

SF'S MOST WANTED VILLAINS

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STARLOG

THE SCIENCE FICTION UNIVERSE

NOVEMBER #148



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ROGER RABBIT

The scenes they censored

BATMAN
Catwoman confesses

It's an all-new **WAR OF THE WORLDS**

Richard Chaves:
"Why they're killing me!"

Plus: **ERIK THE VIKING**
BLAKE'S 7
Episode Guide

WANTED!!!

- THE ABYSS**
Michael Biehn, underwater psycho
- BEAUTY & BEAST**
Paracelsus—Vincent's father?
David Warner
All-Time evil
- GHOSTBUSTERS II**
Carpathian creep



STARLOG



NUMBER 148
NOVEMBER 1989
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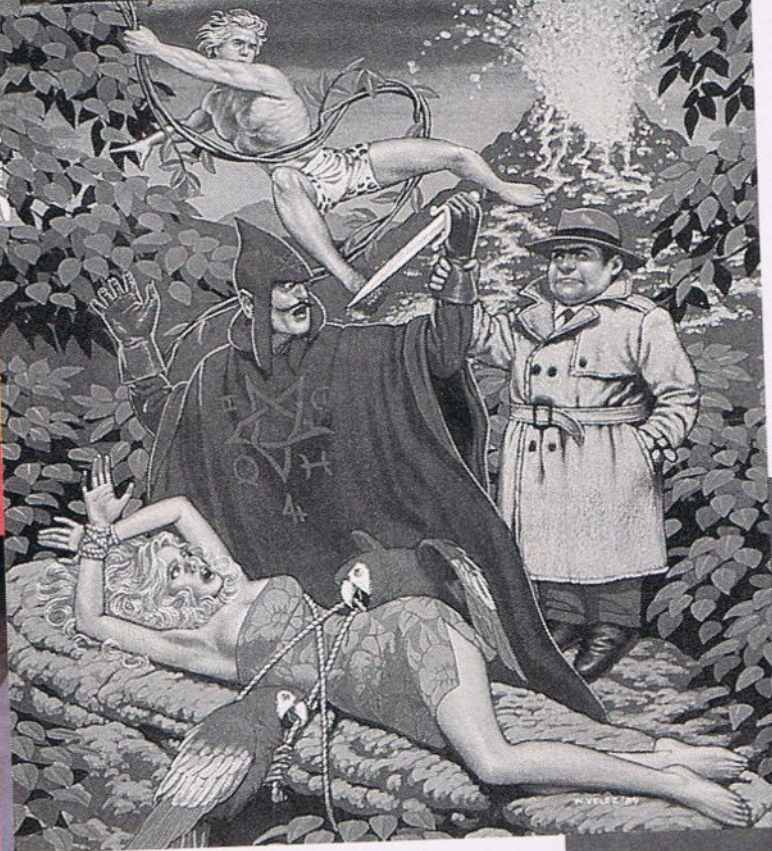
CRAIG SHAW GARDNER

AUTHOR OF
THE EBENEZUM TRILOGY AND THE BALLAD OF WUNTVOR

REEL ONE OF THE CINEVERSE CYCLE

SLAVES OF THE VOLCANO GOD

The Bewildering New Series That Believes in B-Movies!



A Captain Crusader Decoder Ring is the key to unlocking the door into the Cineverse, where B-movies are not just reels.

Walking through Harvard Square, Craig Shaw Gardner happily details how he became interested in comic books, and how that led to his novelizing *Batman*. He has good reason to be happy. *Batman* has been on the *New York Times* bestsellers list for weeks. Fantasy is his business, and business is good.

Gardner, whose new work *The Cineverse Cycle* is due out this month, confesses that his parents' forbidding him to read comic books was what truly sparked his interest in the four-color form. He fondly recalls buying the first issue of *The Fantastic Four* and many other comics off the newsstand.

"This is a warning to parents," Gardner says with a mischievous smile. "Let your kids read comics and they'll go out and do something worthwhile with their lives. And if you forbid them comics... they'll turn out like me."

As a young writer, Craig Gardner was the

Fantasy By the Book

BY CHRISTOPHER GOLDEN

With the Dark Knight wrapped, Craig Shaw Gardner plans a few trips outside the "Cineverse."

Slaves Art: Walter Velez/Ace Books

"Batman, on a certain level, isn't necessarily a children's character," notes Gardner.



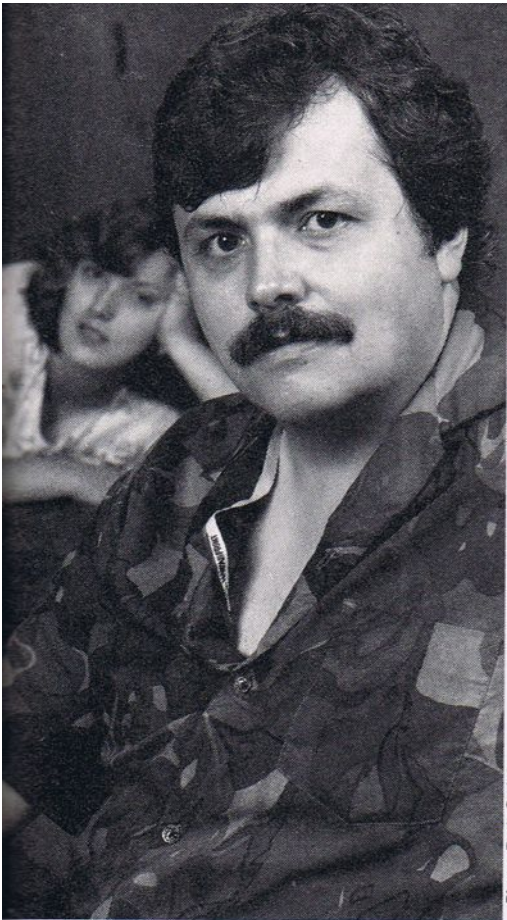


Photo: Bath Gwinn

"This is a warning to parents; let your kids read comics," says Craig Shaw Gardner, seen with wife Elizabeth. "If you forbid them comics, they'll turn out just like me."

manager of the Million Year Picnic in Harvard Square. He proudly points out that his comics/SF store was only the third of its kind in the nation, and it is no surprise that the dedication of *Batman* reads: "For the Million Year Picnic, and all who toil and buy therein." And so, with all this behind him, Gardner was thrilled to take up the pen for the Dark Knight.

He talks quite a bit about the modern image of Batman, and how that image influenced his work.

"When you write about Batman," Gardner says, "you write about an idealized Batman." Today, that idealized Batman is just as psychotic as the Joker, but Batman channels his psychosis into "doing good."

At the beginning, he was just as uncertain as anyone about Michael Keaton's ability to play Batman convincingly. The movie changed Gardner's mind.

"He makes a great Bruce Wayne and a very troubled Batman, which is what I think the director was trying to get across. Keaton has a real edge that perhaps the square-jawed hero that the comics fans were looking for wouldn't have been able to provide. He's perfectly believable."

It doesn't take long for the conversation to turn to Robin, who is conspicuously absent from the movie and therefore Gardner's book. Originally, the Boy Wonder did make an appearance near the film's end. However, Gardner believes that Robin's presence was "almost an after-

thought" and that it would have been a matter of doing too much in one film.

"From what I know, the current thinking is that Robin will show up at the second film's beginning, which I think is actually a better way to go."

Considering *Batman's* success, a sequel is inevitable. As to its plot, there's D.A. Harvey Dent (Two-Face).

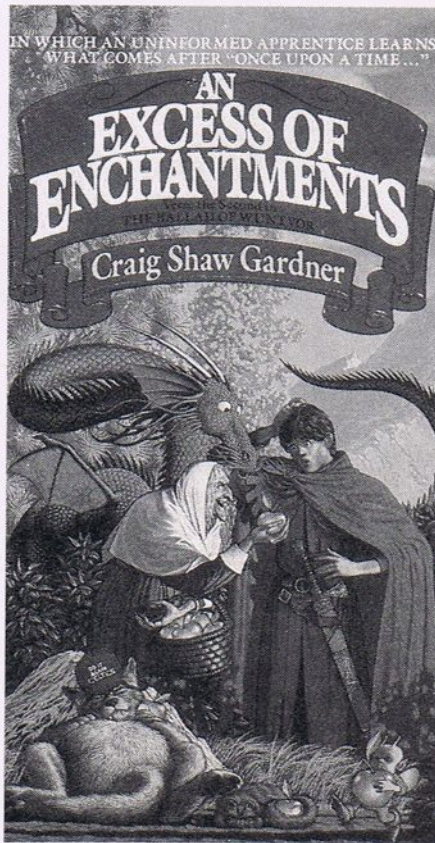
"Originally," says Gardner, "there was a treatment for a second one written by Sam Hamm [STARLOG YEARBOOK #4], in which the Joker turned Dent into Two-Face. But, I understand that Hamm doesn't want to do any more *Batman* scripts."

Some critics, including TV Joker Cesar Romero (STARLOG #146), have complained about the violence in the modern *Batman*, but Gardner is quick on the defense.

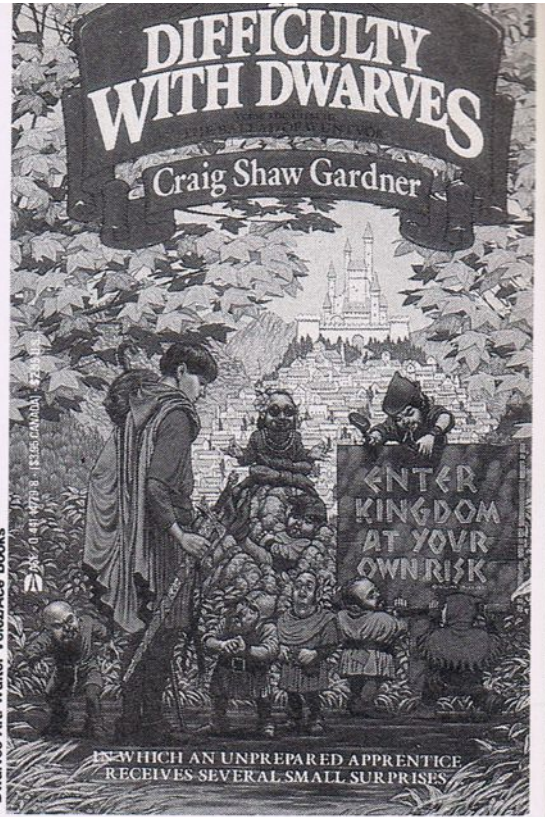
"Batman, on a certain level, isn't necessarily a children's character. There are aspects of Batman which are very violent and perhaps more provocative than people might want their children to see. Those aspects have always existed even though they may have been unspoken for a long time. It's not necessarily a bad thing that the new *Batman* shouldn't be seen by younger children."

The author defends the TV version of Batman as well.

"It's good in its own right," he says. "It's a very entertaining, fast-moving and funny show, and one of the best examples of comics into TV. We've grown up now, and so has Batman."



Further fracturing fairy tales, Gardner involves the Eternal Apprentice Wuntvor in fearsome fables conjured by Mother Duck.



"Even wizards sometimes have bad days," wrote Gardner as the premise for the second Ebenezer Trilogy.

Movie Magic

As many writers have noted, the problem in adapting screenplays into novel form, is that producers and directors are "always changing things until the last minute." With *Batman*, the final change came 48 hours before the book was due at the printers, and Gardner had already sent it out. So, someone at the publisher's office had to "ghost-write" a few paragraphs near the book's end. Though one would expect an author to be upset by such tampering, Gardner simply laughs. He does novelizations, he explains, "for the fun of it. Of course, the money helps. But I only do the ones that I find really interesting."

His first novelization was *The Lost Boys*, and that taught him to expect last-minute changes. Two days before Gardner was supposed to mail the book, director Joel Schumacher called and told him that the film's last 20 minutes had been entirely changed. The author says he was only able to get it done in time "through the glory of word-processing."

Gardner hopes that the success of his fantasy novels had something to do with his assignment to novelize both *Back to the Future II* and *III* for Berkeley. Although the details of these projects are prohibitively secretive, Gardner shares what he is allowed to reveal.

"The second one takes off right where the first one ended," he discloses. "It's the further adventures of Marty McFly and Dr.

CHRISTOPHER GOLDEN is a Massachusetts-based writer. This is his first article for STARLOG.



Gardner will become involved in Marty McFly's time-hopping via "the funniest screenplay I've ever had to novelize."

Brown at various times and places. They end up in 2015, and that's all I can tell you. *Back to the Future II* will be out for Thanksgiving. It's the funniest screenplay I've ever had to novelize."

But, the author is eager to talk about his newest work, an original funny fantasy series called *The Cineverse Cycle*, published by Ace Books and of special interest to STARLOG readers.

"It uses one of the basic SF/fantasy clichés of all time, which is that ours is but one of myriad worlds that you can reach by either fantastic or super-scientific means. That's science-fiction cliché #207."

The difference here, as Gardner details, is that in this particular case, the other worlds are all based on B movies. "Somehow," he says, "the great subconscious of Hollywood has tapped into reality."

