



Movies

Batman Forever

Directed by: Joel Schumacher
starring: Val Kilmer, Tommy Lee Jones and Jim Carrey

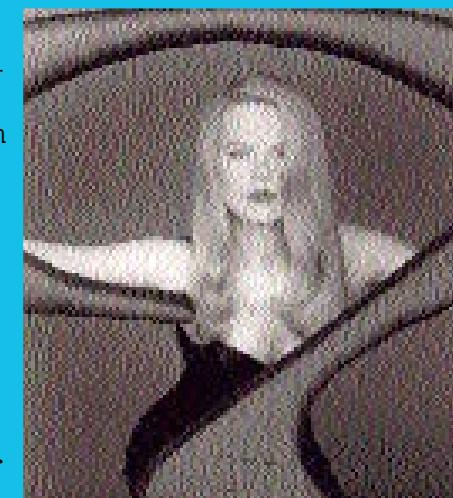
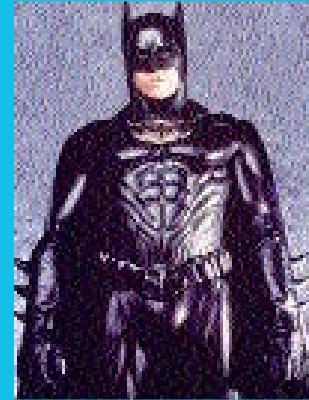
Its the nature of Hollywood that one it discovers a fat cash cow it milks it as dry as it can, hence we three or four sequels of a movie, all bigger, brasher, glitzier and crazy than the next. Is this one any different? Joel Schumacher has taken over the director's hot seat from Tim Burton. Unfortunately his CV isn't exactly a screamer, having directed the totally sad *Lost Boys* and *Flatliners*. Michael Keaton has been replaced as well by Val Kilmer, whose only claim to fame so far seems to be being pretty good looking and marrying our gorge Joanna. Gone is the bat mobile and those bat suits. Ok we still have Gotham city and its gothic skyscrapers where everyone but batman appears to be superglued to the 1940s. Still it gives it some atmosphere I guess, until its rudely interrupted by flashes, bangs and stunt men. Batman believe it or not is 55 now and his life hasn't



changed a bit. He still has a mansion, millions in the bank and a faithful manservant called Alfred. Good to see that some things just don't change. Batman, however, has become a bit more of a superhero, more on a par with superman. Nicole Kidman plays the girlie role - a psychologist with a bat-man fetish if you please. But there are some great lines in her encounter with the man himself.

When she tells him she adores black rubber Batman comes back with Try Firemen, less to take off. Unlike her predecessors Kidman is allowed to be a bit of a girl, without being branded a bit tarty. Surprisingly she pulls off the bat babe bit very well. The script comes with all the usual sad humour you'd expect from a movie that has been billed as a summer

BY HASI



blockbuster, which seems strange cos you ain't going to go the movies if its hot, hot outdoors.

The supervillains all have their place to play and do it very well. Tommy Lee Jones is his crazy self as District Attorney Harvey Dent, Jim Carrey the slimey nerd and Edward Nigma who pulls it off as a great Riddler. Ok so the characters are all pretty cool, but what about the plot you might well ask? Well everyone as per normal is out to either ensure that Batman is six foot under or shag his brains out. Aside perhaps Dick Grayson (Chris O'Donnell), an emotional trapeze artist - ok that is an original twist - who wants to be Batman's best friend (yuk!). As you would expect its not the story that makes this movie, its the way it gallops away at break neck speed. Blink and you've missed something. There are points were you just cannot understand how Batman managed certain escapes. Maybe the Director is trying to make us think? I myself think its more down to some slip-ups in the editing room. It is a movie that surprisingly is definitely worth seeing if the BBQ has gone out, its pissing down with rain and the beer is warm. Get in that queue.





Pinball

This month Stephen Jelbert visits the arcades of central London and rates them, at risk to his health and general sanity.

Crystal Rooms, Leicester Square.

Despite its glamorous position in the backpackers centre of the Northern hemisphere, this really is a sad old dump with the worst maintained machines available anywhere in the world, and the noisiest fruits playing away all around you. The twenty four hour caff in sunny Birmingham near the bus station where they burn an egg samie had better kept tables than this, and they were so old you had to use pre decimal currency to make them work, and they put sterilised milk in the tea. Ugh! I digress. Very unrecommended.

Ratings

Newness of machines: Usually up to date but like so many things in the area they look older.

