

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JUNE 2013

ISSUE 501

HONORARY PRESIDENT: **BRIAN W ALDISS, O.B.E.**

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NOVACON 43 CHAIR: YVONNE ROWSE**

WEBSITE: [www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/](http://www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/)

EMAIL:

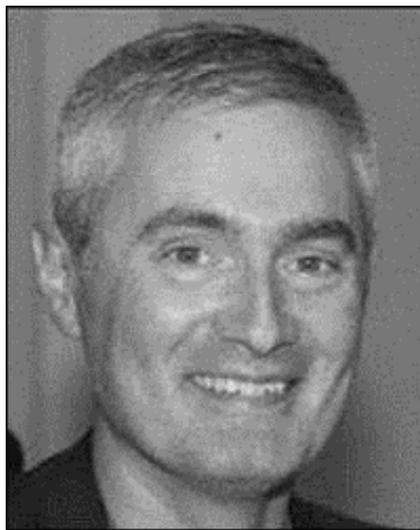
[bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk)

FACEBOOK:

[www.facebook.com/groups/BirminghamSFGroup/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/BirminghamSFGGroup/)

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## Friday 14th June **IAN DRURY**

Ian Drury is a literary agent at Sheil Land Associates Ltd. He has extensive experience in the publishing industry. Prior to joining Sheil Land he worked for Weidenfield and Nicholson (as a Publishing Director) and for Harper Collins (Editorial Director). He represents novelists primarily from

July 12th - local author **RICHARD DENNING** who writes science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction and non-fiction.

the adventure, fantasy, SF and historical (fiction and non-fiction) genres. Some of the fantasy authors he represents are Mark Chadbourn (**THE SWORD OF ALBION**), Elspeth Cooper (*The Wild Hunt* series) and Mark Lawrence whose **PRINCE OF THORNS** has been published in sixteen languages. He also represents Peter Higgins, author of the successful alternative history, **WOLFHOUND CENTURY** and SF author, Jaine Fenn (*The Hidden Empire* series). He will hopefully be talking of his experiences in the field and some of the pleasures and problems of getting published. CG

*The meeting will take place in the conference room on the first floor of The Briar Rose Hotel, Bennetts Hill, off New Street.*

*The doors open at 7.30pm and the meeting will normally commence at 8.00pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar on the ground floor, and be seated in plenty of time. The entrance fee for our January AGM is free and the August and December socials are ticket only events. All other meetings the entrance fee is £3.00 for members and £4 for non-members.*

### ***500TH NEWSLETTER EXTRA COPIES***

Several people have asked for extra copies of the 500th Newsletter. However we only printed enough for our usual postings plus some for the non-Member contributors. Previous newsletter editors who contributed to the 500th newsletter have already received copies. A complimentary copy is also available to the artists whose work appeared. We have contact details for some of these contributors but if anyone could put us in touch with them (or ask them to contact the Committee) it would be appreciated.

If anyone would like an extra one (or more) copies please email your requirements to the Group email address before Friday June 14th or tell Pat at the meeting that evening and we will have them printed as soon as possible. State whether you want them posted to you at a cost of £1.30 each inc. postage, or 80p each to collect at a Group meeting. VB

### ***SUMMER SOCIAL MEAL - 9TH AUGUST***

This year sees a change to our usual August venue, to a small pub just off the City centre.

It's The Bull in Price Street, just round the corner from the Aston University end of Corporation Street, although it's not a student haunt. It's a small old traditional pub with a separate dining area, good beer and good food. Pat and I have family reunions there every so often because it's ideal for small group get-togethers i.e. just what the Group wants.

The pub has a website which unfortunately is currently being reorganised, although general information is given it only shows the menu for Christmas plus a

few light bites. But I'll bring an everyday menu to the Group meeting to show to anyone interested.

