

BRUM GROUP NEWS

March 1993

Issue 258

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

GROUP CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, SECRETARY - HELENA BOWLES, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,
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ORDINARY MEMBER - MICK EVANS, NOVA CON 23 CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON.

This month's speaker is **BOB SHAW**

Friday 19th March 1993, 7.45pm for 8.00pm
Admittance: Members £2.50 Visitors £3.75

Bob Shaw was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland on 31 December 1931. Educated at the Technical High School in Belfast before going on to work in the steel and aircraft industries and as a cab driver, assistant publicity officer, press officer and journalist (with the Belfast *Telegraph*). Winner of the British SF Association award in 1975 and the Hugo award for fan writing in 1979 and 1980. His works include the classic ORBITSVILLE books, the SLOW GLASS stories and the more recent RAGGED ASTRONAUT trilogy, as well as the hilarious WHO GOES HERE? Renowned for his witty "Serious Scientific Talks" (which are anything but!) at conventions, his prolific output of often hysterically funny fanzine articles, Bob has spoken to the Group on a number of occasions. His most recent book is HOW TO WRITE SCIENCE FICTION which is published this month.

Of himself he writes "It is very difficult, if not impossible, for an author to write objectively about his own work, but I sum up my output by saying that I write science fiction for people who don't read a great deal of science fiction. This doesn't mean that I curb my imagination. I'm quite prepared to deal with the most fantastic concepts, but I try to do it in such a way that the ideas can be appreciated by any reader. The technique involves a minimal use of in-group jargon and a very firm emphasis on relating every fictional event to real characters of a kind that the reader can immediately recognise and identify or empathise with. The universe is wonderful, but only when there is somebody there to wonder at it. Humour also plays an important role in my work, partly because I feel that science fiction shouldn't become too gloomy and portentous, mainly because one of the things we need most these days is a good laugh."

{Many thanks to TWENTIETH-CENTURY SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS, third edition, for the above information.}

COHEN CAPTION COMPETITION

The winner of January's Caption Competition was judged by Ian Stewart to be WILLIAM McCABE. William will receive an Andromeda book token at this month's meeting.

His winning entry was titled "*Sodomy & Stick Insects*" a demonstration by J. Cohen and featured one of the aliens 'thinking' "*I never knew they made them so small*". (See below.) Dr Cohen has, so far, been unavailable for comment...

Other entries included **9** from **Martin Stallard** - "*Here is one I prepared earlier*", "*The one with the eye ornaments is allegedly a Human...*", "*Teddy Bears' picnic (If you go down to the Woods Today)*", "*We used to have a problem with squirrels...*", "*Bet you've never seen Crabs this size...*", "*What's that strange hairy thing between your legs?*", "*I have to hold this one or it will bonk anything!*", "*The wife will only let me see them Sunday.*", "*If you think they're ugly, you should see the wife*"; Someone describing themselves as "**ME!**" (possibly Jack Cohen?) - "*OK, now, let's see... if this one's a bird and this one's a bee, you'll get two ***'s and a !*"; **Dave Hardy** - "*(INHALE) Two of us have knees, but only one is an alien... which?!*". Many thanks to them all.

"Sodomy & Stick insects" a demonstration by J Cohen

(William McCabe)



The BSGF meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) in the upstairs function room of the White Lion, corner of Thorp Street and Horsefair/Bristol Street in Birmingham city centre. The annual subscription rates (which include twelve copies of this newsletter and reduced price entry to meetings) are £9.00 per person, or £12.00 for 2 members at the same address. Cheques etc. payable to "the Birmingham Science Fiction Group", via the treasurer Richard Standage at meetings or by post c/o Bernie Evans (address below). Book reviews and review copies should be sent to the reviews editor Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 021 558 0997). All other contributions and enquiries regarding the Brum Group News to: Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG (tel: 021 327 3023).

COLOPHON

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Personal opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the membership of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group.

All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise. This publication was printed on the WAVE photocopier.

Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for typing the Book Reviews, all of our reviewers, STEVE GREEN and CRITICAL WAVE for the news in the Jophan Report, TONY MORTON for his Chairman's Bit, AL JOHNSTON for his Phannish Fizzicks and TONY BERRY for the use of his spare room.

Congratulations to William McCabe on winning the Andromeda book token for his correct entry to the Jack Cohen Caption Competition.

CHAIRMAN'S BIT

The story so far by Tony Morton

We have begun the year in good form, having two "rising stars" at our meetings. Firstly TOM HOLT provided our first meeting (yes, a special!) and gave a reading from his forthcoming book **HERE COMES THE SUN** as well as telling us the inspirations behind his earlier works. His current release, **OVERTIME** also providing a talking point. The humour of the books was evident in his talk and asides which gave us an enjoyable evening.

For the February meeting, our second "rising star" STEPHEN BAXTER, our "hard" science fiction author, entertained the group. Stephen talked of his beginnings as a writer and the background to his stories, which include some heavy research at such places as the British Museum Library Reading Room! He showed us interesting insights into how he goes about developing his stories. Don't forget Stephen is guest of honour at this year's Novacon.

