

# The Birmingham Science Fiction Group

Honorary presidents: BRIAN ALDISS and HARRY HARRISON.

Number 141

MAY 1983

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group has its formal meeting on the third Friday of each month in the upstairs room of the Ivy Bush pub on the corner of Hagley Road and Monument Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 16. There is also an informal meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at the Old Royal pub on the corner of Church Street and Cornwall Street, Birmingham, 3. (Church Street is off Colmore Row.) New members are always welcome. Membership rates are £3.50 per person, or £5.50 for two people at the same address. The treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2NJ.

**MAY MEETING.** Friday May 20 at 7:45 pm.

"Question Time" with Lawrence 'Robin Day' Miller and his intrepid team; Margaret Thorpe, Simon Norburn, Bob Vernon and Stan Eling. They will endeavour to answer any devious question on SF you care to throw at them.

This month's Chinese meal will take place as usual. In an effort to avoid last month's unfortunate mishap, Margaret Thorpe will take the names of those intending to attend the meal, at the door.

Admission: Members 30p, Non-members 60p.

COMING SOON

**JUNE** — BARRINGTON J. BAILEY — author of Soul of the Robot (1974), in which a robot searches the Earth for the meaning of a soul, and to discover if he has one.

## CONTEMPORARY SF AUTHORS

.....is a ten-week course that has already gone under way. Meetings are held on Wednesdays at 7.30 to 9.30 pm at Winterbourne, 58 Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham B15. The tutor is our own Chris Morgan, and the fee for the whole course is £8.00. It may be less as the course has started, best ask Chris for details.

May 25 — Anne McCaffrey.

June 1 — Philip K. Dick.

June 8 — Frederik Pohl.

June 15 — J.G. Ballard and Christopher Priest.

# Letters:

If you have any grievances, interesting news, etc. then this is the place for them. Anything you have to say to the group, then please feel free to write; this is your voice.

CHRIS DONALDSON.

46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds LS11 6PY.

"It ~~was~~ nice to read Pete's chairman's report in the newsletter, especially where he asks "...do we have the....commitment to run Novacon....?" I'd like to ask in return 'Do we have the commitment to GO to Novacon?'

Last year, very few of the members of the convention were from the Brun group. So far this year, it's pretty much the same picture, with only a few Brun group members signed up. If, as Pete insisted at the E.G.M. recently, Novacon is a convention run by Brun group members for Brun group members, where are you all?

This year's Novacon will be a memorable experience (as they all have been up to now!) We're trying to alter the programme a little to make sure everyone will find something of interest.

Why not come along — you might enjoy it."

(( Chris is registrations secretary for Novacon 13, so she is the one to send your money to.))

PAUL OLDROYD.

46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds LS11 6PY.

"Thanks for the latest BSFG newsletter. I like the new format — it's newsy, still retains the reviews section, but is becoming more like a fanzine, especially with the introduction of a letters column which should ensure that important items receive a wide airing. I don't know about anyone else out there, but the first thing I always read when a fanzine arrives is the locs.

The main reason I'm writing this now is to comment on Pete Weston's remarks about Novacon in the current issue. His points about there being a wealth of conventions to choose from these days are very true; in fact many people that I have talked to have said that if they have to miss any conventions these days it will be Novacon because it is so predictable. Certainly, the thing that came over very strongly at Albacon is that you have to sell your convention these days, which means getting pictures of past cons, printed flyers and large registration desk signs up at every con that happens. We've become far too complacent that Novacon will simply just happen, and this year that means that registrations are down approximately 50% on previous years membership at a comparable time.

I think that Pete's statement that Novacon is a local con run by a local group has not been strictly accurate for some time; it was the first 'local' con, and as such became the second national con, with national committees for most recent years. However, with the proliferation of local cons, it's probably about time that Novacon resumed this status in fact, rather than in theory. If Pete's plans work out, you should have a local committee set up for next year, and will have to compete with others for registrations. That means trying to offer something different from everyone else — something we're trying to do this year — and also having somebody with experience of conventions to lead the committee. If you can't generate the enthusiasm within the BSFG for this, then I would disagree with Pete about removing Novacon from the convention map. It would probably be best to do what the Keele University Group did with Unicon — put it up for bidding in a similar manner to Eastercon bids.