As usual a table for 12 has been booked so if you would like to join us please pay Pat a £5 deposit at the next Group meeting to reserve your seat because we usually have a "full house" for these meals. Timing is 7.30 for 8.00pm. Full directions will be given when you book. VB

## ***LOCUS AWARD FINALISTS 2013***

The Locus Science Fiction Foundation has announced the finalists for the 2013 Locus Awards. The winners will be announced at the Locus Awards Weekend in Seattle from the 28th to 30th June. A full list of nominations is available at [www.locusmag.com/News/2013/05/2013-locus-awards-finalists/](http://www.locusmag.com/News/2013/05/2013-locus-awards-finalists/)

### **SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL**

THE HYDROGEN SONATA by Iain M. Banks (Orbit)

CAPTAIN VORPATRIL'S ALLIANCE by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen)

CALIBAN'S WAR by James S.A. Corey (Orbit)

2312 by Kim Stanley Robinson (Orbit)

REDSHIRTS by John Scalzi (Tor; Gollancz)

### **FANTASY NOVEL**

THE KILLING MOON by N.K. Jemisin (Orbit)

THE DROWNING GIRL by Caitlín R. Kiernan (Roc)

GLAMOUR IN GLASS by Mary Robinette Kowal (Tor)

HIDE ME AMONG THE GRAVES by Tim Powers (Morrow; Corvus)

THE APOCALYPSE CODEX by Charles Stross (Ace; Orbit)

### **YOUNG ADULT BOOK**

THE DROWNED CITIES by Paolo Bacigalupi (Little Brown; Atom)

PIRATE CINEMA by Cory Doctorow (Tor Teen)

RAILSEA by China Miéville (Del Rey; Macmillan)

DODGER by Sir Terry Pratchett (Harper; Doubleday UK)

THE GIRL WHO FELL BENEATH FAIRYLAND AND LED THE REVELS THERE by Catherynne M. Valente (Feiwel and Friends; Much-in-Little '13)

### **FIRST NOVEL**

THRONE OF THE CRESCENT MOON by Saladin Ahmed (DAW; Gollancz)

VN by Madeline Ashby (Angry Robot)

SERAPHINA by Rachel Hartman (Doubleday)

THE GAMES by Ted Kosmatka (Del Rey; Titan)

ALIF THE UNSEEN by G. Willow Wilson (Grove; Corvus)

## **NEBULA AWARD WINNERS**

The Nebula Awards were announced at the Nebula Awards Banquet in San Jose, California from May 16th to 20th. They are voted for and presented by the members of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA)

**Best Novel:** *2312* by Kim Stanley Robinson (Orbit US; Orbit UK)

**Best Novella:** “After The Fall, Before The Fall, During The Fall” by Nancy Kress (Tachyon)

**Best Novelette:** “Close Encounters” by Andy Duncan (THE POTTAWATOMIE GIANT & OTHER STORIES)

**Short Story:** “Immersion” by Aliette de Bodard (*Clarkesworld* 6/12)

**Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation:** BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD

**Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy Book:** FAIR COIN by E.C. Myers (Pyr)

**2012 DAMON KNIGHT GRAND MASTER AWARD:** Gene Wolfe

**SOLSTICE AWARD:** Carl Sagan and Ginjer Buchanan

**KEVIN O'DONNELL JR. SERVICE TO SFWA AWARD:** Michael H. Payne

## **2013 CLARKE AWARD**

The twenty seventh winner of the Arthur C Clarke Award was announced on May 1st at a ceremony hosted by the Royal Society, London. The winner was DARK EDEN by Chris Beckett (Corvus / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1848874640). This is only his second novel. The SF novel is set on the planet Eden which has no natural light source. The 532 human inhabitants of the planet are all descended from two astronauts (Tommy and Angela) who crash-landed over 163 years ago. They live in a single community in an enclosed valley and cling to the hope of rescue from Earth. John Redlantern is the rebel who defies tradition and leads his followers on an exploration out of the valley, across icy mountains in the pitch black in search of wider lands. The repercussions of this act bring bloodshed and divided loyalties into the claustrophobic colony.



## **AND WHAT DID YOU THINK?**

### **THE LETTER COLUMN OF 'BRUM GROUP NEWS**

Anything to say about the Group, meetings or SF in general? Email your opinions or queries to me at [goodwined@yahoo.com](mailto:goodwined@yahoo.com)

## Letter of Comment by Dave Hardy

Great to see the 500th edition of Brum Group News – 32 pages, and in colour, which is definitely a record! Congratulations on a nice job. It was also a bonus to see the reprint of Issue #1 from June 1971, which even I hadn't seen before -- I didn't join the Brum Group until 1973, having been living in the wilds of Norfolk. As a matter of interest, I was AT the launch of Apollo 15 that month!

It was good to read the reminiscences of previous Editors; though I was a little puzzled to see a photo of Vernon alongside Chris and Pauline Morgan's write-up? (even if he does have dark hair; yes, I remember that. I think). But then we know how shy and retiring they are!

Thanks

Dave

*Dear Dave,*

*Thank you for the kind comments about the 500th edition. I also thoroughly enjoyed the various reminiscences of previous editors and was extremely grateful for their contributions.*

*The photo of Vernon was included as it was mentioned in Chris and Pauline's write-up. If I had a photograph of Chris/Pauline I would of course have included it in the newsletter. All of the Editors were asked if they wished to provide a photograph for inclusion but some (as in this case) were unable to do so.*

*Thanks*

*Carol G*

## News of Deborah Miller

I'm very sad to pass on the news that Deborah Miller, author and principal founder of the David Gemmell Awards For Fantasy, passed away on Monday. Deborah had been battling breast cancer for some years, and went into remission several times. The condition recently surfaced again, and she fought it with her usual resolve, but treatment proved ineffective. She passed peacefully, with her husband, Bill, at her side.

Deborah faced her illness with courage and good humour. Her fiction and the Gemmell Awards will stand as permanent memorials to an exceptional person, an indomitable spirit and a good friend.

Stan Nicholls

Chair, David Gemmell Awards For Fantasy

## News of Harold "Howie" Rosenblum

Michelle Rosenblum has asked us to spread the news round fandom that her father, Harold, passed away on Sunday. He had been very recently diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Harold's funeral will be at Worthington Crematorium, Sussex, on Monday 10th June at 13:40. I'm sure everyone will be sorry to hear of the loss of such a well-loved, long-standing fan.

## **NEWS IN BRIEF ....**

.... As mentioned in the letters column, author **Deborah Miller** died on May 7th after a long battle with cancer. She published her own work under the pseudonym of **Miller Lau**. She wrote *The Last Clansman* Trilogy, SWARMTHIEF'S DANCE (the first in a planned *Swarmthief* Trilogy) and THE SIN EATER. She was the founder and administrator for the David Gemmell Awards....British fan **Howard Rosenblum** died from pancreatic cancer on May 26th (funeral details are given in the Letters column if anyone wishes to pay their respects). He was the son of Mike Rosenblum, thus claiming to be Britain's earliest second-generation fan. As well as being an enthusiastic attendee at conventions, he published the fanzine *Son of New Futurian* (from 1968 until 1977) .... SF Grandmaster **Jack Vance** (real name John Holbrook Vance) has died at the age of 96. He published over 60 novels in the science fiction, fantasy and mystery novels. He is probably best known for his *Dying Earth*, *Lyonesse* and *The Demon Princes* series. He won three Hugo Awards (THE DRAGON MASTERS, THE LAST CASTLE and THIS IS ME; JACK VANCE! (His memoir) a Nebula (THE LAST CASTLE and a World Fantasy awards for LYONESSE:MADOUUC and for lifetime achievement .... Special effects genius **Ray Harryhausen** died after a short illness at the age of 92. A pioneer of stop motion animation, his first major film work was the creation of the ape in MIGHTY JOE YOUNG that won him an Academy Award. His work featured in many well-known fantasy films including the *Sinbad* films, JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS and THE CLASH OF THE TITANS. He was a close friend of Ray Bradbury and Forrest Ackerman and an early member of the Los Angeles Science Fiction League. He was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2005 .... Director, actor and writer **Bryan Forbes** has died. He acted in the films QUATERMASS II: ENEMY FROM SPACE and SATELLITE IN THE SKY. He also directed films including THE STEPFORD WIVES and wrote the screenplay for CHAPLIN .... Lone Star Con has announced three bids for **Worldcon 2015**. The three contenders are Helsinki, Orlando and Spokane .... The winner of the **Terry Pratchett** Aywhere but here, Anywhen but now First Novel Award is Alexander Maskill with THE HIVE. The winner will receive a Transworld publishing contract with a £20,000 advance .... A Kickstarter crowdfunding appeal has been launched to make a film of BLOOD KISS by Emmy award winner Michael Reaves. **Neil Gaiman** and fantasy writer Amber **Benson** will appear if the film is fully funded .... Silicon Valley tycoons are trying to raise \$1million to launch a **Space Telescope** to find asteroids suitable for mineral exploitation. If you donate \$150 you can direct the telescope yourself .... A very large **Asteroid 1998 QE2** with its own moon passed close to the Earth (only 3.6 million miles away!) .... Scientists believe they have found the first evidence that **Other Universes** exist. The European Space Agency's Planck spacecraft provided data to produce a map of the cosmic microwave background ("radiation" left behind after the Big Bang). Anomalies in the map are believed to be caused by the gravitational effect from other universes .... Russian scientists have recovered liquid blood and other well-preserved tissues from a **10,000 year old mammoth**, and have signed a deal to give South Korean scientists rights to attempt to clone a mammoth



# BOOK REVIEWS



(REVIEWERS please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [goodwinced@yahoo.com](mailto:goodwinced@yahoo.com) Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting).

***REVIVER*** by Seth Patrick

Macmillan / 409 pgs / £12.99 trade paperback / ISBN 978-0230768949

Reviewed by Michael Jones



The Revivers are able to awaken the recently dead - not for long and not to put right what killed them, but, according to the circumstances of how they met their ends, for long enough to say farewell to their loved ones or to explain how they were killed (or both). The latter possibility has led to the establishment of the Forensic Revival Service, an organisation to assist the police in murder investigations. One of their best operatives is Jonah Miller and at the beginning of the book he undergoes a disturbing experience during what should have been the routine “revival” of a murdered woman. As the story gradually unfolds it becomes apparent that there is something lurking there, down where the dead people go, and it wants

to find a way out into the world of the living. It may be may be something beneficial or something dark and malign. As Miller investigates what his friends and colleagues are doing he discovers that there are two undercover factions, one seeking to make contact with this hitherto unknown something and the other trying to prevent contact. The latter group are prepared to resort to extremes of violence and murder, but they may not actually be the bad guys.

Writer Patrick has done a fair job of bringing all the elements of his story together, but it is rendered over-complicated by the way in which flashbacks are used to explain how what has happened in the past influences what is happening in the present while new leading characters have to be introduced with a backstory which needs to be explained. All this tends to make it confusing to follow what is going on in the first part of the book, but once that is over a gripping narrative emerges with one or two wholly unexpected twists as it builds to a climactic conclusion. There is also a hint in an Epilogue that there might be more to come. What is of particular interest is that although this could easily be dismissed as supernatural horror the underlying themes of the book could alternatively be categorised as SF if the reader chooses to interpret them in that way. It is possible to think that one recognises the derivation of some of these ideas, but the use

made of them is sufficiently novel to excuse this and the overall effect is new and exciting.

This is the writer's first novel and this being so the grounds for the critical comments made above are to a degree excusable. As a first novel it is a remarkable effort and Seth Patrick is certainly a new writer to watch. *MJ*

***POLLEN* by Jeff Noon**

**Tor / 354pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1447229209**

**Reviewed by Jim Pearce**

Like VURT, this edition of POLLEN is issued on the 11th April 2013 and is set in the same alternate reality Manchester and its bleak surrounding countryside. For those who have not read VURT, a Vurt is a virtual world akin to a computer/game station adventure set in a LSD dream and accessed by tickling the back of ones throat by a special type of feather. While in VURT some hints are provided as to the source/origin of Vurt in POLLEN both the origins/source of the Vurt worlds and feathers is confirmed. Also as in VURT another staple 'Vaz' a universal lubricant and fix-it with miraculous properties plays a prominent role.

In POLLEN the action takes place about twelve years after the events chronicled in VURT. However only one character in VURT is in the current tale and that is Twinkle although a further link is forged by Blush, a Vurt virtuoso, the daughter of Scribble and Desdemona.

POLLEN chronicles the 'sweet' death of Coyote an independent and semi-legal taxi driver and the search by his lover Boda for the reasons why and for justice/vengeance. Coyote's death is the first of many; soon people are sneezing and dying all over Manchester. Hay fever becomes a fatal condition as exotic flowers bloom everywhere and the pollen count reaches astronomical levels. If nothing can reverse this epidemic humans of all kinds will become extinct or at least an endangered species. As well as the types of 'human' featured in VURT, i.e. Robos, Shadows (telepaths), Dog and Pures another two varieties are introduced - Zombies and Dodos and the reasons why these hybrids exist is explained.

Importantly for this story Dodos are impervious to Vurt feathers and cannot dream or enter a Vurt world. Both Boda and Sybil Jones are Dodos.

The police only reluctantly treat Coyote's death as murder and blame Boda. However telepathic shadowgirl cop Sybil Jones believes otherwise and persists in looking for other suspects despite active obstruction from her superiors in particular the intriguingly named chief cop Jacob Kracker. Eventually she recruits reluctant allies in fellow cops Zulu (Zero) Clegg and Tom Dove. Arraigned against them and Boda are excellently depicted villains including Persephone and her husband John Barleycorn (a dark Vurt world deity providing



links to Greek and other mythologies) and their “dupes”. Support for Boda comes from pirate DJ and mystic Gumbo Ya Ya and his network.