On to future meetings; this month we have the incomparable BOB SHAW, who truly needs no introduction, talking about his new book **HOW TO WRITE SCIENCE FICTION**. Followed by a "special" on the 2nd of April when we have JOE HALDEMAN speaking to the group - a slightly later start as he's travelling up on the day to see us, also note the different venue (the Hotel Arcade on Ladywell Walk).

In April GARRY KILWORTH will be talking to us and in May COLIN GREENLAND. Other authors are in the pipeline for the rest of the year but have yet to confirm - and anyway too much excitement in one go is bad for you.

Watch this space...

Can YOU eat a 'Desperate Dan

Pie' ? Find out at the

BEER & SKITTLES

EVENING AT THE

LITTLE KIPPER HOUSE

(Bradley Green, Hanbury to

Feckenham Road, B4090

out of Droitwich)

If you are interested call

HELENA BOWLES on 558 7591

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

19 MARCH 1993: BOB SHAW author of the *Orbitsville* and *Ragged Astronaut* books will be speaking to the Birmingham SF Group at the White Lion, 7.45pm for 8pm.

20 MARCH 1993: BOB SHAW will be signing copies of *HOW TO WRITE SCIENCE FICTION*, "The most illuminating and funniest book ever on how to write anything. Full of insights. Even if you don't want to write - even if you don't read sf - you're going to love this book." - Brian Aldiss, (Alison & Busby, £6.99). Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from noon. Call 021 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

20-21 MARCH 1993: *THE COMPANY OF WOLVES* Neil Jordan's film of the late Angela Carter's classic story will be showing at the Midlands Art Centre cinema, call 021 440 3838.

26 MARCH 1993: LASER DEATH HORROR! We are organising a trip to the QUASAR Laser Combat Centre on New Street in Birmingham "to defeat the evil Birmingham University Storm Troopers at 7pm on Friday 26 March. The cost will be £2.50 each. If you're interested speak to STEPHEN JONES at the BSFG meeting on 19 March.

26-28 MARCH 1993: ACTION 93. A weekend celebration of ITC Entertainment, organised by members of *THE SAINT* club, *RANDALL & HOPKIRK (DECEASED)* Appreciation Society, Fanderson, Six of One and others. It will take place at the Shepperton Moat House, Felix Lane, Shepperton, Middx. Full details from Claire Saunders, 12 Saville Crescent, Ashford, Middlesex, TW15 1SX.

26-28 MARCH 1993: TREK DWARF. Combined *STAR TREK / RED DWARF* con. The venue is the Holiday Inn, Leicester. Guest of Honours (subject to other commitments): Mike Okuda, Richard Arnold, Guy Vardaman, Mike Butcher, Adrian Riglesford. Membership limit of 500, Attending £30.00. Contact: 47 Marsham, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5RN.

27 MARCH 1993: ANNE GAY will be signing copies of the paperback edition of *THE BROOCH OF AZURE MIDNIGHT* (£4.99) and her third book in hardcover *DANCING ON THE VOLCANO* (£14.99) at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from noon. Call 021 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

2 APRIL 1993: JOE HALDEMAN will be speaking to the Birmingham SF Group in the GEORGE STEPHENSON ROOM of the HOTEL ARCADE, Ladywell Walk, just off Hurst Street in Birmingham city centre, 8pm for 8.15pm.

2 APRIL 1993: PETER F HAMILTON will be signing copies of his latest book *MINDSTAR RISING* at Magic Labyrinth before speaking to the Leicester SF Group at the Rainbow and Dove in the town centre. Call Steph Mortimer or Dave Holmes at Magic Labyrinth, on 0533 518178, for further details.

3 APRIL 1993: JOE HALDEMAN will be signing copies of his books at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from noon. Call 021 643 1999 for details.

3 APRIL 1993: COMIC MART at the Midland Hotel, New Street, Birmingham. Doors open noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

8-12 APRIL 1993: HELICON 93, 44th British national sf con, combined with the 1993 Eurocon. Hotel de France, St Helier, Jersey. Guests of honour: John Brunner, George R R Martin, Artist guest of honour Karel Thole, Fan guest of honour Larry van der Putte. Attending £28.00, Supporting and children's attending (age 8-14 years) both £14.00. Contact: 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

16 APRIL 1993: GARRY KILWORTH author of *IN SOLITARY*, *SPLIT SECOND*, *CLOUDROCK* and the critically acclaimed *HUNTER'S MOON* and *MIDNIGHT'S SUN* will be speaking to the BSFG at the White Lion, 7.45pm for 8pm.

16-18 APRIL 1993: SMOFCON 10. First non-US venue for this annual relaxcon for conrunners. Same site and contact address as Helicon, above. Attending £20, Supporting £10 (£2 off the price if you are a member of Helicon).

18 APRIL 1993: COMIC MART, YMCA, Granby Street, Leicester, opens noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

19-24 APRIL 1993: *RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET* will be showing at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton. Tickets £9.00-£18.50, call 0902 29212. If you are interested in seeing this in the company of other BSFG members please call HELENA BOWLES on 021 558 7591.

24 APRIL 1993: TERRY BROOKS will be signing copies of *THE TALISMANS OF SHANNARA* (Century, £14.99) and *THE ELF QUEEN OF SHANNARA* (Arrow, £4.99) at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from noon. Call 021 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

24-25 APRIL 1993: GLASGOW '93, comic art convention at the City Hall, Candleriggs. Guests include Jim Shooter, Archie Goodwin, Dougie Braithwaite, Jamie Delano, Sean Phillips, Steve Pugh & Paul Johnson. Attending (untill 5 April) £10.00. Contact: Rusty Staples Ltd, PO Box 146, Glasgow, G1 1TR.
LATE APRIL 1993: TAD WILLIAMS will be signing copies of the long-awaited third volume of his trilogy - *TO THE GREEN TOWER* at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from noon. Call 021 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

30 APR - 3 MAY 1993: WARP ONE, 35th UK *STAR TREK* convention. Pontins Middleton Tower Holiday Centre, near Morecambe, Lancs. Guests of Honour to be announced. Contact: 69 Merlin Crescent, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 6JB.

21 MAY 1993: COLIN GREENLAND author of the award winning *TAKE BACK PLENTY* and others, will be speaking to the Birmingham SF Group at the White Lion, 7.45pm for 8pm.

21 MAY 1993: IAIN M BANKS will be signing at Magic Labyrinth before speaking to the Leicester SF Group at the Rainbow and Dove in the town centre. Call Steph Mortimer or Dave Holmes at Magic Labyrinth, on 0533 518178, for further details.

22 MAY 1993: COMIC MART with guest BRYAN TALBOT at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 6SO (0527 585036).

24 MAY - 5 JUNE: *SHERLOCK HOLMES THE MUSICAL* by Leslie Bricusses, starring Robert Powell and Roy Barraclough. Alexandra Theatre, Suffolk Street, Birmingham. Tickets £7.00-£19.50, Box Office 021 633 3325.

28-31 MAY 1993: MEXICON V. "Straight" science fiction con. St Nicholas Hotel, Scarborough. Featured guests include Ian McDonald and Ken Campbell. Attending £20.00, to: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

5 JUNE 1993: COMIC MART at the Midland Hotel, New Street, Birmingham. Doors open noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

?? ???? 1993: ORSON SCOTT CARD will be signing at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham. WATCH THIS SPACE FOR DETAILS.

28 AUGUST 1993: COMIC MART at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p.

Contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 6SO (0527 585036).

3-6 SEPTEMBER 1993: CONFREANCISCO. 51st world science fiction convention at the San Francisco Marriott Moskone Convention Center. Guests of Honour: Larry Niven, Tom Digby, Alicia Austin, Jan Howard Finder. MC: Guy Gavriel Kay. Attending US\$110.00, Supporting \$25.00 until 31 March, then \$125.00, \$25.00 until 16 July, \$145 on the door. Contact British Agent: Chris O'Shea, 12 Stannard Road, London, E8 1DB.

1-3 OCTOBER 1993: FANTASYCON XVIII. Midland Hotel, Birmingham, Guests of Honour: Peter James, Tad Williams and Les Edwards, Master of Ceremonies Dennis Etchison, further guests to be announced. Attending £20 (to British Fantasy Society members) £30 (non-members), Supporting membership £10. Contact: Mike Chinn at 137 Priory Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0TG (tel: 021 474 2585).

5-7 NOVEMBER 1993: NOVACON 23 the Brum Group's own sf con, at the Royal Angus hotel in the city centre. Guest of honour Stephen Baxter. Attending membership costs £20 until Easter 1993, then £25 until 1st October and £30 on the door. Supporting membership is £8.00 (please note that this will NOT automatically reserve an attending place, but it WILL ensure receipt of all of the convention's publications and entitle you to vote in the Novas). Although the hotel has agreed to increase the membership ceiling from 300 to 350 people the committee advises you to register early, as they will if necessary turn people away on the door. Further details from Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 021 558 0997).

11 NOVEMBER 1993: COMIC MART at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 6SO (0527 585036).

26-28 NOVEMBER 1993: CON-YAK, annual international Beneluxcon, venue probably Altea Hotel, just outside Amsterdam. Guests of honour to be announced. Contact Richard Vermaas, James Wattstraat 13, 1097 DJ Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

1-4 APRIL 1994: SOU'WESTER, 45th UK national sf con, Britannia Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Guests of honour: Diane Duane, Neil Gaiman, Barbara Hanby, Peter Morwood. Attending £25.00, Supporting £12.50, children 9-14 on 1 April 1994 £12.50, Contact: 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

? MAY 1994: **INCONCEIVABLE**. Second 'humour' con in Derby, date to be announced. Attending £15.00, contact 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby, DE23 6ES.

