

BRUM GROUP NEWS

October 1994

Issue 277

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

GROUP CHAIRMAN - BERNIE EVANS, SECRETARY - RICHARD STANDAGE, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,
TREASURER - HELENA BOWLES, PUBLICITY OFFICER - STEVE JONES, ORDINARY MEMBERS - MICK EVANS &
DAVID HUNTER, NOVACON 24 CHAIRMAN - RICHARD STANDAGE, NOVACON 25 CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON.

This month's speaker is Special Effects & Animatronix Expert **JOHN PRIEST**

on Friday 21st October 1994, 7.45 for 8.00pm

Admittance: Members £2.50 Visitors £3.75
(half-price for 14-18 year olds on production of proof of age).

JOHN PRIEST has had a somewhat varied career, after leaving Lucas Electrical and getting bored with making perspex cases - then architectural models to go into said cases, he turned his attention to supplying various shady characters with items like phase bombs, security scramblers and bio-trackers. Other jobs included helping someone called "Ford" with a book, interior decorating for Space Police and gun running to Star Cops, Cybermen, mercenaries, assorted alien creatures and "The Boys from the Dwarf".

When not doing this, he is either blowing things up or custom making creatures for clients.

Reasonable Rates Are Available - Starships A Speciality!

[Many thanks to John Priest for the above 'biography.']

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 £10.00 per person, or £13.50 for 2 members at the same address. Cheques etc. payable to "the Birmingham Science Fiction Group", via the treasurer Helena Bowles 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.

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Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road,
Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG,
(tel: 021 327 3023.)

Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for typing the book reviews, STEVE GREEN, CRITICAL WAVE and WHAT'S ON for the news in the Jophan Report and Events listing and TONY BERRY for the use of his spare room.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

19 OCTOBER 1994: *TRIBUTE TO NIC ROEG*, in a remarkable career spanning forty years, Nicholas Roeg worked his way up from studio tea boy to leading cinematographer and went on to become one of the most original and challenging film-makers in British cinema. Neil Sinyard (critic and author of *THE FILMS OF NICHOLAS ROEG*) will be discussing the director's work before screening *HEART OF DARKNESS*, Nic Roeg has been invited to attend. From 8pm at the MAC Cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, tickets £4.00 (£3.00 concessionary), call 021 440 3838.

19 OCTOBER - 31 DECEMBER 1994: *THE HOLY GRAIL TAPESTRIES* the first opportunity in two years to see the famous tapestries illustrating the legend of the Holy Grail. Designed by Edward Burne-Jones and woven by Morris & Co. At the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, tickets £2.50 (£1.50 concessionary).

20 OCTOBER 1994: *COMPUTER WORLD 2*, at the Ikon Gallery, 58-72 John Bright Street, Birmingham, 1pm and 6.30pm, with talk at 5.30pm by Richard Brown. A brand new follow-up to Film and Video Umbrella's international showcase *COMPUTER WORLD*. This collection brings together some of the latest state of the art work in the rapidly expanding field of digital and computer-generated images. While many of these works explore the cutting edge in computer-generated imagery, various other pieces show how computer technology has brought a striking new element to a more accessible and humorous animation style. Richard Brown is an interactive multi-media designer/sculptor/inventor, who has exhibited extensively in Britain, his work taking its form in kinetic sculptures and computer-based interactive multimedia installations. Screening is Free, Richard Brown talk £4.00 (£3.00 concessionary), call 021 643 0708.

20 OCTOBER 1994: *WELCOME TO THE TERRORDOME*, opening in the year 1652 - where a kidnapped African family dives into the murky waters of the Atlantic rather than face slavery - and moving swiftly to the futuristic ghetto that is *TerrorDome 2010*, this nightmarish sf allegory finds a future where slavery as metaphor and physical state has come full circle - and mixed relationships have become a fearful no-man's-land. Directed by Ngozi Onwurah, this one of the most spectacular releases of the year, screens from 7.30pm at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 021 643 7277.

20-21 OCTOBER 1994: *FRANKENSTEIN'S MOTHERS* the World Premiere of a romantic tragedy of monstrous proportions, a Gothic fantasy for the twentieth century. A unique interpretation of Mary Shelley's life. The MAC Theatre, 8pm, tickets £5.50 (£4.20 concessionary), call 021 440 4221 for details.

9-10 NOVEMBER 1994: *FAUST*, directed by Czech 'alchemist of the surreal' Jan Svankmajer, features a disturbing and macabre use of life-size marionettes, dolls, automata and bizarre transformations of objects, screens from 7.30pm at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 021 643 7277.

21 OCTOBER 1994: *SPECIAL EFFECTS DEMONSTRATION* by PAUL DOHERTY from 4pm at Central TV, Central House, Broad Street, Birmingham. A leading figure in video graphics, computer animation and special effects, Doherty founded Electric Image, one of Europe's oldest and most respected animation

and special effects production facilities, where he is currently managing director. He will talk about his work, and demonstrate, using cutting edge techniques, how special effects are actually achieved. Tickets £5.00 (£4.00 concessionary), call 021 643 9898.

