

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

July 1992

Issue 250

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

GROUP CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, SECRETARY - CAROL MORTON, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,  
TREASURER - RICHARD STANDAGE, REVIEWS EDITOR - BERNIE EVANS, PUBLICITY OFFICER - POSITION VACANT,  
ORDINARY MEMBER - MICK EVANS, NOVACON 22 CHAIRMAN - HELENA BOWLES.

## THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER IS IAN STEWART

Friday 17th July 1992, 7.45pm for 8.00pm

Admittance: Members 1.25 Visitors 2.25

Ian Stewart is, in his own words, "the author of *DOES GOD PLAY DICE?* and *GAME, SET & MATH*. He will talk about his new book *FEARFUL SYMMETRY: IS GOD A GEOMETER?* (the prequel to *DOES GOD?*) about pattern formation in nature. The subject matter ranges from why few snails are left-handed to the largest structure in the known universe, and includes a method for making quilt patterns from chaos. Those of you who heard *The Pattern of Tiny Feet* at Novacon 21 were exposed to a version of Chapter Eight.

He publishes sf stories in *ANALOG* and *OMNI* at the rate of approximately 1.3077 per year (exercise: when was the first and how many have been published?). He joined the Brum Group a couple of years ago, and he and Jack Cohen are working on yet another book, which has a godless title but is really number 3 in the God Trilogy. But Jack's already told the Brum Group about that. He also writes the Mathematical Recreations column of *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*, and a new collection of those columns is soon to appear as *ANOTHER FINE MATH YOU'VE GOT ME INTO*."

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

A FEW WORDS  
FROM OUR CHAIRMAN  
- Tony Morton

During the year, members have made numerous comments about the social side of the Group, their concern being that there *isn't* one, and what can we do about it? Well, the Committee decided to have a "free" meeting in June entitled "Does the team think?", followed by charades, to bring out a more social/free and easy night. To those who attended, I think you enjoyed the evening. To those who didn't, you missed some fun. Specifically to those who complain about lack of a social side and *didn't turn up - why?* If you wish to comment about the social side of the Group "dying", why did you not come to "chat with old acquaintances" and join in the "silly" games?

The Group is there to provide items YOU, the members, want to see. I note the author based meetings are well attended. Do you want all meetings thus, or separate social events - if so try to tell Martin why the Beer Bus trip failed to attract sufficient interest, or further back, Vernon's trip to the dramatic presentation of *FORBIDDEN PLANET*. I am open to people making positive comment on the Group, after all, as Chairman that's my job, but in the end it's up to you, the members, to support them.

The "Annual Challenge" against Birmingham University SF Group will soon be on us again. It is our turn to choose a motion for debate, so suggestions ASAP to a Committee member please. Of course we also need volunteers to provide the (winning) team for the Brum Group, so please pass your names to a Committee member as well.

OOOOO

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

17 JULY 1992: IAN STEWART will be addressing the BSFG on Chaos Theory at the White Lion.

18-26 JULY 1992: MINEHEAD SPACE AGE FESTIVAL. Not actually a convention, but sounds interesting. Being held at the Exhibition Centre, Market House Lane, Minehead. Costs only £1.00 per day. Expected guests include Arthur C Clarke, Patrick Moore, John Brunner and Terry Pratchett. Contact the Town Clerk, Town Hall, The Parade, Minehead, TA24 5NB.

8-9 AUG 1992: FAB 1. THUNDERBIRDS con at Wolverhampton Civic Hall. Full details from 15 Fullers Court, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4DZ.

21 AUG 1992: PAM WELLS TAFF winner and this year's Eastercon fan guest of honour will be speaking to the BSFG at the White Lion.

29 AUGUST 1992: COMIC MART at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham, B5 4ST. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Further details from Mrs P Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, Worcs., B97 6SO.

5 SEPTEMBER 1992: COMIC MART in the Library Exhibition Hall, Paradise Street, Birmingham city centre, opens midday. Located next to Central Library; get a train to New Street Station, or any bus to the town centre, then take a five-minute walk up New Street. Full details from Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

18 SEPTEMBER 1992: BSFG meeting - speaker to be announced.

23 SEPTEMBER - 3 NOVEMBER 1992: DRAGONS OF THE MIND. "Tolkien and Science Fantasy" -

The Birmingham Centre for the Book celebrates the centenary of JRR Tolkien's birth by using his works as a centrepiece to explore the history of Science Fantasy and how it has developed into one of the most popular genres read today. The fantasy worlds of British and American writers will be used to illustrate the range of the genre. The Birmingham Centre for the Book, Central Library, Floor 1, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham, B3 3HQ. Call (021) 235 4511 for further details.