1-5 **SEPTEMBER 1994: CONADIAN**, 52nd world science fiction convention, at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. Guests of Honour Anne McCaffrey, George Barr, Barry B Longyear, Fan Guest of Honour Robert Runte. Attending US\$85.00, CAN\$95.00, Supporting US\$25.00, CAN\$30.00 until 6 September 1993. Contact British Agent: Helen McCarthy, 147 Francis Road, London, E10 6NT.

24-28 **AUGUST 1995: INTERSECTION**, 53rd world-con, SECC, Glasgow. Guests of honour Samuel R Delany, Gerry Anderson. Attending £50.00, Supporting £15.00, please note that "Glasgow pre-support and friend benefits will expire on 30 April 1993 - pre-supporters will become non-members and Friends will become supporters." Contact: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

27 **DECEMBER 1999 - 2 JANUARY 2000: MILLENIUM**. Venue to be announced, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a Benelux country or UK). Attending £3.00 (f10.00) per year, to be deducted from eventual membership fee (to be announced before 1997). Contact: Malcolm Reid, 2/R, 9 Airlie Street, Hyndland, Glasgow, G12 9RJ.

Although details are correct to the best of my knowledge, I 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.

JOPHAN REPORT #60

by Martin Tudor

The nominations for the 1992 British SF Association's Awards are as follows: **BEST NOVEL** - *HOT HEAD* by Simon Ings (Grafton), *HEARTS, HANDS AND VOICES* by Ian McDonald (Gollancz), *RED MARS* by Kim Stanley Robinson (HarperCollins), *LOST FUTURES* by Lisa Tuttle (Grafton) and *DOOMSDAY BOOK* by Connie Willis (NEL). **BEST SHORT FICTION** - "Priest of Hands", Storm Constantine (*INTERZONE* #58), "Reification Highway", Greg Egan (*INTERZONE* #64), "The Sculptor", Garry Kilworth (*INTER-*

ZONE #60), "Returning", Ian MacLeod (*INTERZONE* #64), "Innocents", Ian McDonald (*NEW WORLDS* #2), "The Coming of Vertumnus", Ian Watson (*INTERZONE* #56). **BEST AKTWORK** - Cover "Hearts, Hands and Voices", Jim Burns (Gollancz), Cover *INTERZONE* #66 / *KAETI ON TOUR* (Kerosina) Jim Burns, Cover *INTERZONE* #65 by Mark Harrison, Cover *INTERZONE* #58 by SMS, Cover *DOOMSDAY BOOK* (NEL) Unknown artist. There were insufficient votes cast in the *Dramatic Presentation* category to warrant an award this year.

The *BSFA Awards* will this year be presented at *MEXICON V* in May.

The new, revised edition of Peter Nichols *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION* is due to be published by Orbit in April, price approximately £40.00.

Those of you tuning in to Challenge FM at 7pm on Sunday the 14th of March will hopefully have heard a wonderful plug for the Brum Group courtesy of Dave Hardy. Dave was invited to speak as an expert on a show about *STAR TREK*.

The Science Fiction Poetry Association's 1992 Rhysling Awards were presented to David Lunde (short work, "Song of the Martian Cricket") and W Gregory Stewart (long work, "the button, and what you know").

The seventh annual Arthur C Clarke Award, presented for the best science fiction novel published in Britain in 1992, will be announced at London's Groucho Club on 25 March. In addition to an engraved bookend, Fred Clarke, brother of the author for whom the award is named, will present the winner (or their representative) with a £1000 cheque.

Eight novels have been shortlisted: Ian McDonald's *HEARTS, HANDS AND VOICES*, Marge Piercy's *BODY OF GLASS*, Kim Stanley Robinson's *RED MARS* (see interview this issue), Richard Paul Russo's *DESTROYING ANGEL*, Michael Swanwick's *STATIONS OF THE TIDE*, Sue Thomas' *CORRESPONDENCE*, Lisa Tuttle's *LOST FUTURES*, Connie Willis' *DOOMSDAY BOOK*. Administrator David Barrett commended the "exceptionally strong shortlist" and conveyed the judges' honourable mentions for two works which were considered ineligible, Karen Joy Fowler's *SARAH CANARY* and M John Harrison's *THE COURSE OF THE HEART* (see this issue's "Critical Eye").

The judges this year were Maureen Speller and Mark Plummer (Science Fiction Foundation), Catie Cary and Kev McVeigh (BSFA), Dr Maurice Goldsmith and Dr Jeff Kipling (International Science Policy

Foundation). Previous winners include Colin Greenland's *TAKE BACK PLENTY*, Rachel Pollack's *UNQUENCHABLE FIRE* and Geoff Ryman's *THE CHILD GARDEN*.

Book dealer Barry R Levin has presented his annual "collectors awards" to Stephen King ("most collectable author"), Charnel House (for Tim Powers' *LAST CALL*, "most collectable book") and bibliographer Robert Reginald ("lifetime award").