As in *VURT* Jeff Noon has created an eclectic and amazingly enjoyable set of characters set in an unbelievably believable fantasy world. To my mind *POLLEN* is an enhancement on *VURT*. I enjoyed *VURT* and I enjoyed *POLLEN* even more. JP

***THEM OR US (Hater Trilogy 3)* by David Moody**

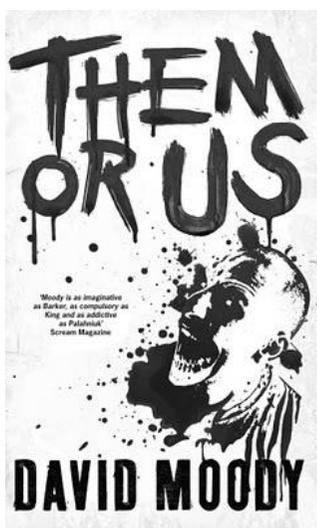
**Orion Books / 361 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0575084735**

**Reviewed by Theresa Derwin**

The third novel in the compelling Hater series, *THEM OR US* starts following the ‘limited nuclear exchange’, which has resulted in the implosion of the vast ‘Unchanged’ city centre refugee camps. The towns that remain, dominated by Haters are desolated, radiation filled cities corrupted and ravaged by the remaining humans. The humans that remain as the dominant species are the Haters, people filled with uncontrollable rage and the desire to kill anyone left, more specifically, the Unchanged.

Danny McCoyne is a Hater with a difference in the post-apocalyptic world – Danny can ‘hold’ the hate and pass himself off as an ‘Unchanged’, which makes him invaluable to Hinchcliffe, the despot running what is left of Lowestoft. McCoyne, despite his weaknesses and the actions he has performed in hate, is a strangely sympathetic character and makes for a great lead. Despite his hate he is likeable and as a narrator, he is a great choice.

The world Moody has created is bleak, visceral and cold. What frightens the reader so much is the actual possibility of Moody’s vision becoming reality. If you have read the Hater novels, then you must simply read this instalment; in a word, it is stunning. If this is your first Hater novel, don’t worry reading this without knowledge of the first two books will not detract from your experience. And experience this is! Enjoy the end! TD



***LONDON FALLING* by Paul Cornell**

**Tor / 395 pgs / £12.99 trade paperback / ISBN 978-023076310**

**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.**

There is a lot of what is called ‘cross-over’ fiction around these days. In some cases, it is claimed, that is just how the story turned out, that the author merely told the story they wanted to tell. The more cynical might suggest that it is a ploy to gain a larger share of the market, or that the author is dressing up what they

really want to write my suggesting it is something else. This latter scenario has certainly been employed by horror writers unable to find a publisher for that genre label. Some crime can certainly be very gruesome.

At the outset, **LONDON FALLING** has all the hallmarks of being a crime thriller. Costain and Sefton are undercover cops planted in the gang of Toshack, a very successful underworld boss. Toshack has taken over a number of other firms in the last ten years but is very canny. No-one has been able to get any evidence against him. Now it is make or break time. Wired up, Costain has one last chance to get something out of Toshack before the heavy mob smash down the door and arrest the whole gang.



Then, in the interview, Toshack has an apparent seizure and dies. Immediately suspicion falls on the squad; that perhaps someone has managed to poison him. As a result, the four people that are above suspicion are hived off into a Portakabin with the brief to investigate the circumstances of the death,

while the rest of the squad concentrate on clearing up behind Toshack's gang.

Thus, Costain and Sefton are joined by Quill, their immediate boss and the witness to Toshack's death, and Lisa Ross, a police analyst. Using Costain's knowledge of Toshack's movements in the last couple of days before his arrest they are plunged into a far deeper mystery.

This is the point where the nature of the book changes as supernatural horror elements begin to shape the rest of the plot. Searching the same houses Toshack did the night before his arrest, they discover the remains of three children in a cauldron switching the game to a murder hunt. They quickly find that their prey is a Mora Loseley who is a West Ham supporter and a witch. She is elusive but they do establish that any player who manages to score a hat-trick against her club is in danger of death. The race is on to catch her before that happens again.

The plot is far more complicated than that and has plenty of twists and surprises. The four principal characters are multi-layered each with their own motives, failings and insecurities but are able to meld as a team to reach out for their final objective. I would happily meet them again in another book. *PM*

### ***ZERO POINT*** by Neal Asher

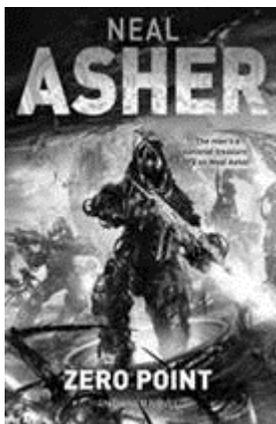
Tor / 564pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0330524520

Reviewed by Jim Pearce

**ZERO POINT** is the second volume in Neal Asher's 'Owner' series of novels set in a world where a bureaucracy gone mad rules. Imagine a world where the EU has expanded to the nth degree and the 'Committee' delegates, especially the 'Chairman' have absolute power and also there is an enforcement Inspectorate that makes the Gestapo seem like the Salvation Army. In this world all but those at the top live under the Committee's leaden bureaucratic oversight and plain

incompetence. Everyone with a smidgen of power abuses it and grovels to those above them. Basically its Citizens are divided into two groups i.e., 'Zero Assets (ZAs)' and 'Societal Assets (SAs)' with neither having any rights, even to life.

In ZERO POINT the 'Owner', Alan Saul, has hijacked the orbital space station Argus (see the first Owner novel - THE DEPARTURE) and is on his way to Mars leaving behind a planet in disarray. While capturing Argus he attempted to destroy the Committee and its Inspectorate by turning their own weapon systems against them. Unfortunately some survive and like a hydra grow more heads as with extreme rapidity 'Delegate' Serene Galahad grabs power and commences a reign that makes those of Pol Pot and Hitler seem to be teddy bear picnics. Her rise to power forms a powerful strand within this book.



While much of ZERO POINT describes the titanic struggles of Alan Saul and his subjects/friends aboard the Space Station against the attempts of Serene Galahad to recover the Argus; there is also a strong third strand which follows the fight of Technical Director Varalin Delex and her staff to survive in a Mars Base abandoned by the Committee as a waste of resources. However, with the overriding suspicion and treachery culture of Committee run Earth infecting most of her subordinates, Varalin not only has to fight against an inhospitable planet but also against those on her staff on whom she should be able to depend.

ZERO POINT is pure space science fiction of the best possible kind full of action and believable science with a great depth of terrific well defined characters. Often when one reads the second book in a series, as is ZERO POINT, without reading the first (THE DEPARTURE) there is a feeling of loss, however this is not true with this book. ZERO POINT is more than good enough to stand by itself. That said the author provides plenty of natural references to actions in THE DEPARTURE to ensure that all actions are natural and clear. However if you have not already read THE DEPARTURE read it as soon as possible as you have missed a great book. JP

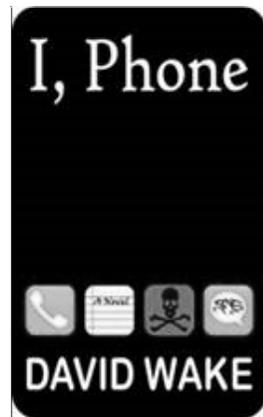
***J, PHONE* by David Wake**

**Watledge Books, Birmingham / 299 pgs / £9.00 enlarged paperback; £4.64 e-book / ISBN: 978-1482306484**

**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan**

David Wake, an occasional Brum Group attendee, has already made his mark as a writer of one-act plays which have been produced in the smaller theatres around the Midlands, and at the annual Easter SF conventions. In this respect he has shown a marked talent for the absurd. This has been carried over into the writing of this novel and when reading this book it is a requisite to watch out for literary allusions - beginning with the title.

I, PHONE is SF tainted with chick-lit. In this case it is not a bad thing. The entire novel is narrated by a technologically advanced phone (at least it was until yesterday) that has been named Jeeves by its owner, Alice Wooster. Alice lives in a totally consumerist society seduced into a virtual utopia. Two items of technology are essential, a phone and a headset. The phone contains an AI chip and is aware of the world around it even if reacting tangibly with it is almost impossible. After all it is contained in a small piece of hardware. It is more aware of the real state of its surroundings than its owner and has a similar relationship with Alice as the original Wodehouse characters did. Without her phone, Alice would have problems functioning. With the exponential rate of technological development, Jeeves is aware that he is likely to be superseded alarmingly soon - possibly within hours as a system called 'full embodiment' comes on line. The headsets mostly resemble glasses and allow the wearer access to a virtual world. Most consumers view the world through them on a continuous basis, thus with full embodiment they will see the shopping mall as a spectacular place in which everything they could possibly want is available. The reality, as Jeeves shows us, is of run down, scruffy buildings in dire need of painting and renovation, which instead of the cleanliness they appear to have are actually filthy and litter strewn.



What Alice wants is a real relationship with a man. She and her best friend, Jilly, go to dating bars in order to try to meet men yet they don't really see the people around them as all, including Alice and Jilly, are effectively disguised as an movie star from early films such as BRIEF ENCOUNTER. They rely on their phones to get proper information for them. The plot really starts at one of these evenings when the man Alice takes home is murdered and Jeeves finds he has a memory of Alice doing it, even though he was switched off at the time. This allows Alice to go on the run through a semi-farcical series of events while Jeeves is trying to prove her innocence and become physically reunited with her.

For a debut novel, this is an ambitious project and perhaps tries to do too much. David Wake has tried to put everything into it and much will pass over the heads of the average reader. It is however, very cleverly written. At its heart is a futuristic thriller which employs extrapolations of the way technology is advancing in order to get its effects. At the same time it is a warning of what the technological classes could expect if they constantly desire the new gadgets and are intent in keeping up the superficial veneers offered by the new developments. It is also an indictment of the way in which people, especially the young, increasingly live life at second hand via their technologies and dwell in an increasingly artificial reality without making real connections between others in the real world.

Although this book deserves a wider distribution because of the bleak future it depicts and that we seem to be rapidly heading towards, its niche is

probably amongst the small press and independent publishers as its intensity would overwhelm the average mass market reader (as the chapters are numbered in binary this in itself would be found off-putting by some). As a thought provoking book tempered by the farcical elements it is certainly worthy of consideration. *PM*

## **NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES**

Listings should not be necessarily taken as recommendations. View at your own peril!

**WORLD WAR Z** - Release date June 21st Big budget zombie film starring Brad Pitt

**DESPICABLE ME 2** - Release date June 28th Animated comedy where the reformed villain, Gru (and his minions) help stop a new super-criminal

**A FIELD IN ENGLAND** - Release date July 5th Horror. English Civil War deserters search for hidden treasure - are they victims of magic or psychedelic mushrooms!

**MONSTERS UNIVERSITY** - Release date July 12th Animated comedy prequel. Child-scaring monsters Sulley and Mike go to University

**PACIFIC RIM** - Release date July 12th Summer blockbuster directed by Guillermo del Toro. Giant robots battle enormous monsters!

## **FORTHCOMING BOOKS**

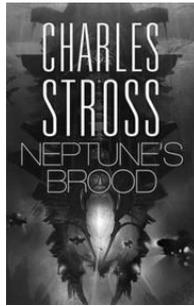


**HARVEST OF TIME (Dr Who)** by Alastair Reynolds / BBC Books / 368 pgs / £16.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-1849904189 / June 6th A 3rd Doctor novel. To save the Brigadier and UNIT the Doctor must save the Master

**THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE** by Neil Gaiman / Hodder Headline / 256 pgs / £16.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-1472200310 / June 18th Fantasy. Three strange women help defend the narrator from dark forces.

**REVIVER** by Seth Patrick / Macmillan / 420 pgs / £12.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0230765016 / June 20th Revivers briefly wake the recently dead to solve murders.

**THE LONG WAR (Long Earth 2)** by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter / Doubleday / 448 pgs / £18.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0857520111 / June 20th Mankind has settled the alternative worlds of the Long Earth but war now threatens.



***THE ADJACENT*** by Christopher Priest / Gollancz / 432 pgs / £12.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0575105362 / June 20th A photojournalist discovers that his wife's death and other incidents all involve a new weapon, quantum adjacency.

***NEPTUNE'S BROOD*** by Charles Stross / Orbit / 336 pgs / £16.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0356500997 / July 2nd Metahuman Krina searches across star systems for her lost sister.

***iD (Book 2 of Machine Dynasty series)*** by Madeline Ashby / Angry Robot / 416 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0857663108 / July 4th SF. Javier, a self-replicating humanoid undertakes a journey of redemption

***THE GLASS GOD (Magicals Anonymous 2)*** by Kate Griffin / Orbit / 464 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356500652 / July 9th Urban Fantasy. In London's otherworld an apprentice shaman, Sharon Li must find the missing Midnight Mayor.

