

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE FREE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

AUGUST 2004

ISSUE 395

HONORARY PRESIDENTS: BRIAN W ALDISS & HARRY HARRISON

COMMITTEE: VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); VICKY COOK (SECRETARY);

PAT BROWN (TREASURER); ROG PEYTON (NEWSLETTER EDITOR);

TIM STOCK (PUBLICITY); STEVE JONES & WILLIAM MCCABE;

NOVACON 34 CHAIRMAN: MARTIN TUDOR

Friday August 13th The Summer Social

Friday the 13th...unlucky for some. Well, certainly unlucky for you if you didn't reserve your ticket for our visit to the Black Eagle, Hockley, as all places are taken. Yes, we're fully booked.

If you did do the sensible thing and booked your ticket, we will meet at 7.15pm to 7.30pm outside the front of Snow Hill Station. If you're not there by 7.30 we will leave to catch the Metro to Benson Road, from where it is about a 200 yard walk to the Black Eagle.

If you are making your own way to the Black Eagle, PLEASE LET ME KNOW so that we're not hanging around waiting for you.

If you want more info on the Black Eagle and how to get there, please visit: <http://www.camrabirmingham.fsnet.co.uk/blackeagle.htm> If you failed to buy a ticket, you can see what you'll be missing. RGP

CORRECTION TO LAST MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

When cutting and pasting the Press Release from John Jarrold, I never noticed that the email address for John didn't copy. My apologies. So the last sentence of that Press Release should have been...

He can be contacted by email on: j.jarrold@bopenworld.com or by phone on 01424 440652. RGP

.....
: SEPTEMBER MEETING - Comics artist Bryan Talbot will be giving a :
: talk and slide show :
:
:

METROPOLIS

Although many people, and most fans, will have seen a picture of Lang's (mislabelled) 'robot Maria', far fewer will have seen the film, which is a classic of the cinema and SF genres. Georges Melies 1902 film *LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE* is regarded as the first SF epic because of its (comparative) length, but Fritz Lang's 1926 *METROPOLIS* is deservedly the most celebrated of all SF films of the silent period. Unfortunately it premiered only months before *THE JAZZ SINGER*, the first talkie, which eclipsed it in the public's eyes and it flopped badly.

Visiting New York in 1924 Lang had been impressed by the futuristic skyscrapers, lights and general bustle although he also felt depressed by the darker undercurrents that he perceived, all of which influenced his development of *METROPOLIS* the basic idea of which he already had. The result was a film that nowadays has something for everyone, from the fan who sees it as SF, through the special effects enthusiast to the analytical critic. So make a date for September 30th, because that's when *METROPOLIS* will be screened at the Birmingham Symphony Hall.

Better known for live performances the BSH sometimes puts on a special event; Pat and I saw *NOSFERATU* there last year and thoroughly enjoyed it. But *METROPOLIS* will be something different again - there are at least seven official known versions of the movie because it was modified for showing in different countries with different requirements. Bits have also been lost, looted and transposed so what this version will be remains to be seen.

This silent film will be accompanied by live organ music.

The date: 30th September 2004 at 7.00 pm. at Birmingham Symphony Hall, Centenary Square, Broad Street. Tickets are £5 - £18 - tel: 0121 780 3333.

See you there...

Vernon Brown

LOCUS AWARD WINNERS

Locus has announced this year's Locus Award winners....

SF Novel: *ILIUM* by Dan Simmons

Fantasy Novel: *PALADIN OF SOULS* by Lois McMaster Bujold

First Novel: *DOWN AND OUT IN THE MAGIC KINGDOM* by Cory Doctorow

Young Adult Novel: *THE WEE FREE MEN* by Terry Pratchett

Novella: "The Cookie Monster" by Vernor Vinge

Novellette: "A Study in Emeralds" by Neil Gaiman

Short Story: "Closing Time" by Neil Gaiman

Collection: *CHANGING PLANES* by Ursula K. Le Guin

Anthology: *THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION: TWENTIETH ANNUAL*

COLLECTION edited by Gardner Dozois

Non-Fiction/Art: THE SANDMAN: ENDLESS NIGHTS by Neil Gaiman, et al.

