

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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THE QUIZ *Friday 13th February*

It's time for the annual quiz again. This is held in February

due to the potential bad weather and the risk of speakers (and members) being unable to get to Birmingham city centre. The members of Birmingham University SF Society have again been invited to hopefully swell the numbers.

For those who have not previously attended, the quiz is a fun pub-quiz style event with several teams competing for honours and prizes.

This year the questions have been set by William McCabe. I

March 13th - Peter Coleborn and Jan Edwards of Alchemy Press

understand that questions could cover many aspects of SF and Fantasy from books, magazines, artwork, films, TV, radio, gaming etc so everyone has a chance of winning. The questions should hopefully be a mixture of easy, medium and a few “stinkers” for the “anoraks” amongst us. Teams will be organised on the night (by lots) to encourage mixing and to give everyone a better chance!

So, if you haven't already, start revising – a great excuse for reading and watching more SF (and Fantasy!).

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

A Note from the Quizmaster – William McCabe

It's the quiz this month. . I've tried to put in some stuff that hasn't been in the previous quizzes. There will still be questions about SF/Fantasy from books, movies and TV but not necessarily the same sources, periods and styles that you've had before. To get you in the mood, here are a few questions that won't be in the quiz itself but should give you an inkling of what is to come.

1. Which American sit-com centred on a group of aliens masquerading as the Solomon family?
2. In Wagner's *Ring* cycle, who was Siegfried's grandfather?
3. Which novel/series ends with the following lines:- "So be it," Amalfi said. He touched the button over his heart. Creation began'.
4. What connects the titles of the last films in the *Cube* and *Ring* series?
5. In which of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels is Death the title character?

(Answers on page 4)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Editor **Alice K Edwards** has died from Pneumonia aged 75. She was the editor of *Playboy* and published work by Ursula K LeGuin, Robert Silverberg, Dan Simmons and other well-respected SF writers. She also played a large role in nurturing new writers Actor **Rod Taylor** died in January. He is most well-known to SF fans for playing the lead role in THE TIME MACHINE. He also appeared in *The Twilight Zone* and in Hitchcock's THE BIRDS Designer **Robert Kinoshita** has died. He began working in Hollywood in 1939, but he was placed into an US

internment camp for Japanese during World War II. He designed and built Robby the Robot for the film FORBIDDEN PLANET. He also designed the robot for the television series *Lost in Space* The nomination period for the **2015 Hugo Awards** has opened. Anyone who was a member of Loncon3 is eligible to submit nominations and should have received details of how to vote. If you have not received this or have problems then contact Sasquan (World Con 2015) at hugoadmin@sasquan.org The nominations close on March 10th Cardiff's bid to host **Eastercon in 2016** has been withdrawn. The city will also be hosting a World Marathon that weekend and this would badly affect the availability and price of accommodation for convention attendees. They hope to rebid for 2017 but this is not confirmed to date The 2014 Locus recommended Reading List is now available. More details at www.locusmag.com The **David Gemmell Awards** has announced the appointment of three new Committee members including Juliet E McKenna, Sky Campbell and Luke Arthur. Public voting for this year's awards open in March at www.gemmellaward.com/ Nominees for a new award for Horror novels written in English and published in the UK, the **James Herbert Award** have been announced. Sponsored by Pan Macmillan and judged by a panel, the winners will be announced in March The "preliminary ballot" (shortlist) for the **Bram Stoker Awards** include a nomination for non-fiction work HORROR 101 which includes work by Brum Group member, **Theresa Derwin** Author **Jack McDevitt** is the winner of the 2015 **Robert A Heinlein Award** for work that inspires the exploration of space SF writer **James S A Corey's** *The Expanse* series will be filmed as a 10 episode TV series by the SyFy channel The Horror Writers' Association has announced that **Jack Ketchum** and **Tanith Lee** are to be honoured as Lifetime Achievement Award Winners. CG

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

Listings should not be necessarily taken as recommendations. Release dates are subject to change. View at your own peril!

PREDESTINATION - Release date February 20th. A time-travelling agent's pursues a criminal throughout time.

IT FOLLOWS - Release date February 27th. Horror. Teenagers have strange visions and sense something horrific is following them.

CHAPPIE - Release date March 6th. SF. Kidnapped at "birth", Chappie the robot grows up with his adopted dysfunctional human family. Directed by Neill Blomkamp (DISTRICT 9).

