

September 1996

Issue 300

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

Price: 45p

Price: 45p

## *25th Anniversary Issue!*

*The monthly newsletter of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group  
(Honorary Presidents: Brian W Aldiss and Harry Harrison)*

Group Chairman & Newsletter Editor - Martin Tudor, Secretary - Anne Woodford,  
Treasurer - Sarah Freakley, Publicity Officer - Steve Jones, Ordinary Member - Alan  
Woodford, Novacon 26 Chairman - Carol Morton, Novacon 27 Chairman - Martin Tudor.

## **This month's speaker is Christopher Priest who will address the BSFG on Friday 20 September, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel,**

(on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre). Admittance: Members: £2.50 (Waged), £2.00 Unwaged), Non-Members £3.75 (Waged), £2.75 (Unwaged). (NB: Unwaged discounts are at the discretion of the Committee and will depend on satisfactory proof of status being produced.)

CHRISTOPHER MCKENZIE PRIEST was born in Cheadle, Cheshire in 1943 and educated at Warehouseman and Clerks' Orphan Schools, Manchester. His first sf story, "The Run" appeared in IMPULSE magazine in 1966 (much of his early work later appeared in the collection REAL-TIME WORLD in 1974). His early novels - INDOCTRINAIRE (1970), FUGUE FOR A DARKENING ISLAND (1972), THE INVERTED WORLD (1974) and THE SPACE MACHINE (1976) - dealt with a wide variety of standard sf ideas, but often gave them a bizarre twist. But with A DREAM OF WESSEX, the collection AN INFINITE SUMMER (1979) and the creation of his "Dream Archipelago", he began to write increasingly intricate plots, and to move away from standard sf or fantasy. THE AFFIRMATION (1981) and THE GLAMOUR (1984) continued this trend, although the dystopian near-future novel THE QUIET WOMAN (1990) marked a return to a more common sf world. His latest novel THE PRESTIGE appears in paperback this month (Simon & Schuster, £5.99).  
*[Many thanks to THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF for much of the above information.]*

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) in the upstairs function room of the Prince Hotel, Station Street in Birmingham city centre (formerly Stephenson's Hotel, between the Electric Cinema and the Bus Station). The annual subscription rates (which include 12 copies of this newsletter and reduced price entry to meetings) are £10.00 per person, or £13.50 for 2 members at the same address. Cheques etc. should be made payable to "the Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to: the Treasurer, Sarah Freakley, c/o 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH. (E-mail should go via: [bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk](mailto:bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk)) Book reviews, review copies and other contributions and enquiries regarding the Brum Group News to: Martin Tudor, Newsletter Editor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX.

## Colophon

The contents of this issue are copyright 1996 the BSFG, on behalf of the contributors, to whom all rights revert on publication. Personal opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the membership of the BSFG.

All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise. This issue was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier. For details of WAVE's competitive prices contact Martin Tudor at the editorial address on the cover.

Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for producing the address labels, supplying news from the Net and transferring files; THE BIRMINGHAM EVENING MAIL, WHAT'S ON, THE BIRMINGHAM VOICE, STEVE GREEN and CRITICAL WAVE for the other news in the Jophan Report and the Events listing.

Will "P. Phillips", who joined the Group in May, please send his address to: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

## Forthcoming Events

20 SEPTEMBER 1996: CHRISTOPHER PRIEST will address the BSFG, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre).

21 SEPTEMBER 1996: GRAHAM EDWARDS, MIKE JEFFERIES, GRAHAM JOYCE, STEPHEN LAWHEAD, KEN MACLEOD, MICHAEL MARSHALL SMITH and CHRISTOPHER PRIEST will be signing copies of their latest works from noon at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

27 SEPTEMBER 1996: ROBERT JORDAN will be signing from 4pm at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call

0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

27 SEPTEMBER 1996: ROBERT JORDAN will address the BSFG, 7.15pm for 7.30pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre).