Value for money: Dreadful.

Everything's knackered.

Unique selling point: Lots of cinemas nearby, fair chance

The sort of antique you're unlikely to meet in Soho



of meeting people from distant countries.

Game Zone, Wardour Street Opposite the Swiss Centre (now there's a fascinating concept in itself) this not especially interesting arcade has nothing to distinguish itself from the surrounding area. A collection of recently outdated games that work fairly well, and a distinct lack of atmosphere sums it up pretty much.

Ratings

NoM: Not a major incentive to visit.

VfM: Okay. Everything works I suppose.

USP: Um, convenient for Chinatown. Will this do?

Play2Win, Oxford Street (at the tatty end opposite Virgin, nearly) A long time favourite this one, near some of the West End's better pubs, clubs and venues. This place usually has an up to date selection of games, including recently Frank Thomas' Big Hurt, the ace baseball game I praised last month. Sadly Big Hurt was a Bit Hurt last week, but with World Cup 94 still around and the world's lowest replay on Shaq Attaq thanks to the Japanese schoolchildren that throng the place I feel safe giving the gaff a thumbs up.

Ratings

NoM: Generally very good

VfM: Machines usually work, but they put the price of a game up after lunchtime, the tight gets.

USP: Convenient when shopping for tat at the cheap end of Oxford Street.

Las Vegas, Wardour Street (north of Old Compton Street) When I used to work around the corner a few years ago this place really did seem like the scummiest spot in London, with its general air of seediness and runaway kids a-thronging. I can hardly say it's London's finest pin attraction, but it's no worse than other places though they hardly fight to bring you the best games.





NoM : Unexceptional

VfM: They work I guess

USP: Things are available here that are not available at other arcades, according to legend. Not that I've ever tried to obtain them. Or young kids.

Funland, Trocadero, Piccadilly Circus

This is easily the best arcade in London for pin lovers. All games are a generous three for a quid, and because the emphasis here is on teenagers killing each other on super chop socky video nasties the tables are usually unoccupied and in excellent condition. And there's lots of em. It's the recipient of the star award, unchallenged.

NoM: Reasonable at the least

VfM: Excellent. Everything works and inexpensively too.

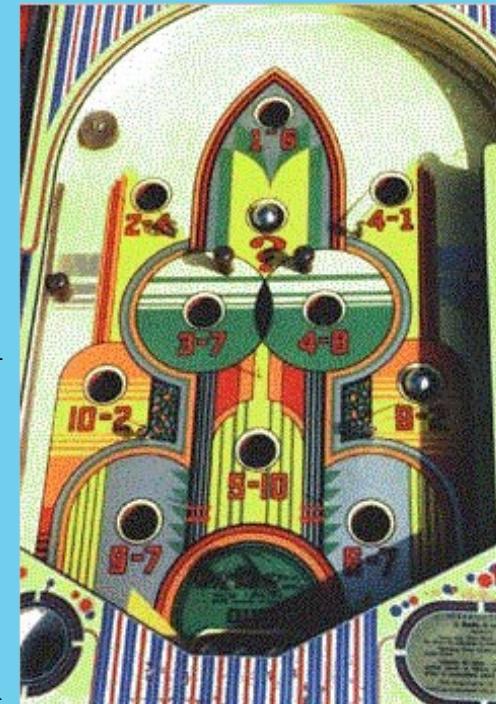
USP: There's a good chance of watching the Plaistow Posse blow away the Northolt Neds on a Saturday afternoon as gangs of teenagers argue about their stupid trousers. Top.

Casino, Tottenham Court Road (by Goodge St station)

Another old favourite this, with some of the least attractive staff of any establishment not by the docks anywhere in the world. This place usually has a

good, and reasonably priced selection of games, updated frequently, though on a recent visit Maverick was doing even worse than the movie.
NoM: Good.
VfM: Good
USP: All the tables are downstairs so you can give them a good kicking when they offend, and turn them off when they play up.

Family Leisure, Old Compton Street and Kings Cross
Sadly the old sign is gone, because of course these two arcades are based in places where you rarely see families, in fact in Old Compton Street you rarely see breeders at all. The Soho arcade is shabby with games that hardly work and wobble if you glare at them, but the Kings Cross site isn't bad at all. Overpriced certainly, but there's a good selection of tables generally in playable condition, especially downstairs. And it's bet-



ter than hanging around outside being harassed by London's most aggressive beggars...and that's just the women.

