

Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

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CONTENTS:

FICTION: *Gravestones* by Mari Ness

REVIEW: *Space Raoul*
Let The Right One In
Magical Shopping Arcade

FEATURE: *Podcasting* by Mur Lafferty



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FICTION

Gravestones

by mari ness

1

When the gravestones began to chatter to each other we ignored it. Their voices then were only light whispers, no more, mere breaths of wind. We assumed, I fear, that they were the voices of the dead with little to say anyway.

2

It was a playground for us, that graveyard, a wilderness of tall and fallen stones, of short squat stones for tables and dollhouses and board games. When it rained, we squatted against some of the leaning stones and waited, or danced wildly in the mud and grass between stones. Sometimes we slid on the low, now slippery gravestones, rolling merrily in the grass on the other side.

We could not hear the voices when it rained.

3

"It's the rocks," we said, spreading a Monopoly board across a particularly large flat stone. The dice trembled on the gravestone, as if to signal that we played on a gambler's grave. "Gotta be the rocks. The voices don't match."

And indeed, they didn't. The stone bearing the name Linda Towland Meadows Beloved Wife murmured in a dark bass voice about guerilla warfare in the Congo, occasionally interspersed with songs about crocheting. The stone bearing the name Toby Sanders Purple Heart Korean War sang in a high-pitched wail about bumblebees. The stone covered in lichen seemed to attract a myriad of voices. We speculated that perhaps many people had been buried underneath it. But we never tried to find out.

4

As the voices grew louder we said the word "ghosts" louder, to see if it provoked a response. The stones sang back at us.

We decided to start playing baseball. We shouted as we played. It was almost loud enough to drown out their voices.

5

"It's dead people," we said, not really believing it. None of us, really, believed in ghosts, even with the whispers of a graveyard around us. Because ghosts only come out at night, and the sun was shining brightly. We listened to the conversations of the graveyard, and played on, unafraid, occasionally wondering why the one voice remained so angry over the actions of some person called G. Gordon Liddy, and why another voice lamented the passing of dominoes, and sometimes getting intrigued by the voice that complained about the vast decline in the quality of American confectionary.

6

But the singing; the singing terrified us. Not just because on one fine summer evening some of the gravestones were attempting to sing "Smells Like Teen Spirit" in a haunting acapella style while other gravestones were humming "She'll Be Coming Down the Mountain When She Comes," while still others were attempting to sing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" in a series of rhythmic clacks, creating a cacophony of terror. No.

No, it terrified us because we realized that perhaps even death would not teach us to sing.

fin

REVIEWS

Space Raoul



Written and drawn by Jamie Smart
Published by Slave Labor Graphics
rrp £6.99

reviewed by *alasdair stuart*

Small! Red! Heroic! Defiantly British! Occasionally embearded! *Space Raoul* is the greatest space hero there is, a man (Well, red thing) who's heroism knows no bounds. Well, actually it knows some bounds but he has a wheel powered spaceship and a manservant called Quibble, what do you expect?

Jamie Smart is one of the best kept secrets of British comics, his magnificent work on *Angry Little Robot*, *Bohda Te* and *Bear*, home of Looshkin, the finest psychopathic cat in comics, is amongst the funniest comics produced in the last ten years.

The reasons are simple; firstly, Smart's art style is almost impossibly likable. His chunky figures are packed with energy and his layouts bounce along with the same energy. His art work is friendly, accessible, open and cheerfully complex all at the same time and he clearly revels in the extra space on offer here, as many of these strips were originally printed in *The Dandy*.

What really makes this fly though is the quality of the writing. Smart has a great understanding of the pacing of comedy and a joke arrives every second panel at least, as Space Raoul and the irrepressible Quibble face down the likes of fallen Space Hero Antimatter Alan, Laika the Bounty Hunter (and Dog) and the dreaded Goliath Boxicus. They do this with the sort o can do spirit and willingness to flee in the face of total destruction that makes them truly British.

So pip pip! Tally ho! Join Space Raoul today and prepare for a life o adventure, excitement, tea, battenberg and ocasionally running away a lot! The Space Heroes need you. No, really, they do.

Let The Right One In



Directed by Tomas Alfredson
Written by John Ajvide Lindqvist
Starring: Kåre Hedebrant (Oskar), Lina Leandersson (Eli),
Per Ragnar (Håkan), Peter Carlberg (Lacke)
Certificate 15, 114 minutes, DVD Released April 10

reviewed by *richard whittaker*

And when at last it does
I'd say you were within your rights to bite
The right one and say, "what kept you so long?"
"What kept you so long?"
– Morrissey, *Let the Right One Slip In*

A quick word before starting with this review. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is now officially an irrelevancy. Aside from snubbing *The Dark Knight* for best picture, and ignoring Bruce Springsteen's track *The Wrestler* for best original song, the fact that *Låt den Rätte Komma in* isn't even in the running for best foreign picture is a sign of a broken Oscar system.

Sweden isn't known for its horror movies. If it's known for much in cinema, it's really for Ingmar Bergman and a host of imitators that, for better or worse, have followed in his footsteps. But it has also established a tradition of realism that allows films about even the most extraordinary of subjects – like a teen vampire in an ice-covered village – to seem grounded and plausible. Coming out of that tradition, *Let*

the Right One In rams home what an extraordinary act of mediocrity the similarly icy *30 Days of Night* was. In fact, it overshadows a whole slate of movies – not least *Interview With a Vampire* – making them seem tawdry and silly by comparison.

Oskar (played with a twisted fragility by newcomer Hedebrant) is a strange and isolated child living in a grim ferroconcrete suburb of Stockholm called Blackeberg. Friendless and with signs of a sociopathic streak emerging, he's the victim of school bullying and non-existent parenting. His isolation ends when a strange new child moves in to the apartment next door. Eli (Leandersson) is his opposite in many ways: While Oskar's mother is only around to yell at him, her guardian Håkan (Ragnar) is devoted to the point of obsession. Of course, he has to be: Eli is quickly revealed to be a vampire. He plays Rehnquist to her adolescent Dracula, protecting her from discovery and death while hunting her next meal. But when one death too many drags him away, he leaves Eli open to the strange advances of Oskar.

To call what emerges from this a romance is probably a misnomer. Oskar and Eli are both too disconnected from normal human interaction for the word 'love' to be bandied around freely. Instead their mutual need binds them together and creates an emotionally stunted connection - Sort of like *Romeo and Juliet* if the actors were the right age and kept having to hide corpses. There is an undeniable tenderness, an unforced awkwardness between the two young actors that keeps the narrative grounded and even somewhat charming.

Not that this film won't make some viewers uncomfortable – and not just for the gore. The tension between Oskar and Eli is not just that one is undead and the other a potential meal: After all, the emotionally repressed Oskar is arguably as much of a deadly monster as the blood-sucking Eli. The viewer's awkwardness will come because the film dwells between infantile crushes and burgeoning youthful sexuality. Oskar seems more at ease with his new friend being a vampire than with the complexities of hormones and physical intimacy, while Eli's guarded comments about her age and origin create a tension that will leave the audience wondering who is getting what from their relationship.

Much of the credit must go to scripter Lindqvist, who adapted his own debut novel. He takes every traditional convention of literary vampirism, everything from mirrors to sunlight to bloodsucking-as-sex, and makes them fresh again by underplaying them. Carving away much of the exposition and back-story from his book, he leaves a lean, spartan tale that allows the performances to bloom.

While there are undoubtedly all the components of a horror movie, down to the gore sprayed forth from a series of gruesome deaths on the slushy snow, Lindqvist's script doesn't depend on them to succeed. Nor is it simply an off-kilter romance. In fact, while Oskar and Eli are at the center of events, his story has most sympathy for blue-collar schlub Lacke (Carlberg) and his cadre of affable working class drunks that become their prey.

It also helps that director Alfredson does not come from a traditional horror background, instead having cut his teeth with social absurdist comedy troupe Killinggänget. His emphasis on the grueling mundanity of life in a small, frozen town is like watching an early Wes Craven, when the sociology professor turned director was breaking the horror formula to refine it, rather than just following the generic instructions. That's what may make this film so important for modern horror. Like last year's sadly overlooked *The Signal*, none of its debts are to the sausage-machine product being force-fed to genre audiences. Maybe that's what modern horror needs: Less *Underworld*, more *Wild Strawberries*.

Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi - The Complete Series

reviewed by alasdair stuart

Starring Luci Christianson, Jessica Brooke and John Gremillion
rpp £24.99

Sasshi knows everything there is to know about popular culture and nothing about real life. His family used to own the Bath house at the Abenobashi Shopping Arcade but now, the arcade is starting to run down, his family have sold the Bath House and his best friend Arumi, another Arcade child is planning to move. To make matters worse, his grandfather is in critical condition after trying to retrieve their cat from the roof.

Sasshi's world is falling apart. But it's only when he and Arumi take a wrong turn in the arcade and find themselves in a medieval version of it complete with bad French accents, evil overlords and market places, Sasshi realizes just how bad things have got.



Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi changes style and tone at the same speed Sasshi and Arumi change worlds. It starts out as a subtle, well observed character piece and over the course of thirteen frantic episodes becomes a science fiction series, a romantic comedy, an action movie, an anti-war satire, a clear eyed examination of adolescence and a multiversal fantasy epic. Many of the changes are accompanied by changes to animation style, all are accompanied by some of the best, most nuanced voice work in recent anime history and all of them make the series a cheerfully maniacal rollercoaster ride. Some of the best episodes see the series' style completely overhauled especially the fantastic noir version of the arcade and a war torn wasteland that sees Sasshi and Arumi's families fighting all out war for control of the Arcade's tiny patch of land.

This is anime at it's best, a constantly shifting parade of visuals locked around a rock solid and extremely well written character-driven drama. The central story is nothing more complex than Sasshi trying to come to terms with the first big changes in his life but it's presented with such wit and humour and flare that you can't help but be carried along. One of the best, quirkiest series of recent years and at this price, unmissable.

FEATURES



podcasting



by mur lafferty

If I had a nickel for every time I have said, "the great thing about podcasting is..." I'd have, well, probably about a dollar. (Come on, I don't say it THAT much.)

That I'm a podcasting enthusiast is no secret. I love listening, I love producing, I love brainstorming new ways to play with the distribution method. The versatility is mind boggling, and most of us haven't even begun to explore all the things you can do with it.

The thing I am loving most about podcasting lately is the fact that you can have a niche podcast and become a hit, as people around the world (that hopefully speak your language) with the same passions can tune in. Can you take a TV show about wine or knitting to television, or even radio? No - in the limited viewership of the time slot and geographical limitations of traditional media, a tiny number of people could tune in. But worldwide, yeah, knitting podcasts, wine podcasts, and all sorts of niche hobbies and passions can find their listenership.

My latest passion in the podcast arena is the ARG - alternate reality game. I'm relatively new to the gaming scene, and right now just trying to soak up as much information as I can. There are two ways I'm doing this - the first is reading the kid's ARG, 39 Clues, with my six-year-old daughter. The somewhat straightforward puzzles and online treasure hunting is fun, and the book is pretty good too. Right now we're on book 1, The Maze of Bones. The second way I'm getting into ARGs is, of course, listening to a podcast.

The ARG Netcast (<http://www.argnetcast.com/>) is a weekly (usually) podcast that deals with ARGs. The funny thing is, it breaks almost all of my personal rules as to what makes a podcast unlistenable - most of the podcasts are one hour+ long, they're done in a round table-like manner with as many as four hosts-most of them not the same from week to week-and it rambles a bit. I mean, I can't listen to the incredibly popular TWIT podcast because I can't stand the round table rambling approach. But the point is, the ARG Netcast works. The host, Jonathan Waite, who also runs The ARGNetwork (<http://www.argn.com/>), does the chat live via UStream (<http://www.argnetcast.com/live/>) with a chat room chiming in during the call. While I haven't done the live experience (the great thing about podcasting is the time-shifted manner where I can listen whenever I want to), I love catching up later in the week. Waite manages to run the conversation pretty well, moderating when needed. The group is always entertaining even when they go off topic, which they do frequently. It's unabashedly explicit, usually in order for the casual swearing to not shock anyone listening.

All of the background details aside, what the podcast does is let you know about the newest ARGs, how existing ARGs are doing, histories of some of the more popular ARGs, and what goes into making them. The podcast manages to be useful to both players and creators of the new gaming genre, bringing in writers and puppet-masters (think GM for role playing games) to be on the panel. The hosts are fun and the topic is informative and entertaining. What more could you want?

Other niche podcasts include feminist comic book discussion (Four Color Heroines - <http://girl-wonder.org/4colorheroines/>), skeptic interviews (Skepticality - <http://www.skepticality.com/>), Harry Potter fandom (Pottercast - <http://pottercast.the-leaky-cauldron.org/>), Firefly and Serenity fandom (<http://signal.serenityfirefly.com/>), kink education and information (The Ropecast - <http://rope.mevio.com/> - and do we need to say it's not for kids?), knitting (Cast-on <http://www.cast-on.com/>), and the intelligence community (The Spycast - <http://www.spymuseum.org/programs/spycast.php>).

Want to get even more focused? Knitting too broad for you? Try the ultra-niche knitting cast focusing on socks (Socks in the City - <http://socksinthecitypodcast.blogspot.com/>). If you're worried about how to survive if your favorite science fiction movie turns out to be real, go for the Geek Survival Guide (<http://gsguide.blogspot.com/>). If you want to see what other parody music exists beyond Weird Al, check out Manic Mondays (<http://www.devospice.com/manicmondays.php>). If every four years at the Olympics is not enough curling news and information for you, try The Curling Show (<http://www.thecurlingshow.com/>).

The point is that if you have any interest, no matter how broad or narrow, there's probably a podcast out there for you. Plug "[interest] podcast" into Google and see what comes up. You might be surprised.

Of course, I was surprised to not find an orchid podcast, so I have decided that there is a hole that must be filled. Not by me, of course; I kill the poor things. But by someone more knowledgeable than me. I can be patient. It'll happen. See, the great thing about podcasting is that if there isn't a show about something you like, one will probably come along soon.

Mur Lafferty

www.murverse.com

Playing For Keeps, a superhero novel by Mur Lafferty available now in print, iphone, and Kindle editions!



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