

BRUM GROUP NEWS

January 1994

Issue 268

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

GROUP CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, SECRETARY - HELENA BOWLES, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,
TREASURER - RICHARD STANDAGE, REVIEWS EDITOR - BERNIE EVANS, PUBLICITY OFFICER - STEVE JONES,
ORDINARY MEMBER - MICK EVANS, NOVACON 23 CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BSFG

will begin at 8.00pm on Friday 21st January 1994

Admittance: FREE

If time allows (and enough MATERIAL is DONATED the AGM will be followed by an Auction in aid of BSFG funds which will be conducted in his usual many-times imitated but never bettered fashion by ROG PEYTON.

**DONATIONS OF BOOKS AND ANY OTHER MATERIAL YOU FEEL
MIGHT BE OF INTEREST WILL BE GREATLY APPRECIATED
- SIMPLY BRING IT ALONG ON THE NIGHT.
(Here's your opportunity to get rid of those unwanted Christmas presents!)**

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) in the upstairs Function Room of the Australian Bar, corner of Hurst Street and Bromsgrove Street in Birmingham city centre. The annual subscription rates (which include twelve copies of this newsletter and reduced price entry to meetings) are £9.00 per person, or £12.00 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).

COLOPHON

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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 CRITICAL WAVE photocopier. Contact the editorial address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

Many thanks this issue to STAN ELING for his puzzle, STEPHEN BILLINGS and STEVE JONES for their reports, BERNIE EVANS for typing the Book Reviews; EMPIRE and others for the news in the Jophan Report and Events listing and, of course, TONY BERRY for the use of his spare room.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

UNTIL 22 JANUARY 1994: Roald Dahl's *THE GIRAFFE AND THE PELLY AND ME* at the Old Rep Theatre. The Birmingham Stage Company presents Dahl's tale about a giraffe with an extending neck, a pelican with an expanding beak and an athletic little monkey, who all join together to form The Ladderless Window-Cleaning Company and their adventures cleaning the 677 windows belonging to the Duke of Hampshire. Call 021 616 1519.

UNTIL 29 JAN 1994: *PETER PAN* adapted & directed by Anna Farthing at the MAC, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham. Tickets on sale now £4.95 (£3.95 concessions) call 021 440 3838.

UNTIL 29 JAN 1994: *THE SNOWMAN* the world premiere of a new stage presentation of Raymond Briggs' children's classic, specifically adapted for the Birmingham Repertory

Theatre Company by Anthony Clark, featuring the original and extended score by Howard Blake. Call the Birmingham Rep Box Office on 021 236 6771.

21 JANUARY 1994: BSGF AGM & AUCTION, 7.45pm for 8.00pm at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street. DON'T FORGET TO BRING LOTS OF GOODIES FOR THE AUCTION!

21 JANUARY 1994: *BARBARELLA* at the University of Warwick Arts Centre from 11pm. Call 0203 524524 for details.

22 JANUARY 1994: *The Feline and the Feminine* is the first Film Talk of 1994 at the University of Warwick Arts Centre. Petra Kuppers of Swansea Institute of Higher Education will deliver a comprehensive survey of the screen life of the catwoman, from the earliest silents to the outer limits of science fiction. The subject will be illustrated by a complete screening of Paul Shraeder's 1982 version of *CAT PEOPLE*, starring Natassja Kinski, and copious illustrations from sources as diverse as 40s film noirs, Hammer horror, *STAR TREK* and *BATMAN RETURNS*. 11am-4.30pm, £4.75 (£3.50). Call 0203 524524 for details.

22-23 JANUARY 1994: *DEAD BY DAWN* the horror film festival at the Edinburgh Filmhouse. All enquiries to 031 447 8704.

4 FEBRUARY 1994: *TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME* (18). 11pm at the University of Warwick Arts Centre. Call 0203 524524 for details.

2-3 MARCH 1994: *BRAVE NEW WORLD* by Aldous Huxley, adapted by Roger Parsley, will be performed by the Snap Theatre Company at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon. Prices £4-£9. Call 0789 295623 for further details.

4-6 MARCH 1994: *MASQUE III* the third British costume convention, Shakis Victoria Hotel, Nottingham. Membership until 30 December 1993 is £20.00 attending, £5.00 supporting. Contact: c/o Mike Percival, 4 Ednaston Court, Yeldersley Lane, Ednaston, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 3BA.