NoM: Adequate

VfM: Poor, but at least they work at the Cross.

USP: Convenient for travel to the North and Scotland/ a wide selection of gay bars.

The Mean Machines, Angel, Islington.

It was great when the sign was broken for a while, as it said 'The Man Machine', which made you wonder if a gang of Kraftwerk loving vandals had passed through and left their mark. This is a standard out of the centre arcade, four or five tables, none too damaged. You can find the rare and crap Nightmare on Elm Street table here.

NoM: Reasonable all things considered.

VfM: Poor. Two for a note is pretty tight out of town.

USP: The staff are polite, unusually so in fact. And Pret A Manger is almost next door.

Stephen Jelbert co-edits *The Pinball Report*. For more details write to P.O. Box 2427, London N4 2BJ.





Theatre

Hot Mikado
Karen Trevelyan

Opera last week, operetta this week, in fact Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado. Before you drift back to memories of enforced visits with your granny, maiden aunt, or parents to an embarrassing Am Dram production in a church hall with three excruciating little maids, painful renditions of Tit Willow and other sad performances caked in pancake and nylon kimonos - Get off the Net and Get Down, both literally and metaphorically speaking, to The Queens Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue to see the HOT MIKADO. Gilbert and Sullivan provided the lyrics and story line and there ends their involvement. But fear not, Gilbert and Sullivan won't be turning in their graves, they'll be swinging!

The little maids are three sassy doo-wah singers, of which Yum-Yum, Paulette Ivory, plays an excellent tongue-in-cheek cameo. Tit Willow is the only recognisable tune in its original format, and the only pain Ross Lehman, as Ko-Ko, inflicted on the audience was

aching sides and floods of tears - from laughing so much. So infectiously funny was he, that on the night I went, even Sharon Benson, as the stunning domi-matrix Katisha, corpsed, and nobody could blame her.

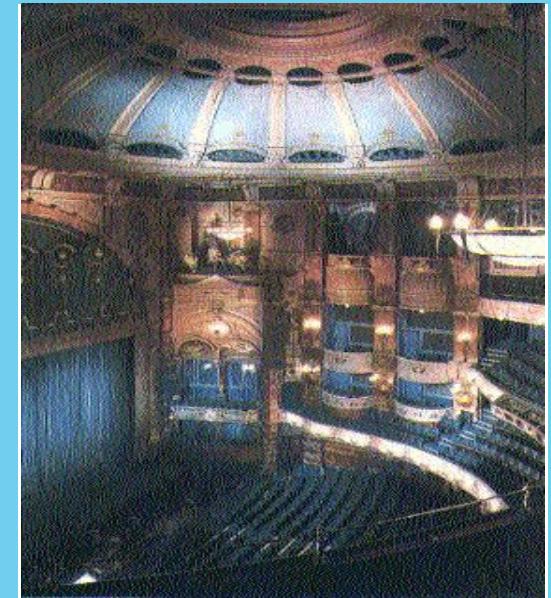
Alison Jlear as Pitti-Sing deserves a special mention, especially in the powerful vocal play off, with Katisha, in the first act. Paul Manuel, gives an admirable John-Boy-Walton-esque performance as the second trombone player - Nanki-Poo and Richard Lloyd King's understated facial contortions, as Pooh-Bar, were most entertaining.

Hot is an understatement, together with an exhilarating, dancing zoot-suited chorus and a wonderful score - blues, jazz, gospel and swing - this musical has every thing and makes it the most sizzling and uplifting musical staged in years.

Evening performances: Tuesday-Saturday

Matinee performances: Thursday, Saturday and Sunday

Box office: 0171 494 5040



Theatre in the round (up)

Rather a lot of premieres, provocation and drums this summer, so here's a round up of what's currently available and a taste of impending delights:

Only a few days left to check out the provocative and controversial world premiere of ZUMBI at the Theatre Royal Stratford East. This powerful musical-drama is based on the myths and legends of a black Brazilian freedom fighter entwined with comparative stories and characters from the street of 90's urban London. Combined with an evocative mix of the awesome drum rhythms of Olodum, energetic dance and drama, ZUMBI has had audiences cheering, crying and in some cases walking out! Black racism or a legitimate voice for



