love of course) from a Season 6 episode of Buffy The Vampire Slayer. Good show. Great show titles. It's not like they even need it. The show's been dead for years. No harm no foul.

But it wasn't always like this. I never use to steal from TV.

Only from children.

EPISODE 2: SHADES OF ME

Learning to write a screenplay was going to be the death of me. Literally. Why? Cause I was going to blow my frigging brains out! That's why!

'I can't do this' is exactly what I kept telling myself. The format is impossible, the sentences aren't even sentences half the time and I'm not allowed to let anyone know what my characters are thinking? The hell?!

So I bought a book.

You know, the kind of book that tells you how to not only write the best damn script this side of *Timecop* but also how to market, and sell it, and how to become your own agent.

This was going to be easier than I thought. Now, if only I had a killer movie idea...

"Shades." That's what my 11-year-old future brother-in-law told me as we stood in his parent's backyard, tossing a tennis ball back and forth.

"Shades?"

"Yeah, shades."

"As in sun glasses?"

"No. As in shadows."

"Shadows?"

"Yeah. I call them Shades. I'm writing a story for school."

"Huh."

"Do you like it?" He was beaming at me.

I shrugged. "No."

That night, this synopsis sprung forth from the genius of my mind:

A small town sheriff tries to solve the disappearance of some local teenagers and uncovers the dread evil behind the mask of a travelling freak show. And also, people's shadows kill them a lot.

I called my masterpiece: *SHADES*.

Soon, with the screenwriting book in tow, I was teaching myself format using WordPerfect (of all programs!). I was officially a screenwriter.

Well... almost ...

"Oh to hell with this!" I said to no one in particular one day, right before ordering my first \$200 Final Draft screenwriting program, or in layman's terms: a month's pay at K-Mart.

As I waited patiently for my future to arrive in the form of a CD-ROM disc, I outlined and outlined, and then outlined some more, the ups and downs and twists and turns of *Shades*, a movie for horror fans by a horror fan, a movie that was going to turn the whole genre on its gory head, a movie that I wasn't selling for under 5 mil.

One day my program arrived. The following month I finished *Shades*.

And then...

At my girlfriend's parent's house:

"Read it and weep!" I said to my future brother-in-law.

The kid blinked at the title page, took off his old man glasses, rubbed his eyes and returned them to the bridge of his nose.

"Hey! What gives? This is my story."

"Really? That's strange, it's registered under my name." I said, whipping out my newly acquired Writer's Guild confirmation letter.

"MOM!" He yelled as he ran down the hall.

He was always a whiny kid.

NEXT: *Shades* (the greatest horror script of all time) vs. The Most Jaded Screenwriting

Competition Judge in All of Screenwriting
Competition Judge History!!

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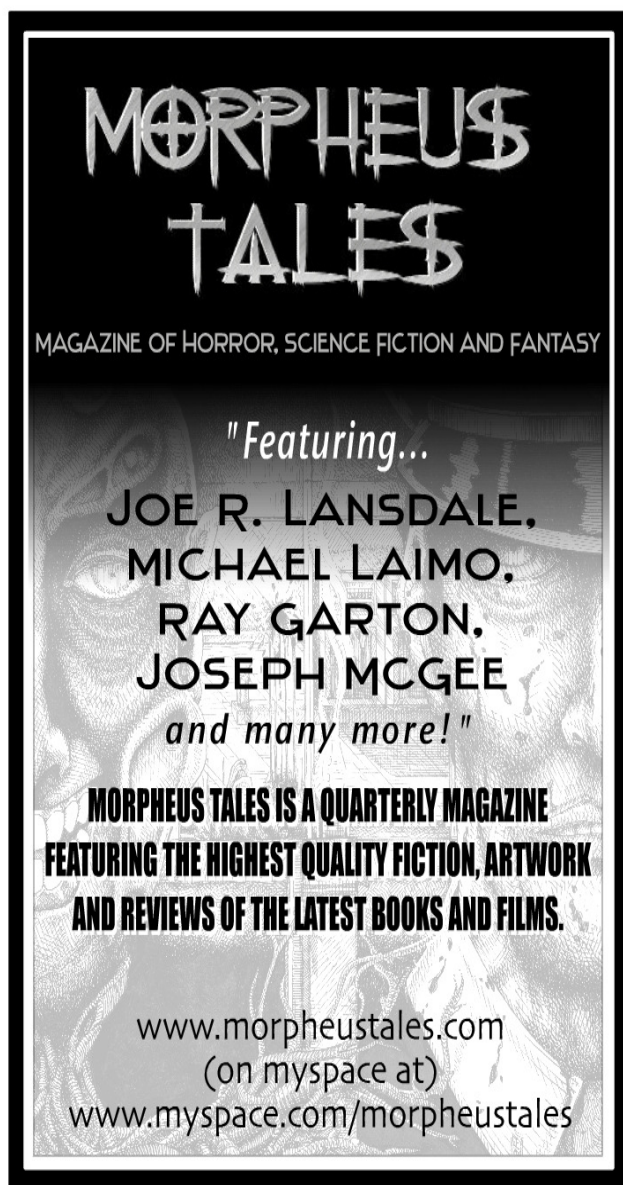
***Apartment 14F* By Christian Saunders**

***Kell's Legend* By Andy Remic**

Plus loads more!

Plus more columns and non-fiction!

www.morpheustales.com

The image shows the cover of Morpheus Tales Magazine. The title 'MORPHEUS TALES' is written in a large, stylized, white font at the top. Below it, in a smaller white font, is the subtitle 'MAGAZINE OF HORROR, SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY'. The background of the cover is a dark, textured image of a person's face, possibly a character from a horror or sci-fi story. In the center, there is a quote: '"Featuring... JOE R. LANSDALE, MICHAEL LAIMO, RAY GARTON, JOSEPH MCGEE and many more!"'. Below the quote, there is a bold statement: 'MORPHEUS TALES IS A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FEATURING THE HIGHEST QUALITY FICTION, ARTWORK AND REVIEWS OF THE LATEST BOOKS AND FILMS.' At the bottom, the website 'www.morpheustales.com' is listed, followed by '(on myspace at)' and 'www.myspace.com/morpheustales'.

Want to write a review for Morpheus Tales?

We are looking for reviews, and reviewers, from around the world to contribute to the reviews supplement.

We will be reviewing genre material (horror, SF, fantasy) books, dvds, films, merchandise, toys, clothes, games (PC and console), magazines, websites, cds, events, and anything else you can think of!

We will be using two types of reviews in the new supplement:

Full-length reviews - up to 500 words.

Mini-reviews - up to 80 words.

The first review supplement will be feature a number of reviews and will be out on 1st of January. We are currently seeking contributors to the reviews supplement. We are looking for first online and first print world rights.

All review submissions/enquiries/suggestions should be sent to:

morpheusales@blueyonder.co.uk