

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

May 1995

Issue 284

*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,  
NOVAACON 25 CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, NOVAACON 26 CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON.

This month's guest is:

## BOB SHAW

who will address the Group

on Friday 19th May 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).

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 his '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 was made an Honorary President of the Birmingham SF Group this year and was 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.

[Many thanks to *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF* for much of the above information.]

## 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

19 MAY 1995: BOB SHAW, an honorary president of the BSFG, will speak to the group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm.

20 MAY 1995: MOVIE MEMORIBILIA FAIR "everything for the film enthusiast under one roof...over 60 stalls...all top dealers...buy, swap, sell or just browsw". At the Irish Centre, Digbeth, 10.30am-4pm, admission £1.00. Bar and refreshments all day. For bookings or enquires call 01374 266 454 or write to PO Box 4445, Moseley, Birmingham, B14 6QQ.

23 MAY 1995: THE NEMESIS 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.

31 MAY - 3 JUNE 1995: RUDYARD KIPLING'S JUNGLE BOOK a new live-action version of the classic tale directed by Stephen Sommers,

starring Jason Scott Lee, Lena Headey, Cary Elwes, John Cleese. At the MAC Cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham. Call 0121 440 3638.

WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE 1995: IAIN M BANKS will be talking to the Birmingham SF Group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm.

15-17 JUNE 1995: THE RED BELLIED QUEEN the premiere of Foursight Theatre's bizarre play which explores the life, times and battles of Boadicea and her two, hitherto obscured daughters. Her bones are buried beneath platform eight, Kings Cross Station. When her bones are shaken Boadicea, Queen of the Celts, red-blooded, brave and brutal, returns to life - and she means business. The Studio at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry. Call 01203 524524 for details.

16 JUNE 1995: COLIN GREENLAND, author of TAKE BACK PLENTY and the sequel SEASONS OF PLENTY (HarperCollins, £15.99), will speak to the Brum Group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm.

16 JUNE 1995: APPESEED directed by Kazuyoshi Katayama and based on the comic by cult writer Masumune Shirow will be showing from 11.15pm at Phoenix Arts, 11 Newarke Street, Leicester, tickets £2.00 call 0116 255 4854.

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

30 JUNE 1995: ROUJIN Z directed by Hiroyuki Kitabuko, based on a story by the creator of Akira, Otomo Katsuhiro, will be showing from 11.15pm at Phoenix Arts, 11 Newarke Street, Leicester, tickets £2.00 call 0116 255 4854.

8-9 JULY 1995: SPACESCAPES '95. "Extravaganza" at the NEC, Birmingham. No further details available.

21 JULY 1995: SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA directed by Osamu Dexaki, an old-fashioned Manga in a STAR WARS vein, with soundtrack by Yello, will be showing from 11.15pm at Phoenix Arts, 11 Newarke Street, Leicester, tickets £2.00 call 0116 255 4854.

28 JULY 1995: WINGS OF HONNEAMISE directed by Hiroyuki Yamaga, involved 300 animators and a soundtrack by Ryuichi Sakamoto, showing from 11.15pm at Phoenix Arts, 11 Newarke Street, Leicester, tickets £2.00 call 0116 255 4854.

3 AUGUST - 7 SEPTEMBER 1995: LORD OF THE FLIES the world premiere of Nigel Williams stage adaptation of William Golding's classic tale, directed by Elijah Moshinsky. At The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon. Call: 01789 295623.



5 AUGUST 1995: **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCHIVES** '95 fantastic tv festival at Stourbridge Town Hall, 10.30am-10.30pm. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for further details to: Kaleidoscope, 93 Old Park Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 3NE.

5 AUGUST 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 £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.

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

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

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 1 October 1995. Supporting membership costs £8.50. Progress Report #2 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.

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

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 was £20.00, supporting £12.00 until 18th April 1995. Contact: 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

29 AUGUST - 2 SEPTEMBER 1996: **LACON 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.*

## MAGAZINE REVIEWS

DARK ASYLUM 1, March 1995, £2.95

DARK ASYLUM 2, April 1995, £2.95

BEYOND 1, April-May 1995, £2.50

All reviewed by Chris Morgan.

It's good to see a new British magazine that's fully professional - paying well for contributions. Two starting up at the same time are riches indeed. Both of them use new stories, with some review and non-fiction material. While BEYOND concentrates on sf and fantasy, DARK ASYLUM is devoted to horror.

The good news is that the best of the fiction in both magazines is of a very high standard, being surprising, entertaining and mostly the product of newer writers. Notable stories in DARK ASYLUM are from Conrad Williams ("Inside Brian", about really nasty kids), Chaz Branchley (an historical fantasy) and Nicholas Royle (a novelette involving a child and a serial killer), while BEYOND's outstanding story is a Martian time-slip from

Rick Kennett. DARK ASYLUM also uses poetry - though nothing very good so far.

There are attractive full-colour covers on both magazines, though BEYOND's looks more like horror than sf or fantasy, and its featured authors (Ramsey Campbell, Karl Edward Wagner, Stephen Gallagher, Stephen Laws and Kim Newman) are all best known for horror fiction. The real problems are with the layout and non-fiction. BEYOND's layout is occasionally a little amateurish, and it has too much non-fiction for my taste, especially on comics and horror movies, subjects which most sf fans try to avoid. DARK ASYLUM's layout is, if I'm generous, awful, with copious typographical errors and too much overlaying of text with lettering; its illustrations look poor because most are printed too large (full page); some reviews, especially in issue 2, are very amateurish indeed. It does feature interesting interviews with Mark Morris and Poppy Z Brite, though.

But flaws can be remedied in later issues. The most important thing is that here are two new British magazines, both available at Andromeda Bookshop. They need your support. New magazines mean more opportunities for writers, of course. I've sold stories to both magazines, Pauline has a review column in BEYOND, and Dave Hardy has artwork and a story scheduled for a later issue of BEYOND. It could be you next....

## JOPHAN REPORT #85

This year's British Science Fiction Awards were presented at Confabulation, the 1995 National British Science Fiction Convention which was held at the Britannia International Hotel, Docklands, London, over the Easter weekend. The award for best novel went to Iain M Banks FEERSUM ENDJINN (Orbit), best short fiction to "The Double Helix by Paul Di Filippo (INTERZONE #87) and best artwork to Jim Burns for the cover of INTERZONE #79.

Other awards presented the same weekend included the Doc Weir Award which was presented to Bernie Evans. The Ken Mc Intyre Award which went to Dave Harwood for his cover on ATTITUDE #2. The Sou'Wester Masquerade Award for best in show went to "The Three Mooseketeers" - Jaine Weddell, FanTom, Phil Manson, Teddy and Kari.

The Mexican Hat launched its first

newsletter at the convention; and went on to further swell its coffers during its programme item on the Monday of the convention with £25.00 donations from both the BSFA and Friends of Foundation which, combined with a further £10.00 raised in the "passing of the Hat", auction and "jumble sale", brought the total fund to over £1600.

Other fan fund auctions and collections raised the following: TAFF £34.60 in the Fan Fund auction and £50.60 in the Book Auction; GUFF £34.90 in the Fan Fund auction; Fans Across the World just over £16.00; the Slave auction raised £128.21 for the Filk Fund, with the highest price of £28.00 being paid for Kari.

To mark the fact that both Bob Shaw and Roger Robinson were guests of the convention (in addition to Lois McMaster Bujold); Confabulation arranged for Robinson's Becon publications to produce a booklet featuring a collection of Shaw's "Serious Scientific Talks". These, entitled "A Load of Old BoSh", were distributed free to members of the convention but copies are available from Becon Publications, 75 Rosslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex, RM3 0RG, for just £4.95 (incl. of p&p) - all proceeds to produce the RNIB. Bob Shaw delivered the latest of his "Serious Scientific Talks" at the con and the collection which followed raised a further £240 for the RNIB.

As of Easter Sunday the convention newsletter, MOOSE DROPPINGS, announced that the con had 668 attending members with in excess of 650 of these actually at the convention.

Among the conventions announced at Easter was Precursor, a small, informal, fannish convention, to be held the weekend before the Worldcon this year - 18-20 August. Although the committee are currently negotiating with a hotel in Leicester the venue has yet to be announced. The committee consists of Rob Hansen, John Harvey and Martin Smith and membership costs £15.00. Contact: Precursor, 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London, E6 1AB.

The 1997 Eastercon bid session saw the "Wincon" bid, Intervention, conclusively defeat the Illumination 2 bid; the voting went as follows:

Unconstitutional (spooF)	1
Illumination 2	19
Intervention	178
Defer decision	16
Abstain	3
No bid	1

Having won their bid Intervention



announced that their guests would be Brian W Aldiss and Robert Silverberg, with Dave Langford as fan guest of honour. The convention will be held at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. (Many thanks to Alasdair Hepburn's MOOSE DROPPINGS for much of the above information and to Bernie Evans for filling in the details. Further news and a full Eastercon report will appear in CRITICAL WAVE #41 in June.)

The Arthur C Clarke award, presented at the Conservatory, London on the evening of 20 April, went to Pat Cadigan for FOOLS (Harper-Collins). The rest of the shortlist was: MOTHER OF STORMS by John Barnes, NORTH WIND by Gwyneth Jones, PASQUALE'S ANGEL by Paul J McAuley, TOWING JEHOVAH by James Morrow and ALIEN INFLUENCES by Kristine Kathryn Rusch.

A correction to an item in the last issue of the newsletter:

DR WHO group, The Wolves of Fenric, meet on the first SATURDAY (not Friday) of each month at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham, 3pm-10.30pm.

They also meet on the third Saturday of the month at the Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, Bell Street, Wolverhampton.

For further details send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: The Wolves of Fenric, 161 Dangerfield Lane, Darlaston, Wednesbury, Staffs., WS10 7RU.

The nominees for the 1995 Hugo Awards and John W Campbell Awards are as follows:

Best Novel: MOTHER OF STORMS by John Barnes (Tor); BRITTLE INNINGS by Michael Bishop (Bantam); MIRROR DANCE by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen); BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS by Nancy Kress (Tor); TOWING JEHOVAH by James Morrow (Harcourt Brace).

Best Novella: "Cri de Coeur" by Michael Bishop (Asimov's); "Melodies of the Heart" by Michael J Flynn (Analog); "Forgiveness Day" by Ursula K Le Guin (Asimov's); "Seven Views of Olduvaï Gorge" by Mike Resnick (F&SF); "Les Fleurs Du Mal" by Brian Stableford (Asimov's).

Best Novelette: "Cocoon" by Greg Egan (Asimov's); "The Martian Child" by David Gerrold (F&SF); "The Singular Habits of Wasps" by Geoffrey A Landis (Analog); "The Matter of Segri" by Ursula K Le Guin (Crank!); "A Little Knowledge" by Mike Resnick (Asimov's).

Best Short Story: "Mrs Lincoln's China" by M Shayne Bell (Asimov's); "Dead Man's Curve" by Terry Bisson (Asimov's); "None So Blind" by Joe Haldeman (Asimov's); "Understanding Entropy" by Barry N Malzberg (SF Age); "Barnaby in Exile" by Mike Resnick (Asimov's);

"I Know What You're Thinking" by Kate Wilhelm (Asimov's).

Best Non-fiction Book: I ASIMOV: A MEMOIR by Isaac Asimov (Doubleday); SPECTRUM: THE BEST IN CONTEMPORARY FANTASTIC ART by Cathy Burnett & Arnie Fenner (Underwood Books); SILENT INTERVIEWS: ON LANGUAGE, RACE, SEX, SCIENCE FICTION, AND SOME COMICS by Samuel R Delany (Wesleyan University Press); MAKING BOOK by Teresa Nielsen Hayden (NESFA Press); THE BOOK ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER by Christopher Priest (Fantagraphics).

Best Dramatic Presentation: "All Good Things" (STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION); INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE; THE MASK; STARGATE; STAR TREK: GENERATIONS.

Best Professional Editor: Ellen Datlow; Gardner Dozois; Mike Resnick; Kristine Kathryn Rusch; Stanley Schmidt.

Best Professional Artist: Ian Burns; Thomas Canty; Bob Eggleton; Don Maitz; Michael Whelan.

Best Professional Artwork: LADY COTTINGTON'S PRESSED FAIRY BOOK by Brian Froud & Terry Jones (Pavilion UK); Cover for GUN, WITH OCCASIONAL MUSIC by Jonathan Lethem, by Michael Koelsch (Harcourt, Brace/NEL UK); Cover for FOREIGNER by C J Cherryh, by Michael Whelan (DAW/Legend UK).

Best Semiprozine: INTERZONE edited by David Pringle; LOCUS edited by Charles N Brown; THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by David G Hartwell, Donald G Keller, Robert K J Kilheffer & Gordon Van Gelder; SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE edited by Andrew I Porter; TOMORROW SPECULATIVE FICTION edited by Algis Budrys.

Best Fanzine: ANSIBLE edited by Dave Langford; FILE 770 edited by Mike Glycer; HABAKKUK edited by Bill Donaho; LAN'S LANTERN edited by George Laskowski; MIMOSA edited by Dick & Nicki Lynch.

Best Fan Writer: Sharon Farber; Mike Glycer; Andy Hooper; Dave Langford; Evelyn C Leeper.

Best Fan Artist: Brad W Foster; Teddy Harvia; Linda Michaels; Peggy Ranson; Bill Rotsler.

John W Campbell Award for Best New Writer: Linda Dunn (2nd year of eligibility); David Feintuch (1st year of eligibility); Daniel Marcus (2nd year of eligibility); Jeff Noon (2nd year of eligibility); Felicity Savage (1st year of eligibility).

The nominees were chosen by popular vote by 477 members of Intersection or ConAdian who submitted valid nominating ballots. In some categories more than five nominations appear due to tie votes. In the



# Saucy life of Brian

## Author sees 'miracle' as tales found

Sci-fi author Brian Aldiss hailed as a "miracle" the unearthing of the stories he had buried at his boarding school more than 50 years ago.

Mr Aldiss, aged 69, recalled yesterday that he had hidden them down a rabbit hole to escape a beating because they were saucy.

Sixth formers at West Buckland School, north Devon, unearthed the biscuit tin containing the school exercise book after a 4½-hour search using spades and a metal detector.

But Mr Aldiss admitted the tales were not the raunchy writings he remembered.

"It was not what I expected," said Mr Aldiss, clearly shaken by the amazing discovery in a wood that was out of bounds during his three years at the school.

'Bedtime stories not what I had expected'



■ It's off to search we go — Brian Aldiss and pupils

But the tin held items which would still have been punishable with six of the best had they been found by staff.

There was a saucy French cartoon of a chambermaid naked, except for lace cap and apron, serving tea to a couple in bed.

It was stuck to a black and white photograph of female breasts which, confessed Mr Aldiss, would have been forbidden in the dormitory.

But the 10 sixth formers who found the tin still admired his tales, labelling them "zany and gory" and "brilliant with lots of violence".

Mr Aldiss wrote the stories when he was a 17-year-old sixth former at

the school in 1942. He composed them by torchlight under the bedclothes, charging his school pals a penny a read.

He had "given up hope" of them coming to light again, and after the discovery said: "I feel a bit faint." But he described *The Jest So Stories* as "naive" and "feeble".

Also in the tin was his Latin exercise book, a pamphlet for a 1942 performance of *Jack and the Beanstalk* pantomime at a theatre at Ilfracombe, and his pen.

Mr Aldiss, author of 34 novels and short story collections, said the items would probably go to the Aldiss archive in the Bodleian Library in his home city of Oxford.



■ Brian's saucy sketch



■ Got them — Brian celebrates



"Original Artwork" category only three nominations appear, as no other candidates appeared on more than five percent of the ballots cast in that category, as required by the WSFS constitution. The Hugo Subcommittee of Intersection decided to cancel the Best Music category due to a marked lack of interest that category: only one nominated item received more than seven nominations. LADY COTTINGTON'S PRESSED FAIRY BOOK received votes in both the categories of Best Non-Fiction Book and Best Original Artwork; we have decided to assign it to Best Original Artwork.

*(From the press release by Mike and Debby Moir, Hugo Awards Administrators, distributed by Intersection, the 53rd World Science Fiction Convention, dated 1 May 1995.)*

The Writer's Bureau, the Creative Writing Correspondence College, are sponsoring a Poetry and Short Story Competition.

Prize money totalling £950.00 can be won for poems not exceeding 40 lines and short stories up to 2,000 words.

Short story judging will be by Iain Pattison, and poetry judging by award-winning poet Alison Chisholm. First prize in each category is £250.00, second £150.00 and third £75.00.

The entry fee per poem or short story is £3.50 (£1.50 for members of the Association of Freelance Writers) and the closing date for entries is 31 July 1995.

For further information and entry forms contact: The Competition Secretary, Dept PC942, The Writer's Bureau, Sevendale House, 7 Dale Street, Manchester, M1 1JB (tel: 0161 228 2362).

H G Wells is the subject of a biography by Michael Foot, to be published as a £20.00 hardback by Doubleday on 7 September. H G: THE HISTORY OF MR WELLS probes both Wells' writings and his personal life, for which Foot seems better qualified than many - in his youth, he was a friend of Wells and was greatly influenced by his political beliefs.

Meanwhile, publishers hoping to cash in on cheap editions of Wells' work will have to think again - EC legislation coming into force on 1 July will extend copyright from 50 years after an author's death to 70 years, meaning such classics as THE WAR OF THE WORLDS and THE TIME MACHINE are safe until 2015. It's not yet clear how this will affect works already in the public domain but which fall within the 70-year period, such as the short stories of M R James.

Ramsey Campbell has recorded four of his short stories for a BBC Merseyside audio-cassette, TWILIGHT TALES FROM MERSEYSIDE. The tape contains "The Companion", "Calling Card", "The Guide" and a new story, "Out of the Woods"; copies are available for £6.00 (including postage) from BBC Radio Merseyside, 55 Paradise Street, Liverpool, L1 3BP. Necronomicon Press is planning an American release.

Campbell's ALONE WITH THE HORRORS won the "best collection" category in the 1994 World Fantasy Awards, presented at the World Fantasy Convention in New Orleans. The other winners were Lewis Shiner's novel GLIMPSES, Terry Lamsley's novella "Under the Crust", Fred Chappell's short story "The Lodger", artists Alan Clarke and J K Potter (tie), author Jack Williamson (for life achievement), the anthology FULL SPECTRUM 4 (ed. Lou Aronica, Amy Stout, Betsy Mitchell), the former imprint Underwood-Miller (special award for professional publishing) and Marc Michaud's Necronomicon Press (special award for non-professional publishing).

British author Rachel Pollack's TEMPORARY AGENCY is among the seven nominations in the "best novel" category of the 1994 Nebula Awards. The other six are MOVING MARS by Greg Bear, PARABLE OF THE SOWER by Octavia E Butler, A NIGHT IN LONESOME OCTOBER by Roger Zelazny, GREEN MARS by Kim Stanley Robinson, GUN, WITH OCCASIONAL MUSIC by Jonathan Letham and TOWING JEHOVAH by James Morrow.

The novellas nominated are "Mefisto in Onyx" by Harlan Ellison, "Forgiveness Day" by Ursula K LeGuin, "Cold Iron" by Michael Swanwick, "Seven Views of Olduvai George" by Mike Resnick and "Haunted Humans" by Nina Kiriki Hoffman. LeGuin completes a hat-trick of nominations with the Tiptree-winning "The Matter of Seggri", up for the "best novelette" award; also nominated are "The Martian Child" by David Gerrold, "Necronauts" by Terry Bisson, "The Sigilar Habits of Wasps" by Geoffrey A Landis and "Nekropolis" by Maureen McHugh. The short stories nominated are "I Know What You're Thinking" by Kate Wilhelm, "Inspiration" by Ben Bova, "A Defense of the Social Contracts" by Martha Soukup, "None So Blind" by Joe Haldeman, "Understanding Entropy" by Barry Malzberg and "Virtual Love" by Maureen McHugh.

The on-off DR WHO movie has hit another hurdle, as the latest incarnation - to be exec-produced by Steven Spielberg - has reportedly been cancelled.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **INSANELY GREAT: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MACINTOSH, THE COMPUTER THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING**

by Steven Levy

Penguin, £7.99, 312pp, p/b

Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

1984 is a resonant year in the history of sf; partly because of Orwell, partly because of Gibson's *NEUROMANCER*. It was also the year in which a gang of obsessive, wildly ambitious, young engineers and designers operating out of Cupertino, California, first unveiled the Macintosh computer and, according to Stephen Levy, author of this highly readable account of its creation and development, things have never been the same since.

Though I doubt that everyone will agree with his claim that the Mac was the first computer to "make a dent in the universe", his obvious enthusiasm is fairly irresistible. An experienced science journalist, he has a considerable gift for clear technical explanation and a sure understanding of the growing computer industry's social and commercial context. What he lacks are the qualities of a good sf novelist - an ability to combine technological savvy with a persuasive sense of character, atmosphere, and drama. He is very good at describing the capacities of the machine itself, but much less so the events and personalities surrounding it. Thus, although one is left with some impression of the inventiveness, eccentricity, erratic brilliance, and sheer cheek of the team that worked on Mac, it is hard not to feel just a little cheated. A good, professional book should have been much better.

This is a pity since, as Levy is fully aware, the computer revolution of the 80s was a striking instance of fact overtaking speculative fiction. The Mac not only marked an important advance in the evolution of user-friendly PCs, it was also relatively cheap and widely adopted by many people who had previously never thought of owning a computer. Steve Jobs, Apple's co-founder, wanted to create something "insanely great", that would radically change public attitudes to information and technology. His clash with the polymathic Jef Raskin, over the precise nature of the Mac project is decently recounted, but could surely have been made more human and exciting, as could the descriptions of the audacious corporate raid on Xerox that made Mac possible, and the

truly insane period where a clearly inadequate Macintosh was released onto an underprepared market with near disastrous results.

Of course, Levy is not writing fiction and, within its limits, *INSANELY GREAT* is both informative and entertaining. Like its subject, this Penguin edition is attractive to look at, with unusually large and well spaced print. Unfortunately, it is also overpriced for a text that could easily be crammed into half the number of pages. Why, one wonders, can't publishers emulate Apple's achievement of combining utility with low cost?

### **DEATHSTALKER** by Simon R Green

Gollancz, £5.99, 571pp, p/b

Reviewed by Martin Tudor.

Following his interesting but deeply flawed excursion into the more thoughtfull realms of serious fantasy in *SHADOWS FALL*, Green here returns to the straightforward action/adventure story with which he is more comfortable.

Heralded as "the first of three epic novels", *DEATHSTALKER* is very much in the tradition of *STAR WARS*: a vast tyrannical empire, a small but valiant group of rebels, etc. This is the empire hinted at in Green's two previous sf novels, *MISTWORLD* and *GHOSTWORLD*, with the hero of those novels, Captain John Silence, appearing here on the "wrong" side, that of the empire.

This is an entertaining enough romp, if you can suspend sufficient disbelief (and believe me it takes a lot). To give Green his due, the action is fast and interesting enough to keep the pages turning, but a vast, technologically advanced, interstellar empire where swords are still used in battle? As Barry Norman is wont to say: "If you like this kind of thing, you'll enjoy it." Me? I wish Green would return to the light-hearted sword and sorcery books, such as *BLUE MOON RISING* and the "Hawk and Fisher" series, which he does best.

### **STAR WARS: THE TRUCE AT BAKURA** by Kathy Tyers

Bantam, £4.99, 341pp, p/b

Reviewed by Adrian Middleton.

I don't know why, but my expectations for *STAR WARS* novels have always been quite high - the old Han Solo and Lando Calrissian books, followed by the commissioning of Timothy Zahn, had led me to think that Lucasfilm had a higher regard for its properties than Paramount.

How wrong I was.



TRUCE AT BAKURA reads like a rejected STAR TREK novel. In fact, the plot would fit almost seamlessly into a planet-based story starring Picard, Troi and Data. For the first 200 pages, the book is taken up completely with political shenanigans - no action! Does this sound like STAR WARS to you?

Worse, the Empire aren't the villains but uneasy allies - just like the Klingons or Cardassians of TNG. What's wrong with this picture? The bad guys even come from another galaxy (and that only happened twice in the entire history of STAR TREK - even they realised it was a bad idea).

In fact, the entire premise of TRUCE AT BAKURA is the antithesis of the space operatics we have come to know and love from STAR WARS. People who liked the films were swayed by the timeless quality aimed at the twelve-year-old in all of us. When I pick up a STAR WARS book it is in the hope of recapturing that timeless quality - pulp action from cover to cover. The book starts well enough, with a strong sense of continuity - it follows directly on from the end of RETURN OF THE JEDI - and a build up of the characters which seems to bode well for the rest of the book. Leia Organa is angst-ridden by the knowledge that her father was Darth Vader, while Luke and Wedge Antilles are provided with strong characterisation and equally strong roles. Unfortunately, it soon becomes apparent that the author is obsessed with Luke and nobody else. Leia looks like she should be getting an equal billing, but doesn't quite, while Han is along as the love interest by association, Chewbacca is along as the "bodyguard" who never gets to do anything, while R2-D2 is practically non-existent.

When the action does start, it is C-3PO who gets the best slice, bearing arms and dressing up as an imperial Stormtrooper in flagrant disregard for the Laws of Robotics which the original STAR WARS film led us to believe existed.

At the end of the day, if you believe that the heroes of STAR WARS should naturally progress into the mature Starfleet officers of TNG within only six weeks of the Battle of Endor, then this is for you. You're welcome to it.

#### **WORLD WAR: TILTING THE BALANCE**

by Harry Turtledove

Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99, 482pp, h/b

Reviewed by Martin Tudor.

I've always been a sucker for "what if?" and alternate worlds stories, but strangely have never previously read anything by

Turtledove, who specializes in such fiction; this is an oversight I intend to put right.

TILTING THE BALANCE is the second of a planned four novels set in a timeline where World War II is interrupted by an invasion from outer space. The lizard-like "Race" set out to invade the Earth centuries ago, and their intelligence on the capabilities of the planet's inhabitants is based on information from probes which visited Earth just 800 or so years ago. A slow, meticulous people, they have been ruled by the same family for more than 400,000 years and have already conquered two other planets, both of which shared their steady technological progress (scientific advances are not instigated until *all* the potential effects have been thoroughly examined, from every possible angle). The Race is therefore more than a little taken aback by their discovery that the "Tosevites" (humans) have made such unprecedented technological advances in a mere eight centuries; expecting to swiftly subdue a planet full of sword-wielding barbarians, the aliens instead find themselves facing barbarians in tanks, fighter planes and armed with grenades and rifles.

However, they've brought with them far more munitions and equipment than it was anticipated they'd need (they're a careful people, to ensure that the planet is pacified in time for the arrival of the colonists in 20 years. But whilst this has been more than enough time on previous conquests, the Tosevites prove a different matter; they adapt incredibly fast and within months of the Race's first attack, the various major powers have already introduced jets, improved tanks, missiles and armour-piercing machine guns. Worse still, it appears that some of them are on the brink of developing nuclear weapons. Could it be that the Race might face its first setback in a hundred thousand years?

This is a terrific series. The Race has a technology not much more advanced than ours now - which is, of course, infinitely more advanced than that of the 1940s: valves versus silicon chips. But what the inhabitants of Earth lack in technology, they more than make up for in practical experience of warfare and versatility. The first volume ended, after several victories for the Race, in a virtual stalemate; as the title suggests, the second volume sees a number of developments and the stalemate is broken. Turtledove deftly juggles storylines featuring dozens of characters around the world and still grips the reader's attention. This isn't great literature by any stretch of the imagination, but it is an exciting story, very well told. This is what an alternate history story should be: ideas

and plot twists coming at you so fast you can barely keep track. Great stuff.

**CLOUD CASTLES** by Michael Scott Rohan  
VGSF, £4.99, 284pp, 'C' format p/b

Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

Scott Rohan's "Spiral Trilogy", began quite promisingly with CHASE THE MORNING and got somewhat laborious in the subsequent GATES OF NOON. Saddy, the spiralling continues downwards in this concluding volume, which falls into just about every trap concluding volumes of trilogies tend to fall into.

Steve Fisher, the entrepreneurial hero / narrator of the earlier novels, is now one of the richest men in the world and only in his early 40s. An obnoxious mixture of Peter Pan, James Bond and Richard Branson, he already enjoys so many privileges of wealth, good looks, and education that it is very hard to like him or care about his new adventure. Still, his author having committed himself to a third instalment, off he's plunged into a rough and ready scenario resembling nothing so much as that of a teenage fighting fantasy book.

If you haven't grown out of the sort of story where an invincible and omniscient protagonist with his colourful band of followers thwart the unspeakably foul (if vaguely defined) machinations of an incorrigibly evil necromancer and his jibbering hordes of Hell, then you might just enjoy it. For my part, I might have enjoyed it too, had it not been so weakly motivated, thinly characterized and mechanically written.

True, there are (a few) nice images, and the action is virtually incessant, but humour, pace and narrative coherence are conspicuously lacking. Rohan is clearly a highly intelligent man, but his extensive knowledge of such diverse fields as history, computers, European languages and classical music does not add to the richness of his fiction. If anything, the goblets of gratuitous information peppering the text seem little more than pompous and intrusive showin-off. Every swordfight comes accompanied by a lecture on sabre technique; every gunfight with an essay on ballistics.

By the end of CLOUD CASTLES, Fisher has acquired a female partner (after having first spied upon her undressing and beaten her about a bit to assert his masculine superiority). He has also been revealed as the reincarnation of the Fisher King, who will presumably heal the wounds of a divided Europe, having defeated adversaries including neo-Nazi black magicians. Can Rohan really be

completely unaware of the irony whereby his own book, with its worship of power and the individual will, and whose dominant image is that of the lone predestined hero first confronting, then leading the herdlike crowd, comes dangerously close to endorsing the Fascism it ostensibly condemns?

□□□□

### A REMINDER TO REVIEWERS

*Please remember that reviews of books should reach MARTIN TUDDOR at 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG, within ONE month of your taking the book. A number of reviews are currently overdue please ensure that these (and any others that are due) are passed to MARTIN TUDDOR at one of this month's meetings.*

The following reviews are outstanding from:

Lynn Edwards: DIAMOND MASK by Julian May (March 1995); THE WESTERN WIZARD by Mickey Zucker Reichert (March 1995).

Bernie Evans: THE DEUS MACHINE by Pierre Ouellette (February 1995); NIMBUS by Alexander Jablovok (March 1995); TO BUILD JERUSALEM by John Whitbourn (March 1995).

Robert P Jones: THE GOLD COAST Kim Stanley Robinson (March 1995).

Steve Jones/B'HAM UNI: DRAGONCHARM by Graham Edwards (January 1995); TALISMAN by Sam Lewis (January 1995); WARHAMMER: RED THIRST ed. David Pringle (March 1995); WARHAMMER: WOLF RIDERS ed. David Pringle (March 1995).

Adrian Middleton: GRAILS: QUESTS OF THE DAWN ed. Richard Gillian, Martin H Greenberg, Edward E Kramer (March 1995).

Tony Morton: BLOODSTONE by David Gemmill (March 1995); IRONHAND'S DAUGHTER by David Gemmill (March 1995).

Chris Ridd: THE WILD SHORE by Kim Stanley Robinson (January 1995); ARE WE ALONE? by Paul Davies (March 1995).



# BRUM GROUP NEWS

May 1995

Issue 284

*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.

## SPECIAL MEETING: IAIN M BANKS

who will address the Group

on WEDNESDAY 7th June 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).

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 Grenock 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) his next two novels despite the fact that both contained genre elements - the first featuring a set of characters from a science fictional war and the latter including an 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 Guest of Honour at Novacon 17 in 1987 and is Special Guest at Novacon 25 this year.

*[Many thanks to THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SF for much of the above information.]*

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. 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.