Anyone wanting to get a feel of Novacon from the point of view of running it could do little better than offer to be a Gopher this year. We're always short of enough people to handle the Ops side of the con, and Gophering certainly affords you a unique view of the 'crisis management' of a con.

To digress — is anything happening about the idea of a 'mini-con' in the summer of '84? The last that the BSFG ran (the tenth anniversary party) was excellent, and I know that Pete was enthusiastic about staging another. Has he managed to enthuse a committee into existence?

Finally, a plug for Seacon '84. This is next year's Eastercon, and we hope to produce something that will be unforgettable. Our GoH is ISAAC ASIMOV; we're having the con directly after World SF holds its pre-Easter meetings in the same hotel, and many authors will be staying on the con; this year we have Eurocon combined with Eastercon, and will have many European (both East and West) guests, and will be running a Eurocon programme in addition to others. Rush £7 immediately to Pauline Morgan for attending membership."

((Pauline's address is, 321 Sarehole Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AL.))

STEVE GREEN.

11 Fox Green Crescent, Birmingham, B27 7SD.

"Ta very much for the kind words in the latest newsletter; I may be biased (heck, I am biased), but I think the party went very well, thanks also to the contribution of the ex-Exeter Group, who proffered advice on treatment of the real ale, carted much of it back to my room and even donated a few bottles. They'll also be in evidence at Novacon '83, which bodes well for the party there on the Friday night (the opening shot in N13's alternative programme)."

## Things to come

May 27-30.

SOL III — the fifteenth official Star Trek convention. Held at The Grand Hotel, Birmingham.

July 29-31.

BECCON. Held at Essex Crest Hotel, Basildon. Attending membership is £7 and supporting membership is £3. Details from The Beccon Committee, c/o 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middx. UB5 4BU.

September 2-4.

UNICON 4, at the University of Essex, Colchester. Fan-guest-of-honour is Ken Slater, with special guest, Gary Kilworth. Attending membership is £6, supporting is £3.

September 17-18.

THE CON WITH NO NAME. (Mediacon.) At the Leeds Dragonara Hotel. Attending membership is £10. Details from C/O 111 Chestnut Grove, Conisborough, South Yorks.

September 23-25.

INVENTION — at the Glasgow Central Hotel. GoH is Chris Boyce, with Jim Barker as fan GoH. Attending membership is about £9. Write to V. J. Docherty at 20 Hillington Gardens, Cardonald, Glasgow G25 for further details.

NOVEMBER 4-6.

NOVACON 13. GOH is LISA TUTTLE. Attending membership is £7 and £3.50 for supporting membership. Send your loot to Chris Donaldson. (Address on locs page.)

# News~

((An URGENT plea from Dean Bisseker.))

Dear Members, I don't know what I have done to them, but for some reason the Birmingham Junior Chamber have decided to hold this year's Lord Mayor's procession on the day after our next meeting — ie. Saturday May 21. Therefor if you would like to be on the float or help in any way, please let me know as soon as possible on 553-5879. (Like NOW.)

The first Philip K. Dick Memorial Award for the best original paperback of 1982 was awarded to Rudy Rucker for Software — a computer-orientated novel.

Granada has been bought by William Collins for £7.9 million. Collins also owns Fontana and a third of Pan, making them the second largest publishers.

DAME REBECCA WEST died in March at the age of ninety. Dame West wrote for The Freewoman — a radical feminist journal, in 1911 and one fantasy novel Harriet Hume; A London Fantasy, published in 1929. She lived with H.G. Wells for ten years.

MAX EHRLICH died in February, aged seventy-three. He wrote scripts for TV, including Star Trek. He is best remembered for his novel The Big Eye. (1949)

The American SF magazine, The Twilight Zone (no relation to The Twilight Zine!) is holding its third annual short story competition. First prize is \$500, second \$300, and third \$200. Entries must be from those who have not sold fiction before; of 2000 words or less, and typewritten. The deadline is September 1 1983 and the address to send entries to is; Story Contest, TZ Publications Inc., 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

BSFA awards 1983:

Novel — BRIAN ALDISS for Halliconia Spring (Cape)  
Short Story — KIETH ROBERTS for Kitemaster (Interzone)  
Media — Bladerunner.  
Artist — TIM WHITE.

Seen in the May issue of the Cosmopolitan:

"DORIS LESSING is ..... using deep, outer space as a metaphor to send us up so high that we may never come down again. The Sentimental Agents In The Volyen Empire is the latest in her series of astro-intellectual investigations — a sort of E.T. Ph D." ((Yeuck!))

The first Scottish Book of the Year award of £1,000 went to ALASDAIR GRAY for his fantasy novel Lanark. (Granada.)

The editor of Matrix, the newzine of the British Science Fiction Association, is now Simon Polley.

The Solihull SF Group meetings schedule:

May 8: Meeting at the Red House, Hermitage Road, 7pm. De ate on media SF.  
May 22: Probable daye for trip to see DARK CRYSTAL. (But please check.)  
Future events: Wargaming session, trip to see HHGTTG, etc. The Twilight Zine (number four) should be out now, including humour by Bob Shaw and fiction by Gary Kilworth. As usual £1 for six issues and group membership to STEVE GREEN, 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7SD.

((Some film news from Steve Green.))

The first accurate adaptation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan, Hugh Hudson's Graystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes, should be on release by Christmas. Hudson, whose previous Chariots of Fire won four Oscars, including best film, launched principal photography in equatorial Cameroon in November and recently completed seven weeks of intensive shooting on the vast jungle stage at Elstree. The crew is currently filming at historic Hatfield House, which appears in the movie as the ancestral home of the Earl of Grey-stoke, Tarzan's grandfather (played by Sir Ralph Richardson). The title role is taken by newcomer Christopher Lambert, whilst Jane is played by Andie MacDowell. After the abysmal Bo Derek vehicle, this should please the ERB enthusiasts no end.

# Reviews:

Once again there is only one review this month. I was sent only one review copy, of The Destroyers of Lan-Kern by Peter Tremayne. But this was reviewed in the newsletter when it came out in paperback.

SPLIT INFINITY by Piers Anthony, Granada £1.95, 382 pp.

Stile has it. Style, that is. The Person of Restricted Growth who is Anthony's hero combines strength, grace and intelligence in a sort of abridged version of Batman. Minus the cape, because Stile is a serf and serfs don't wear clothes. But someone on the SF world of Proton wants him dead. On the parallel fantasy world of Phaze, several more someones have the same ambition. Who will win? And what of the machines? Stile is a likeable hero battling logic and the fantastic, each on its own world. A book of contrasts this: androids or sword-and-sorcery, mechanical and fleshly, self-determinism, witty and amusing, Split Infinity should keep you up late (it did me). Roll on volumes one and two.

Reviewed by Anne Gay.

## Andromeda Top ten

1. Friday by Robert Heinlein. (NEL)
2. Dr. Who: Timeflight by Peter Griawade. (Star)
3. Forest of Doom by Ian Livingstone. (Puffin)
4. The Citadel of Chaos by Steve Jackson. (Puffin)
4. The Non-Born King by Julian May. (Pan)
6. Unacompanied Sonata by Orson Scott Card. (Futura)
6. The Golden Torc by Julian May. (Pan)
8. Bill, The Galactic Hero by Harry Harrison. (Puffin)
9. Insider by Christopher Evans. (Granada)
10. FAMILIAR SPIRIT BY LISA TUTTLE. (NEL)  
((D on't forget, Lisa is this year's GoH at Novacon!))

## New paperbacks

RAYMOND BRIGGS — When The Wind Blows.  
(Penguin, £1.95)

PETER PRINGLE & WILLIAM ARKIN — S.I.O.P.  
(Sphere, £2.95)

ROBERT BLOCH — Psycho II. (What an original title!)  
(Corgi, £1.50)

Return of The Jedi.

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY — The Mists of Avalon.

ORGILL & GRIBBEN — Brother Esau.  
(Sphere, £1.75)

ROBIN BROWNE — Shark.  
(Sphere, £1.75)

((All these are due out this month.))

# Fanzines

This month we have the first of many fanzine reviews by Steve Green.