Each of Hollywood's trends has become a universe of its own. "So, there's a Tarzan world and a Beach Party world and a Singing Cowboy world, and as you get deeper into the Cineverse, you get into a foreign film world which is in black and white with subtitles. There's a South Sea Island world and a film noir world where it never gets light. There's a '50s science-fiction world where you find the Southern California Institute of Very Advanced Science."

This saga begins with *Slaves of the Volcano Gods*. The next volumes are *Bride of the Slime Monster* and *Revenge of the Fluffy Bunnies*.

The series' protagonist is a public relations man named Roger, whose great love of movies gets him lost in the Cineverse.

"It all starts," says Gardner, "when our hero finds a Captain Crusader Decoder Ring in a box of Nut Crunchies. This is a key to the universe, which I think says something about the universe. Anyway, this cheap plastic ring can be used to travel from place to place within the Cineverse."

While in the Cineverse, Roger meets various and sundry characters who become major players in the story. The Beautiful Delores is Roger's girl friend. She is from the Cineverse, as are all of the main characters except for Roger and his mother.

"There's Big Louie, who's five feet tall, Zabana, Prince of the Jungle, and a mysterious hero who shows up in many different guises throughout the series. We first meet him as The Masked Marshal."

The main villain, Doctor Dread, "never says anything directly. He's always beating around the bush. He says things like 'Deal with them,' or 'Take care of it.'"

Magic Moves

One of the attributes of humorous fantasy is that it tends to be short. However, immediately following the last book in *The Cineverse Cycle*, Gardner will publish *The Other Sinbad*, the first in an Arabian Nights trilogy, also from Ace. Each of these books will be significantly longer than Gardner's other novels.

"I had never read a modern Arabian Nights story that I really liked, so I thought, 'OK, I'll write one myself.' These will still be humorous, but they won't be the straightforward burlesques, the fantasy vaudeville of the Ebenezum books."

This series will be based on actual Sinbad legends, which maintain there were two Sinbads. Sinbad the Sailor, whom we are familiar with, is always seen as an old man, telling the tales of his youth.

"However, we never see *The Other Sinbad*, who is called Sinbad the Porter. He was of lowly calling and became the Grand Vizier of the adventurer Sinbad's estates.

"In this book, Sinbad the Porter is sort of the Arabian Nights' Certified Public Accountant," Gardner laughs. "It didn't make sense to me. Sinbad would go out on an adventure, come back with loads of gold, saying he would never do it again. And two weeks later, he would be off on a new quest. This book explains all of that."

A second volume, *A Bad Day for Ali Baba*, tells the story of what happens when the Forty Thieves go on strike. A third, *Scheherazade's Night Out*, will follow. The three books will have some continuity of character and idea, but for the most part, stand independent of each other.

With two film novelizations and six novels on the way, Craig Shaw Gardner is doing very well. However, his work hasn't always been in such high demand.

"I got about five years of rejection letters," he laughs. "I went from straight rejection letters to personalized rejection letters. It was thrilling to find out there was actually someone on the other end."

In 1978, Gardner sold his story "A Malady of Magicks," which eventually became the basis for his novel of the same name. Almost immediately, he started selling horror short stories to Charles L. Grant. After about a dozen short stories, Gardner got his first book deal. At a convention in Washington, D.C., he ran into Ginjer Buchanan, who had recently become an editor at Ace Books. She asked if he had anything new, and he mentioned that he was putting his Ebenezum stories into novel form. She asked to see his manuscript, and then she bought what would become the

novel, *A Malady of Magicks*. This book detailed the first adventure of Ebenezum, the wizard who is allergic to magic, and his bumbling apprentice, Wuntvor. In *Malady*, Ebenezum is cursed with this allergy by "the dreaded rhyming demon Guux Unfufadoo, and Wuntvor must help cure his master."