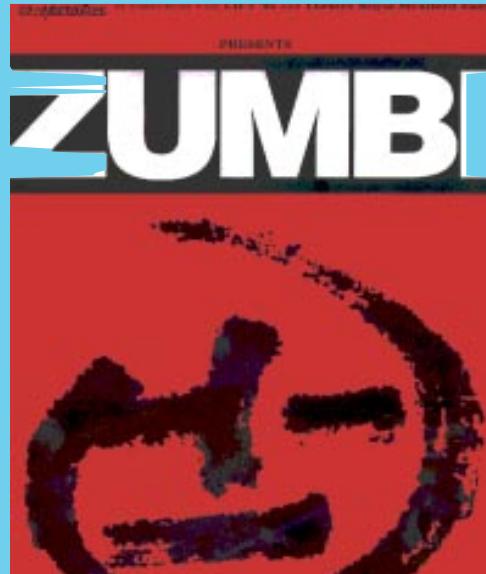
black anger - decide for yourself.
Ends 22nd July
Theatre Royal
Stratford East,
London E15. Box
office 0181 534
0310

Also running until 22nd July is the ALMEDIA OPERA SEASON. Two opera world premieres - EAST & WEST by Ian McQueen and

Thomas Ade's darkly comic piece POWDER HER FACE, inspired by Go to bed and often Marg of Arg - The late Duchess of Argyll. During the month long season there are six concerts which include the British premieres of several works by the late lamented FRANK ZAPPA.

Almedia Theatre, London N1. Box office - 0171 359 4404

For those going to the Edinburgh Festival, drop in for a literary focus at the Edinburgh Book Festival. John Anstiss, of BUTCH BOY fame (see interview & review in this issue) will be performing his poems, together with fellow poets Patience Agbabi and Jade Reidy on August 22nd in

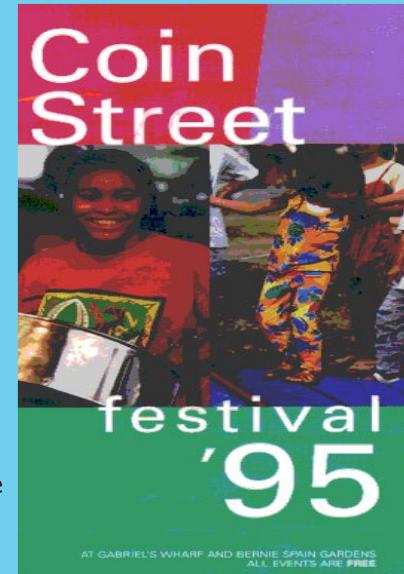


the marquee in Charlotte Street.

The RSC's world premiere of ZENOBIA opens on August 10th at the Young Vic. Go back through the centuries to a time of fierce battles, bloody war and valiant struggles for independence. To a time when men were strong, wait for it boys, and women were stronger. Needless to say I will be paying a visit to see what, if anything, has changed! Previews from August 2nd.

The Young Vic, London SE1. Box office 0171 928 6363

An eclectic mix of events is currently taking place at the COIN STREET FESTIVAL 95. The events and performances include the legendary singer Geno Washington, a chance to learn to jitterbug on JIVE DAY with music from the Jive Cats and then be shown how it should be done by The Jiving Lindy Hoppers. Citroen enthusiasts can purchase and swoon over the Citroen Traction Avants and other classic Citroen cars. Watch a Pan-African procession - headed by TALAZO, a 25 strong Nigerian Fuji drumming



band amongst others. Fireworks and Big Band Sounds on VJ Celebration Day, or a tasty mix of rap and up front soul, swing and bop provided by FEKISHA (recently signed to EMI), or perhaps you'd like to visit on the day that EGGOPOLIS appears - an inflatable city of bright lights and curving tunnels.

The Coin Street Festival is held every Wednesday between

12.45 - 2pm and on Sundays from 1pm until 6-9pm at Gabriel's Wharf and Bernie Spain Gardens, next to the National Theatre and ends on September 3rd. (VJ Celebration day will happen on a Saturday) Details from Gabriel Wharf Market, London SE1.

And finally, for anyone who can only prize themselves off the net for a short while but are in need of a cultural fix you can now invite Ni, a performance poet, into your living room. Ni can provide 30 minutes of stimulating wit, an alternative entree to liven up your pre dinner taste buds.

Contact Ni on 0171 737 6076 for available dates, rates and further details.





Books

Rebecca Blaber casts an eye over some new books and thinks of holidays.

Bunkerman
by Duncan MacLean

There are many things that are attractive about this book. Firstly, there's the good press that seems to have circulated around its author. Secondly, new Scottish writing throws up some of the best fiction around, and MacLean's last novel was no exception.

Bunkerman uses the same urban, gritty syntax, but contains an altogether more sinister plot. Robbie Catto is a school caretaker, newly married and incessantly horny. Sex looms large in this novel; and not the soft focus amour that appears in the pages of some of MacLean's contemporaries. Robbie, possessed of an apparently insatiable appetite, divides his time equally between having frantic, hurried sex, and thinking about it. Unhelpfully (or helpfully, depending on what you want from a novel), Robbie is unashamedly unlikeable. Brutish, thought-



less and devoid of any finer sensibilities, he thrusts his way through the novel in pursuit of the elusive Bunkerman of the title.

Bunkerman himself shadows the text, an enigmatic voyeur complete with furry-hooded parka. He haunts Robbie, driving him to obsession with his elusive but voyeuristic loitering. It is clearly something in Robbie's personality that compels him to be such a determined avenger; it is also an outlet for his more sadistic and driven impulses. MacLean creates a sense of mys-

tery about this in a refreshing, if not wholly convincing fashion. The language of the novel is a bonus. A fine balance is drawn between dialect and standard English, lending credibility to the characters and conveying place and time artlessly. MacLean's prose is sharp, finely-tuned and guttural.

A good read for those who relish full-on realism and a little suspense; for those who prefer something less raw, there are probably better options.

Envy at the Cheese Handout
by Lynne Bryan
Faber&Faber £8.99

Continuing the theme of new Scottish Writing, this particular offering from the Faber New Writers stable is definitely worth £8.99 of anyone's money. Lynne Bryan has produced a formidable collection of short stories that detail modern life in all its squalor and splendour. Her stories have appeared before in a variety of publications, mainly those with a Scottish bias, and in a couple of national periodicals. She is at her finest in this collection, a humorous yet bleak array of humanity on display.

There are too many stories to count in this collection, which indi-

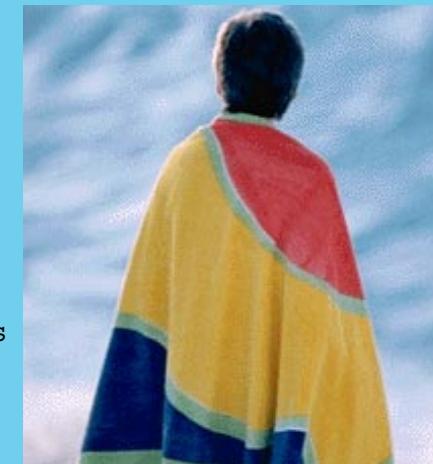




cates that they really are short . And yet they are perfect; concise, well-crafted and pointed in their wit. The characters who inhabit these stories are a peculiar mixture; at once ordinary and splendidly unique. These are men and women in love and betrayed, finding solace at the local launderette. Helpless Samaritans befriending teenage drunks out of overwhelming (but somehow creditable) compassion. Likewise, disillusioned and jaded graduates rub shoulders with the young and naive, in a nameless small towns somewhere north of the border. The charm lies in the candid simplicity of Bryan's language. There are achingly sharp observations that would break your heart with their pain, if they were not so absurdly funny. This is a writer who can write of the desperation, filth and carnage of society and yet add just the right twist, the right nuance, that makes it less earnest and more incisive. Envy at the Cheese Handout is richly satisfying, and has that rare effect of leaving the reader impatient for the next collection.

The Penguin Book of New American Voices
Ed. Jay McInerney
Penguin £6.99

Originally published in hardback as *Cowboys, Indians and Commuters*, this collection is as fine a sample of New American Writing as you are likely to find for £6.99 in any bookstore on either side of the Atlantic. Encompassing the more established writers such as Donna Tatt, Charles D Ambrosio and Dale Peck but including equally interesting but less well known authors including Abraham Rodriguez and Robert Antoni, this anthology has such a diversity of styles that it would be impossible to give a fair idea of the range of scope in one short review. Suffice it to say that whatever you are looking for, or whatever your preconceptions about American fiction, you'll probably find something that you didn't quite expect. Dale Peck's now infamous Fucking Martin will entertain no doubt, but in a markedly different way from Jeff Eugenides' Capricious Gardens. What is interesting about the collection is that, despite McInerney's very valid claim in the Introduction about American writers being



free of the dragging dinosaur tail of a long literary tradition, there is clearly a pattern that emerges in these stories that allows readers to recognise a very American freshness of language and perspective, creating new ways of presenting the short story form. McInerney's Introduction is sharp-witted and stylish, a fine and enlightening read in itself.