21 OCTOBER 1994: **THE FABULOUS FLYING FLEAPIT** - the launch of the Film and Video Club at the Waterworks Club, Waterworks Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 7.30pm. Based on London's 'Exploding Cinema', the Fabulous Flying Fleapit will create an opportunity to showcase some of the exciting new work coming from the region's contemporary artists. The intention is to draw from the existing, but as yet undiscovered, hotbed of producers and directors with the emphasis on a strictly 'no restrictions' policy - in the true spirit of creative freedom there will be no censorship - anything is shown and anything goes. The monthly venue will provide a meeting place for the development of new projects and ideas, encouraging a spirit of collaboration and constructive criticism. Its opening intends to prove that a thriving underground scene is alive and kicking in the West Midlands. £4.00 (£3.00 concess.) call Birmingham Centre for Media Arts on 021 233 4061.

21 OCTOBER 1994: **JOHN PRIEST**, special effects and animatronics expert, will be speaking to the BSG, 7.45pm for 8pm, in the Upstairs room of the Australian Bar on the corner of Hurst Street and Bromsgrove Street in Birmingham city centre.

21-24 OCTOBER 1994: **ALBACON '94**. Central Hotel, Glasgow. Attending £30.00 until 15 October then £35.00 on the door. Guests of Honour Robert Asprin, Douglas Hill and Birmingham's own Fangorn. Contact: M. Drayton, 10 Atlas Road, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE.

25-27 OCTOBER 1994: **ET: THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL**, showing at the MAC cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston Road, Birmingham. Call 021 440 3838 for details.

28 OCTOBER 1994: **THE MASK**, showing at the MAC cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston Road, Birmingham. Call 021 440 3838 for details.

29 OCTOBER 1994: **BRYAN TALBOT** will be signing copies of *A TALE OF ONE BAD RAT* from noon at Magic Labyrinth, 34-36 Rutland Street, Leicester. At the same time the *LUTHOR ARKWRIGHT* rpg will be played/demonstrated. Call 0533 518178 for details of this and other signing sessions.

29 OCTOBER 1994: **KING KONG**, to celebrate the publishing by Random House Children's Books of *KING KONG*, the illustrator Anthony Browne will deliver a short talk prior to the screening of the film. The MAC cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston Road, Birmingham. Call 021 440 3838 for details.

28-30 OCTOBER 1994: **THE WRONG TROUSERS, CREATURE COMFORTS, A GRAND DAY OUT, MY BABY JUST CARES FOR ME** showing at the MAC cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston Road, Birmingham. Call 021 440 3838 for details.

31 OCTOBER - 1 NOVEMBER 1994: **ALPHAVILLE** Jean-Luc Goddard's classic sixties movie will be screened at the Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry. Call 01203 524524 for details.

3-4 NOVEMBER 1994: **THE LOST BOY FOUND** by Euripides, performed by the Actors Touring Company at the Allardyce Nicoll Studio Theatre, Lower Ground Floor, Muirhead Tower, University of Birmingham, tickets £6.50 (concess. £4.00), call 021 643 2514. Raped by the sun god Apollo, the young Princess Creusa abandons her secret baby son to a certain death. Many years later, she and her husband journey to Apollo's Oracle at Delphi to pray that their barren marriage be blessed with a child. There they meet a boy...

4-6 NOVEMBER 1994: **NOVACON 24** the Brum Group's own sf convention at the Royal Angus Hotel. Guest of Honour Graham Joyce. Attending £25.00, supporting £8.00. Cheques payable to "Novacon 24" should be sent to: CAROL MORTON, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

9-10 NOVEMBER 1994: **FAUST**, directed by Jan Svankmajer featuring a disturbing and macabre use of life-size marionettes, dolls, automata and bizarre transformations of objects, showing at the MAC cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston Road, Birmingham. Call 021 440 3838 for details.

11 NOVEMBER 1994: **TERRY PRATCHETT** will be signing at Waterstone's, 24-26 High Street, Birmingham, call 021 633 4353 for details.

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.

11-14 NOVEMBER 1994: CULT TV "an appreciation weekend" at Seacroft Holiday Village, Hemsby, Norfolk, from £59.00 per adult. Guests include: Harlan Ellison, Sylvia Anderson, Annette Andre, Sophie Aldred, Victor Pemberton, Barry Letts, Deborah Watling. For further details call: 0772-622555.

18 NOVEMBER 1994: BSFG VS BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY SF & FANTASY SOCIETY in the annual debate. If you're interested in representing the BSFG, or if you wish to propose the topic, please call Bernie Evans on 021 558 0997.

28 NOVEMBER - 3 DECEMBER 1994: *THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW* 21st Birthday Party, Birmingham Hippodrome. Call 021 622 7486 for bookings.

The December BSFG Meeting

16 December 1994

will be the long-awaited

BEER & SKITTLES EVENING

at the Samson & Lion,

Wordsley,

Price £10.00 per person,

includes travel from and back

to Birmingham city centre.

Cash/cheques to Helena Bowles,

116 Shireland Road, Smethwick,

Warley, West Mids., B66 4QJ.

14-17 APRIL 1995: CONFABULATION 46th UK National sf con at the Britannia International Hotel, London. GoHs Lois Mc Masters Bujold, Bob Shaw and Roger Robinson. Attending £20.00, supporting £10.00 before 31 December 1994. 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, Vinç Clarke. Attending £80.00. Contact: Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR, Scotland.

3-5 NOVEMBER 1995: NOVAACON 25 the Brum Group's own science fiction convention at a

new venue - the Chamberlain Hotel, Alcester Street, Birmingham. Guests of Honour: Brian W Aldiss, Harry Harrison and Bob Shaw, with Special Guest Iain Banks. Currently membership is only available to members of NOVAACON 24, who should send £20.00 to CAROL MORTON, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS, cheques should be made payable to "Novacon 25". Memberships will rise to £23.00 at Novacon 24 and will be available to non-members of NOVAACON 24 from 7 November 1994 for £25.00. Room rates are £20.00 per person per night in twin/double and £40.00 pppn in a single, prices include full English breakfast.

5-8 APRIL 1996: EVOLUTION 47th UK National Convention, venue to be announced. Guests of honour: Colin Greenland, Bryan Talbot, Jack Cohen. Attending £20.00, supporting £12.00. Contact: 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

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.

If you have attended any events or seen any films or videos that you would like to recommend to other members (or warn them of) please feel free to write a report/review and send it to the editorial address.

JOPHAN REPORT #79

Despite overwhelming VERBAL support (ie lots of promises, but not enough booking forms and cheques) the fate of Novacon 24's "Balti Banquet" hangs in the balance. Given the fact that over 40 people HAVE booked the

committee are reluctant to cancel the event out of hand and so have extended the deadline until Friday 21 October.

If you plan to attend Novacon 24 and haven't joined yet you can still do so for £25.00 (or both Novacon 24 and 25 for £45.00) at this month's meeting. If you are a member of Novacon 24 and want to attend the Balti Banquet and/or Beer & Sausage Tasting you can do so at this month's meeting (£6.50 for the Balti Banquet, £4.00 for the Beer & Sausage Tasting, or both events for £10.00). Forms are included in this newsletter, complete them and pass them (along with your cheques made out to "Novacon 24") to Carol Morton.

The passage of the "snuff movie" sub-genre, from publicity stunt to political tool, is engagingly catalogued in *KILLING FOR CULTURE* by HEADPRESS co-editors David Kerekes and David Slater (Creation, £10.95/US\$19.95).

Science fiction figures heavily in the results of a poll by the Cinema Advertising Association and CAVIAR (Cinema & Video Industry Audience Research) into the UK's most popular releases since 1979.

Led off by *JURASSIC PARK*, the "top 20" includes *ET* (2), *GHOSTBUSTERS* (4), *STAR WARS* (5), *WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT* (8), *GHOST* (10), *RETURN OF THE JEDI* (12), *INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE* (13), *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND* (14), *SUPERMAN II* (16) and *TERMINATOR 2, JUDGEMENT DAY* (20).

With George Lucas's initial *STAR WARS* trilogy taking two places in the line-up, little wonder that Elstree Studios felt it appropriate to designate 19 June "STAR WARS Day" and mark the occasion by screening all three at Borehamwood's Venue. Lucas's long-awaited follow-up trilogy is already in pre-production, with releases planned for 1997 (the twentieth anniversary of the first movie), 1998 and 1999.

Nicholas Royle's debut novel *COUNTER-PARTS*, initially published by Chris Kenworthy's slipstream imprint Barrington Books, is to be republished in March as a Penguin paperback. It will be joined by *SAXOPHONE DREAMS*, his second novel, as either a Penguin original paperback or a Viking hardback.

PSYCHOTROPE is a new small press horror magazine from Mark Beech. Issue #1 features 10 tales of "obsession, mad love, dark psychology and the subconscious" from DF Lewis, Andy Cox, Paul Pinn, Peter Tennant and others. A single issue is £2.10, or four

issues for £7.50 to Mark Beech, 23 St Georges Road, Leamington Spa, CV31 3AY.

GATHER YOURSELVES TOGETHER, a previously unpublished novel by Philip K Dick, was published by WCS on 6 June in a limited-edition hardcover run of 1200 copies, priced US\$40.00.

Written in 1952, when Dick had decided to follow his sf success with a mainstream novel, the book focussed upon the sexual awakening of a young woman in 1949 mainland China, amidst the approach of communism.

Distribution is being handled by EyeBall Books, a division of SCIENCE FICTION EYE, with US copies available at \$44.00, Canadian / Mexican at \$46.00 and all other orders priced at \$50.00; all prices include dispatch via airmail. For further details, contact SF EYE at PO Box 18539, Asheville, NC 28814, USA.

Peterborough based writer Adrian Rigelsford's latest book, *THE DOCTORS*, is to be published this month. A study of the BBC tv series, *DR WHO*, it follows on from his earlier works *DR WHO: THE MONSTERS* and *THE MAKING OF DARK DIMENSION* (about the aborted thirtieth anniversary special).

Copies of *FANTHOLOGY '90*, the collection of fan writing from 1990 edited by Mark Loney for Corflu Nova in May this year, are available from Alan Stewart, PO Box 222 World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vic 3005, Australia. Send A\$10.00, or the equivalent in your local currency adding a few dollars more for postage outside Australia. All proceeds from sales will go to DUFF (the Down Under, USA/Australia, Fan Fund).

Penguin has announced the launch of a new horror and dark fantasy line for April 1995. Luigi Bonomi, currently overseeing Roc Books, will be in charge of the new line which is to be called Creed. Former consulting editor at Pan, Jo Fletcher, will be working on Creed as well as Penguin and Roc books.

It is planned that Creed will publish one book a month and the initial line-up includes *THE NIGHT INSIDE* by Nancy Baker, *THE HALLOWS* by Michael Scott and *NIGHTRIDER* by Sheila Holligon. Reportedly already signed up for the new line are Storm Constantine, Freda Warrington and Novacon 24 Guest of Honour Graham Joyce.

Ellen Datlow and Terri Wilding are seeking stories to reprint and publications to highlight in their eighth *YEAR'S BEST FANTASY AND HORROR*, to be published by St Martin's

Press in August 1995; the deadlines are 15 December and 30 January, respectively.

Fantasy material should be sent to Wilding at Casa Rincon, 11651 Calle Aurora, Tucson, Arizona 85748, USA; Datlow handles the horror at OMNI, 1965 Broadway, New York, NY 10023, USA. "If you consider something both," warns Datlow, "send to each of us. We do not confer about our choices."

STAR*LINE, the newsletter of the Science Fiction Poetry Association, has launched a search for back-issues to replace copies borrowed from its archives and inadvertently never returned. Donations will be used to set up two separate libraries, one run by the SFFPA secretary and another lodged with the relevant editor(s).

The sought-after issues date back to 1978 and 1982-5, as well as the Rhysling anthologies for 1978-81 and 1984. Copies can be forwarded to STAR*LINE's editor, Marge Ballif Simon, at 1412 NE 35th Street, Ocala, FL 34479, United States of America.

Scholastic launched a new juvenile sf imprint on 16 June, Point SF, with £2.99 paperback editions of Jessica Palmer's RANDOM FACTOR, Isobelle Carmody's OBERNEWTYN and Nigel Robinson's FIRST CONTACT. The imprint complements the existing Point Horror line, and will be followed this autumn by Molly Brown's VIRUS and Carmody's second "Obernewtyn" novel, THE FARSEEKERS.

Kept awake at night, puzzling over the current population of Ankh-Morpork (1,000,000), the name of Death's horse (Binky) or the identity of Discworld's greatest mathematician (You Bastard, a camel)? THE DISCWORLD COMPANION, the latest collaboration by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Briggs, is no doubt a £14.99 Gollancz hardback few of Pratchett's diehard fans will neglect - even if they may prefer to pick up their copy in a shop far enough away not to be recognized. (A review of the book appears in this month's review column.)

The new tenure of Dave Hodson as editor of the British Science Fiction Association's newszine MATRIX having begun inauspiciously with the non-appearance of his first issue in the BSFA's June/July mailing, ended with the August/September mailing this month with the non-appearance of his "second" issue.

In yet another appeal for a new MATRIX editor Maureen Kincaid Spellar has asked that anyone wishing to produce the BSFA's bi-monthly news magazine contact her on 0303

252939. The successful candidate will have access to word-processing facilities and, ideally, some previous experience of producing magazines.

By popular demand the London meetings of the BSFA will restart in October, on the fourth Wednesday of the month, 26 October when they hope to be welcoming "a very special guest". Meetings will be held in the upstairs room at the Jubilee pub on York Road, close to Waterloo Station. It is a small friendly pub, with good beer and also serving food. Contact Maureen Kincaid Spellar on 0303 252939 for further details.

LynC, 1995 GUFF candidate, and Clive Newall have announced the birth of a son, Roger Henry, at 2.33am on 22 June weighing 7lb 4oz.

Wine lovers will be relieved to hear that Perry Middlemiss (one-time Australian WAVE agent) and Julian Warner's alcoholic cargo survived the collision between their car and a grey kangaroo in May. But animal and car lovers will be saddened to hear that the kangaroo didn't make and the car needed a new radiator and other parts.

Following the success of "Writer's Gate" the Peterborough Telefantasy Group, Nth Dimension, are planning a second event in 1995. Call 0733-313509 for further information about the group and the event.

Magic Labyrinth's Dave Holmes informs the BRUM GROUP NEWS that the recent STAR TREK convention Unicon II, held 24-26 June at the Hilton International Hotel in Bristol, managed to upset most of the dealers who attended.

Unicon II accepted, unseen, a full-page advert for their programme booklet from the recently opened Forbidden Planet Store in Bristol. The advert promised a 25% discount to anyone who brought the booklet to the Forbidden Planet store during the weekend of the convention.

The offer, which proved so successful that reportedly even employees of rival dealers were shopping at the store, effectively "wiped-out" the dealers at the convention. Some of the dealers were so upset by this "unfair competition" that they are considering boycotting future TREK conventions. It is also rumoured that the Unicon committee are considering refusing future advertising from Forbidden Planet.

[Thanks to WAVE & Steve Green for the above news.]

BOOK REVIEWS

PAPER TIGER MINIATURES

Paper Tiger, Approx 20 plates, £3.99 each, h/b

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

The Group actually received three of these tiny art books for review: Jim Burns, Bruce Pennington and Patrick Woodroffe. Because I've seen them in Andromeda I happen to know that there are six altogether, the missing ones being Boris Vallejo, Tim White and Rodney Matthews. In other words, these are basically miniaturised versions of art books that Paper Tiger have published over the last several years.

Why, you may ask (as I did on first seeing them), would they want to publish art books measuring roughly 4½ by 3½ inches? Surely the idea of art books is to show the work in as much detail as possible? One answer is of course "impulse buying": at only £3.99 these are easy to pick up at a checkout. But then I discovered another advantage. Reproducing the work so small gives it a brilliant, jewel-like clarity. This is the case especially with Pennington's work, which is actually very "loose" and painterly in technique. His works look wonderful reduced to this scale (not that it isn't anyway).

A gimmick perhaps, but one with its points.

CITY OF THE IRON FISH by Simon Ings

HarperCollins, 314 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Phil Noyes.

Having moaned about formula fantasy/sf, I can certainly not accuse Simon Ings of going for the easy buck, and here he has come up with an original tale in a most unusual setting. The city in question is a seaport in the centre of a vast desert, and this is only one of the ambiguities, for it reshapes itself every twenty years following various ceremonies and the symbolic hoisting of a large iron fish.

We see this first through the eyes of Thomas Kemp as a child, learning lost rituals and knowledge from his remote father. He

unsuccessfully attempts to influence the reshaping by placing a rag doll on one of the bridges of the city, and then we see him as a young adult. He encounters Blythe and I anticipated a romance, but I was unprepared for two pages of extremely explicit descriptions of sexual acts (a small clue about his sexuality might have been helpful) the searching detail of which seemed a little out of place (though written with relish).

Together with Blythe he explores some of the nature of his world, travelling to the edge to find the boundary strange and challenging (losing detail and definition to the point of becoming a line drawing) then returning to a life which veers from choreographer to a live-sex theatre show to protegee of an academic. The city has not stood still however, and its social structure is disintegrating into violence and nihilism, setting up an ending where Thomas's early attempt to change the cycle comes to a belated and unexpected conclusion.

I found this an interesting, if not always comfortable, read, reminiscent of early Christopher Priest. Worth trying.

THE GAP INTO MADNESS - CHAOS AND ORDER by Stephen Donaldson
HarperCollins, 663 pp, £15.99, h/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

Just to put you in the picture, this is part four out of five. Each volume so far has been bigger than the last one and if the progression continues the complete story will run to at least 2500 pages and take up about ten inches of shelf space. Remember, this is not a series but one continuous story lasting just a few weeks, or months at the very most.

This instalment is principally concerned with the fluctuating fortunes of a desperate and dwindling band of fugitives, as they try to stay alive long enough to achieve some kind of escape. Elsewhere, great events are moving towards a climax which will determine whether humanity or the aliens become the dominant force in space, and the actions of the fugitives will play a major part in deciding the outcome of the struggle - a struggle in which they could be crushed to nothing between opposing forces. The volume ends on a hopeful note, but eager readers must wait until the fifth and final instalment to see what happens. Meanwhile, readers have been regaled with lengthy accounts, not only of who did what to whom, but of why they

thought they would do it, and what they thought would happen when they did it, and what whoever they did it to thought about it, and what they all said about it afterwards. What they thought and what they said are not always the same because everybody has his own secret agenda, and it all rather gets in the way of the action, of which there is quite a lot, but not 663 pages' worth.

Trouble is, there have already been about four hundred thousand words of this sort of stuff before you ever get to page one of this book, all of it very important and significant, and there will likely be another quarter of a million to follow. It is almost impossible to synopsis the story effectively, and almost meaningless to review the volume other than in the surrounding context of the other four. Also, it represents a considerable effort of intellect keeping all these details in mind, especially if the reading is spread over the five years or so of publication.

However, the intellectual effort demanded of the reader is as nothing compared to the accomplishment of the author. One cannot but admire what he has done, but whether it was worth doing is another matter - long books are all very well but this is going a bit far. Just the thing on a train journey if you are travelling on the Trans-Siberian Railway! I think this volume only stands a chance of selling to people who are already following the series, and they will not need by humble opinion to tell them whether to buy it or not; that already know that it is complex, carefully plotted, richly detailed and fascinating. As for part five, Well I have got to know how it all ends, so count me in.

THE SHINING ONES by David Eddings
HarperCollins, 608 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Phil Noyes.

Having shied away from Eddings' books in the past on the grounds of a phobia against fantasy trilogies, I admit to having had no expectations of enjoying this novel whatsoever. However, having (amongst others) knocked the man persistently since his first series (what was it? Biggerliad or something like that?) I thought that I should at least read something by him.

This volume is the second in the "Tamuli" series, featuring the mighty Warlord Sparhawk, his wife Ehlena and a cast of child gods, sentient jewels, trolls and the eponymous

Shining Ones, whose touch means instant death. The Tamul Empire is being clawed back from bureaucrats by the Emperor, with aid from Sparhawk and his allies, and rebellion is in the air in the provinces. The Sapphire Rose, Jewel of the Troll Gods, is the crucial weapon to turn the tide, and treachery and double dealing abound.

I would be ashamed to admit I had misjudged Eddings' worth, but having ploughed through 600 plus pages, I now have the right to persist in my views. He is a competent writer with a clear style, but the book was written to a formula (not formula one either, it is slowpaced), with characters he is obviously as fond of as McCaffrey is of hers. Evil villains there are, but very two-dimensional. And despite the cliff-hanger ending there can be no doubt as to the eventual outcome and the survival of all the heroes. The whole thing has as much substance as candy floss, and though Eddings knows his market well, and sells heavily, I wish he would offer more challenging and original stories. The Shining Ones may kill by touch, *THE SHINING ONES* bores one to death.

STAR TREK DEEP SPACE NINE - EMANCIPATION AND BEYOND

by Mike W Barr, Gordon Purcell + Terry Pallot
Boxtree, pgs un-numbered, £7.99, Graphic Novel

Reviewed by Adrian Middleton.

The first thing I noticed about this graphic novel was the name of the publishers, Boxtree. It looked so much like one of the Titan range that I was momentarily thrown. Then again, Boxtree is a company plagued by bad press, with a reputation for producing and reprinting unlicensed products and of great presentation but dreadful contents. I wondered just how faithfully they would reproduce the original Malibu comics which are compiled into this, the second volume of Deep Space Nine stories.

I mention Malibu and that this is the second volume because Boxtree don't. In fact, if I didn't know already I'd never have realised that the stories had ever been printed before - even the creative team don't get credited until halfway through the book (true, names are given on the frontispiece, but only those of the principal creators, not the rest of the comics team who were so obviously involved).

The first story is, presumably, called "Emancipation". Credits have been blanked out by computer graphics in such a way that we

all know that they are there. I haven't got a clue who wrote it, and my only clue as to the title is taken from the name of the collection. It involves an escape attempt by slaves from the other side of the wormhole whose "masters" have come to take them back. The story is good enough to actually be an episode of Deep Space Nine, and the standard of writing is excellent, bettered only by the unique but oh so realistic artwork by Rob Davis and Terry Pallot (who get a credit in a different story, but they're all obviously done by the same people). I particularly enjoyed the classic Star Trek turnabout ending with a moral lesson straight out of The Next Generation.

The second story is credited and is called "Field Trip" - another typical TNG story in which DS9 personnel are forced into doing jobs normally done by somebody else. In this case a field trip goes wrong when Chief O'Brien and Commander Sisko are knocked out, forcing Keiko (O'Brien's wife and a teacher) to pilot a "runabout" back to DS9 with the help of Sicko's son Jake. Again the story would have rated as a tv episode, although I'm not so sure about the next two offerings.

The third story, "Pickpocket", is also well executed, but lacks the depth of the first two, focussing on Quark, Doctor Bashir and an innovative Klingon thief whose methods bring "Shogun Assassin" to mind.

The fourth story - the holodeck tale of the book, is entitled "Program 359" (set, surprise surprise, in a reconstruction of the battle with the Borg at WOLF 359), and is sheer indulgence in Sisko's attempts at exorcising the ghosts of his past. Too short to work on tv, it does take a glimpse into Sisko's mind in exactly the way that DS9 has completely failed to do. More like one of those continuity-reliant Star Trek movies than anything else.

The final piece, "Working Vacation", focuses upon Major Kira and brings a little humour to the fore. Plenty of character depth and another nice moral side to the story, this is the only tale that is unlikely to have made the transition to the tv screen in some way. The pointy-eared aliens are a little too twee, while the climax involved Kira in a fight between suits of power armour. Shades of BattleTech and Manga don't settle well in Trek, although it was handled well enough.

Overall I'd say the book is a good buy for Star Trek fans and a fair buy for sf fans. If I could get hold of them I'd prefer the original comics, just to see the covers, and I'm sure I'd class them as a fantastic buy. If only Bantam had put in as much effort as Malibu had done before them.

THE DISCWORLD COMPANION

by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Briggs
Gollancz, 288 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

At last - all you wanted to know about the Discworld but didn't know who to ask! Countries and creatures, places and people, everything and everybody from Bishop Abbys to Jack Zweiblumen! Listed, sourced, annotated, cross-referenced and illustrated, with new jokes and extra background information from the Discworld Creator Himself!

You don't read a book like this by starting at page one and working through to the end. Even if you try to be systematic at first, you start looking up cross-references and then other things catch your interest as you turn the pages and before you know it your coffee has gone cold and it's after midnight. That happened to me several times - I was having so much fun that I forgot this was not a new Discworld novel, in fact the majority of it is re-worked from the old ones.

So, is it a rip-off? Well, not really. Somebody has put a lot of work into this book and they deserve to be recompensed, but nobody is forced to buy it if they don't want to. There is no attempt to deceive potential buyers into thinking it is anything other than what it is - a glorious distillation of all the magic, excitement and humour of the greatest fantasy world of the known (or unknown) universe.

If that is what you want, *THE DISCWORLD COMPANION* is just the thing: I cannot imagine it being done any better. Personally, I would probably not buy it for myself with my own money, but it would make a smashing present.

FORWARD THE FOUNDATION by Isaac Asimov
Bantam, 476 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Phil Noyes.

In the foreword to this volume, a collection of four linked novellas, Asimov sets himself a daunting task - to flesh out

the myth of Hari Seldon and show him not in youth, nor as a projection in a Seldon Crisis, but as a man at the height of his intellectual powers and on the verge of his launching psychohistory and the Foundation. Asimov recognises in his foreword that he would not have been ready to write this until now, and credits Seldon as his alter-ego.

The stories follow Seldon's progress towards psychohistory and in the first section, "Demerzel", Seldon encounters again the enigmatic First Minister to the Emperor, known here as Demerzel but better known in other novels as R Daneel Olivaw, and defeats a conspiracy to overthrow him.

The second, and probably the best in the book, finds Seldon as First Minister himself, enmeshed in palace intrigue and the tragic dénouement of a plot to kill the Emperor, while the third and fourth sections, "Dors Venabili" and "Wanda Seldon", show the struggle to build the second foundation against a backdrop of the crumbling Empire.

These narratives will never have the punch that readers remember of the original "Foundation" trilogy, but instead have a power of their own, in part derived from the fact that Asimov knew as he wrote that his death was close at hand. The epilogue section is particularly poignant, representing the last words of Seldon/Asimov. As fitting an end to a lifetime's work as possible.

VAMPIRE WORLD 3 - BLOODWARS by Brian Lumley

RoC, 776 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Mike D Siddall.

Confession time! I have a real soft spot for Brian Lumley's Wamphyri novels! Despite their stylistic flaws! For instance their excessive, not to say silly, over-use of the exclamation mark! But seriously! oops, sorry.... but seriously, these novels are good, honest page-turners; no frills but plenty of thrills. It's also nice to see that not *everyone* has gone with the vampire-as-erotic-symbol school of horror, the Wamphyri being about as erotic as a visit to an abattoir, and leaving ten times as much intestine strewn about the place.

The plot, I hear you groan, tell us about the plot. Shan't. Look, taken together, the Necroscope and Wamphyri novels run to 4960 pages; even with repetitions, what-has-gone-before etc, that's one hell of a lot of plot.

"5,000 pages" I hear you gasp. "It must be getting tired and unweildy by now, surely?" Precisely. Although not *bad* books, the two previous Vampire World novels showed few signs of the energy and imagination of the Necroscope series. And so, wisely, Lumley brings the whole thing to a close in this final book.

Nathan Keogh, son of the original Necroscope, must attempt to complete his dead father's work ald lift, once and for all, the curse of the Wamphyri from Starside. In the course of which he faces many dangers, not least from a bunch of British Intelligence and Lord Nestor Lichloathe, once his twin brother Nestor. The details? Naah, you want to know if there's lots of tearing-out-his-throat-and-feeling-her-fangs-washed-in-sweet-fresh-blood, don't you? Lots of that, also plenty of the old rendered-down-into-a-putrescent-pool-of-slime-by-the-life-giving-rays-of-the-sun. Certainly, with this last in the series, Lumley seems to have re-discovered some of the energy of the original cycle. Even if he does have to strain to weave back in the over proliferation of plot threads.

If the thought of, for example, roast baby-wolf in wolf-blood sauce maked you barf, then this is probably not for you. But for sickos like me, it's an excellent way to while away, say, a long train journey or a wet afternoon.

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AND AN END BIT BY BERNIE

First a disclaimer on Martin's behalf, any typos in these four pages are *mine*. I was so late doing my part this month that Martin had to go with what I gave him with no further editing. The same applies to any publishing conventions that I may have overlooked, and which Martin usually notices and corrects, and if there are any of either, then I apologise.

Next I'd like to welcome a guest reviewer, Adrian Middleton. Adrian is a friend of Steve Jones, and I'm sure you'll agree he's done an excellent job with the Star Trek Graphic Novel, thanks very much Adrian.

Finally, those of you who were given a short moratorium on reviews due to such things as holidays, pressure of work and so forth. A reminder that they all fall due NOV, please, or there won't be a reviews column next month, so please do bring them along on Friday night.

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THE BLACK LODGE MEETS : First Tuesday of each month in the lounge of the OLD FOX PUBLIC HOUSE in Hurst Street from 8:30 PM onwards. Plenty of buses, taxi's, food and parking nearby.

*YOUR . . .
presence is requested . . .*



Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the Western Spiral arm of Birmingham City centre, lies a small unregarded public house.

Orbiting this at a spitting distance of roughly ninety-eight thousand millimetres is an utterly insignificant little blue green Hippodrome whose ape-descended life forms are so amazingly primitive that they still think that not going to BLACK LODGE meetings is a pretty neat idea.

Now this public house (not the Hippodrome) has, - or rather had - a problem, which was this: most of the people drinking in it were unhappy for pretty much of the time. Many solutions were suggested for this problem, but most of these were largely concerned with the movement of small black and white magazines, which is odd because on the whole it wasn't the small black and white magazines that were unhappy.

And so the problem remained; lots of people just read books, and most of them were miserable, especially the ones NOT going to BLACK LODGE meetings.

Many were increasingly of the opinion that they'd all made a big mistake in buying small black and white magazines in the first place. And some said that even reading them in the shop had been a bad move, and that no one should ever have learnt to read in the first place.

And then, one Tuesday, nearly two thousand years after one man had been nailed to a tree for saying how great it would be if writers wrote something worth reading for a change, an alien, large and loud with dreadful taste in ear-rings, sitting with his partner at a small round table in this public house suddenly realised what it was that had been going wrong all this time, and he finally knew how the world could be made a good and happy place. This time, it was right, it would work, and no one would have to get nailed to anything (unless they wanted to... but that's another story...) and this is his-tory

Sadly, before a terrible, stupid catastrophe could occur and a hyperspace by-pass could be built... he got to a phone and told everyone about it...

YOUR HOSTS:

Steven Green & Martin Tudor

Editors: CRITICAL WAVE -The European Science Fiction
& Fantasy Review
845 Alum Rock Road
Birmingham B8 2AG.

(Sample magazine: Cheques to 'Critical Wave Publications'
£1.95 inc.)

Occasional Attendance

John Williams

Editor: FICTION FURNACE - The Multi-Genre
Magazine of Short Fiction
17 Anker Moor Close, Shard End
Birmingham B34 6TF.

(Sample magazine: Cheques to 'Fiction
Furnace' £2.00+30p P&P)

Just turn up and announce yourself at the table covered in gory books, filthy photo's, and a small but perfectly formed (in at least one case anyway) group of boisterous drunkards busily bantering on about books, films, horror, science fiction, painfully pierced privates, or just staring around looking for other likely looking carrion to pounce on. If you're feeling particularly brave - ask for Steve Green. Bring a friend, husband, spouse or spices...and don't forget to ask if anyone fancies a Bells, single, with no ice or water.

THE BLACK LODGE

A PLACE FOR WOULD-BE WRITERS - HORROR FANS - AND LOVERS OF FICTION OF ALL FORMS TO SLAG EACH OTHER OFF

NOVACON

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**If you send your money by the 21st October 1994 you can join both
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Novacon, as you may know, is a long running Science Fiction convention organised by the Birmingham SF Group. Both Novacons 24 and 25 will have the usual mixture of talks from guest speakers (including publishers, editors, authors and scientists), panel discussions, quizzes, silly games, films, late bar and lots of fun.

NOVACON 24 will be held at the Royal Angus Hotel in Birmingham from 4-6th November 1994, and with a Guest of Honour as entertaining as GRAHAM JOYCE, along with Joyce and Bradbury's Emporium of Dreams and Illusions on the Friday night, a proposed Balti Banquet on the Saturday night and a Beer and Sausage Tasting on the Sunday night, it looks like this will be a Novacon to remember.

NOVACON 25 is going to be something special, it will be held from the 3-5th November 1995 and features FOUR guests - BRIAN W ALDISS, HARRY HARRISON, BOB SHAW and IAIN BANKS, a new location - the Chamberlain Hotel in Birmingham, with room rates from £20.00 per person per night (sharing a double/twin, £40.00 pppn in a single) which includes full English breakfast.

So how do you join? Simply complete the coupon enclosed with this issue of *the BRUM GROUP NEWS* and send it (along with your cheque) to: CAROL MORTON, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. If you have any queries call Tony or Carol Morton on 0384-825386 (before 9pm).