Artist: Michael Whelan

Editor: Gardner Dozois

Magazine: THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION

Book Publisher: Tor

NEWS IN BRIEF

.... Hugh B Cave (1910-2004), pulp writer, mainstream magazine writer and novelist, passed away on June 27. Cave produced over 800 stories for the pulp magazines, mostly horror, detective and supernatural. His writing career ran from the 1920s to the present. His first professional publication was in 1929 and his novel THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS was published just this year The 84 year old actor **James Doohan**, who portrayed Montgomery Scott in the original STAR TREK series and subsequent films, has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease The winner of the John W Campbell Award for best science fiction novel of 2003 is OMEGA by **Jack McDevitt**. Runners-up were NATURAL HISTORY by **Justina Robson** and THE X PRESIDENT by **Philip E. Baruth** The winner of the Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award for best short science fiction in 2003 is "The Empress of Mars" by **Kage Baker**. Runners-up were "Bernardo's House" by **James Patrick Kelly** and "It's All True" by **John Kessel** **Jasper Fforde's** THE WELL OF LOST PLOTS won the Wodehouse prize for comic fiction, which includes a case of champagne and a live pig! A surprise presentation of the 2004 First Fandom Hall of Fame Award has been made to **Brian Aldiss**. Congratulations Brian! One-time member of the BSFG, **Edward James** won the Pilgrim Award for lifetime contributions to SF scholarship from the Science Fiction Research Association **Tom Holt** has handed in the manuscript for his next novel EARTH, AIR, FIRE AND CUSTARD Film rights have been optioned for **Harry Harrison's** THE TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE Interaction, the 2005 World Science Fiction Convention to be held in Glasgow, Scotland, has announced that **Colin Harris** will serve as co-chair alongside **Vince Doherty** STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE has been given the thumbs up for a fourth season. However, the show's fate still hangs in the balance since there is the distinct possibility that the show could be axed mid season if the ratings don't start to recover SPIDER-MAN 2 set another record as it became the fastest film to mark \$250 million in total ticket sales in just 12 days, one day faster than previous record holder, SHREK 2 After negotiations broke down between the BBC and the estate of writer **Terry Nation**, the BBC announced that the Daleks, which were created by Nation, would not be appearing in the new Doctor Who Series set to launch in 2005. Set builders can now have sets with stairs in them Irish singer **Chris de Burgh**, best known for the song "Lady in Red," has purchased the alien model which burst from **John Hurt's** chest in the 1979 film

ALIEN for £29,875. De Burgh explained he bought it because it was a 'defining moment in cinema history for its sheer horror' Bill Clinton is the latest victim of publishing pirates who take whole books and rewrite them. Translators are recruited by the counterfeiters to take out whole sections and even add others to make them more appealing. In the Chinese version of his autobiography MY LIFE, out went: "I was concerned about China's continued suppression of basic freedoms." and "I went to bed thinking that China would be forced by the imperatives of modern society to become more open." In came: "China is a mysterious and unique place." and "She (Hillary) was as beautiful as a princess. I told her my name is Big Watermelon." RGP



BOOK REVIEWS



(REVIEWERS please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk) Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting. RGP

***THE LIGHT AGES* by Ian R MacLeod**

Pocket Books / 456 pages / £6.99 / paperback

Reviewed by Michael Jones

Rating * * * *

Sutton Coldfield author MacLeod here creates a strange alternative England where the Industrial Revolution took place on the basis of a mineral resource called Aether discovered in 1678. Three hundred years later, the influence of aether is everywhere and its use through the application of arcane processes affects every aspect of life from education to engineering. The magical rituals and spells which govern its use are jealously guarded by the Guilds who control the various aspects of day-to-day life and their insularity seems to have stifled progress so that England (and the rest of the World) have failed to advance beyond a Victorian social structure.

Into this world Robert Borrows is born to Dickensian deprivation and poverty, in what may, by our calendar, be 1954 or may be 1976. From Yorkshire, where England's supply of aether is mined, he makes his way to London where he renews contact with the enigmatic Annalise, who he met as a child, and thanks partly to her influence rises to the highest level of society. He helps to foment what would in another context have been a Marxist revolution, but the hoped-for social change fails to materialise. On the way he discovers the secret of his own and Anna's mysterious origins, becomes rich and successful, but loses her in the end: he still loves her but his love is unrequited.

This brief synopsis scarcely does justice to a strange book which is hard to categorise. Neither wholly Science Fiction nor Fantasy, it partakes of both - the best description I can think of would be Fantastic Steampunk. Above all, however,

it is Literature. MacLeod is without doubt a gifted writer and has that masterful way with words which conjures a scene or an atmosphere by an almost subliminal process. The story, despite being complex and convoluted, is mostly worked out, although a few floating elements and loose ends remain unclear. "I still don't know what the truth is," says Robert in the book's final lines "but I'm sure that when I find it, it will be marvellous." That describes the situation of the reader, who must find his own truth among these pages and will feel himself well rewarded if he succeeds. MJ

FUTURES: 50 YEARS OF SPACE ART

by David A Hardy & Patrick Moore

AAPP / £17.95 / large format hardcover

Reviewed by Laurence Miller

Rating: * * * * *

2004 is the 50th Anniversary of David's first collaboration (THE CHALLENGE OF THE STARS) with Sir Patrick Moore which was published to great success in 1972 and revised in 1978. Now, in a unique project, they have collaborated again on this volume with a look at the ways in which our views of the universe and space exploration have changed in that fifty years as well as the amazing new discoveries made by various space probes and the Hubble. It has a few of the original 1970s paintings but contains many brand new paintings dealing with things whose existence was unknown in 1954 or even 1972... pulsars, neutron stars, black holes and jetting galaxies. A superb look at the universe as we now know it, both in print and the artwork of David.

The text provides information about the sights and meaning of the universe in Patrick's inimitable style but the heart of the book is contained in the pictures which show what is believed to be a realistic view of the universe as we currently understand it... of course, it may change again next week but if it does then David will be up to the challenge of representing it with his artwork.

A fascinating book for anyone interested not only in astronomy but in the look of things from a closer viewpoint to show what it's probably like if we ever get out there. LM

(This volume available from Andromeda Bookshops - signed - at £17.95)

***THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW* by Whitley Strieber**

Gollancz / 249pgs / £6.99 / paperback

Reviewed by Anne Gay

Rating: * * *

This is the novelisation of a disaster movie and it reads like one. Its basic premise is that Earth's climate keeps changing, as evinced by ice ages and interglacial periods, and we're not helping.

The book opens with paleoclimatologist Jack Hall taking core samples of Antarctic ice when a fissure opens up and threatens to swallow him. Then follow his efforts to convince the President of the USA to accept his warnings of the need to take action. Human interest is provided by a variety of minor characters experiencing tornadoes, murderous hail, tidal waves and blizzards, and the plot is stitched together by Hall's attempts to be reunited with his family who are stuck in killer ice-storms in different parts of the USA.

This novelisation is workmanlike rather than well-crafted, and that's not helped by the way Strieber follows the script cuts from scene to scene. It's not Strieber's fault: it's a problem inherent in the structure of disaster movies, but it would have helped if he'd had greater wordage to play with. I don't have enough science to say whether director Roland Emmerich's premise of super-cell ice-storms has a credible basis but Strieber's explanation is both accessible and plausible enough to carry the story along. There are some pluses: he makes the point that fictionalising a potentially real problem could invite politicians not to take global warming seriously. He explains the characters' background slightly more clearly than the film does, but where SFX give the film its narrative drive, the book lacks the same punch. Nevertheless the ending, while contrived, is still moving and that's to Strieber's credit. It does the job but by and large the film is far scarier.

AG

THE RAFFLE

Raffle tickets are available as soon as you get to the meeting. You do NOT have to wait until the break when someone twists your arm - do it voluntarily - it's far less painful! The Group needs your cash to pay visiting authors' expenses, the salubrious surroundings of our regular meeting room, etc. It's just a quid - not even the price of half a pint! And you could WIN this month's prize... it could be a book or if you're really lucky it could be a bottle of wine!