25 SEPTEMBER 1992: KIM STANLEY ROBINSON will be signing at Andromeda Bookshop, call (021) 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

25 SEPTEMBER 1992: KIM STANLEY ROBINSON will be speaking to the BSFG in an extra meeting at the White Lion public house. Watch this space for further details.

16 OCT 1992: IAN WATSON will be speaking to the BSFG at the White Lion.

24 OCTOBER 1992: COMIC MART in the Library Exhibition Hall, Paradise Street, Birmingham

city centre, opens midday. Located next to Central Library ; get a train to New Street Station, or any bus to the town centre, then take a five-minute walk up New Street. Full details from Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

6-8 NOV 1992: NOVACON 22 the Brum Group's own sf con returns to the Royal Angus hotel in the city centre. Guest of Honour Storm Constantine. Attending membership costs £20 until one month before con after which only on the door memberships available at £25. Details: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

20 NOV 1992: DEBATE against the Birmingham University SF & Fantasy Society, at White Lion.

8-12 APR 1993: HELICON '93. 44th British national sf con, Hotel de France, St. Helier, Jersey. Guests of honour George RR Martin & John Brunner. Attending £20. Supporting / Family Membership / Children 8-14 are all £10 each. Details: 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

12 DECEMBER 1992: COMIC MART in the Library Exhibition Hall, Paradise Street, Birmingham city centre, opens midday. Located next to Central Library ; get a train to New Street Station, or any bus to the town centre, then take a five-minute walk up New Street. Full details from Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

28-31 MAY 1993: MEXICON V. "Straight" sf con, venue to be announced. Attending £18 until Novacon 22. Details from: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 558 0997).

THE GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER MEDICAL FUND  
announces the

"WORLDCON-FOR-A-BUCK" RAFFLE

WHAT YOU GET:

- 1). a chance to help defray George Effinger's medical costs.
- 2). a chance to see *ConFracisco*. Grand Prize includes airline travel, membership, 4 nights hotel accommodations and meal allowance!
- 3). a good feeling.

WHAT YOU DO:

- 1). write your name, address and telephone number on as many index cards or 3"x5" sheets of paper as you like.
- 2). drop them in an envelope, enclosing one dollar for each chance, and mail them to:

The George Alec Effinger Medical Fund  
c/o NFSFA  
Post Office Box 500, Bridge Station  
Niagara Falls, NY 14305

- 3). Start packing.

HELP US TO HELP GEORGE, AND GET A  
CRACK AT A FREE WORLDCON BESIDES!

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Harlan Ellison Pat Cadigan Pamela Sargent  
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Mary Stanton: administrator Joe Maraglino: executor  
Please make checks payable to: The George Alec Effinger Medical Fund

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**of merchandise**  
**come dressed as**  
**'DEATH'**  
**the most mortifying**  
**will win.**

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at **12** noon

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Tel: 0533 518178 Fax: 0533 518179

# The Jophan Report by Martin Tudor

## The 53rd Jophan Report

Titan Books continued its line of original *STAR TREK* novels on 25 June with Victoria Mitchell's *IMBALANCE*, in which Captain Picard stumbles across a plot to destroy the Federation.

Mitchell's is the twenty-second Titan novel based upon the current tv series. The parallel sequence of spin-offs from the original episodes hit volume 54 on 29 May with *THE DISINHERITED* by Robert Greenberger, Michael Jan Friedman and Peter David, in which Captain Kirk stumbles across a plot to destroy the Federation.

The BBC may screen all 79 episodes of *STAR TREK* on BBC2 - including the four shows banned for more than 20 years. Despite this apparent re-think, *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* continues to suffer cuts, the latest example being the loss of "The High Ground" because it mentioned the IRA.

The BBC has halted its screening of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* with the second half of "Best of Both Worlds", first episode of the fourth season. Those unwilling to wait for the BBC to recommence airing the series can buy copies of the remaining fourth season episodes on CIC Video ; the final two cassettes ("The Host" c/w "The Mind's Eye", "In Theory" c/w "Redemption") were released on 8 June. But a word of warning: "Redemption" also ends on a cliffhanger, and CIC will keep *TREK* fans waiting till September for its conclusion.

Movie director Jim Wynorski, whose latest film is *976-EVIL 2: THE ASTRAL FACTOR*, has bought the screen rights to the comic character Vampirella and is working on a screenplay.

The British *ALIENS* Fan Club has received 20th Century Fox's go-ahead to hold the first UK convention dedicated to the film series and spin-off comics. Final date and location has still to be decided, but it is planned for the middle of November, and is likely to be

held in the Gloucester area.

Society membership costs £7.00pa, including four issues of the newsletter *FACEHUGGER*, a 6"x4" colour photo and a plastic membership card. Full details of all activities can be obtained from Post Office Box 11, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 6YL.

Colin Murray has reportedly succeeded John Jarrold as sf and fantasy editor at Macdonald Books.

British film directors Peter Walker and Robert Fuest, the actress Caroline Munro and producer Tony Tenser are the special guests at the third annual Festival of Fantastic Films, being held at Manchester's Charterhouse Hotel on 9-11 October.

The event has been organized by the Society of Fantastic Films, which also holds monthly screenings at the city's Mitre Hotel ; future bills include *REPTILICUS* and *THE GIANT CLAW* (3 July), *ISLAND OF THE DAMNED* and *THIRST* (7 August), *GOG* and *THE CREATURE WITH THE ATOM BRAIN* (4 September), *THE MAN FROM PLANET X* and *MISSION MARS* (2 October), *THE PLANET OF THE OPERA* and *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* (6 November) and *THE COMEDY OF TERRORS* (5 December).

Convention membership costs £30.00, payable to Tony Edwards at 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN. Society membership is £10.00 p.a., plus £3.00 per meeting.

The organizers of next March's combined *STAR TREK / RED DWARF* convention, Trek Dwarf, have announced a tentative guest-list, subject to work commitments: Guy Vardeman, *ST:TNG* body double and graphic artist on the American *RED DWARF* magazine ; Richard Arnold, Paramount's *TREK* consultant ; Mike Butcher, editor of the British *RED DWARF* magazine ; Adrian Riglesford, actor and author of the forthcoming *DOCTOR WHO MONSTER BOOK*, whose appearance has been sponsored by the Peterborough telefantasy group Peladon. Membership rates rise in July, but local comics shops have been supplied with "£5 off" vouchers.

Anne Rice has completed the fourth novel in her "Vampire Chronicles", *ONCE OUT OF NATURE*. An American hardback edition is due for October.

Rice recently met with members of the band LA Guns at her home in New Orleans. She was presented with copies of their three gold discs in recognition of the inspiration her novels have provided. Lead singer Phil Lewis

was quoted in *WORLD OF FANDOM*: "It's really a big deal to me because I've been a fan of hers for such a long time. This is our way of saying thanks." The author herself, whose 13 year-old son is a fan of the band, said she was "very touched".

Fandata has published the 1992-93 edition of its *FANDOM DIRECTORY*, with nearly 20,000 American fan listings and more than 2,000 non-US listings; the 560-page softback also includes information on fan clubs, specialist stores and fanzines, again with an American emphasis. Full details can be obtained from Fandata at 7761 Astrella Court, Springfield, VA 22152-3133, USA.

The third and final volume in Jean-Marc Lufficier's guide to *DR WHO*, *THE UNIVERSAL DATABANK*, will be published by Virgin on 19 November. The previous books were *THE PROGRAMME GUIDE*, a complete episode listing, and *THE TERRESTRIAL INDEX*, which explored the future history of Earth as mapped out in the series; the new book includes an A-Z of leading characters and alien lifeforms, as well as longer essays on such specific aspects of the show as time travel.

Meanwhile, Virgin's series of original *WHO* novels continue with *NIGHTSHADE* by Mark

Gatiss (August), *LOVE AND WAR* by Paul Cornell (October) and *TRANSIT* by Ben Aaronovitch (December). This latest thematically-linked sequence sees the departure of Ace and the introduction of new companions for the Time Lord.

Gerry Anderson has signed up with the BBC for a 13-part sf series entitled *SPACE POLICE*, which will utilise state of the art animatronics techniques. It will be his first major tv show since *SPACE: 1999* in the late 1970s.

NBC has reportedly abandoned plans to shoot its own version of *RED DWARF* after filming the pilot. Robert Llewellyn reprised his role as Kryten (the revised plot included him in the show from episode one), but the remaining crew were recast with American actors.

Six episodes from the bizarre US tv series *EERIE, INDIANA*, which Channel Four has scheduled for 1993, will be available on rental video from Braveworld on 21 July. Created by *GREMLINS* director Joe Dante, the show is a mix of *THE WONDER YEARS*, *TWIN PEAKS* and *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*.

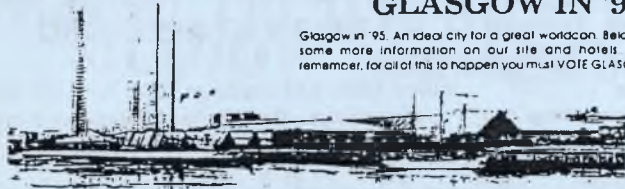
Videas Productions, the Welsh film outfit headed by Brian Davies, will release *LADY IN DANGER!* this summer, with Lorraine Tyrer in the title role.

## GLASGOW IN '95!

Glasgow in '95. An ideal city for a great worldcon. Belows some more information on our site and hotels. But remember, for all of this to happen you must VOTE GLASGOW!

Presupporting memberships

are £5 or \$8



### THE SITE

The facilities we plan to use for the 1995 Worldcon are the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) and the Moat House Hotel in Central Glasgow. The two buildings are physically connected and stand on their own landscaped site next to the river Clyde. Consequently, all the programme will be held on one site, with no roads to cross.

The SECC will contain the majority of the convention programme. It is the premier con/exhibition facility in Scotland and has played host to a range of national and international events from medical conferences and rock concerts to the 10,000 strong World Baptist Youth Conference.

There are five major function halls in the SECC plus a suite of smaller rooms and offices. We intend to have main programme (up to 2,000 seats), extravaganzas (up to 4,000 seats), films, dealers room and art show (a total of 4,000 square meters of floor space), internal programme and a large social space here.

The SECC already has two permanent fast food cafes and two bars. Further temporary bars, (including an English Real Ale bar) and food outlets will be installed. The main concourse of the SECC will have seating and also has a range of shops, including a bank, news-stand, and accommodation booking service.

All function areas in the SECC (apart from the suite of small rooms) are on the ground floor with direct access for wheelchairs. The upper floor has lift access from the main concourse.

The Moat House Hotel will hold the remainder of our convention facilities and accommodation for those fans who must be on-site. There are 14 function rooms in the hotel ranging in seating capacity from 30 to 800. Several of the rooms can be sub-divided.

The site is well served with road, bus and train links (with its own station less than 5 minutes from the city centre). We will also arrange a bussing service which will run into the night. The international airport can be reached by car in 15 minutes from the site and Loch Lomond or Edinburgh in an hour.

### THE HOTELS

Apart from the Moat House, (which has 300 twin/double rooms), the majority of hotels we will be using are in the centre of Glasgow, approximately a half to one mile from the SECC.

We currently have 3500 rooms booked in hotels in the city, 2000 in 3 to 5 star hotels like the Hilton, Holiday Inn, Albany and Copthorne and 1500 in budget accommodation. In addition we expect that there will be bed and breakfast accommodation in smaller establishments throughout the city.

Glasgow in '95  
121 Cape Hill  
Smethwick Warley  
West Midlands  
B66 4SH UK



Glasgow in '95  
P.O. Box 15430  
Washington, DC  
20003-0430  
USA

Compuserve: 70511,603

GENIE: K.Siegel1

*FANTASY TALES*, the veteran British fiction digest, may be relaunched in a new format if Robinson Publishing can complete negotiations with a new retail outlet. Company director Nick Robinson was unable to confirm when a decision was likely, but stressed the proposed deal could boost sales significantly.

The magazine was founded in 1977 by editors David Sutton and Stephen Jones, and relaunched as a twice-yearly paperback by Robinson in 1988. Issue eight of the new series, cover-dated spring 1992, is already overdue, but any new-look *FANTASY TALES* is certain to revert to number one again.

Pegasus Publishing Ltd, the Birmingham-based company whose stable included *ACADEMY*, *GAMESMAN* and *SIREN*, went into receivership on 9 April, with debts exceeding £909,000. Title rights to *SIREN* were transferred to the Hemel Hempstead-based group EPG shortly before the collapse, reportedly as part-payment of a debt, and it is rumoured EPG may also relaunch *ACADEMY* under its original title, *FANTAZIA*.

The task of receivers Langard Lifford Hall may be complicated by a break-in at the Pegasus offices in Bradford Street less than 24 hours after the company was closed down. Thieves removed four filing cabinets containing paperwork and two relatively inexpensive personal computers, although 10 or 12 Apple Mac computers - far more valuable - were curiously ignored.

The collapse of Pegasus Publishing Ltd is the latest in a series of financial disasters in the genre. Croftward Ltd folded in mid-1990, sinking *GM* magazine. That title's editors moved to Newsfield Ltd to relaunch as *GAMESMASTER INTERNATIONAL*, but Newsfield itself collapsed with £500,000 debts in September last year, taking *FEAR* and its spin-off *FRIGHTENERS* with it; Newsfield has since been relaunched as part of the Europress group, but there are no plans to re-enter genre publishing. Ironically, Pegasus was the favourite to resurrect *FEAR*, the rights to which are still held by former editor John Gilbert. The most recent failure was that of Force Ten, which launched *TERROR* late last year but has ceased publication after just two issues.

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*Thanks for the news this time goes for the most part to STEVE GREEN and to CRITICAL WAVE, which is still Europe's only independent sf, fantasy and horror news and reviews*

magazine. Regular features include publishing news, extensive club and convention listings, interviews with prominent authors and editors, video, film and comics reviews, fiction market reports, fanzine and small press reviews, convention reports and theatre reviews.

*CRITICAL WAVE* #26, featuring interviews with DAN SIMMONS and JOHN JARROLD (both recent guests of the Brum Group), is now available for £1.95, or a six issue subscription costs only £7.50, cheques payable to "Critical Wave Publications" should be sent to Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

## REMINISCON 40

To celebrate  
**LIONEL FANTHORPE'S**  
40th. Anniversary as an Author in print.

Guest speakers:

**BRIAN ALDISS      GUY N. SMITH**  
**BRIAN STABLEFORD**

Video films and readings from Lionel's novels, short stories, Rennes-le-Château and other true-life mysteries, poetry, plays and musicals.

Bookstalls

Chapter Arts Centre  
Market Road, Canton, Cardiff

Saturday 5th. September 1992  
9.30 a.m. - 5.30 p.m.

Admission: £10  
including souvenir booklet and badge.

Bookings: Patricia Fanthorpe  
48 Claude Road, Cardiff CF2 3QA  
Tel. (0222)498368 Fax: (0222) 496832

# **NOVACON 22**

**from Friday 6th November  
to Sunday 8th November 1992**

**at THE ROYAL ANGUS HOTEL  
in Birmingham city centre.**

**Guest of Honour**

**STORM CONSTANTINE**

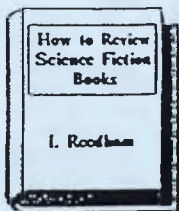
**author of the "Wraeththu" trilogy,  
MONSTROUS REGIMENT, ALEPH,  
HERMETECH & BURYING THE  
SHADOW - amongst others.**

**Attending membership twenty pounds  
until 12th October 1992  
or twenty-five pounds on the door,  
please note that postal applications  
will NOT be accepted after the  
12th of October 1992.**

**Cheques made payable to "NOVACON 22"  
should be sent to:**

**Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick,  
Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.**

**Call Bernie on (021) 558 0997 for further details**



# Book Reviews

*Due to unavoidable problems caused by an inconvenient 'flu bug this newsletter is later than normal, your editor sends his apologies.*

**PLUTO IN THE MORNING LIGHT** by Robert Silverberg  
Grafton, 396 pp, £5.99, "C" format p/b

Reviewed by Mick Evans.

Sub-titled "The Collected Stories of...", this collection covers Silverberg in the early to mid-eighties, a period which marked his return to writing after a five-year gap. It is the first in a five-volume series.

I approached this volume with some trepidation, as I've always preferred his earlier work, from the sixties and seventies, but I was very pleasantly surprised. Unlike some collections which either include everything for the sake of completeness, or else pad out to book length with weak material, every story within fully deserves to be here, it's impossible to choose a favourite. Each has either won, or been nominated for, an award, as Silverberg takes obvious delight in telling us during the course of his introductory notes to the tales. These notes also tell the background to, and evolution of, each of the stories, and are in themselves very entertaining, and informative.

Most of the themes have been well-used in his earlier work, but are given a whole new lease of life here, such as time travel in "Homefaring", telepathy in "Snake and Ocean, Ocean and Snake" and future humans in "Dancers in the Time Flux" and "Sailing to Byzantium". There are also some incredibly corny aliens in here, deliberately?

Most of the stories first saw the light of day in magazines such as "Playboy" and "Omni", before featuring in anthologies, so you may already have some of them, but it's well-worth buying anyway, for those you may have missed.

**SCHEHERAZADE'S NIGHT OUT** by Craig Shaw Gardner  
Headline, 250 pp, £15.99, h/b

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

Neatly ensconced in its Josh Kirby cover, this is the final instalment of Gardner's "New Arabian Nights" trilogy. How much this version of Scheherazade deviates from the original I cannot say, but Oh, most estimable and beloved

reader, most assuredly the style of this humblest of narrators is more gravely indebted to *THE BANANA SPLITS* TV show than to any of the mighty scribes of ancient Arabia. Or maybe flowery phrases just don't translate well into the modern English idiom. *And I haven't even mentioned the constant interruptions by various djinn yet.*

Stylistic peculiarities apart, which you may or may not find funny, this is a reasonably entertaining book with some good humour in places. Some of the best is almost thrown away, on other occasions it is overdone, but it is there. The well-known frame of the 1001 nights is followed pretty closely for the first two-thirds of the book. Thereafter Gardner grafts on an additional frame, just as the pace was starting to flag, and things get a bit confused towards the end, with threads running out unnoticed. All in all a quite enjoyable read, but I think most people would be better off waiting for the paperback.

**THE BIRTH OF FLUX AND ANCHOR** by Jack L Chalker  
RoC, 374 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is the story of how the world of Flux and Anchor was created by scientists as a cure for problems on Earth. Anatole Borelli, an Italian scientist, had invented a device which, when triggered, would fuse and destroy almost any known type of electrical device. This meant that the threat of nuclear war was over and countries could follow other lines of peaceful scientific research. The Japanese (of course) were the first to discover and develop artificial intelligence, but this backfired when a rebellion of these AI computers was only stopped by the triggering of Borelli's device. This in turn plunged half of the Earth into chaos and famine. Further research on AI computers produced a version that needed two humans to interface with the CPU before it would function.

It was the use of these computers, and remote probes, that led to the discovery of Flux, an insubstantial plasma that exists on the edges of our universe. When subjected to



an energy field, Flux can replicate objects, so it is used to terraform a series of planets leading out from Earth. Each planet can only be accessed by passing through "gates", like moving from one square to the next in a board game. The story in the main tells of the problems encountered on New Eden. The discovery that Flux can be manipulated by sensitives with psionic talent leads to wars, schisms and the setting up of secret police and private armies and a weird matriarchal religion. The route to Earth must, at all costs, be protected.....

Chalker had intended to put all the information on the creation of New Eden in an appendix to volume three, but it proved too long and so this novel was written. It is a good thing it was, because it clears up a lot of questions and gives a good, stable hard science background to a series that was hovering in the grey area between science fiction and fantasy.

Terraforming/colonisation stories have not been well served of late, but this goes a long way to redress the balance. In spite of the wealth of explanation to be found in this volume, *don't* be tempted to read it first, that would spoil the series. Read them in order of publication, they are excellent.

STAR WARS: HEIR TO THE EMPIRE by Timothy Zahn  
Banta., 381 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is the first in a new trilogy set five years after *THE RETURN OF THE JEDI*. The New Republic has been proclaimed, with the demoralised Empire in full retreat. Cracks are beginning to appear in the Rebel Alliance, as an internal power struggle begins. This may be premature, because the Empire shows signs of making a come-back led by Grand Admiral Thrawn.

All the old familiar characters are here. They have grown, but in a believable manner. Han Solo has settled down (!) and is recruiting other smugglers to work for the New Republic. His wife Leia is setting up a new democratic government, and is pregnant with twins who are already strong in the Force. Lando Calrissian has gone back into business as a mine owner. Luke has a personal enemy (and possible love interest ?) in the person of the Imperial Assassin, Mara.

Zhan - whose name itself sounds as if it belongs in *STAR WARS* - has avoided the "bigger is better" syndrome. After defeating the Emperor, a mere Grand Admiral seems a bit of a come-down. Thrawn may not have the Force tricks the Emperor had, but he is an

intelligent and capable commander, something far more dangerous. He is served by the Noghri, a race of fanatical assassins.

Remember the reference to the "Clone Wars" in *STAR WARS* ?, at least one survivor remains to trouble the galaxy. Joruuus C'baoth is the evil clone of a Jedi Master. He wants Leia and her unborn twins as disciples. The "ysalamir" stop the Force from dominating the plot too much. They create bubbles around themselves where the Force does not work, thus forcing even the Jedi to rely on their physical skills.

The book builds to a good rousing space battle, but very little is settled. I would like to read the rest of the trilogy however, so it has caught my interest. A good fun read.

MASTER OF WHITESTORM by Janny Wurts  
HarperCollins, 448 pp, £15.99, h/b  
Also available in "C" format p/b at £8.99

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This tells of Korendir, who becomes something of a last resort when people and kingdoms face impossible problems. As the tale opens Korendir is a galley slave on a Murghai warship. He attempts, and succeeds with, the impossible, escape from such a galley. He leads a revolt and frees the other prisoners, but leaves them and the ship behind, taking with him only one companion, his oar-mate, the former blacksmith Haldeth.

In an effort to gain security and a safe haven, Korendir undertakes several seemingly impossible quests. He defeats a sorceress who, in vengeance for her father, blights a whole kingdom and lays it barren. He fights a weather elemental, taking its cliffside and building a castle. He frees a village from the threat of wereleopards, and rescues a princess from slavery.

He is then asked by Ithariel, a sorceress of the White Circle - a group of wizards - to smash her father's evil. To this end he placed a crystal in the cellars of the ducal palace in the City of Tir Amindel. The crystal compels the people of the city into a life of felicity, but knowing no peace and being unable to feel real emotions. In addition, the original inhabitants of the city will live forever, or until the crystal is destroyed, although any children they bear will die normally. The crystal will also not allow anyone who has the blood of the White Circle wizards in their veins to leave the city alive. Korendir has agreed to help Ithariel not knowing that he himself is the son of Morien, the last elected (and murdered) Archmage of the White Circle....

This is really a series of short stories shaped into a full length novel. The tales of the various quests are well told if a little overlong in places. Janny Wurts is a gifted story teller and this excellent book should swell the ranks of her fans.

FLYING DUTCH by Tom Holt  
Orbit, 252 pp, £4.50, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This tale is based loosely, very loosely, on *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN*. The Dutchman is Captain Julius Vanderdecker, a sailor who is cursed to sail the seas for eternity, or until he finds a woman who will be faithful to him until death. Well that's the opera Richard Wagner wrote after Vanderdecker told him his life story. Tom Holt's version is more prosaic, and far more entertaining.

Vanderdecker's ship was carrying a cargo of jute to Cadiz when Francis Drake requisitioned his cargo. He now has no income and no way of getting another cargo, so he agrees when offered 5,000 gold pistoles to give passage to England to alchemist Juan de Montalban. A slight misadventure during the voyage leaves the entire crew, together with Vanderdecker and Montalban, invulnerable and immortal. Of course, there's an unfortunate side-effect, they all smell so bad that they can only come ashore for one month, once every seven years.

Before these occurrences, Vanderdecker had taken out an insurance policy which paid out an extra 50% on the final payout for every year he lived over the age of 75. This had seemed like a good deal to the insurance company at the time. 400 years on, with the extra payments compounded, it behoves them to do something about it! Now the National Lombard Bank, the company sends accountant Jane Dolan (who, incidentally, has a very poor sense of smell), to find Vanderdecker. At the same time the Captain is looking for Montalban, now a nuclear scientist at Dounreay, to do something about the smell as he has obviously found a cure.

This is the first book I have read by Holt, and it is a wonderfully amusing and subtle yarn. The subject matter does not at first glance seem to lend itself to a fantasy treatment, but Holt's deft touch renders it one of the best such tales I have read for a long time. Vanderdecker is so dead-pan and pragmatic about his situation, I suppose after 400 years all hysteria is gone, and Montalban is so much the loony professor, that the two extremes mesh well together and become the pivot around which the story swings.

I have reservations about the practice

of using Josh Kirby covers for so many novels of this type. Nothing against Josh's work, but he has become so linked with Pratchett I feel their use could be misleading. The novel could even remain unread should a careless Pratchett fan have a touch of pique on discovering his/her error. That aside, the story is superb, so ignore the quibble and buy it.

MANTIS by K W Jeter  
Pan, 281pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Bernie Evans.

This story is told to us in the first person by an un-named man who is resigned to his divorce, has stayed friendly with his ex-wife and sees his son regularly. He also follows the adventures of Michael, who is slowly revealed as a psychopathic sex-killer who thinks he is doing his victims a favour, they are actively seeking out his "services". He meets up with Rae, a lady who has need of a man like Michael in order to become aroused. Michael is presented to us as the product of the unsettled mind of our un-named hero, or is he?

Beautifully crafted, the novel builds to a crescendo of violence as Rae pushes Michael further and further to the edge, and beyond. You keep turning the pages as Jeter leads you inexorably to the final scene, all the time you are hoping that Michael, and Rae, will have the ending they deserve.

Beautifully crafted it may be, skilfully written, a masterpiece of language, but it's also the sickest book I've ever laid eyes on. The ideas presented here are an outrage, not only against women but by implication against any weak or vulnerable member of society. Ideas like this belong on a psychiatrist's couch, not presented as a form of entertainment. Jeter's undoubted skill with the written word has been abused, prostituted, turned into something unremittingly evil. If the intention was to sicken and disgust, then it succeeded.

MISTRESS OF THE EMPIRE by Raymond E Feist & Janny Wurts  
HarperCollins, 560 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is the third and final volume in the trilogy that runs in parallel with *THE RIPTWAR SAGA*. One or two characters from that series appear here, but the plots are independent.

Mara, now ruling Lady of the Acoma and Servant of the Empire (an honour only given to the Emperor's most favoured adviser), is happily married to Hokanu, the heir to the Shinzawai. She has two sons, Ayaki from her

disastrous first marriage, and Justin, the son of a now freed Midekman slave. Mara seems to attract trouble, and when Ayaki is murdered she swears vengeance on her first husband's older brother, Jiro Lord of the Anasiti, who she thinks is the killer. She insults him at Ayaki's funeral, and even the discovery of the real killers comes too late to prevent war between the clans.

Mara is forbidden further bloodshed by the Assembly of Magicians, which stops the battle but leaves Mara furious at her own powerlessness. She decides they have too much power and must be stopped. With no hope of allies within the Empire, she goes outside it, to enlist the help of the insectile Cho-ja. On her way home she is told that the Emperor has been murdered and succession will devolve through the man who marries his eldest daughter, as he left no sons. To ensure peace and security for the Empire, Mara must see the right man on the throne. The ensuing power struggle makes her past conflicts as nothing by comparison.

This trilogy has been a fine complement to *THE RIFTWAR SAGA*, and the political manoeuvres have made this an excellent if involved read. Mara stands out as one of the strongest characterisations I have read in a long time, and with such a big - if not epic - saga that is essential. From *DAUGHTER OF THE EMPIRE*, which was a little slow to start, this series has improved greatly and is now an unput-downable read.

CHILDREN OF FLUX AND ANCHOR by Jack L Chalker  
RoC, 350 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

After, for a very good reason, adding a fourth volume to an apparently completed trilogy, Jack Chalker then found some loose ends he wanted to tie up, and so along came volume five. But don't worry, this volume isn't a cash-driven after-thought. It's as strong as the others.

At the end of volume three, *MASTER OF FLUX AND ANCHOR*, the alien Samish have been defeated, and World can now settle down to something approaching normality. The rulers of the New Eden section of World decide to hold a carnival to celebrate the end of the hostilities, and to prove to the rest of World that their way of life - with subservient women and dominant men - is the best way for World to develop. They held this carnival at the time of year when the old matriarchal church used to hold the pairing rite, and invite Suzi, a one time flux-wife, and several stringers, Matson included. Suzi is given the

grand tour by the present ruler of New Eden. Unfortunately he forgets just who she is, and invites her to see his latest top secret scientific project, a flux projector cannibalised from the wreckage of the Samish ships. This is capable of tapping into the computer grid that flux stands upon, and manipulating and shaping everything and everyone within a given area of flux.

The outcome of the ruler's forgetfulness is that Suzi, despite her status, has to be arrested. She escapes, and runs to Matson with the news, but not before her household is killed and her children kidnapped. She cooperates with the kidnappers, a group of women who are the antithesis of New Eden and who want to take over, becomes corrupted by the power of the projector, gradually taking over the group. Matson and his colleagues now find themselves in direct opposition to Suzi, and with only one way to stop her, their one-time friend.....

This has been an above average series, if a little slow and stodgy in places. The basic story-line is sound, characterisation is good, especially the omnipotent Matson, and this book fully deserves its place within the series.

RAFT by Stephen Baxter  
Grafton, 251 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Bernie Evans.

This is hard sf in every sense. The basic premise is that in the universe of which Baxter writes, the force of gravity is one billion times stronger than on Earth. Humans have got there as a result of what may have been a navigational error, or just simply by going where no man had gone before, many years before the story opens. In order to survive a rigid stratified society developed, with the engineers and scientists at the top of the pile and manual workers at the bottom. But things are starting to go wrong, the food machines fill bellies, but not as nutritionally as they once did, the sky is getting redder by the day, blue is a concept, not a colour to be seen. Why is all this, and what can be done?

Baxter's answer is Rees, a miner who escapes to the Raft. He becomes a scientist, extrapolating the true state of things from very minor clues. He overcomes great odds and survives to develop and put into action a plan to escape the universe, now known to be dying. It's all internally consistent, but Rees is just too much, almost a one dimensional super-hero. It cries out for better characterisation, this is definitely a case of the Idea as Hero - but I loved it.

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