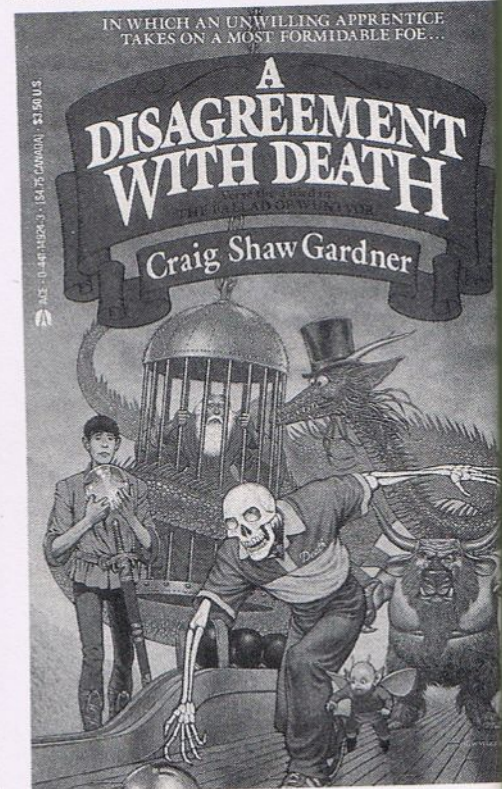
Later, Gardner published two more novels of Ebenezum and Wuntvor. In *A Multitude of Monsters*, "Wuntvor runs afoul of the A.F.T.A.O.M.I.B.A.C., who decide that he would look much better covered in a light cream sauce." *A Night in the Netherhells* ("In case you didn't notice," the author smiles, "there's a pattern here.") features Wuntvor trying to rescue his beloved from the Netherhells, "armed with three magical items: Cuthbert the Cowardly Sword, the Horn of Persuasion and the Get Out of Jail Free Card." The books did so well that Gardner was asked to write a second trilogy. He felt that he had more to say about Wuntvor, who he claims is the series' true protagonist.

"I like to think of him as every adolescent," Gardner says. "I take all the worst experiences I had as a teenager, combine them with everybody else's worst experiences as a teenager, and I give them all to Wuntvor."

The second trilogy sold even better than the first.

In *A Difficulty With Dwarves*, it's discovered that Ebenezum has been infecting other wizards with his malady, and "Wuntvor must go on a quest to the kingdom of Mother Duck for aid." *An Excess of Enchantments* gives readers Gardner (continued on page 58)

Death is the last statement Gardner wants to make on Wuntvor's world for now.



Death Art: Walter Velez/Ace Books

Gardner

(continued from page 44)

ner's "homage to fractured fairy tales. Wuntvor is revealed to be the Ever-Bumbling Eternal Apprentice, and Mother Duck decides to test him by trapping him in strange and deadly fairy tales." Finally, in *A Disagreement With Death*, the final volume, Death decides that the Eternal Apprentice should belong to him, and therefore kidnaps his master Ebenezer. "Wuntvor, of course, must go to the rescue." Gardner insists that the sixth volume really is the last book in the series. Unless, of course, years from now, he comes up with some truly wonderful adventure for Wuntvor.

Magic Words

Craig Shaw Gardner has also written short stories, reviews and articles for newspapers and magazines and *Wishbringer*, a book tie-in to a computer game. That was something he enjoyed thoroughly.

"I was able to take an already existing setting, and perversely, not use *any* of the magical hints that you're supposed to get to the game's end. There's actually a way you can do it without using [a single one] of the clues. Anyone reading it won't find out any of the game's secrets."

All of Gardner's original books, as well as the computer tie-in, have had covers painted by Walter Velez. And *The Cineverse Cycle* will be no exception.

"Apparently, we're joined at the hip," says Gardner. "But, he has done very well for me, and I like to believe my books have helped him as well. One of the things that publishers try to do is to make your books recognizable to the public, and Walter Velez definitely has something to do with that."

Pleased with his growing popularity, Gardner continues to create. He has a comic-book project called *Time Bomb* under submission at various publishers, drawn by John Garcia, an old friend. Like Gardner, Garcia too is a big comics fan. The pair recently decided that "today's vigilantes like [Marvel Comics'] Punisher are fun but perhaps a little bit too wimpy. We decided to come out with a *real* two-fisted comic."

Add all of this together with the epic horror novel that Gardner is "always working on but never quite finishing" and a trend becomes obvious. Gardner is running from his greatest fear—typecasting. He has been typecast as an "up-and-coming horror and short story writer," as "one of the funny fantasy guys," and now believes that there is a strong public urge to see him as "that *Batman* writer."

"Whenever anything is popular, you discover yourself in a brand new pigeonhole. Some of my fans know all of my guises, but to most people, I'll soon be 'that B-movie fantasy guy' or 'that Arabian Nights guy.'"

But some day, Gardner hopes, people will be familiar with enough of his work to say, "Here's a new book by that Craig Shaw Gardner guy."

Biehn

(continued from page 12)

script and I know *exactly* how to do it, because I've read about such a character or experienced similar things myself or had the same sort of relationship with people. So, when I go in to act it, it's mostly technique. I'm not an actor who just lets things happen in front of the camera.

STARLOG: You don't have to get drunk to play drunk.

BIEHN: No. You always hear the story of Dustin Hoffman and Laurence Olivier when they did *Marathon Man*, and Hoffman would stay up all night and Olivier would come in and say, "Why don't you try acting?" I mean, I would never begin to question any of Dustin Hoffman's techniques—he's such a wonderful actor! I just think everybody does things differently. It's not to say that I'm not intense.

STARLOG: Yet, you've said you didn't know why people thought of you as intense.

BIEHN: I know why they think of me as intense. It's because on the set, I'm very concentrated. I don't just walk on and do my thing and walk off. I'm very intense when I'm working. I know exactly what I'm doing before I get in there. When I did *Terminator*, I thought about Reese who comes from the future and I wondered what I had to identify with. So, I went back and read a lot about the Warsaw Ghetto, about people living in the rubble and facing insurmountable odds with the Nazis closing in on them. When you read about what they felt, what their relationships were like, what death meant to them, you begin to feel what maybe you would feel like if you were in those situations.

STARLOG: *ALIENS* wasn't as intense an experience.

BIEHN: It was a less challenging role. Sigourney's character was really the movie's focal point. *ALIENS* was a lot of fun, a rollercoaster type of ride, but I feel the story in *Terminator* was stronger and better. I like Sigourney and Bill Paxton, whom I've known for years, and all the guys; it was wonderful working over in London. But for me, it was just not as challenging as other roles I've had. When you're not being challenged continually, you have a tendency to relax, so when the time comes when you do have to do something, you're not thinking about it, whereas in other roles, you're always there. In *ALIENS*, I wasn't working every day, but I had to be right on when I did.

Both those characters were a little bit the same—tough guy, a little bit vulnerable underneath—like Reese, Hicks gives you a sense of the man underneath, a man like you or me, who is frightened. He's not just a big tough stud who walks through walls.

STARLOG: Do you try to inject this vulnerability into each character you do, even if it's not written into the script, just to humanize it?

BIEHN: Anytime you do any kind of role, you must humanize it and be honest and

sincere. In *ALIENS*, there's a scene where everybody has been killed and Ripley tells Hicks, "You're the boss now," which is a big change for him from one who takes orders to being in command, and I had to show his insecurity and doubts, which is something the audience can relate to.

STARLOG: Does a movie experience ever affect your life? Do you come from the movie feeling you've changed in any way?

BIEHN: I think they all affect you to a certain extent. I've probably been affected more by a couple of TV shows that I did, where I played the bad guys. My two best bad characters were in *Hill Street Blues*—I played a racist woman-hater, a real pig, who felt betrayed by all the people on the hill—and a TV movie called *Deadly Intentions*, about a schizophrenic doctor who abuses his wife emotionally. As I did on *The Abyss*, I tend to rationalize my characters, especially the bad ones. I really get very defensive about it. I think those characters have affected me more because I couldn't seem to move them aside afterwards.

STARLOG: Does it make you confront evil that you may find in yourself?

BIEHN: I think we all have, you know. Maybe I'm a little bit closer than most people to being just on the edge of falling over into—we're *all* capable of doing things that we think of as horrible, given the situation. That's why they say about the guy who walks into McDonald's and kills 15 people, "He was such a *nice* guy!"

STARLOG: Where do you think your need to act comes from?

BIEHN: A sense of insecurity, I think. It really comes down to not really having a full understanding of myself and my sense of self and having a real confidence in myself as a person. I seem to be able to have more confidence in some characters that I play, knowing right down the line exactly the way that I feel about things about that character, whereas in real life, I'm more insecure, I don't really know the answers.

STARLOG: Based on the work you've done, you should have received greater recognition. Do you feel shortchanged by the industry?

BIEHN: I do believe firmly that I have been overlooked, especially in *Terminator*. Jim Cameron was saying to me at the time, "I don't know, Michael, why you are not being offered more movies now. All of us expected it, you know?" But now, five or six years later, when everyone has seen the movie five or six times on video, people are beginning to realize how good it was and what a good performance it was.

But I have to say I don't feel shortchanged and I don't resent anything. I think it's best in the long run. Look at the Brat Pack: Those guys got so much so fast that they were never allowed to really struggle and know what good chances they had in much of the work they were doing. So, even though I felt that some of my work was overlooked at times, I know that it has made me stronger and better and it has made me work harder to get other jobs and be good in them.