10 OCTOBER 1996: WILLIAM GIBSON will be signing copies of IDORU (Viking, £16.99) from 1pm at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

18 OCTOBER 1996: KEN MACLEOD, author of THE STAR FRACTION which was the runner-up in the Arthur C Clarke award, will address the BSFG, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre).

19 OCTOBER 1996: OLIVER JOHNSON and ROBERT RANKIN will be signing copies of their latest work from noon at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

18-20 OCTOBER 1996: MASQUE 4 "the fourth British Costume Convention for all creative people, fantasy, sf, historical... but above all lots of FUN. Talks, Shows, Competitions." The Moat House, West Bromwich, Junction 1 M5. Attending £30.00, Supporting £10.00, Day attendance £15.00. Contact: Alan Cash, 130 Hamstead Hall Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, B20 1JB.

26 OCTOBER 1996: GERRY ANDERSON and STAN NICHOLLS will be signing copies of Anderson's authorised biography from noon at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

8-10 NOVEMBER 1996: NOVACON 26 the Brum Group's own convention, Hotel Ibis, Ladywell Walk (off Hurst Street), Birmingham. Guest of Honour David Gemmell. Attending membership £27.00 until 30 September, £30.00 thereafter and on the door. Supporting £10.50. Progress Report #3 and hotel booking forms now available. Contact: Tony Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

9 NOVEMBER 1996: DAVID GEMMELL will be signing from 11am and ROB GRANT will be signing copies of RED DWARF: BACKWARDS (Penguin, £5.99) from 1pm at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

13 NOVEMBER 1996: TERRY PRATCHETT will be signing copies of HOG-FATHER (Gollancz, £15.99) and MASKERADE (Corgi, £5.99) from 1pm at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

15 NOVEMBER 1996: HARRY HARRISON, one of the Group's Honorary Presidents, creator of the Stainless Steel Rat, etc will address the BSGF, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre).

16 NOVEMBER 1996: STEPHEN BAXTER, HARRY HARRISON, TOM HOLT and J V JONES will be signing from noon at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

23 NOVEMBER 1996: BUZZ ALDRIN will be signing from noon at Andromeda book shop, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

14-17 FEBRUARY 1997: ATTITUDE: THE CONVENTION at the Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern. Attending £23.00. Contact: First Floor Flat, 14 Prittlewell Square, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 1DW.

28-31 MARCH 1997: INTERVENTION the 48th UK National SF Convention, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Theme "communication". Guests Brian W Aldiss, David Langford, Jon Berg and Octavia Butler. Attending £25.00, supporting £15.00, cheques (payable to "Intervention") should be sent to: 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants., PO10 7TS.  
3-5 SEPTEMBER 1997: LONESTARCON 55th World SF Convention, San Antonio, Texas, USA. Contact: PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755-2277, USA.

27 DECEMBER 1999 - 2 JANUARY 2000: MILLENNIUM. Venue to be announced, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a BeneLux country or UK), £3.00 (£10.00) per year, to be deducted from eventual membership fee (to be announced before 1997). Contact: Malcolm Reid, 186 Casewick Road, West Norwood, London, SE27 0SZ.

Although details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise readers to contact organizers prior to travelling. Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses. Please mention the BRUM GROUP NEWS when replying to listings or advertisements.

If you know of any events which you think may be of interest to members of the BSGF please send details to the Editor.

If you have attended any events or seen any films or videos that you would like to recommend to other members (or warn them about) please feel free to write a report or review and send it to the editorial address.

## The Jophan Report #97

Following its debut with Derek Fox's RECLUSE, the Tanjen imprint will continue its new line of illustrated novellas with Neal Asher's THE PARASITE (art by Ralph Horsley) and Rhys Hughes' EYELIDIAD (art by Alan Casey), both at £5.99 (or just £10.99 for all three). For further details, contact Anthony Barker at 52 Denman Lane, Huncote, Leicester, LE9 3BS.

The cream of Japanese monster movies is celebrated in Robert Marrero's GODZILLA: KING OF THE MONSTER MOVIES, a US\$15.95 paperback from the Florida-based Fantasma imprint. As well as the "Godzilla" sequence, Marrero covers a further 50 films, including those featuring Mothra, Gamera and Rodan. British orders cost US\$20.45 from 419 Amelia Street, Key West, Florida 33040, United States of America.

Elvis Presley had a fascination with the superhero Captain Marvel, according to one acquaintance interviewed for Phil Baker's new biography, ELVIS AARON PRESLEY (HarperCollins, £16.99): "Billy Smith recalls Elvis modelling his personality and perhaps also the 1970s Elvis look [on the character], with the one piece jumpsuit, wide belt and cape."

Athens-based fanzine writer Bill Babouris is setting up a web page to spotlight small press publications; for further information, e-mail him at [diceman@hol.gr](mailto:diceman@hol.gr) or send a copy of your current issue to Apostolpoulou 56, Halandri 152-31, Athens, Greece. The web page is located at <http://users.hol.gr/~diceman/index.htm>.

Actor/author Ken Campbell, whose Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool adapted the "Illumin-

atus" trilogy in the 1960s and worked with Brian Aldiss in the early 1990s, has a new proposal to close the millennium: an adaptation of COSMIC JEST, spread over several days, featuring a cast of 981 (each paying £100.00 for the honour) and performed for an audience of 23. Any takers?

Arnold Schwarzenegger's on-off relationship with the fourth Batman movie appears to have finally settled with his accepting a highly lucrative package to play supervillain Mr Freeze: £12-16.6M up front, plus a probable £6-9M in merchandise royalties (figures vary depending upon which newspaper you trust, if any). George Clooney, on the other hand, is reportedly picking up a mere £8M for succeeding Michael Keaton and Val Kilmer in the title role.

Actress Kate Beckinsale has slammed the producers of the film version of James Herbert's novel HAUNTED - now on video release - for taking a peripheral sex scene and extrapolating it into several extended nude sequences. The 22 year-old demanded a body double: "[Viewers] all think they've glimpsed my bum, but I won't just take off my knickers without good reason."

The autumn tv schedules see the launch of THE COWS, described by its writer, comedian Eddie Izzard, as a bovine spin on PLANET OF THE APES, with a dash of THE SIMPSONS. This alternative timeline diverts from our own in 1926, when the General Strike prompts cows to walk upright and campaign for the vote.

Stanley Kubrick's long-awaited AI, loosely adapted from Brian Aldiss' "Super-Toys Last All Summer Long" with input from Ian Watson and the late Bob Shaw, has been put on hold yet again, whilst Kubrick helms a vehicle for Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman



(the latter is meanwhile strongly tipped for the planned AVENGERS movie). According to SCI-FI ENTERTAINMENT sources, test footage for AI was shot in late 1994; it's only now, however, that Kubrick has access to digital technology which meets his own exacting standards but stays within Warner Brothers' projected budget.

### Book Reviews

**DEAD THINGS** by Richard Calder  
Voyager, 'c' format p/b, 201pp,  
Star Rating: \*\*\*\*

Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

The final instalment of a controversial trilogy, **DEAD THINGS** is avant-garde sf coming on in a manner suggesting that of a heterosexual William Burroughs. Flashy, tortuous, repetitive, violent, sexy, and (above all) self-aware, it is the kind of book that invites instant dismissal as nasty and pretentious tripe. However, in a genre where stylistic brio literary sophistication, and formal innovation are at a premium, I am inclined to defend it.

Ostensibly, **DEAD THINGS** concerns the mission of Dagon (and his talking gun), returned to Earth from outer space to eradicate the plague of Meta, released by one Dr. Toxicophilous, which has turned much of the world's female population - or at any rate the nubile part of it - into vampiric Dead Girls. Dagon's own sister Primavera, with whom he has an incestuous obsession, is one of these living dolls, and he himself is rapidly succumbing to a second strain of the virus and metamorphosing into a murderous Dead Boy.

This pulpy nonsense of a plot is not clearly explained until about two thirds of the way through a book which demands considerable concentration on the

part of its reader. Before its outlines become clear we have been treated to a variety of deliberately confusing false starts, flashbacks, dreams, drawings, philosophic meditations, random jokes, literary allusions, absurdist chapter headings, footnotes, bits of weird science, in short every dislocation of narrative and fictional reality that the indefatigable author can throw at us. Everything or nothing that Dagon experiences may be "real", and the book as a whole may be read as pessimistic, optimistic, trivial, profound, coarse, rarefied, or all of these.

Calder's rich "fin de siecle" texture knowingly recalls the work of such 19th Century "decadents" as Swinburne and Rossetti, though these overripe poets are far from being his only point of cultural reference. As the concepts of reality and artifice, time and space, life and death, are steadily eroded in Dagon's mind, so distinctions between "high" and "low" culture are relentlessly undermined by a book that happily drops the names of Byron and Berlioz one minute, Bardot and James Bond the next. The central climax - an extended pornographic fantasy involving the slaughter of bikini-clad girls by harpoon gun - cleverly evokes both Delacroix's great painting **THE DEATH OF SARDANAPALUS** and the tacky title sequence of the Bond movie **THUNDERBALL**. The world of this fiction is so unstable that there is no single style that will adequately represent it.

Calder's "Dead" trilogy is far removed from the SF of the Campbellian "Golden Age", and indeed, subversive of its values. Unlike much post-cyberpunk experimentalism, however, it is a work of real confidence, that repays close attention. I want to read it again.

**ZEITGEIST** by Todd Wiggins



## Competition



How many people can you identify? Answers on a postcard to the editorial address by 20th September (or pass them to Martin Tudor at the Chris Priest meeting). The entry which identifies most will win a FREE BSFG MEMBERSHIP FOR ONE YEAR. (In the case of a draw first out of the hat wins.)

Gollancz, 'C' format p/b,  
320pp, £9.99,  
Reviewed by William McCabe.

Lately there seems to be a thought that urban civilization is about to explode. A few months back I reviewed "Random acts of senseless violence" set against large scale rioting all across America. The film STRANGE DAYS has much the same setting. These are all set in the near future (both this and STRANGE DAYS are set at the end of 1999) and have no great technological advances. The near-future urban disaster is as close to sf as this novel gets. I doubt this qualifies as a thriller since the opening gives away enough of the ending to take most of the tension away. I suppose that explains why it's just listed as "Fiction". There could be a problem if you bought this from the back cover that suggests a high-speed chase thriller - what you get is a road novel.

The protagonists are overstated on the back - but I doubt anyone could write a proper novel with characters that flat. We start (okay so it's really chapter two) with two college students being abducted by a recently defrocked schizophrenic priest who is carrying a machine gun and an awful lot of stolen drug money. Or maybe not since the students are going to California and the ex-priest isn't going anywhere particularly. On the road they pick up a runaway from an alternative-lifestyle camp (owned by her mother) and a young woman who has been very badly beaten. At this point the only real desperation the characters are showing is in trying to find a gas station before the car runs out, unfortunately everyone seems to have run off to some end-of-the-world prayer meeting out in the country. An attempt at faith-healing onstage when the ex-priest's medication wears off results in carnage and in no time

the police are after them in force. It doesn't help at all that one of the students has sent a couple of bomb threats that resulted in explosions.

On the whole, this is a solidly written novel with only a few inconsistencies (mostly connected with the narrator). Nothing special but may be it marks a trend. Does the USA really believe that its apocalypse is at hand?

THE DIFFERENCE ENGINE by William Gibson & Bruce Sterling  
Vista (Gollancz), 383pp, £5.99,  
p/b. Star Rating: \*\*\*\*\*  
Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

Just suppose that Charles Babbage had not only built his "mechanical computer" or Analytical Engine, but that it had caught on in the way that electronic/digital computers have in the last ten years or so; the only problem being that they are huge, need massive buildings to house them, armies of people to look after them and keep their brass gears greased and turning, and are powered by steam engines. What a strange and different world the 19th century would have been! Not only that, but steam powers everything, from cars to dreadnaughts. A thick pall of smog hangs over cities like London, a layer of dirty grease covers everything, and pollution is rife. The Thames is literally a cess-pit.

In this book we follow first the fortunes of Sybil, a prostitute (or dollymop, as she calls herself - there are lots of quirky names which I, for one, hadn't heard before), who turns out to be the daughter of a leading Luddite agitator. Then, after some 70 pages, we leave Sybill and her newly-acquired fancy man, and follow the fortunes and adventures (and adventures they certainly are) of archaeologist Edward Mallory. The only connection between these characters is a mysterious and

apparently politically sensitive package of kinetrope cards. Such cards are used to "program" theatre picture shows composed of thousands of tiny balsa-wood blocks which act like crude pixels to make a moving image, usually accompanying a lecture. The travels of these cards are the thread which links the rest of the book, for near the end the narrative is again cut short, and the viewpoint changes to that of journalist Laurence Oliphant, who in turn finally makes way for a series of letters, reports from newspapers, playbills and such. Close attention to these does tie up most of the loose ends.

The real strength of this book is the depth and density of the descriptions of this "alternate reality". The atmosphere (literally, in view of the pollution problems) and detail are utterly believable. Every detail of life in this world has been carefully researched and incorporated into the background of the story. The technique is unusual and strange, and led Chris Morgan to ask "is it a novel?". On balance I would say "yes"; but whatever it is, I heartily recommend it for a very different and satisfying read.

**RING** by Stephen Baxter  
Voyager, 'C' format p/b, 443pp,  
£5.99, Star Rating: \*\*\*\*  
Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

In my late teens I was very impressed by the ending of THE FIRST THREE MINUTES - Steven Weinberg's classic on the origins and probable history of the Universe. Although the Universe was doomed to eventual extinction, Weinberg argued, the quest to understand it was one of the things that gave human existence a powerful sense of meaning.

Evidently Stephen Baxter agrees with him, for this largely admirable novel (the culmination of his ambitious "Xeelee" cycle) is, for the most part, a grave,

poetic, and uplifting tour of a Universe in terminal decline.

In the year AD 3953 the starship GREAT NORTHERN (incorporating the whole of Brunel's celebrated steam vessel and equipped with time/space collapsing wormhole technology) is dispatched on a mission to the far future to investigate an unexpectedly rapid decay of the Universe's visible (baryonic) matter. Many millenia later, the tired, confused, and squabbling survivors of its crew re-enter their own solar system, to be confronted with a virtually burnt-out Sun and many signs of cosmic devastation. Is this the result of war between humanity and the almost godlike Xeelee, or is there a more disturbing explanation? Has the stoical Leiserl, her personality downloaded into a computer for prolonged solar observation, started to perceive something of the answer?

I don't want to give too much away. Suffice it to say that the real conflict turns out to be not that between humans and Xeelee, but between the "baryonic" Xeelee and another implacable "anti-baryonic" force - or, to put it another way, between light and darkness. Also that Baxter's narrative provides ingenious fictitious solutions to real problems in cosmology. There genuinely are mysteries surrounding the apparent rate of the Sun's deterioration, the location of the Universe's dark matter, and the nature and function of the distant "Great Attractor" into which the rest of the Universe appears to be falling. At its best, RING offers truly awesome vistas of desolation, quite superbly evoked and visualized, and confirms its author's place beside Clarke, Pohl, and Benford as a master of cosmological "hard" sf.