## ***FORTHCOMING EVENTS***

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

*Any information about forthcoming SF/Fantasy/Horror events is always welcome - please send to Carol at [goodwinced@yahoo.com](mailto:goodwinced@yahoo.com)*

**Alistair Reynolds signing, 6th June to 2nd July, Various venues.** Promotional tour for HARVEST OF TIME book. Forbidden Planet Bristol (6th June), Forbidden Planet London (7th June), Waterstones Cardiff (12th June), Forest Bookshop, Coleford, Gloucestershire (20th June) and Toppings Bookshop Bath (2nd July) For further details please check with individual venues.

**Sir Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter: The Long War, 25th June, London** The two authors discuss their new book, THE LONG WAR etc. This is their only UK event. At the Institution of Engineering and Technology, 2 Savoy Place, London WC2R 0BL, at 7pm for about one hour. Books will be on sale courtesy of

Forbidden Planet – these books will be stamped exclusively for this event. There will be the opportunity to purchase signed books by both authors but these will be strictly limited and ticket numbers for these will be drawn fairly out of a hat on the evening. Tickets (£10) from [www.terrypratchettbooks.com/?p=2629](http://www.terrypratchettbooks.com/?p=2629)

**Writing Fantasy Fiction, 17th August, Sarehole Mill** From 12.30 - 4pm “In a setting which inspired Tolkien, we will look at the importance of world building, the fine line between genre expectation and cliché, and how fantasy fiction relates to and comments on the real world. With guest speaker Stan Nicholls, award winning, million-selling author of the *Orcs* series.” Cost £ 25 plus booking fee. [www.eventbrite.com/event/5617786952](http://www.eventbrite.com/event/5617786952)

**Neil Gaiman signing, 22nd August, Birmingham** Neil Gaiman will be signing copies of his new novel *THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE* at Waterstones New Street from 11 – 1pm. No booking possible – time limited so arrive early to avoid disappointment. If you are unable to attend there will be a very limited availability to reserve a signed copy. Phone store at 0121 631 4333

## ***CONVENTIONS***

**FUTURA, 15th June, Wolverhampton.** One day SF convention at the Wolverhampton Light House. Guest of honour Ian R Macleod. More information at [www.alexdavisevents.co.uk](http://www.alexdavisevents.co.uk)

**EDGE-LIT 2, 13th July, Derby.** Literary event considering Science fiction, fantasy and horror writing. Guests of Honour Mike Carey, Tricia Sullivan and Stan Nicholls. Venue is QUAD (Market Place, DE1 3AS). Tickets £25 Website [www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-2](http://www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-2) Phone: 01332 290 606

**NINE WORLDS GEEKFEST, 9th – 11th August, Heathrow.** New fan run “multi-themed mega convention”. Guests include Jaime Fenn, Ben Aaronovitch, Charles Stross, Stan Nicholls and Anne Gay. Kickstarter funded (closed on March 1st) so details of ticket pricing etc. to follow at <http://nineworlds.co.uk/>

**WORLD FANTASY CON, 31st October – 3<sup>rd</sup> November, Brighton.** Guests of Honour include Richard Matheson, Alan Lee, Brian Aldiss and Tessa Farmer with China Mieville as Master of Ceremonies. Numbers are limited to book early. Attending membership £125 at <http://wfc2013.org/howtojoin01.html>

**LONCON 3 (WORLDCON 72), 14th – 18th August 2014, London.** Held at ExCel exhibition centre. Guests of Honour include Iain M Banks, Chris Foss, and Robin Hobb. £95 Adult membership. See [www.loncon3.org](http://www.loncon3.org)

# **NOVACON 43**

## **8th – 10th NOVEMBER 2013**

### **GUEST OF HONOUR**

#### **JO WALTON**

**Membership is £45 until Eastercon.**  
**See [www.novacon.org.uk](http://www.novacon.org.uk) for details**

#### ***FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG***

July 12th - **RICHARD DENNING** on self-publishing

August 9th - **SUMMER SOCIAL** (new venue the Bull near Aston University)

September 13th - Loncon 3 (Worldcon 2014) chair **ALICE LAWSON**

October 11th - TBA

November 1st - TBA

December 6th - **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL** - Skittles and buffet

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***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 Membership Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG