

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

AUGUST 2009

ISSUE 455

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& **HARRY HARRISON**

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## Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August SUMMER SOCIAL

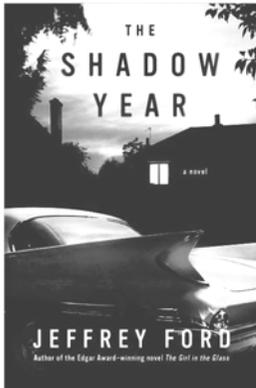
Yes it's that time of year again – time for the Brum Group Summer Social event instead of having a speaker. Tickets have been on sale for several weeks and are now sold out. So if you haven't booked already, it is now too late. Sorry.

If you have booked a seat at this month's meal at the Black Eagle in Handsworth there will be a sheet of directions etc., enclosed with this newsletter. If you have booked and the sheet is NOT enclosed please email Vicky as a matter of URGENCY via the Group email address above.

Last month I announced my new email address but several people did not notice and are still using my old address. Please note that effective immediately my new address is **[rogpeyton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rogpeyton@hotmail.co.uk)**. I still have my old address but am getting so much spam that genuine messages can easily be overlooked/lost.

### NEXT MONTH

**September 11th – the Guest of Honour at this year's Novacon is SF author JUSTINA ROBSON and she will be talking to the Group this month.**



## **SHIRLEY JACKSON AWARD WINNERS**

The winners of the Shirley Jackson Award, which recognizes excellence in psychological suspense, horror, and the dark fantastic in literature, were announced at Readercon on July 12.

**Novel:** THE SHADOW YEAR by Jeffrey Ford

**Novella:** “Disquiet” by Julia Leigh

**Novellette:** “Pride and Prometheus” by John Kessel

**Short Story:** “The Pile” by Michael Bishop

**Collection:** THE DIVING POOL by Yoko Ogawa

**Anthology:** THE NEW UNCANNY edited by Sarah Eyre and Ra Page

## **MYTHOPOEIC AWARDS 2009**

The Mythopoeic Awards, presented annually for works which typify the spirit of the Inklings, Inklings research, and works that look at authors who write in the Inklings’ tradition, were given out at a banquet in Los Angeles during Mythcon XL. The Inklings were a group of authors at Oxford who met and shared ideas and criticisms. The group included J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.

**Adult Literature:** FLESH AND SPIRIT AND BREATH AND BONE by Carol Berg

**Children’s Literature:** GRACELING by Kristin Cashore

**Inkling Studies:** THE HISTORY OF THE HOBBIT edited by John Rateliff

**Myth and Fantasy Studies:** FOUR BRITISH FANTASISTS: PLACE AND CULTURE IN THE CHILDREN’S FANTASIES OF PENELOPE LIVELY, ALAN GARNER, DIANA WYNNE JONES, AND SUSAN COOPER by Charles Butler

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



.... Publisher **Charles N. Brown** (b.1937) died peacefully in his sleep on July 12 on his way home from Readercon. Brown, along with **Ed Meskys** and **Dave Vanderwerf**, founded LOCUS as a fanzine in support of a Boston Worldcon bid. When the ‘zine received a Hugo nomination, Brown continued to publish it, eventually turning it into the news magazine of the science fiction field. LOCUS has won 29 Hugo Awards over the years. In addition, Brown contributed book reviews to *Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine* and ‘year in review’ articles to Terry Carr’s anthology series ....

Author **Phyllis Gotlieb** (b.1926) died on July 14 following complications from a burst appendix. Gotlieb won the Aurora Award in 1982 for her novel A JUDGEMENT OF DRAGONS. The Canadian Sunburst Award is named after her debut novel, originally published in 1964. In addition to writing numerous novels and short stories, Gotlieb was also a poet and served as editor for TESSERACTS 2. Her most recent novel was BIRTHSTONES, published in 2007 .... **Eleanor ‘Ellie’ Frazetta** (b.1919) died on July 17 following a year long battle with cancer. She married SF artist **Frank Frazetta** in 1956. Ellie was a partner with Frank, handling many of the business aspects of his career .... July 18 has been declared Edmond Hamilton Day in Kinsman,

Ohio, the former home and burial place of **Edmond Hamilton**. The event will include the release of three collections of Hamilton's work by Haffner Press, a display of Hamilton's work, a presentation and a toast at Hamilton's grave .... Take a look at **Adam Roberts'** blog website - <http://punkadiddle.blogspot.com/2009/07/hugos-2009.html> where he attacks fandom's choice of award nominations for the Hugo Award. A very interesting viewpoint .... Production on the TV version of **Terry Pratchett's** fantasy novel GOING POSTAL has now started .... **Edgar Rice Burroughs'** John Carter of Mars series will begin filming next year (Disney) .... Bestselling paperbacks in the USA (according to B&N/B Dalton) contains 8 books by **Charlaine Harris** in the top 10, the other two being FAHRENHEIT 451 by **Ray Bradbury** at #4 and ENDER'S GAME by **Orson Scott Card** at #10. According to Borders/Walden there are 7 Harris books, the other three all being by **Brent Weeks** at Nos 3,7 & 8. Surprisingly, FAHRENHEIT 451 is also #1 bestselling trade paperback at B&N/B Dalton and #3 at Borders/Walden. Not bad for a 46 year-old book that's been in print continuously!!! .... The most interesting points in a court ruling over the rights to **Superman** were, one, that the rights revert back to the heirs of creators **Jerome Siegel** and **Joe Shuster** in 2013 and two, that Warner Brothers has no script and no development plans for a sequel to **Bryan Singer's** 2006 SUPERMAN RETURNS. Indeed, the studio wouldn't be able to release a sequel until 2012 at the earliest, meaning that the clock is running out for Warner .... As countries with strong national identities, it can safely be said that **Australia** and **New Zealand** are worlds apart. However, a strong earthquake in the region has brought the fierce rivals closer – 30cm to be precise. The 7.8-magnitude quake appears to have jolted the South Island and moved it towards Australia, the New Zealand Herald reported ....

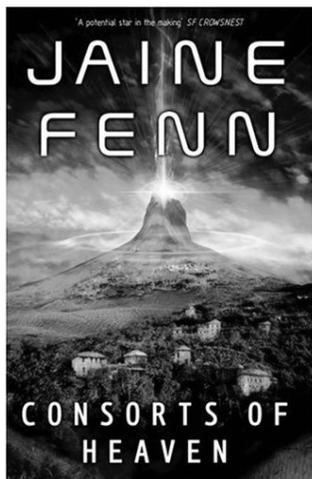
**RGP**



## BOOK REVIEWS



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



**CONSORTS OF HEAVEN** by **Jaine Fenn**  
**Gollancz / 332pgs / £18.99 hardcover ISBN: 978-0575083226 /**  
**£12.99 trade paperback ISBN: 978-0575083233**  
**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan**

Jaine Fenn's first novel, PRINCIPLES OF ANGELS, was a fascinating, hard SF novel set on a floating city with an interestingly portrayed dichotomy of social mores with the focus being on the underclass. CONSORTS OF HEAVEN is set in the same universe but you wouldn't believe it. In fact, for much of its length it reads like fantasy.

Kerin is a young widow who is tolerated in her village because of her skill with herbs. This is a village without modern amenities like electricity or plumbing. Her son, Damaru, gives all the appearances of being

autistic but has a talent for telekinesis. Two factors are about to influence her life. The first is that Damaru finds a naked stranger in the marshes. This man, who Kerin names Sais, has lost all memory and in some ways, appears to be more of a simpleton than her son. The other significant event is that Damaru is to be sent down onto the plains to, hopefully, serve the Skymothers. These are portrayed as goddesses, so his selection is an honour. She and Sais join the caravan that is to take them from her remote mountain village to the City of Light.