Whether an experienced reader of this genre or a novice, this collection should be enough to engage and maintain interest in what is, arguably, the most interesting and experimental of fictions in the nineties, the American short story.

The Guinness Book Of Hit Singles.

The Guinness book of hit Singles is updated every other year. It features every band who have reached the singles charts in the last 40 years. It lists the name of each chart single that they've released, the date that it entered the chart, the highest position that it reached and the time that it remained in the charts. It is an essential reference to settle those pub disputes once and for all. Which single stopped Ultravox's Vienna reaching number 1. Did the Shop Assistants ever reach the top 75? (answers on an e-mail to.).





Manga

Jesper Bark starts the first of a new series looking at the state of Japanese anime/manga comics and videos. First off what the hell is an anime ?

Mangas: just what is all the fuss about. And what exactly is the difference between manga and anime ? To answer the second question first, manga is the term used to describe the stylised Japanese comic books, and anime are the detailed animated features often based on original mangas.

The term manga is basically generic, a bit like hard boiled or pulp fiction. Literally translated it means irresponsible pictures . It was first coined in 1814 by the famous woodblock artist Hosuka, but it wasn't until after the second world war that mangas started to become the national craze they are today. There isn't the same stigma attached to comics in Japan that there is in Britain, and mangas cater to all ages and all sectors of society. As well as the sexy ultra violent sci fi more commonly available in this country, you can buy mangas for business



Golgo 13 - Contract Killer

men and women, housewives, sports fans and even sushi makers .

The main appeal of anime/manga for many fans is that it combines the childhood thrill of Saturday morning cartoons with sophisticated story lines covering adult themes. Oh yeah, and there's lots of sex and violence too.

So what's on offer in the way of anime then ? Well that depends what your tastes run to. If you like your entertainment à la Reservoir Dogs : lots of foul mouthed men in sharp suits, large guns and plenty of designer violence, then check out The Professional: Golgo 13 and Crying Freeman.. Codename Golgo 13 is an enigmatic assassin who never misses and never breaks a contract. But when the hunter becomes the hunted can the professional survive the combined forces of the FBI, CIA, The Pentagon and the US Army ? Only one way to find out. While out painting, the beautiful Emie witnesses a brutal killing by the Yakuza's top hitman Crying Freeman. As he is leaving he tells her his name and she knows this custom means she will die. Before she does, she has one request, to be released of her virginity. And guess which lucky guy she has in mind.

If you're into girls with really big ... erm, guns and things, then



Dominion: Tank Police and Bubblegum Crisis have got you totally sussed. Dominion :Tank Police pits the Tank Police and their latest raw recruit Leona against the sexy but ruthless cat sisters Annapuna and Unipuma. These bioengineered super criminals plan to hold the city to ransom by stealing (no lie) urine samples. And the only thing standing in their way is Leona and a whole heap of hardware. Intrigued? you know what to do. Bubblegum Crisis is not about low orders in a sweet shop, it's set in a grim, post earthquake Mega Tokyo of 2023. A small band of high tech mega babe mercenaries called The Knight Sabres are the only people facing up to the Evil GENOM Corporation and their deadly androids:

Boomers . Billed as the first Cyberpunk classic, this ongoing series continuously provides challenging storylines focusing on many areas of current social concern.

If you're on the look out for sword wielding fantasy you can't miss the excellent Ninja Scroll, three specially gifted master ninja battle dark forces to rid their country of a deadly plague. Fantastic animation, brilliant story, not to be missed. But if you prefer cold shivers down your spine, you'll want to shudder at Vampire Hunter D . When a beautiful



girl is attacked by a horde of vampires menacing her village, she'll do anything to enlist Vampire Hunter D's help in her revenge. I mean anything. And while we're on the topic of supernatural depravity, top of the anime/manga list for eldritch sex and violence has to be the unspeakable Legend of the Overfiend. I dare not say more.

Also worthy of note is the excellent Rumiko's World series, based on the work of Japan's foremost female cartoonist Rumiko Takahashi. Definite must see. And no otaku's (Japanese for anime/manga freak) collection is complete without the twelve part best selling Guyver series.

In future columns we'll focus on previous series, characters and creators of note and keep you updated on the latest hot releases. Until then, try not to get too excited.

**Sexy Ninja Tank Police
Annapuna and Unipuma**