

BRUM GROUP NEWS

Price: FREE

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The monthly newsletter of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group

(Honorary Presidents: Brian W Aldiss and Harry Harrison)

Group Chair-Yvonne Rowse, Secretary-Martin Tudor, Treasurer-Alan Woodford, Publicity Officer-William McCabe, Ordinary Member-Anne Woodford, Newsletter Editor-Yvonne Rowse, Novacon 29 Chair-Carol Morton, Novacon 30 Chair-Tony Berry.

STEVE GREEN will interview
STAN NICHOLS

for the BSFG on

Friday 8th October 1999, *

**from 7.45pm, in the Lichfield Lounge, second floor,
 Britannia Hotel, New Street, (entrance in Union
 Passageway).**

**Drinks may be purchased from Harvey's Bar on the Mezzanine level
 and taken up to the Lichfield on the second floor.**

**Admittance: Members £3.00 (£2.00 Unwaged), Non-Members £4.00
 (£3.00 Unwaged). (*Unwaged discounts are at the discretion of the
 Committee and will depend on satisfactory proof of status being
 produced.*)** (*VB: the second Friday of the month.)

Forthcoming Meetings:

12th November – Geoff Ryman

10th December BEER & SKITTLES at the Samson & Lion

The BSFG meets from 7pm in the Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham, (entrance in Union Passageway), on the second Friday of each month (unless otherwise notified).

The annual subscription rates (which include 12 copies of this newsletter and reduced price entry to formal meetings) are £15.00 per person, or £20.00 for 2 members at the same address. Cheques etc. should be made payable to "The Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to: Alan Woodford, The Treasurer, 81 Harrold Road, Rowley Regis, Warley, West Mids, B65 0RL, (e-mail enquiries via: bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk).

Book reviews, review copies and other contributions and enquiries regarding the Brum Group News to: Yvonne Rowse, Newsletter Editor, Evergreen, Halls Farm Lane,

Trimpley, Worcs, DY12 1NP (or by e-mail to yvonne@hallsfarm.softnet.co.uk).

Stan Nichols

I began my association with the book trade in 1965 as Assistant Manager of the London office of Washington's Library of Congress. During this period I edited the award-winning small press magazines *Stardock* and *Gothique*, the latter celebrating its 20th anniversary in 1985 with a special issue produced in conjunction with the British Fantasy Society. In 1966 I was a co-founder of the *Gothique Film Society*, now the oldest specialised film club in the country, and twice winner of the Federation of Film Societies' Excellence Award.

From 1971 to 1973 I co-owned and managed *Bookends*, a general/specialist science fiction book shop in West London. In 1973 I became a MS reader for *Sphere Books*, acted as Research Assistant for Dennis Wheatley on *Sphere's Dennis Wheatley's Library of the Occult* - a series that ran to 45 volumes - and was appointed a Contributing Editor of *Fortean Times*. I also read for *Penguin* and *Rider Books*, and began a four-year tenure as Manager and Company Secretary for *Dark They Were and Golden Eyed*, at that time Europe's largest science fiction and comics store. I joined the *Forbidden Planet* retail chain in 1976, as first Manager of its London shop, and stayed until 1981. My duties included helping to establish and run the New York branch. I have subsequently acted as a consultant for the company.

A full-time freelance writer since 1981, my work has appeared in a wide range of publications including *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Daily Mirror*, *Time Out*, *Films & Filming*, *Sight & Sound*, *Film Monthly*, *Movie*, *Video World*, *Video Re-View*, *Rolling Stone*, *Rock Power*, *She*, *Take a Break*, *Weekend*, *Woman's Weekly*, *SFX*, *Alien Monthly*, *Interzone*, *Million*, *Aboriginal SF*, *Starlog*, *Starburst*, *Locus*, *Skeleton Crew*, *The Dark Side* (review column), *Infinity* (review column), *Supernatural*, *Fear*, *The Scream Factory*, *Fantazia/Academy*, *Gamesman*, *Blitz*, *2000AD*, *Comic Media*, *Batman Monthly*, *Comics Scene*, *Fantasy Advertiser*, *Speakeasy/Blast!*, *Comic World*, *Focus*, *Prediction*, *Writers' Monthly*, *Writing!*, *Vector*, *Matrix*, *Focus*, the *Advertiser* (North London) and North London Independent local newspaper groups. I have worked on the internal publications of *BP International* and several other multinationals.