The connections with the previous novel are slight and do not become apparent until late in the story and unfortunately many of the plot elements are predictable. It does not have the complexity of *PRINCIPLES OF ANGELS* and would probably have been better told from a different perspective, to avoid the apparent fantasy aspects. That apart, this is a stand-alone novel and presages a lot more stories set in the same universe. *PM*

### ***TENDER MORSELS* by Margo Lanagan**

**David Fickling Books (Young Adult) / Jonathan Cape (Adult) / 486 pgs / £12.99 Hardcover ISBN: 978-0385613231**

**Reviewed by William McCabe**

A few years ago, Margo Lanagan's first book - a collection of short stories entitled *BLACK JUICE* was published. That book (and several of the stories in it) was nominated for several awards. She has had two more collections published since then and this is her first novel. As with those early works, most of the story here is horribly realistic. The fantasy element is stronger although, most of the time, this could be taken for historical rather than fantastic fiction. Parts of the plot are deliberately emotive but written well enough for it not to appear artificial. The grotesque aspects of the plot are presented in enough detail to establish events and emotions but not so much as to repulse most older teenagers or adults. This is not recommended for younger teens or anyone below that age.

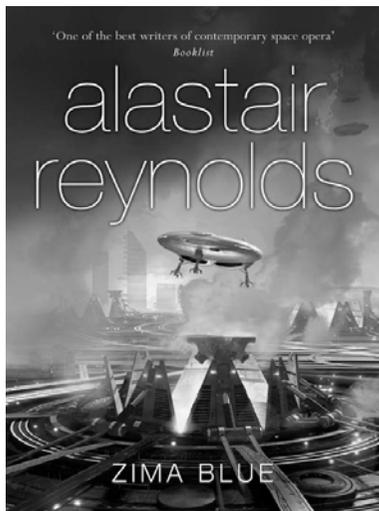
The setting is mediaeval or later. This is the story of Liga and her two daughters Branza and Urdda. Liga had been raped by her father regularly following the death of her mother. Despite various attempts at abortion, she gave birth to her first child at age 14. When her father dies a few months later in an accident with a cart she is gang-raped by a group of youths leaving her pregnant again. The horror of such events is enough to make anyone withdraw from the world but Liga is given the opportunity to withdraw into a different reality where everything is safe and she can bring up her two children with no real worries. The new world is exactly like the old one except that all the people that ever did her harm are gone. It is not entirely separate from the real world. Some real people manage to cross over, like the dwarf who finds that everything he touches there turns to precious gems or the men who participate in a regular ritual dressed in bear costumes and find themselves living as bears for months in the other world while no time passes in their own. Things cannot last forever. The new world collapses and Liga and her children must make their way in the real world again.



There seems to be a whole lot here borrowed from fairy tales. There are points of style and a few images that seem to have come straight from the Brothers Grimm but none of it is really a direct lift. There are people who are animals, there are magical charms taken away in what seems an act of betrayal, there's a character description that seems to come straight from Snow White. It's something that has been done before, most notably by Angela Carter, but it stands up against anything else like it. This deserves the award more than anything she's done before. WAM

***ZIMA BLUE AND OTHER STORIES* by Alastair Reynolds**  
**Gollancz / 403pgs / £18.99 hardcover ISBN:**  
**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan**

ZIMA BLUE was originally published in 2006 by American publisher Nightshade Books. They produced two versions, the standard trade edition and a limited edition containing an extra story. Now, in 2009, Gollancz have published the collection in Britain. This edition contains three extra stories that were not in either of the Nightshade editions.



Of these stories “Digital To Analogue” is the one not in the standard Nightshade edition but in their limited and the Gollancz editions. Unusually for Reynolds it is one of the few stories set in the present. The narrator is well into the club scene – alcohol, soft drugs and loud music. One night on the way home he is picked up by a serial killer preying on clubbers.

