

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2005

ISSUE 408

HONORARY PRESIDENTS: **BRIAN W ALDISS, O.B.E.**
& **HARRY HARRISON**

COMMITTEE: **VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); VICKY COOK (SECRETARY);**
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Friday 9th SEPTEMBER

MIKIE CHINN

Unfortunately our intended speaker for this month, Jane Johnson, has had to fly out to the USA unexpectedly. Standing in at very short notice is Brum Group member Mike Chinn, who will be interviewed by his good friend Chris Morgan.

Author of *THE PALADIN MANDATES* and editor of *SWORDS AGAINST THE MILLENNIUM* which included stories by both Pauline and Chris Morgan, Mike has had short stories – SF, fantasy and horror – published in the USA, including one in Charles Grant's *SHADOWS* anthologies. He has won a ghost story competition and has written for the comic book field – even writing a book on how to write for comics (reviewed by our Chairman, Vernon Brown some months ago here in Brum Group News).

Having worked in the SF, fantasy, horror, supernatural and comic book fields, Mike will certainly be touching on something to interest everyone. Come along and be entertained..... *RGP*

OCTOBER MEETING – Peter F Hamilton will be talking to the Group on his tour promoting his new book *JUDAS UNCHAINED*, the second half of the story started in *PANDORA'S STAR*.

The meeting will take place in the Lichfield room on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel, New Street (entrance in Union Passage almost opposite the Odeon. At the bottom of the ramp from New Street Station, turn right, cross over the road and you'll find Union Passage about 20-30 yards along). It will commence at 7.45pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar and be seated in plenty of time.

HUGO WINNERS

The Hugo Awards were presented at Interaction in Glasgow on August 7.

Best Novel: JONATHAN STRANGE & MR NORRELL, by Susanna Clarke

Best Novella: "The Concrete Jungle," by Charles Stross

Best Novelette: "The Faery Handbag," by Kelly Link

Best Short Story: "Travels with My Cats," by Mike Resnick

Best Related Book: THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO SCIENCE FICTION, Edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form: THE INCREDIBLES, Written & Directed by Brad Bird

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: "33" – BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, Written by Ronald D. Moore and Directed by Michael Rymer.

Best Professional Editor: Ellen Datlow

Best Professional Artist: Jim Burns

Best Semiprozine: ANSIBLE, Edited by David Langford

Best Fanzine: PLOKTA, Edited by Alison Scott, Steve Davies and Mike Scott

Best Fan Writer: David Langford

Best Fan Artist: Sue Mason

Best Web Site: SciFiction (www.scifi.com/scifiction) Edited by Ellen Datlow. Craig Engler, general manager

NOT THE HUGO AWARDS (but presented at Interaction)

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: Elizabeth Bear

Special Interaction Committee Award: David Pringle

James White Award: Elizabeth Hopkinson

Big Heart Award (3 recipients): Walter Ernsting, John-Henri Holmberg, and Ina Shorrock

First Fandom Hall of Fame Award: Big Hearted Howard DeVore.

SIDeways AWARDS FOR ALTERNATE HISTORY:

Long form: THE PLOT AGAINST AMERICA by Philip Roth

Short form: "The Ministry of Space" by Warren Ellis, art by Chris Weston

Once again a fantasy novel bags Best Novel Award – this was Susanna Clarke’s first novel. I’ve not read it and know little about it. Obviously a lot of people think it is an excellent book and I won’t argue. But it’s not SF and the Hugo Awards are supposed to be for SF novels. Yes, I know that the rules have been amended to include fantasy but I’m still very much against that decision. Have the World Fantasy Awards, the British Fantasy Awards or the Mythopoeic Awards been amended to include SF? No, they haven’t.

Runner-up was RIVER OF GODS by Ian McDonald making it Best SF Novel of 2004 in my little alternate-reality!!! Which also states that J K Rowling never won a Hugo. But then, in my little world, J K Rowling probably wouldn’t exist. Tolkien? Who he?

Commiserations to Peter Weston and David Hardy who came 2nd and 3rd respectively in the ‘Best Related Book’ category, losing out to Ed James and Farah Mendlesohn – 2 ex-Brummies. Still nice to see Brummies coming in 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

Dave Langford got his 24th and 25th awards, for Best Semi Prozine and Best Fan Writer catching up with Charles Brown/LOCUS for the honour of the most Hugo wins.

The Award Ceremony was apparently one of the best-ever presentations according to some Americans who seen many of them. One US fan had been to EVERY Hugo Awards ceremony and rated this year’s the best one ever! Comperes were Paul McAuley and Kim Newman who did a superb job full of wit and humour. The complete transcription can be found on Kim Newman’s website at www.johnnyalucard.com – or so I’m reliably informed. I couldn’t get into the site at all when I tried.

Pete Weston’s Convention Report on Interaction can be found on <http://trufen.net/article.pl?sid=05/08/22/0811225>

2005 Mythopoeic Award Winners

The annual Mythopoeic Awards were presented at Tolkien 2005 here in Birmingham on August 14.

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award, Adult Literature: JONATHAN STRANGE & MR. NORRELL by Susanna Clarke

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award, Children's Literature: A HAT FULL OF SKY by Terry Pratchett

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies: WAR AND THE WORKS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN by Janet Brennan Croft

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies: ROBIN HOOD: A MYTHIC BIOGRAPHY by Stephen Thomas Knight

...AND WHAT DID YOU THINK?

THE LETTER COLUMN OF 'BRUM GROUP NEWS'

Anything to say about the Group, meetings or SF in general? Email your opinions to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk >>

SEPTEMBER QUIZ

BY STEVE GREEN

01. Whose 1990 memoir is entitled BURY MY HEART AT W.H. SMITH'S?
02. Identify the odd one out among these actors: Kirk Alyn, Dean Cain, Tom Welling, George Reeves.
03. The work of which guest of the 2005 worldcon Interaction has been collected as CAN'T GET OFF THE ISLAND?
04. Name the prison mentioned in the Hugo Award-winning HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE.
05. Which UK book cover and comics artist produced set designs for the movie A.I.?
06. Name the comics writer credited with the creation of Batman.
07. In which alternative history novel did Keith Roberts reimagine post-reformation England?
08. Which classic M.R. James short story formed the basis of the 1958 film NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD?
09. Who's the guest of honour at Novacon 35?
10. Which 1970s glamour model and would-be starlet wrote the 1980 sf novel GALACTIC GIRL?
11. Name George Lucas's student SF movie, later released theatrically.
12. Which science fiction organisation borrowed parts of its constitution from the Young Conservatives?

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... **Andromeda Bookshops Ltd** finally closed its doors at 1 Suffolk Street on August 26th. All the staff had walked out, the current owners pushing them one step too far. The website is closed down their Amazon listings put on holiday settings and the phone just gives a standard message – well, no staff to answer it! The stock is all in storage in Walsall **Forrest J Ackerman** fell ill upon his arrival in Glasgow for Interaction. He was taken to hospital and although there were hopes he would be able to visit the convention for a brief period of time, he was not able to make it. While some reports state that Ackerman was burnt getting into a bath that was too hot, other reports state he was suffering from a virus ... **Eurocon 2007** will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Danish bid beat a rival bid from Ireland to host the event. This will be the first time

Denmark has hosted Eurocon Congratulations to **Dave Hardy** whose painting “Ice Cliffs of Miranda” won the Artshow Staff Choice Award at Interaction Cascadia Con, this year’s NASFiC in Seattle, has announced two or three day membership rates. In addition, **Harry Harrison** will attend Cascadia Con as a Special Guest of Honor FarmerPhile, a magazine devoted to **Philip José Farmer**, is set to be launched. The first ten issues of the quarterly digest will include Farmer’s novel UP FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT as well as previously unpublished fiction and non-fiction by Farmer. **Win Scott Eckert** will contribute a quarterly column on creative mytholgraphy and there will be other articles about Farmer’s work as well Scientists have determined, using dendrochronology, that a door in Westminster Abbey dates back to the 1050s, making it the oldest door in England and the only door dating from the Anglo-Saxon period. The door, which has been in use since the time of **Edward the Confessor**, at one time was bound in leather and rumours have long speculated that it was the flesh of a heretic, although recent tests indicate it was cow leather. Cows can’t be heretics??? **A STAR WARS fan** dressed as an Imperial Storm Trooper was detained by police outside JVL-Con in Janeville, Wisconsin on August 19 after they received a report that there was an armed robbery in progress at the hotel. The police informed the unnamed con member that he should probably leave the plastic blaster at home in the future The Alamo Draffhouse in Austin, Texas has announced plans to hold a marathon showing of the three **LORD OF THE RINGS** films. The event will include a complete Hobbits’-day’s worth of meals, including Breakfast, Second Breakfast, Elevensies, Luncheon, Afternoon Tea, Dinner, and Supper. The event proved to be in such demand, a second showing has been scheduled for November 26. In addition, the Alamo Draffhouse will be hosting a marathon showing of the complete **Firefly** series, interspersed with Chinese food, and lessons in Chinese swearing

RGP



BOOK REVIEWS



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

RGP

SCATTERED SUNS by Kevin J Anderson

Simon & Schuster / 736pgs / £10.99 / trade paperback

Reviewed by Steve Mazey

Star rating: * * * * *

This book is pretty much the most anticipated book in my reading year - I know for a lot of folks, the sixth *Harry Potter* book has brought near

ecstasy, but not me. I like space opera. My favourite book of all time is space opera (DUNE by Frank Herbert), and this series so far has been excellent space opera. So you can imagine my feelings when I received this fourth and latest instalment in *The Saga of the Seven Suns*. And the one thing I can say to anyone about this series is that it is getting better and better as every book comes out.

The battle has now been joined once and for all. Since Mankind launched the Klikiss Torch turning a gas giant into a new star and destroying the Hydrogue colony living within the planet, the Hydrogues have been attacking the ekti (fuel for space ships) harvester mankind has placed around the gas giants of many systems. And so far all efforts by Earth's military have failed to have any effect on the Hydrogues.

Mankind's ally, the Ildiran Empire has at least scored a victory although at a very great cost, with only a suicide attack being successful.

In recent times the Hydrogues have been becoming more belligerent, and have started attacking planets, wiping out both Ildiran and Human worlds, as well as attacking Theron, the home of the sentient World Forest - one of their ancient enemies.

Worried by the lack of success to report, Earth authorities have launched a campaign against the Roamers, a loose-knit group of human clans who live on the fringes of the main human empire (the groups have until now been on at least a tolerable relationship). This course of action at least giving the authorities the victories they need so desperate to report to the people.

And all this is not mentioning the Faeros (beings living within stars - enemies of the Hydrogues), Wentals (elemental water beings, also enemies of the Hydrogues), the Klikiss robots (insect-like robots made by a long dead race of insect-like beings), an Ildiran breeding program designed to produce a telepath capable of communicating with the Hydrogues, and a Civil War occurring within the Ildiran Empire.

This book is immense, both in terms of size (700 plus pages) and in scope - there is just so much going on. But it also manages to include all of these divergent plot strands without seeming overwhelming. It helps that the chapters are short (this would be so much harder to read with lengthy chapters) and the constant scene changes help drag you through the book.

The action here is simply incredible, this is a totally absorbing book.

The scale of this book is so huge, and yet as the action is told from the perspectives of individuals on the various sides of this conflict, the scale of it actually seems comfortable.

This series has everything, we have a first contact situation (or three), plus a major war between space faring species, political intrigue and betrayal, human settlers trying to make their way on new planets in good old frontier tradition, and even a love story or two going on in the middle. What more could you want? This is excellent.

Kevin J. Anderson is one of the top SF writers around today, and this book is further proof of his talent. SM

9TAIL FOX by Jon Courtenay Grimwood

Gollancz / 326 pages / £12.99 hardcover, £10.99 trade paperback

Reviewed by William McCabe

Star rating: * * * *

Sergeant Bobby Zha is a policeman in San Francisco. He is investigating the murder of a supposed burglar by a young girl who couldn't even hold the gun steady. He is also looking into the story of a dead baby told to him by a crazy homeless man. Then he is shot dead. After a dream of a celestial fox Bobby wakes to find that he is now Bobby Van Berg, just woken from a coma after more than a decade with a fortune in compensation. He acquires fake ID that says he's working for various government agencies and in very little time he is investigating his own murder. Is it connected to the shooting or the dead baby or both? Why does his partner deny he was there?

This is really a detective thriller. There's a central plot point that is definitely fantasy and the final revelation involves the sort of SF that you'd find in James Bond but, as a whole, this is a detective novel.

Grimwood is a pretty good detective/thriller writer. His plots are solid although sometimes convoluted with plotlines that just appear out of nowhere. As such, this is probably his best to date. On the other hand this is the least SF/Fantasy yet. If you haven't read any of his books yet and you're not worried about it being anything more than a good thriller, this is a good place to start.

And for the fans... there's always the fox.

WAM

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group meets on Thursdays at 5.30pm to 7pm monthly, in GP5 on the 5th Floor at the Central Library, Chamberlain Square, B3 3HQ. It's a small friendly group meeting to discuss SF & fantasy books. Contact person is Pam Gaffney on (0121) 303 3398.

Books to be discussed:-

15th Sept - **Ian R MacLeod** - THE LIGHT AGES

20th Oct - the Tim Powers evening was moved to August. You missed it!!

17th Nov - **Robert J Sawyer** - FRAMESHIFT

15th Dec - **Sarah Zettel** - A SORCERER'S TREASON

FANTASYCON 05 is on 30 September - 2 October 2005, at the Quality Hotel, Walsall, near Birmingham. Guests of Honour: Steven Erikson, Simon Clark and Mark Chadbourn. For registrations and all other details please see www.britishfantasyociety.org.uk or email fcon@britishfantasyociety.org.uk

Stan Nicholls and **Juliet McKenna** are appearing 'in conversation' at Hall Green library (1221 Stratford Rd, Hall Green), at 10.30am on the Friday 30th September, shortly before their appearance the same evening at FantasyCon. Entry free, for further details the library can be contacted on 0121 464 6633

*** * * NOVACON 35 * * ***

- the Brum Group's own convention, will again be held at the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall over the weekend of 11th to 13th November. Guest of Honour is Alastair Reynolds. Cheques to 'Novacon 35', Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ Email: x15@zoom.co.uk Website: www.novacon.org

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organisers before travelling. Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses.

Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

October 14th – Peter F Hamilton

November 4th – Storm Constantine (PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE)

December 2nd - Christmas Social Evening – Skittles, buffet, prizes.

January 13th 2006 – Annual General Meeting / Auction of Books

February 10th - Ian R MacLeod

March 10th – Brian Stableford

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Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue and to William McCabe who sends me reams of news items every month which I sift through for the best/most entertaining items.

ABOUT US... The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month. Membership is £16 per year per person (or £21 for two members living at the same address). This includes the 12 free issues of the Newsletter plus reduced entrance fee at each meeting. Cheques should be made payable to "The Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to our Secretary, 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH