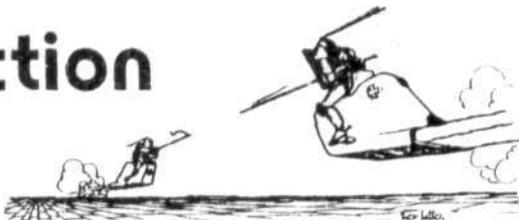


Birmingham Science Fiction Group

(Honorary Presidents: Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison)



NEWSLETTER 112

DECEMBER 1980

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the third Friday of each month at The Ivy Bush pub in Hagley Road, BUT everything is different this month, with Christmas looming, so see below for details. Our treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham 8.

DECEMBER MEETING - Friday 12th December from 7.30 pm until 12.30

- At the WHITE SWAN pub in Harborne Road, Edgbaston.

- This is our XMAS PARTY, a BEER & SKITTLES evening in the White Swan's own skittle alley, which we've hired for the evening. There will be a large and filling BUFFET. The cost is £3.00 per person, and entry is by ticket only. If you haven't already got your ticket you can do so from Andromeda Bookshop. Phone up and reserve your ticket NOW. Because final numbers for the buffet need to be known by Wednesday 10th December, no more tickets can be sold after that.

- Remember it's the SECOND Friday from 7.30 pm, with a bar extension until 12.30.

COME ALONG AND ENJOY YOURSELVES!!

PLEASE NOTE: there WON'T be a meeting on the THIRD Friday of December.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Julian Isaacs turned up with a great deal of impressive technical equipment designed to show electronically if anybody present had the slightest psycho-kinetic ability. He got us all to try spoon-bending, and three spoons were indeed bent during the evening—two apparently by the mental power of ladies and one by the persuasive fingers of the Brum Group's solicitor! A fascinating evening was had by all.

FORTHCOMING

* From January we'll be back at our regular meeting-place, THE IVY BUSH, on the corner of Hagley Road and Monument Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 16, which has been completely renovated and redecorated.

* In mid-January Philip Jose Farmer will be in Britain for a few days, and we are trying to get him to come and speak to us.

* On Friday 16th January will be our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, including the election of committee members for 1981. (See page 3 for details of the committee jobs.) Nominations are required now. There will also be an AUCTION that evening, so start sorting out your unwanted books, magazines, etc. This is the one meeting of the year with FREE ENTRY.

* In February our speaker will be KEN SLATER, who's been selling SF books for 30 years and involved with SF fandom for even longer.

DON'T MISS TUESDAY'S SIGNING SESSIONS. DETAILS INSIDE ON PAGE 2.

...NEWS...

WORLD FANTASY AWARD winners for 1980 were announced at the recent World Fantasy Convention in Baltimore, Maryland. These were: Life Achievement - Manly Wade Wellman; Best Novel - Watchtower by Elizabeth A. Lynn; Best Short Story - (tie) "The Woman Who Loved the Moon" by Elizabeth A. Lynn and "Mackintosh Willy" by Ramsey Campbell; Best Anthology / Collection - Amazone edited by Jessica Amanda Salmonson; Best Artist - Don Maitz; Special Award (professional) - Donald M. Grant; Special Award (non-professional) - Paul Allen.

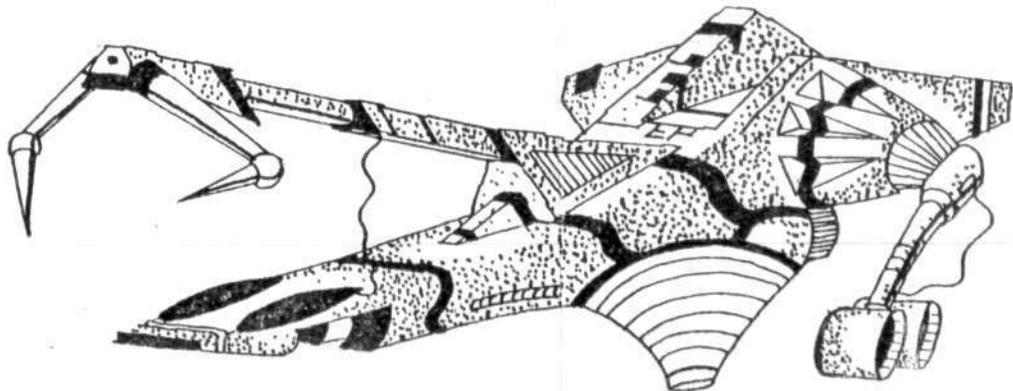
GALAXY magazine has folded after thirty years of existence. The publisher doesn't even have enough money to mail out copies of the last issue to subscribers. It is hoped that the magazine can be sold to another publisher. Galileo magazine, owned by the same publisher, has also folded.

DOUGLAS ADAMS will be signing copies of his new book The Restaurant at the End of the Universe in Birmingham on Tuesday 9th December. The signing session will be at Willie's Wine Bar in Summer Row, next door to the Andromeda Bookshop, between 5.30 and 7.30 pm. Andromeda will be open until at least 7.30 to allow you to buy a copy of the book that evening. The Restaurant at the End of the Universe is reviewed later in this month's newsletter.

PETER JONES will be signing copies of his magnificent new book Solar Wind (a large-format paperback of full-colour artwork) at the same time and place as Douglas Adams. Solar Wind is reviewed later in this issue.

BIRTHS: we had hoped to be able to announce in this issue that your treasurer had given birth to a litter of kittens. However, much to Malcolm's relief, Margaret Thorpe produced a 7lb 15oz girl on 1st December. She'll be called Helen. Mother, baby and father all seem to be doing well. Congratulations from the whole Brum Group. (Those of you who attended the November meeting may recall that Michael Guest dowsed the baby as a girl. ESP rides again!)

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION FILM SOCIETY's December programme will be on the SECOND Sunday of the month. That's December 14th, at 11.00 am at the Arts Lab cinema in Holt Street. The films are Dark Star, Flash Gordon's Rocket Ship and Hardware Wars. In January there won't be a film programme but there will be a Film Society A.G.M., on the evening of Friday 9th January at The Ivy Bush, Hagley Road. In just under a year's time the Film Society are putting on FILMCON 81, a convention dedicated to SF, fantasy and horror films. That will be over the weekend of 27-29th November 1981, at Birmingham's Grand Hotel. There'll be more films than you could possibly want to see over a single weekend, plus speeches, displays, a famous guest-of-honour and many other attractions. Attending membership is only £10. Details available from Chris Smith, 49 Humber Tower, Francis Street, Birmingham B7 4JX.



SITS VAC

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group has the following vacancies:

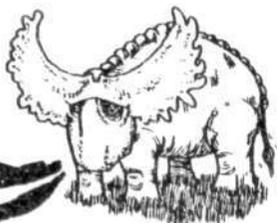
1. Dynamic, artistic person wanted to act as CHAIRMAN. Must have a sufficiently forceful personality to whip the committee into life and to keep order at meetings. Must be willing to write hundrede of begging letters each year to authors, publishers and scientists, urging them to come and speak to the group.
2. Energetic insomniac with strong fingers required for post of NEWS-LETTER EDITOR. Ability to read and write an advantage. Duties include personal delivery of all newsletters simultaneously.
3. Shorthanded typist, preferably male or female, wanted as SECRETARY. Ability to stay awake during committee meeting is a considerable advantage. Responsibilities include addressing hundreds of envelopes each month (most of them as "sir") and similar boring things.
4. Person able to count above ten needed to fill post of TREASURER. Successful applicants are not necessarily required to reproduce themselves during the year, though any such gimmicks aimed at increasing the number of members are encouraged. Must be able to keep the group solvent.
5. Male or female of great organisational ability wanted to pose nearly naked on a float in the Lord Mayor's Procession and act as PUBLICITY OFFICER. Must be willing to bully the media and to provide maximum exposure (for the group, of course).

This is not a subtle way of informing you that your committee is resigning en bloc, but just a reminder that at our A.G.M. in January there will be free and fair elections for all committee posts. If YOU are interested in filling any of these posts during 1981 please make your intentions known to any current committee member, preferably (though not essentially) in writing, with a named proposer. A little bit of competition at election time makes things more exciting and prevents people like me from becoming complacent about re-election.

A Merry Christmas
to all our readers

And a pretty
alien New
Year

Well, they mostly
are, aren't they?



ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP's top ten best selling paperbacks for November were:

1. The Road to Science Fiction vol 3 From Heinlein to Here edited by James Gunn,
 2. The Wounded Land - Stephen Donaldson,
 3. Profundis - Richard Cowper,
 4. Prison of Night (Dumarest 17) - E.C.Tubb,
 5. Wyst: Alastor 1716 - Jack Vance,
 6. Homeworld - Harry Harrison,
 7. Star Rigger's Way - Jeffrey A.Carver,
 8. Superfolks - Robert Meyer,
 9. The Sword and the Satchel - Elizabeth Boyer,
 10. Dragonworld - Byron Preiss & J.Michael Reaves.
- The top seller for December must be (from advance orders alone) The Restaurant at the End of the Universe - Douglas Adams.



SOLAR WIND by Peter Jones, Paper Tiger £5.25, 92 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Over the last seven years Peter Jones has produced some of the most startling and original cover art to appear on British SF books. Almost 100 pieces are reproduced here in full colour. His most familiar trademark is the exaggerated human figure---either male or female---which parodies older SF artwork. His range of subjects seems limitless; he tackles heroic fantasy scenes, aliens, planetscapes and space hardware with equal success and attention to detail. A flair for futuristic design combines with an imaginative use of colour to produce complex, exciting pictures. Stephen Bayley's introduction is both pretentious and ignorant, but the artwork is superb.

THE RESTAURANT AT THE END OF THE UNIVERSE by Douglas Adams, Pan 95 pence, 187 pages

Reviewed by Pauline E.Morgan.

This continues the narrative of the radio series The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy, begun in the book of that name. The outrageous wit carries an almost non-existent plot as the main characters ricochet across time and space. The humour dies away towards the end. It should, like the radio show, be taken in small weekly doses.

THE MIGHTY MICRO by Christopher Evans, Coronet £1.50, 255 pages

Reviewed by Malcolm Thorpe.

Read this TV series tie-in if you want to know all about the silicon chip revolution. It covers the history and present trends of computing, then extrapolates a future society featuring micro-computers in many forms. The computer buff will also find it useful, as it attempts to clarify the issue of artificial intelligence. I found the author over-enthusiastic, and some of his ideas contradictory, though the silicon chip's importance cannot be over-emphasised.

THE AWAKENING by Ronald Chetwynd-Hayes, Magnum £1.25, 224 pages

Reviewed by David C.Holmes.

Based on Bram Stoker's The Jewel of the Seven Stars, this story was used by Hammer for the film Blood From the Mummy's Tomb in 1971. Each adaptation gets worse. By the time we get to this film novelisation it has become utter rubbish.

LADY OF THE HAVEN by Graham Diamond, Magnum £1.50, 382 pages

Reviewed by Margaret Thorpe.

A well-written fantasy novel with credible characters and a fast-moving storyline. Stacy, Princess of the Empire (for a change, the heroine is not a busty sword-wielding female Conan) leads an expedition overseas to increase the Empire's territories. She is accompanied by allies of the Empire, including the leader of a pack of intelligent wolves. Note that the cover blurb is totally inaccurate.

THE GREY MANE OF MORNING by Joy Chant, Bantam distributed by Corgi £4.95, 332 pages

Reviewed by Pauline E. Morgan.

This mature fantasy novel is compulsive reading, set quite some time before Red Moon and Black Mountain (Joy Chant's earlier, juvenile novel), but in the same fantasy world. She tells of the events that lead to the change in relationship between the Horse People and the Golden People, the former having always willingly given tribute to the latter. Their contrasting societies and mores are interwoven delicately with the plot. The characters are all real people, and the storytelling is superb. Well worth reading.

AMBULANCE SHIP by James White, Corgi £1.25, 224 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Once more the familiar, good-hearted medics (some human, some alien) of James White's hospital in space embark upon a series of adventures. The mixture is as before, with the plots being exercises in medical detection. The object each time is to identify increasingly bizarre sentient aliens and cure them of their ailments. Collectors should note that this edition includes one story more than the US paperback.

THE EARTH BOOK OF STDRMGATE - 2 by Poul Anderson, NEL £1.00, 159 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Don't let the title confuse you: this is War of the Wing-Men, Anderson's often-reprinted novel from 1958 in which Nicholas van Rijn sorts out some uppity flying aliens. It's a good story, and is already in print as a British paperback from Sphere Books.

GALACTIC WARLORD by Douglas Hill, Piccolo 80 pence, 127 pages

Reviewed by Chris Smith.

Keill Randor is out on his own, with a bad case of radiation poisoning. Life is hard for this legionary as his hunt for the person who destroyed his home world takes him from one end of the galaxy to the other. This is intended for children, and brings to mind a certain Perry Rhodan. Good stuff for kids.

GALACTIC CLUSTER by James Blish, Granada £1.25, 255 pages; MISSION TO THE HEART STARS by James Blish, Granada 95 pence, 127 pages

Reviewed by Chris & Pauline Morgan.

Galactic Cluster is an important collection of 6 hard-science stories, including "Common Time" (about relativity), "Beep" (about interstellar communication, and later expanded into the novel The Quincunx of Time) and the novella "Beanstalk" (about artificially bred giant humans, this is half of the novel Titan's Daughter). Recommended. Mission to the Heart Stars (the sequel to The Star Dwellers) is a short novel for young people, with the message that the human way of life is best if we work at it. The main characters travel to the centre of the galaxy, but nothing really happens.

"No, officer. I'm just hanging around until Douglas Adams gets here."



NOT TO MENTION CAMEIS by R.A.Lafferty, Dobson £5.25, 215 pages
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

"But there are no other people!... There are a dozen or so people. That is all. And they are repeated billions and billions of times." And to prove it R.A.Lafferty follows a chain of deaths and reincarnations across several worlds. Superhuman archetypes reappear; only their names have been slightly changed. In his typical, inimitable fashion Lafferty depicts cult-creation and apocalypse. There is truly exciting writing here; there is torture and dismemberment; there are also over-long discussions of dismaying depth. Recommended if you enjoy a difficult read.

THE AITORAN CREED by Terrence Cockburn, Dobson £5.25, 233 pages
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

A colony planet is populated by rampant feminists who treat men as second-class citizens and are disgusted by the mention of heterosexuality. But a young, strong, handsome, amazingly intelligent hero (who even has flashes of psi power) upsets the system. There's quite a lot of action in this wish fulfilment fantasy, but a conspicuous lack of subtlety.

RODERICK by John Sladek, Granada £6.95, 348 pages
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

John Sladek attempts to show that a robot can (despite its metal body) grow up mentally and go to school like a human boy. The attempt is never wholly successful, yet the novel is intricate and brilliant, with superb examples of black comedy as the author satirises everything in sight. Too many zany characters reappear briefly every fifty pages or so, fragmenting the narration and defying the reader to remember where they fit in. This is a novel full of snippets: individually they are mostly very good; in such profusion they eventually become tiresome.

THE STAR-CROSSED by Ben Bova, Magnum £1.25, 224 pages
Reviewed by Vernon Brown.

To restore the sagging ratings of his 3D TV network, Bernard Finger decides to produce "Romeo & Juliet in Outer Space"---which precis sets the tone of a novel about a society with earthquake-avoiding rocket skyscrapers, perfumed pink smog and new bodies for old. Not straight enough to grip or comic enough to amuse, this is definitely not one of Bova's best.

ONCE UPON A GALAXY: A Journal of the Making of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
by Alan Arnold, Sphere £1.25, 277 pages
Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

There is so much 'spin-off' from STAR WARS (and other big SF movies): from Production Art Portfolios to Yoda's Book of Yoga (?). What can one say about yet another addition except that if you are one of the many people who thirst after every intimate detail of the making of this film and its actors, you can't miss this one...

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Editorial Notes

As another year prepares to bite the dust I'd like to thank all those who've helped to make my task a little easier: reviewers, article-writers, artists and, not least, the twenty-two publishers who have been good enough to send review copies. Artwork this issue is by Ivor Latto (p.1), Phill Probert (pp.2 & 6) and Euan Smith (pp.3 & 7). The fancy titling was done by Rog Peyton. News items were, as usual, culled from Locus. My "Nelson" reference last month foxed you all. It referred to the newsletter number, 111. That, as all those who've ever listened to cricket commentaries on the radio should know, is known as "Nelson"---a dreaded score at which England traditionally loses a wicket. You're lucky I can't think of anything equally erudite and boring about the number 112. Season's greetings from Chris Morgan, 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, B'ham 29.