

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

MARCH 2005

ISSUE 402

HONORARY PRESIDENTS: BRIAN W ALDISS & HARRY HARRISON

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Friday 11th March

DAVID A HARDY

presents his new video film on DVD

SFX IN SPACE

(read that carefully)

Our own resident space artist has given talks regularly to the Group over the years and they have NEVER failed to entertain and fascinate. This month's talk will be no exception - in fact, it promises to be one of his best. It's a test run for a programme item he's doing at Eastercon and when I asked Dave for information on the talk he said...

"How did the reality of the Apollo 11 Moon landing, and later missions, compare with George Pal's 1950 film DESTINATION MOON? Dave saw this film, at the age of 14, and it made a lasting impression on him - especially as the astronomical art was done by his new hero, Chesley Bonestell. He has now spent many hours - days in fact - finding scenes which match as closely as possible, and compiling and editing this film. It also includes scenes from several other movies of this era for comparison, often with hilarious results! (Watch out for some surprises, too)."

Wow! And I'm going to miss it! I can't make this month's meeting but hopefully I can catch it at Eastercon in Hinckley.

APOLOGIES...AND THANK YOU

My apologies for not being able to produce last month's newsletter. My mother passed away in early January and my father followed just 24 days later. We were told, the day after my mother's funeral, that he had only days to live. This was the time I would normally have been preparing the newsletter. He died 5 days later. Understandably there was no way I could fix my mind on anything other than immediate family concerns.

A very big thank you to Vernon who, like every good Chairman, filled the gap and came up with the goods. He produced the newsletter at very short notice. I owe you a pint or ten, Vernon! Thanks. RGP

THE LOSS OF A GREAT ARTIST: FRANK KELLY FREAS (1922-2005)

By David A. Hardy

Frank Kelly Freas passed away in his sleep at his home in California in the early hours of Sunday, 2nd January, at the age of 84. He had not been in the best of health for some time, but even so his death will come as a shock to his many fans. He leaves behind his wife of 16 years, Laura Brodian Freas, a daughter, son, and six grandchildren. He was a graduate of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh.

Sadly, I never had a chance to meet Kelly myself, but I did have the pleasure of corresponding with him in 1979 when I was working on *VISIONS OF SPACE* (Dragon's World, 1989), and he seemed a real gentleman, always helpful and, amazingly, he seemed honoured to be included in this book about space art. But he was of course a space artist among his other talents, and was one of the first artists to be awarded a Fellowship by the International Association of Astronomical Artists (IAAA), in 2000. After visiting Cape Canaveral he produced a series of posters promoting the Apollo programme, with titles like "We (still) have a choice?" and "Er - suppose Isabella had said 'NO!'" because he was appalled by the cutbacks at NASA, and he firmly believed that mankind's destiny lies in space. He also designed astronauts' crew patches, including Skylab, and his work is in the National Air & Space Museum and in other galleries.

Kelly is, however, even better known in the fields of SF and comic art. He started drawing Buck Rogers spaceships in kindergarten at the age of seven or eight, and later admired the SF work of Virgil Finlay and Ed Cartier, but also the astronomical art of Chesley Bonestell. His own first professional work was in *WEIRD TALES*, November

1950, and he went on to produce covers for most of the major publishers – Daw, Ace, Lancer, et al – and famous writers, including Asimov, Ciarke, Heinlein, Van Vogt, Pohl and Anderson. He has won the Hugo Award for ‘Best Artist’ 11 times. He gave us sleek spaceships, humanoid robots, entertaining aliens, weird landscapes and (lots of!) exotic women.

Kelly has said that he considered himself to be mainly an illustrator, but he was also a fine artist and portraitist, and his work is avidly collected. He also worked on TV backgrounds, commercials and animations. One of Kelly’s best-known – one might even say iconic – images was a cover for a 1953 ASTOUNDING magazine, illustrating a story by Tom Godwin: “The Gulf Between”. This showed a giant robot holding a bloodied, dead man in his hand; in 1977 he was asked to repaint this as the cover for an album by the rock group Queen, ‘News of the World’, incorporating members of the band. Also well-known is his green ‘Martian’, leaning through a keyhole, originally done for Fredric Brown’s “Martians, Go Home”, but later used as the cover of a collection of his work entitled THE ART OF SCIENCE FICTION (Donning, 1977). A more recent (and better) collection is KELLY FREAS: AS HE SEES IT (Paper Tiger, 2000).

Another string to Kelly’s bow was comic art. During the 1950s he worked on MAD magazine, for which he was the chief cover artist. He produced many brilliant portraits, and helped to make the Alfred E Neuman character world-famous, with his freckles, gap-toothed grin and the phrase: “What? Me Worry?”. In all of these fields his style influenced two generations of artists and designers, and he will be much missed. Fortunately he will live on through his art. DAH

HAPPY BIRTHDAY HARRY!

A very happy birthday to Harry Harrison who is 80 this month - March 11th to be precise. It’s actually the day of the Brum Group meeting which means I won’t be at the meeting this month as I’ll be down in Brighton celebrating with Harry....!

* * * * *

It’s that time of the year again - Awards everywhere....more even than on Dave Langford’s mantelpiece!

NEBULA AWARDS FINAL BALLOT

Best Novel nominations:

PALADIN OF SOULS - Lois McMaster Bujold (Eos)
DOWN AND OUT IN THE MAGIC KINGDOM - Cory Doctorow (Tor)
OMEGA - Jack McDevitt (Ace)
CLOUD ATLAS - David Mitchell (Random House)
PERFECT CIRCLE - Sean Stewart (Small Beer Press)
THE KNIGHT - Gene Wolfe (Tor)

Best Novella nominations

- "Walk in Silence" - Catherine Asaro (Analog 4/03)
"The Tangled Strings of the Marionettes" - Adam-Troy Castro (F&SF 7/03)
"The Cookie Monster" - Vernor Vinge (Analog 10/03)
"The Green Leopard Plague" - Walter Jon Williams (Asimov's 10-11/03)
"Just Like the Ones We Used to Know" - Connie Willis (Asimov's 12/03)

Best Novelette nominations:

- "Zora and the Zombie" - Andy Duncan (Sci Fiction 2/4/04)
"Basement Magic" - Ellen Klages (F&SF 5/03)
"The Voluntary State" - Christopher Rowe (Sci Fiction 5/5/04)
"Dry Bones" - William Sanders (Asimov's 5/03)
"The Gladiator's War: A Dialogue" - Lois Tilton (Asimov's 6/04)

Best Short Story nominations:

- "Coming to Terms" - Eileen Gunn (STABLE STRATEGIES & OTHERS)
"The Strange Redemption of Sister Mary Anne" - Mike Moscoe (Analog 12/04)
"Travels With My Cats" - Mike Resnick (Asimov's 2/04)
"Embracing-the-News" Benjamin Rosenbaum (Asimov's 6/04)
"In the Late December" - Greg van Eekhout (Strange Horizons 12/22/03)
"Aloha" - Ken Wharton (Analog 6/03)

WINNERS TO BE ANNOUNCED APRIL 30TH

2005 ARTHUR C CLARKE AWARD

Nominations are:

- RIVER OF GODS - Ian McDonald (Simon & Schuster)
IRON COUNCIL - China Mieville (Macmillan)
CLOUD ATLAS - David Mitchell (Sceptre)
MARKET FORCES - Richard Morgan (Gollancz)
THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE - Audrey Niffenegger (Cape)
THE SYSTEM OF THE WORLD - Neal Stephenson (Heinemann)

BSFA AWARD

Best Novel nominations:

- CENTURY RAIN - Alastair Reynolds (Gollancz)
FORTY SIGNS OF RAIN - Kim Stanley Robinson (HarperCollins)
JONATHAN STRANGE & MR NORRELL - Suzanna Clarke (Bloomsbury)
NEWTON'S WAKE - Ken MacLeod (Orbit)
RIVER OF GODS - Ian McDonald (Simon & Schuster)
STAMPING BUTTERFLIES - Jon Courtenay Grimwood (Gollancz)

Best Short Fiction nominations:

- "Delhi" - Vandana Singh (SO LONG BEEN DREAMING)
MAYFLOWER II - Stephen Baxter (PS Publishing)

"Point of No Return" - Jon Courtenay Grimwood (New Scientist)

"The Faery Handbag" - Kelly Link (THE FAERY REEF)

"The Wolf-man of Alcatraz" - Howard Waldrop (Sci Fiction)

Best Artwork nominations:

"Iguana" - photograph by Sebastiao Salgado (The Guardian)

"Millau Bridge" - photograph by Eric Cabanis (The Guardian)

cover of NEWTON'S WAKE by Stephen Martiniere

cover of THE ALGEBRAIST - photograph by NASA

cover of THE YEAR OF OUR WAR by Edward Miller

PHILIP K DICK AWARD

Best Novel in Original paperback nominations:

THE COYOTE KINGS OF THE SPACE-AGE BACHELOR PAD - Minister Faust
(Del Rey)

STABLE STRATEGIES AND OTHER - Eileen Gunn (Tachyon)

LIFE - Gwyneth Jones (Aqueduct)

APOCALYPSE ARRAY - Lyda Morehouse (Roc)

AIR - Geoff Ryman (St Martin's Griffin)

CITY OF PEARL - Karen Traviss (Eos)

BANNER OF SOULS - Liz Williams (Bantam Spectra)

Er....only one book appears in both British award nominations - Ian McDonald's RIVER OF GODS. But David Mitchell's novel, CLOUD ATLAS is nominated for a Nebula as well. But not a BSFA award.

50% of the titles of the BSFA Award nominations are rather wet....

And photographs being nominated as 'artwork'???? I'm stunned that the cover of THE ALGEBRAIST could be nominated for an award. A photograph? So what? Maybe a good photo and a reasonably attractive cover but as a commercial cover it is complete non-starter.... I sincerely hope we are not returning to a repeat of those utterly boring 'photographic' covers we had to endure in the late 60s. There must be an influx of new 'trendy' blind people in publishing art departments (well, it happens every few years...). Whatever happened to GOOD science fiction artwork? Surely Jim Burns, John Harris, Chris Moore and Fred Gambino haven't priced themselves out of the market?

THIS MONTH'S QUIZ - Steve Green

- 1 Which 1969 SF novel by Norman Spinrad prompted a parliamentary row?
- 2 In which year did Harry Potter gain his lightning scar?
- 3 Name the British fanzine artist who's just received the Rotsler Award for lifetime achievement?

- 4 Whose novels include THE 10TH VICTIM (1966) and DIMENSION OF MIRACLES (1968)?
- 5 How many movie sequels were there to 1968's THE PLANET OF THE APES?
- 6 Which SF authors have the following middle names: Anson; Kindred; Elmer; Kilian Houston?
- 7 Name Gollum's brother in J R R Tolkien's 'The Lord of the Rings' trilogy.
- 8 Which 1951 movie was adapted from Harry Bates' short story "Farewell to the Master"?
- 9 Name the hugely influential magazine edited by Forrest J Ackerman from 1958 until 1982.
- 10 Under what pseudonym did former fanzine fan Sam Youd release his SF novels?
- 11 What was the original ending of 1964's DR STRANGELOVE, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, and how many roles did Peter Sellers fill?
- 12 Name the celebrated pulp magazine artist nicknamed 'the Bubble Man' for the way he preserved the modesty of his female subjects.
- 13 Which alien race designed the artefacts central to Fred Pohl's GATEWAY (1977) and its sequels?
- 14 Name the anti-hero who managed to break out of both 1997 Manhattan and 2013 Los Angeles, and the actor who played him.
- 15 In which year did the Brum Group first host NOVA CON?

ANSWERS TO QUIZ IN ISSUE #400

1. Clock striking thirteen.
2. Its author, Douglas Adams.
3. The Nova Awards, decided by members of the Brum Group's convention, NOVA CON.
4. John Wyndham's THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS. (Simon joined our party for the book.)
5. KING KONG, with Andy "Gollum" Serkis in the title role.
6. Outgoing NOVA CON chair Martin Tudor.
7. Who else but our own David Hardy?
8. THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD.
9. Walt Willis and Brum Group president Bob Shaw, both sadly missed.
10. Philip Roth, with THE PLOT AGAIN.
11. Captain Scarlet. Spectrum operative and lunar explorer.
12. The inimitable Peter Weston, of course.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ IN ISSUE #401 (Nobody claimed a drink!)

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1/ DAN DARE | 2/ VERN(E) | 3/ WELLS |
| 4/ h b PIPER | 5/ dave HARDY | 6/ NOVA CON |
| 7/ DR WHO | 8/ STAR WARS | 9/ bET |
| 10/ ANALOG | 11/ A for andromeda | 12/ i. WATSON |
| 13/ac CLARKE | 14/ ROBOT | 15/ HUGO |
| 16/ pj FARMER | 17/ NEBULA | 18/ FANTasy |
| 19/ NONSTOP | 20/ TRIFFIDS | 21/ PREDATOR |
| 22/ da DRAKE | 23/ JOHN RINGO plus book title | 24/ j WHITE |
| 25/ FLYING SAUCER | | |

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Besides losing **Kelly Freas** recently, we have also lost another great artist, **Will Eisner** who died Jan 3rd, age 87. He was most famous for his comic book character **THE SPIRIT**. His 14 graphic novels have been resold for republication in three omnibus volumes Author **Jack Chalker** died Feb 11th, age 60, following a two-month hospitalisation. Bestselling author of over 40 books, the most famous of which were his *Well of Souls* series, Jack was well-known at conventions particularly for his auctioneering skills The father of German SF, **Walter Ernsting** died in January aged 84. Under the pseudonym **Clark Dalton** he wrote 192 of the 2250 weekly issues of **PERRY RHODAN** The February issue of **LOCUS** has an interview with **Neil Gaiman** The March issue an interview with **Clive Barker** as well as UK fan and publisher **Malcolm Edwards** **Michael Moorcock** has delivered **THE WHITE WOLF'S SON: THE ALBINO IN THE MIDDLE MARCH** to Warner in the USA. It will be the very last Elric novel British author **Roger Levy** was one of 6 people randomly attacked by a knife-wielding former psychiatric patient in December, and is now recovering **Robert Rankin's** next novel is called **THE BRIGHTONOMICON** **Sir Arthur C Clarke** survived the tsunami but lost most of his diving equipment and boats. All of his family and staff were unhurt **DEATHSTALKER CODA** is the 'conclusion' to the space opera series *Deathstalker Saga* by **Simon R Green** **HOME CALLING** by Judith Merrill contains the complete solo short fiction (NESFA) NESFA Press have also issued **YEARS IN THE MAKING** by **L Sprague de Camp**. It contains all of his alternate world stories including the novel **LEST DARKNESS FALL**. I'll be getting copies in a couple of weeks ready for Eastercon! **Harry Turtledove** has edited an anthology tribute to **L Sprague de Camp** entitled **THE ENCHANTER COMPLETED** **RINGWORLD'S CHILDREN** by **Larry Niven** out in paperback in April



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 LIMITS OF ENCHANTMENT* by Graham Joyce**

Gollancz / 250pgs / £14.99 / hardcover

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Star rating: * * * * *

Graham Joyce has always written on the edges of fantasy. His apparently straightforward style is accessible to readers of mainstream fiction as all the quirky bits can be passed off as psychological aberrations. Or can they?

Fern, the narrator, is a young woman living in rural Leicestershire in the 1960s. She has grown up in her adoptive mother's cottage, an old farm labourer's house which still has no gas, electricity or running water. The plumbing is a shed in the garden and a hand pump provides water. It could easily have been the setting for a tale in any rural part of the British Isles in the past five hundred years except that Fern owns a transistor radio and listens to pop music as she hangs out the washing.

Mammy is still a respected wise woman. Although the National Health Service is available, many of the local people call in Mammy to attend childbirth, visit for advice on unwanted pregnancies and to bake love into a wedding cake. Mammy has taught Fern some of her skills but there is a sense that she is holding some things back. Fern, she says, is not ready. Fern is caught between the old ways and the new. She is aware that regulations will stop her continuing Mammy's line of work, but at the start of the novel, these things do not concern her. It is only when Mammy is taken into hospital that her problems start. Fern is forced to consider the idea that Mammy will not be around for ever. Then the estate they rent the cottage from demands all the arrears of rent and she is faced with eviction. She has no way of raising or earning the money. To add to her woes, her enemies attempt to have her sectioned as crazy so that she can be totally disposed of.

For the characters in *THE LIMITS OF ENCHANTMENT*, 1966 is a time of change and they are caught up within a greater change. Society, its structure, beliefs and expectations are in flux and the survivors are the ones that are prepared to compromise. Mammy, illiterate but knowledgeable about the old ways represents a past whose purpose has been replaced by the young, vibrant technological age. Science and legislation is not on her side. Fern is poised on a stepping stone in the middle of the fast flowing river of progress. A misstep and she could be swept away.

Once again, Graham Joyce has produced a book that will delight on a number of levels. PM

***NEW YORK DREAMS* by Eric Brown**

Gollancz 325pgs / £6.99 / paperback

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Star rating: * * *

This is the third volume of the *Virex* trilogy. It is basically a detective thriller set in a future New York which lies at the cutting edge of technology. In the first Volume, *New York Nights*, we are introduced to Halliday and his partner. They are ex-cops and run the kind of detective agency you would expect in a 1950s novel. They are brought in to investigate a disappearance. In their world, VR technology is the up and coming thing. Public facilities are just opening in which you can immerse yourself in your fantasies.

In *NEW YORK DREAMS*, we rejoin Halliday, who is now rich and spends most of his time tanked in a VR world. He is offered large sums to find the

technological genius who has gone missing. His heart is not in the investigation until his ex-lover also disappears. His old partner, Barney, reappears from the dead (literally). This is a fast paced, techno-thriller but there are problems. Brown is an excellent writer but some of the information needed to make sense of the plot lines are included in the previous volumes. A newcomer to this series is strongly recommended to begin with volume one. At the start of *NEW YORK NIGHTS*, the technology that is vital to the course of all three books is new. Although current developments have shown how fast changes and improvements can be made, the time scale seems a little too short for the universal acceptance and use suggested here. A degree of suspension of disbelief is required. It is probably worth waiting for an omnibus volume and reading all three volumes at one sitting. PM

WRITING AND ILLUSTRATING THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

by Mike Chinn

A&C Black / 128pgs / £14.99 / paperback

Reviewed by Vernon Brown

Star rating: * * * *

The title says it all, or almost all. Long-standing BSFG member Mike Chinn has put together a book of the A-Z of writing, illustrating and selling the graphic novel minus the basic technique of drawing, the assumption being that the reader can already do this although he does go into materials, colours, computer graphics, etc., and more of the tricks and techniques of presenting the material. He discusses the various sub-genres, the devices, such as framing, used to guide the reader (viewer) through the story, styles of artwork, writing, note taking and just about everything from conception to conclusion, all illustrated profusely. In fact the book could almost serve as a basic illustrated dictionary of the graphic novel.

Because Mike is not teaching drawing per se but its application, someone like me, whose drawing skills are very basic, can also learn from his book. I've always understood graphic novels to be comics for adults (?), a view reinforced by the covers seen in bookshops but they are more than that, having the characteristics of the written novel although with a different emphasis. And it's interesting to note how many of the techniques used depend on a knowledge of the interactions between the human brain, mind and eye, techniques used in advertising, particularly in posters. Which leads me to a slightly worrying conclusion.

The human mind cannot imagine what it has not experienced. If an author writes 'The alien had a head like an oozlum' the reader would be perplexed but if he wrote 'like an eagle' the reader would understand. It does not have to be firsthand experience either - a photograph or sketch will serve as experience. And experience is learning, and learning moulds the personality. Which means that, within limits, a written novel is only a recombination of experiences, although constant rereading will have some effect on the reader. Graphic novels on the other hand are stories set

visually in pictures, which are effectively second-hand experiences. Although the reader 'knows' these do not reflect reality as does the sketch of an eagle's head, they will have more effect than just the written word.

This means that it's not impossible for an avid viewer to develop over time a perception of life that is distorted. This probably won't matter too much where pictures of elves are concerned but blood 'n' guts 'n' general mayhem is a different matter. I believe there was some form of legislation in the '50s regulating the content of comic books; nowadays with the much greater ease of production and distribution perhaps graphic novelists should consider the influence that they have on their viewers.

This review seems to have developed some way from its initial sentence so I'll conclude by saying that Mike's book is not only helpful and informative for the budding graphic novelist but its of interest to anyone interested in visual 'story telling'. For the price of a couple of paperbacks you can't go wrong! VB

<<Now, *THERE's a subject to argue about. Is Vernon right? Do graphic novels have a responsibility? What do YOU think? Let's have your views for the next newsletter...email to rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk - RGP>>*

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. Books to be discussed:-

March 10th - Neil Gaiman et al - SANDMAN: PRELUDES AND NOCTURNES

April 14th - Chris Bunch - THE EMPIRE STONE

May 12th - David Gemmell - DARK MOON

June 23rd - Robert Holdstock - CELTIKA

July 21st - Diana Wynne-Jones - YEAR OF THE GRIFFIN

PARAGON 2 - The 2005 British National SF Convention - takes place over the weekend of 25th-28th March at the Hanover International hotel in Hinckley, Leics. Guests of Honour are Ben Jeapes, Ken MacLeod, Richard Morgan and Robert Rankin. Fan Guests of Honour are Eve and John Harvey. There's still time to register - memberships@paragon2.org.uk
All details from their website: <http://www.paragon2.org.uk>

CALLING ALL SCI-FI [sic] FANS <<yes, you always wanted to be called a Sci-Fi fan, didn't you? Go on, admit it!>>. A special day is in store for sci-fi [AAAGH!] fans, thanks to 'A Galaxy of Stars'. The event, which takes place at the Winter Gardens, Weston-Super-Mare on April 16th, is being held in celebration of the STAR WARS Episode III, along with the long overdue return of DOCTOR WHO. <<Has it been away?>>. "We plan on giving the fans a very special day," said the event organisers. "The British fans are very passionate for both STAR WARS and DR WHO <<oh, yeah?>> and we are expecting a large turn-out of fans with the current named celebrity line-up." <<Who?>> More details are being released through the official event website www.agalaxyofstars.co.uk, Tickets are now selling online with dealers stalls, directions and accommodation available. <<Do you have children who are possibly interested in attending this kiddies' extravaganza?>>

FARINGDON ARTS FESTIVAL runs every year in the Oxfordshire town of Faringdon, between Oxford and Swindon. In 2005, our dates are 4-10 July, and on Saturday 9th July we're playing host to three SF and fantasy authors. Running a half-day workshop on How To Write A Novel (£10 fee, limited to 20 places), is Juliet E. McKenna; talking about her work will be Gwyneth Jones; and headlining our literary strand, in a rare public appearance, will be Brian Aldiss. (Both authors admission free, and will not run at the same time as Juliet's workshop.) Our website will be up and running shortly. In the meantime, for more information, or to book for Juliet's workshop, contact Paul Cornell at paulcornell@owlservice.freemove.co.uk

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

TOLKIEN 2005: THE RING GOES EVER ON is a 5-day conference celebrating 50 years of THE LORD OF THE RINGS, to be held at Aston University, Birmingham, from the 11th to 15th August 2005. All details on website <http://www.tolkienociety.org/2005/>

FANTASYCON 05 has been booked for the 30 September - 2 October 2005, at the Quality Hotel, Walsall, near Birmingham. Further details to follow.

***** NOVACON 35 ***** - the Brum Group's own convention, will again be held at the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall over the weekend of 11th to 13th November. Guest of Honour is Alastair Reynolds. Cheques to 'Novacon 35', Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. email: x15@zoom.co.uk Website: www.novacon.org

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

Because of the personal problems I've had, my negotiations with several speakers have not been finalised. They are 95% to 99% certain but I don't want to announce anything until it's 100%. Be assured that we will be having some terrific speakers in the next few months.

RGP

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Newsletter 402 copyright 2005 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the general membership or, for that matter, the person giving the 'opinion'. 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.

And a special thank you to William (again!) for helping me out with converting my newsletter templates, currently on Lotus Wordpro, into Microsoft Word. This is the final newsletter produced on Wordpro - I've now got a month to learn how to use Word...

My experiments so far have been a total failure - I find Word the most frustrating and unnecessarily complicated word-processing programme I've used. Everyone else says it's straightforward and easy! I must be doing something wrong.

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