Yet it's not perfect. Perhaps it is inevitable that the characters should come to seem



wooden and uninteresting against their spectacular backdrop, but I still can't resist a feeling that Baxter is at his least comfortable when writing about people. More damaging are the rather lumpy pacing and some clumsily gratuitous references to the events of other "Xeelee" novels. But most damaging of all is a rushed BLAKE'S 7 style ending when, in what amounts to a staggering failure of nerve, the author blasts his heroes through to safety in a convenient "parallel" Universe.

This is not only something of a cliché; it trivializes a book that otherwise dares courageously to contemplate the certain death of all things. Baxter is a talented and serious-minded author whose writing keeps on getting better. Let's hope next time he has greatness within his grasp that he keeps his cool, and doesn't let it slip between his fingers.

*The ratings are:*

- \* = *Crap, beyond belief.*
- \*\* = *Crap, but readable.*
- \*\*\* = *Not too bad, really.*
- \*\*\*\* = *Pretty good actually.*
- \*\*\*\*\* = *BUY IT!*

*Please remember that reviews of books should reach Martin Tudor at 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, WV13 1HX, within ONE MONTH of your taking the book.*

*A number of people still owe reviews, their names are followed by the books they have yet to review (and the month in which they received them). Please ensure that these, along with reviews of books picked up at the last meeting are passed/mailed to Martin Tudor at/by this month's meeting:*

*Dave Cox: HOT SKY AT MIDNIGHT by Robert Silverberg (5/95).*

*Bernie Evans: THE DEUS MACHINE by Pierre Ouellette (2/95); NIMBUS by Alexander Jablovkov (3/95).*

*Sarah Freakley: MAGNIFICAT by Julian May (5/96); A RISE OF A MERCHANT PRINCE by Raymond E Feist (5/96).*

*Simon R Green: MEMORY SEED by Stephen Palmer (4/96).*

*John Howes: THE WAR OF THE LORD'S VEIL by Adam Nichols (8/95).*

*Robert Jones: JERUSALEM COMMANDS by Michael Moorcock (1/96); THE UPLIFT WAR by David Brin (3/96); STAR BEAST by Will Baker (4/96); SAILING TO UTOPIA by Michael Moorcock (5/96); THE BLUE MANOR by Jenny Jones (6/96); HELICONIA by Brian Aldiss (7/96).*

*Steve Jones/B'ham Uni: DRAGONCHARM by Graham Edwards (1/95); TALISMAN by Sam Lewis (1/95); WARHAMMER: WOLF RIDERS ed David Pringle (3/95); BRIGHTNESS REEF by David Brin (1/96); SEASONS OF PLENTY by Colin Greenland (5/96); THE X FILES: GROUND ZERO by Kevin J Anderson (6/96); THE X FILES: RUINS by Kevin J Anderson (6/96).*

*Adrian Middleton: DR WHO THE MISSING ADVENTURES: LORDS OF THE STORM by David A McIntee (2/96); DOCTOR WHO: TIME AND THE RANI by Pip & Jane Baker (2/96); DR WHO: PARADISE TOWERS by Stephen Wyatt (2/96); STAR WARS: THE LOST JEDI ADVENTURE GAME BOOK by Paul Cockburn (2/96); STARTIDE RISING by David Brin (2/96).*

*Carol Morton: WITCHES BREW by Terry Brooks (5/95); RONAN THE BARBARIAN by James Bibby (5/95); THE FEY: SACRIFICE by Kristine Katherine Rusch (8/95); SACRED GROUND by Mercedes Lackey (9/95); STORM WARNING by Mercedes Lackey (9/95); THE HEDGE OF MIST by Patricia Kennedy-Morrison (5/96); THE LIONS OF AL-RASSAN by Guy Gavriel Kay (5/96).*

*Tony Morton: RICHTER 10 by Arthur C Clarke & Mike McQuay (2/96); THE SIRENS OF TITAN by Kurt Vonnegut (5/96); GLOBAL HEAD by Bruce Sterling (6/96); MATTER'S END by Gregory Benford (6/96)..*

*James Robertson: BEGGARS IN SPAIN by Nancy Kress (9/95); AXIOMATIC by Greg Egan (4/96); THE BAKER'S BOY by J V Jones (4/96).*

*Martin Tudor: THE KEEPERS by Pauline Kirk (6/96).*

*Peter Weston: THE STARS ARE ALSO FIRE by Poul Anderson (1/96).*

*Andrew White: DAEMONIC by Stephen Laws (6/96); LETHE by Tricia Sullivan (7/96).*

*Will EVERYONE please note that you should PRINT your name in the box provided as well as signing for the review book(s) you pick up.*



■ LEND ME YOUR EARS: David Wake wears an authentic toga to teach Lucy Tuckett (left) and Emily Flower, both eight, about Roman life. Picture: PATRICK NEAME

## *Dad's Roman around*

A FUNNY thing happened at school today — parent David Wake turned up in a toga!

Mr Wake, whose daughter Rachael, aged eight, attends Bournville Junior School, is a fan of all things Roman.

So when he heard that her Year Three class was study-

ing the period as part of national curriculum history, he was keen to help.

Mrs Carole Barnickle, head of Year Three, said: "He brought in all sorts of costumes and things, a lot of which he makes himself, and gave a little lecture.

"It's all very authentic and the children really enjoy it. Rachael had her own costume and everyone joined in.

"We like to foster links with parents and Mr Wake is someone with a specialist skill we have been able to use."

September 1996

Issue 300

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

Price: 45p

Price: 45p

## *25th Anniversary Issue!*

*The monthly newsletter of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group  
(Honorary Presidents: Brian W Aldiss and Harry Harrison)*

Group Chairman & Newsletter Editor - Martin Tudor, Secretary - Anne Woodford,  
Treasurer - Sarah Freakley, Publicity Officer - Steve Jones, Ordinary Member - Alan  
Woodford, Novacon 26 Chairman - Carol Morton, Novacon 27 Chairman - Martin Tudor.

## Special Meeting Featuring

# Robert Jordan

who will address the BSFG

on Friday 27 September,

7.15pm for 7.30pm, at the Prince Hotel,

(on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station,  
in the city centre). Admittance: Members and Non-members: £3.50.

ROBERT JORDAN "was born in 1948 in Charleston, South Carolina, where he now lives with his wife, Harriet, in a house built in 1797. He is a graduate of The Citadel (The Military College of South Carolina) with a degree in physics.

He served two tours of duty in Vietnam, and among his decorations are the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star with 'V', and two Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry. He enjoys the outdoor sports of hunting, fishing and sailing, and the indoor sports of poker, chess, pool and pipe collecting. Robert Jordan has been writing since 1977 and intends to continue until they nail shut his coffin." (Quote from the inside back cover of A CROWN OF SWORDS.)

Robert Jordan is the author of the popular "Wheel of Time" series; A CROWN OF SWORDS, the seventh in the series is published this month by Orbit at £17.99 rrp. Previous titles were: THE EYE OF THE WORLD, THE GREAT HUNT, THE DRAGON REBORN, THE SHADOW RISING, THE FIRES OF HEAVEN and LORD OF CHAOS.

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) in the upstairs function room of the Prince Hotel, Station Street in Birmingham city centre (formerly Stephenson's Hotel, between the Electric Cinema and the Bus Station). The annual subscription rates (which include 12 copies of this newsletter and reduced price entry to meetings) are £10.00 per person, or £13.50 for 2 members at the same address.

Cheques etc. should be made payable to "the Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to: the Treasurer, Sarah Freakley, c/o 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH. (E-mail should go via: [bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk](mailto:bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk)) Book reviews, review copies and other contributions and enquiries regarding the Brum Group News to: Martin Tudor, Newsletter Editor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX.