

BRUM GROUP

NEWS

December
1989

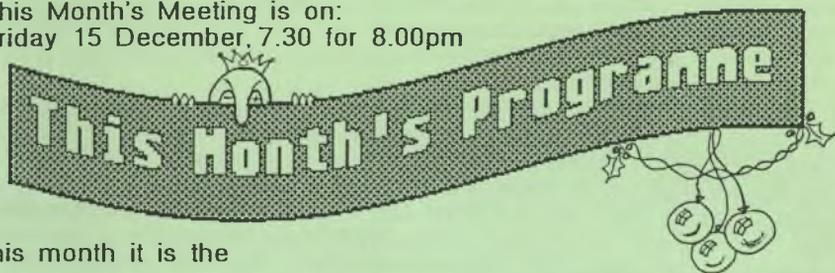
Issue
No.219

The monthly Newsletter of the
BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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

1989 Committee: Chairman - Bernie Evans Secretary - Chris Murphy
Treasurer - Chris Chivers Newsletter Editor - Dave Hardy Reviews Editor -
Mick Evans Publicity Officer - Helena Bowles Novacon 19 - Martin Tudor

This Month's Meeting is on:
Friday 15 December 7.30 for 8.00pm



This month it is the

Christmas Party

As last year, the Party is being held in the Senior Common Room at Aston University. (Don't worry - there's no 'academic' atmosphere! It has its own Bar, etc....) It will be a good evening - bring your friends.

A few tickets are still available at only £3.00 each, including a good Buffet Meal, music, and all sorts of surprise items, with the chance to win valuable prizes: send your cheque or postal order to our Treasurer, c/o Bernie & Mick's address, below.

The BSFG meets on the third Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) at the PENGUIN (ex LADBROKE) HOTEL, New Street, Birmingham at 7.45 pm. Subscription rates: £6.00 per person (£9.00 for two members at same address)

Cheques etc. payable to the BSFG, via the Treasurer, c/o the Chairman (below).

Book Reviews to Mick Evans at 7 Grove Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7UY (Telephone 021-707 6606), which is also the Chairman's address.

Other contributions and enquiries to Dave Hardy, 99 Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AB (telephone 021-777 1802, fax 021-777 2792)

Last Month

Harry Harrison

Judging from the size of the audience, there can be very few people who need a review of this meeting (though our guest noticed the absence of a few faces - I won't report the stories he told about them; it's their own fault for not coming...).

It's difficult, anyway, to condense a HH talk, since he hardly uses a prepared script, and his talk is punctuated by sounds like "Kkkkkkkkkccchhhrrummm" (I hope that is spelt correctly). First, Bernie handed over to Rog Peyton to Chair the evening, since he and Harry have known each other for some 25 years. There then followed a discussion of when and where they first met, with a convention at Harrogate coming out on top. Harry said his introduction to cons was there, but Brum quickly took over. Having been in Britain for only ten years, he was not yet used to its food, and was amazed to be charged 1s 9d (I don't know - get out your calculator) for cheese and tomato sandwiches. So he and some other fans came up with the idea of buying some meat pies at 6p each and selling them to fans at 9p. For some reason they were suspicious! Then Brian Burgess took over, and this became a fannish tradition.

A few years ago Harry was GoH at a con in Chicago, and was in the middle of his speech when who should come rolling up the aisle towards him but Brian Burgess... (He didn't relate whether Brian was selling pies.)

Another occasion which involved Birmingham was when Harry was hoping to sell the film rights to *The Stainless Steel Rat*. A couple of 'film touts' wanted him to sign the contract, but he was at the Royal Angus for a Novacon that weekend and suggested that they meet him in Birmingham. That was quite outside their experience. "Where is it?", they asked. Apparently they were quite impressed that such a large city existed outside London, though.

Then came some gossip about other SF writers (mainly American). Alan Nourse (MD), who is the same age as Harry, has had a triple bypass heart operation, and so has Avram Davidson. Charles Platt has a girlfriend in LA. Harry then related how, at a US con, Charles came up to him screaming "Jerry Pournelle wants to kill me!". Having first said "Good!", then tried to calm him down, Harry located Jerry and asked him about it. Jerry confirmed that he did indeed intend to kill Charles. But why? "He called me a fascist." Harry: "But you *are* a fascist!" Etc.

Harry talked to Poul Anderson after the San Fransisco earthquake, and learned that the SF community, at least, seems to have come through unscathed. With Harry around, though, who needs an earthquake?

The 1990 Committee

At the beginning of the last meeting, Rog hotly denied that he is standing for Chairman in 1990. **But who is?** All Committee posts are open, and only one or two of the present Committee are standing for re-election.

There are vacancies for Secretary, Newsletter & Reviews Editors, Publicity Officer... But anyone can stand for any post. **YOU?**

Contents of this issue (c) 1989 The Birmingham Science Fiction Group, on behalf of the contributors, to whom all rights revert on publication. Personal opinions expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Committee or the Group.

Thanks to Tim Groomer for artwork, to Martin for the Jophan Report, and to all book reviewers.



1989 - THE OVERVIEW by Bernie Evans - Chairman

Well, here we are at the end of yet another SFnal year, and Dave wants a "Chairman's Bit" for the newsletter. What can I say that hasn't been said before? NOTHING, so he's getting a review of the year instead.

We've had quite a varied mix this year, with "filthy pros", both world-famous and up-and-coming, accounting for seven out of the twelve meetings (including one "special") held so far this year. We got off to a flying start with Terry Pratchett giving us a bumper attendance in February, in fact, it was the best of the year. Others who've been kind enough to come along and talk to us, and with us were, in no particular order, C.J.Cherryh, Harry Harrison, Dave Gemmell, Stephen Lawhead, Neil Gaiman and Jack Cohen,

We've also has a fair sprinkling of "home-grown" events, with a panel of book-sellers to tell us how badly off they are in the field!!, a debate with Birmingham University SF Group, which we won, an absorbing video presentation from Dave Hardy, all about how men walked on the Moon, and how the film-makers THOUGHT it would be done. Last, but by no means least, We had loads of fascinating tips from Chris Morgan on how to be a writer, We also had something we've never had before, an auction in aid of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, at which we decided to do with a selection of books given to us by one of their local organisers. I was pleased to see that was a great success, thanks, of course, to a certain Mr Peyton and his auctioneering skills.

We mustn't forget the Lions v Christians - oops, I mean the AGM back in January, and the re-match in March. I hope you're all ready for the next thrilling episode this coming January.

That just leaves me to remind you all about the Christmas Buffet and fun evening this month at Aston University, If you haven't booked yet it isn't (quite) too late, just give me a ring on 021 707 6606 in the evening, I hope we'll see many of you there,

NOVACON 19: A CONREP By Mick Evans

Novacon's move from the Angus, although forced on the Committee by circumstances, proved to be a great success, The staff at the Excelsior were friendly and enthusiastic, and a good atmosphere prevailed throughout the weekend, Guest of Honour Geoff Ryman proved to be an interesting choice, with a long interview on the Friday evening and his stage presentation of "Gilgamesh" on Saturday, assisted by a very skilful Indian Dancer. This was a real challenge for the Ops/Tech team, and was very successful, Well done to all concerned.

The programme was varied, with plenty of hard science courtesy of Patrick Collins, Dave Hardy and Stephen Gould, who did an excellent job of standing in for Jack Cohen at very short notice,

A personal favourite of mine was a panel item "Lucy in the Sky with Dick", With Greg Pickersgill, Chris Stocks and Dave Packwood debating the merits and influence of Philip K. Dick, with some fascinating personal insights from John Brunner.

The theme of the Con was the Music, the Science and the Fiction of the 60s, with the Fashion of the era also getting a look-in at the Opening Ceremony. Each member of the Committee was dressed in the fashions of the 1960s, but Bernie Evans managed to get the Century wrong, and came on as an 1860s Queen Victoria!!

Variety, and the music ingredient, was added by Pam Wells's 60s Pop Quiz, which entertained the audience for over an hour, and there was also a 60s Disco on the Saturday night. The Excelsior's two full-sized snooker tables were put to good use thanks to Stephen Tudor, who organised a tournament. (I won't go into detail about my own performance!),

It was altogether an enjoyable weekend: Novacon seems to go from strength to strength.



Competition Time!

The Christmas issue of the Newsletter has, almost by tradition, contained a competition (or two) by Stan Eling. This issue is no exception... Stan puts a lot of effort into these, and they are worth the effort of 'having a go' - so do; there are prizes! Entries to me at the Party, or by post by 10 January 1990.

COMPETITION NO.1:

This is a 'Doublet' of a Word Chain, after the style of Lewis Carroll. The idea is to change the word **SPACE** into the word **SHIPS** by a series of link words. Each interposing word must differ from the next by one letter only; all words must be English; and the letters must not be interchanged among themselves. Stan did it in 28 steps - can you do it in less?

Simple example (for the simple).

To change PIG into STY in five steps:

PIG
WIG
WAG
WAY
SAY
STY

The winner will be the person who does it in 28 steps or less. In the case of a tie, a sudden-death playoff will be held at the January meeting.

COMPETITION NO.2:

This is a 'Double Acrostic', and starts with a little story, which goes like this:

Professor Ont Sew had been saving up his leave and ackers for many years to enable him to make this trip, and now that he was here in the Arcanarium of City City just five miles from the North Magnetic Pole, he could hardly believe it. Before him in seemingly endless rows stretched the cases of cryptograms, enigma and rebuses of fifty-one generations. Ah, where to begin his study?

Then, as if reading his thoughts, a voice from just behind said: "At the beginning, of course!" He turned to face the speaker, who was none other than the world-renowned curator Cni Revonrut Elppa. The Professor introduced himself and said that a copy of an early 20th century Double Acrostic would do nicely to pass the evening. Elppa now produced from one of the blue cabinets a dry, brown Spp which contained just what the Professor desired. A copy was quickly furnished, and working on the solution gave him much pleasure.

The poem printed below is what the Professor received. The first two verses define the two 'uprights' to be discovered, by taking the initial and final letters of the answers to the subsequent verses.

You want a 'for instance'? Well, suppose we had one with six verses, to which the answers were:

Verse 1: FRED
Verse 2: POHL
Verse 3: FLAP
Verse 4: ROCOCO
Verse 5: EARTH
Verse 6: DECIBEL

then the last four verses would have made words (any length) which started and ended with the 'uprights' FRED and POHL, thus:

F LA P
R OCOC O
E ARTH H
D ECIBEL L

Here's the Prof's poem:

*I entered one in great decay
Out there among the Milky Way
Moored in some celestial bay*

*There goons did go around in drag
and actors you could never gag
Did march about and wave the flag*

*One distributed to each and all
Sheaves of paper large and small
"The text," said he. "The play's a ball."*

*The general meaning was quite clear
Acting being their career
A normal-voiced man raised a cheer*

*The overture was not played slow
With many trumpet blasts, and lo
A white-haired man began the show*

*Then cattle too were herded in
Unbroken horses and their kin
And riding these did make a din*

*One rider was unseated twice
Till introduced on sound advice
To iron hoop, just the device*

*The chief female upon the boards
Dealt with many hideous hordes
With two jewelled and gleaming swords*

*While he who took another's role
By mimicry did reach his goal
Complete with greasepaint, wig and kohl*

*The tragic ending to the play
Left my thoughts in disarray
And evokes pity to this day.*

Go on - it's not that difficult!

NEWSFILE

News and Gossip from the world of SF, including Martin Tudor's celebrated JOPHAN REPORT.

If you have any information, don't keep it to yourself - send it in. (This does mean YOU) (Yes - YOU!)

THE SAGA CONTINUES...

Because our meeting was a week early due to Novacon, there was no time to update my report on those publishing delays (Pan/NEL/Intermediate *Reptile Critical Wave*) etc. I said that I had received no complaints or explanations from publishers - but the day after we went to press I received a letter from Kathy Gale of Pan. It is too long to publish here now, but basically she denies acting in petty self-interest or against the interests of Brian Stableford (whose books were delayed). A day or so later I received from Dave Langford a copy of a letter from Humphrey Price of NEL saying that Dave's article had not upset *him*...

I'm sure that no-one seriously believes that Kathy had any sinister motives; I have since met her (and Brian), at Novacon, (she even offered to buy me a drink, but perhaps I shouldn't mention that in case someone suggests bribery), and I hope that we can now 'consider this correspondence closed'.

I also said that my own new book, *Visions of Space*, had been delayed, jeopardising various signing sessions. I am glad to report that copies did arrive at Andromeda in the nick of time, I've had my final advance, and, apart from the fact that review copies seem to be rather late, all is well!

The Christmas Party:

There will be chances for everyone to win valuable prizes, one of which will be Dave Hardy's brand new, highly illustrated book, *Visions of Space*, published at £16.95, donated by the author. (See review) Many more, too!



"TO HELL WITH PHONING HOME!"

A NASTY HUMOUR

The latest issue of *Conrunner* (a sort of fanzine for people who run conventions) contains a letter by Helen McCarthy, of London, referring to a report that Brum Group members have been 'slagging off' Eastcon 90, and actively working for its failure. She describes us as 'stupid and mean-spirited', and suggests that something 'nasty, orchestrated and sustained' is going on - perhaps because we are 'just peeved that a successful bid was made for a con on our patch without asking our permission first'.

I bet you are as surprised as I am to know about all this! Does any member recognise him/herself, or know anything at all about this 'orchestrated effort to make Eastcon 90 fail, and persuade people not to go'? Personally (and this *is* a personal note, not a Committee entry - though I'm sure they agree with me), I find it the biggest load of rubbish I've read in a long time...

Helen mentions that we apparently objected to the original Birmingham venue (the Clarendon Suite) because the Hagley Road is a 'dangerous main road and a hangout for local prostitutes', and points out that the same could be said about Liverpool's Lime Street, but no Brum Group member objected to the Adelphi when Follycon was held there.

She obviously misses the real objection that some of our members did make at the bid for Eastcon to be held in Brum - that it would be necessary to cross the main road in order to get from one part of the con to another. That doesn't apply to the Adelphi, and the majority of Brum Group members are pleased about the change of venue, simply because we know our 'patch' and prefer to visit pastures new (including restaurants new, etc.) for cons - except Novacon, of course.

Just as a final point, we were the first to announce the new venue, since Bernie put a flyer in the *Brum Group News* at the time. But I don't remember it saying 'DON'T GO', do you? It just goes to show that some people seem willing to believe anything - especially if it's bad. Unless someone can name names, let's hope that this silly but damaging rumour dies the death it deserves - and quickly. (Perhaps Helen would like to come to a Brum Group meeting - incognito if preferred - and report back to *Conrunner* on our evil machinations? Or just an apology would be appreciated...)

D.A.H.

THE JOPHAN REPORT #3]

In the Nova Awards ballot at Novacon 19 a total of 44 ballot forms were received of which only 40 were ruled eligible. The winners were as follows (the figures in brackets are the votes):

BEST FANZINE: [1] *VSOP*, edited by Jan Orys (72), [2] *VILE ANCHORS* edited by Simon Polley (66), [3] *LIP* edited by Hazel Ashworth (24), [4] *GROSS ENCOUNTERS* edited by Alan Dorey (22), [5] *EMPTIES* edited by Martin Tudor (20), [6] *CHICKEN BONES* editor Abigail Frost (19), [7] *EYEBALLS IN THE SKY* edited by Tony Berry (17), [8] *FUCK THE TORIES* edited by Joseph Nicholas & Judith Hanna (15), [9] *MARITAL RATS OF SHAOLIN* editor Geogre Bondar (11) (despite pre-con vote campaign), [=10] *THE CAPRICIAN* edited by Lillian Edwards & Christina Lake (10), [=10] *EFILNIKUFESIN* editor Kev McVeigh (10). There were a total of 30 titles mentioned. **BEST FANWRITER:** [1] SIMON POLLEY (102), [2] Martin Tudor (43), [3] Jan Orys (35), [4] Abigail Frost (16) [5] Alan Dorey (15), [6] Hazel Ashworth (13), [7] Chuck Harris (11), [8] Lesley Ward, [9] Michael Ashley, [10] Dave Langford (6). A total of 25 names were mentioned. **BEST FANARTIST:** [1] DAVE MOORING (74), [2] D.West (53), [3] ATOM (26), [4] Simon Polley (24), [5] Lesley Ward (19), [6] Ian Brooks (16), [7] Dave Carson (13), [=8] Iain Byers, Krischan Holl, Shep Kirkbride, Petra Kufner and Mike Molloy (all 5). A total of 17 names were mentioned.

DARK VOICES, the forthcoming anthology of fiction culled from three decades of *THE PAN BOOK OF HORROR STORIES*, will sport a Dave McKean cover and tales by James Herbert, Ramsey Campbell, Peter Straub, Robert McCammon and Stephen King; according to co-editor Steve Jones, it's the first time the five have appeared together in a single volume. Ramsey Campbell's novel *THE INFLUENCE*, Brian Lumley's short story "Fruiting Bodies" and the movie *BEEETLEJUICE* were among those to receive British Fantasy Awards at Fantasycon XIV. Also honoured were *FEAR* editor John Gilbert ("best newcomer"), Carl Ford for his small press magazine *DAGON* and artist Dave Carson. Ronald Chetwyn-Heyes received the committee's special achievement award. Fears that the British sf magazine *THE GATE* has folded are unfounded, promises publisher Richard Newcombe. The lengthy delays in the appearance of its second

issue have been caused by the over-cautious distributor, who is unwilling to fully underwrite an unproven title, whilst the magazine is unable to form a track record without aggressive marketing: in essence a "Catch 22" situation which has left "the bulk of issue one" lying in a warehouse. Despite this, Newcombe has met with editor Maureen Porter and assistant Paul Kincaid, the three setting a January launch for the second issue, which features a Jim Porter cover. Issue three's contents have been agreed and a quarterly publication schedule drawn up. *FEAR* has collaborated with Corgi, publishers of the horror anthology *PRIME EVIL* in softback, to launch its first short story competition. Entries should be under 1500 words, deadline 31 December; the best three will win a signed copy of the collection and will appear in *FEAR*. Michael Bishop's novel *UNICORN MOUNTAIN* has won the 1989 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award, whilst the Mythopoeic Scholarship Award has been made to *THE RETURN OF THE SHADOW*, sixth in the series of JRR Tolkien manuscripts edited and annotated by his son Christopher. The prizes, bronze statues of a lion, are administered by the Mythopoeic Society, an international group devoted to the study and enjoyment of fantasy; past winners include Orson Scott Card, Mary Stewart and Peter S Beagle. Arthur C Clarke will number among the 100 contributors to the second collection of "Drabbles", sf tales which must run to exactly 100 words including the title.

The planned November release of the £14.99 *BATMAN* video has been put back until March 1990, to allow British distributors time to monitor sales of their first cut-price video *RAIN MAN*. However, Michael Keaton's Caped Crusader is already delighting the American home video market at £20 a time. James Coburn is producing a six-part television adaptation of Marion Zimmer Bradley's Arthurian bestseller *THE MISTS OF AVALON* for Viacom. Coburn also co-wrote the outline for the fantasy film *THE SILENT FLUTE* with close friend Bruce Lee and Stirling Silliphant.

The Walt Disney organisation came under fire at the third annual meeting of the NM Conscience Fund in November. Unit holders in the international ethical trust objected to the leisure group's "imposition of American culture", but the investment is to stay after fund manager Carol Smith claimed Disney had good employee relations, was environmentally aware and had a history of charitable contributions.



All books reviewed in these pages by members have been provided by the publishers, who will receive a copy of this Newsletter. Members may keep books reviewed by them (or may donate them as Raffle Prizes, or Auction Items, if feeling generous...)

Please keep reviews to under 150 words unless instructed otherwise. Deadline for reviews: **at least 2 weeks before next meeting.**

Because review copies were rather late coming through, this book arrived too late to be included in the 'normal' review pages. But in any case I would respectfully submit that this is the 'biggest' book ever produced by a Brum Group member (certainly in terms of size), so I make no apology for placing it on a separate page. (If anyone objects, OK - so I resign!!)

VISIONS OF SPACE by David A. Hardy; Dragon's Dream/Paper Tiger; 176 pages; £16.95 hardcover.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

The most important feature of this magnificent coffee-table book of space art is the pictures: virtually every page has a full-colour painting, nearly all of them extremely well reproduced. Also, despite having an interest in the subject, I found the majority of the pictures and artists new to me. About seventy different artists are included, with only a handful of illustrations being by Dave himself. The arrangement of pictures and text is "onward and outward", beginning with a brief history of space art, then dealing with spacecraft, space stations, the Moon, the rest of the Solar System (a section containing too many similar-looking pictures of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) and then the stars. The next chapter, "Space Fantasies" is the closest to SF as well as the most startling.

Dave's text is interesting (though obviously aimed at a wide range of reader) and my only grumble concerns the page layouts, with captions too often being a page or two away from the picture described, and with the intrusive nature of separate "Artist Profile" chunks of text in what are technically known as side-bars. I should mention the foreword by Arthur C. Clarke and the useful bibliography. This is a book obviously aimed at the Christmas present market, where it should do very well, especially as an impulse buy due to the stunning quality of the artwork.

And now here's another contribution from Chris - an extra news item of local interest:

In the November issue of *Eastern Digest* (a Birmingham magazine aimed at those of Asian origin) is an article on the Punjabi mystic and writer Ejaz Elhak, who has recently moved to Birmingham. Among his books is a novel, *Blood of the Planet*, about "spacemen visiting another galaxy where they encounter different humanoids". Before you all rush off to Andromeda Bookshop in search of a copy, you should know that it's written in Urdu. Is this the only SF novel originally in Urdu, or is it part of some long tradition?

If any members know the answer to this question, or anything else about this author, please let us know...

WOLF'S BROTHER by Megan Lindholm; Unwin; 234 pages; £6.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Please do not try this book without reading *The Reindeer People* first. *Wolf's Brother* is not so much a sequel, more a continuation. The two together are an excellent novel set in the northern wilderness of what is now Canada. Tillu, a healer, fled from a small forest tribe with her strange son, Kerlaw, when the shaman, Carp, attempted to take the boy as his apprentice. Camped near the permanent winter home of a tribe who have tamed, and who follow, the reindeer herds, Tillu is gradually accepted for her skills. In *Wolf's Brother* she joins them on their summer migration. Carp, who has reappeared, has nearly succeeded in stealing her son's affections, but she has a loyal friend in Heckram, the man who first brought her to the tribe. The characters are well developed, their problems are realistic and the magic is believable. Not as original as *The Wizard of the Pigeons*, Megan Lindholm's earlier novel, it is nevertheless well researched and well written.

GALAXY'S END by Richard A Lupoff; Grafton; 304 Pages; £3.50 Paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Chivers.

Man or Machine, David Kitajina was "reborn" into a nightmare world where the planet Earth only has a short time to live. Caught as a pawn in the last frantic struggle of the wealthy elite of Earth's hierarchy in the late 21st century, David was sent as part of an exploration team to the worlds of the star Zimazla. *Galaxy's End* is the sequel to *Star's End*, and Richard A Lupoff has made very heavy going of it. The story-line is extremely disjointed, with his main character David Kitajina jumping through time and space to different scenarios that seem to have no relevance to the main plot of the sun heading towards going nova. A book definitely for Richard A Lupoff fans only.

WITH FATE CONSPIRE by Mike Shupp; Headline; 306 Pages; £3.99 Paperback.

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

This is a good first novel by a writer who shows a fair talent for description and invention. Plotwise, the story owes much to Heinlein's *Glory Road*. Tim Harper is invalided out of Vietnam and goes to MIT to study Physics. Alone during a Christmas vacation, he is caught in the field of a time machine. Discovering his predicament, he literally walks 90,000 years into the future, becoming a warrior among the clansmen of Alghera near the end of the Fifth Era. He joins just at the start of the city's war against the world, and with his time machine is enrolled into the struggle to undo the inevitable defeat. His attempts to come to terms with the language and mores of this society, and his championing of the telepathic minority, form the meat of the book, areas in which it is clearly superior to Heinlein's. Like Heinlein's, Shupp's hero ends up striding off the final page into more adventure. Unlike Heinlein, Shupp is planning a sequel.

THE MASK by Dean R Koontz; Headline; 341 Pages; £3.50 Paperback.

Reviewed by Marika Charalambous

A strange girl turns up in the middle of the city one day, and walks in front of Carol Tracy's car. Overcome with guilt, Carol visits this girl, who has no past or memory, and strikes up a friendship. Meanwhile, strange things are happening to Carol's husband and foster-mother. There is a persistent thumping noise which has no source, and a psychotic cat. *The Mask* is certainly not as good as Dean Koontz's last novel, and the plot is predictable, but it is still worth reading.

NIGHT TERRORS Edited by Charles L Grant; Headline; 308 Pages; £4.99 Paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

This is another in the *Night Visions* series, and it comprises 100 pages of new horror stories by each of three authors; this time they are David Morrell, Joseph Payne Brennan and Karl Edward Wagner, none of whom are well known in Britain. The stories are mostly supernatural, mostly an entertaining read, with nothing outstandingly good or bad. Wagner's "Shrapnel" is well worth reading (perhaps somebody ought to edit an anthology of horror stories about scrapyards), though Morrell comes across (just) as the most interesting of the

HERO OF DREAMS by Brian Lumley; Headline; 242 Pages; £2.99 Paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

David Hero and Prof Leonard Dingle are involved in a car accident, and find themselves as adventurers in Earth's Dreamlands. They are hired to steal a magic wand from a wizard, and inevitably they find themselves on a quest to prevent the awakening of dread Cthulhu. Although set in H P Lovecraft's Dreamlands, this is more a swords-and-sorcery romp than a horror story. The most original part of the story is the city of Thalarion, ruled by the eidolon Lathi and her insect-like Ter-men. A very light read.

THE TREASON OF ISENGARD by J R R Tolkien, ed by Christopher Tolkien; Unwin; 504 pages; £17.95. Reviewed by Wendall Wagner Jr.

This is the second of three volumes of preliminary drafts of *The Lord of the Rings* that Tolkien's son Christopher is editing. If you're a true Tolkien devotee, you'll want to read this book too, but it's too disjointed to be of much use to the casual reader. In any case, read the first of these three volumes of preliminary drafts, *The Return of the Shadow*, before you start on this book.

TOLKIN CALENDAR 1990 Illustrated by Ted Nasmith; Unwin Hyman; £5.95.

Reviewed by Wendel Wagner Jr.

It's probably irrelevant that Ted Nasmith isn't my favourite Tolkien artist, since he is the favourite of many Tolkien fans. For my taste Nasmith, a Canadian who works in gouache, has too much of a realistic feel to his drawings. *Rivendell*, which illustrates both the cover and June in this calendar, perfectly exemplifies this problem for me. It looks to me like the cover of a romance novel. The problem isn't entirely Nasmith's, though. I've seen the original drawings of most of these illustrations, and the colours are not very well reproduced. They are well reproduced in the Ballantine calendar, which uses the same illustrations this year. Unwin Hyman has gotten a bit minimalist in the calendar itself, with no holidays marked and little space for notes.

VOICE OF THE WHIRLWIND by Walter Jon Williams; Orbit; 278 pages; £6.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

Etienne Njagi Steward is a Beta, or clone, with a problem. His Alpha has been murdered, and unfortunately Steward Alpha did not have his memory updated for the last fifteen years. Steward Beta's quest for his past takes him to an interstellar war on the planet Sheol, and first contact with an alien race called the Powers. He finds his Alpha left a trail of unfinished business across the solar system. This book is slow to get started, but worth reading once it does. Even though it is set in the same universe as *Hardwired* two hundred years on, it comes across as more traditional "hard SF" than "cyberpunk". A good read.

WALK TO THE END OF THE WORLD and MOTHERLINES by Suzy McKee Charnas; The Women's Press; 436 pages; £6.95 p/back.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Both these were acclaimed as great feminist novels when they were originally published in 1974 and 1978 respectively. They are still excellent novels. They portray extremes. The world has been devastated by the Wasting - a catastrophe caused by mankind's mismanagement of the biosphere. The men of Holdfast place all the blame on women, thus the fens are treated like animals fit only for breeding, boys grow up knowing neither parent and are taught that anything female is to be despised. One man, Eykar Bek, does know the name of his father and with Servan D Layo, a DarkDreamer, and the femslave Alldera, he sets out to find him. *Walk to the End of the World* portrays a bleak society even for the men who control it, and it is beginning to fall apart. Alldera has another purpose. She has gone willingly with Bek and D Layo on a mission for the Matris, a secret few group. There are rumours of free fens beyond the confines of Holdfast. When she escapes she is found by the Horse Women. They form an all female society to which Alldera has difficulty adjusting although she and her new-born daughter are made welcome. *Motherlines* is the story of how she faces her problems and the conflict between the Horse Women and the free fens. Again, the society is intricately developed. The unnerving thing about the books is that the situation that triggered the development of these societies has its roots in the present. It could happen. I recommend everyone to read these books - they are a dire warning.

CASTLEDOWN by Joyce Ballou Gregorian; Orbit; 330 pages; £4.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This story takes place eight years on from the *Broken Citadel*. Sybil is now at college and the memories of Tredana have faded. Sybil is called back to Tredana by the Players of Ornat to marry Leron, the now exiled King of Tredana, but Sybil is none too happy at their high-handed decision making. This is turning out to be a wonderful trilogy based on a complex board game - but don't think because of this the characters are wooden and move in set fantasy patterns - far from it. The characterisation is excellent, as is the plot, with several twists and surprises in it. Highly recommended but you will have to read volume one first.

ON STRANGER TIDES by Tim Powers; Grafton; 397 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Mick Evans.

In this novel Tim Powers confirms his reputation as one of the more interesting fantasy writers. Set in 1718 in the Carribean, it's a spectacularly fast moving story of piracy and sea battles, with great emphasis shown to some really weird voodoo and black magic. The main protagonist, John-Shandagnac, bookkeeper and puppeteer, falls foul of a pirate crew. He eventually joins them and is rechristened Jack Shandy. His adventures are many but mainly involve a meeting with a satanic Blackbeard and his attempts to win the hand of the fair Beth Hayward. Powers is a good story teller, very inventive, and captures the period excellently. My only criticism is that some of the action scenes are incredibly slapstick considering the standard of the rest of the book, but it didn't spoil my enjoyment and I look forward to his next one. Recommended.

THE 30TH PAN BOOK OF HORROR STORIES ed by Clarence Paget; Pan; 208 pp; £2.99 p/back. Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

First the good news; this is the last in the series to be edited by Paget, now replaced by Brum's own Dave Sutton - who should be able to select a much better written and more entertaining range of stories in the future. Now the bad news; number 30 is no improvement on the previous few, with lots of mindless nastiness (and that's just in the writing style!). Even the reprint ("The Lawnmower Man") from a certain S King is not a good example of the great man's work. Best of an unconvincing bunch is Alan Temperley's "Revenge of the *Kittivake*".

TRANSFORMATION: THE BREAKTHROUGH by Whitley Strieber; Arrow; 256 pages; £3.99 p/back, Reviewed by Neil Talbott.

A sequel to the best-selling *Communion* (now a film), about horror author's further encounters of the third kind, this book would probably exasperate the patience of most SF readers. Rather than on dramatic incidents, the author has drawn on dreams, poems, coincidences, UFO literature and feedback from *Communion*, to spin a tissue of philosophical musings on how the phenomenon has affected his life. Whether you believe Whitley Strieber is in the grip of some psychosis, or telling the truth, he does have something important (though not original) to say about the human condition, and some interesting (though rather familiar to SF readers) ideas about "the visitors", but the whole effect is a little too diffuse and rambling to make much impact.

EXIT FUNTOPIA by Mick Farren; Sphere; 264 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Chivers.

Mick Farren in *Exit Funtopia* has managed to mix a surrealistic world of the leisured out in the zone with characters from a Raymond Chandler novel. The lead character Marlowe, complete with his cat Greenstreet, is hauled out of his fantasy world when a mysterious woman gives him his first real case. From that moment on his life will never be the same. Caught in a battle between the two major corporations to control the world, Marlowe and the girl he has been hired to find are running for their lives. The story takes them from the elite world of the super rich, through the badlands filled with toxic waste and radioactive debris, to the space colonies in Earth orbit. *Exit Funtopia* is the latest novel from Mick Farren in his unique style of writing.

WISE WOMAN by R A Forde; NEL; 352 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Sharon Wright.

This is not really fantasy, but more of an historical novel. The story is set at the time of the wane of the Roman Empire and tells of the life of a young woman living then. Although the plot has a mainly 'romantic' bias, the book has some interesting things to say about the clash between the new Christian religion and the old Celtic way of worship. It is an interesting read and makes a nice change from the usual fantasy books.

THE CRYSTAL SWORD by Adrienne Martine-Barnes; Headline; 307 pages; £3.99 paperback. Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This sequel to *The Fire Sword* tells of Dylan, Eleanor and Doyle's son, and how he takes up his Mother's quest against the Darkness. Despite Eleanor's over-protectiveness Dylan is sent to Franconia, to Paris, to find the sword's scabbard, and then to the caves of the underworld to find the crystal sword and rescue Aenor, Arthur's sister, from her imprisonment there. The prologue of this book tells how the swords (and there seem to be five) came into being. This would have been better placed as the epilogue to *The Fire Sword*, as it does detract from the plot of *The Crystal Sword*. However, the characters are well-drawn, the plot is tighter in this second book, the series is excellent so far.

BEST NEW SF 3 ed by Gardner Dozois; Robinson Publishing; 569 pages; £6.99 paperback. Reviewed by Tony Morton.

As the title says, Best New SF - in this case for 1988, and while purely Dozois' choice, he picks some exceptional stories. Included within the book are nine stories nominated for Hugos and three of the winners. Pick any year and having to choose the contents for such a book would cause controversy (you can't please everyone), but Dozois' intelligent summation at the book's beginning and the honourable mentions at its close reveal perhaps his understanding of the genre as exhibited in his capacity as editor of IASFM, and go some way to explaining his choices. The stories themselves represent the creme de la creme of 1988 for USA publishing and from this side of the pond, it's hard to argue at the choices made. Not all the authors are home grown and notable British names appear, providing a lively blend (and dispelling the usual American jingoism active in other fields). From a personal view, I found several of the 27 stories included outstanding, notably "Peaches for Mad Molly" (Gould), "Kirinyaga" (Reznick - Hugo short story winner), "The Last of the Winnebagoes" (Willis - Hugo novella winner), "Love in Vain" (Shiner), "The Hob" (Moffett), "Schrodinger's Kitten" (Effinger - Hugo novelette winner), "Surfacing" (Williams), "House of Bones" (Silverberg), and "Do Ya Do Ya Wanna Dance" (Waldrop). Hell, I could mention nearly all the stories, there are so many highlights, Dozois has produced a truly supreme book with this volume, the stories are of the highest calibre. Highly recommended.

DRUID'S BLOOD by Esther M Friesner; Headline; 279 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Wendell Wagner Jr.

You get everything but the kitchen sink in this novel. Not only is this a Sherlock Holmes pastiche, but it's set in an alternative history England in which magic works. You also get Sarah Bernhardt, Queen Victoria, Lord Kitchener, Lord Byron, Ada Lovelace, and H.G. Wells with his time machine. Indeed, Friesner seems to be throwing together people from the early and late nineteenth century rather indiscriminately. The mystery that the Holmes and Watson characters (who are called Brihtric Donne and John H. Weston here) solve is itself rather slow. It's about how they recover the Rules Britannia, the magic scroll that protects England and preserves Queen Victoria's power, and return it to the Queen. The fun in this novel though, as it usually is in these pastiches, is in discovering what famous characters Donne and Weston run into in their investigations.

THE DRAGONBONE CHAIR by Tad Williams; Legend; 638 pages; £14.95 Hardback

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Simon is a castle kitchen boy who dreams of being a warrior or, failing that, a magician, so when he is apprenticed to Morgenes, doctor and sometimes magic user, Simon's world is complete. That is until the old king of Osten Ard, John, dies and his son Elias assumes the throne. Elias is under the influence of the priest Pryrates whose machinations plunge the country into civil war, cause the release of the Storm King, an undead former ruler of Osten Ard, and force Simon from the only home he knows to go in search of swords of power mentioned in a riddle as the only hope of salvation. An over-long and fairly weighty tome this, but not a bad story even if some of the plotlines are a little too convenient. Definitely for fantasy lovers only. If you - like me - enjoyed Williams' *Tailchaser's Song* you may find this disappointing.

INTERZONE: THE THIRD ANTHOLOGY ed by John Clute, David Pringle and Simon Dunsley; NEL; 243 pages; £2.99 p/back.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Interzone the magazine has gained a reputation for publishing bizarre/difficult/preentious/innovative stories - take your pick of the adjectives. It is a worthy successor to *New Worlds* which older readers will remember. The selection in this anthology represents *Interzone's* best and are all fine examples of the craft of writing. A wide range of subjects and styles are present within these pages, from the Victorian feel of "The Only One" by David S. Garnett to the far future jargon of "Krash-Bangg Joe and the Pineal-Zen Equation" by Eric Brown. There is dark fantasy from Kim Newman in "The Next-But-One Man", and more traditional SF in Pat Murphy's "His Vegetable Wife". There are famous names and newcomers worth watching. If you are wondering whether to take out a subscription and support Britain's only real SF magazine, try this first, it is an excellent taster.

MONA LISA OVERDRIVE by William Gibson; Grafton; 316 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

The latest (and reportedly last) "cyberspace" novel from Gibson provides a fast moving story with tangible characters. Using several plots interspersed in the opening chapters that finally cohere into a powerful finale, Gibson tantalises the reader into his near future "vision". The characters gel well; the behind the scenes dealings in London provide a good backdrop to the Factory sequences with the Sally/Molly persona easily gliding through the whole conspiracy, revealing little but scoring winning points at will. Overall a well-balanced novel creating a plethora of ideas while keeping a tight rein on the diverse plot elements. If like me you enjoyed Gibson's other books, this maintains his high standards. Highly recommended.

THE TOTAL DEVOTION MACHINE & OTHER STORIES by Rosaleen Love; The Women's Press; 167 pages; £4.50 Paperback.

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

Like any book from the Women's Press you can't help asking whether anyone else would have published it. The answer in this case is I certainly hope so; these snappy short stories deserve a wider audience than Australia. Maybe someone else could have priced it lower, four and a half quid is a lot for such a slim volume. Yet what there is, is good; sharp SF ideas with a feminist perspective that neither stoops to androgyny nor needs too much prior knowledge of the relevant political jargon. Ms Love has a neat line in humour, gently poking fun at contemporary attitudes, "right on" and otherwise, as her stories unwind the future. In value terms quality outweighs quantity, some more quantity would have gone down well, but this collection is well worth reading.

CRADLE by Arthur C Clarke & Gentry Lee; Orbit; 373 pages; £5.99 lge paperback.

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

Would you believe a Clarke story, in 1999, involving aliens who crash-land on Earth to make repairs to their spaceship and need gold (among other things) to enable them to take off - and an alien creature who looks like a giant carrot? Put that way it sounds like a fifties 'B' movie doesn't it! It isn't that bad actually, but it certainly won't rank with *2001*, *Rendezvous with Rama* and *Childhood's End* as the cover blurb suggests. It doesn't really read like a Clarke story (I'm waiting to read, in *Rama II*, how the collaboration with Lee worked), except in parts. But it moves along quite nicely, with excellent science (of course), interesting underwater settings, alien worlds, attempts at characterisation and personal relationships, and some sex built in. And (not for the first time) the secret of Man's origin is revealed... One for Arthur's fans, and there are many.

THE ROAD TO AVALON by Joan Wolf; Grafton; 475 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Lynn M Edwards.

If you have never read any of the Arthurian books that are currently available, then *The Road to Avalon* is a reasonable starting place. It is a fast moving version of the tale which starts with Merlin fetching his grandson, the boy Arthur, from Cornwall and taking him to his villa at Avalon. There Arthur meets with Merlin's daughter Morgan, growing up to fall in love with her. Unfortunately he is not allowed to marry her as she is his aunt, and there are Saxons to be fought. There is a lack of description, especially near the beginning, which makes me feel that I know the characters better from other works. There are, however, a couple of interesting twists in the tail. On the whole, a book for collectors or those who have not begun to explore this genre yet.



A
Very Happy
Christmas
to
All Our
Readers!