## THE STAINLESS STEEL WRIT

There are two real reasons for writing a fanzine review column; every member of fandom knows them, but like the Emperor's New Clothes, as long as no one says anything, the pretence survives. The first is the opportunity it offers to rip hoes in other fan's efforts from the safety (and probable hypocrisy) of your own; the second, slightly more important to newer members of the True Faith, is the sudden influx of fanzines the reviewer can allegedly expect (it never works out quite that way, I promise; fandom has a very simple remedy for freeloaders: indifference).

But since I'm never loath to proffer my criticism of colleagues' fanzines (or appreciation, for that matter) and I already receive virtually every literate excursion into print, why this column? Well, you can blame Uncle Peter; seems he thinks BSPGers left au fait with the inner workings of the underground publishing empire could do with a few pointers to steer them towards the worthwhile zines and away from the crap sadly still as prevalent today as when I read my first zine in the mid-70's, a kind of Which Fanzine?, and thinking it over, Pete may have a point. So here it is, in no way a vehicle for in-depth criticism, but merely encapsulated comments on recent releases; the rest is up to you.

NABU 13.....Light but distracting mix of humour (John Brosnan dredging

the Granada slushpile for the kind of crud which makes Number of the Beast seem almost readable) and critical insight (Phil Palmer on performance 'art'); even includes an unbelievable sexist crack I can't recall making in the first place. Solid if unchallenging.

THIS NEVER HAPPENS 3.....One of the better fanzines to tread the limbo between SF fandom and comidom, presently weathering some hard-hitting criticism over the co-editors' penchant for mixing unconnected artwork and text on the same pages (personally I wouldn't mind so much if the illist-reations were up to scratch, which the majority are not); the centre pages are devoted to a Venn diagram of fandom which manages to completely ignore the Birmingham and Solihull contingent, but more thought is apparant in the remainig articles, which tend towards the personal insight (Pam Wells on school life, Christina Lake on her Catholicism, Lilian Edwards on art, Dave Langford on fandom as a religion (shome mishtake surely?)). A good mix, evolving promisingly.

SHRAFF 1.....Very much the archetypal first ish, slight, unassuming and frankly rather forgettable. Movies, fanzines, wargaming, swimming; all are skimmed but none truely explored in this personalzine without a personality.

TIGER TEA 1.....Superb cocktail of contributions to that bastion of feminism, the Women's APA, which only goes to show that its members have nothing to worry about emerging into the mainstream of fandom. Linda Pickersgill chats about apas, Joy Hibbert interviews Angela Carter from a feminist viewpoint, Pat Charnock talks frankly about post-natel depression; terrific stuff. Ah, ifonly we men could be so open about our innermost thoughts.

All of the above are available for "the usual" (contributions, letters of comment, trade copies of your own zine, return postage, bottles of vodka, etc) from the following address:

Nabu — IAN MAULE, 5 Beaconsfield Road, New Malden, Surrey.

This Never Happens — CHRISTINA LAKE and LILLIAN EDWARDS, 20a Chatsworth Parade, Queensway, Petts Wood, Kent.

Shraff — DAVE ROWLEY — 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

Tiger Tea — LINDA PICKERSGILL — 7a Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London.

((There are also two new fanzines out by Brum Group members. Sic Buiscuit Disintergraf is by JOY HIBBERT at 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. And The Many Tales of Zoltan is a zine made up of cartoons by PHILL PROBERT at 32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham B37 6JE. ))

## ONE NEW MEMBER, A C-O-A, AND THE END

425. JAMES STEEL. 35/220 Griffin Close, Bristol Road South, Birmingham.

### Change-of-Address:

PHILL PROBERT AND EUNICE PEARSON now live at "Ballard's View", 32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham B37 6JE.

The above address is, of course, the new editorial address. Thanks for news etc. go to Matrix, Cosmopolitan, Locus, and the Albacon II progress report 2. Artwork this issue is by Phill Probert, once again. It was planned to have our chairman's report on American SF groups, but alas, that was not to be. Next time perhaps? I am very sorry for ommiting to mention that last month's issue was printed by TIM STANNARD. Thanks Tim. See you next issue.