Of the three stories only in the Gollancz edition, “Minla’s Flowers” is the middle of a sequence of three stories. The central character calls himself Merlin and the sequence revolves around two problems – how the remnants of humanity are going to hide from the pursuing Huskers (aliens bent on wiping out humans wherever they might be found), and how they are going to find a weapon to destroy the Huskers. Both humans and Huskers are space faring species travelling long distances in sub-light ships. There is a faster way. A long gone alien species threaded the galaxy with a fast transit system, if you can gain access to it. In “Hideaway” the humans have to decide whether to hide or run. Opinion is divided, so they divide the ship. Merlin stays with the group that intends to hide on a cinder of a planet. His motive, to find a way of using an artefact they call a sphinx to gain access to the Way. In “Minla’s Flowers” Merlin, now a seasoned traveller of the Way, finds a planet of floating cities reminiscent of his own planet, destroyed by the Huskers. By going into stasis for long periods, he is able to follow the career of Minla and her attempts to unify her planet. In the third of the sequence, “Merlin’s Gun”, he believes he has found where the weapon he wants is located. These three stories are very different from each other and are unified by the character of Merlin. It would be good to have more or longer pieces of his story.

Another story, only in this volume is “Cardiff Afterlife”. It is in the same sequence as “Signal To Noise”. One of the consequences of string theory is the idea that there are many parallel worlds. Here, the belief is that with every choice, an alternative time line

branches off our own. It is becoming a fashionable theme in SF. In this story, however, a laboratory in Cardiff has succeeded in linking resonances with another, closely parallel world. In our world, Mick Leighton's wife is killed in a traffic accident. In the world they have contact with, she is still alive. Using technology that allows for transfer of minds between bodies, Mick takes over his counterpart's body to spend a few more days with his wife before the differences between their realities becomes too different to hold the connection.

In "Cardiff Afterlife", the city is destroyed by a terrorist atomic bomb, but not in all versions of Cardiff. The story relates the effect of the knowledge of the destruction on a counterpart of a parallel world of the man who developed the means to communicate between alternative Cardiffs.

Related to these stories in philosophy is the fourth story only in the Gollancz volume. In "Everlasting" an unstable man scares an old friend by ringing her up and telling her that he is not going to kill himself. His theory is that as there are infinite worlds, if he plays Russian Roulette, then he cannot die because in one branch of the timeline, he always survives. It is a scary kind of twisted logic, but entirely believable.

Of the remaining stories in this volume, all of which appear in all versions, the first and last involve the same character. Carrie Clay is a journalist who specialises in interviewing people with strange stories. As a character, she is fairly passive. She is a listener and it is the tales her interviewees tell that make the stories fascinating. In "The Real Story", she is interviewing Grossart, the first man to set foot on Mars. During his lone voyage to the now colonised red planet, he coped by developing multiple personalities. As he shows her the sights of Mars, she has to keep up with his personality switches to avoid upsetting him and losing the scoop. In "Zima Blue", Carrie is the only person granted an interview with the reclusive artist Zima. Zima Blue is the colour that the artist started putting in his paintings, initially as a very small square but which grew to dominate the entire work. Some of his creations have literally been on a cosmic scale. Now, the world is awaiting the unveiling of his final masterpiece.

There are five other stories in this collection. All of them are well told, thoughtful stories which aim at exploring an aspect of humanity as well as entertaining. The ones that work best for me are those in which the central character is interesting enough for the author to want to go back and write more about, such as Merlin and Carrie Clay. *PM*

## ***THE ROAD GOES EVER ON AND ON by Brian Sibley***

**Illustrated by John Howe**

**Harper Collins / 64pgs / £9.99 hardcover ISBN: 978-0007312696**

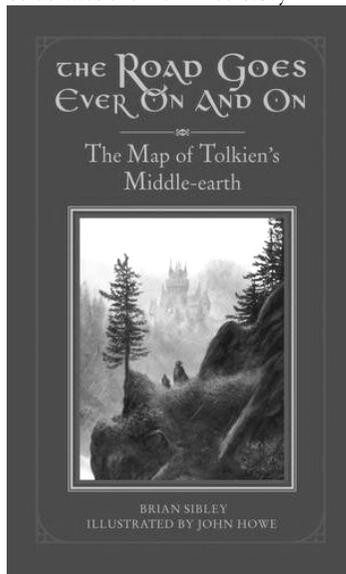
**Reviewed by Dave Corby**

Brian Sibley is one of the foremost Tolkien scholars and has many renowned works published, inspired by or about Tolkien, not least being the script for the award winning BBC radio adaptation of *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*. This new edition of his essays about the map of Middle-earth (originally published in 1994) is a beautiful cloth-bound A5 size book, with one of John Howe's gorgeous paintings adorning its cover.

