

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

November 1992

Issue 254

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 MEETING FEATURES A DEBATE BETWEEN THE BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY SF & FANTASY SOCIETY and THE BIRMINGHAM SF GROUP

Friday 20th November 1992, 7.45pm for 8.00pm

Admittance: Members £2.00 Visitors £3.25

1. **THE MOTION:** "This house believes that there is a conspiracy against showing science fiction on the television by the television companies, especially the BBC."

2. **PROPOSING THE MOTION:** David B Wake, editor, writer (if he could sell some stories), graduate from Birmingham University as a Software Engineer. Sixth Chairbeing of the University Science Fiction and Fantasy Society, less small person (see below).

Believes he will have an easy time winning this motion.

**SECONDING THE MOTION:** Lisa Hammersley, a first year geologist originating from Richmond, Surrey. She is NOT an astrophysicist. ~~Prefers older men~~, and considers herself a small person (NOT in Bernie's league I'm told).

*The Birmingham University team propose the motion, hoping to take a 4-3 lead in the series on the premise the motion is sound - and winable.*

*However,*

3. **OPPOSING THE MOTION:** Carol Morton presently secretary of the BSFG, responsible for the programme at this years Novacon (wonderful wasn't it?), newsletter editor for the BSFG in 1986, ordinary member of the BSFG committee in 1987 and for her sins (as if that wasn't enough) chair of Novacon 23 next year. And, just to keep it in the family.....

Tony Morton present chairman of the BSFG, newsletter editor of the BSFG in 1987, ordinary member of the BSFG committee in 1986 and doing publications for Novacon 23 next year. You would have thought that would have been enough for anyone to cope with but no, here he is seconding the opposition to the motion.

*So come along and see just what secret weapons these two have up their sleeves 'cause they'll certainly give the Birmingham University lot a run for their money.*

**FORTHCOMING  
EVENTS**

UNTIL 5 DECEMBER 1992: "FROM FANTASY TO REALITY the world of JRR Tolkien", on display on Floor 6 of the Central Library. Call (021) 235 4511 for further details.

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

20-22 NOVEMBER 1992: LEONARD NIMOY CON dedicated to STAR TREK star, director. Stakis Victoria Hotel, Nottingham. Attending £15.00. Contact 77 the Ridings, Ealing, London, W5 3DP.

21 NOVEMBER 1992: TERRY PRATCHETT will be signing copies of the new Discworld hardcover LORDS AND LADIES (£14.99) and the paperback edition of WITCHES ABROAD (£3.99) at Andromeda Bookshop from 10.30am, call (021) 643 1999 for further details of this and other signing sessions.

27-29 NOVEMBER 1992: HILLCON III. Eighteenth Beneluxcon, Atlanta Hotel, Rotterdam, the Netherlands. GoHs: Tanith Lee, Terry Pratchett, Tad Williams, Peter Schaap. FGoHs: Jo Thomas, Johan-Martijn Flaton. Att. Hfl.65 (only Hfl.20 for East European sf fans). Write to Ruud van de Kruisweg, Bijltespad 52, 1018 KJ Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

5 DECEMBER 1992: COMIC MART at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Call (0527) 585036 or send see for details to Mrs P Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, Worcs., B97 6SO.

12 DECEMBER 1992: COMIC MART at the Midland Hotel, New Street, opens midday. Train to New Street Station, or any bus to the city centre. Full details from Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

18 DECEMBER 1992

BRUM GROUP

CHRISTMAS PARTY

at the White Lion,

Buffet, competitions,

prize raffle, party games

and tombola!

Tickets available

from Richard Standage,

only £4.50!

(Call Carol Morton on

0384 897206, before 7pm,

if you have any

prizes you wish

to donate

to the tombola.)

23 JANUARY - 6 FEBRUARY 1993: DRACULA IS UNDEAD AND WELL AND LIVING IN PURFLEET by Charles McKeown, "Gothic humour, vampire bats, blood, beautiful young girls! Will Count Dracula triumph? Will the lovely Mina escape his clutches? Or is it already too late?" Crescent Theatre, Cumberland Street, Brindley Place, Birmingham. Call (021) 643 5858 for further details.

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise 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).



5-7 MARCH 1993: TREK DWARF. Combined STAR TREK / RED DWARF con. NOTE: the venue is now the Holiday Inn, Leicester. GOHs (stc): Mike Okuda, Richard Arnold, Guy Vardaman, Mike Butcher, Adrian Riglesford. Membership limit of 500. Write to 47 Marsham, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5RN.

8-12 APRIL 1993: HELICON 93. 44th British national sf con, combined with the 1993 Eurocon. Hotel de France, St Helier, Jersey. GOHs: John Brunner, George R R Martin. FGOH: Larry van der Putte. Attending £25.00 until 1 December 1992; Supporting and children's attending (age 8-14 years) both £13.00. Contact: 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

16-18 APR 1993: SMOFCON 10. First non-US venue for this annual relaxcon. Same site and contact address as Helicon, listed above.

28-31 MAY 1993: MEXICON V. "Straight" science fiction con. St Nicholas Hotel, Scarborough. Contact: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

5-7 NOVEMBER 1993: NOVACON 23 the Brum Group's own sf con, hopefully at the Royal Angus hotel in the city centre. GOH Stephen Baxter. Attending membership costs £20 until Easter 1993, then £25 until 1st October and £30 on the door. Supporting membership is £8. Details: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

1-4 APRIL 1994: SOU'WESTER. 45th UK national sf con. Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. GOHs: Diane Duane, Neil Gaiman, Barbara Hambly, Peter Morwood. Attending £20.00 (£18.00 discount for pre-supp members). Write to West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

24-28 AUGUST 1995: INTERSECTION. 53rd worldcon, Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow. GOHs Samuel R Delany and Gerry Anderson. Further details: see full-page advertisement last issue.

27 DECEMBER 1999 - 2 JANUARY 2000: MILLENIUM. Venue tba, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a Benelux country or UK). Att. £3.00 (£10.00) per year, to be deducted from eventual membership fee (to be announced before 1997). Contact: Malcolm Reid, 2/R, 9 Airlie Street, Hyndland, Glasgow, G12 9RJ.

Although details are correct to the best of my knowledge, I advise readers to contact organizers prior to travelling. Please mention the BRUM GROUP NEWS when replying to listings or advertisements.

## THE 57th JOPHAN REPORT

by Martin Tudor

The Nova Awards for best fanwriter, fanartist and fanzine were voted on and awarded at Novacon 22 over the weekend 6-8 November. The full results appear below, the figure in brackets being the number of points received. There were 32 valid ballots cast.

BEST FANZINE: 1) *BOB ?* edited by Ian Sorenson (32). 2) *SALIROMANIA* ed. Michael Ashley (25). 3-) *SLUBBERDEULLION* ed. Nigel E Richardson (15) and *BLACKBIRD'S EGG* ed. Richard Hewison (15). 5-) *FTT* ed. Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, *BLACK LAGOON* ed. Simon Ounsley, *ANSIBLE* ed. Dave Langford, *THE LIGHT STUFF* ed. Rhodri James and *GROSS ENCOUNTERS* ed. Alan Dorey (all 9 points). 10) *THINGUMY BOB* ed. Chuck Connor (8). 11-) *GAIJIN* ed. Steve Green, *ALISON WONDERLAND* ed. Paul & Cas Skelton, *READING MATTERS* ed. Tibs, (all 6). 14) *THE OLAF ALTERNATIVE* ed. Ken Cheslin (5). 15-) *PULP* ed. Rob Hansen, *Avedon Carol & John Harvey, SHIPYARD BLUES* ed. John D Owen (both 4). 17) *DAISNAID* ed. D West (3). 18) *HORRORSHOW* ed. Eddie Trenchcoat & Mr Damage (2). 19-) *PIE IN THE SKY* ed. Harry Bell, *CONRUNNER* ed. Ian Sorenson (both 1).

BEST FANWRITER: 1) *MICHAEL ASHLEY* (29). 2) Nigel E Richardson. 3-) Dave Langford and Ian Sorenson (17 each). 5-) Simon Ounsley and Abigail Frost (11 each). 7) Avedon Carol (9). 8) Paul Skelton (6). 9) Alan Dorey (5). 10-) Chuck Connor and Judith Hanna (4 each). 12-) John D Rickett, Helen Bland, John Richards, Steve Green, D West and Joseph Nicholas (all with 3). 18-) Geoff Hall, Hazel Ashworth, Rob Hansen, Rhodri James (with 2 each). 22-) Pete Presford and Chuck Harris (1 point each).

BEST FANARTIST: 1) *DAVE MOORING* (40). 2) D West (23). 3) Jim Barker. 4) Shep Kirkbride (16). 5) Sue Mason (9). 6) Alan Hunter (8). 7) Harry Bell (5). 8-) Sylvia Starshine and Lesley Ward (4 each). 10-) Dave Carson, Ken Cheslin, April Lee, Tim Groome, Colin Johnson, James Steel (all with 2). 16-) Colin Langeveld, Jackie Duckworth, Per Porter and Graham Higgins (all with 1 point each).

The outgoing Nova administrator, Harry Bond, noted that some fanzines were voted for but were declared ineligible as they had not appeared during the period necessary, most

notably Ann Green's *ORMOLU*. The new Nova administrator is Tony Berry, 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, Warley, West Midlands, B69 4EP. If you wish your fanzine to be considered for the Novas next year you please send him a copy so that he can include it in his listing which will appear in one of the Novacon 23 progress reports.

Also at Novacon Roger Robinson presented a cheque for £2,500 to Jill Smith of the RNIB. A further £600 will follow shortly. Roger thanked the following for raising the money: several Novacons, the Drabble Project, a couple of Wincons, the Drunken Drabble Project, the Beer Auction, Eastcon, Protoplasm and Jim White.

The Novacon 22 Book Auction raised a further £150 for the RNIB and the Books for the Blind Raffle another £156.

The Sunday night Fan Fund Auction at Novacon 22, conducted by Pam Wells, aided by Roelof Goudriaan, Lynne-Ann Morse, Brian Amerigen and Roger Robinson raised £22.25 for Fans Across the Worlds and £115.14 for the TransAtlantic Fan Fund.

The Science Fiction Foundation will move to Liverpool University next year, following demands from the North East London Polytechnic that it become self-financing from April onwards.

The announcement was made in the latest Friends of Foundation newsletter; the organization intends seeking charitable status to continue its financial support of the SFF.

Robert McCammon's *BOY'S LIFE* won the World Fantasy Award for best novel at the World Fantasy Convention, held in Pine Mountain, Georgia over the Halloween weekend. The full results are given below, with each category's winner shown in bold type.

**Novel: *BOY'S LIFE*, Robert P McCammon.**  
Also nominated: *THE PAFER GRALL*, James P Blylock; *HUNTING THE GHOST DANCER*, A A Attanasio; *BONE DANCE*, Emma Bull; *THE LITTLE COUNTRY*, Charles de Lint; *OUTSIDE THE DOG MUSEUM*, Jonathan Carroll.

**Novella: "The Raghorn", Robert Holdstock and Garry Kilworth;** "Our Lady of the Harbour", Charles de Lint; "The Galley of His Dreams", Kristine Kathryn Rusch; "Gwydion and the Dragon", C J Cherryh; "The Pavilion of Frozen Women", S P Somtow; "To Become a Sorcerer", Darrell Schweitzer.

**Short Story: "The Somewhere Doors", Fred Chappell;** "The Better Boy", James P Blylock and Tim Powers; "Pity the Monsters", Charles de Lint; "The Conjure Man", Charles de Lint.

**Anthology: *THE FOURTH ANNUAL COLLECTION OF THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY & HORROR*, ed Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow;** *A WHISPER OF BLOOD*, ed Ellen Datlow; *FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES*, ed S Dziemianowicz, Robert Weinberg and Martin H Greenberg; *FINAL SHADOWS*, ed Charles L Grant; *AFTER THE KING*, ed Martin H Greenberg; *WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER*, Lewis Shiner. **Collection: *THE ENDS OF THE EARTH*, Lucius Shepard;** *LAFFERTY IN ORBIT*, R A Lafferty; *THE BONE FOREST*, Robert Holdstock; *MORE SHAPES THAN ONE*, Fred Chappell; *NIGHT OF THE COOTERS*, Howard Waldrop; *GRIMSCRIBE, HIS LIFE AND WORKS*, Thomas Ligotti. **Artist: Tim Hildenbrandt;** David Bergen; Alan Clark; Ned Dameron; Alan Lee. **Special Award (Professional): George Scithers and Darrell Schweitzer;** Ramsey Campbell; Donald M Grant; Terri Windling; Dean Wesley Smith and Kristine Kathryn Rusch. **Special Award (Non-Pro): W Paul Ganley;** Crispin Burnham; Barry Hoffman; Peggy Nadramia; Joe Stefko. **Life Achievement Award: Edd Cartier.**

Michael Whelan's Hugo-winning cover art for Joan D Vinge's *THE SUMMER QUEEN* was also named best hardcover illustration at the Association of SF and Fantasy Artists' Chesley Awards; the best paperback cover was David Cherry's for *SWORD AND SORCERESS VIII*, the magazine award to David Mattingly for the September *AMAZING STORIES*. Also honoured were: Bob Walters (best interior artwork, *WEIRD TALES*, summer 1991); Clayburn Moore (best 3-D work, "Celestial Jade"); James Gurney (career achievement); Jan Sherrall Gephardt, Richard Kelly (tied, contribution to ASFA); Betsy Wollheim, Sheila Gilbert of DAW Books (joint, best art director). Cherry's "Filea Mea" and Whelan's "Study for *ALL THE WEYRS OF PERN*" also won the awards for best unpublished work, in the colour and monochrome categories respectively.

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Personal opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the membership of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group.

All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise. This publication was printed on the WAVE photocopier. Many thanks this issue to CAROL & TONY MORTON for the cover blurb, BERNIE EVANS, CRITICAL WAVE, SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE, ANSIBLE, DAVE HARDY, STEVE GREEN, DAVE HOLMES and TONY BERRY.



**BIRMINGHAM  
SCIENCE FICTION  
GROUP:  
COMMITTEE POSTS  
1993**

by Bernie Evans

With the A.G.M. looming on the 15th of January 1993 it's time for all you enthusiastic members to send in your nominations for Committee posts. You can, of course, nominate from the floor at the meeting if you wish, but if you KNOW you will be standing, send in your written nomination so we can print it in the January edition of *BRUM GROUP NEWS* for everyone to see.

Written nominations must reach Bernie Evans (who will be typing them up), by the end of December. She can be contacted either at the November meeting or the Christmas Party or by post to 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

So, what positions are there ?

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**CHAIRMAN**

Will chair and keep order at all meetings, and will also hold regular committee meetings (currently on the Tuesday following the Brum Group meeting). Will contact speakers, arrange accomodation where necessary and ensure they get to the meeting on time.

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**SECRETARY**

Should be able to type, attend all committee meetings and produce Minutes of these to be sent to all Committee Members. Likewise the A.G.M. or other Group meetings. May also be asked to write to prospective speakers, etc.

**TREASURER**

If you don't know what a treasurer does, don't bother to apply !

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**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

Has to produce the newsletter every month. Access to a computer and desktop publishing software and/or a word processor is an advantage, but not a neccessity, a typewriter and a pair of scissors will suffice. The ability to type AND meet a monthly deadline ARE a neccessity, as is the ability to drag contributions out of people, ditto artwork. A knowledge of design/layout is also an advantage.

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**PUBLICITY OFFICER**

Will produce A4 posters, A5 flyers, and so on for meetings, and arrange for them to be displayed in local shops, libraries, and as many other outlets as possible. Will also produce general publicity for the Group, and contact radio and tv if necessary. Enthusiasm and the ability to produce new IDEAS are an important factor.

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**REVIEWS EDITOR**

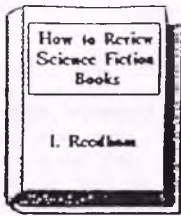
Is actually an Ordinary Member, (see the Constitution), but may be appointed to receive and distribute review copies of books as fairly and appropriately as possible, and recieve and compile (re-type) reviews in time to be included in the Newsletter each month. Ability to type is obviously essential.

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One other ORDINARY MEMBER may be appointed by the Committee any time during the year at the discretion of the Committee.

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So, that's who we need. Which do YOU want to do ?



# Book Reviews

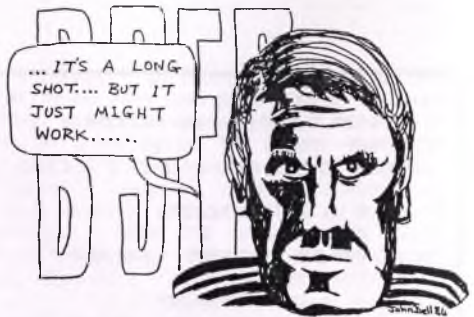
[[Before we start on the reviews, I'd like to make a special plea to you all, concerning *next* month's newsletter. Bearing in mind not only the Christmas post, which means we'll have to post early, but also the fact that both Martin and I have plans for pre-Christmas celebrations with colleagues from work and friends, we would very much appreciate your co-operation. Please let me have all your book reviews at the meeting this Friday, so the typing and editing can be done straight away. Not only will this enable us to get the newsletter out on time, it will give you a breathing space, you'll have an extra couple of weeks to read and review the books you take away this month - Bernie]]

**MAGIC'S PROMISE** by Mercedes Lackey  
RoC, 320 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Vanyel, the most powerful Herald-Mage (he has both defensive Herald magic and offensive Mage magic powers), is exhausted. He single-handedly ended a border war and is in desperate need of a rest. If he stays at Havens, the Herald-Mage headquarters, he will be called on for help. He is persuaded to go to his childhood home for a visit that he has been putting off for years. It all stems from the fact that his macho father cannot accept his son's sexual inclinations. Vanyel is shay'a'chern, he prefers male partners. His life-bonded Tyrendel is dead, and Vanyel is afraid his mother will start to throw young women at him again, that his father will shun him again, that once again the sadistic arms-master Jervis will be out to better him. But he is persuaded to go, and is pleasantly surprised at his reception.

His parents seem to welcome him, and Jervis reveals that his previous brutal treatment of Vanyel was on his father's orders to "make a man out of him". All is going well until Yfandes, Vanyel's equine-like Companion, receives a call for help from one of her kind from just across the Valdemar border with Lineas. Vanyel and Yfandes arrive at the palace in the town of Highgrove to



find a Herald belabouring with a whip a young boy riding a Companion. It seems the entire palace populace was torn to pieces, literally shredded, and this child is the only survivor. Vanyel rescues the child Tashir, son of the King's consort but maybe not of the King, and takes him back to his father's house.

Investigations show that someone set a trap that Tashir inadvertently triggered, which caused a swarm of creatures to rip apart his family and retainers. That person has set the trap on Vanyel and the swarm will follow him, and kill him and all those that bear his blood. Now, Vanyel is the actual father of the King of Valdemar's only child, because the King was sterile and his life-bonded wanted a child. So unless Vanyel can find and stop the person who set this trap, not only will his family die, but the country could be plunged into chaos with the death of the princess.....

**MAGICIANS OF THE NIGHT** by Barbara Hambly  
Harper Collins, 349 pp, £8.99, "C" format

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is the concluding part of the tale which began with *THE RAINBOW ABYSS*, (although I have my doubts, Hambly could possibly continue the story). Jaldis the blind opened a Dark Well, a gateway between worlds, and heard a voice begging for help to save magic in a world where wizards were being persecuted. To escape from persecution themselves Jaldis and his apprentice Rhion enter the Well and try to cross the void between the worlds. Only Rhion makes it through. He wakes up to find himself surrounded by men in grey uniforms emblazoned with the reversed symbol for light, the swastika. He is in Nazi Germany, and in the hands of fanatical Nazi Occultists. They are determined to use real magic to aid in the invasion of England.

At first Rhion believes their tales and is willing to help, but gradually the truth emerges. These "wizards" will go to any lengths to gain power, even to the ritual sacrifice of anyone they believe has magical powers. A young barmaid, Sara, turns out to

be the daughter of a man who has a little of the magic about him - and he's also a Jew. Rhion helps Sara to free her father, but in doing so comes under suspicion from the occultists. Meanwhile British Army Intelligence believes Rhion is a major threat, and sends an agent to kill him. It becomes a race against time. Rhion has to reach a place of ancient power, some standing stones, by midnight on the Summer Solstice before he is captured by the Nazis and used as a sacrifice, or is killed by the British agent.

This is a superb tale and has a mix of settings that is, at the least, unusual. It has all the hallmarks of Hambly at her best.

FIRE SEA by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman  
Bantam, 410 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is the Death Gate Cycle volume III. Once trilogies were enough, but seven books are proposed for this series. Possibly it is worth it, though.

Centuries ago the Sartons created four new worlds from the wreckage of the devastated Earth, and banished the Patryns to the Labyrinth. Abarrach is the World of Stone, with caverns of poison gas and rivers of lava. The few remaining inhabitants of this hellish world have turned to necromancy to survive.

Haplo the Patryn and Alfred the Sartan finally discover the terrible secret of what happened to the Sartans, who should be happily ruling all four worlds. Humans, elves and dwarves have died out altogether on Abarrach, and it looks like the Sartans will soon be joining them. Only the undead will remain....

The misplaced humour that spoiled the previous books is thankfully absent from *FIRE SEA*, which was a wise decision, as the tone of the book is serious and grim. One quibble, the book ends unexpectedly, and at the end there are thirty-four (!) pages of dance music and excerpts from other books by these authors. This series has been very original so far, and is also becoming a good read.

GRUNTS! by Mary Gentle  
Bantam, 429 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

"Ah! I Love the smell of Greek Fire in the Morning"

A group of downtrodden orcs raid a dragon's treasure and make off with a load of strange weapons with weird runes on them, such as "M16 Assault Rifle". The dragon has put a curse on her treasure:- "You shall become what you take". By the time they get

back to camp they have already started to march in step and shout "Yo!" a lot. Captain Ashnak starts to develop ambitions. The orcs will not be sword-fodder any longer....

There are many good touches in this book. Ned and Will Brandiman are the sort of revolting halfling (or hobbit) that Tolkien never mentioned in the interests of good taste. There is the Special Undead Service (SUS), with the motto "Death Then Glory". There are Flying Elephants, Stealth Dragons, and of course after the Final Battle come the Final War Crimes Trials.

There are definite similarities between this world and *VILLAINS!*, an anthology edited by Mary Gentle and Neil Gaiman. I suspect this book may have started as a short story for *VILLAINS!* and then ran off by itself. The Final Battle occurs only one quarter of the way through, and the story does not stop. Instead we get the elections for the Throne of the World (with the Dark Lord as a candidate of course) afterwards, and then the Aliens invade and it gets really silly.

*GRUNTS!* is an excellent parody of all soppy High Fantasy, but be warned, orcs can be pretty sordid creatures at times:- "Pass me another elf, Sarge, this one's split."

MAGIC'S PRICE by Mercedes Lackey  
RoC, 351 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

The land of Valdemar is under seige, the neighbouring land of Karse has outlawed Magic and killed all but one of its Herald-Mages. The King of Valdemar, Vanyel's friend, is dying from an unidentifiable and incurable disease. Vanyel has to take over some of the duties of the King because he is in too much pain to function as a monarch. That is until the young Bard, Stefen, discovers the ability to play pain away. This gives Vanyel the chance to discover who or what is behind the killings of the Karsean Herald-Mages. Stefen, unbeknownst to Vanyel, is also shay'achern, and eventually Vanyel finds happiness at last, and becomes life-bonded to Stefen.

However, their happiness only lasts a few weeks as, one by one, the remaining Valdemarean Herald-Mages die. At first it is thought to be a series of accidents, but they turn out to be murders. Vanyel's Aunt Savil, a powerful Herald-Mage and his tutor, is killed, which leaves Vanyel as the last Herald-Mage. He must, despite his new love, find and stop this renegade who has killed his peers before he is killed, which would leave Valdemar only the Herald Magic to protect her from her enemies.



This has been an absolutely superb series. The storyline isn't particularly outstanding, but the characterisation is the factor that raises these tales above the ordinary. The anguish and pain of Vanyel's being what he is, his grief and loss at Tyndel's death, and his loneliness after, are so emotively portrayed that I felt like weeping for him at times. I'm only sorry that I can't read these again for the first time, but you can be assured I will read the whole trilogy again and again, and I am eagerly awaiting whatever else Mercedes Lackey will write. Do please read these stories, they are quite wonderful.

SERPENT MAGE by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman  
Bantam, 407 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is the fourth in the increasingly impressive Death Gate Cycle. Chelestra is the world of water, upon which human, elf and dwarf have learned to live in harmony. Their idyllic life, in bubbles of air amidst an endless sea, is threatened not only by the terrible dragon-snakes but also by the Sartans, the race of wizards who have delusions of godhood.

Alfred finds himself reunited with his fellow Sartans at last, only to find he can no longer accept their ambitions. Haplo the Patryn is rescued by the "mensch" (the term both Sartans and Patrins contemptuously use for humans, elves and dwarves), and agrees to help them against the dragon-snakes. He means to stir up a war against the Sartans, but things do not go according to plan.

This book is lighter in tone than the grim *FIRE SEA*, but the humour is natural rather than forced, as in earlier Weis and Hickman works. An interesting series so far, and an excellent read.

FROST DANCERS. A Story of Hares by Garry Kilworth  
Harper Collins, 380pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is Kilworth's third venture into Henry Williamson territory. The first two books, *HUNTER'S MOON* (about foxes) and *MIDNIGHT'S SUN* (about wolves) were fictional studies of the lives of carnivores with all the excitement of the hunt. What then could give a group of herbivores whose chances of survival are far less, any degree of fascination other than the oohs and aahs reserved for fluffy, cuddly rabbits. Perhaps the astonishing thing is that enough hares survive each year to replenish the species.

The hero of this volume is Skelter, a blue mountain hare. At the start he is a youngster always on the lookout for predators and the next mouthful of heather shoots. Then, along with many others of his clan, he is captured and transported from the highlands, destined to be torn apart at a hare coursing event. Except that Skelter is lucky. Mountain hares do not behave in exactly the same way as brown field hares and he escapes. Now, far away from his homeland, he has to adapt. Initially he finds refuge with some rabbits but later joins a brown hare colony which is menaced by a huge predatory bird. It is his habit of digging a U-shaped tunnel for a form, instead of the usual scrape, that gets him accepted as this saves the local hares from the deprivations of Bubba, the giant raptor. His habit of scanning the skies for golden eagles saves him on more than one occasion.

As in the other books, the animals have their own culture and story-telling traditions although Skelter finds some of the superstitions of the lowlanders rather silly, which does not endear him to them.

Death for herbivores is a matter of everyday existence. Naturally, many of the hares fall prey to various causes - foxes, Bubba, shotguns, dogs - but these occurrences are related without sentimentality. The animals are often frightened - it is an important survival trait - but they do not grieve in the way humans do. Death is something that happens. This attitude is one of the strengths of the book. One of the problems is that is a bit overlong.

THE SHADOW'S EDGE by Terry Murray & Jeff Anderson  
Lion, 48 pp, £3.99, Graphic Novel

Reviewed by Tony Berry.

This is the first in the Legends of Larian, a sword-and sorcery story concerning a blind girl, Sheela, and her mentor, Daare. She is chosen by some mystic oracle to rule the land of Berberous, which angers the neighbours who all want to get their hands on it. Plots are hatched, knives are wielded, spells are cast. Chief of the bad guys is Naythen Skrithe, a paladin who thinks he should be on the throne. He teams up with one of the rival factions and raises an army to invade Berberous and get rid of Queen Sheela. Also involved is a monster which lives at the bottom of the sea. We only glimpse it briefly, and no doubt its part in things will be revealed in future episodes.

Anderson's artwork is nice, all fully painted, but the script is hardly Neil Gaiman



standard. The book is obviously aimed at younger readers who, if they like straight-forward fantasy, should find it entertaining enough.

MORNING STAR by Peter Atkins

Harper Collins, 238 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

Peter Atkins is an old friend of Clive Barker, and wrote the screenplays of the second and third Hellraiser movies. Although he has previously published some shorter fiction, this is his first book. It starts in a fairly routine way with some quite gruesome serial killings, but then we come to learn that these deaths are the result of one man's crusade to rid the world of vampires. But are they truly vampires?, or are they the product of his deranged imagination? This has scarcely been clarified when a friend of one of his victims becomes involved in some very strange supernatural happenings, and it seems that the "vampires" are fighting back. Finally, no - I'll let you discover for yourself what happens next. It ends in a stunning climax which, although effectively described, leaves the reader to place his own interpretation on what has actually happened. Indeed, the questions of whether the vampires were real or imaginary, and of whether Morningstar the killer was good or evil, remain unanswered,

Atkins is clearly an accomplished writer, and he has the gift of describing scenes so well that they are readily pictured in the mind's eye. Perhaps his experience in motion-pictures is partly responsible. However, his writing style definitely goes over the top in some places and one can detect a conscious striving for effect by a calculated use of constructions and figures of speech. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, I found it an enjoyable book to read. I was always eager to find out what happened next, but on the way the process of reading was a pleasant experience in itself. It is odd to think of reading what is basically intended as a horror novel as "enjoyable" or "pleasant", but that's the way it was, and I actually look forward to reading it again some time.

THE FETCH by Robert Holdstock

Warner Books, 376 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

The story of a boy adopted at birth, and of the uncanny powers that surround him. Purported to be unwanted by his natural mother, Michael is adopted (through illicit

dealings) by the Whitlocks. Once Michael is within the family home in rural Kent unusual happenings begin. He is continually covered in earth that appears from nowhere, a poltergeist in the house? Other mysterious events continue, but cease abruptly after a near-fatal episode with mud. As Michael grows up he develops a strange ability to "find" items, often of great value. This proves to be both a blessing and a curse for him, as his "gifts" take a special place within the household: for Michael as tokens of his feelings for his parents, for his parents as objects with a high market value which cause their greed to consume them. The intervention of a psychic, Francoise Jeury, only isolates Michael further.

Obsessed with the legend of the Fisher King, Michael cannot forgive his parents for selling his gifts, but he has to continue to "fetch" objects in his search for the Grail. The climax is stunning, and one of the best twists I have ever come across. Building superbly to this finale, Holdstock reveals the truth as the bemused and confused parents grasp an insight into what has occurred, and the potential ending. An excellent "horror" story, seen largely from the child's viewpoint, the perception so different from that of an adult. Holdstock provides numerous images and backdrops to the novel - the mysterious Chalk Boy, Richard and Susan Whitlock, their friend Goodman, sister Carol, the school bully Steven Hanson - but overall is the power within Michael, his losing of it, the outcome, and its dangerous return. They all build to give a compelling, haunting story, a stunning read equal to any. Read for yourself and enjoy.

[[Another few words from Bernie. It isn't often we are witness to the birth of a new publishing house. It's even less often we find a novel which lives up to the "hype" put out by the publishers. With this first offering from the brand new MILLENNIUM (no, that's not a spelling error) stable we find the two events in one. This must be a "first" in every sense, so it gives me a great deal of pleasure to present.....]]

A FIRE UPON THE DEEP by Vernor Vinge

Millennium, 391 pp, £8.99, "C", £14.99 h/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

Every once in a while an author produces a book which stands head and shoulders above whatever else is around at the time. Vernor Vinge has been writing for quite a while and, although he has not published a great amount of work, it has always been worth looking out for. This time he has surpassed himself and

come up with one of the best sf novels I have read in a long time.

It is set against the background of a galaxy-wide civilisation which has existed for millions - perhaps billions - of years, outlasting many of the individual races in it. In part this is because they all seek, and some achieve, "transcendence", becoming "powers" in a process which reminded me of the climax of the human race in *CHILDHOOD'S END*. The story opens as an archeological expedition on a remote planet inadvertently releases a kind of computer super-virus which had been isolated and imprisoned there five million years previously. Two children, the only survivors of this debacle, are cast away on an unknown world where the dominant race are dog-like beings who have achieved intelligence by functioning together in small telepathic groups or packs.

Meanwhile the released entity begins taking over inhabited systems by infiltrating their communication networks. Its ultimate objective is to rule the galaxy, and even the Powers will be unable to stop it. An expedition to rescue the children thus becomes a matter of crucial importance when it is discovered that they may have with them a Counter-measure which will save the galaxy.

It is of course impossible to do justice to a book like this by attempting to summarise it in a few short sentences. There are complexities and ramifications on almost every page, multitudinous threads skillfully woven together in a rich tapestry which truly brings the writer's imaginings to life. For me, the most fascinating image is the amazing unity of countless disparate races, held together by a commercial communications network like a gigantic computer mailbox system, a global village expanded to encompass a galaxy. However, this is only one picture in a veritable gallery of wonders, and the chance to stroll through such a gallery is what we read science fiction for. This gallery is well worth the price of admission.

*HEATHEN* by Shaun Hutson  
Little, Brown, 311 pp, £14.99, h/b

*CAPTIVES* by Shaun Hutson  
Warner Books, 433 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Bernie Evans.

Shaun seems to be maturing somewhat in these two novels, his latest offerings. The violence is as bloodthirsty, graphic and sick-making as ever, but it is integral to the story-lines, not inserted at regular intervals to shock, as has seemed the case in several of his other stories. There is also less of

it, especially in *HEATHEN*, making it all the more shocking when it does appear. Not only that, but the stories are strong and (at least for the most part) entirely believable.

*HEATHEN* has us commiserating with newly-widowed Donna Ward as she tries to come to terms with her loss, and to understand it. Her attempts lead her into danger as she uncovers a plot as old as mankind, of which her husband and his mistress (whose existence Donna only discovered after the car accident which killed them both) were a part. Her husband was not what he had appeared to be, and neither are many of the people to whom Donna turns for comfort and safety....

By contrast, the characters in *CAPTIVES* are exactly what they seem to be, only they are supposed to be already dead, before they die in the plot, and they have implants in their heads. Are they the Undead? No, but what they are is even more shocking.

*ONLY YOU CAN SAVE MANKIND* by Terry Pratchett  
Doubleday, 173 pp, £9.99, h/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

A thought provoking novel from Pratchett based on computer gaming. Events turn out differently when the aliens surrender. What does a gamer do? The hero, Johnny, wades determinedly through the story attempting to save the alien ScreeWee from other gamers. Unwilling at first to take on the mantle of ScreeWee saviour, Johnny is thrust into the role through dreams where he lives within the game. He finds he can interact with both the ScreeWee and with the other gamers who are playing the game.

Cleverly paced to provoke the reader into seeing beyond computer gaming and the "kill the aliens" xenophobia inherent therein, Pratchett's superb craftsmanship provides a perfect volte-face with Johnny and his all-too-human faults. While Johnny, as a typical teenage misfit, reluctantly has to choose what the outcome will be for the aliens, his (well-characterised) mates and acquaintances exhibit the usual teenage traits. Johnny "grows up" to his fate, the pivot of the story, and shows there is another way.

This is beautifully constructed and told, as you'd expect from Pratchett. I am sure the game manufacturers will *hate* this for two reasons. Firstly, not killing the aliens will wipe out most of their products, and secondly the gamer, Johnny, has to think and to choose a path, not the usual gamer persona. It's a great story, and one I hope makes us all think of what we see on-screen. Remember - ET is an alien too.



# HELICON

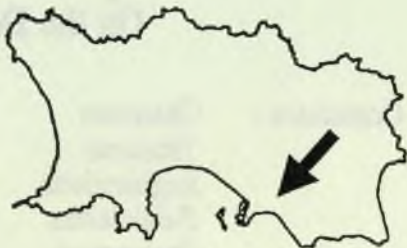
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# NOVACON 23

**GUEST OF HONOUR : STEPHEN BAXTER**

**VENUE : Hopefully (in fact Probably) ROYAL ANGUS  
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BIRMINGHAM**

**Date : 5, 6 and 7 November 1993**

<b>Rates to join :</b>	<b>Now at Novacon22</b>	<b>£18.00</b>
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<b>Committee :</b>	<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Carol Morton</b>
	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Richard Standage</b>
	<b>Registrations</b>	<b>Bernie Evans</b>
	<b>Publications</b>	<b>Tony Morton</b>
	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Andy Wright</b>
	<b>Ops</b>	<b>Helena Bowles</b>

<b>Contact :</b>	<b>Bernie Evans</b>	<b>121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH 021-558-0997</b>
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# 1993 TAFF Ballot

**What is TAFF?** -- The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. Since that time, TAFF has regularly brought North American fans to European conventions and European fans to North American conventions. TAFF exists solely through the support of fandom. The candidates are voted on by interested fans all over the world, and each vote is accompanied by a donation of not less than \$2 or £1. These votes, and the continued generosity of fandom, are what make TAFF possible.

**Who may vote?** -- Voting in the 1993 race is open to anyone who was active in fandom prior to September 1991, and who contributes at least \$2 or £1 to the Fund.

Contributions in excess of the minimum will be gratefully accepted. Voting is by secret ballot: only one vote per person, and you must sign your ballot. "Write-ins" are not permitted. You may change your vote at any time prior to the deadline.

**Deadline** -- Votes in this race must reach the administrators by 1 May 1993.

**Voting details** -- (1) TAFF uses a preferential ballot system which guarantees automatic runoffs until a majority is obtained. You rank the candidates in the exact order of your preference for them. If the leading first-place candidate does not get a majority, the first place votes for the lowest-ranking candidate are dropped, and the second-place votes on those ballots are counted as first-place votes. This process repeats itself until one candidate has a majority. It is therefore *important* to vote for second, third and fourth place on your ballot. Also, it is a waste of time to vote for any candidate in more than one place.

(2) One other requirement obtains. To win, a candidate must receive at least 20% of the first-ballot first-place votes on both sides of the Atlantic, separately. Any candidate failing to receive this minimum percentage on either side will be dropped, and the second-place votes on their ballots counted as first-place votes in the next ballot count. It is therefore important for candidates and their supporters to canvass fans on both sides of the Atlantic. It should be noted that, while you may send your ballot to either administrator, it will be tabulated with the other votes from the side of the Atlantic on which you reside. Finally, votes from fans not resident in *either* Europe or North America will not be counted towards either 20% minimum (but are almost certain to affect any given race, so don't let this stop you from voting).

**Hold Over Funds** -- This choice, similar to "No Award" in Hugo balloting, gives voters the chance to vote for no TAFF trip this year, if the candidates don't appeal to them or if they feel TAFF should slow down its trip frequency. Hold Over Funds may be voted in any position, and is exempt from the 20% requirement; thus, should it ultimately receive a majority of votes on the final ballot, no TAFF trip will be held this year regardless of how many votes Hold Over Funds received on the first ballot.

**No Preference** -- Voters who prefer not to choose between the candidates, but do not want the trip to be held over, may enter a vote of No Preference.

**Donations** -- TAFF gratefully accepts freely given donations of money and of material for auction; such generosity has sustained the Fund for 40 years. If you are ineligible to vote, or do not feel qualified to make a choice, why not donate anyway? TAFF is fandom's oldest travel fund, and one of its worthiest causes.

**Candidates** -- Each candidate has posted a bond, promising -- barring Acts of God -- to travel to the 1993 World Science Fiction Convention, Confrancisco, in San Francisco, California (September 3-6, 1993) if elected; and has provided signed nominations and a platform, reproduced overleaf above the ballot.

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Send ballots and contributions to:

*In North America:*

Jeanne Bowman  
P.O. Box 982  
Glen Ellen  
CA 95442-0982  
USA

*In Europe:*

Pam Wells  
24A Beech Road  
Bowes Park  
London N11 2DA  
UK

*N.B. Make cheques payable to relevant individual, NOT TO TAFF.*

# 1993 TAFF Ballot - Europe to North America

## Michael Ashley

True Confessions: I went to my first convention -- Novacon 7 in 1977 -- aged 15. Been to one or two more since then plus have written innumerable fun-packed fanzine articles. Been voted best British fanwriter in 1988 and 1991 Nova awards. Edited eight issues of award-winning SALIROMANIA. Member of all-powerful Leeds Group Mafia for last seven years, with intimate knowledge of all leading UK fans. Interests: drink, gossip, and good writing. TAFF pledge: will write trip report to end all trip reports. Why vote for me? Easy -- the alternatives are too dull for words. Plus I'm young, cute and single. You want fannish fun? *Sorted.*

*Nominators: Hazel Ashworth, Lucy Huntzinger, Linda Krawecka, Robert Lichtman and Ian Sorensen*

## Tony Berry

As befits a Secret Master, Tony appears to stay in the background, whilst quietly shaping Fandom at large. Expert at stating the obvious, founder member and nomenclator of Frank's APA, fanzine producer, twice Novacon chairman and committee member of several others, and all-round good guy.

Asked why he would like to win TAFF, he replied "There are three good reasons to go to San Francisco: to ride the trams, visit the micro-breweries, and to hire a Ford Mustang and re-enact the chase sequence from 'Bullitt'. Oh yeah, and I'd like to go to an American Worldcon as well".

*Nominators: Harry Bell, Linda Blanchard and Dave Bridges, Anne Page, Spike Parsons and Martin Tudor*

## Abigail Frost

YOU SHOULD VOTE FOR ABIGAIL BECAUSE:

Anything she could say about Tony Berry would only make him sound more interesting \*\*\* Ashley Watkins just hasn't been the same since he gave up transvestism \*\*\* Michael Ashley will not, as promised, spend all the money on drink, but will keep TAFF in apple-pie order, thereby depriving us all of honest mirth, which we badly need in these hard times \*\*\* All the other rumoured candidates were only trying to stop each other \*\*\* It will get right up Avedon Carol's nose.

Vote for the woman of your choicel

*Nominators: Lilian Edwards, Jeanne Gomoll, Dave Langford, Joseph Nicholas and Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden*

## Ashley Watkins

Did I really attend a con in drag? Yes, but not many people know I'm a lesbian. What is the horrible truth behind the "Dear John" Prevert cover? Why was there a trail of broken hearts among the cast of "Spock in Manacles"? Is it true the hotel manager fancied the only Amazon who wasn't a woman? Were all the seats really wet after the show?

Only I can kiss and tell . . .

Mr Flibble says that if I win TAFF I can stay in America and attend cons until they get sick of me, or at least until the money runs out.

*Nominators: Bill Bodden, Don Herron, John Jarrold, Darroll Pardoe and Geoff Ryman*

**Please read both sides of this sheet before voting. Send entire sheet as vote.**

I vote for (rank 1, 2, 3, 4 etc):

Name and address (legibly, please):

\_\_\_\_\_ Michael Ashley

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Tony Berry

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Abigail Frost

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Ashley Watkins

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Hold Over Funds

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ No Preference

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is \_\_\_\_\_ as a contribution to TAFF. Please make cheques etc. payable to Jeanne Bowman or Pam Wells, not to "TAFF", and payable in the currency of that administrator's home country.

If you think your name may not be known to the administrators, then in order to qualify please give, in the space below, the name and address of an active fan (not a fan group, a candidate or their nominator) who is known to them and to whom you are known:

Reproduction of this form is encouraged. It is the official voting vehicle and must be reproduced verbatim. Anyone doing so should substitute their name here: Martin Tudor