

BRUM GROUP NEWS

December 1992

Issue 255

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 IS THE BRUM GROUP CHRISTMAS PARTY

at the White Lion
Friday 18th December 1992,
7.45pm for 8.00pm
Tickets only £4.50

This year the Birmingham Science Fiction Group's Christmas Party
will be in the upstairs function room of the White Lion,
corner of Thorp Street and Horsefair/Bristol Street
in Birmingham city centre. Featuring:

Julia's Amazing *ENORMOUS* Finger Buffet!

Competitions! Prizes! Party Games! Silly Prizes!

Raffle! More Prizes! Tombola! Even More Prizes!

Tickets *may* still be available from the treasurer, Richard Standage,
116 Shireland Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4QJ,
(tel: 021-558-7591). Cheques etc. should be made payable to
"the Birmingham Science Fiction Group".

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS**

**FORTHCOMING
EVENTS**

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 may still

be available

from Richard Standage,

for £4.50 each.

(Call him on

021 558 7591,

to see if there

are any tickets left.)

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.

26-28 MARCH 1993: TREK DWARF. Combined STAR TREK / RED DWARF con. NOTE: change of date. The venue is the Holiday Inn, Leicester. GOHS (etc): 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. After 1 December rates go up to £28.00 attending and £14.00 supporting, junior or family member. Contact: 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

16-18 APR 1993: SMOFGON 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 £8.00 (please note that this will NOT automatically

The BSGF 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).

reserve an attending place, but it WILL ensure receipt of all of the convention's publications and entitle you to vote in the Novas). Although the hotel has agreed to increase the membership ceiling from 300 to 350 people the committee advises you to register early, as they will if necessary turn people away on the door. Further details from Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 021-558-0997).

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-supporting 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. For further details contact Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 021-558-0997).

27 DECEMBER 1999 - 2 JANUARY 2000: MILLENIUM. Venue tba, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a Benelux country or UK). Att. £3.00 (f10.00) 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.

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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.

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A NED-FAN AT NOVACON 22
or
I WAS A CONVENTION VIRGIN

A report by Mike D Siddall

Well I did it ; lost my cherry, achieved fanhood, severed my tenuous grip on reality (pick your own metaphor) at Novacon 22. I've been reading sf since I was eight and I'm, well, a few years older than that now, but still a con virgin. So how come I picked Novacon ? Completely at random is the answer, so I suppose I was lucky to find a good one at the first attempt. Either that or Novacon was rubbish, and I enjoyed it, which makes me an addict already (this fandom's worse than crack).

I arrived on the Thursday before the con started, my first impression of fans was that they must be the small group of multi-national drunks hugging the bar (no offence, guys). This was quite correct and, later, the rest of the fans turned out to be the *large* group of multi-national drunks hogging the bar.

Bernie "Jacket" Evans had advised me to become a gopher, which could have been exciting ("It's alright officer, Tony Berry *told* me to deface that bus-shelter..."), but instead it was merely a good way to meet people. I was fairly near the bar, so I was able to answer the question everyone had asked me before I left ; namely, what exactly do fans *do* ? Answer ; talk about other cons. This gave me the initial impression that they were very cliquy, and left me feeling a bit isolated. Bernie had told me "don't be shy" but if, like me, you are shy, this is bad advice. It should read *DON'T BE SHY*. With some help, I finally got the message that, within reason, no one minds a total stranger joining in their conversation, and if you do this often enough you won't be a total stranger anymore. A good tip for any neo-fan is to tell everyone this is your first con, the response to this was, without exception, helpful (which compares favourably with a few medical conferences I've been to). Of course Larry van der Putte will try to sell you lots of con memberships, innocent that you are, but he's a nice guy really.

So that night I went to both films ; I'm told this is the mark of a neo-fan and a badge of shame, but I enjoyed them. I don't give a monkey's what the critics say, *FREEJACK* is a good film, with plenty of energy and a decent sense of humour. *FLATLINERS* was okay, but every man I spoke to wanted to know how come Julia Roberts was the only actor to keep

her top on? The big event of the night was a party hosted by Intersection to celebrate Glasgow's winning worldcon bid; Brian Ameringen's punch was as deceptively vicious as a Shetland pony, but I left before the Kayleigh... er, Calliope... sod it, why can you never find a dictionary when you need one? Anyway, the sound of cats being fed through a mincer (or "the pipes" as Scots call it) was too much for me.

First impressions? Hair. Lots of it. Long, shining, gorgeous, female hair. Thanks be to Allah, long hair hasn't gone out of fashion amongst female fans (note to neo-fans: if you see a large concentration of long-haired women, follow them, it's either a con or an Abba revival). Not that I'm a pervert, oh no, but I am taking a large collection of a hairbrushes to Helicon, just in case.

There was plenty to do over the next two days and I started with the science lecture by Ian Stewart (time travel, black holes, all the fun of the fair), followed by the book auction, auctioneer Rog Peyton, in aid of the RNIB. Rog struck me as a very nice guy, with a great future in his chosen field of fraud and grand larceny.

Next was a panel on "humour in sf", though I mentally re-titled it "Chaos Theory". To be fair the moderator was labouring under the triple handicap of being Scottish, red-haired and having a beard fetish (no names, no pack-drill). However this did lead to my *conversation with an author*, which took place in a lift,

"Hi. Aren't you Bob Shaw?"

"Yes."

"Like your books."

"Thanks."

"This your floor?"

"Yeah. Thanks."

He wasn't being unfriendly, this was the only occasion the damned lifts worked efficiently. The designer of the Royal Angus lifts must have been fresh from his engineering triumph at Chernobyl, as they approached meltdown whenever asked to actually take people from one floor to another. My only quibbles with the hotel were over the cost of parking and booze (but that's hotels for you). The cheap food bar worked well, and the staff seemed helpful (though with a strange hangup about sleeping bags in the video-room). The general organization struck me as pretty good, although operating on what John Herrold calls "fannish mean time" (in which the committee uses a small black hole to warp space-time as we know it). All the things that were supposed to happen, happened and no one got shot, stabbed or turned into a small purple frog.

The Guest of Honour was Storm Constantine;

when I asked what she was like everyone said "Gothic, really Gothic". When asked to Gothic, they answered "like Storm Constantine". I think this is called fan logic. I went to the GOFH interview and left determined to read some of her stuff, if only to find out about the "erotic coffee-table" that Graham Joyce seemed so struck by. There was a disco in the evening at which the music was okay, but the DJ suffered from terminal talk-over-the-musicitis, at least it would have been terminal, but I fell asleep.

The last day started with another GOFH panel so, what with panels, signings and a virtuoso performance to K.L.F. on the dance floor we certainly got our pound of flesh.

I nimbly avoided Mr Peyton at the art auction by gophering, but I'm told prices were a bit low; so if you bid you got a bargain. After this things were a bit obscure; the TAFF interviews and the Nova awards could have been held in Serbo-Croat for all I understood. But I clapped everyone and hoped I'd understand one day.

The best panel was on favourite books, as voted for by the con-goers. Fans obviously get passionate about books, so this debate was very lively (translation: lots of personal abuse), and I disagreed strongly with one panellist (translation: I thought he was a berk). Someone tried to tell me this was the mark of a good panel. Rubbish. Why didn't these people listen to someone with taste, with intelligent, insightful opinions? Someone like... well, like me for instance. Ah well, there's always next time.

I did go to the debate on evolution, but the less said the better.

Latest, and bestest, was the TAFF/GUFF auction at which various objets'd'art and priceless (well, no one bid on them) books were sold. This was great fun, though I'm not sure an American looking after the money, and a Dutchman keeping the totals when the bidding is in pre-decimal, is such a good idea. This was also "lively", and my suggestion for next time is to give a certain membership secretary, and a certain TAFF administrator, a large ring filled with mud. We could charge at least a £1 a time to watch.

So that was Novacon 22 for me. I've missed out a lot, so if you're a neo-fan reading this, there was plenty else going on. Put plenty in, as they say, and I'm sure you'll get plenty out. You'll find all the non-virgins helpful. "But aren't they weird," I hear you ask? Yes, definitely. But I enjoyed the con, so I must be weird too.

Great!

An identity at last.

An Almost
Logical
Puzzle

Space Pirate	Book Seller	Biologist	Teddybear Make	Pianist	Cooper	Collie	Cook	Cortes	Dijon	Uleeda	Earth	Boist	Yikon	Zoon	Reads Twain	Eats J-Fish	Drinks Pyr	Flies Kites	Reads Joyce
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Fred																			
Bill																			
Roy																			
Tom																			
Joan																			
Reads Twain																			
Eats J-Fish																			
Drinks Pyr																			
Flies Kites																			
Reads Joyce																			
Uleeda																			
Earth																			
Boist																			
Yikon																			
Zoon																			
Cooper																			
Collie																			
Cook																			
Cortes																			
Dijon																			

The Earthperson who flies kites and is a book seller, but does not have Cortes

for a surname, is not Roy nor Joan.

The one from Boist is Bill Cooper and he makes Teddybears.

The biologist who reads

Twain is named Cook, there is no Roy Cook. Fred the pianist likes eating J-fish.

The one from Uleeda, who drinks pyr is named either Dijon or Cooper.

The Yikon's surname is Cook.

List each persons full name, their occupation, planet of origin and what gives them pleasure.

EDITORIAL BIT

Stan Eling's annual puzzle appears above. If you want to have a chance to win the fabulous prize we will be presenting for the first correct entry pulled out of the "hat" at the AGM please send your entries to Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG. Entries must be received by 1st January 1993.

We have misplaced two BSFG members, if anyone has the second Newcastle address for Al Johnston or knows the current whereabouts of John Efstathiades, previously at 7 Borrowdale Close, please contact Martin Tudor or Bernie Evans as soon as possible.

JOPHAN REPORT #58

by Martin Tudor

On Friday 20 November BBC2 started screening "The Daemons", a lost *DR WHO* story featuring Jon Pertwee as the Doctor, Katy Manning as Jo Grant and Roger Delgado as the Master. The BBC had reportedly wiped their tape of the five-part story, but *DR WHO* fan, Ian Levine, persuaded a friend to tape it on Betamax during a recent US broadcast. The BBC's black and white tape was combined with Levine's fuzzy colour tape using computer technomapping.

BBC's Radio 5 launched a six-part dramatization of Terry Pratchett's Discworld novel *GUARDS! GUARDS!* on Monday 23 November (9.30pm, MW 909, 693 KHz, 330,433m).

Dramatised by Michael Butt, it features the voices of Martin Jarvis, John Wood, Melvyn Hayes, Stephen Thorne and Helen Atkinson Wood.

Michael Moorcock is currently working on a new Elric novel, *VENGEANCE OF THE ROSE*, a sequel to the recent paperback release *REVENGE OF THE ROSE*; he also has several short stories in the pipeline for the twice-yearly anthology *NEW WORLDS*.

The American sf/fantasy magazine *QUANTUM*, formerly known as *THRUST*, will make its last appearance with its winter edition, after which it will merge with *SCIENCE FICTION EYE*, published by former associate editor Steve Brown. Editor/publisher Doug Fratz told *LOCUS* that he considered he'd "paid his dues" with the magazine, which celebrates its 20th birthday this year, adding "I want to have a life."

FICTION FURNACE is a new quarterly digest, due to make its debut on 5 November with short stories by Clive Turner, Pauline Clerk, Alice Wilde and Albert Rimmer. Sample copies will cost £2.00 (including postage) from John Williams, 17 Ankermoor Close, Shard End, Birmingham, B34 6TF.

Submissions should be 500-6000 words long, with an emphasis on originality and characterization; Williams requires first British serial rights, with copyright returning to the author six months after publication.

Titan Distributors, Britain's main network for imported US comics and graphic novels, has merged with Diamond International, the world's largest distributor of US comics. However, the October edition of *COMICS*

INTERNATIONAL reveals that key contracts have yet to be signed if the take-over is to go ahead, as the former managing director of Diamond's British wing challenges his former bosses in court over the ownership breakdown. Diamond's main US competitor, Capital City, also expressed regret at the resulting monopoly and may set up its own UK offices.

A new short story by Clive Barker, "The Departed", formed the Halloween offering from *The Guardian* on 31 October.

A new American science fiction magazine made its debut at the Orlando worldcon, *Magicon*. *SCIENCE FICTION AGE #1* included an article by Ray Bradbury on the art of Robert McCall, an essay by Jerry Pournelle and fiction by Barry N Malzberg, Gene O'Neill, Paul Di Filippo and Resa Nelson. Warner Publishing Services is handling distribution and publisher Mark Hintz is aiming for an initial news-stand circulation of 123,000.

Meanwhile, *PULPHOUSE* has a new sf sister title, *TOMORROW*, edited by Algis Budrys; #1 is cover-dated January. Let's hope it's more successful than Pulphouse's planned hardback edition of Budrys' *HARD LANDING*, reportedly cancelled due to contract difficulties with Warner.

The American sf anthology *UNIVERSE #3*, edited by Robert Silverberg and Karen Haber, is no longer accepting submissions.

Headline will publish the first unabridged edition of Ramsey Campbell's *COLD PRINT* in May, whilst Arkham House will release a new anthology, *ALONE WITH THE HORRORS*, showcasing Campbell's best short fiction of the past three decades. Meanwhile, a new novel, *THE LONG LOST*, is due from Headline in late 1993.

SUPERMAN #75, featuring the much-heralded death of the Man of Steel, was shipped out to dealers on 17 November, with a US\$1.25 price tag. Completists, however, may prefer the bagged \$2.50 collector's edition, which also includes a poster, postage stamp, newspaper obituary and, of course, a black armband.

GLIMPSES is a new quarterly US sf/fantasy/horror magazine, due to debut in January, paying 1-2¢ per word. Submissions to PO Box 751, Bowling Green, OH-43402, USA.

Confusion still reigns over a replacement venue for London's "first Thursday" meetings, as several alternatives

are investigated whilst a die-hard core stay at the Wellington Pub despite its conversion into a wine bar. "Rob Hansen's group and self will probably land up at Hamilton's (Liverpool Street Station)," reports Vint Clarke in *CRITICAL WAVE #28*, "but nothing's certain. The main trouble with Fenchurch Street Wine Vault is that it's comparatively small and they allow smoking in the cellar, which is not something I go for."

Meanwhile, Nic Farey reports that most media fans have opted for Turnmills, corner of Turnmill Street and Clerkenwell Road - near the old Tun. He adds that as well as supplying reasonable Guinness "the gunvor, Terry, lets us play with the video (two big screens), but the main disadvantage is that the clubbers start to arrive around 10-10.30pm - the place is otherwise deserted."

The Peterborough Fantasy Fair has announced that local writer Peter F Hamilton will be launching his first novel, *MINDSTAR RISING*, at the event on 21 February 1993. Hamilton has had short stories published in *FAR POINT*, *NEW WORLDS* and the anthology *IN DREAMS*.

Other guests include: artist John Bolton, author Louise Cooper, comics writer Pete Milligan and local author Adrian Rigelsford; the Fair will run from 11am-4pm, admission £1.

TREK DWARF has been forced to change its dates again, this time to the weekend of 26-28 March. The convention was originally scheduled for August 1993 in Peterborough's Swallow Hotel, but was recently forced to change its venue to Leicester's Holiday Inn and its date to early March. The organizers report that this latest alteration to late March may be "a blessing in disguise" as filming for the sixth series of *RED DWARF* will be completed by then.

According to the first progress report, the Swallow Hotel decided to cancel *Trek Dwarf's* booking in favour of a business event.

The guest of honour will be Mike Okuda, set designer and author of *THE STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION TECHNICAL MANUAL*. Other speakers will include Paramount spokesman Richard Arnold, actor and graphics designer Guy Vardaman, actor and author Adrian Rigelsford, fresh from his work on *DRACULA*, and Mike Butcher, editor of the *RED DWARF* magazine. All speakers are subject to work commitments.

For more information on the Peterborough Fantasy Fair or *TREK DWARF* write c/o 47 Marsham, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5AN.

Anthony Perkins, who died of AIDS on 12 September aged 60, is undeniably best

remembered for the role of Norman Bates; after the original *PSYCHO* in 1960, he reprised the part in 1983, 1986 and 1991, directing *PSYCHO III* himself.

Perkins' other genre roles frequently evoked unfavourable comparisons with Bates, *HOW AWFUL ABOUT ALLAN* (1970), *CRIMES OF PASSION* (1984) and *EDGE OF SANITY* (1989) among them.

Congratulations to Des Lewis, whose short story "My Giddy Aunt", originally published in *CHILLS #5*, has been chosen by Karl Edward Wagner for the premier anthology *YEAR'S BEST HORROR*. Lewis, who has managed to place fiction with almost every genre outlet in the UK, says his recent redundancy will allow him to become "more prolific"; small press editors may wonder if the world's paper reserves are up to the challenge.

Colin Greenland is currently working on a new novel, *HARM'S WAY*, featuring "an orphan of the spaceways, set in a romantic space age that never was".

Condolences to the sf author Cherry Wilder, whose husband Horst Grimm died of a heart attack on 9 September; the couple had been in the process of moving home, and her new address is 36 Kurt Schumacher Strasse, 6070 Langen/Hessen, Germany.

Wilder intends to remain in Germany for three more years, during which time she will complete *SIGNS OF LIFE*, a sequel to *SECOND NATURE*, after which she may move to an English-speaking country.

Jeffrey Archer's rumoured move from Hodder & Stoughton to HarperCollins prompted William Boot, gossip columnist for *THE BOOKSELLER*, to ponder how the newly-enobled novelist would get on with editorial director and erstwhile sf fanzine publisher Malcolm Edwards, "who, to judge by his leather jacket and stropy demeanour, is no doubt some kind of socialist".

Congratulations to Dave Cox who, having been out of work since he was made redundant just before Christmas last year, started work this month. The job is a six-month contract in the MIS department of the University of Warwick.

The Science Museum in London is presenting a special programme of events entitled *SCIENCE FICTION, SCIENCE FACT* from 27 December 1992 to 3rd of January. Call 071-938-8000 for details.

Science Museum

Science Museum London SW7 2DD Telephone 071-938 8000

SPECIAL PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

*** SCIENCE FICTION, SCIENCE FACT ***

	Suitable for a family audience. 35-40 minutes long. Tickets available on the day. 12.30 and 14.30 in the Lecture Theatre	
Sun 27 Dec	<i>The Science in Science Fiction</i> Author Brian Stableford examines the question what science is there in science fiction stories?	
Mon 28 Dec	<i>Title to be confirmed</i> What plants and animals would you take with you if you needed to stay alive in space? Irving Rappaport links science fiction with real projects like the Biosphere	
Tues 29 Dec	<i>How to Design a Spaceship</i> BBC special effects designer Mat Irvine talks about what you need before venturing into space and why some famous fictional spaceships could never actually work	
Weds 30 Dec	<i>Frankenstein's monster is alive and well</i> Fact is often stranger than fiction. Two biologists, Sam and Dean Madden, ponder the accuracy of science fiction stories	
Thurs 31 Dec	<i>How to Design an Alien</i> Do aliens exist? What do they look like? Jack Cohen, biologist, explains why real extra-terrestrials would probably not be little green people	
Fri 1 Jan	<i>The Good Planet Guide - for the armchair astronaut</i> Is there life on other planets? What must a planet be like to support life? Space scientist Jim Potter looks at the facts and the fiction on this fascinating subject	
Sat 2 Jan	<i>How to Build a Time Machine</i> Time travel is a popular subject in science fiction, but is it really possible? John Gribbin, writer of both science fiction and fact, tells the secret of time travel (Followed by a book signing session in Dillons Book Shop in the Museum)	<i>The Science Museum Christmas 2092</i> What do you think might be on display in the Science Museum one hundred years from now? Your chance to contribute to a special children's science fiction mural!
Sun 3 Jan	<i>Science Fiction, Science Fact</i> Well-known science fiction author David Langford illustrates the links between science fiction and science fact using actual examples	<i>The Science Museum Christmas 2092 PLUS</i> A special evening viewing of HG Wells' classic film <i>The Shape of Things to Come</i> (to be confirmed)

*** PLUS ***

Science Fiction Comes Alive! Find out what a science fiction author might write about 50 years from now and what lessons we can learn from science fiction in this memorable science fiction drama presentation. Daily at 13.30 and 15.30 in the Lecture Theatre

Follow the special *Science Fiction Trail* to discover objects in the Museum that were predicted by science fiction and the chance to win an exciting prize. 27 Dec - 3 Jan.

A great opportunity for Star Trek fans to see an actual *Star Trek* communicator and phasor, as well as the model of the Starship Enterprise in a special exhibition. 27 Dec - 3 Jan.

NOVACON 23

GUEST OF HONOUR : STEPHEN BAXTER

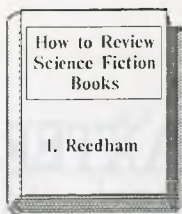
VENUE : Hopefully (in fact Probably) ROYAL ANGUS
THISTLE HOTEL
BIRMINGHAM

Date : 5, 6 and 7 November 1993

Rates to join :	Up to Eastercon	£20.00
	Up to 1st October 1993	£25.00
	On the Door	£30.00

Committee :	Chairman	Carol Morton
	Treasurer	Richard Standage
	Registrations	Bernie Evans
	Publications	Tony Morton
	Programme	Andy Wright
	Ops	Helena Bowles

Contact :	Bernie Evans	121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH 021-558-0997
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Book Reviews

DARK FORCE RISING by Timothy Zahn
Bantam, 376 pp, £9.99, h/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is the second book in the new "Star Wars" trilogy, set five years after *RETURN OF THE JEDI*. The Empire is rising again, under Grand Admiral Thrawn and the evil Jedi Master Joruss B'Boath, to threaten the New Republic. Luke Skywalker and Han Solo go looking for a lost fleet of battleships, the Dark Force of the title. Leia goes as ambassador to the lethal Noghri, the Empire's most dangerous assassins.

There is a lot of rushing around in this book, but very little actually happens. This is a common fault in middle books of trilogies, but should have been avoided. It is disappointing that "Dark Force" is not the Dark Side of the Force. In fact, the Force hardly appears in the book.

As always there is a rousing space battle at the end, but the climax of the book is something of a damp squib. Zahn is obviously setting up the scenes for the third book, which is going to have a lot of resolving of plots and tidying up of loose ends. However, this is remarkably cheap for a hardback, probably a benefit of mass marketing.

THE REVENGE OF THE ROSE by Michael Moorcock
Grafton, 233 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is yet another Elric novel, set between *THE VANISHING TOWER* and *THE BANE OF THE BLACK SWORD*. Elric must search across dimensions to save his father's soul, even though he hated his father while he was alive. He is aided by the usual companions of the Eternal Champion, including Ernest Wheldrake, a Victorian poet, and the Rose herself, the last survivor of her race.

The best part of this book is the part about the Gypsy Nation, with its giant wagons, on which live a few aristocrats in great luxury. Down below, great hordes slave to turn the treadmills which keep the wagons moving on their endless journey.

The great cliché of the Elric series appears: when Elric gets into a fix he suddenly remembers an "ancient pact" which summons a "plot device" beast. After fixing the problem it tells him "Never summon me again". This time it is called the Tangled Woman. In spite of this, *THE REVENGE OF THE ROSE* is an interesting book, if not an exciting one.

THE BEAST WITHIN - A History of the Werewolf by Adam Douglas
Chapmans, 294 pp, £15.99, h/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

Early man believed that his physical weakness could be overcome by taking on the superior characteristics of a member of the animal kingdom - eagle, tiger or wolf - or by actually becoming one. Fueled by tales both real and imagined, such wishful thinking gradually grew into a belief that men could really change into wolves. By the sixteenth century this belief was associated with a more general belief in witchcraft, so that supposed werewolves were, for a while, persecuted with that kind of gleeful cruelty which only religious fervour seems to inspire. Since then, a more rational approach attributes supposed cases of lycanthropy to either drug-induced hallucination, psychological aberration, or a combination of both.

The earliest purely fictional account of a man changing into a wolf dates from the first century A.D., and further stories have cropped up from time to time ever since. However, neither a Stoker nor a Shelley has appeared to provide any kind of literary status and it has been left to Hollywood to virtually invent the werewolf as the third of the great myths of horror.

This much anyone might have known. In this comprehensively researched and scholarly book the author traces the whole story from the earliest times to the present day. Inevitably, such minute detail with no reference unquoted and no connection overlooked does make for rather tedious reading, but if you want a source of everything there is to know about the werewolf, look no further, and you may find it fascinating. If all you want is entertainment, however, perhaps you should look elsewhere.

DARK PRINCE by Davis Gemmill
Legend, 547 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Peter Day.

This is the sequel to *LION OF MACEDON*, which had as its hero the Greek general Parmenion, who ended up serving under Philip

of Macedon. That volume ended with the birth of Alexander - possessed by a demon - and the present book takes up the story from this point. The bulk of it, and the main story, concerns a supposed episode in the still possessed Alexander's childhood, when the main characters are transported to an alternate world abounding in nymphs, centaurs and other fabulous creatures. They duly battle forces of evil, defeat them, and return.

Although I certainly enjoyed this book, I found it less satisfactory than its predecessor, mainly, I think, because of its unbalanced construction. The adventure in the alternate world is a well-rounded, balanced story in its own right, complete on its own, and all the rules of rhythm and construction place its natural ending at the point when the characters, their victories accomplished, return to this world. But after all those cadences of finale the author continues, following this closely observed, richly detailed, temporally compact episode with a comparatively bare, long-shot overview of the whole of Alexander's further career up to his death - and the final disposal of the demon.

Since Alexander's possession constitutes an underlying theme running through the tale, I can see why the author was tempted to pack all this into one volume, but I still think it was a mistake. To put it bluntly, these two parts simply do not fit together and it would have been better to have given this last section a fuller treatment, and written it as a separate book. After all, this theme had been established in *LION OF MACEDON*, so it had already been split between volumes.

Having said all that, however, this is still an impressive read. David Gemmell is an accomplished craftsman, and even the least of his works is above average in quality and a joy to read. This one is no exception.

DOOMSDAY BOOK by Connie Willis
NEL, 527 pp, £15.99, h/b

Reviewed by Mick Evans.

American writer Connie Willis has written a memorable time travel book which may well be considered part of the canon of this niche of the genre. Reading it conjured memories of Jack Finney's classic *TIME AND AGAIN*, in its general "feel". Willis has obviously researched the fourteenth century quite rigorously, and I was soon drawn into her vision of it.

Kivrin, a third year student of Mediaeval History, travels back to the Oxford of 1320, to study the era as it really was, from life rather than books, and with no modern comforts

whatsoever. It is a few decades before the Black Death wipes out half the population of Europe, but as the story moves between then and the Oxford of Kivrin's time, the near future, we see it has become a quarantine area, caused by this long forgotten disease. Her tutor Mr Dunworthy desperately attempts to resolve the situation.....

Connie Willis doesn't go into a lot of technical detail about the device which casts people through time, it is an accepted fact, a hook on which to hang the story. And what a fascinating read it is. With her superb skill in characterisation she brings the people and the mediaeval period to life on the page. It is all utterly believable. This novel is an excellent addition to the genre.

TRITON by Samuel R Delany
Grafton, 369 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

First published in 1976, this novel is as complex and sophisticated a portrayal of a future society as any author has ever achieved. Triton is a moon of Neptune. It has a society stratified according to sexuality and politics, with every possible variant catered for. The protagonist (certainly not a hero!) is Bron, a man with a weak and fairly unpleasant personality, who drifts through life on Triton until he decides to undergo a sex change on the basis that this will solve all his problems. It doesn't, of course.

Difficult, yet always sharp and thought-provoking, the novel is a satire upon our own reactions to sexual identity, freedom of the individual and the persecution of minorities. Its moral is "know yourself".

WITCHES ABROAD by Terry Pratchett
Corgi, 286 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Rob Whitmore.

I am addicted to Terry Pratchett's work. This latest "fix" may not have given me the "high" of, say, *GUARDS GUARDS!* or *MORT*, but nevertheless has satisfied my habit for now.

The three witches, Nanny Ogg, Granny Weatherwax and Magrat Garlick are reunited in this story about stones. The girls are off to foreign parts as they try to stop the marriage of a young servant girl and a prince. Mr Pratchett gives us the Discworld observations on life and has some fun along the way with fairy tales.

The book is littered with corny jokes and visual humour, worth reading just for Nanny Ogg's linguistic "abilities". All-in-all I recommend reading it, fans will anyway.

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