Column: *Time Out* - My science fiction/fantasy book review column for the London listings magazine appears every six weeks. In 1990 I was elected to membership of the Science Fiction Foundation, now located at Liverpool University. *Pan Books*, *Random House* and the *Camell Literary Agency* have employed me as a MS reader/advisor, and in September 1995 I began acting as Advisory Editor for Little, Brown's science fiction imprint *Orbit*.

I am an experienced proof-reader - most recently for Croner Publications and Historical Publications - and have line-edited several books. I have taught courses in Creative Writing and Journalism for City University and Westminster Adult Education Institute. As a freelance copywriter I have contributed to several major advertising campaigns for agencies including Saatchi & Saatchi.

Stan's latest books are:-

Bodyguard of Lightning

(Trade Paperback Out Now. Paperback October 1999)

Legion of Thunder

(Trade Paperback October 1999. Paperback August 2000)

Warriors of the Tempest

(Trade Paperback August 2000. Paperback March 2001)

Signing Sessions

Forthcoming signing sessions at Andromeda, 2-5 Suffolk Street. For confirmation and/or further details call 0121 643 1999.

5 Oct: William Gibson signing a world first edition of ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES.

(Unfortunately you will receive this mailing too late for the signing but Rog says he will have additional signed copies available if you are interested - Ed.)

16 Oct: 12noon. Peter Hamilton will be signing THE NAKED GOD (Macmillan £20). A SECOND CHANCE AT EDEN is published simultaneously in paperback by Pan at £6.99.

5 Nov: Brian Aldiss will be signing WHITE MARS in the evening at Novacon. IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE will also be available in paperback.

Rog is still waiting for confirmation of the signing date for Josh Kirby, A COSMIC CORNUCOPIA. Please phone Andromeda for up-to-date information. Signed copies of Terry Pratchett's THE FIFTH ELEPHANT can be ordered from Andromeda.

Forthcoming Events

8 OCTOBER 1999: Stan Nicholls will talk to the Brum Group from 7.45pm in the Lichfield Lounge, 2nd floor of the Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham, (entrance in Union Passageway).

18-23 October 1999: The Chrysalids by David Harrower, based on the novel by John Wyndham, will be presented by the Crescent Youth

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Theatre in the Studio at the Crescent Theatre, Sheepcote Street, Brindleyplace, Birmingham. The evening will also feature short comic pieces including Ken Campbell's GET WELL and Harold Pinter's VICTORIA STATION. Tickets £4.75 in advance or £5.00 on the door, contact the Box Office on 0121 643 5858.

5-7 NOVEMBER 1999: NOVACON 29, at the Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham. Guest of Honour Ian Stewart. Attending membership costs £32.00 by post or £35.00 on the door. Contact: Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, DY9 8SS.

6-7 November 1999: Memorabilia Europe's largest science fiction, film, cult tv, pop and collectors' fair. Hall 17, NEC. Contact Made in Heaven on 01899 221622 or NEC Booking Office 0121 767 4555.

12 NOVEMBER 1999: Geoff Ryman will talk to the Brum Group from 7.45pm in the Lichfield Lounge, 2nd floor of the Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham, (entrance in Union Passageway).

18 November 1999: Schrodinger's Box. Quantum physicist, Erwin Schrodinger, changed forever the way we look at the world and made it possible for the strangest things to happen. Reckless Sleepers explore this new physics armed only with their bodies, an experimental chamber they have constructed in the shape of a box and their wits. The Studio, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry. Box Office 0247 652 4524.

27 November 1999: Dracula by Bram Stoker, a musical performed by Katch 22 at Chelmsley Wood Library Theatre from 2.30pm and at the Solihull Arts Complex Exhibition Hall from 7pm. Call 0121 704 6962 for further details.

29 November - 4 December 1999: Return To The Forbidden Planet performed by St Augustine's Musical Theatre Company from 7.30pm in the Solihull Arts Complex. Call the Box Office on 0121 704 6962, tickets £5-£10.

10 DECEMBER 1999: BSFG BEER & SKITTLES Christmas Meeting at the Samson and Lion, Wordsley. See page 6.

25-26 March 2000: Memorabilia Europe's largest science fiction, film, cult tv, pop and collectors' fair. Hall 9, NEC. Contact Made in Heaven on 01899 221622 or NEC Booking Office 0121 767 4555.

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21-24 April: 2Kon, Eastercon at the Central Hotel, Glasgow with guests Guy Gavriel Kay, Deborah Turner Harris and Katherine Kutz. Reg £25, £20 unwaged; supp. £15. Contact 2Kon, 30 Wodburn Terrace, St Andrews, KY16 8BA. E-mail: 2kon@dcs.st-and.ac.uk
<http://www.theory.cs.st-and.ac.uk/2Kon>

13-16 April 2001: Paragon, Eastercon at the Norbreck Hotel in Blackpool with guests Michaels Scott Rohan, Stephen Baxter, Lisanne Norman, and fan guests Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer. Membership currently £25 Attending, £15 Supporting, £12.50 Junior and £5 Child. Contact Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. Tel. 0114 281 1572. e-mail steve.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk

Although details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise readers to contact organisers 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 (e-mail yvonne@hallsfarm.softnet.co.uk).

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.

Announcements

If anyone is interested in going out for a meal as a group before the meeting please meet at Andromeda at 5.50pm on Friday 8th. It would be worth giving me a call on the Thursday if you're interested so I know roughly how many people want to go and what sort of food they would like to eat. My phone number is 01299 400750.

In the last newsletter Dave Hardy suggested write-ups of the previous meetings to be published in the following month's newsletter. How about it? Anybody feel they want to volunteer, either on a regular basis or as a one off? Please contact me. If the writer doesn't mind the piece may also be published in the BSFA's MATRIX to let the wider fan community know what we're doing in Birmingham.

The Minutes of last years AGM are available if anyone wants copies

The Beer and Skittles evening has been booked. I have also booked a sixteen seat minibus which will, as usual, pick up at the Rotunda, Bearwood and Lye. We will not know the exact cost until we have numbers confirmed – the more people attending the cheaper it will be per head. The cost of transport and a meal will be included in the price. The landlady tells me there is now a bar in the skittles room so service will be quicker. If you are interested please give a £5 deposit to Alan on the door at the next meeting. Bring spouses, bring friends; the more the merrier.

And now another letter from Dave Hardy:

I was quite surprised to read D F Chillington's letter in the latest BRUM GROUP NEWS, because I enjoyed Robert Rankin's visit in July. True, there were 'dead patches' -- due, as our Editor/Chairman says, to the fact that the audience apparently had no questions (or was stunned into silence?). But what Robert DID say was, on the whole, more entertaining and even informative than many speakers who were able to keep talking non-stop for a full hour or more! I think I certainly asked enough questions to keep him busy (did the writer of this letter?). I also wonder whether the writer had read any of Robert's books?

It certainly always helps if one has read at least some of a speaker's books, so as to have some idea of 'where (s)he is coming from'. In the case of Robert Rankin, I bought his Brentford Trilogy (EAST OF EALING etc.) and THE SPROUTS OF WRATH after his first visit to the Brum Group. I must admit that I then rather forgot about him until his recent visit, but at the Andromeda signing session next day I bought three more. I took one with me on my eclipse trip (no, I didn't see it, but it was still great. . .) and people kept giving me funny looks as I lay on my sunbed chortling to myself. After this I went back to Andromeda and bought another six! I can't understand why this man isn't as successful (and wealthy) as Terry Pratchett, unless it's because he doesn't look and sound like a goblin and wear a funny hat?

I do agree that the speaker should be expected to stand up front for at least an hour, and I also feel that the Chairman should be ready to step in if a speaker seems unable to know when to stop!

David A Hardy

(Former Chairman, etc)

Jophan Report #125

By Martin Tudor

Author Marion Zimmer Bradley suffered a major heart attack on

Tuesday, 21st September and died Saturday 25th September 25.

Memorial donations may be sent to her church: Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, 300 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94704, USA.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's best known works were *The Mists of Avalon*, the *DARKOVER* series of novels and the *SWORD AND SORCERESS* series of anthologies. She founded *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine* in 1988. Several memorial services are being planned.

Messages for Marion's family and co-workers may be left at <http://www.mzbfm.com/news.htm> or mailed to MZB, Box 249, Berkeley, CA 94701-0249, USA.

The 1999 Hugo award Winners as presented on 4th September 1999 at Aussiecon Three the 1999 World Science Fiction Convention were as follows:

Best Novel of 1998

To Say Nothing of the Dog by Connie Willis

Best Novella of 1998

"Oceanic" by Greg Egan

Best Novelette of 1998

"Taklamakan" by Bruce Sterling

Best Short Story of 1998

"The Very Pulse of the Machine" by Michael Swanwick

Best Related Book of 1998

The Dreams Our Stuff is Made Of by Thomas M. Disch

Best Dramatic Presentation of 1998

The Truman Show (Paramount)

Best Professional Editor of 1998

Gardner Dozois (*Asimov's*)

Best Professional Artist of 1998

Bob Eggleton

Best Semiprozine of 1998

Locus edited by Charles N. Brown

Best Fanzine of 1998

Ansible edited By Dave Langford

Best Fan Writer of 1998

Dave Langford

Best Fan Artist of 1998

Ian Gunn

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer of 1997 or 1998

(Sponsored by Dell Magazines) - Nalo Hopkinson.

The British Fantasy Awards were announced at FantasyCon 23, on Sunday 19th September:

Karl Edward Wagner Award (British Fantasy Special Award)

Diana Wynne Jones.

August Derleth Fantasy Award for Best Novel

BAG OF BONES by Stephen King.

British Fantasy Award for Best Anthology

DARK TERRORS 4 edited by Stephen Jones and David Sutton.

British Fantasy Award for Best Collection

GHOSTS AND GRISLY THINGS by Ramsey Campbell.

British Fantasy Award for Best Short Fiction

"The Song My Sister Sang" by Stephen Laws (from SCAREMONGERS 2: REDBRICK EDEN edited by Steve Saville).

British Fantasy Award for Best Artist

Bob Covington.

British Fantasy Award for Best Small Press

THE THIRD ALTERNATIVE edited by Andy Cox.

The following details for FantasyCon XXVIII have been announced: 8-10th September 2000, Britannia Hotel Birmingham. Guests of Honour Storm Constantine and Stan Nicholls with more to be added in due course. Prices will be as for this year's convention, except that Supporting Membership is only £10.

They're offering a £5 discount to anyone who registers before the end of October this year. More details will be posted to the BFS Web Site at BFS News <http://www.herebedragons.co.uk/bfs/index.htm> soon. Information also available from David Howe at howe@which.net or c/o 46 Oxford Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 6DT.

A group of Australian fans have announced a bid for the 2007 Worldcon. As announced in *The Monotreme*, the daily newszine of Aussiecon Three, the chair of the bid committee is Rose Mitchell, the Treasurer of Aussiecon Three. Perry Middlemiss, Chair of Aussiecon Three, is listed as Advisor to the committee. The intended site of the convention is Adelaide, unlike the three previous Aussiecons, which have all been held in Melbourne.

Besides the Hugo awards, reported above, the following WSFS business was conducted at Aussiecon 3, this year's Worldcon. The site selection chose San Jose as the site of the 2002 Worldcon, to be called Con Jose, with Vernor Vinge, David Cherry and Bjo and John Trimble as Guests of

Honour and Tad Williams as Toastmaster. This was not a particularly startling result, as the only opposition was the spoof Roswell bid.

The ballot count results from the site selection voting for Worldcon 2002 as presented to the WSFS Business Meeting at Aussiecon 3 on Sunday 5th September were as follows:

Site	By Mail	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Total
San Jose	247	145	161	113	666
Roswell	51	32	15	22	120
-- write-ins --					
San Francisco	0	1	0	1	2
No Dams	0	0	1	0	1
Minneapolis in '73	0	0	1	2	3
Rottnest Island	0	0	0	1	1
None of the Above2		0	0	1	3
Total with Preference					796
Needed to Elect					399
No Preference	7	3	4	10	24
Total Ballots	307	181	182	150	820

Ballot counting was completed in a record 41 minutes

Also at the business meeting the No-Zone motion, carried forward from last year, was ratified by 56 to 43. The North American bidding zones are dead. Instead, no Worldcon may be selected within 500 miles/800 km of the Worldcon at which the site selection is held. There is a grandfather clause so that any bid which would be eligible under either the old or new systems will be allowed in the 2000, 2001 and 2002 site selection for 2003, 2004 and 2005.

The motion to reduce the lead-time for Worldcon site selection to two years was defeated by 32 to 29. An unexpected problem was that the WSFS constitution currently gives all Worldcon members the right to vote in site selection, but the reduction in lead-time would result in one year with no vote. The proposed amendment did not address this, but is likely to return next year.

A motion to extend Hugo eligibility to works published within the previous two years, largely in order to give works first published in the UK a better chance of competing, was referred to committee, to report

back next year.

Motions to divide the Dramatic Presentation Hugo into two were all defeated, but at least one such motion is also expected to reappear next year.

The Cassini-Huygens spacecraft, on its way to Saturn, was due to make a close flyby of Earth to get a gravity assist, early this morning (August 18.99) Cassini is a joint NASA and ESA project, and is due to reach Saturn in 2004, after a seven year journey. The project has cost a total of \$3.4 billion (£2.1 billion). Cassini has also had an assist from Venus on its circuitous route, and will get a further boost from Jupiter. The Earth fly-by was at 35,000mph and the boost was due to be of the order of about 11,000mph During the Earth flyby, nine of the twelve scientific instruments on Cassini were turned on to gather data on the Earth/Moon system. The Huygens Probe and its six scientific instruments remained dormant during the Earth flyby. The next bi-annual in-flight Probe checkout activities will take place in mid-September. The Cassini-Huygens mission is to study Saturn, its magnetic and radiation environment, moons and rings for four years. The European Space Agency's Huygens probe will separate from Cassini and parachute to the surface of Titan. Titan is especially interesting, not least because of its many Earth-like characteristics, including an atmosphere made up mostly of nitrogen and the presence of organic molecules in its atmosphere and surface. Lakes or seas of ethane and methane may be found on its surface. Cassini-Huygens will enter orbit around Saturn on 1 July 2004. The Huygens probe will separate from Cassini to parachute through the atmosphere to the surface of Saturn's largest moon, Titan, in November that year.

Astronaut wanted - no experience necessary! On or around 6 August 2003 a Starchaser 4 rocket will carry the Thunderbird spaceship on a 15 minute sub-orbital flight into space. Aboard the ship three Starchaser astronauts aim to usher in a brand new era of affordable access to space, incidentally bringing home the \$10,000,000 X-Prize. Two places will be offered to candidates without any prior experience or training.

Astronaut # 1 - RESERVED

Astronaut # 2 - FOR SALE This is available throughout 1999 for the bargain basement price of £64,500 (\$100,000). This place is offered on a first come first served basis. If this offer isn't taken up in 1999 the price will be doubled to £129,000 (\$200,000) for the year 2000.

Astronaut # 3 - CAN BE WON! This is offered as a grand prize to an international competition which will run for four years. Entrants must

answer correctly the following question; "name the first person to walk on the moon" and send this in to Starchaser with £1 (\$2) per entry. Competitors are welcome to enter as many times as they like. Entrants must be at least 18 years of age. Many "smaller" prizes will be awarded during the course of the competition but the grand prize winner will be the first correct entry drawn after our closing date of 1 May 2003.

Starchaser began life as an amateur rocket test programme set up by Steve Bennett back in 1992. The goal had been to develop an inexpensive means of delivering small scientific payloads to high altitudes.

This research was funded through a variety of sponsorship deals and by the mid-nineties the project had grown into a team effort. In 1996 the team successfully launched a 22 foot rocket called Starchaser 2 which qualified as the largest private civilian rocket ever to be built and flown in Europe. Later the same year the programme was re-launched as the Starchaser Foundation before relocating to the Physics Department at Salford University, England where Mr Bennett now serves as Director of the Space Technology Laboratory.

Seven out of nine launches have been successful as Starchaser has become internationally recognised as a leader in its field. The team officially entered the \$10,000,000 X-Prize competition in 1997 and has recently been ranked joint #1 seed by Future Publishing's 'Frontiers' magazine. Starchaser Industries was incorporated as a private limited company on 16th December 1998, its primary goal being to win the X-Prize by September 2003.

Steve Bennett successfully launched the latest version of his Starchaser Rocket - the 3a, from the beach at Morecambe on Friday.

While several earlier flights had been hit with technical problems this flight went smoothly - the 220lb craft was spot-on its flightpath. The craft achieved 700 mph within three seconds, developing four tonnes of thrust from nine rocket motors, before deploying two parachutes to bring it back down softly.

The next craft will be 26ft long and six times bigger. He aims for a passenger carrying launch test in 2003, which would bring him not only record status as the first amateur to achieve space, but a \$10m (£6.4m) prize as well. For further details check out <http://www.starchaser.co.uk> or write to Starchaser Industries Ltd., PO Box 21, Dukinfield, Cheshire, SK16 5FD.

(Many thanks to the following for the above news:

<http://filmmagazine.com/>; <http://www.herebedragons.co.uk/bfs/index.htm>.

<http://www.plokta.com/pnn> ;

<http://www.lineone.net/entertainment/index.html>; BBC News Online.

NASA <http://www.nasa.gov/today/index.html>;
<http://www.westmidlands.com/>; BIRMINGHAM EVENING MAIL;
WHAT'S ON; <http://www.variety.com/index.asp>; Steve Green.)

Book Reviews

TIME ON MY HANDS by Peter Delacorte; Phoenix; trade pbk. 397 pages (illustrated), £6.99 Reviewed by Dave Hardy

This book has a lot in common with the ~~the~~ **TIMESHARE** books by Joshua Dann (which you may have read if Rog got to you). That is, our hero goes back in time -- in this case to 1938 -- and mixes with a lot of film stars of that period, becoming friends (or more) with some of them. In this case, Gabriel Prince is asked to go back by Jasper Hudnut, a strange old man he meets in Paris, who has discovered a time machine. The reason? To try to change the course of the life of Ronald Reagan (known back then as 'Dutch' Reagan, pronounced 'Reegan') so that he never becomes President of the USA, believed by Hudnut to be the source of all today's ills. This does not prove as easy as it first appears. . . It's all pretty well-written, and the author is either a film buff or has done his research well. In fact, it's a good read. I was, however, not altogether happy with the 'mechanics' of the author's method of time travel. In my opinion he tries to hedge his bets too much, bringing in the theory of parallel worlds etc. (like TV's **SLIDERS**), so that even if Prince did change the course of history in one timeline, the original one would still continue as it was -- so what is the point? It's all a bit confusing and complicated. There are 25 black-and-white illustrations, in the form of photographs from the period, no doubt intended to add to the authenticity of the whole. All in all, worth reading, as long as you can suspend your critical faculties from time to time.

FANTASY ART OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM by Dick Jude; Voyager (HarperCollins); hbk; 144 pages, £16.99 Reviewed by David A Hardy

Let's dispose first of an obvious error on the inside back flap of the jacket: Forbidden Planet in London is obviously NOT "the world's greatest SF store" as stated. We all know why. But Dick Jude apparently once worked there, and is also a drummer. I'm not sure either why this is 'fantasy art of the new millennium', since it was all obviously done before the year 2001 (or even 2000)!

Having got that out of the way, I enjoyed this book. There are four artists

who paint only conventionally: Alan Lee, Don Maitz, John Howe and Brom. Three who still do so, but have also made the transition into digital art: Jim Burns, Rick Berry and Chris Moore. And three who work purely digitally: Steve Stone, Fred Gambino and Dave McKean.

The illustrations are well reproduced and well chosen, and the text goes into plenty of detail about how the artists work, how their lives developed, and so on, with plenty of direct quotes from the artists themselves. Some of the non-digital artists appear to be under the sort of misapprehension which is common among those members of the public who have had no contact with computers. Eg., Don Maitz is quoted as saying "The concept of pushing a series of buttons and having one's artwork materialize on an electric screen gives me great pause and trepidation. I prefer the hands-on approach." Speaking as an artist who now does 90% of his work digitally, I can say that it just isn't like that! For a start, I use a graphic tablet with a cordless 'pen' which allows me to recreate the feel of an airbrush, a brush, a pen or whatever I need, just like the real thing. . .

I could argue with the 'fantasy art' in the title, since much of the art is obviously SF, but let's not get into definitions (again). I was heartened to note that all but one of the digital artists turned naturally to the AppleMac when they made the change, only one using a PC. And quite right too! Whether you just want to look at some nice art, browse, or learn something about techniques and methods of working, and why artists turn to working on computer, you will find it rewarding and worth coming back to time and again.

DEATHSTALKER DESTINY by Simon R Green, Millennium/Victor Gollancz, Star Rating ***. Reviewed by Dan Waters.

The book opens on a world called Lachrymae Christi. Owen Deathstalker is mourning the loss of his friend Hazel D'Ark. She has been kidnapped by a group called Blood Runners. Owen, remarkably, commandeers a space craft and single handedly goes and rescues Hazel, fighting his way through hundreds of Blood Runners. Owen is of a select group of people who went through something called the 'Maze'. After surviving the people all received Superpowers, and Owen, as well as Hazel, lost these powers in some previous battle. Other members of this select group go on a killing rampage on the capital world and, if that is not enough, the wars between the Shub (AI machines who control humans through the computer Matrix) and other Aliens are not going well and then Come the Recreated to destroy the human empire. Only Owen Can Save The Universe!

Unfortunately this is the final book of a six part series. I think that if I had read the rest, or at least a couple of the other books in the series, I might have been able to understand what the hell was going on. To be frank, I found the situations the main characters were put into were bizarre and in a lot of cases totally absurd. The fact that a character like Owen has super powers and can destroy a legion of monsters at will isn't the problem I had with the story. The problem I had was that even though he'd lost all of his powers he was still doing it, fighting off hordes of creatures and escaping without a scratch.

However, apart from the absurdities of the book I still found it a fairly enjoyable read, although I would assume the fact that I hadn't read any of the other books made it more difficult for me to grasp and I had to make a much bigger effort to read than I would have preferred.

CHI by Alexander Beshler. Orbit, 306pp, Star rating **1/2
Reviewed by Dan Waters

This book is, to put it mildly, completely bizarre. It is book three of a trilogy of Cyber-thrillers. Set in the year 2038, it opens with a character called Butterfly who is Katoey which, if I understand the book properly, is transexual. He/She works in some kind of pleasure house, which is a front for a Chi smuggling operation. Chi is the life-force of any living thing and is extracted from the victim during sexual intercourse and usually results in death. The reason for this is Chi is a drug that bestows temporary immortality, which must surely be a contradiction in terms. The story is held together by the investigations of a freelance reporter as he tumbles into a scheme where apes and monkeys are taken from the wild a engineered to resemble humans. These apes and monkeys are given to childless couples to bring up as humans. This part of the story concerns an ape couple whose genetic programming is falling apart. This leads Paul Sykes, the freelance reporter, to discover the plant and animal version of the world wide web, which allows them to send messages to one another in a kind of e-mail system.

The book, although confusing and bizarre, has its funny parts, one of them being the revelation that one of the character were Microsoft missionaries all over the world shows just how sick this author's humour really is!

However, I would have preferred to read the first two books in the trilogy as I feel that would have made the whole story make sense to me. As it was I got bored very early on and then found it a real struggle to finish. Therefore I can only give it a two and a half star rating for, in balance, the book was confusing and weird, hard to follow and boring, balanced out

by Beshler's wicked sense of humour, which I think rescued the book very well. If you have read the other books in the series then I would think that this is a good way to finish the series.

THE REDISCOVERY OF MAN by Cordwainer Smith, Millennium Masterworks, 377pp, £6.99 Star Rating ****
Reviewed by Yvonne Rowse

Yet another wonderful book from the Masterworks series. I read Cordwainer Smith's NORTSRILIA as a teen, although my copy is split into THE PLANET BUYER and THE UNDERPEOPLE. I loved the books and was fascinated by the hugely complex history hinted at, the people mentioned obliquely. This volume of short stories goes a long way towards filling those gaps.

At the beginning of the book is a timeline from the Instrumentality of Mankind which gives an idea of the vast span of Smith's imagination, starting in 2000AD and heading on past 16,000AD. The opening story, 'Scanners Live in Vain', is set in 6000AD. 'Martel was angry. He did not even adjust his blood away from anger...' The opening sentences drag you into the sad and proud world of the scanner, the men protecting space voyagers by giving up their pain and their humanity.

In 'The Dead Lady of Clown Town' I finally found out who D'Joan was, the dog girl who began the drive for rights for the underpeople. 'Mother Hitton's Littul Kittons' graphically describes the defence systems of Old Norstrilia and 'A Planet Named Shayol' explains horribly why Shayol was the ultimate punishment. These are tremendous stories, wonderfully, occasionally oddly, written, full of fascinating ideas, mythical people, wisdom, cruelty, humanity. If you've never read Smith before I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to you.

THE SECOND ANGEL by Philip Kerr. Orion, 432pp, £6.99
Star Rating *** Reviewed by Yvonne Rowse

A fairly good book this, SF marketed as 'the thriller of the future.' I think it's this dual nature that I found somewhat off-putting.

The story itself is the traditional bank heist, except the bank to be robbed is the First National Blood Bank on the moon.

80% of people are infected with P2, a worse-than-AIDS type virus that remains dormant for an unpredictable length of time, around 15years, but once activated kills in three months. The healthy, and by definition wealthy, 20% deposit their own blood in secure blood bank. A healthy litre of blood is worth \$1.84million. P2 can be cured with a cheap drug

and a complete transfusion. Unfortunately, with the price of blood what it is, a complete transfusion is out of the reach of most people and it is not in the interests of the wealthy to find a cure for P2 or the value of their blood will plummet.

Dallas, chief designer for Terotechnology, designs the security systems for blood banks. His child, Caro, has been diagnosed as suffering from thalassaemia, an incurable genetic condition requiring frequent transfusions. The amount of blood Caro will need will leave Dallas with huge debts. Suddenly Terotechnology sees Dallas as a security risk, attempts to nullify the risk but instead leave him free, frightened and desperate for revenge.

The book is full of ideas. Much of it is fascinating. Where it didn't quite work for me was the info dumps. The Daily Telegraph, in review printed on the back of the book, comments that Kerr's 'work radiates belief in detail and knowledge'. Fair enough; detail and knowledge are essential to good SF but where the novel is a thriller the detail can get in the way of the pace and the plot. The detail in the text was irritating enough but the footnotes drove me to distraction. I know you don't have to read them but years of Terry Pratchett has trained me to never let a footnote go unread. This book untrained me quickly. Some of the notes were interesting, some seemed like simple inability to let the research be background. Do I need to know that a human blood corpuscle is one three thousandths of an inch in diameter? Not to appreciate the story. As Kerr writes about Microsoft 45.1, 'so much of what you were told was simply irrelevant, an interesting waste of time.'

In the end I thought this was a good book that could have been a damn sight better if only it hadn't had to explain all the expected SF background to the non-sf audience.

Colophon

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