Two essays are included, the first giving an insight into the creation of the map of Middle-earth and how that process was integral to the creation of the story in *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*, and the second being an overview of the features of the map itself. Of these the former is the more scholarly, but is really only a superficial overview; the reader wanting a detailed look at the process of the creation of the map should refer

instead to *THE HISTORY OF MIDDLE-EARTH VOL VII: THE TREASON OF ISENGARD* edited by Christopher Tolkien, which gives a much more in-depth account.

The second essay is a rather nostalgic read for veterans of *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*, being an overview of the places in the map and the events that occurred there. However, it does not give any new insight or add anything in particular; it merely celebrates the well-liked story.



The remaining pages are given over to a gazetteer of the map, giving a brief description and notable events occurring at every location named on the map. This is potentially useful, perhaps, for the first-time reader of *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* wishing to relate the story to the map. However, a much more complete map and companion to *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* is Barbara Strachey's *JOURNEYS OF FRODO*.

The package is rounded off with John Howe's map of Middle-earth. This is beautifully illustrated with John's wonderfully evocative pictures (I think John Howe may be my favourite Tolkien illustrator), and the map itself is pleasingly rendered in a pictorial fashion. The detail is clear and all the pertinent detail at this scale is included without getting cluttered. This is an item of beauty (it makes the official film maps look extremely gaudy and ugly by comparison) and every self-respecting Tolkien fan should consider owning it.

However, as this map has been around for some time I am not sure how many self-respecting Tolkien fans will not already own a copy of this map. Furthermore, the *MAPS OF TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE-EARTH: SPECIAL EDITION*, which is still in print, includes this map, the other maps relating to *THE SILMARILLION* and *THE HOBBIT*, as well as the exclusive map of Numenor, all for a recommended price of £20. Therefore it is hard to recommend the single map over the set.

In conclusion I find it hard to see exactly who this is aimed at. The Tolkien completist may desire this new edition with its wonderful production values, but for almost anyone else it seems to offer too little detail to be worth buying. Maybe if you just want the map of Middle-earth as it relates to *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* then this is for you, but otherwise there are better equipped, or just plain better value options for mapping Middle-earth. DC

### ***WINTERSTRIKE* by Liz Williams**

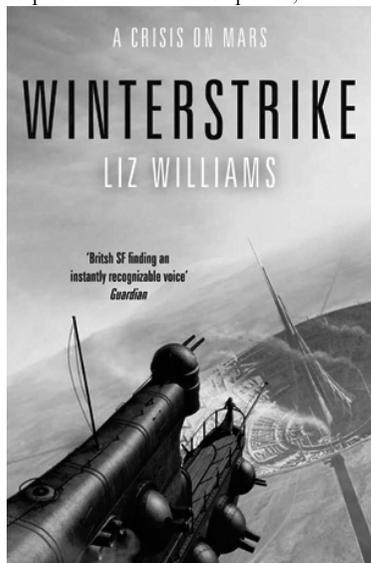
**Tor / 358 pgs / £6.99 paperback ISBN: 978-0330442077**

**Reviewed by Dave Hardy**

I took this to review because the cover bears the legend: 'A Crisis on Mars in the Far-Distant Future'. This is certainly true – but it is so far in the future that the world bears about as much resemblance to the Mars we know as Burroughs' Barsoom! Mars has canals (often frozen), though not in any Lowellian sense - they are the product of ancient terraforming. But like so much else in this book, this is something we deduce; very little is

explained, and we are left to work out what's going on from the context. Which is fine, but a little explanation would often help a lot.

The publishers and excerpts from reviews seem convinced that this is SF. Maybe, but not as we know it, Jim! Where we would expect technology, the inhabitants of Mars use 'haunt-tech'. For security they use 'weir-wards'. These all seem to be based on the Realm of the Dead: ghosts and spirits are in everything - machines, locks, clocks - and demons howl and gibber from the walls. . . People communicate by 'antiscibes', which seem to serve the same purpose as mobile or video-phones, laptops or computers. I said people, but actually I suppose this could be called a feminist book: because of the use of genetics men were eliminated long ago, Mars being run by a series of matriarchies, and women customarily marry women, babies being 'grown' rather created by any kind of sexual process. (Bad idea, I say!) But there are remnants of men, mainly living in the hills, including the genetically-changed vulpen. These repel most women, though one of the main characters is attracted to one. There are other Changed, too, such as aspiiths, kappa and, worst of all, demothea, who have masses of tentacles, Gorgon-like, on their heads, which can whip out like lightning. And there are excissieres or 'Scissor-women', who seem to perform as militia or police, but communicate via wounds on their body-armour.



But what's it about, you ask? Winterstrike is one of the main Martian cities, and is at war with Caud. (Geographically, or areographically, only the name Tharsis has survived of the Mars that we know). Each blames the other for the conflict, even when a bigger threat affects both of them. The story follows the adventures of three sisters living in Winterstrike: Essegui, Leretui (also known as Shorn after she consorts with a vulpen) and the younger Canteley, and their cousin Hestia Mar. Essegui and Hestia write their stories in the first person, which can be confusing. On the night of the Ombre festival Shorn is released from the room in which she has been locked for her transgressions, and goes on the run, chased by Essegui, part of whose soul has been stolen by a 'majike', Gennera Khine, at the behest of one of her mothers, the autocratic Alleghetta. (The other mother, Thea, is a weak-willed drunk).

Hestia is a spy in Caud, and searches for information in its ruined library. Here she finds the details of a weapon (whose nature is never really revealed) which she sends back to Winterstrike. She also finds a small ball which contains the ghost of the Library, which has actually been instructed to watch over Hestia, and several times helps her out of sticky situations. Secret experiments from the past start to rise from the shadows and threaten Mars with danger, and the weapon found by Hestia looms over them as retaliation. On her travels, Hestia goes to Earth (where there are still males), and just to complicate matters a Centipede Queen from Earth comes to Mars with her retinue. Meanwhile, up on the cliffs, the creatures of the Noumenon are organizing an attack in order to restore their figurehead to power in Winterstrike. There are other main characters, such as Mantis, who is one of the Changed, Peto and Rubirosa, and many lesser ones, adding to the complications.

There is no doubt that this book is well-written, and in its way original, but to me it is overly complicated and long-winded relying too much upon its mystical elements to be considered as true SF. If you like your reading to be obscure and require you to use your imagination to fill in the details, this may be for you. One final warning though: don't start reading this book unless you are prepared to read at least two more. Although this is not explicitly stated anywhere, it is very clear by the end of the book that this is the first of at least a trilogy.

*DAH*

## ***OCEANIC* by Greg Egan**

**Gollancz / 490pp / £12.99 trade paperback ISBN:978-0575086524**

**Reviewed by Michael Jones**



Some while ago I reviewed a Greg Egan novel for this Group and I was rather put off him as a result. More recently I have discovered that his work can be both more varied and more accessible and in this collection of a dozen shorter pieces he displays both talent and versatility, although his predilection for highly advanced maths and physics concepts is still very much evident.

The title story of this collection and Hugo-winning novella, is a satire on religious faith. “Dark Integers” would be better described as mathematics fiction rather than science fiction while the rest treat with a variety of subjects. One of the best is “Singleton” which discusses the use of quantum computing to explore the relevance of the many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics to the experience of an individual human being. Another, “Riding the Crocodile”, is the precursor story to his recent novel INCANDESCENCE. Altogether they range from the almost-now to a million years into the future and from here to the farthest reaches of the Galaxy. So there should be something for all tastes

However, I found the majority of these stories vaguely disappointing. Mostly, despite or perhaps in some way because of, his cleverness, they tend towards dull, becoming ‘page-turners’ not in the spirit of wanting to find out what happens next but rather to find out how much longer it is to go on for. Worse still, some of them do not come to an end but simply stop with no proper resolution seeming to have been reached. Perhaps this is deliberate, to allow readers to bring their own interpretation to the forming of a conclusion.

In short, this a very ‘intellectual’ kind of SF, requiring a serious level of input from the reader. Some, of course, might say this is what reading SF is for. If one is prepared to make the effort to understand it and is able to bring to it a reasonable degree of comprehension of mathematics and science, then these stories can be quite rewarding. If, on the other hand, reading is to be viewed as entertainment rather than an opportunity to ‘learn something’, then not so good.

*Mj*

# ☺☺☺☺ DVD REVIEW ☹☹☹☹

BY ROBERT DAY

## ***STAR WRECK: IN THE PIRKINNING (IMPERIAL EDITION)***

**Revolver Entertainment, REVD2278: DVD, 105 minutes, £12.95  
Review by Robert Day**

Some of you who were at this year's Eastercon might well have seen this already, or at least seen the rather spectacular poster. If not – well, there are good reasons why you might well seek this out. This is a *Star Trek* spoof, started by two guys in a back bedroom somewhere in Finland. The first STAR WRECK was a home-made computer animation in the style of SOUTH PARK. It was posted on the Internet, and attracted enough attention to inspire the makers to repeat the exercise. By the time they reached this film, the sixth in the series, they had gathered enough support to make a live-action professional film, with CGI effects that are the equal of almost anything you have seen on television – and possibly on the cinema screen too.

The plot is a mad version of *Trek*'s 'mirror universe' plot strand. Marooned in early 21st-century Finland, Captain Pirk, his loyal Plingon officer Commander Dwarf and his android companion Commander Info, force Russian scientists, anxious to rebuild the Soviet Union, into building a replacement space fleet with which to re-invent their future. Yes, you read those names right. In an effort to avoid legal copyright complications, all the characters and some of the plot devices have been renamed with some of the stupidest alternative names you can think of.

But that is the real marvel of this film. Forget the names; look at the visuals. They are as good, and as inventive, as anything that Paramount has given us. Indeed, some of them look suspiciously as if they themselves were copied for the most recent *Star Trek* film: the building of the *USS Enterprise* – sorry, *CPP Kickstart* – and the 'maggot hole' anomaly appears almost unchanged in the 'real' *Star Trek*. There are few signs that this is an amateur production: the producers only built two main sets for the spaceship interiors, plus some generic corridors. The rest is filmed location work, clever CGI using stock footage, and even a short sequence of fake black-and-white newsreel which is delightful.

In the course of the film, Pirk and his crew invade an alternative universe which itself is a parody of *Babylon 5*; this takes longer than it ought to as the action has to stop at regular intervals for the station commander to make a pretentious speech. Watch out for the truth behind the mystery of the Vorlons!

This is no GALAXY QUEST. Sophisticated comedy it is not. The Finns are revealed in this film to have a similar sense of humour to the Germans; rather literal and unsophisticated, yet at the same time having a good sense of wordplay – though it loses quite a bit in the translation and some of the subtitles are less than grammatically perfect English. The visual style of comedy is also rather German, in that it owes more than a little to the overcranked style of the late Benny Hill.

There are some extras, including a Director's Commentary (the language of which is not specified; it'd better not be in Finnish!), a blooper reel, and perhaps the biggest disappointment of the whole package. This is a documentary called TOWARDS THE IRON SKY, and it consists of a series of interviews with the production team, and others, talking about their next production, IRON SKY. Unfortunately, that's all they do – talk

about it, in considerable detail. This 30-minute (or possibly 45-minute) documentary was filmed, for some reason, in an anechoic chamber; and believe me, 30 minutes of talking Finnish heads can easily seem like 45 minutes. Or longer. Much longer.

