

BRUM GROUP NEWS

March 1995

Issue 282

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

GROUP CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON, SECRETARY - ANNE WOODFORD, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,
TREASURER - STEVE JONES, PUBLICITY OFFICER - SARAH FREAKLEY, ORDINARY MEMBER - ALAN WOODFORD,
NOVACON 25 CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, NOVACON 26 CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON.

This month's guest is:

PETER F. HAMILTON

who will address the Group

on Friday 17th March 1995, 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).

Peter F. Hamilton was born in Rutland in 1960, and now lives near Rutland Water. He began writing in 1987, and made his first professional short story sale to FEAR magazine in 1988. In the short biographical piece which appeared with the story he mentioned that he was working on a novel - on seeing this Kathy Gale, then editor at Pan Books, contacted him and asked to see the book. *MINDSTAR RISING*, his first novel, was published by Pan in 1993. It was followed by *A QUANTUM MURDER* in 1994 and *THE NANO FLOWER* this year. All three novels feature the psi-boostered private detective Greg Mandel and are available from Pan at £4.99 each. In addition to his professional sales of short stories to INTERZONE, *IN DREAMS* and *NEW WORLDS*, Hamilton's work has appeared in a number of small press magazines since the late eighties. Heralded as the most exciting "sf technician" currently writing in Britain, Hamilton's fourth novel, *THE REALITY DYSFUNCTION*, marking a change of pace to "Space Opera", will be published in hardcover by Macmillan in January 1996.

[Copies of CRITICAL WAVE #30, which featured Peter F. Hamilton's article concerning the difficulties of creating future societies, is available from Martin Tudor at the Editorial address below for just £1.50 per copy (p&p inclusive).]

The BSGF 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. should be made payable to "the Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to the Treasurer, Steve Jones, c/o 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Mids., B66 4SH. Book reviews, review copies and other contributions and enquiries regarding the Brum Group News to: Martin Tudor, Newsletter Editor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

Confabulation

CONFABULATION

the 1995 Eastercon

14th-17th April, 1995, Britannia International Hotel, Docklands, London
Guests of Honour: Lois McMaster Bujold, Bob Shaw and Roger Robinson
£20 attending/£10 supporting until 31/12/94: then £25 attending/£10 supporting
3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH
confab@moose.demon.co.uk

Stages in the evolution of the moose



Step1: The Moosoeba

Confabulation is planned to be a small and friendly Eastercon; if you haven't joined yet, then we're encouraging you to do so now. We aren't publicising the con much outside the fannish community, and we're aiming to have about 750 members. Although we can go a bit bigger than that, we may be forced at some point to close membership. In order to get a clear idea of numbers, we are encouraging people to join in advance. Our on-the-door rates, for both day and full attending memberships, will be expensive.

You can avoid both of these problems by becoming a supporting member of Confabulation now. It's only a tanner, and supporting members will be able to convert to day or attending membership at reasonable rates even if the convention has been closed. Supporting members also get all the convention publications. We will only be taking postal memberships until 31/3/95.

COLOPHON

The contents of this issue are copyright 1995 the BSFG, on behalf of the contributors, to whom all rights revert on publication.

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. For details of WAVE's competitive prices contact:
Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road,
Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for producing the address labels, 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

UNTIL 16 MARCH 1995: *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE* (15) screening at the MAC Cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham. Call 0121 440 3838 for details.

17 MARCH 1995: PETER F HAMILTON will be addressing the BSFG, 7.45 for 8pm in the upstairs room of the Australian Bar, corner of Hurst Street and Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham city centre.

17-23 MARCH 1995: *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE* (15) screening at the Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry. Call 01203 524524 for details.

17-19 MARCH 1995: *TREK DWARF 3*, media convention at the Holiday Inn, Leicester. Attending £30.00, contact: 47 Marsham, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough.

18 MARCH 1995: *STAR PARTY* organised by the Birmingham Astronomical Society in the Park Side Room at the MAC, Cannon Hill Park,

Birmingham. 7.30-10.30pm, admission free, everyone welcome. Displays by amateur astronomers, games, quizzes, things to buy, advice on telescopes and binoculars. Lots of telescopes for you to use. See: Mars, the red planet; the Great Orion Nebula; the Pleiades and Praesepe; Sirius and Gemini; double stars Castor and Alviaera. Refreshments available. Contact: Peter Bolas on 01283 568512 for further details.

27 MARCH - 1 APRIL 1995: *RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET* at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton. Call 01902 29212 for details.

28-30 MARCH 1995: *RESERVOIR DOGS* Quentin Tarantino's cult classic showing at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

31 MARCH - 2 APRIL 1995: *PULP FICTION* Quentin Tarantino's instant cult hit showing at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

31 MARCH - 2 APRIL 1995: *FOREST GUMP* showing at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

UNTIL 2 APRIL 1995: *THE HOLY GRAIL TAPESTRIES* designed by Edward Burne-Jones and woven by Morris & Co. are on display at the Museum and Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham City Centre, call 0121 235 2834 for details.

2-3 APRIL 1995: *FEARLESS* Jeff Bridges walks away from a plane crash convinced he's invulnerable, showing at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

2-3 APRIL 1995: *ALTERED STATES* Ken Russell sf classic, showing at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

4-6 APRIL 1995: *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* showing at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

9 APRIL 1995: *COMIC MART* at the YMCA, Granby Street, Leicester, opens noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO8 9YW.

10-11 APRIL 1995: *BLADERUNNER - THE DIRECTOR'S CUT* showing at the Castle. Wellingborough from 7.30pm, tickets £2.00. Contact: The Castle, Castle Way, Welling-

borough, Northants, NN8 1XA or phone the Box Office on 01933 270007.

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. Attending £25.00 until 31 March 1995, supporting £10.00 until 31 March 1995. Contact: Confabulation, 3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH.

17 APRIL 1995: ALIEN, ALIENS and ALIEN 3 showing at the Castle, Wellingborough from 2pm, tickets £2.00 per film or £5.00 for all three. Contact: The Castle, Castle Way, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 1XA or phone the Box Office on 01933 270007.

29 APRIL 1995: COMIC MART at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. Opens noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

29-30 APRIL 1995: BABCOM '95 BABYLON 5 event at the NEC, Birmingham, from the people who brought 'Generations' to the Albert Hall in London. Contact: 22 Reindeer Court, Worcester, WR1 2DS.

6-7 MAY 1995: MEMORABILIA '95 Roadshow and Fair in the Pavilion at the NEC, Birmingham. Comics, sf, film memorabilia. Call Made in Heaven on 01462 683965 for details.

23 MAY 1995: THE MENESIS THEORY what killed the dinosaurs? The implications and consequences for the human race of living in an uncontrollable cosmos - a lecture by Derek Behrens, 1pm at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham. Admission free, part of the Handford Science Lectures 1994-5. Call (0121) 236 3591.

17 JUNE 1995: COMIC MART at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. Opens noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

24-28 AUGUST 1995: INTERSECTION, 53rd world-con, Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow. Guests of honour Samuel R Delany, Gerry Anderson, Vint Clarke. Attending £80.00 until 18 April (then rising to £90.00 until 22 July after which advance memberships close and it will cost £100.00 on the door). Contact: Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR, Scotland.

3-5 NOVEMBER 1995: NOVACon 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. Attending membership is £25.00 until Easter 1995. Supporting membership costs £8.50. Progress Report #1 and hotel booking forms are available, deadline for hotel bookings is 20th July 1995. Contact CAROL MORTON, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS, cheques should be made payable to "Novacon 25". Room rates are now only £17.50 per person per night in twin/double and £35.00 pppn in a single, prices include full English breakfast.

5-8 APRIL 1996: EVOLUTION 47th UK National Convention, the Radisson Edwardian Hotel at Heathrow. Guests of honour: Colin Greenland, Bryan Talbot, Jack Cohen. Attending £20.00, supporting £12.00 until 18th April 1995. Contact: 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

29 AUGUST - 2 SEPTEMBER 1996: LAGON III 54th World SF Convention, Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim Hilton and Towers and Anaheim Marriott, California, USA. Guests: James White, Roger Corman, Elsie Wollheim, Connie Willis (Toastmaster), Takumi and Sachiko Shibano (Fan Guests of Honour). Attending \$90.00 until 30 June 1995, then \$110.00. Supporting \$30.00, then \$35.00. Contact: c/o SCIFI, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

3-5 SEPTEMBER 1997: LONESTARCON 55th World SF Convention, San Antonio, Texas, USA. Attending was \$65.00. Contact: PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755-2277, USA.