5 MARCH 1994: *DRAGON ISLAND* a new show from the All Electric Theatre Company, featuring the recorded voice of Toyah Willcox as the Sea Hag. Call 0789 295623 for details.

15-16 MARCH 1994: *BOUNDARY* presented by IOU at the University of Warwick Arts Centre. "Take a step into another world, where

disembodied heads glide through canvas ponds, fists fall, figures fly, kings crumble and necks crane. *BOUNDARY* strides across 300 million years in three acts - from before the beginning of anything, through the first experiments in the evolution of life-forms, to the impenetrable rituals of courtly etiquette." Call 0203 524524 for details.

16 MARCH - 9 APRIL 1994: *WILDEST DREAMS* by Alan Ayckbourn will be playing at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon. "This is Real Life, and there are Dreams, where we hide when Real Life gets too much. But if those Dreams ever come true, would we still want to hide? And if so, where? Ayckbourn turns the spotlight on to a seemingly familiar and unexceptional middle England to expose hobgoblins, elves, dragons and sprites, spirits, bogey men, imps and spooks. A literally fantastic play of the everyday, in turns hilarious, frightening, sad and uplifting." Call 0789 295623 for details.

25-27 MARCH 1994: *TREK DWARF II* combined *STAR TREK/RED DWARF* convention at the Holiday Inn, Leicester. Attending £30.00. Contact 47 Marsham, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5RN.

1-4 APRIL 1994: *SOU'WESTER*. 45th UK national sf con. Britannia Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Guests of honour: Diane Duane, Neil Gaiman, Barbara Hambly, Peter Morwood. Attending was £25.00 (£23.00 for paid-up pre-supporting), Supporting £12.50, children aged 9-14 (on 1 April 1994) £12.50, £1.00 for "babies and beasts" until November 1993. Contact: 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

30 APRIL - 1 MAY 1994: *COME-BACK CON*. The first Belgian BeNeLuxcon in a long time at the Rubenianum House, Antwerp, Belgium. Attending 650BF, Supporting 500BF until 31 Dec 1993, then Attending 750BF, Supporting 650BF until 31 March 1994, children up to 6 free, age 6-12 half-price. Contact: Alfons J Maes, Zandkapelweg 18, B-2200 Noorderwijk, Belgium.

27-30 MAY 1994: *INCONCEIVABLE*. Second 'humour' con from Octarine, Tudor Court Hotel, Draycott, near Derby. Attending £20.00 (£18.00 for members of Octarine or ZZ9, contact 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby, DE23 6ES.

1-5 SEPTEMBER 1994: *CONADIAN*, 52nd world science fiction convention, at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. Guests of Honour Anne McCaffrey, George Barr, Barry B Longyear, Fan Guest of Honour Robert Runte. Contact: Helen McCarthy, 147 Francis Road, London, E10 6NT.

4-6 NOVEMBER 1994: *NOVACON 24* the Brum Group's own sf convention at the Royal Angus Hotel. Guest of Honour Graham Joyce. Attending membership £20.00 (before Easter). Cheques payable to "Novacon 24" should be sent to: CAROL MORTON, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

11-13 NOVEMBER 1994: *UNIFICATION '94* multimedia convention at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. *QUANTUM LEAP, STAR TREK, DR WHO, ROBIN OF SHERWOOD, STAR WARS, V, TIME TRAX, DS9* and many more, plus guests, quizzes and games. For further information write to: Unification, Clifton House, 27 Clifton Place, Newton Bar, Wakefield, WF1 3JH.

14-17 APRIL 1995: *CONFABULATION* 46th UK National sf con at the Britannia International Hotel, London. GoHs Lois McMasters Bujold, Bob Shaw and Roger Robinson. Contact: Confabulation, 3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH.

24-28 AUGUST 1995: *INTERSECTION*, 53rd world-con, Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow. Guests of honour Samuel R Delany, Gerry Anderson. Attending £60.00 until 30 September 1994. Supporting and Junior (24.8.80) £15.00, Child (24.8.88) £5.00. Contact: Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR, Scotland.

4-6 NOVEMBER 1994 (?): *NOVACON 24* the BSFG's own convention. GoH Graham Joyce. Venue and date still to be confirmed, but attending membership costs just £20.00 until Easter 1994. Contact: CAROL MORTON, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

27 DEC 1999 - 2 JAN 2000: *MILLENNIUM*. Venue to be announced, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a BeNeLux country or UK), £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.

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Although details are correct to the best of my knowledge, I advise readers to contact organizers prior to travelling.

Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses.

Please mention the BRUM GROUP NEWS when replying to listings or advertisements.

If you know of any events which you think may be of interest to members of the BSFG please send details to the Editor.

**CHAIRMAN'S
BIT**

by Tony Morton

Well, here we are again. Another year over. Time seems to go by so quickly. We once again managed 15 meetings in one year, including both the Honorary Presidents. Again opening with a "special" (Tom Holt), such talented authors as Stephen Baxter (also Novacon 23's GoH). Bob Shaw, Joe Haldeman, Graham Joyce, Iain Banks, Louise Cooper, Garry Kilworth and Colin Greenland visited the Group this year. It again proved an interesting mix throughout the year and hopefully provided enough variety for you, the members.

There have been one or two problems in the year, mostly out of our hands, such as the rail strike in April postponing Garry Kilworth's talk until July and forcing Joe Haldeman to drive up from London. But it has

mostly been fun.

The guests have proved popular with sufficient people attending to allow the Group to break even on costs again, so we go forward into another year solvent. Hopefully, this was due to members continuing to spread the word, and the Publicity Officer, Steve Jones, *did* do sterling work.

I must thank my Committee for their work during the year, they've all worked hard and well. Novacon 23 proved a great success and the committee meetings had to be experienced to be believed. Thanks for all your efforts Bernie, Martin, Richard, Helena, Steve, Mick and of course, Carol - who has to put up with me any way!

After two years as Chair of the Group I've decided to have a break from the "rigours of office" and stand down for the forthcoming year. I thank all the members of my committees over this period and the Group for your support. It's been fun (well, most of it) and I may ~~get~~ *conceded* decide to stand again soon.

Tony Morton,
Chairman
(retiring).

STAN'S CHRISTMAS PUZZLE: THE SOLUTION

NAME	FAVOURITE BOOK	OCCUPATION	AGE	PET
GAIUS	CAMP CONCENTRATION	INNKEEPER	70	YAK
JOHANN	A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ	PRINTER	35	BEETLE
POVDY	NON-STOP	FLUTE PLAYER	25	CAT
ORTUS	FAHRENHEIT 451	JUGGLER	200	SEAL
TARUS	MAKE ROOM, MAKE ROOM	ESCAPOLOGIST	42	TORTOISE
THEREFORE NON-STOP IS PLOVDY'S FAVOURITE BOOK.				

Correct entries were received from CHRIS MORGAN, PAULINE MORGAN, MR M TARIQ and PAM WELLS, their entries will be "put in the hat" and the winner announced at the AGM. The winner will receive an Andromeda Book Token (as long as Steve remembers to pick an extra one up - hey Steve... Many thanks to all those who entered and commiserations to SARAH FREAKLEY - yes Sarah, it worked the *other* way!

PLATFORMS

STANDING FOR SECRETARY

- RICHARD STANDAGE

After three years as Treasurer I felt it was time to hand over the cash box and Cathedral analysis books, and try my hand at another committee position. I considered Ordinary Member but unfortunately, since my emergency circumsion, this is no longer physically possible. I thought about going for Chair, but frankly I just don't have the physique to be a Chippendale. I toyed with the idea of Publicity Officer and Secretary, but concluded that these might be a little too rank and file. So that left Newsletter Editor, by which time, you'll be pleased to read, I ran out of godawful puns and was barred for life from ever holding such a responsible position. So in the end I returned to the idea of Secretary, if only for the chance it gives me to sit on the boss's knee.

STANDING FOR CHAIR

- BERNIE EVANS

Hi there. As I'm intending to stand for Chairman for '94 I suppose I'd better tell you my plans. Firstly on smoking: the "No Smoking During the Formal Part of the Meeting (guests and others on the platform excepted)" rule was brought in by me in my first year as Chairman some time ago, as an attempt to effect a compromise. I have no intention of rescinding this rule, but neither do I intend to extend it into the informal part of the meeting. If anyone thinks they can vote me in and then have a go at me about smoking at meetings behind the scenes, they can think again. It's fair, it works, it's staying.

Secondly, on the nature of meetings: this Group is for the benefit of ALL its members. I will be willing to hear suggestions from any and everyone of you. I won't listen to complaints from anyone who has no ideas of their own to put forward. I particularly won't listen to those who complain there are no "hard sf" writers coming to speak. There are, and if you choose to believe otherwise then it's your problem. We could have more if

there were more, but short of holding a seance there's no way of getting more.

One thing I do intend to do is get the *INTERSECTION* people along to give a presentation, partly because I think we should know what they're up to, and partly because, as the oldest established and largest sf group in Britain, I think we should be getting ourselves involved in some way.

Finally, it's my intention to continue helping Martin with the Newsletter, including maintaining the membership database, so I hope others standing for Committee posts will be happy to go along with this.

OK, that's my platform ; probably too long, so it'll be interesting to see what Martin chops out. If any of you aren't happy with any of this, then show some life, put the rest of your body where your mouth is, and **STAND AGAINST ME.**

A REPORT ON A PAST MEETING

THE GREAT DEBATE

- by Steve Jones

This year's debate between the BSFG and the Birmingham University Science Fiction and Fantasy Society was, as usual, a tense and exciting contest.

Birmingham University proposed the motion: "This house believes that Science Fiction is a man's game." The proposer was David Wake and the seconder was Miss Elizabeth J Thacker.

Opposing on behalf of the BSFG was Robert Jones, seconded by Carol Morton. They argued convincingly that there ought to be more women in science fiction - writing, reading and in fandom.

However, the proposers' counter-argument that at the moment sf is overwhelmingly a male preserve carried the day.

The motion was carried by 17 votes to 6.

It is believed a strong turn-out from the University may have helped their cause, but I'm *sure* no-one allowed such petty allegiances to determine their vote.

JOPHAN REPORT #70

by Martin Tudor

A DRABBLE/REPORT ON A FUTURE MEETING

January again, third Friday and fans from all around Birmingham amass at its Australian Bar spoiling for action. After much oiling of throats at two bars, a quorum goes up stairs.

Tim, pausing only to light a cigar, starts things off. As usual complaints abound; cost of this, cost of that, poor publicity, too many authors. Round and round disputations go without variation, (similar to a chrono-sylastic infundibula) until all bars are shut and you can't buy a drink. Two by two folks drift away. By four o'clock Saturday morning with no conclusions in sight, our last stalwarts go away.

Anon.

A REPORT ON ALIEN WAR

- report by Stephen Billings

ALIEN WAR is a 15-20 minute live action play, in which you are being shown around a large (approximately 9,000 square feet of corridor) complex. You are taken around by "Marines" who have working guns.

In the complex the life cycle of the Alien is shown to you, but things go wrong and you are finally trying to escape from the Aliens.

ALIEN WAR is on the lower floor of the Trocadero, Piccadilly Circus, London. Cost: £6.95 for adults, £4.95 for children (8-12 years).

Do try and be gentle with outgoing Chair Tony Morton at the AGM on the 21st of January - it will be his 41st birthday. A traumatic enough time for anyone without having to deal with you whiners and whingers!

Mick Evans should probably be handled with some care that same night, as the Brum Group's favourite Step-Grandfather will have celebrated his 44th birthday the day before, on the 20th of January. So try not to trample on him too hard in your rush for Review Books!

Speaking of the Evans' clan, Vicky Evans (daughter of Bernie) announced her engagement to Lee Nicholas on New Year's Eve, they plan to marry in August. And lo there was a great wailing and gnashing of teeth amongst male fen the length and breadth of Britain...

Carol and Tony Morton have asked me to bring to your attention their change of telephone number to 0384 825386. Their address, however, remains the same.

A new year and a host of new titles are promised. This month sees the publication of volume two of Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the Long Sun* - *LAKE OF THE LONG SUN* (Hodder & Stoughton, £15.99); *THE FORBIDDEN ZONE* from Whitley Strieber wheresomething "deadly and soul-destroying" comes "out of time, space and the depths of the mind" to terrorize the citizens of a small town (Hodder & Stoughton, £15.99); the latest from Dean Koontz is *WINTER MOON* (Headline, £16.99); *LOVE ME TO DEATH* by David Martin is yet another vampire story set in the modern day (Headline, £16.99, £8.99); *EVIL INTENT* is a horror novel from Bernard Taylor (Headline, £16.99); a must for Koontz fans is *THE DEAN KOONTZ COMPANION* by Martin H Greenberg, Ed Gorman & Bill Munster (Headline, £18.99); the second part of Dwina Murphy Gibb's Celtic saga *CORMAC: THE KING-MAKING* is published in trade paperback (Pan, £9.99), whilst the first part, *CORMAC: THE SEERS*, appears in paperback (Pan, £4.99); W Michael Gear and Kathleen O'Neal Gear's *PEOPLE OF THE WOLF* (Pan, £4.99); Jane Yolen re-tells the tale of Sleeping Beauty in the context of the Holocaust in *BRIAR ROSE* (Pan, £4.99).

In February Hodder & Stoughton publish a first novel from Mark Richard, winner of the 1990 PEN/Ernest Hemingway Foundation Award. A "strikingly imaginative reinvention of the classic sea-faring tale" (it says here) "informed by myth, magic and the blackest

humour", *FISHBOY: A GHOST'S STORY* sounds quite interesting (£15.99, £8.99); *THE MAILMAN* "a very special delivery of fear" from Bentley Little (Headline, £16.99); *THE SILVER CITY* by Pamela Belle marks the beginning of a new fantasy trilogy (Pan, £8.99); *BRING ME THE HEAD OF PRINCE CHARMING* by Roger Zelazny and Robert Sheckley "a spoof of everything from Fairytales, to Biblical notions of Good, Evil, Bureaucracy and quite possibly detente and the cold war as well" (Pan, £4.99); the "true" story behind the discovery of America is told in Esther Friesner's *YESTERDAY WE SAW MERMAIDS* (Pan, £3.99).

Hodder & Stoughton release *A WOLF STORY* by James Byron Huggins under their religious imprint in March. An allegorical tale of a great grey wolf's passion to overcome evil, as the followers of the Lightmaker battle against the encroaching powers of the secretive Dark Council (£4.99). Also in March we see a new fantasy from Tanith Lee, *EVA FAIRDEATH*, (Headline, £16.99, £8.99); Bridget Wood returns to the Ireland of legend with *SORCERESS* (Headline, £16.99, £8.99); *THE CITY*, the fourth in the Rats series, is a graphic novel from James Herbert and Ian Miller (Pan, £7.99); Peter F Hamilton's *A QUANTUM MURDER* details the further adventures of PSI-boostered ex-private eye Greg Mandel (Pan, £4.99); *LORD OF THE TWO LANDS* is a tale of ancient Egypt by Judith Tarr (Pan, £4.99).

April sees the 18th Xanth book, *GEIS OF THE GARGOYLE*, from Piers Anthony (Hodder & Stoughton, £15.99); *THE DEUS MACHINE* is a novel from a new author "with the imagination of Michael Crichton" - Pierre Ouellette, apparently it is a "gripping journey into the dark side of technology in the future" (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99); *PARADISE* from Chaz Brenchley details the events following some miracles worked by a charismatic young man in an inner city area (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99); Storm Constantine extends her short story "Priest of Hands" (nominated for the BSFA award) into a novel, *CALENTURE* (Headline, £16.99); *ALONE WITH THE HORRORS* features 39 "marrow-chilling" stories from Ramsey Campbell and illustrations by J K Potter (Headline, £17.99); Richard Matheson's son, Richard Christian Matheson, makes his debut with *CREATED BY* (Macmillan); *PEOPLE OF THE FIRE* W Michael Gear and Kathleen O'Neal Gear's sequel to *PEOPLE OF THE WOLF* (Pan, £4.99); the fourth Tek book, *TEK VENGEANCE*, by William Shatner (Pan, £4.99); a first novel in the form of the Dark Fantasy *STREAMSKELTER* by Simon Harding (Pan, £4.99); *PSYCHOPATHS* ed. by Robert Bloch features stories from David Morrell, Chelsea Quinn Yarbo, Charles L Grant,

Dennis Etchinson & David Schow (Pan, £4.99).

In May Hodder & Stoughton release A A Attanasio's *SOLIS* (£16.99); John Gideon has apparently been reduced to writing "in the tradition of Dean Koontz" with *RED BALL* (Headline, estimated £16.99); yet more diabolic evil is let loose in Bentley Little's *EVIL DEEDS* (Headline, est. £16.99); Peter Underwood, the Chief Investigator and long-term President of the Ghost Club of Great Britain, offers tours of haunted houses with *NIGHTS IN HAUNTED HOUSES* (Headline, est. £17.99).

Finally, for now, June sees *ROAD KILL* by Jack Ketchum - "on a par with Clive Barker, James Ellroy and Thomas Harris" according to Stephen King (Headline, estimated £16.99); *REVENANT* by Melanie Tem (Headline, estimated £16.99); *IN THE DARK* by Richard Laymon (Headline, estimated £16.99).

Cambridshire's Fourth Fantasy Fair is to be held on 10 April 1994 at the Cresset, Bretton, Peterborough. Guests include Peter F Hamilton, marking the launch of *A QUANTUM MURDER* his second novel, as well as Rich Parsons and Tony Keaveny celebrating the paperback publication of *COLIN THE LIBRARIAN*. 10.30am until 4pm, admission £1.00.

May sees a handfull of events to celebrate the Peterborough SF Club's 18th Birthday. This includes an evening of literate fantasy (ie. NO ELVES) with local publisher Dedalus. Guests should include publisher Eric Lane, Brian Stableford (editor) and Robert Irwin (author of *THE ARABIAN NIGHTMARE*). The evening (co-presented with WRITERS IN PETERBOROUGH) is on 18 May at the Great Northern Hotel, admission £3.00.

For further information about these and other events contact: Pete Cox, 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 ORB.

EVOLUTION: THE NEXT STEP is a bid for the 1996 Eastercon, their flyer proclaims: "It's time for you to think about ... the 1996 Eastercon ... which we want to hold on the South Coast of England ... the committee ... at the last count comprised (in alphabetical order) Simon Bisson, Mary Branscombe, Mark Charsley, Bridget Hardcastle, Rhodri James and Pat McMurray, and we are promised others after Intersection. Most of us have worked at conventions and on committees before, and the rest of us have been diligent attendees."

If you wish to presupport them (£1.00) or want further information contact: EVOLUTION, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

Voting will take place at Sou'wester in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool this Easter.

CRITICAL WAVE

THE EUROPEAN SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY REVIEW

"CRITICAL WAVE is the most consistently interesting and intelligent review on the sf scene." - Michael Moorcock.

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Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

Please allow 30 days for delivery.

**BOOK
REVIEWS**

THE PSYCHIC DETECTIVE by R Chetwynd-Hayes
Robert Hale, 208 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Frederica Masters is an exceptionally gifted psychic medium with a very conservative Father and Stepmother who cannot understand how they managed to produce a child with such talents. Needless to say she is a bit of a rebel as far as her parents are concerned. After a falling out with her boyfriend Frederica is rescued by Francis St Claire, an independently wealthy young man who just so happens to be an authority on the occult. Francis proposes that Frederica becomes his assistant in the business of psychic detecting which would enable her to reach her full potential as a psychic medium.

Impulsively Frederica agrees and moves into Francis' house where it would seem lurks an evil spirit, that of a depraved 18th century nobleman who, using Frederica's powers, wants to alter the past so as to change the future. Does Francis really want Frederica as his assistant only to rid his house of the evil spirit of Lord Ramsay or to set up this detective agency? In ridding the house of this spirit will Frederica become trapped by Ramsay and remain trapped in the 18th Century?

I am sorry to say that although this novel puts forward an interesting concept, it is written in a very dated style with plodding plot and characterisation. I was convinced it was a reissue but found out it was written and first published in 1993. Not really a book I would recommend.

SNOW CRASH by Neal Stephenson
RoC, 438 pp, £8.99, C Format

Reviewed by William McCabe.

This is one of those books that starts off very promisingly but quickly degenerates, this time into just another cyberpunk offering. It begins with the hero (so you'll know who he is he's named Hiro Protagonist) as a high tech lean'n'mean road warrior type with a fast car, skintight bullet-proof armour and a job at the cutting edge of American industry. He

delivers pizza for the Mafia.

By chapter three he's crashed the car and is back to his usual job (freelance programmer - I said this was cyberpunk) and meeting someone who's going to explain to him exactly what he has to do to save the world from a high powered virus, partly biological and partly computer. There are lots of cute gadgets and plot devices and larger than life characters (especially Raven, who carries around a stack of glass knives and an H-bomb in a motorcycle side-car) but somehow the writing never quite lives up to the first few chapters.

That said, it's a lot lighter than most of the sub-genre, which would make it a good idea if you don't give a damn about computer jargon. There is some but it's either common parlance, made up or so far out of date that it might as well be. A review I've seen recently cites this as the best cyberpunk novel ever written, which I don't dispute, and that probably says more about my opinion of the sub-genre than it does about the book.

Incidentally, the last page advertises the "RoC Fantasy Fan Club". No prices and little information, except for hints at news and competitions, but if you're interested you can write to Penguin Books Ltd, Bath Road, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, UB7 ODA.

THE MOAT AROUND MURCHESON'S EYE

by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
HarperCollins, 401 pp, £8.99, C Format

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

It takes literally half of this book for the story really to start. The first part is concerned with a hunt on the planet Maxwell's Purchase for a Snow Ghost (an animal already hunted almost to extinction; will humans never change?), and for a deposit of meerschaum, and with Horace Bury's paranoid fear that the alien Moties are about to burst out of their system, past the blockade known as the Crazy Eddie Squadron, and into the Empire. And with bringing together most of the original cast, in traditional style, for another visit to the Mote along with various offspring, now adult, and a female reporter.

If you have read *THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE*, which appeared 18 years ago, you will remember Bury, who was then under house (or ship) arrest for some crime. He is now His Excellency, Imperial Trader and Magnate, much respected, if not universally trusted, and kept alive by a medical machine. Nonetheless, he insists on going back to the Mote with Kevin Renner and the rest of the survivors from book one. As

the action hots up in the second half in an almost impossible attempt to bottle up the Moties, we finish up with an almost Doc Smith-type space battle, with perhaps just a little more scientific rationale, given the authors.....

One for Niven/Pournelle fans, this, but not their best book by a long chalk.

SUPERMARIONATION CLASSICS by Various Authors
Boxtree, 304 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Chris Murphy.

Here's another publication aimed at Anderson fans, who are exoected not to mind a poor cover or the fact that only the three most recently repeated puppet series are described at length.

The featured series are *STINGRAY*, *CAPTAIN SCARLET* and *THUNDERBIRDS*. For each there are numerous photographs, biographies of the principal characters, an explanation of the scenario, an episode guide and production details. The sections on how these programmes were made are informative, and the episode notes could be useful. Much of the rest is just padding. Does anyone over the age of ten want to know that Captain Scarlet was born in Winchester?

In one respect the book seems distinctly unfair. It naturally credits Gerry Anderson with being the driving force behind the shows, but hardly mentions his ex-wife and fellow producer Sylvia. She has 12 references in the index, while he receives more than 80. I find it hard to believe that her contribution was really so much less important than his.

THE TALE OF THE BODY THIEF by Anne Rice,
Penguin, 607 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is the fourth in the 'chronicles of the Vampire, Lestat. In it he is tricked into exchanging bodies with a self-confessed liar and con-man. Lestat agreed because he thought it was his greatest desire to be human again and the body he is offered on loan is a very fine specimen. It is not as much fun as he expects as the first thing this new body does is catch a cold. And the thief refuses to give his body back. Louis, the vampire who told Lestat's story in *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE*, refuses to help Lestat and he has to turn to his human friend, David Talbot who is Superior General of Talamasca, the organisation that documents and researches into the supernatural. David,

however is becoming old and frail.

As with other recent books by Anne Rice, this is overlong. The plot doesn't properly start until 100 pages into the book and contains many passages that could have been omitted without detracting from the story. Part of the intention is to explore in greater depth the character of Lestat, and his relationship with David Talbot. This doesn't work well because Lestat is as arrogant as he is naive - he has lost touch with the human race over the two centuries he has been dead - and because it is a first person narrative there is no chance to see events from the point of view of the others involved. This said, Anne Rice remains an excellent story teller.

MOVING MARS by Greg Bear
Legend, 452 pp, £9.99, C Format

Reviewed by Chris Murphy.

This novel is set in the same universe as Bear's earlier books, *QUEEN OF ANGELS* and *HEADS*, but is not a direct sequel to either of them. It tells how Cassela Majumdar, a young Martian colonist, becomes caught up in momentous social and scientific developments. Along the way she falls in love, witnesses the discovery of an indigenous life form and fights the corrupt governments of Earth.

In the 22nd century most manual work is done by robots which, for some reason are called "arbeiters". Genetic Engineering is taken for granted, but politics is still the same as ever.

I found it all a little disappointing. For the first time in reading Bear I was reminded of other authors, particularly Heinlein's *THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS*. It was also the first time I have been able to guess the ending of one of his stories well in advance. However, this is not just another tale of terraforming the Red Planet. Bear's sense of character and his eye for detail in depicting future societies remain as sharp as ever. Worth reading, but not his best work.

EXPLORING DEEP SPACE AND BEYOND

by Mark A Altman and David Ian Solter
Boxtree, 126 pp, £6.99, non-standard p/b

Reviewed by David B Wake.

Containing 16 full page full-colour photographs in addition to the page-count above, *EXPLORING DEEP SPACE AND BEYOND* is about the recent spate of US TV shows dedicated to life aboard a space-station.

There's been *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*, *BABYLON FIVE* and *SPACE RANGERS*. I'm a fan of *DS9* as I have Sky One; if the TV people over here would get their act together I would probably be a fan of the other two (of course, there isn't a conspiracy).

This book is the first unofficial guide. It really stresses its unofficial nature, making it part of its advertising by-line. You would expect something that spills the dirt but we have instead pages and pages, crammed with quotes, saying how wonderful *DS9* is, how lucky we were to get so-and-so in this role, how spiffing the effects were, how stupendous the biggest standing set in American TV history is, how marvellous the sliced bread was. It's all very sycophantic in that peculiarly American way.

Neither is it balanced, nine chapters on *DS9* and one each for the other two shows, and no comparing or contrasting. Then we have two appendices, both on *DS9*. All three shows go to lengths to explain that they are grittier than *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*. I suppose that's dirt in a way.

I did turn the pages quite easily until about two-thirds of the way through and then - by the prophets! - the syrup got to me.

THE TURING OPTION by Harry Harrison and Marvin Minsky
RoC, 498 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Megalobe Industries is an American corporation that was originally set up to catch up and hopefully surpass the Japanese in the research into HDTV, High Definition Television. As this process would seem to have uses in warfare and future technologies Megalobe forms a consortium with the Pentagon which results in further projects being undertaken. One of these is research into the development of Artificial Intelligence run by a whizz-kid Brian Delaney. The Chairman of Megalobe, J J Beckworth, is asked to take a look at Delaney's work but is so unimpressed by the project he would probably have shut it down. But only seconds after Beckworth's leaving the laboratory Delaney is shot and left for dead, all his research notes and equipment stolen, the entire Laboratory's security staff, guards and guard dogs and Beckworth himself had vanished. It seems that someone believes Delaney's work has potential and is prepared to go to any lengths to get their hands on it.

In the aftermath of the attack on the Laboratory Delaney has to undergo long and delicate brain surgery using parts and

techniques he himself used in his AI research. This is in the hope that he will be able to identify his attackers and to rebuild his research project. Delaney's personality is changed and his memory damaged by his injuries but his research goes on much faster and, despite repeated attempts on his life, he produces a working AI robot. When another company produces an AI robot Megalobe finally have a lead on who attacked the laboratory, but can they find the perpetrators before Delaney is killed?

This is an excellent novel. It is one of those books that is very hard to put down, the plot though complex is entertaining and the technical details are outlined in such a way that you are not lost in a maze of technical jargon but the wealth of scientific background is evident. This is a wonderful collaboration, I hope the first of many. Read this and enjoy.

21ST CENTURY VISIONS by Derek Meddings
Paper Tiger, 127 pp, £12.95, art format p/b
Reviewed by Chris Murphy.

This is a view of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's productions which largely ignores the stories and both the fibreglass and live actors. Meddings was one of the Andersons' leading effects technicians, and later had an equally successful career in feature films.

He writes about the ways in which the various futuristic machines were made to appear as if they were flying, rolling, swimming, burrowing or blowing up. His team enjoyed blasting the miniature craft to pieces, he confesses, "because of all the trouble they had caused". In these modern days of computer-generated images it is fascinating to read about a time when elaborate fantasies were conjured up out of wood, wire and parts from model kits.

Meddings makes a few comments which may annoy dedicated Anderson fans, for example his claim that Thunderbird 1 "only looked right from certain angles". Nevertheless this book would make an ideal present for such fans, who will find its many excellent photographs and its wealth of Anderson trivia irresistible. It should also appeal to anyone with an interest in special effects or in the history of television.

As most reviewers use computers to write their reviews Bernie would prefer reviews to be sent on disk. She can accept Anstrad 3 in either Locoscript or ASCII and 3K* ASCII only (DD disks, formatted to 720K with the reviews in the "Root Directory"). Please enclose a hard copy as well.*

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