Katherine V Forrest's "novel of lesbian utopia", *DAUGHTERS OF A CORAL DAWN*, will be published by the Women's Press in April.

The second issue of the new American magazine *SCIENCE FICTION AGE* featured an essay on sf cons by Marion Zimmer Bradley, fiction by Thomas Disch and Lawrence Watt-Evans, collaborative poetry by Bruce Boston and Robert Frazier, artwork by Geoffrey Mann and a feature on the tv series *BABYLON 5*.

Among those invited to choose their top three recordings for the Guardian's classics and opera supplement on 3 December was author Ramsey Campbell, who plumped for Beethoven's "String Quartet No 16 in F" (Deutsche Grammophon 413 814-2), Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" (Philips 410 447-2) and Debussy's "Pelleas et Mélisande" (Decca 430 502-2).

Nicola Griffith, British-born but now living in the United States, returned for a brief tour during the second half of February to promote HarperCollins' softback publication of her sf novel *AMMONITE*; she signed copies at London's Forbidden Planet bookshop and addressed that month's British SF Association's meeting.

Algis Budrys has bought *TOMORROW SPECULATIVE FICTION*, the magazine he has edited since its launch at the 1992 worldcon, from Pulphouse Publishing. Previous owner Dean Wesley Smith has also handed over the editorial reins of *PULPHOUSE MAGAZINE* to Jonathan Bond.

Nicholas Royle's "Tracks" [INTERZONE, 1/92] has been selected by Karl Edward Wagner's *THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES XXI*, his first consecutive appearance in the landmark anthology; he will be joined by Simon Clark, whose "Eyes Like a Ghost's" first appeared in *DARKLANDS 2*. Royle's "Glory", meanwhile, has been snatched from Pete Crowther's *NARROW HOUSES* for Ellen Datlow's *THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY & HORROR*.

February's edition of *THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION* includes an analysis of Thomas Ligotti's short stories by Stefan Dzienianowicz and a lengthy essay by Richard Terra entitled "Shades of Rose and Red: Nostalgic and Visionary Images of the Human Exploration of Mars", as well as reviews by Gwyneth Jones and Brian Stableford. The latest public reading organized by *NYRSF* was held on 18 February, featuring Michael Cadnum and Bradley Denton.

Terry Pratchett will attend Swancon 18 in Perth, Australia, this Easter as its guest of honour. Also attending will be Robert Jordan, author of the "Wheel of Time" series.

The Science Fiction Foundation will move from its existing site at the University of East London to the University of Liverpool this spring. The move, which the SFF chose to announce via the American magazine *LOCUS*, followed the withdrawal of funding from the London faculty, its home since 1971.

The University of Liverpool will appoint a full-time administrator for the Foundation, to be jointly funded by its library and its English department, and will also be offering a graduate-level course in science fiction. Appropriately, the SFF library will be housed next to the Olaf Stapleton Archive.

In the meantime, the Friends of Foundation has relocated to offices donated by the New Worlds bookshop, at 71-72 Charing Cross Road, London, WC2H 0AA.

Submissions for the journal *FOUNDATION* should be forwarded to Dr Edward James at the University of York, the King's Manor, York, YO1 2EP. Dr James is currently inviting contributions for issue 60, to be published early next year, which will be an expanded edition with the theme "Science Fiction Research: The State of the Art". Outlines are welcomed either by him or by his co-editor on the project, Gary Westfahl, who can be reached at the Learning Centre, UC Riverside, Riverside, CA-92521, USA.

BLOOD & ROSES: THE VAMPIRE IN 19TH CENTURY LITERATURE, edited by Adèle Olivia Gladwell and James Havoc, was published by Creation Press in January. It includes work by John Polidori, Arthur Machen, Oscar Wilde, Charlotte Brontë and Sheridan LeFanu.

Elke Lacey, an editor on Methuen's children's books and wife of New English Library's sf editor Humphrey Price, died of cancer on 10 November; their son was born on 8 October.

BOOK REVIEWS

HOW TO WRITE SCIENCE FICTION by Bob Shaw
Allison & Busby, 158 pp, £6.99, "C" format
Reviewed by Bernie Evans.

The latest in a series of "How to.." books from this publisher, this is as witty and irreverent as you'd expect from Bob Shaw, yet the serious intent is never lost. Would be writers learn how to avoid hackneyed ideas and stupid mistakes. How to develop an idea, a character, a plot. How to invent credible backgrounds, believable aliens and consistent plots. All with examples from both Bob's work and that of other authors. There is also the added bonus of a full reprint of Bob's first slow glass story, "Light of Other Days"

There is information on choosing a good title, on marketing your work once it's written, and on the importance of doing proper research before you even start to write, both general research (lots of sf reading), and specific research when you need help with your science, linguistics etc. SF cons are mentioned as a source of contacts, and there is a section on the difference between hard and soft sf. There is also a short section on why you should use an agent, with some insights by Pamela Buckmaster on what an agent does.

