

July 1996

Issue 298

BRUM GROUP NEWS

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

Group Chairman & Newsletter Editor - Martin Tudor, Secretary - Anne Woodford,
Treasurer - Sarah Freakley, Publicity Officer - Steve Jones, Ordinary Member - Alan
Woodford, Novacon 26 Chairman - Carol Morton, Novacon 27 Chairman - Martin Tudor.

This month's guest speaker is

Ian Stewart

on Friday 19th July,

7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel,

(on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre). Admittance: Members: £2.50 (Waged), £2.00 Unwaged), Non-Members £3.75 (Waged), £2.75 (Unwaged). (NB: Unwaged discounts are at the discretion of the Committee and will depend on satisfactory proof of status being produced.)

A popular speaker at Brum Group meetings and at Novacons, Ian Stewart graduated in mathematics from Cambridge University and is now Professor of Mathematics at the University of Warwick. An active research mathematician, his present field is the effects of symmetry on dynamics, with applications to pattern formation and chaos theory.

Much of his writing is centred on popular science, and his books include: DOES GOD PLAY DICE? (an acclaimed best-seller, translated into 11 languages); THE PROBLEMS OF MATHEMATICS; SET AND MATH; ANOTHER FINE MATH YOU'VE GOT ME INTO; FEARFUL SYMMETRY; THE COLLAPSE OF CHAOS and NATURE'S NUMBERS. He contributes to a wide range of newspapers and magazines in the UK, Europe and the USA, including the "Mathematical Recreations" column for SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) in the upstairs function room of the Prince Hotel, Station Street in Birmingham city centre (formerly Stephenson's Hotel, between the Electric Cinema and the Bus Station). The annual subscription rates (which include 12 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, Sarah Freakley, c/o 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH. (E-mail should go via: bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk) 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.

Colophon

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This issue was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier. For details of WAVE's competitive prices contact Martin Tudor at the editorial address on the cover.

Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for producing the address labels and transferring files; STEVE GREEN for his unsolicited (but very welcome) small press reviews and much of the news; THE BIRMINGHAM EVENING MAIL; WHAT'S ON; THE BIRMINGHAM VOICE; CRITICAL WAVE for the other news in the Jophan Report and the Events listing.

Forthcoming Events

6-7 July 1996: ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP GRAND RE-OPENING. At noon on Saturday the new premises at 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT, will be opened by Iain Banks, David Gemmell and Terry Pratchett. Further signing sessions will take place on Sunday in Circo's Bar (four doors from the new shop) on the hour by: Brian Aldiss, Chris Baker, Eric Brown, Jim Burns, Ramsey Campbell, Storm Constantine, Louise Cooper, Chris Evans, Maggie Furey, Simon Green, Colin Greenland, Peter F Hamilton, David A Hardy, Harry Harrison, Douglas Hill, Tom Holt, Stephen Jones, Graham Joyce, Pauline Kirk, David Langford, Christopher Priest, Mark & Julia Smith (aka 'Jonathan Wylie'), Brian Stableford, Freda Warrington and Angus Wells. Call: 0121-643-1999 for further details.

POSTPONEMENT!

PLEASE NOTE!
HARRY HARRISON
will NOT be speaking
to the BSFG on
12 JULY 1996,
as previously
announced.

However, we hope that
he will be able to speak
to the Group later
in the year.

19 JULY 1996: IAN STEWART will address the BSFG, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre).

26-29 JULY 1996: ALBACON '96, sf con at the Central Hotel, Glasgow. Guests of Honour: David Gerrold, Terry Pratchett, David A Hardy, Professor Edwin Dawes. Attending £30.00, contact: Flat 1/2, 10 Atlas Road, Glasgow, G21 4TE.

27 JULY 1996: COMIC, CARD & SCI-FI MART at Carrs Lane Church Centre, beside Marks & Spencers in Birmingham city centre. Opens midday. For further information contact: Golden Orbit, 18 Oak Tree Way, Strensall, York, YO3 5TF.

3 AUGUST 1996: KALEIDOSCOPE THE MAIN EVENT, media event at Stourbridge Town Hall, 10.30am-10.00pm. Contact: 93 Old Park Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 3NE, for further details.