27 DEC 1999 - 2 JAN 2000: MILLENNIUM. Venue to be announced, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a BeNeLux country or UK), £3.00 (£10.00) per year, to be deducted from eventual membership fee (to be announced before 1997). Contact: Malcolm Reid, 186 Casewick Road, West Norwood, London, SE27 0SZ.

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.

The Novacon 25 Committee in Association with the Birmingham Science Fiction Group are Proud to Present

NOVACON 25

Commencing Friday 3rd November 1995

Running Continuously Until Sunday 5th November 1995

Introducing

The Chamberlain Hotel, Alcester Street, Birmingham as The Venue
With Room Rates From £17.50 per Person per Night (including Full English Breakfast)

Starring

Star of Stage, Screen and WH Smith's,
author of the 'Helliconia Trilogy'
and the Burnell Series

Brian W.
ALDISS

as A Guest of Honour



Author of 'the Culture' novels,
Death-Defying Human Fly and
Connoisseur of Fine Sherry

Iain M.
BANKS

as A Special Guest

Also Starring

Creator of the Stainless Steel Rat
and Bill, the Galactic Hero,
Fandom's Very Own White Haired Guru

Harry
HARRISON

as A Guest of Honour



Creator of the 'Slow Glass' Stories,
author of the 'Warren Peace' books, and
Fandom's Favourite Serious Scientific Speaker

Bob
SHAW

as A Guest of Honour

Featuring

Guest Speakers	Silly Games	Films	Quizzes
Late Bars	Panel Discussions	Music	Lots of Fun
Programme Book and Limited Edition Souvenir Booklet			

Brought To You By

Tony Morton, Chairman	Tony Berry, Operations	Carol Morton, Registrations
Chris Murphy, Programme	Richard Standage, Treasurer	Martin Tudor, Publications

The Cost?

£25.00 until Easter 1995

Probably Rising Thereafter

Cheques, made payable to 'Novacon 25' should be sent to:

Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

Queries should be directed to Carol or Tony Morton on 01384-825386 (before 9pm)

Special Guest at Novacon 25: Iain Banks



Iain Menzies Banks was born in Fife, Scotland on 16 February 1954. Educated at Stirling University he went on to be an Expediter-analyzer with IBM in Greenock in 1978 and a Solicitor's clerk in London, from 1980-84, before becoming a freelance writer.

His first published novel, *THE WASP FACTORY* (1984), was launched amidst a storm of controversy over the violence and language it featured but, despite being a modern horror story, it found favour with many 'mainstream' literary critics. As did *WALKING ON GLASS* (1985) and *THE BRIDGE* (1986) even though both contained genre elements – the first featuring a set of characters from a science fictional war and the latter including a hilarious sword and sorcery parody.

Banks continued to stretch the nature of the mainstream novel with *CANAL DREAMS* (1989) which was set in 2000AD. Other 'mainstream' works include *ESPEDAIR STREET* (1987) and *THE CROW ROAD* (1992).

In science fiction circles, however, Iain M Banks (as his SF work is credited) is best known for his space operas which are set, for the most part, in the vast, interstellar, ship-based universe of 'the Culture': *CONSIDER PHLEBAS* (1987), *THE PLAYER OF GAMES* (1988), *THE STATE OF THE ART* (1989) and *USE OF WEAPONS* (1990). Other science fictional works include *AGAINST A DARK BACKGROUND* (1993) and *FEERSUM ENDJINN* (1994).

Iain Banks was previously the Guest of Honour at Novacon 17 in 1987 and has been a frequent, popular and entertaining attendee at conventions ever since.

Guest of Honour at Novacon 25: Brian W Aldiss

Brian Wilson Aldiss was born 18 August 1925. Educated at Framlington College, Suffolk (1936-39) and West Buckland School (1939-42), he served in the Royal Signals in the Far East from 1943-47. Since then he has been a bookseller in Oxford (1947-56), literary editor of the *OXFORD MAIL* (1958-69), SF editor at Penguin Books in London (1961-64) and arts correspondent to the *GUARDIAN*.

