

## Frontier Worlds—the cover story

I was impressed with the cover that the design house Black Sheep had produced for the BBC to use for my first novel, *Kursaal*. But I had some particular ideas about the cover for *Frontier Worlds*. Here's how things evolved...

### The Natural Graces of Rene Magritte



I had liked the idea of spoofing a Rene Magritte painting, especially those in which plants and animals blended one into the other. Magritte is perhaps better known for *Ceci n'est pas un pipe* or bowler-hatted men with a face full of apple, or even a man staring into a mirror and seeing the reflection of the back of his own head.

However, I particularly admired *The Natural Graces*, in which a green crop evolved into a flight of birds (see detail on the left), which seemed appropriate for the novel's theme of unnatural genetic manipulation.

### Vienna Paint's Cabbage Head



But I'd also seen a series of amazing monochrome illustrations in *Creative Review* magazine. I'd spotted a copy of this in my office, and had been drawn to it by a particularly striking image of a man turning into a tree. (Not to be confused with a scene by Pip and Jane Baker.)

I investigated further, and found these images were originated by a chap called Albert Winkler for an Austrian company called Vienna Paint. In these gruesome photomontages, people mutate before your eyes into plant life—a man reaches up at the clouds, his arms twisting and distorting into branches which clutch at a lowering sky; a woman's spine is revealed to be a row of peas in a pod; a man's knee is snapped like a piece of celery.

Best of all, though, was "Cabbage Head" (see detail on the right: originated by Vienna Paint's Albert Winkler, and photographed by Jorit Aust). It is a woman staring into the lens as her head morphs into a cabbage, her lip curled (in disdain? resentment? just by the mutation?).

### McGabbage rears his ugly head

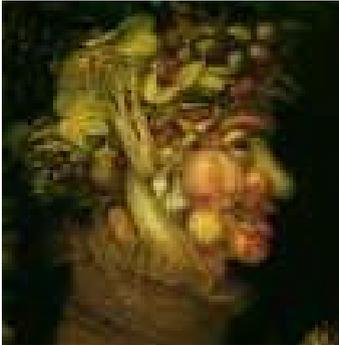


You may have noticed that there are very few *Doctor Who* books with eighth Doctor Paul McGann on the cover. This is largely because, with only one film in character, he hasn't been photographed in costume all that often, and so there are few suitable portrait shots available.

Perhaps you've also seen the cunning way in which *Doctor Who Magazine* and Big Finish audio covers have to reuse this diminishing supply of original material.

I'd been impressed (and envious) of Justin Richards' cover for *Demontage*, and asked BBC Worldwide if they could do a "mutation" of McGann into a cabbage. The result wasn't felt to be a complete success - being more reminiscent of Little Weed than the Creature from the Black Lagoon (see detail above).

## L'Estate we're in, courtesy of Guiseppe Arcimboldo



Meanwhile, I did some research into Giuseppe Arcimboldo, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century painter who wittily drew attention to the ephemeral nature of human existence by creating faces from even more short-lived flowers and fruit. He was the inspiration for, among other things, the Peter Gabriel "Sledgehammer" video. After considering what McGann would look like with bananas for lips, the BBC vetoed this idea (probably very wisely). But to see the kind of thing I was thinking about, I've included a detail from one example of Arcimboldo's work on the left (entitled *L'Estate*).

We toyed briefly with the idea of the Doctor's face picked out in a field of wheat like a crop circle effect (too difficult, and also perhaps too similar to the cover of the Kate Orman novel for Virgin called *Return of the Living Dad*). Then we considered a butterfly with barcodes for wings (the brilliant Vienna Paint people again).

## Screen "grab" from *The Tomorrow People*



And then I remembered an image from the opening sequence of ITV's original series *The Tomorrow People*: a hand opening up, and a fast zoom into an open palm—see detail on the left.

(Incidentally, I cannot remember who sent me this image, but if anyone reminds me then I will happily credit them.)

## A big hand for Jon Tuttle



In the end, I asked an enthusiastic graphics student at my workplace to design, in his spare time, a hand "growing" out of the ground like a tree. I also suggested he could use DNA spirals as part of the design. This bright young man, Jon Tuttle, produced a draft (see detail on the left) which I sent to Black Sheep, and from this they designed the final version.

The result is, I think, one of their best covers for the BBC's *Doctor Who* range.