10-11 AUGUST 1996: DELTA QUADRANT STAR TREK convention at the Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham. Confirmed guests are Tim Gaskill of the Official STAR TREK Fan Club of the UK and Robert Hollocks of CIC Video, further guests to be announced. Attending membership £35.00 (6-14 year olds £25.00). Contact: Infinite Frontiers Conventions, PO Box 8966, Great Barr, Birmingham, B43 5ST.

16 AUGUST 1996: MICHAEL J ("SIMO") SIMPSON, staff writer for SFX magazine, will address the BSFG, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre).

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, Connie Willis (Toast-master), Takumi and Sachiko Shibano (Fan Guests of Honour). Attending \$130.00 until 31 July, then \$150.00 on the door, Supporting \$30.00. Contact: c/o SCI FI, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

20 SEPTEMBER 1996: CHRISTOPHER PRIEST will address the BSFG, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre).

18 OCTOBER 1996: KEN MACLEOD, author of THE STAR FRACTION which was the runner-up in the Arthur C Clarke award, will address the BSFG, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre).

18-20 OCTOBER 1996: MASQUE 4 "the fourth British Costume Convention for all creative people, fantasy, sf, historical... but above all lots of FUN. Talks, Shows, Competitions." The Moat House, West Bromwich, Junction 1 M5. Attending £30.00, Supporting £10.00, Day attendance £15.00. Contact: Alan Cash, 130 Hamstead Hall Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, B20 1JB.

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 £27.00 until 30 September, £30.00 thereafter and on the door. Supporting £10.50. Progress Report #3 and hotel booking forms now available. Contact: Tony Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

15 NOVEMBER 1996: HARRY HARRISON, one of the Group's Honorary Presidents, creator of the Stainless Steel Rat, etc! Hopes to address the BSFG, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the Prince Hotel, (on Station St., behind New St. Station, near the Electric Cinema and Bus Station, in the city centre). (TO BE CONFIRMED!)

14-17 FEBRUARY 1997: ATTITUDE: THE CONVENTION at the Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern. Attending £23.00. Contact: First Floor Flat, 14 Prittlewell Square, Southend-on-Sea, SSI 1DW.
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. 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 (£10.00) per year, to be deducted from eventual membership fee (tba before 1997). Contact: Malcolm Reid, 186 Casewick Road, West Norwood, London, SE27 0SZ.

Although details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we 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 about) please feel free to write a report or review and send it to the editorial address.

The Small Press Scene

Compiled by Steve Green.

[The following magazines rec-eived British distribution bet-ween Easter and the end of May. Prices shown include postage; where names are given, cheques should be made out to the first identified.]

BUBBLEGUM #1: LOIS & CLARK third season listing (to be skipped if you

wish to enjoy the mid-season twist); low-budget film producer Matt Devlen interviewed; DEMONSOUl director Elisar Kennedy on making a movie for £4,000. [£1.00 from Sean Harry, 148A Queensway, London, W2 6LY.]

DAVID WARBECK, THE MAN AND HIS MOVIES: Interview and profile of actor at one point set to become the next Bond, but best known for his appearances in such films as THE BEYOND, TWINS OF EVIL and THE LAST HUNTER. [£4.95 from Harvey Fenton, Post Office Box 178, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 2YU.]

DRONE #23: Bimonthly newsletter of the Film & TV Model Club; tips on scratch-building the "missing" USS Enterprise; ufology; models include Sil from SPECIES, Boba Fett from THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, G'Kar from BABYLON 5, the new MARS ATTACKS series; actor Clive Mantle interviewed. [Club membership costs £10.00 per year from Andrew Hall, 172 High Hope Street, Crook, Country Durham, DL15 9JA.]

ESPYLACOPA #1: Comics strips, fiction with a fantasy or humorous slant. [£1.00 from Wesley White, Splotts Moor Farm, Wick, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 8JS.]

EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA #13: On-set report on Jean Rollin's LES DEUX ORPHELINES VAMPIRES; director Alex de la Islesiz and actor William Berger interviewed. [US\$9.00 from Craig Ledbetter, Post Office Box 5367, Kingwood, TX 77325, USA.]

THE EXPLOITATION JOURNAL Vol.2, #4 [#20]: European witch-hunting movies; horror movie sound-tracks; NIGHT OF DARK SHADOWS retrospective. [US\$5.50 from George Reis and Keith Crocker, 40 South Brush Drive, Valley Stream, NY 11581, USA.]

FANTASY COMMENTATOR #47/48: Sf historian E F Bleiler and poet A C Evans interviewed; essays on authors Ray Bradbury, Homer Eon Flint, Jules Verne, Henry S Whitehead and Fenton Ash, artist Roy Squires, wartime UK fandom (by Sam Moskowitz), rocket pioneer Philip Cleator and Voltaire's scientific detective, Zadig; poetry by Steve Eng, John Francis Haines, A C Evans, Andrew Darlington, Bruce Boston and Kenneth Bailey. [US\$11.50 from A Langley

Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, NY 11708-5909, USA.]

FLESH & BLOOD #6: Italian directors Michele Soavi, Joe D'Amato, actress Catriona MacColl, German director Tinto Brass interviewed; Screen Edge feature; MANIAC reappraised; reviews, news. [£3.95 from Harvey Fenton, as above.]

FRENZY #2: Director Kathryn Bigelow profiled; author Richard Laymon interviewed; eye-gouging horror films; director George Romero profiled; reviews; fiction by Noel Hannan, Tyler Endecott. [£2.00 from Neil Snowdon, 5 Wansbeck Cotts, Stakeford, Choppington, Northumberland, NE62 5JG.]

GOREHOUND #21: Finnish-language text; director Michele Soavi and horror movie collector Jack Stevenson interviewed; 1990s gangster cinema; actress Mary Woronov profiled. [£3.50 from Mikko Aromaa, Dark Fantasy Society, Post Office Box 178, 00521 Helsinki, Finland.]

HOLLYWOOD HORROR CLASSICS #4: "Black Lagoon" series special; book reviews; foyer photo spread; modelling hints. [US\$9.50 from Mike Gelino, 845 Edison Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84111, USA.]

INTERZONE #107: Fiction by Stephen Baxter & Eric Brown, Keith Brooke, Molly Brown, Robert Lionel Fanthorpe, Sean McMullen; Brian Stableford profiles John Brunner; numerous reviews. [£2.75 from 217 Preston Drive, Brighton, BN1 6FL.]

JUGULAR #0: Trial issue for planned horror fanzine; "Count Yorga" overview; Boris Karloff horror filmography; sound-track, video reviews. [£2.00 from Brian Turner, 46A Kent Avenue, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8NQ.]

LET SLEEPING CORPSES LIE: Magazine-length critique by Nigel Burrell of the 1974 Spanish/ Italian zombie movie THE LIVING DEAD AT THE MANCHESTER MORGUE. [£4.50 from Midnight Media, The Barn, Upton Lodge, Hamerton Road, Upton, Cambridgeshire, PE17 5YA.]

MANSPLAT #4: Anarchic sf/horror coverage; essays by Joe Bob Briggs; Pumpkinhead "interview"; "Handy Monster Zodiac Chart"; "Ten Stages of Drunk". [US\$2.00 from Jeff Gilbert, Hairball Press, Suite 591, 2318 2nd Avenue, Seattle, WA 98121, USA.]

MEDIA SCENE #1: Combined movie newsletter and horrorzine mail order catalogue, intended to be bimonthly; Lucio Fulci obituary; film reviews. [£1.25 from Media Publications, Unit C, 2 Leswin Place, London, N16 7NJ.]

THE MISSING LINK #5: Pre-1940s horror reviewed; extensive discussion of the relationship between Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi; profile of director Roland West. [£2.00 from Kip-Xool, 13 Lon Penllyn, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, CF4 6BZ.]

MONSTERS FROM HELL #2: FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL; LEGEND OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN VAMPIRES; Jimmy Sangster filmography; Hammer publicity campaigns. [£3.00 from Stephen Jones, 9 Park View, Langley Moor, County Durham, DH7 8JU.]

NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION #92: John Norman interviewed (part one of two); Damien Broderick slides between literary realities; Darrell Schweitzer on predictive sf; numerous reviews. [US\$4.00 from Dragon Press, PO Box 78, Pleasantville, NY 10570, USA..]

NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION #93: Fantasy playlet by Arkady & Boris Strugatsky; David Bratman on Mervyn Peake; Jack Dann. [US\$4.00 from Dragon Press, address as above.]

NIGHTDREAMS #4: Fiction by Rhys Hughes, Graeme Hurry, Peter Tennant, Anthony Cawood, Derek Fox, Simon Clark and D F Lewis, Jason Gould, Tom Baldwin, Caitlin Burke, Anthony Barker, Madeleine Finnegan. [£2.80 from Kirk King and Anthony Barker, 47 Stephens Road, Walmley, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B76 2TS.]

NOCTURNO CINEMA #4: Italian-language; horror movies; directors Claudio Fragasso (aka Clyde Anderson) and Quentin Tarantino, actor Luigi Montefiori interviewed; Nazi exploitation cinema; video reviews. [£4.00 - cash or international money order - from MBE 258 Via XXV Aprile, 37/B, 20091 Bresso (MI), Italy.]

PAPERBACKS, PULPS & COMICS #3: sf movie novelizations; INTERZONE checklist; John Brunner tribute and bibliography; "Jeff Hawke" retrospective; THE SPIDER appraised; early UK "girlie" publishers. [£3.95

from Zardo Books, 20 Whitecroft, Dilton Marsh, Westbury, Wiltshire, BA13 4DJ.]

PEEPING TOM #22: Fiction by Guy N Smith, Ben Leech (aka Steve Bowkett), Hugh Collingbourne, D F Lewis, Mary Wallace, Simon Woodward. [£2.10 from David Bell, Yew Tree House, 15 Nottingham Road, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire, LE65 1DJ.]

THE PETER CUSHING FILE #1: Addendum to scrap-book-format tribute published immediately before its subject's death in 1994, here containing both archive material and personal eulogies from those he worked with. [£2.50 from Simon Flynn, 41 Hartley Road, West Croydon, Surrey, CR0 2PJ.]

PROHIBITED MATTER #5: "Feminism Versus Censorship" commentary; fiction and comics by Antoinette Ryder, Steve Carter, Rod Marsden, Mark McAuliffe, P J Roberts, D Sandy Nielsen, Don Boyd, Pauline Scarf, Barbara Custer, Geoff Jackson. [A\$5.00 from Rod Marsden, Post Office Box 19, Spit Junction, NSW 2088, Australia.]

SACCADE #7: Fiction and poetry by John B Ford, Paul Pinn, Dave Kendall, Sheila Holigon (interviewed elsewhere), Maureen Braithwaite; director Larry Cohen profiled; second instalment of "weird fiction" biographical guide. [£1.75 from Robert Gill, 93 Green Lane, Dronfield, Sheffield, S18 6FG.]

SMALL SAILOR #1: Rock-orientated fanzine, but includes a "horror top 10" by Home Made Productions director Paul Shrimpton and assorted video reviews. [£1.00 from Richard Thompson, 39 Station Road, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, YO7 1QH.]

SAMHAIN #55: On-set report from German gorefest PREMUTOS; director Tsui Hark and Encore laser disc exec Stephen Haynes interviewed; extensive reviews. [£2.00 from 77 Exeter Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon, EX3 0LX.]

SCI-FI ENTERTAINMENT Vol.2, #6 [#12]: Bimonthly magazine of the Sci-Fi Channel; actors Terry Farrell, Matt Frewer and Bruce Boxleitner interviewed; X-FILES critique; OUTER LIMITS executive producer Richard Lewis and HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS exec Robert Tapert interviewed. [US\$4.95 from 441 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 22070, USA.]

SCI-FI ENTERTAINMENT Vol.3, #1 [#13]: DR WHO, DRAGONHEART previewed;

PHANTOM screenwriter Jeffrey Boam, Dark Horse exec Mike Richardson, THE ARRIVAL director David Twohy interviewed; tribute to CAT PEOPLE producer Val Lewton. [As above.]

SHOCK CINEMA #8: Dozens of obscure films reviewed, from Fulci's A LIZARD IN WOMAN'S SKIN through SONIC OUTLAWS to the appalling Japanese superhero flick RAPEMAN. [US\$6.00 from Steve Puchalski, Post Office Box 518, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009, USA.]

SIERRA HEAVEN #2: Fiction by Rhys Hughes, Roger Keen, Chris Bell, Geoffrey Duncan Blogg, David Murphy, A M Decker, Cherith Baldry, Ken Alden, Tim Lebbon, Robert Neilson, Roy Gray; book, fanzine reviews. [£3.75 from Alex Bardy, 29 Harrier Way, Evelyn Mews, Breckton, London, E6 4YP.]

SKINTOMB #7: Horror book and film reviews; fiction by Alan Casey, Duane Watson, Kirstyn McDermott; Movie World trip report; censorship court memoir. [A\$10.00 from Rod Williams, Post Office Box 97, Southland Centre, Cheltenham, VIC 3192, Australia.]

SQUANE'S JOURNAL#2: Mark Morris interview and profile; fiction by Mark Morris, Peter James, Simon Clark; columns by Steve Harris, Mark Chadbourn. [£2.50 from Simon Wady, 209 Beacon Road, Chatham, Kent, ME5 7BU.]

SUSPIRIA #4: Spanish-language "splatter" fanzine; Dario Argento's eponymous chiller; early Hammer horror; Troma feature; zombie comic strip; assorted filmographies. [No price shown; from Cesar Souza, Rua Riachuelo, 1334 sl.108, Porto Alegre RS, CEP 90.010-273, Brazil.]

UNCUT #1: New journal of "world-wide video weirdness"; actor-director Paul Naschy interviewed; extensive review section, highlighting movies which largely slipped by the censors. [£3.50 from Midnight Media, address as for LET SLEEPING CORPSES LIE.]

VIDEO JUNKIE #1: Toho's new Godzilla movies; Seattle side-show sleaze; 1970s Hammer horror; director Al Adamson profiled; Hong Kong action cinema. [US\$9.00 from Thomas T Timmons, Post Office Box 4051, Ventura, CA 93007, USA.]

VIOLENT SPECTRES #4: Final issue; fiction by Steve Harris, Paul Finch;

small press column by Rick Cadger.
[£1.75 from Adam Bradley, 28 Treaty
Street, Islington, London, N1 0SY.]

WE BELONG DEAD #7: Hammer make-up
tribute; Vincent Price, Tod Browning and
Lon Chaney profiled; RKO horror
highlights; James Whale's FRANKENSTEIN
reappraised. [£4.00 from Eric
McNaughton, 3 Gladys Street, New
Basford, Nottingham, NG7 7AZ.]

The Jophan Report #95

Brian Aldiss, Josef
Nesvadba, Canadian author Candas
Jane Dorsey and history professor
Edward James will be the keynote
speakers at "Who Speaks Science
Fiction?", a conference at the
University of Liverpool over 11-
13 July. Further information can
be obtained from the Science
Fiction Foundation, University of
Liverpool, Post Office Box 123,
Liverpool, L69 3DA.

One of the more bizarre JFK
conspiracy theories is expounded
in WHO KILLED KENNEDY (note the
lack of question mark), David
Bishop's attempt to tie the
world's most famous assassination
to its most famous time-
traveller. The £4.99 paperback
was released through Virgin's DR
WHO imprint on 18 April.

US fanwriter Teresa Nielsen
Hayden was injured in April, when
her car was rear-ended by another
vehicle, but is reported to be on
the road to a full recovery.

The Birmingham Rep's summer
season continues with a new
adaptation by David Edgar of
Robert Louis Stevenson's THE
STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR
HYDE, running until 20 July.

Intervention, the 1997
Eastercon, continues its policy
of fannish glasnost on 20 July,
when it hosts an open programming
forum at London's Jubilee public

house (near Waterloo tube
station); running from 2.30pm
till approximately 6.30pm.
Suggestions for the fan
programme, on the other hand,
should be directed to 33 Scott
Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ.

The Birmingham-based horror
and dark fantasy group the Black
Lodge moved to its new venue on 7
May: the bar of the Midlands Arts
Centre, opposite Edgbaston
Cricket Ground. Meetings will
continue to be held on the first
Tuesday of each month.

Book Reviews

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FOURTH
KIND by C.D.B. Bryan,
Orion, 642pp, £6.99, p/b.
Star Rating ** (if you like this
kind of thing)
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

In case you've forgotten,
the fourth kind is where you
actually meet extra-terrestrials
and sometimes involves abduction
and insemination. So this is a
thick book of supposedly true
alien encounter stories, backed
up by hypnotic sessions in an
attempt to get at the truth. In
fact, almost half the book is a
blow by blow account of an
Abduction Study Conference, at
MIT in 1992. Everything is
presented scientifically, with
notes, an index, a bibliography
and so on, but it's too long-
winded. For real UFO enthusiasts
only.

SUNDIVER by David Brin
Orbit, £5.99, 340pp, p/b
Reviewed by Chris Ridd.

The future earth in SUNDIVER
has been contacted by alien
races. There are very strict
relationships between all the
alien races, in terms of how each
race achieved status, and how

many other races each race has helped to achieve sentience. Thus the most important species are the ones who have assisted (are "patrons" to) many other species ("clients"). Mankind is regarded as unique in the galaxy as it has somehow achieved sentience without the assistance of any sponsor species, and this uniqueness provides the core of the tension in the story.

There are two main plots in SUNDIVER; the more interesting of the two surrounds an investigation into the destruction of an earth-built ship which was flying (deliberately!) through the Sun's chromosphere.

Alas, this plot is resolved well before the end of the book. The other plot, which was much less interesting to read through, was all about the discoveries the Sunships were making in the Sun. This all got a bit tedious and boring, unfortunately, and because the last chunk of the book was pretty tedious, the lasting impression I have of the book was that it was quite tedious.

MOTHS TO A FLAME by Sarah Ash,
Orion £4.99, 296 pages
SONGSPINNERS by Sarah Ash,
Orion £16.99, 325 pages
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Both these novels, the first from a new fantasy writer, have considerable merit. They are also deeply flawed.

Moths to a Flame begins in a very clichéd fashion. Just as the hero, Lai, is about to take part in an initiation ceremony in a sacred grove, raiders descend, kill most people and abduct him and his twin sister to be sold into slavery. Naturally, both fall on their feet, Lai overcoming his pacifist scruples and becoming a superb swordsman while his sister becomes the Ruler's beloved concubine.

Fortunately there is another, intriguing strand to the novel. At the same time that the twins arrive, so do the moon-moths. The dust from their wings is a powerful aphrodisiac and has addictive and healing properties. With the moths also comes plague. The mystery is to discover the connection between the moths and the plague. Descriptions are good and the writing competent but the climax adds power, the characterisation is emotionally flat and the political intrigue doesn't.

SongspINNERS is very similar. It, too, contains a mystery. This time it involves the circumstances surrounding the death of Oriol's mother Iridial. All Oriol knows is that her father has banned music from the household but Oriol has secretly taught herself to play the cithara in the isolation of her mother's shrine. It is here she meets two fugitives from the neighbouring country, one of whom is a composer whose hands have been badly burnt, the other a castrato. They bring the music into her life that precipitates the symptoms of the condition that killed her mother. Everything is hugely coincidental and, as in Moths to a Flame there is the renegade scholar who puts together the clues to solve the problems.

Insufficient effort has been made to produce convincing settings. While there are strange names for obvious things - they all drink a stimulant called gaffe and there are quite well realised religious belief systems there are also too familiar things, like willow herb plants and elderflower cordials. And in SongspINNERS characters have a habit of using Italianate endearments, like 'miu caru' and 'carissa'. These are books which are quite enjoyable while you are reading them but which fall apart

if you start to think about the actual content.

THE ART OF DAVID B MATTINGLY (ALTERNATE VIEWS, ALTERNATE UNIVERSES), Text by David B Mattingly with Cathleen Cogswell, Paper Tiger, £12.99, limpback, Star Rating: ****

REFLECTIONS: THE ART OF STEPHEN BRADBURY, text by David J Howe, Paper Tiger, £12.99, limpback, Star Rating: ***

THE BOOK OF THE UNICORN, text by Nigel Suckling, illustrated by Linda & Roger Garland, Paper Tiger, £12.95, limpback, Star Rating: ***
Reviewed by David A Hardy.

Three books, same size, same publisher, one four pence cheaper than the others (why?), four artists, several different styles, of which the first two books are probably closest, although the first is definitely much more sf, the second fantasy.

Dave Mattingly (we've met, so can skip the 'David A' or 'David B'!) paints in extreme detail, and he goes for bright colours - sometimes a bit too bright for my taste: red spaceships, purple dragons with yellow mouths and eyes, strong contrasts between complementary, almost primary colours. Although he doesn't say so, he could be influenced by Alex Schomberg in his style (he does mention Kirby). Occasionally his very clear, sharp style can be a disadvantage, as the eye can't decide where to rest, and his figures can look somewhat posed, static and 'stagy'. This probably stems from his beginnings, when he worked as a matte painter for Disney, which shows.

I much prefer his hardware; he paints some very convincing futuristic vehicles, as well as some fantastic ones. Cityscapes, too. On page 82 he starts to relate how he turned in 1993 to

doing computer art on an Apple Mac. He's obviously well into 3-D programs, and knows how to use them - no mean accomplishment, as I know well (I'm still struggling with those). His art for MINDSTAR RISING is done in Photoshop, and takes advantage of that program's text/graphic capabilities. Excellent stuff, and one for every sf art fan's bookshelf.

The same can be said, I suppose, of Stephen Bradbury's book, but for fantasy fans. I must admit that my first thought on looking through it was "Rodney Mathews", but that's unfair. There certainly are similarities in style, and especially in colour-schemes, but there it ends. Bradbury is more conventional, less quirky. His work has appeared on the covers of many well-known fantasy and horror novels over the last 15 years. Again, it is crisp and sharp, with nice and sometimes subtle use of the airbrush, and the book is a worthy addition to the ever-growing Paper Tiger range.

This publisher has produced other books by Linda and Roger Garland (GARLANDS OF FANTASY), and this one contains many fine examples of their work, though there is no indication of which artist painted which illustration (in some cases, no doubt, both). Many of the illustrations are softer and more stylized than the other two books', with some very nice textures, as well as Celtic-type decorations. However, although it is the art that will interest many readers, ostensibly at least this is a book about unicorns (surprise!), and contains short versions of several unicorn tales and legends, as well as descriptions and analyses of the myth of this could-be beautiful animal, in the East and West, and with a section devoted to "The Lion and the Unicorn". Quite a useful

reference book, if you tire of the pictures.

THE TOUGH GUIDE TO FANTASYLAND
by Diana Wynne Jones,
Vista/Gollancz,
223pp, £6.99, p/b.
Star Rating ****.
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Jones writes wonderfully entertaining SF and fantasy novels for children, which more adults should read. Here she's poking fun at all heroic fantasy writers who take themselves too seriously (though she's too wily to mention any of them by name). The book is alphabetically arranged and is presented as a tour through Fantasyland. While the individual entries are extremely witty and the whole book is really a useful guide to the clichés and stupidities of the genre, I'm a little worried about who is going to buy and read it. I fear that many fantasy readers (though not Brum Group members, of course) do take it all a little too seriously and might object to their favourite literature being satirised in this way. They might not want to be alerted to the fact that most fantasy worlds possess no sensible ecology or economy and are choc-a-bloc with over-used plot conveniences such as dragons, castles, quests and wizards.

BIOGRAPH by John White
Fractal Press, 192pp, £7.99, p/b.
Reviewed by William McCabe.

This is the first time I've found a novel that tries to present "cyber" without the "punk". Here you have the massive links of a vast computer network that has "taken over" without any of the negative aspects of social disaster that you find in the "cyberpunk" novels. Most of the time it feels a bit like BRAVE NEW WORLD

without the negative aspects. Maybe this is where it goes wrong.

Imagine a world where (almost) everyone is connected up to a global all-seeing computer network. Democracy is more than elections - wealth and social standing are counted in proxies (proxy votes) and everything seems to be voted for. What could possibly go wrong?

To begin with we have a global computer crash that puts the whole system out of commission for hours. Then there's the story of the asteroid/starship whose departure with billions of people threatens to destroy the entire universe. Then there's the first contact with aliens. It all sounds terribly exciting but somehow, it isn't. The first disaster is passed without any real difficulties, the second passes before you know it's happened, and the third seems somehow too artificial. The plot of the book revolves around Roath Stand (well, it's supposed to be the future) who is bored, needs to get out of a rut and get a life. Maybe this explains the lack of pace?

Overall this shows a new and different vision but not a strong story.

THE UNSEEN UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE
Terry Pratchett's Discworld
Quizbook compiled by David
Langford,
Vista/Gollancz, 224pp, £3.99,
p/b.

Star Rating: ** for normal people
***** for sad Discworld
obsessives
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

And so the Discworld spin-off books continue. The irrepressible Langford has done the sort of clever and amusing job you'd expect. There are sections of questions under a multitude of downright bizarre

headings: Meganumerology, Adhesive Ultimates, Gastrology (in three parts), Egregiosity, Parvorectology, etc, all with their answers comfortably close by. Even if you've read every Discworld novel, you'll find some (most?) of the questions cortex-twistingly difficult. A silly and entertaining item.

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The ratings are:

* = Crap, beyond belief.
** = Crap, but readable.
*** = Not too bad, really.
**** = Pretty good actually.
***** = BUY IT!

Please remember that reviews of books should reach Martin Tudor at 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, WV13 1HX, within ONE MONTH of your taking the book.

A number of people still owe reviews, their names are followed by the books they have yet to review (and the month in which they received them). Please ensure that these, along with reviews of books picked up at the last meeting are passed/mailed to Martin Tudor at/by this month's meeting:

Dave Cox: HOT SKY AT MIDNIGHT by Robert Silverberg (5/95).

Bernie Evans: THE DEUS MACHINE by Pierre Ouellette (2/95); NIMBUS by Alexander Jablokov (3/95).

Sarah Freakley: MAGNIFICAT by Julian May (5/96); A RISE OF A MERCHANT PRINCE by Raymond E Feist (5/96).

Simon R Green: MEMORY SEED by Stephen Palmer (4/96).

John Howes: THE WAR OF THE LORD'S VEIL by Adam Nichols (8/95).

Robert Jones: JERUSALEM COMMANDS by Michael Moorcock (1/96); RING by Stephen Baxter (2/96); THE UPLIFT WAR by David Brin (3/96); DEAD THINGS by Richard Calder (4/96); STAR BEAST by Will Baker (4/96); SAILING TO UTOPIA by Michael Moorcock (5/96).

Steve Jones/B'ham Uni: DRAGONCHARM by Graham Edwards (1/95); TALISMAN by Sam Lewis (1/95); WARHAMMER: WOLF RIDERS ed David Pringle (3/95); BRIGHTNESS REEF by

David Brin (1/96); SEASONS OF PLENTY by Colin Greenland (5/96).

Adrian Middleton: DR WHO THE MISSING ADVENTURES: LORDS OF THE STORM by David A Mcintee (2/96); DOCTOR WHO: TIME AND THE RANI by Pip & Jane Baker (2/96); DR WHO: PARADISE TOWERS by Stephen Wyatt (2/96); STAR WARS: THE LOST JEDI ADVENTURE GAME BOOK by Paul Cockburn (2/96); STARTIDE RISING by David Brin (2/96).

Carol Morton: WITCHES BREW by Terry Brooks (5/95); RONAN THE BARBARIAN by James Bibby (5/95); THE FEY: SACRIFICE by Kristine Katherine Rusch (8/95); SACRED GROUND by Mercedes Lackey (9/95); STORM WARNING by Mercedes Lackey (9/95); THE HEDGE OF MIST by Patricia Kennedy-Morrison (5/96); THE LIONS OF AL-RASSAN by Guy Gavriel Kay (5/96).

Tony Morton: RICHTER 10 by Arthur C Clarke & Mike McQuay (2/96); THE SIRENS OF TITAN by Kurt Vonnegut (5/96). James Robertson: BEGGARS IN SPAIN by Nancy Kress (9/95); AXIOMATIC by Greg Egan (4/96); THE BAKER'S BOY by J V Jones (4/96).

Peter Weston: THE STARS ARE ALSO FIRE by Poul Anderson (1/96).

Would the person who took a copy of LIFE FORM by Alan Dean Foster in January this year, please either send in their review or identify themselves - they had signed with a squiggle. Will EVERYONE please note that you should PRINT your name in the box provided as well as signing for the review book(s) you pick up.

No ANSIBLE this issue as we have had to come out early; copies should be available at this month's meeting and the remainder will be mailed with the August newsletter.

Would "P. Phillips", who joined the Group in May, please send his address to: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP GRAND RE-OPENING.

6-7 July 1996

At noon on Saturday the new premises at 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT, will be opened by IAIN BANKS, DAVID GEMMELL AND TERRY PRATCHETT.

Further signing sessions will take place on Sunday in Circo's Bar (four doors from the new shop) by:
Brian Aldiss, Chris Baker, Eric Brown, Jim Burns, Ramsey Campbell, Storm Constantine, Louise Cooper, Chris Evans, Maggie Furey, Simon Green, Colin Greenland, Peter F Hamilton, David A Hardy, Harry Harrison, Douglas Hill, Tom Holt, Stephen Jones, Graham Joyce, Pauline Kirk, David Langford, Christopher Priest, Mark & Julia Smith (aka 'Jonathan Wylie'), Brian Stableford, Freda Warrington and Angus Wells. Call: 0121-643-1999 for further details.