There is a short appendix which gives a list of recommended anthologies and reference books, together with sources of up-to-date information in the field, current magazines and mail order bookshops. I thought this section was a little thin, there are only two bookshops listed, and only one magazine. (I know I'm biased, but to omit *CRITICAL WAVE*, with its regular updates on who's buying what, is a major oversight) Even with this reservation, this will prove to be a valuable reference work for any aspiring writer.

I read this book as a reader, rather than as an aspiring writer, and found it to be totally fascinating, with its insights into how a GOOD sf story should develop. It could be re-titled "How to READ Science Fiction" and still be a winner. I would urge anyone with an interest in sf, reading it, reviewing or criticising it, and especially writing it, to buy this book.

A SONG FOR ARBONNE by Guy Gavriel Kay
Harper Collins, 513 pp, £14.99, h/b
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Guy Kay is a fine writer, as he has shown in his previous novels (*TIGANA* and *THE FIONAVAR TAPESTRY* trilogy). This is told with the same powerful story-telling skills.

Arbonne, in the south, is a beautiful, gentle country. Gorhaut, to the north, is colder and more tempestuous. The characteristics of the climate come out to some extent in their inhabitants. Blaise is a Gorhaut mercenary serving in Arbonne because he disagrees strongly with treaty his king has made after the Battle of Iersen Bridge with the king of Valensa. He has come with his prejudices about the people who he thinks are soft, woman dominated music lovers. He realises he is wrong about many things as he is forced by circumstances to make a stand against the corrupt king of Gorhaut, Ademar, and his own father, Galbert de Garsenc, who is the High Priest of Corannos and the king's chief advisor.

The novel itself has some wonderful elements in it and the characters of the women are developed as strongly as those of the men. There is, however, an increasing trend in modern novels to add plot elements that, although interesting, don't actually add greatly to the main thrust of the story and make the book very long. Lisseut is such a character element here. Also the strength of the double-dealing that was present in *Tigana* is played down more and the relations at the end are perhaps a little disappointing. Nevertheless, this is still an excellent read.

FACETS by Walter Jon Williams
Grafton, 321 pp, £4.99, p/b
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

There are times when a reader will look at the author's name on a book and put it back on the shelf. A reputation has gone before. For some, Walter Jon Williams means complex, literary science fiction, the kind you don't start reading after a tiring day at

work. But all authors of repute deserve to be given a chance and a collection of stories is a good place to start. This, as the title suggests, shows some of the facets of writing of a very talented man.

The nine stories were first published between 1985 and 1989. The one that probably gives the best insight of the kind of novel he writes is the first story, "Surfacing". It has complexities not usually found in short stories, even ones of this length (62 pages). It is set in a distant future on a distant planet. It deals primarily with communication and the needs for it. Anthony, with the help of some imported killer whales is gradually deciphering the language of a deep water alien species. Then suddenly he has to cope with the intrusion of Philana, who is interested in his work, and his life suddenly becomes complicated. "Video Star" deals with the vicious underworld of youth gangs in a data and drug orientated future, while in contrast "No Spot of Ground" is an alternate history in which Poe does not die but ends up as a Confederate General during the American civil war. "Side Effects" is a disturbing look at the way some people misuse their responsibilities but at the same time is a story of a missed opportunity.

All the stories here are good. They are all very different from each other and well worth reading.

THE RED DWARF OMNIBUS by Grant Naylor
Penguin, 590 pp, £7.99, "C" format

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

Just in case you missed *RED DWARF: INFINITY WELCOMES CAREFUL DRIVERS* and *BETTER THAN LIFE* the first time around, here they are in one volume. For those who have them already, there is some added material to encourage you to fork out again:- the Original Beermat, the Original Sketch (from Radio 4's *SON OF CLICHÉ*), and the Original Script (with special emphasis on how *cheap* it would be to produce).

For those unfortunates who have not seen the TV series:- there is this guy David Lister, the Last Man Alive three million years in the future on the huge mining ship Red Dwarf. Of course, if he were on his own it would be fairly boring, so he has Rimmer the Hologram, the Cat, Holly the Computer, Kryten the Mechanoid and the Talky Toaster (only £19.99 plus tax) for company.

The basic plot of the book derives from several of the TV episodes, but connected together rather better. It starts at the beginning, or "The End" as Dwarfers know it,

and goes through duplicate Rimmers, the lethal Better Than Life computer game and the even-more-lethal Polymorph to the reversed world of Backwards.

It is not always easy to translate from one medium to another, but Grant Naylor has managed it. (Yes, I do know that Grant Naylor is really a combined Rob Grant & Doug Naylor.) From radio to written is difficult enough (the *HITCH-HIKER'S* series always seemed to work best on radio), but from TV to written is much harder, as the pictures disappear. Fortunately the authors' powers of description are up to the task. In some ways the book is better as Grant Naylor has given the special effects an improved budget of imagination. Highly recommended.

EAST OF EALING by Robert Rankin
Corgi, 283 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Sally-Ann Melia.

Robert Rankin's *EAST OF EALING* is the third in the "Brentford" Trilogy. *THE ANTIPOPE* told of the Devil in Brentford. *THE BRENTFORD TRIANGLE* told of an attack on Brentford by Space Aliens. *EAST OF EALING* tells of - wait for it - an evil credit card company that wants to do away with all cash in Brentford.

To fend off this third and ooh so fearsome foe, the brave lads from the Swan (the Swan, you may remember, is the local pub and the real hero in the Brentford saga, in the same way that the Queen Vic stars in *EAST ENDEKS*) call up the help of Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock who? Sherlock Holmes, who else!

This is not particularly funny. In fact it's rather complicated. Sherlock Holmes is kidnapped from someone's time machine to help out the Brentford worthies. The plot goes completely astray then the Swan collapses around its stoic part-time bartender Neville. How can a story based in a pub survive after the pub and publican have gone? Well, *EAST OF EALING* doesn't. More to the point, it is hard to get excited by a credit card initiative that I personally think would be an improvement on the current state of affairs.

So, a sorry finale to what had been a promising trilogy. Maybe if you really enjoyed the earlier novels - nah - *EAST OF EALING* is a disappointment.

MAGICIAN by Raymond E Feist
Grafton, 691 pp, £9.99, "C" format

Reviewed by Sharon Wright.

This New Revised Edition of *MAGICIAN* is essentially the same as the original apart from the addition of 15,000 extra words, and a few

minor revisions to make it fit properly with later books, and with the "Empire" trilogy, written with Janny Wurts.

For fans of the books these are welcome changes, as they remove minor irritations. For the already convinced reader, the revised edition is a good excuse to return to the world of Uidkemia, although probably not worth buying. For the uninitiated, this is as good a place to start as any. It has to be said, though, that if you didn't like the original, you won't like this one any more.

THE DRAGON KNIGHT by Gordon R Dickson
Grafton, 503 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is the sequel to the light fantasy *THE DRAGON AND THE GEORGE*, in which a man from our world finds himself in a magical version of 14th century England, in the body of a dragon! At the end of the previous book the hero, Jim Eckert, had returned to human form, but he decided to stay in the other world.

Six months later Jim unexpectedly starts to turn into a dragon at random. From the wizard S Carolinus he finds he must learn to use his magical powers, or they will start to use him. Unfortunately he has no time to practice for, as part of his feudal duties as Sir James, Baron de Bois de Malencontri et Riveroak, he must go with the army to France. If he turns into a dragon, he must then deal with the dragons of France as well.

The medieval society is very well done, with its realistically rigid social order. If a noble says "Hop", peasants start doing frog impressions. In this world dragons are social creatures as well, with their own nations and laws. When a dragon visits another country he has to take the most valuable gem from every dragon in his community as a guarantee of good behaviour. Collecting the gems is an adventure in itself, and if they are lost there is going to be serious trouble. A lightweight, enjoyable fantasy.

BEAUTY by Brian D'Amato
Grafton, 414 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by William McCabe.

Do not be confused by the Dean R Koontz blurb at the beginning, this is not a horror novel. I didn't find it even remotely frightening. It is true that it uses the kind of ideas that might have come out of an updated version of one of those mad scientist horror movies, but that seems to relate more to characterisation and plot than style.

First there's the central character, the "mad scientist" type, from whose extremely egocentric point of view the whole story is told (in first person, naturally). His name is Jamie Angelo, and he is an artist and under-the-counter plastic surgeon dealing in operations on slightly fading movie stars and models. Over the first few chapters he goes into extreme detail about one operation and the methods used. This is as close as the book gets to science fiction, because some of the procedures, techniques and substances used during surgery are almost certainly science fiction.

The next phase of the story involves Jamie's relationship with Jaishree (a stand-up comedienne), and his transformation of her into his ultimate face, a combination of every movie star/work of art you can think of. It transpires that one of the substances he used has been tampered with and Jamie goes into a bad impression of the Phantom of the Opera.

This book is a first class example of how to use first person narrative to build a character. It is probably quite good in its descriptions of plastic surgery. I can't, however, see why you'd want to read this book, unless you're an amateur writer looking for instruction, or a face-lift freak.

FRUITING BODIES AND OTHER FUNGI by Brian Lumley
ROC, 278 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Brian Lumley is a very prolific horror writer who is respected within the field but rarely read outside it, having never attained the stature of a Stephen King or a James Herbert. This collection contains stories from as early as 1968 to as recently as 1989. Many of them follow the traditional framework and many are told in the first person. The title story, "Fruiting Bodies" will make you feel differently about dry rot, and the longest in the book, "Born of the Winds", is written in a typical Lovecraftian style. Probably the one with most impact is "The Man who Photographed Beardsley." This book is probably of interest mainly to those who are already Lumley fans.