SELLING YOUR WARES...

And don't forget that YOU can bring along your unwanted books, magazines, videos, etc., and sell them to other members - NO CHARGE, NO COMMISSION. Start rummaging through your collections - you KNOW you'll never read some of that stuff again. BRING YOUR GOODIES! Lay them out on one of the tables provided and wait for people to start throwing money at you.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group meets on Thursdays at 5.30pm to 7pm monthly, in GP5 on the 5th Floor at the Central Library, Chamberlain Square, B3 3HQ. It's a small friendly group meeting to discuss SF & fantasy books. Contact person is Pam Gaffney on (0121) 303 3398. Future meetings...19th August, 9th September

FANTASYCON is 22nd-26th September, at the Quality Hotel, Walsall. Guests of Honour are Rob Holdstock and Muriel Grey. Full details from FANTASYCON 2004, Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ. Or you can print a registration form or booking form off their website at www.britishfantasyociety.org.uk/info/fantasycon.htm

NOVACON 34 - the Birmingham SF Group's very own convention will again be held at the popular Quality Inn, Walsall over the weekend of November 5th to 8th. Guest of Honour is Ian Watson. Cost of registration is £35 - send to NOVACON 34, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.
email: x15@zoom.co.uk **BOOK NOW!** Booking forms and registration forms can be printed directly off the website at <http://www.novacon.org/>

INTERACTION: THE 2005 WORLDCON will be held in Glasgow next year, 4th to 8th August 2005. Guests of Honour are Greg Pickersgill, Christopher Priest, Robert Sheckley, Lars-Olof Strandberg and Jane Yolen. Full details, printable forms, etc from their website <http://www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk/>
Snail mail address: INTERACTION, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organisers before travelling. Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses.

Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk

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FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

September 10th - artist Bryan Talbot will be doing one of his very popular slide shows - THE HEART OF EMPIRE. Please note that he will NOT be interviewed by Steve Green as previously announced. More about Bryan on his Official Website - <http://www.bryan-talbot.com/>

October 8th - Peter Weston will be returning from being Fan Guest of Honour at this year's Worldcon. Peter has written a 130,000 word history of his life in SF fandom and it will be published at Worldcon. It contains a LOT of history of the Brum Group and many of you are mentioned in it! Peter will be talking about the Brum Group part of the book and also signing copies of his book. He will also be talking about the WHOLE book in a talk at NOVACON 34.

(I, as Replay Books, will be getting copies from the USA. Published as a trade paperback only, this should be around the £10 mark. Order now (and pay

later) so that I can ensure sufficient copies. Email me at replayer@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)

November 12th - new author Stephen Hunt, recently taken on by agent John Jarrold (see last month's newsletter), will be talking about his new career

December - Christmas Social - Skittles at the Selly Park Tavern. Please remember that last year we hit the maximum of 30 people without having to turn anyone away. Make sure you join us for a great Christmas social evening by getting your ticket asap. Full details and price in next newsletter.

January 8th 2005 - Annual General Meeting

March 12th - Peter F Hamilton

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Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue and to William McCabe who sends me reams of news items every month from which I sift through for the best/most entertaining items.

The BRUM GROUP Website address is www.bsfg.freesevers.com
NEW! ----The email address is bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk ---- **NEW!**
Contributions, ideas, etc. always welcome.

STOP PRESS NEWS....

Former Novacon Chairman and long time fan Nick Mills contended for the title Brain of Britain 2004 on Tuesday, 27th July. The recording of the show, which was open to the public, took place at 6:00pm at The Drill Hall, Chenies Street, London.

Brain of Britain: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/comedy/brain.shtml>

The outcome is not known and the broadcast date has not yet been announced.

ABOUT US... The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month. Membership is £16 per year per person (or £21 for two members living at the same address). This includes the 12 free issues of the Newsletter plus reduced entrance fee at each meeting. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Birmingham Science Fiction Group' and sent to our Treasurer, Pat Brown, 106 Green Lanes, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5JH