

BRUM GROUP NEWS

September 1995

Issue 288

*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 speaker is **MARK CHADBOURN** who will address the Group on **Friday 15th September 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).

MARK CHADBOURN's first published short story, "Six Dead Boys In A Very Dark World", won FEAR magazine's Best New Author award in 1990. His first novel, UNDERGROUND, was published by Piatkus in 1992 and his second, NOCTURNE, appeared last year (Gollancz, £4.99). (*NOCTURNE was an unusual and fascinating horror tale, based in New Orleans and steeped in the atmosphere, music and traditions of that mysterious town.*) His new novel, THE ETÉRNAL, will be published by Gollancz in January 1996. His non-fiction debut is scheduled for March next year, when Gollancz Metro are due to publish his examination of a British Amityville. This, as yet untitled work, concerns a family in Brecon who were terrorised by a series of increasingly malignant manifestations; backed up by several witnesses from outside the family.

Chadborn, 35, trained as a journalist, beginning his career at the Burton Daily Mail before moving to the Birmingham Evening Mail. He freelanced in London for a while before accepting a job with Today as Music Editor and Feature Writer, and from there he moved to the Daily Mail. He returned to freelance journalism when his first book, UNDERGROUND, was accepted and has written for a range of publications including The Independent, EMPIRE and SELECT.

[Many thanks to Mark Chadborn and Carol Morton for much of the above information.]

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.

THE BIRMINGHAM CHAPTER OF THE WOLVES OF FENRIC
GO

TELEFANTASTIC

From now on we'll be giving equal coverage to such series as

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STAR TREK THE X-FILES
and more

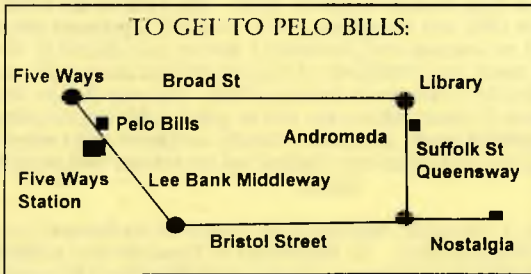
FROM 3.00PM TO 10.30PM AT

PELO BILLS

FIVE WAYS SHOPPING CENTRE
FIVE WAYS BIRMINGHAM

(DIAGONALLY OPPOSITE FIVE WAYS TRAIN STATION)

ON SUNDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER



The group has, due to circumstances beyond its control, had to seek a change of venue from The Australian Bar. We would like to apologise to any members inconvenienced by the cancellation of our August 5th meeting, and also for any of the bar staff's attitude problems towards members who may have been turned away. Our new programme will be aimed at broadening our membership and will try to include rare or brand new telefantasy material not generally available in the UK.

FREE ENTRY (DONATIONS APPRECIATED)
RAFFLE, QUIZ, VIDEOS, DISCOUNTED MERCHANDISE & MORE

COLOPHON

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All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise. This publication is 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, CHRIS MORGAN for his conrep and TONY BERRY for the use of his PCW and spare room.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

UNTIL 25 JANUARY 1996: *THE DEVIL IS AN ASS* Ben Jonson's tale of devil worship, wife stealing, major business frauds and the strange appearance of a Spanish lady, as Hell is transported to seventeenth century London. At the Swan Theatre Stratford-upon-Avon. Call 01789-295623 for further details.

UNTIL 27, JANUARY 1996: *FAUST PARTS I AND II* Swan Theatre Stratford-upon-Avon. Call 01789-295623 for further details.

15 SEPTEMBER 1995: MARK CHADBOURN, journalist, and author of *UNDERGROUND* and *NOCTURNE*, will speak to the Brum Group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm.

15-19 SEPTEMBER 1995: *ED WOOD* Tim Burton's biopic of the world's worst director, at the Midlands Arts Centre Cinema, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham. Call 0121 440 3838 for details.

23 SEPTEMBER 1995: KEN MACLEOD will be signing copies of his first novel, *THE STAR FRACTION*, at Andromeda Book Shop, 84 Suffolk

Street, Birmingham, 12.00-1.00pm. Call 0121 643 1999 for details of this and other signings or to order signed copies.

23 SEPTEMBER 1995: IAIN BANKS will be signing copies of *WHIT*, at Andromeda Book Shop, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, 12.00-1.00pm. Call 0121 643 1999 for details of this and other signings or to order signed copies.

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

Wednesday 25th October
*RETURN TO THE
FORBIDDEN PLANET*
at the Birmingham
Hippodrome, Hurst Street.
ANNE WOODFORD is
organising a block-
booking for this
performance (curtains open
7.30pm). Block-bookings
receive a £3.00 reduction
per ticket. Anne is taking
deposits of £5.00 per
person NOW! Either speak
to her at this month's
meeting or call her on
0121-559-7761
for further details.

3 OCTOBER 1995: THE BLACK LODGE, Birmingham's informal gathering of horror and dark fantasy fans meet in the bar of the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham, from 8.30pm. Copies of the group's newsletter, THE REGISTER, are available for a reply-paid envelope from: 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, West Midlands, B92 7LQ.

12-22 OCTOBER 1995: THE 11TH BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL FILM AND TV FESTIVAL. Booking opens September; further details will appear here as they become available.

15 OCTOBER 1995: GAMES DAY & GOLDEN DEMON '95. "Thousands of Games Workshop hobbyists will get together for a dazzling day of exciting games and special events whilst Citadel miniature painters and modellers compete for the coveted Golden Demon Slayer Sword" (it sez here). The National Indoor Arena, Birmingham. Call the booking office on 0121-767-4321 or INFOTEL's 24-hour information line on 0839-333-554 (calls charged at 39p per minute cheap rate, 49p per minute all other times) for further details.

20 OCTOBER 1995: ROBERT RANKIN author of the humorous Brentford Triangle and Armageddon series will speak to the Brum Group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Brosgrave Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm. (NB: TO BE CONFIRMED.)

23-28 OCTOBER 1995: RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET winner of the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical returns to the Birmingham Hippodrome. Call the box office on 0121-622-7486 for further details.

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 #3 and hotel booking forms are available, the deadline for hotel bookings has been extended until September. 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.

3-5 NOVEMBER 1995: ReContaniméTed 1995, animé convention at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. Attending £21.00 until 30 September, £26.00 thereafter. Contact: Martin Pay, 29 Langton Avenue, Chelmsford, CM1 2BW.

7 NOVEMBER 1995: THE BLACK LODGE, Birmingham's informal gathering of horror and dark fantasy fans meet in the bar of the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham, from 8.30pm. Copies of the group's newsletter, THE REGISTER, are available for a reply-paid envelope from: 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, West Midlands, B92 7LQ.

17 NOVEMBER 1995: UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE featuring the BSFG versus THE BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY. In the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Brosgrave Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm. (NB: TO BE CONFIRMED.)

30 NOVEMBER - 2 DECEMBER: ARTHUR KING an original musical comedy by Sculpture Theatre Company, produced in conjunction with Solihull Arts Complex. "The days of chivalry are not lost to us, they live on in the heart of a

small boy - Arthur King. He believes it is his destiny to be King of the Britons but first he must become King of 4B and the school playground. Assisted by his knights Gavin and Lance and the mysterious caretaker Mervin he embarks on his quest. Performances 2.30pm and 7.30pm in the @Library Theatre. Call the Solihull Arts Complex Box Office on 0121 704 6962 for further details.

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15 DECEMBER 1995: BSFG CHRISTMAS MEETING - BEER & SKITTLES. Bookings now being taken, see below for details.

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 £24.00, supporting £14.00. 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 \$110.00, Supporting \$35.00. Contact: c/o SCIFI, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

28-31 MARCH 1997: INTERVENTION the 48th UK National SF Convention, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Theme "communication". Guests Brian W Aldiss, David Langford, Jon Berg and Octavia Butler (NOT Robert Silverberg as previously announced). Attending £20.00, supporting £10.00, cheques (payable to "Intervention") should be sent to: 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants., PO10 7TS.

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 (f10.00) 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.

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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.

BY POPULAR DEMAND!

THE BRUM GROUP'S
CHRISTMAS MEETING

will again be a
BEER & SKITTLES

evening at

the Samson & Lion,

Wordsley on

Friday 15 December.

CAROL MORTON is now taking bookings for this popular event. Deposit £5.00 per person. Food, transport, prizes and skittles will be included in the final price. (Last year it was £10.00 per person, we will announce the price for this year as soon as possible.) Book early as places are limited.

INTERSECTION 1995

— A PERSONAL VIEW

FROM CHRIS MORGAN

This will, sadly and inevitably, be remembered as the convention at which John Brunner died.

It was on the Friday: he suffered a massive stroke around breakfast time. Pauline was asked to sit with LiYi at John's bedside, which she did for several hours. John never regained consciousness, and he died at about tea time. Over the rest of the weekend we tried to comfort LiYi and sort out her problems. In fact, a lot of people helped, including friends, gophers, the con committee and four different Chinese speakers. LiYi had a mass of luggage, two dogs (one of them ailing), artwork in the Art Show, crafts in the Dealers' Room and a hired van (which she couldn't drive) that had carried them all from Somerset up to Glasgow. John was a sensitive and erudite man, and a friend; I shall miss him.

Around us, the convention swirled on in a complex dance. Almost 5000 people attended, about 40% American - or perhaps 60% if you calculate by weight rather than head count. We had a choice of thirteen simultaneous programme streams, of at least six bars at the Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre and the adjacent Moat House Hotel, many fast food franchises and lots of lounge areas. The Art Show was large, the Dealers' Room was vast, and there were gaming facilities, displays and scores of information tables, offering all you could possibly want to know about future cons, about Glasgow, about esoteric appreciation societies, about gay sex. There were several halls in which you could park a fleet of jumbo jets or a clutch of tower blocks, and yet the whole feeling was one of seediness, of a plastic impermanence.

Samuel R. Delany was an extremely hard-working guest of honour. His speech was entertaining though occasionally difficult to follow due to its rich intellectual content. Perhaps the most interesting point was that he got paid ten times as much to teach writing last year as to do it, despite having three books published. The interview conducted with him by Paul Kincaid was the best programme item I saw. Delany's large

white beard made him look older than his age (53).

He was kind enough to grant me half an hour's conversation with him in his room. There he listened to me prattle on about the effect his work has had on me, he answered my questions, and he signed my copies of his books, all with graciousness and courtesy, calling a halt only when he had to leave for a programme item.

Throughout the con, security tended to be oppressively overzealous, with both gophers and uniformed guards at fault. Four of the smaller programme rooms suffered from the acoustics from hell; they had very high ceilings and were separated by flimsy partitions (Caution: do not lean on this wall) with the result that you could hear the other three programme items almost as clearly as the one you were attending (or, in my case, chairing).

Pauline and I stayed in the on-site Moat House Hotel, which had its own share of problems. On the Thursday night the fire alarm went off at ten to four. We dressed hurriedly and tramped downstairs to stand in the rain for a few minutes. Although most people had dressed, a few were in night clothes and one or two had found the time to pack their suitcases and bring them along. It was a false alarm. When it went off again at twenty to five (we'd just had time to get back to bed and fall asleep) it was noticeable that fewer people took any action. Good job that, too, was a false alarm.

In the bathrooms were user-unfriendly taps and a water pressure sufficient for riot control. One young woman was thrust back against the wall and held there by the force of the shower. (Thanks for telling me, Jaine; did you enjoy the experience?) I understand that running the shower with the bathroom door open was enough to trigger the fire alarm - but who showers at 3:50 and 4:40 am? Perhaps a fastidious vampire after a hard night's sucking.

Some highlights:

- views of the River Clyde from the hotel
- chatting with D.G.Compton
- eating pastrami-filled bagels from one of the fast food counters
- seeing members of one of the best

masquerade entries close up, out in the sunshine the following morning; Henry VIII with his Canon camera and Katherine of Aragon with her rucksack

- meeting Michael Swanwick
- not meeting Craig Charles
- seeing Pauline walking the streets of Glasgow late at night in bare feet
- standing up in a packed hall at the "Why do publishers publish crap?" panel and making a group of editors (who had all been protesting that they didn't) admit sheepishly to one of the ways in which they do
- the fireworks
- seeing tv arts supremo Melvyn Bragg in the hotel. (But what was he doing there? Surely tv hasn't accepted that sf could possibly be a serious form of literature?)
- being talked at by a crazy fan from Detroit for an hour
- chatting with Chris Priest, who hoped that Harlan Ellison would turn up to disrupt the Hugo Awards (he didn't) and who told me that his brand new novel, *THE PRESTIGE*, is really terrific
- getting home to Birmingham.

FREE admission
to the BSGF meeting of
your choice!
Simply introduce someone
to the BSGF and when they
join you will be issued a
ticket for FREE ADMISSION
to the meeting of your
choice! See Steve Jones,
for further details.

Join Our Four Stars at a SuperNovaCon!

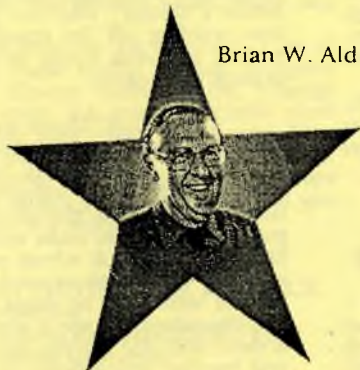
Bob Shaw



Harry Harrison



Brian W. Aldiss



Iain M. Banks



NOVA 25 **CON**

3—5 November 1995

at the Chamberlain Hotel, Alcester Street, Birmingham

Attending Membership: £25.00 until 30 September 1995, £30.00 thereafter.

★ A limited edition of 100 Novacon 25 T-shirts, featuring an exclusive, FULL COLOUR design by David A. Hardy, is available. One large size, only £10.50 each to Novacon members, £12.50 to non-members (+ £1.50 p&p)

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 Tony or Carol Morton on 01384 825386
(before 9.00 pm please)

BOOK REVIEWS

ALIEN INFLUENCES

by Kristine Kathryn Rusch
Millennium, 424pp, £4.99, p/b
Reviewed by Anne Gay.

Generations of children are neglected in favour of a drug this alien colony produces. The children turn to the Dancers, a strange and self-contained race, and under Dancer influence, the children begin to kill each other through horrible mutilations. Or at least, that's how xenopsychologist Justin Schaeffer views things. The surviving children are scattered to penal colonies or humiliating servitude and Justin's reputation is established. What happened, however, is not at all what Justin had thought....

This novel is one of the most fascinating I have ever read. So many "aliens" in sf are merely Earth-creatures in disguise. Rusch has the knack of creating truly non-human beings whose worlds operate on non-terrestrial lines. She plumbs human mentality in stark and credible contrast.

Compelling in pace, style and content, ALIEN INFLUENCES is no pipe-and-slippers read. It is science fiction in its highest - and most readable - form.

HOTWIRE by Simon Ings

HarperCollins, £4.99, 343pp, 'c' format p/b
Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

I have not read Simon Ings' two previous novels, but I had heard and read such good reports of them that I approached this book with high expectations.

Alas, I was to be bitterly disappointed. HOTWIRE is a thinly conceived, unevenly written, vaguely distasteful patchwork of recent sf cliches - as though a handful of rejected INTERZONE submissions had been roughly stitched together, padded out with would-be shocking violence and meaningless illustrations (courtesy of Simmon Pummell), and dressed up in pretentious, pseudo-experimental technique.

Such plot as there is is not easily followed. Ajay, the book's young Cuban hero, loses his job as a policeman after tracking down two gangsters who have brutally raped his sister and bloodily opened up his grandfather's skull with a chisel in search of the titular hotwire. This stuff enables human brains to interface direct with machine intelligence and is rapidly bringing about the

evolution of a world dominated by such huge non-human entities as sentient cities. Seeking to save up enough money for the prosthetic parts with which to rebuild his sister, Ajay becomes an operator with the international agency controlling such cities' emergence, but is seduced into betraying his employers and has to go underground as a freelance hotwire smugler.

This opening section is confusingly narrated in short scenes, with frequent changes of time and location. Maybe Ings wants to disguise the fact that he evidently hasn't the feeblest grip on his science, nor the foggiest idea as to what makes a thinking city different from, or more desirable than, a normal one.

After about a hundred pages of aimlessness, false starts, and gratuitous unpleasantness, the narrative finds some sort of focus as Ajay goes on an illegal mission to steal sophisticated hotwire from a sentient orbital station, where he endures predictable tortures before escaping with Rosa, manufactured thirteen year old daughter of the station's creator, who has been spending her time warding off the sexual assaults of giant snakes, and with whom he enjoys predictably explicit intercourse.

In the final stretch we get a tragic idyll, with Ajay and Rosa hiding out on a Californian beach but, unfortunately, by this time one hardly cares what happens to them, since simply nothing in the novel has been done patiently enough to make sense. Indeed, rarely have I read a book whose parts hung together so badly and which seemed so uncertain as to what it wanted to be about. Promising ideas and characters disappear almost before they've arrived and, for all the nastiness, there is no real tension, atmosphere, or suspense. At its best it comes across as Gibson without the style, Burroughs without the outlaw sensibility; at its worst it's just atrocious. Perhaps Ings dashed this pot-boiler off in a fit of over-confidence, but if he has any serious talent I honestly couldn't detect it here.

THE DETACHED RETINA: ASPECTS OF SF AND FANTASY by Brian W Aldiss
Liverpool University Press, 211pp (& index),
trade p/b £11.75, (h/b £25.00),
Reviewed by William McCabe.

This is a collection of essays supposedly about the writers of sf and the origins of the "genre". The "detached retina" of the title refers to the ability of the writer to detach him(her)self from the subject, Aldiss hasn't really tried to detach himself from the subject in this case. He claims no academic authority

(rather than making no claims) and to work from personal experience with no help. For this review I claim no academic ability and much less experience.

This is probably a great collection of opinions for people to adopt over books they haven't read (you read the article and you don't have to read the book) which is not such a bad thing since so much of this seems to be out of print. Of what is available a fair proportion will frequently appear in the classic or general fiction sections of your local bookshop/library but then you could argue that a lot was sf anyhow. You can argue with the opinions if you like (I think Swift deserves some credit for the flying islands, I'm not so sure about the "inversion" in 1984, etc) but you can't deny Aldiss has a right to them or that he expresses them well.

On top of this you get several personal insights (and the odd lack of insight) into the character of writers and other personalities. Occasionally these observations drift from the subject at hand (the piece on Mary Shelley has a long section about some comments on Hugo Gernsback) but that doesn't make things any less interesting.

So what have we got in here? Lots of Mary Shelley, some Phillip K Dick, Kingsley Amis, Anna Kavan, James Blish, George Orwell, and even the only Lovecraft short story Aldiss has ever read. Is it worth 5p a page? I have my doubts and I'm sure most of the stuff mentioned in this book is much better value. If you've got plenty of money and you can find a copy, it's worth considering.

WORLDWAR: TILTING THE BALANCE

by Harry Turtle dove
New English Library, 482pp, £5.99, p/b
Reviewed by Brian Richards.

TILTING THE BALANCE, the second in the "Worldwar" series by Harry Turtle dove, is not (on its own merit) a good book, but if read *after* book one it is good.

In the first volume Aliens arrived on Earth with the main aim of preparing Earth for colonization by their race. But unfortunately for them they arrive at a bad time - in the middle of World War II. It is 1942 with the Axis holding the upper hand and America getting itself together to face them when the Aliens arrive.

The Aliens have technology on a par with 1995 Earth plus space travel; weapons far more powerful than the 1942 technology. Mankind, however, does not fall to its knees at the feet of the new Master Race, it fights on - even after the Atom-bombing of Berlin by the Aliens in a bid to bring the Nazi Empire down.

Mankind is one thing the Aliens are not - reckless, with a desire to get somewhere fast. The Aliens, on the other hand, are a slow race - willing to take hundreds of years to do something the right way. Mankind has taken a comparatively small amount of time to climb up from the middle ages to its World War II level of technology. The whole story comes down to one thing: the Hare and the Tortoise, in the race to see who wins. Mankind being the Hare speeding ahead and the Aliens the Tortoise watching where it is going and getting there safe.

In book two the Aliens decide to destroy Washington with an Atom bomb in a bid to bring the greatest power against them - America - down, but this tactic fails to work again.

Because of the use of nuclear power on the cities Mankind is aware of its vast potential and in Russia, Germany, Japan and America projects are under way to build the first man-made Atom bomb using plutonium taken by the Russians from a destroyed space ship.

In America the alternative Manhattan Project has been set up by General Groves as in our own world.

For the new reader the author has used the human and Alien characters from book one to retell the story of the first book in the first two chapters. But to someone who has read the first book this is the one big flaw in this work. On the whole this reader is looking forward to book three.

CHORUS SKATING by Alan Dean Foster
Orbit, £4.99, 344pp, p/b,
Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Another Spellsinger adventure, the eighth, and a good one as well. Jon-Tom and Mudge find themselves at a loose end when their wives go off on a shopping trip. When those two get bored, trouble always follows. They had promised not to go adventuring again, but when a misty, glittering even coruscating (sic) lost chord turns up at Clothahump's tree and begins to lead them away, what would any red-blooded adventurer - retired - do but follow.

As the chord leads them on, the reason for its very existence becomes increasingly clear. On their travels Jon-Tom and Mudge find that musicians are forgetting their music, at first the phenomenon is not too pronounced, and Jon-Tom seems immune, but as they travel

the effects worsen until eventually Jon-Tom is the only being who can make any sort of music, even the whales have lost their song.

The whales guide Jon-Tom and Mudge to a desert island where a rock band, Pancreatic Sludge, from New Jersey has been stranded by Hieronymus Hinkel. Hinkel fancied himself as a singer and guitarist, he auditioned and was laughed out of the band because he was the worst singer and guitarist ever. He discovered magical powers and as revenge stranded the members of the band on this island, he followed and decided to steal all the music from this world so that his would be the only music heard. Jon-Tom is the only person who can save his world but his spell-singing is not very reliable, to say the least.

The puns fly fast and loose - not least the title, the characters met on the way are very often OTT, story is a romp of a tale - all in all just what we have come to expect from the spell-singer tales and this does not disappoint. If you enjoyed the other novels in this series you'll enjoy this one.

LITTLE DEATHS ed. Ellen Datlow
Millennium, £5.99, 454pp, p/b
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

La petite mort (the little death) is a euphemism for an orgasm making it an apt title for an anthology whose stories combine horror and sex. There are 24 stories from a selection of well and lesser known authors, most of which are original (the exceptions being by Clive Barker and Ruth Rendell). All the stories have merit, in that they are well written, and all revolve around sex or politics. The horror elements, which allow for the variation between style and content, ranges from slightly unpleasant to extremely nasty, not all of them are memorable.

The shortest and one of the nastier stories is "Menage a Trois" by Richard Christian Matheson. The last story in the volume "The Last Time" by Lucius Shepard has a long (perhaps too long) slow build up to the climatic scene (in both senses of the word) involving a complete relationship. Although horrific enough in its own terms, it also leaves doubts as to whether the cause of the final events are supernatural or psychological. Some stories are definitely supernatural, such as in "The Rock" by Melanie Tem. The appearance of a boulder above his house, exposed by the rain, coincides with the appearance of a new lover in the life of the womanising John Paul Clarke as the events pertaining to the rock and his sexual arrangements converge.

Some stories may appear horrific depending on your standpoint. The woman in Stephen Deadman's "The Lady of Situations" is capable of replaying complete memories so to experience totally the pleasures of sex, she doesn't need a partner. "The Swing" by Nicholas Royle is an allegory of sexual politics in which partners are literally chained together. Joel Lane's "The Pain Barrier" is a bleak futuristic story which explores the eroticism of pain, whereas Sarah Clemen's "Holes" uses self-mutilation as an enhancement to pleasure.

Hopefully, most readers will find their own sexual practices boring compared with the ones laid out here for their perusal but they should find something which will match their tastes in literary style.

*Please remember to bring
reviews of any books you
picked up at the last meeting
(or before) to this month's
meeting.*

*Reviews must be passed (or
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CRITICAL WAVE NEWS UPDATE

WORLDCON MOURNS JOHN BRUNNER

John Brunner, one of Britain's most respected science fiction authors for nearly three decades, died on 25 August, whilst attending the Glasgow worldcon, Intersection; he was 60 and had suffered a massive stroke that morning. His widow, the artist LiYi Tan Brunner, has invited fans to view his personal papers at their home in Somerset.

After making his debut at the age of 17 with GALACTIC STORM (under the pseudonym "Gill Hunt"), Brunner built a reputation for sf actioners, but switched to an increasingly provocative style with the dystopian quartet STAND ON ZANZIBAR (1968), THE JAGGED ORBIT (1969), THE SHEEP LOOK UP (1972) and THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER (1974). To the great discredit of the publishing industry, the bulk of his canon is no longer in print.

[A full obituary will appear in our next issue. Contributions welcome.]

HUGOS FOR LANGFORD, BURNS, INTERZONE

CAMPBELL AWARD FOR NOON

The British fanwriter David Langford, the artist Jim Burns and the sf magazine INTERZONE were among those honoured with Hugo Awards at the Glasgow worldcon. Langford received two, for his fanzine articles and for his monthly newsletter ANSIBLE.

Lois McMaster Bujold's MIRROR DANCE was named best novel, Mike Resnick's "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge" best novella, David Gerrold's "The Martian Child" best novelette and Joe Haldeman's "None So Blind" best short story. Isaac Asimov's memoir I, ASIMOV narrowly beat Chris Priest's THE BOOK ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER in the non-fiction category, whilst Brian Froud's illustrations for LADY COTTINGHAM'S PRESSED FAIRY BOOK by Terry Jones were named best original artwork. Other recipients were: Teddy Harvia (best fan artist), Gardner Dozois (best pro editor), Jim Burns (best pro artist) and the final episode of STAR TREK, THE NEXT GENERATION, "All Good Things" (best dramatic presentation). Britain's Jeff Noon received the John W Campbell Award.

Other awards: Jack Speer, Harry Warner Jr (First Fandom Hall of Fame); Kenneth F Slater (Big Heart Award); Dan Simmons' HYPERION and Cordwainer Smith's "A Planet Named Shayol" (Seiun Awards). The Intersection short story competition was won by Kari's "Clocks" (fantasy category), Lynda Manning-Schwartz's "Baby-Sitting the Burglar" (sf) and Robert Williams' "Selfless Addiction" (horror).

BALTIMORE SECURES 1998 WORLDCON

Baltimore decisively won the race to host the 1998 worldcon, receiving 812 votes (54% of the 1519 valid ballots cast). Boston received 324 (21%), Atlanta (13%) and Niagara Falls 189 (12%). The guests of honour were announced as C J Cherryh, Milton A Rothman, Stanley Schmidt and Michael Whelan, with Charles Sheffield as toastmaster.

Membership rates for Bucconeer are £58.00 (US\$80.00) attending, £22.00 (\$30.00) supporting, with £4.00/\$5.00 discounts for pre-supporters, payable to Post Office Box 314, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701, USA (e-mail: baltimore98@access.digex.net). Progress report one is scheduled for February, and Bucconeer is offering a free half-page ad to any legitimate worldcon campaign ("We recall the cost of running a worldcon bid").

IRELAND TO HOST 1997 EUROCON

Octocon was granted the right to host the 1997 Eurocon at the meeting of the European SF Society held at Intersection on 26 August. The provisional date is October 1997; so allowing members to combine attendance with a trip to that year's World Fantasy Convention in London. The 1996 event will be held in Bulgaria.

NEXT ISSUE: Intersection coverage, Christopher Priest and Gwyneth Jones interviewed, and more. Out at Novacon 25. Now c'mon, have YOU renewed yet?