THE EDITOR SPEAKS:- These pages are a little shorter than you have become used to, aren't they? That's because the time has arrived to start hassling you again, about getting your reviews in on time. There are a fair number of over-due reviews, and only two of you have produced them at the meeting after the one at which you were given the books. It's time to get your fingers out, please.

PHANNISH FIZZICKS

by Al Johnston

*All you ever wanted to know about Life,
the Universe and Everything: Part 4.*

A lot of interest in particle physics currently centres on string theory. This tends to suggest that the Universe was not so much created as thrown together at the last minute. Boy Scouts have been called in at CERN to help string theorists identify any knots they find. Three sheet bends, a reef knot and a granny have been found so far. The so-called "Top Quark" is currently suspected to be a large bowline. As this trend proceeds "Rubber Sheet" models of the Universe are being replaced by ones made out of brown paper and sticky-back plastic. God, should He ever manifest Himself, will be awarded a Blue Peter badge; provisionally at least.

The idea behind string theories is that what had been thought of as particles exist as wave vibrations on bits of string. Not any old common or garden string, but string capable of withstanding tensions up to 10^{27} tons. This is not generally the sort of product you find at your local Do-it-All, as there are not many people who need to wrap up parcels measured in Angstrom units, and not many of those need to tie them tight enough to resist an H-Bomb explosion.

These strings are very small, approximately the Planck Length. (No, you don't get those sort of planks at Do-it-All either.) At the other end of the scale are "Cosmic Strings" which are believed to hold the galaxies together. Scaling up the analogy you would think that "Ropes" or "Hawsers" might be more appropriate terms but never mind, "Strings" they are.

A perennial problem in Physics is to explain gravity. The latest advances in string theory may at last shed some light on this problem. This comes along by expanding the string from one dimension to two, so that it becomes a thin strip. One solution of the differential equations for this situation leads to an adherent force on one face of the strip. This breakthrough was immediately christened "Sellotape Theory". Although this

shows the promise of incorporating Quantum effects, the acronyms GUT (Grand Unified Theory) or ToE (Theory of Everything) seemed inappropriate. The currently favoured name is "The Package". It's not much of a package, for while it has brown paper, sellotape and string, everyone is still looking for the ribbon and the patterned giftwrap, not to mention the card with "Happy 15 Billionth Birthday". No one has yet suggested looking in their local Do-it-All.

BRUM GROUP LASER DEATH HORROR !

We are organising a trip
to the
QUASAR Laser Combat Centre
to defeat the evil
Birmingham University
Storm Troopers.

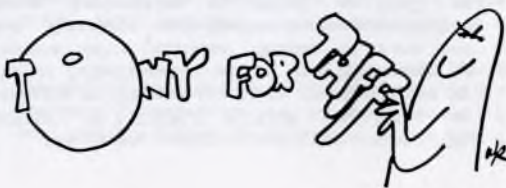
THE TIME: 7pm Friday 26 March

THE PLACE: QUASAR, New Street

THE COST: £2.50

If you are interested
speak to STEPHEN JONES at
the meeting on the
19th of March.

TONY FOR THE



BRUM GROUP NEWS

March 1993 Issue 258

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

GROUP CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, SECRETARY - HELENA BOWLES, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,
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ORDINARY MEMBER - MICK EVANS, NOVACON 23 CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON.

JOE HALDEMAN

will address the BSFG at a Special Meeting on
Friday 22nd January 1993, 8.00pm for 8.15pm
in the GEORGE STEPHENSON ROOM of the

HOTEL ARCADE

Ladywell Walk/Hurst Street in the city centre.

Admittance: Members £2.50 Visitors £3.75

Joe Haldeman's best known work is probably *THE FOREVER WAR*, closely followed by the more recent *THE HEMINGWAY HOAX*, other books include *MINDBRIDGE*, *ALL MY SINS REMEMBERED*, *WORLDS*, *THERE IS NO DARKNESS* (with Jack C Haldeman), *WORLDS APART*, *TOOL OF THE TRADE*, *BUYING TIME* (published in the UK as *THE LONG HABIT OF LIVING*), as well as his *STAR TREK* novels *PLANET OF JUDGEMENT* and *WORLD WITHOUT END*, plus his Attar series, *ATTAR'S REVENGE* and *WAR OF NERVES* (as Robert Graham).

Born Joseph William Haldeman in Oklahoma City on the 9 June 1943, his brother is Jack C Haldeman. Educated at the University of Maryland, College Park, BS in physics and Astronomy in 1967, graduate study at University of Iowa, M.F.A. After serving in the US Army where he was awarded the Purple Heart, he moved on to work as a teaching assistant at the University of Iowa and editor of *ASTRONOMY* before becoming a freelance writer in 1970. Treasurer of the Science Fiction Writers of America for two years, he picked up a Nebula Award in 1975, Hugos in 1976 & 1977, a Ditmar in 1976, the Galaxy award in 1978 and the Rhysling award in 1985.

{Many thanks to TWENTIETH-CENTURY SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS, third edition, for the above information.}