

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

November 1995

Issue 290

*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 meeting features a QUIZ between The Birmingham University SF & Fantasy Society and the Birmingham SF Group on Friday 18th November 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).



# What's happening in science fiction today ...



Discover science fiction and you discover worlds beyond number. The British Science Fiction Association is your guide to these worlds. In reviews and interviews, articles and commentaries, we provide a constant source of information on what is happening in science fiction, as it happens. *Vector* brings you a lively and often controversial overview of sf by some of today's brightest stars. *Matrix* keeps you right up to date with all the latest news. *Focus* is the magazine for writers, with market news and professional tips. All for just £18 a year.

To join the BSFA, or to find out more, write to:  
Alison Cook, Membership Secretary,  
52 Woodhill Drive, Grove, Nr Wantage, Oxon OX12 0DF

## All it takes is a little imagination!

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, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX** (NB: change of address).

## COLOPHON

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Personal opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the membership of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group.

All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise. This issue was printed on the EVANS SENT photocopier.

For details of EVANS SENT's competitive prices contact: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for producing the address labels and the use of her 'copier; STEVE GREEN, TONY BERRY, CRITICAL WAVE and WHAT'S ON for the news.

## 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.

**14-16 NOVEMBER 1995: *THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN*** directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro. Described by VARIETY as "A dark Dickensian \$14 million-plus pinball machine of a movie, it's like a loony-tunes fantasy sprung from the head of Jules Verne." Screening at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

**14-16 NOVEMBER 1995: *UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD*** directed by Wim Wenders, a dream project, and a dream partly realised, this ambitious, personal sf romance, "the ultimate

road movie", is a \$23 million production shot in nine countries. Wim Wenders tops Robby Muller's roving camerawork and the movement across the globe, the host of offbeat characters and the cinematic adventurousness, with a torrent of music from a variety of sources. Screening at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

17 NOVEMBER 1995: UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE featuring the BSG versus THE BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY. In the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm.

14-16 NOVEMBER 1995: ORLANDO directed by Sally Potter. Tilda Swinton plays the eponymous time-traveller of Virginia Woolf's novel, born in the Elizabethan age and bequeathed a stately home by the Queen (Quentin Crisp) on condition: "Do not fade. Do not wither. Do not grow old." Orlando lives through the centuries and finally emerges into the present dat stateless and disinherited, but wiser for her experiences. Screening at the Electric Cinema, Station Street, Birmingham. Call 0121 643 7277 for details.

29 NOVEMBER 1995 - 20 JANUARY 1996: TOAD OF TOAD HALL A A Milne's version of Kenneth Grahame's children's story THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS. Tickets from £7.00. The Mainhouse Birmingham Rep, Centenary Square, Birmingham. Box Office 0121 236 4455.

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.

5 DECEMBER 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 their newsletter, THE REGISTER, are available a ssae from: 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, West Midlands, B92 7LQ.

6 DECEMBER 1995: WILLIAM HORWOOD author of the DUNCTON WOOD books and THE WILLOWS IN WINTER, the sequel to Kenneth Grahame's THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, will be speaking and signing copies of TOAD TRIUMPHANT at Waterstones, 24/26 High Street, Birmingham, from 7pm. Refreshments will be served, tickets £1.50. Call 0121 633 4353 for further details.

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. Just £12.00 per person. Meal, transport, prizes and skittles all be included in the price! Less than 20 places left!

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

6-30 March 1996: DIVINE RIGHT in the corridors of political power left and right are combining to form an influential republican movement. Meanwhile, the heir to the throne takes a radical decision, throwing the spotlight onto his son. It is the beginning of a new millennium and the young

prince finds an unknown world as he goes to discover his country. Peter Whelan's play asks the question for how much longer will Britain remain a monarchy? Tickets £6.50-£15.50 (concessions available). The Mainhouse Birmingham Rep, Centenary Square, Birmingham. Box Office 0121 236 4455.

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 £28.00, supporting £16.00. Contact: 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

8-10 NOVEMBER 1996: NOVACON 26 the Brum Group's own convention, Hotel Ibis, Ladywell Walk (off Hurst Street), Birmingham. Guest of Honour David Gemmill. Attending membership £25.00 until Easter 1996, supporting £10.50. Progress Report #1 and hotel booking forms now available. Contact: Tony Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Mids., DY9 8SS.

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 £25.00, supporting £15.00, 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 DECEMBER 1999 - 2 JANUARY 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.

*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.*

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# EVOLUTION

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## THE NEXT STEP



**Evolution** is the 1996 British National Science Fiction Convention, 5-8th April 1996 in the Radisson Edwardian at Heathrow, a 5 star hotel with room rates starting at £28 per person per night (sharing a triple room – £32 twin, £42 single). Come along to exercise your critical faculties or just have fun!

### OUR GUESTS

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#### VERNOR 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...*Evolution* will be his first UK convention.

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#### BRYAN TALBOT

Artist and author of the alternative history graphic novel *Luther Arkwright* and the compelling *Tale of One Bad Rat*, he is famous for his Victorian gothic art on *Nemesis*. He is now working on a *Dreaming* series for DC. ■

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#### JACK COHEN

Jack Cohen, scientist and fan, evolves alien ecologies for countless writers.

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#### PAUL KINCAID AND MAUREEN SPELLER

One of the UK's best-known fan couples, Paul and Maureen are amongst the mainstays of the BSFA – Maureen is co-ordinator and Paul runs the reviews section of *Vector*. *Evolution Seasons of Plenty and Harm's Way*. ■ will be Paul's 21st Eastercon. ■

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#### COLIN GREENLAND

Award-winning author of *Take Back Plenty*, *Seasons of Plenty and Harm's Way*.

### HOW TO JOIN

Membership is £28 attending, £16 supporting or child rate (aged between 5 and 14 on 5th April 1996 – children under 5 are free. Rates go up to £32 attending, £18 supporting after 5th November 1995. Pre-supporting members get a £1 discount and supporting members can convert to attending for the difference in memberships at any time.

To join, or for more information, please send your cheque (made payable to **Evolution**) to:

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

E-mail: [bmh@ee.ic.ac.uk](mailto:bmh@ee.ic.ac.uk)

Web <http://www.tardis.ed.ac.uk/~simon/evolve/>



USE THIS FORM TO JOIN EVOLUTION NOW (BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

NAME _____	I ENCLOSE (CIRCLE AS APPROPRIATE)
BADGE NAME _____	ATTENDING MEMBERSHIP .....£28 / £32
ADDRESS _____	SUPPORTING .....£16 / £18
_____	CHILD (5-14 YEARS).....£16 / £18
_____ POSTCODE _____	PRE-SUPPORTING DISCOUNT.....YES / NO
TELEPHONE _____	(PLEASE SEND COPY OF PRE-SUPPORTING RECEIPT)
E-MAIL _____	TOTAL .....£ _____
HIGHER RATES APPLY AFTER 5TH NOVEMBER 1995	I AGREE TO MY DETAILS BEING HELD ON COMPUTER

# INTERVENTION

## THE 1997 UK NATIONAL SF CONVENTION

*The 1997 Eastercon will be put together by a committee whose core is the Wincon team, which has run three highly regarded regional conventions. Most of us also have experience of working on some aspect of an Eastercon or Woticon.*

We believe that a good convention begins with an idea, not a hotel, so our programme will use the tried and tested Wincon method of taking a poor innocent concept, feeding it through a shredder and checking out the results. In this case the victim of our depravities is **COMMUNICATION.**

We will:

- Look at actual and fictional attempts to talk to extra-terrestrial intelligence and other life forms on this planet.

- Discuss the social impact of telecommunications and extrapolate our findings into the future.

- Examine languages ancient and modern, and consider whether the translators in Star Trek don't translate Klingon because it is made up entirely of obscenities.

- Dive deep into the trinity of Language, Truth and Power, and present stories from the semaphore

*Guests of Honour*  
*Brian*  
**ALDISS**  
*Jon*  
**BING**  
*Octavia*  
**BUTLER**  
*David*  
**LANGFORD**

**28-31 March 1997**  
**ADELPHI HOTEL**  
**LIVERPOOL UK**

*Attending Membership: £20*  
*Supporting: £10*  
*(Valid to 30 Nov 95)*

**Contact: 12 Crowsbury**  
**Close, Emsworth, Hants,**  
**PO10 7TS, UK**

e-mail: [intervention@pompey.demon.co.uk](mailto:intervention@pompey.demon.co.uk)

version of Wuthering Heights.

- Ask if it is as good to talk as British Telecom want us to think and whether Microsoft is



planning to bring out a spell checker for crop circles.

So if you've ever wanted to write short stories in Nadsat or Newspeak, discuss the relationship between language and perception, find out how an Ansible is really supposed to work or how to transmit Morse code by monarchy, then you want to come to **INTERVENTION.**

*We intend to fascinate, to educate, to amuse and to engage the imagination. To help us in our endeavours we need scientists, engineers, social historians, people who believe in Flying Saucers, people who don't believe in Flying Saucers, actors, writers, translators, adapters, artists, linguists, philologists and the plain people of Fandom. If you want to help please get in touch.*

## JOPHAN REPORT #89

Congratulations to Brum Group honorary president Bob Shaw on his engagement at Novacon 25 to Nancy Tucker. Also at Novacon 25 Martin Tudor and Helena Gough became engaged - it must have been something in the beer that weekend...

Two TAFF candidates were also announced at Novacon, so far the 1996 race features Michael J ("Simo") Simpson (SFX) and Martin Tudor (CRITICAL WAVE). Nominations close on the 2 December.

ATTITUDE the fanzine produced by Michael Abbott, John Dallman and Pam Wells narrowly beat Simon Ounsley's LAGOON for the Nova award for Best Fanzine - thus preventing another clean sweep for Leeds as the awards for Best Fanwriter and Fanartist went to Simon Ounsley and D West respectively.

The full results were as follows; the number in bracket indicates the number of points received after totalling first place (5), second place (3) and third place (1) votes on each ballot:

### Best Fanzine

- 1 ATTITUDE ed. Michael Abbott, John Dallman and Pam Wells (91)
- 2 LAGOON ed. Simon Ounsley (84)
- 3 EMPTIES ed. Martin Tudor (63)
- 4 RASTUS JOHNSON'S CAKEWALK ed. Greg Pickersgill (46)
- 5 FROM THE KELPIE'S POOL ed. Alison Freebairn (39)
- 6 BOB! ed. Ian Sorensen (38)
- 7 ZORN ed. Michael Scott (33)
- 8 FTT ed. Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas (26)
- 9 EYEBALLS IN THE SKY ed. Tony Berry (24)
- 10 THE WRONG LEGGINGS ed. Lilian Edwards (18)
- 11= ANSIBLE and FERMAT (15 each)
- 13 OBSESSIONS (13)
- 14 PLATYPUS (11)
- 15= DOG'S BASKET and DR BEECHING'S (10 each).

Then BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL (9); CYBRER BUNNY, OLAF, GAIJIN, READING MATTERS (6 each); BEER CAT SCRATCHINGS, CYBERSPACE, THE DISILLUSIONIST (5 each); BLEARY EYES, DREAMBERRY WINE, GERALD, SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND (3 each); ETRANGER, GOTTERAMMERUNG, MOSTLY HARMLESS, TASH, THINGUMYBOB (1 each).

### Best Fanwriter

- 1 Simon Ounsley (60)
- 2 Dave Langford (59)

- 3 Alison Freebairn (56)
- 4 Helena Bowles (52)
- 5 Ian Sorensen (48)
- 6 Mike D Siddall (35)
- 7 Greg Pickersgill (32)
- 8 Michael Abbott (27)
- 9 Bridget Hardcastle (23)
- 10 Christina Lake (19)
- 11 Lilian Edwards (18)
- 12 Joseph Nicholas (16)
- 13 Martin Tudor (12)
- 14 Mark Plummer (11)
- 15= Steve Green and Michael Scott (10 each)  
Then D West (9); Judith Hanna (8); Steve Brewster (7); Paul Kincaid (6); John Berry, Ken Lake, Antony Shepherd (5); Tony Berry, Ann Green, Dave Hicks, Alison Scott (4 each); Alisdair Hepburn, Robert Logger, John Richards (3 each); Jim Barker, Jane Carnall, Vinc Clarke, Steve Glover, Catherine McAulay, Jackie McRobert, Jilly Reed, Ivan Sinha, Pam Wells (1 each).

### Best Fanartist

- 1 D West (151)
- 2= Shep Kirbride and Dave Mooring (58)
- 4 Dave Hicks (52)
- 5 Sue Mason (47)
- 6 Ann Stokes (25)
- 7 Jim Barker (23)
- 8 Ken Cheslin (9)
- 9 Bridget Hardcastle (6)
- 10= Tim Groome and Tom Abba (5 each)
- 12= Harry Bell, Alan Hunter and Terry Pratchett (3 each).  
Then Dave Carson, Neil Gaiman, Chuck Harris and Teddy (1 each).

The self-created legend of sf author and would-be messiah L Ron Hubbard received another dent courtesy of THE BIG STORY on 13 July, when one of the series' researchers managed to infiltrate the Scientology movement's headquarters in East Grinstead.

The probe ended in farce, when the spy's secret filming was itself filmed secretly by "church" officials before police were called. Staff at the production company, Twenty Twenty, have since claimed their cars have been vandalized and a staff member's mobile phone "cloned".

Titan Books has appointed Ruth Cole as its new press and promotions officer; she can be reached on 0171-620-0200 (or by fax on 0171-620-0032).

The controversial countercultural journal HEADPRESS has published the first edition of CRITICAL VISION, a large-format paperback containing both new material (particularly



notable is co-editor David Kerekes guide to comics porn and erotica) and items from past issues. Copies cost £11.95 (plus £1.50 postage for UK orders, £2.50 Europe, £4.00 elsewhere) from Post Office Box 160, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 4ET.

John Hurt is working at Pinewood on THE DARKENING, an interactive video thriller.

Pockets too small to carry your favourite "Discworld" novel? Gollancz launches a series of "compact" Terry Pratchett books in October; each of the four initial hardbacks is 87x72mm, 352-416pp and costs £4.99.

Back in the full-size world, November sees the release of Pratchett's MASQUERADE, in which opera hits Ankh-Morpork - or is it the other way around?

Warner Brothers celebrated the opening of its twelfth multiplex, Leicester's £9 million Meridian Centre, by using it as the venue for 12 July's UK premiere of BATMAN RETURNS.

Nominations closed on 11 August for the 1996 FFANZ race, which will send a New Zealand fan to Swancon 21 in Australia next Easter. Voting closes on 8 December.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE DISCWORD COMPANION

by Terry Pratchett & Stephen Briggs,  
Gollancz, £6.99, 288pp,  
Reviewed by Chris Ridd.

Have you forgotten who Bishop Abbys was? Or Abraxas? ... Or Jack Zweiblumen? Now's your chance to find out, without having to reread all the Discworld books. THE COMPANION is an A to Z of, if not all of then most of, the characters, places and events described in the Discworld books.

Although most entries just consist of all the descriptions from the books, and so seem quite familiar to people, to spice up THE COMPANION there are also frequent sketches (by Stephen Briggs) and extra material. The extra material often appears as "guided tours", for example of the Unseen University. Whilst gently amusing, these pieces are not as funny as the real books.

It almost goes without saying that if you are a Discworld fan, then you will want to buy this book, because you probably bought the book before reading this review.

ASIMOV: THE UNAUTHORISED BIOGRAPHY

by Michael White,  
Millenium, 257pp, £5.99, p/b,  
Reviewed by Michael Jones.

In 1972, Isaac Asimov published the first of several collections in which the stories were interspersed with linking commentaries which, taken together, comprised a kind of extended autobiographical account. By 1980 these had been largely supplanted by a full-blown autobiography in two massive volumes. I wondered, therefore, whether there was any place for yet another book on essentially the same subject.

I must admit at this point that I have never read Asimov's own full account of his life. Nevertheless, it is possible to see how White relies heavily on Asimov's own writings for purely factual details. However, he has also talked to his widow and other people close to him and consequently has been able to add a lot of information on personal (sometimes very personal) matters which Asimov might have been less eager to write about himself. In addition, of course, Asimov could never have provided an account of his own death - although he did write what

amounts to his own epitaph, which is reprinted here.

The book is arranged so that from the point when Asimov started writing, each chapter of biographical story is followed by a chapter critiquing his output at the time. This is an effective form of presentation and although White displays a very obvious enthusiasm for his subject he does not refrain from adverse comment where he feels it is deserved. He writes in an informal, conversational style which leads to the occasional grammatical mistake or clumsily-constructed sentence, but all-in-all this is a nicely-compiled, competently-researched and well-balanced little volume.

Returning to my opening paragraph: I would say that it has a place in providing a handy introduction to the man and his work for a reader who does not want anything too heavyweight.

#### BORIS VALLEJO'S 3D MAGIC

with foreword by the artist,  
Paper Tiger/Dragon's World, £12.95  
Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

Actually the remainder of this review is by my wife, Ruth, as she seems able to see these 3D pictures much more easily than myself. It seems that the human race is divided once again - by those who can see them and those who are totally baffled by these intricate and confused patterns...

This is not a book for the beginner at 3D pictures, as some of them are quite difficult to see. However, if you are an "old hand", the effects are stunning. There are 26 full-colour illustrations: beautiful artwork, perfectly reproduced. Boris Vallejo has been working in the fantasy field for more than 20 years and according to his foreword he is well pleased with this book. He says that the visual quality, "knocked him off his socks"!

If you are a fan of this artist, you have to get the book. If you are a fan of boobs and glistening bodies you will enjoy it. If you have a shelf full of Magic Eye books this one's essential.

ACCUSATIONS: BABYLON 5 Book 2 by Lois Tilton,  
Boxtree, £4.99, 218pp, p/b,  
Reviewed by Steve Jones.

After a slow start, BABYLON 5 has improved greatly over its first two seasons. Now it knocks spots off anything STAR TREK has done recently. As well as one-off

stories, B5 has several on-going plots: the Narn-Centari war, the Shadows and increased corruption in the Earth government.

In this second B5 novel, Commander Susan Ivanova is hot on the trail of a particularly dangerous band of raiders. When an old friend of hers from Mars, J D Ortega, is murdered, Ivanova is the prime suspect and she is suspended from duty. Garibaldi's investigation is hampered rather than helped by three Earthforce investigators. It becomes clear that certain elements do not want these raiders investigated too closely....

This novel is part of the corruption-on-Earth plotline, and although it reveals no major secrets, it is a credible addition to the series.

NECROVILLE by Ian McDonald,  
Gollancz, £5.99, 317pp, p/b,  
Reviewed by Chris Ridd.

I find Ian McDonald to be a very variable author. Sometimes he is stunningly good, like DESOLATION ROAD, sometimes pretty mediocre, like SPEAKING IN TONGUES. This book is somewhere in between the two extremes, erring on the good side.

The heart of NECROVILLE is quite fascinating - the dead are able to be resurrected (in "Jesus" tanks!), and thus quite a large group is formed with somewhat different views on life (and death). Death also provides the means for humans to withstand long space voyages, and it is half-suggested that death is the natural evolutionary step for homo sapiens.

The book really feels like five shorter stories nailed together. Their common link is the Necrovilles, but I found myself continually waiting for the main characters to interact with each other. This made it somewhat disjointed and difficult to read. Otherwise, the descriptions of the dead societies were extremely vivid and exciting, almost enticing.

SAILING BRIGHT ETERNITY by Gregory Benford,  
Gollancz, £16.99, 404pp, h/b,  
Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

I have to admit that by the time I reached page 100 I really wasn't all that bothered what finally happened in the year 37,518 to Nigel Walmsley, the astronaut who encountered the Snark, a mechanical scout, in 1999, but actually in IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT back in 1978 and before that in "If", F&SF and

other publications as far back as 1972 - a history nearly as long as that covered by this Galactic Series of novels.

And that's a pity, because generally I have always enjoyed Greg Benford's hard sf stories. He certainly knows his science, but in this last volume he seemed to have lost his way, as did Nigel Walmsley. It's almost a "stream of consciousness" type of thing: wandering through the "Lanes" of the "esty" (space-time), his heroes can end up absolutely anywhere, and do. There are lots of conversations with and between aliens, in funny typefaces, in boxes, without quotation marks but with dashes instead, with odd paragraph spacing in two columns. It's all rather wearying. Maybe you'll be able to follow it to the bitter end, but I'm afraid I ended up by skipping to the final line, in which Nigel is buried, "in full view of the ocean of night". (I don't think I'm giving away much here.)

□□□□

Please remember that  
reviews of books  
should reach:

MARTIN TUDOR at  
24 Ravensbourne Grove,  
off Clarkes Lane,  
Willenhall, West Midlands,  
WV13 1HX, within  
ONE month of your  
taking the book.  
(NB: Change of address!)

The following people owe reviews, please ensure that these (along with reviews of books picked up at the last meeting) are passed to MARTIN TUDOR at this month's meeting on Friday:

Dave Cox: HOT SKY AT MIDNIGHT by Robert Silverberg (May).

Bernie Evans: THE DEUS MACHINE by Pierre Ouellette (February); NIMBUS by Alexander Jablovkov (March).

John Howcs: THE WAR OF THE LORD'S VEIL by Adam Nichols (August).

Robert Jones: ANTICIPATIONS ed David Seed (July); THE BIRDS OF THE MOON by Michael Moorcock (August); BEGGARS IN SPAIN by Nancy Kress (August); RHINEGOLD by Stephen Grundy (September).

Steve Jones/B'ham Uni: DRAGONCHARM by Graham Edwards (January); TALISMAN by Sam Lewis (January); WARHAMMER: WOLF RIDERS ed David Pringle (March).

Carol Morton: WITCHES' BREW by Terry Brooks (May); RONAN THE BARBARIAN by James Bibby (May); BELGARATH THE SORCERER by David & Leigh Eddings (July); ODDS AND GODS by Tom Holt (August); THE FEY: SACRIFICE by Kristine Katherine Rusch (August); SACRED GROUND by Mercedes Lackey (September); STORM WARNING by Mercedes Lackey (September); DJINN RUNNING by Tom Holt (September).

Tony Morton: OTHERNESS by David Brin (June); THE EMERALD FOREST by Robert Holdstock (August); STAR WARTZ by Patrick Tilley (August); FABULOUS HARBOURS by Michael Moorcock (August); ALIENS: ALIEN HARVEST (September).

James Robertson: BEGGARS IN SPAIN by Nancy Kress (September).

Apologies in advance for any book reviews I may have misplaced in my recent move. Please send me a copy of your review if it hasn't appeared yet and you are still being listed above!

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