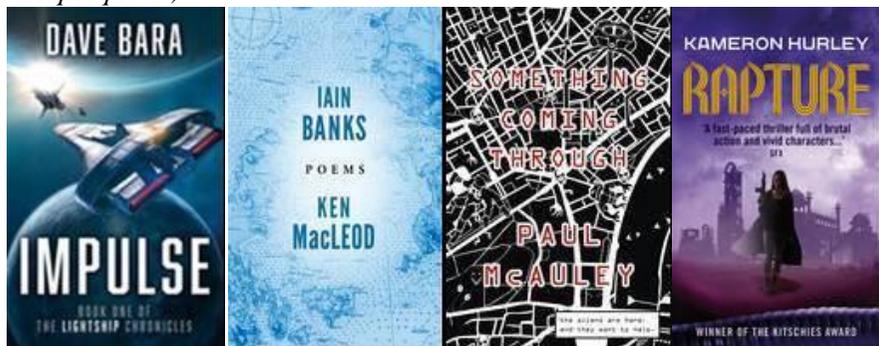
PARANORMAL ACTIVITY: GHOST DIMENSION - Release date March 13th. Sixth in series. Family is haunted in their new home. CG

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. *Third Rock from the Sun*.
2. Wotan - since his mother and father were brother and sister he only had the one.
3. A CLASH OF CYMBALS/ *Cities in Flight* by James Blish.
4. They are both numbered 0
5. REAPER MAN

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

(NB Prices given are Recommended Retail Price and may be available at cheaper prices)



IMPULSE by Dave Bara / Del Rey / 384 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0091956417 / February 12th. SF. Who attacked the Lightship *Impulse*? The secret threatens the Alliance and a fragile peace.

POEMS by Iain Banks & Ken MacLeod / Little Brown / 176 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1408705872 / February 16th. Poetry. A collection of previously unpublished poems.

SOMETHING COMING THROUGH by Paul McAuley / Gollancz / 384 pgs / £14.99 trade paperback / ISBN 978-1473203945 / February 19th. SF. Friendly aliens give Earth fifteen new worlds but all is not as it seems.

RAPTURE (*Bel Dame Apocrypha 3*) by Kameron Hurley / Del Rey / 430 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0091952822 / February 26th. SF. Bounty hunter Nyx must rescue a kidnapped politician,



KNIGHT'S SHADOW (*Greatcoats 2*) by Sebastien de Castell / Jo Fletcher Books / 624 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1782066774 / March 3rd. Fantasy. Now outlawed, the Greatcoats (travelling magistrates) must protect the young heir to the Kingdom.

OLD VENUS by George RR Martin & Gardner Dozois / Titan Books / 608 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-1783297863 / March 6th. Anthology of new stories set in the classic hot, steamy planet of Venus.

THE MECHANICAL by Ian Tregillis / Orbit / 480 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356502328 / March 12th. SF. A mechanical man dreams of freedom from his human masters.

NO MAN'S WORLD: OMNIBUS by Pat Kelleher / Abaddon / 800 pgs / £1.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781083123 / March 12th. SF. A World War I Battalion are transported to an alien planet and must learn to survive.

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 goodwincd@yahoo.com

HARVEY, 6th - 21st February, Birmingham. Comedy about a man with a six foot invisible rabbit companion. Tickets £12.50 - 35 at 0121 236 4455 or www.birmingham-rep.co.uk

CIRCUS OF HORRORS, 16th February, Birmingham. Play set in London ruled by the undead featuring many circus acts. New Alexandra

Theatre. Tickets £19.90 - £29.90 + £2.85 transaction fee. Tel: 0844 871 3011 or www.atgtickets.com/venues/new-alexandra-theatre-birmingham/

EMILY St. JOHN MANDEL Signing, 14th March, Birmingham. The author will be signing copies of her post-apocalyptic novel **STATION ELEVEN** at Waterstones New Street from 12pm. Tel: 0121 631 4333



BOOK REVIEWS



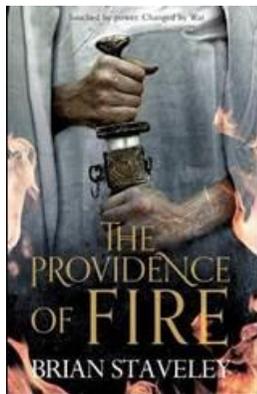
(REVIEWERS please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at goodwincd@yahoo.com Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting).

THE PROVIDENCE OF FIRE by Brian Staveley

Pan Macmillan Tor / 606 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0230770430

Reviewed by Jim Pearce

This is the second book in Brian Staveley's excellent *Chronicle of the Unhewn Throne*. In October 2014 I had the pleasure of reviewing **THE EMPEROR'S BLADES** the first book in this series (see Brum Group News Issue 518). In my review I stated that "In this his first published book Brian Staveley has proved that he is already a master of his craft so much so that this is one of the best books I have read this year." **THE PROVIDENCE OF FIRE** confirms my opinion of the quality of his storytelling and leads me to favourably compare him to Robert Jordan and his seminal *Wheel of Time* series. Although, as I understand from information available to me when writing my 2014 review, there are to be three volumes in this chronicle there should be little chance of reader fatigue when the story concludes in the next volume.



In **THE PROVIDENCE OF FIRE** the story continues seamlessly from where **THE EMPEROR'S BLADES** concluded; following each of the Emperor's Blades' i.e. his two sons and daughter as they each in their own way fight to find out why he was murdered leaving his empire in turmoil. Kaden, the reluctant heir tries to find aid firstly with a group of warrior monks and then from the Empire's nobles but only to find damaged fanatics and weak querulous reeds. The warrior second son, Valyn is harried across the windswept steppes beyond the Empire's northern boundary where he is captured by the nomadic Urghul and their blood-mad leader. Meanwhile the Emperor's daughter Adare first of all

flees the Empire's capital city and his murderer to gain an army with which she hopes to bring the murderer to justice.

As in the previous volume Brian Staveley has created a well-crafted situation populated by realistic characters both 'good' and 'evil' introducing some intriguing new characters creating surprising allies. In these he shows that in some instances 'evil' may have at least temporarily a 'good' objective. But can their help be trusted as the providers certainly have their own agendas? Ominously the gods are stirring. Again progress is a struggle for the siblings, there being many twists and turns in their tales.

As with **THE EMPEROR'S BLADES** Brian has created a masterful and rich tapestry blending the action into a compelling story, which as I previously stated is the type I like best. I look forward to the follow-up and expect that it will be as equally enjoyable as the previous two books in the series.

JTP

(Review copy kindly donated by Pan Macmillan Tor)

CONVENTIONS

PICOCON 32, 14th - 15th February 2015, Imperial College, London. Guest of Honour Cory Doctorow. Guests of Honour tba. Cost £10. Info: www.icsf.org.uk/picocon.

REDEMPTION '15, 20th - 22nd February 2015, Coventry. At Britannia Hotel. Guest of Honour: Miltos Yerolemou (others tbc). Tickets £70 at www.smof.com/redemption

SCI-FI WEEKENDER, 19th - 22nd March, Hafan Y Mor, North Wales. Commercial multi-media convention. Various prices depending on level of access/accommodation. See www.scifiweekender.com

DYSPROSIUM (EASTERCON), 3rd - 6th April, London. Guests of Honour are Jim Butcher, Seanan McGuire, Herr Doktor and Caroline Mullan. To be held at the Park Inn, Heathrow, London. Attending £70, Supporting £25. Details at www.dysprosium.org.uk

EDGE-LIT, 11th July, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guest of Honour Samantha Shannon. Tickets £30 from 01332 290606 or www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-4

NINE WORLDS GEEKFEST, 7th - 9th August, London. Multi-media with strong literature strand. Guests of Honour tba. Tickets £85 (early rate) at <https://nineworlds.co.uk/>

BRISTOLCON, 26th September, Bristol. Guests of Honour Jasper Fforde, Jaine Fenn and Chris Moore. Doubletree Hotel. £20 (£25 from May 1st). Details at www.bristolcon.org

NOVACON 45, 13th - 15th November, Nottingham. Guests of Honour are Anne and Stan Nicholls. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £45. Details at www.novaco.org.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

March 13th - **Peter Coleborn & Jan Edwards** of **Alchemy Press**

April 10th - Mathematician and writer **Ian Stewart**

May 8th - **tbc**

June 12th - SF author **Stephanie Saulter**

July 10th - **tbc**

August 14th - **Summer Meal**

September 11th - **tbc**

October 9th - **tbc**

November 6th - author **Emma Newman**

December 4th - **Christmas Social**

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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