Between 1954 (when his first story, "Criminal Record", appeared in *SCIENCE FANTASY*) and 1992 Aldiss wrote over 300 short stories, as well as finding time to write a number of ground-breaking sf novels, non-genre fiction (such as *THE HAND-REARED BOY*, 1970, and *A SOLDIER ERECT*, 1971), numerous works of criticism and compiling countless anthologies.

His ground-breaking sf novels include his first novel, *NON-STOP* (1958), a classic generation-starship tale; the classic *HOTHOUSE* (1962); the bleak, powerful, post-disaster novel *GREYBEARD* (1964); *REPORT ON PROBABILITY A* (1968); *BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD: A EUROPEAN FANTASIA* (1969); *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND* (1973); *THE EIGHTY-MINUTE HOUR: A SPACE OPERA* (1974); *BROTHERS OF THE HEAD* (1977); *MOREAU'S OTHER ISLAND* (1980).

In 1982 he wrote the first volume of his stunning tour-de-force the 'Helliconia' trilogy – which he completed in 1985. More recently he has produced *DRACULA UNBOUND* (1991) and he is currently working on the 'Burnell' series of short stories with a view to publishing them as a novel at a later date.

An Honorary President of the Birmingham SF Group and previously Guest of Honour at Novacon 10, Brian Aldiss frequently attends conventions all over the world. He was Guest of Honour at the 1965 and 1979 World SF Conventions.





Guest of Honour at Novacon 25: Harry Harrison

Born Henry Maxwell Dempsey in Stamford, Connecticut on 12 March 1925 (his father changed the family name to Harrison shortly after his birth,) **Harry Harrison** was educated at art schools in New York before serving in the USA Air Corps as a Sergeant during World War II. In the late forties Harrison worked as a commercial artist. Working mainly in comics as an illustrator and artist he often collaborated with Wally Wood, but also supplied illustrations to magazines such as GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION. Damon Knight, then editor of WORLDS BEYOND, bought Harrison's first story, "Rock Diver", which appeared in WORLDS BEYOND in 1951.

John W Campbell bought the first 'Stainless Steel Rat' story for ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION in 1957. This first tale featuring the interstellar-criminal-turned-law-enforcer, Slippery Jim DiGriz, set the tone for the eight fast-moving, humorous adventures that were to follow. DEATHWORLD, Harrison's first published novel, appeared in 1960 and was followed by two more 'Deathworld' books in 1964 and 1968. More recently he turned his 1965 novel, BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO, into a series working with such collaborators as Robert Sheckley, David F Bischoff and Jack C Haldeman II. His 'To The Stars' series featured more serious 'straight sf action' in HOMEWORLD (1980), WHEELWORLD (1981) and STARWORLD (1981). It was followed by the critically-acclaimed 'Eden' trilogy: WEST OF EDEN (1984), WINTER IN EDEN (1986) and RETURN TO EDEN (1988). More recently he has started THE HAMMER AND THE CROSS (1994) series with 'John Holm', the second and third volumes of which should appear this year.

A prolific novelist, Harrison has in his career explored most of the major themes of SF. Robots appear in his collection WAR WITH THE ROBOTS (1962); matter transmission in the collection ONE STEP FROM EARTH (1970); space opera in STAR SMASHERS OF THE GALAXY RANGERS (1973); generation starships in CAPTIVE UNIVERSE (1969); parallel worlds in A TRANS-ATLANTIC TUNNEL, HURRAH! (1972); over-population in MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! (1966) – which became the Nebula award winning film SOYLENT GREEN (1973). Harry Harrison, an Honorary President of the BSFG, was previously GoH at Novacon 12.

Guest of Honour at Novacon 25: Bob Shaw



Born Robert Shaw in Belfast, Northern Ireland on 31 December 1931 and educated at Technical High School, Belfast. **Bob Shaw** worked in the steel and aircraft industries and as a cab driver before working as assistant publicity officer at Short Brothers aircraft manufacturers (1960-66). This was followed by a succession of jobs: as a journalist at the Belfast TELEGRAPH (1966-69); a press officer at Harland aircraft manufacturers (1969-73); a publicity officer with Vickers Shipbuilding Group (1973-75).

He published his first story, "Aspect", with NEBULA SCIENCE FICTION in 1954, and in the mid-fifties contributed several more stories to NEBULA and AUTHENTIC before he ceased writing for several years. After a 'come-back' story, "...And Isles Where Good Men Lie" (1965), 1966 saw the appearance of the classic "Light of Other Days" – the first of Shaw's 'Slow Glass' stories which was nominated for a Nebula and was later incorporated, with two sequels, as OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES (1972).

His first novel, NIGHT WALK, appeared in 1967 and was followed by THE TWO-TIMERS (1968), THE PALACE OF ETERNITY (1969), SHADOW OF HEAVEN (1969), ONE MILLION TOMORROWS (1970) and GROUND ZERO MAN (1971). 1975 saw the publication of the British SF Award-winning first volume of Shaw's trilogy, ORBITSVILLE, with ORBITSVILLE DEPARTURE (1983) and ORBITSVILLE JUDGEMENT (1990) following some time later. 1977 saw the publication of both MEDUSA'S CHILDREN and the first appearance of Shaw's comic character Warren Peace in WHO GOES HERE? These were followed by SHIP OF STRANGERS (1978), VERTIGO (1978), DAGGER OF THE MIND (1979) and THE CERES SOLUTION (1981). In 1986 Shaw's second trilogy made its appearance with the critically acclaimed THE RAGGED ASTRONAUTS. THE WOODEN SPACESHIPS (1988) and THE FUGITIVE WORLDS (1989). Most recently Warren Peace reappeared in the sequel to WHO GOES HERE? – DIMENSIONS (1994, aka WARREN PEACE, 1993).

Bob Shaw, an Honorary President of the Birmingham SF Group, was previously Guest of Honour at Novacon 11. A fan since the early fifties he has won two Hugos for his writing in fanzines and his hilarious 'serious scientific talks' have been the main programme item at numerous conventions.

Novacon 25 Membership Form

Attending membership costs £25.00 until Easter 1995 after which it will probably increase. Supporting membership costs £8.50. If you wish to register please complete this form and send it with your money (cheques/postal orders should be made payable to "Novacon 25") to: **Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS**, or if you have received this flyer at a convention you can register at the *Critical Wave Table* (which will be either with the other convention registration tables or in the Book Room).

MEMBERSHIP: I enclose £ for membership(s) of Novacon 25.

Name(s): Phone No:

Address:

.....

.....

BADGE NAMES: Please complete this section if you want a fannish name on your badge.
(We would prefer to use your real name for sending items through the post.)

Name: Badge Name:

Name: Badge Name:

BOOK ROOM: Please reserve me6ft. tables @ £15.00/4ft. tables @ £10.00 each.

ART SHOW: Please reserve mesq. ft. Art Board space in the Art Show.

GOPHERS: I am willing to volunteer as a gopher: YES/NO

I shall be arriving on (day and approx. time):

I am capable of (please specify):

.....

QUERIES, SUGGESTIONS, IDEAS, REQUESTS etc: We can only act on your ideas/problems if you tell us about them. Please attach a separate sheet of paper if you need more space.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE NANO FLOWER by Peter F Hamilton,
Pan, £4.99, 566pp, p/b.

Reviewed by Martin Tudor.

In his first novel, the fast-moving, sf political thriller *MINDSTAR RISING*, Hamilton brought us his terrifying vision of post-warming Britain and introduced Julia Evans the billionaire, owner of the multi-national corporation Event Horizon and Greg Mandel, the psi-boostered private detective.

His second novel, *A QUANTUM MURDER*, set a few years later, saw Mandel brought out of his semi-retirement to solve a locked-room murder mystery with superb science fictional twists.

THE NANO FLOWER, the third (and probably final) Mandel novel is set around 15 years after the events of the second book. Julia Evans, desperate to find her missing husband calls on the services of Greg Mandel again. By now Mandel has a growing family and is firmly ensconced in the planetation business. But as the disappearance of Evans' husband seems to be linked with strong evidence that an advanced alien race has turned up in the Solar System, he can't resist the challenge of one last case.

This is Hamilton's best work to date. As fast-moving and action-packed as we've come to expect, but exhibiting even greater confidence and maturity than the excellent *A*



QUANTUM MURDER. Greg Mandel's adventures in the *THE NANO FLOWER* take us all over the post-warming earth - and beyond - giving us our best view yet of the scope of Hamilton's vision. This is sf at its best, how can those 'old-time' sf fans complain "that they don't write real sf anymore" when we've seen three novels of this quality in as many years from one writer. If you haven't read any of Hamilton's work yet do yourself a favour and buy (at least) one now!

THE EARTH WIDE by Joel Lane,
Egerton Press, £6.99, 206p, 'B' format p/b.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Joel Lane is one of Birmingham's finest young poets; he occasionally attends Brum Group meetings. His short stories are often regarded as horror, and several have appeared in *THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES* series edited by the late Karl Edward Wagner, yet this 17-story collection, his first book, is more a mixture of science fiction and literary stories. All are rooted in Birmingham itself, especially in the seedy, decaying parts of the city, for Lane delights in gritty urban realism. The sf content is not (sorry to disappoint anybody) aliens and spaceships, but near-future dystopia, when Brum is controlled by the military, or the canals are full of dead bodies or, as in the title story, whole rows of houses have burnt down in "the disturbances" and people are missing. The stories are poetically written, full of small, telling details of depressing rented accommodation, uncertain relationships, gay clubs, and the streets after dark. Lane is very perceptive of people and of the symbolic potential of inanimate objects; he even has the occasional happy ending. Not only are the contents of the very highest standard - demanding and rewarding in equal measures - but this book gets my vote as the best designed British paperback of 1994.

THE LORD OF MIDDLE AIR
by Michael Scott Rohan,
Gollancz, £15.99, 253 pages, h/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

One of Mike Scott Rohan's ancestors was the thirteenth century scholar and mathematician, Michael Scot. He was the kind of a man to whom strange tales accrete. Some suggest that he was a sorcerer. Rohan has taken these stories and distilled them into an excellent fantasy tale.

The novel is set at a time when the Scottish Border clans were always feuding with each other. Reiving and cattle raiding was a pastime for bored young men. As the book opens, young Walter Scot, heir of Branxholme, is hot on the track of cattle stolen by raiders from neighbouring Liddesdale. As they approach a ford the air is rent by an explosion. Coming on the scene, Walter and his companions find one reiver dead, one blinded and one fled. The cattle are scattered. The cause of the mayhem introduces himself as Michael Scot of Oakwood, a kinsman returned from abroad.

Walter soon discovers that the raid was only a part of a greater scheme by Nicholas de Soullis to annex Scot lands. His father is killed in ambush and his bride-to-be is abducted. De Soullis has the reputation of being a black sorcerer and impregnable in his fortress of Hermitage. And unkillable. Walter turns to Michael Scot for help and learns that the only way he might defeat de Soullis is by acquiring some kind of weapon or talisman from elsewhere. Elsewhere is the land of Faerie.

This is a delightful tale, blending history, magic and myth and works because people like Walter believed in the kind of magic Michael dealt in. At a time when God was an omnipresent spirit, the prospect of damnation was also very real and very possible. Walter constantly has to justify Michael's involvement in his affairs in case doing so causes his own damnation. Rohan has resisted the temptation to make this into an epic - the length is just right - but there is a very strong authorial presence. Often we are shown the land and its history from a present day viewpoint; a case of over-familiarity with a landscape that detracts a little from the ambience.

NIGHT FEAST by Tony Richards,
Pan, £5.99, 537pp, p/b

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

A trio of godlike creatures who feed on people's emotions (particularly fear) have existed since ancient Egyptian times. So long as they keep out of the sunlight, avoiding even representations of the sun, they can live and have their evil way forever. Separately or together, they can control human minds, or revert to their original powerful animal bodies and tear people apart. As I read of their exploits at various times and places during this century I kept on thinking, "So what?" If these superbeings can do anything,

there's no point in reading about them. Even though one of their kind opposes them, he's not a heroic figure. That's the problem with this novel: no hero, not even a likeable character of any sort with whom the reader can become involved.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER by Octavia E Butler,
The Women's Press, £6.99, 299 pp, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Each of Octavia Butler's books has something new to say. In this case it is about the nature of change. The story begins in 2024. Lauren and her family live in a walled neighbourhood about 20 miles from Los Angeles. They subsist by growing what food they can and paying for extras by the sale of excess produce and the wages of those few who have jobs. For those outside there is starvation, violence and vice. This is a society in decay. Changes in climate mean that once fertile areas struggle against drought, water is precious and every drop must be paid for. Changes in attitude mean that if you do call the police they will want to be paid first and are more likely to arrest you that look for the real criminals. Only in the walled neighbourhoods is there any degree of safety and people willing to work together. But the peace is fragile. Lauren knows that there will come a day when the walls are breached and prepares herself mentally and physically to face the world outside. That day comes and she and the only two others of her neighbourhood set out north in some vague hope of finding a place where there are still jobs.

For many years Lauren has kept a diary, not just of events but also her attempts to make sense of the world, and in particular to work out her relationship with God. God, she decides, is Change. As her philosophy develops she gives it a name, Earthseed. She imagines communities living by that philosophy and eventually heading out for the stars. She is practical enough to realise that this is unlikely within her lifetime but as she walks north she explains her ideas to the little group that gradually forms. Each of them react differently; but all question as, sensing a need to believe in something, they seek to find the part of Earthseed that can grow within them.

This is an excellent examination of the way beliefs develop. Lauren provides the acorn. Others tend it, each in their own way so that Earthseed has the chance to become a tree that supports, shelters and feeds.

EVOLUTION

THE NEXT STEP

Evolution is the 1996 British National Science Fiction Convention to be held 5-8th April 1996. It's no longer in the Brighton Metropole and we're pleased to announce our new site – the Radisson Edwardian at Heathrow.

THE VENUE

The Radisson is a 459-room 5 star hotel at Heathrow with excellent facilities, including an indoor swimming pool. Coaches run directly to Heathrow from all over the country, and it's 40 minutes from central London by tube. Room rates from £28 per person per night.

OUR GUESTS

VERNON VINGE

Author of *Across Realtime*, *True Names* and *A Fire Upon The Deep*, his mix of space opera and hard SF explores the future evolution of man and machine in the fast approaching Singularity...This will be his first appearance at a UK convention.

JACK COHEN

Jack Cohen, scientist and fan, evolves alien ecologies for countless writers; his new book explores simplicity and complicity, concepts that could shape the future of science.

HOW TO JOIN

Membership is £20 attending, £12 supporting or child rate (between 5 and 14 on 5th April 1996 – children under 5 are free) – these rates are valid until 18th April 1995. Pre-supporting members get a £1 discount and supporting members can convert to attending for the difference in memberships at any time. Mascots and beasts of all kinds – £5. To join, or



BRYAN TALBOT

Artist and author of the alternative history graphic novel *Luther Arkwright*, he is famous for his victorian gothic art on *Nemesis* for *2000AD*. Recently he worked on *Sandman* and has just completed a graphic novel – *One Bad Rat* – on sale October 26th.

COLIN GREENLAND

Author of *Take Back Plenty* and *Harm's Way*, amongst other projects, he is working on a graphic novel with Dave McKean set in a Venice at the end of the world...

for more information, please send your name, address and details with your cheque (made payable to Evolution) to:

Evolution, 13 Lindfield Gardens,
Hampstead, London NW3 6PX, UK

Information via e-mail: bmh@ee.lc.ac.uk

Your details will be held on computer

ENTER THE WORLD OF SF

THE 53RD WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

**JOIN NOW!
MEMBERSHIP
RATES RISE
AFTER
EASTER**

**GUESTS OF HONOUR:
GERRY ANDERSON
SAMUEL R DELANY**

**JOIN SF FANS
AUTHORS
ARTISTS AND
PUBLISHERS
FROM
ACROSS THE
GLOBE FOR
PANELS, TALKS
FILMS
MUSIC, ART
GAMES
BOOKS, SIGNINGS
COSTUMES
PARTIES
AND OTHER
EXTRAVAGANZAS**

The world of SF comes to Britain in 1995.

- It's a great, once-in-a-decade opportunity for YOU to meet thousands of other SF enthusiasts...
- hear world-famous writers discuss issues in SF...
- watch SF, Fantasy and Horror Movies round the clock...
- browse the huge dealers' room... see the spectacular masquerade and stunning art show...
- vote in the Hugo Awards...
- explore developments in science fact and party

on into the wee small hours!

Interested?

Contact *Intersection*, Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR, UK or *Intersection*, PO Box 15430, Washington DC, 20003, USA for more details.

INTERSECTION
SCOTTISH EXHIBITION & CONFERENCE CENTRE
GLASGOW, UK, 24-28 AUG 1995

World Science Fiction Convention and Hugo Award are registered service marks of the World Science Fiction Society