Which is a shame, because IRON SKY will be well worth seeing.

The strapline for IRON SKY is: "In 1945, the Nazis fled to the Moon. In 2018, they're coming back." The producers took a show-reel to Cannes in 2007; they remade it completely, using professional studio facilities and full-scale bluescreen techniques with live actors, to take back to Cannes in 2008 in their search for funding. The overall style is rather like Kerry Conran's SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW – sepia retro technology – but this is extended to Albert Speer's GERMANIA ON THE MOON, complete with subsurface flying saucer hangars.

IRON SKY is in production now, with release dates variously quoted as 2010 or in the first quarter of 2011. But unless you research this on the Internet (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron\\_Sky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Sky) or the official site, [www.ironsky.net](http://www.ironsky.net)), you won't see any of it as Revolver Pictures didn't bother to check what extras they were getting when they bought the rights to UK DVD distribution!

This DVD is now available in limited quantities through the UK retail trade and may well be available from major online retailers; or you can buy online direct from the producers via the address above – though in that case, you will be ordering the original Finnish DVD (with subtitles, fortunately).

If you can cope with the broad comedy, I can recommend this for the sheer, jaw-dropping chutzpah of the producers in making this film and punching way above their weight in the effects department. You will come away from this asking yourself "How have they avoided getting sued?" And they deserve support simply for what they are going to do next.

## ***FORTHCOMING EVENTS***

*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 contact addresses.*

*Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome – please send to me at [rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)*

**The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group** meets on Thursdays at 5.45pm 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:-

20th August - **CITY AT THE EDGE OF TIME** by **Greg Bear**

Future dates – 17th September, 15th October

**THE MISFiTs** are an informal group of local SF fans who meet regularly at 7pm at the Wagon & Horses, Oldbury on the third Friday of each month. Real ale, good food, great company. Next meeting is on 21st August.

More details from Martin Tudor ([empties084@btinternet.com](mailto:empties084@btinternet.com)).

**FANTASYCON 2009** will take place on the weekend of September 18-20, at the Britannia Hotel, 1 St James Street, Nottingham. Ian Watson will be the Master of

Ceremonies. The confirmed GoHs are: **Jasper Fforde, Brian Clemens and Gail Z Martin**. Details from British Fantasy Society website  
<http://s256537080.websitehome.co.uk/>

**The British International Comics Show** will be held 3rd and 4th of October at the Thinktank, Millennium Point, Curzon Street, Birmingham B4 7XG. For more details go to the website <http://www.thecomicsshow.co.uk/>

**OCTOCON, the annual Irish SF Convention** will be held 10th and 11th of October 2009 at The Camden Court Hotel, Camden Street, Dublin 2. See  
<http://2009.octocon.com/> for further details

**NOVACON 39 – the Birmingham SF Group’s own convention - will be held at the Park Inn, Nottingham over the weekend of 13-15 November 2009. Guest of Honour is JUSTINA ROBSON. Full details from 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ or email [alice@altair-4.co.uk](mailto:alice@altair-4.co.uk)**

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

**September 11th – Novacon 39 Guest of Honour JUSTINA ROBSON**

**October 9th – SF author ALASTAIR REYNOLDS (provisional)**

**November 6th – to be announced**

**December 4th – CHRISTMAS SOCIAL – skittles, buffet, prizes, fun!!!**

**January 2010 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and AUCTION**

**February – QUIZ versus the B’ham University SF Group**

**March – Gollancz editor JO FLETCHER returns with more amusing and interesting anecdotes of life in publishing**

**April – Author and satirist ADAM ROBERTS**

**BRUM GROUP NEWS #455** copyright 2009 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton (19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL – phone 0121 477 6901 or email [rogpeyton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rogpeyton@hotmail.co.uk)). 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 which I sift through for the best/most entertaining items.

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