

# **Brum Group News**

The *Free* Monthly Newsletter of the  
**BIRMINGHAM**  
**SCIENCE FICTION GROUP**

JUNE 2002

ISSUE 369

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Friday 14th JUNE  
THE BSFG WELCOMES  
NEW FANTASY AUTHOR

# **JULIET E MCKENNA**

Juliet E McKenna is a new author with four published works to date. All four books are part of the *Einarinn* fantasy series published by Orbit. Titles so far in the series are - in order - THE THIEF'S GAMBLE, THE SWORDS-MAN'S OATH, THE GAMBLER'S FORTUNE and the newly published THE WARRIOR'S BOND. The blurb for the first volume reads: "*In Einarinn, the secret of magic is known only by an elite few. They live in deliberate isolation under the watchful eye of the Archmage. But nothing lasts forever... Livak is a part-time thief and a full-time gambler, long accustomed to living by*

*her wits and narrowly avoiding serious trouble. But when she attempts to sell a stolen antique to a local merchant, she finds herself pulled into a new and dangerous world of political intrigue in which the stakes are higher than anyone involved can imagine.*"

Will there be a fifth? Why not come along to this month's meeting and find out.

Juliet visited Birmingham at the end of 2001 to sign books. The Orbit rep, Nigel Andrews, ferried Juliet around Birmingham signing every one of her books in sight! This is her first visit to the Brum Group. RGP

**JULY Meeting** - Fantasy and horror author and editor - and local active fan - **Mike Chinn** will be talking to the Group.

This month's meeting will take place in the Lichfield room on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel, New Street (entrance in Union Passage almost opposite the Odeon, New Street). It will commence at 7.45pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar and be seated in plenty of time.

At the bottom of the ramp from New Street Station, turn right, cross over the road and you'll find Union Passage about 20-30 yards along.

### **LAST MONTH'S MEETING**

Last month should have been a talk on science fiction conventions by Peter R Weston. But due to a 'double booking' (Peter was in Belgium visiting his daughter, Alison) he was unable to deliver the promised talk. Hah! Didn't I warn you that the rust was starting to affect the working of this PRW model robot? Did you really think I was joking when I claimed that the early Brum Group members built this robot from a kit that we bought off a Birmingham market stall? What do you think the 'R' in Peter R Weston stands for? Just like R Daneel Olivaw.... yes, you got it.

At very short notice - like a few hours - Vernon and myself decided to stand in and give a talk on the subject members were expecting. We covered most conventions since 1964 along with a potted history of the Group. Nothing was thrown at us afterwards so presumably the evening was enjoyed by those who attended. Mind you, it probably wasn't brilliant - no-one offered to buy us a pint....! *RGP*

### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**June 28-30 - the SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE** will be held at New Lanark, Scotland. Theme of the conference will be Utopias. Guests of Honour are Pat Cadigan, Paul McAuley and Ken MacLeod. Keynote speaker will be Andy Sawyer. Cost is £264.00 (all meals included) for SFRA and SFF members - see website for other fees, etc. Info from 22 Addington Road, Reading, RG1 5PT, UK. email: Farah Mendlesohn - farah@fjm3.demon.co.uk or Andrew Butler, ambutler@enterprise.net website: [www.sfra.org/sfra2002.htm](http://www.sfra.org/sfra2002.htm)

**August 9-11 - CONTEXXT (UNICON 20)** at University of Gloucestershire, Oxon, UK. Guests of Honour: Keith Brooke and Ben Jeapes. Details from Nigel and Sabina Furlong, 17 Cow Lane, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 7SZ, UK. email: [contexxt@unicon.org.uk](mailto:contexxt@unicon.org.uk) website: [www.cix.co.uk/-bugshaw/uniconwin/](http://www.cix.co.uk/-bugshaw/uniconwin/)

**November 1-3 - NOVACON 32** - the Birmingham SF Group's very own convention will be held at the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall, UK. Guest of Honour - Ian McDonald, author of *DESOLATION ROAD*, *ARES EXPRESS*, *CHAGA*, etc., etc. Cost of registration is £35 - send to NOVACON 32, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. email: [x15@zoom.co.uk](mailto:x15@zoom.co.uk)

**NOVACON is the one event that YOU should be attending! It is not**

# CREATIVE WRITING SUMMER SCHOOLS 2002

## Chris Morgan

*Bring a pen and paper for all workshops. Note that all centres have drinks machines but not (except for Stone Hall) food, so bring a packed lunch if you like. Please book your place in advance.*

**Saturday 29th June** at the Clock Tower Centre (0121 427 3213) **POETRY WORKSHOP** 9.30-11.30am and noon-2.00pm. Cost is £6.60 and £3.20 (4 hours of brand new exercises, handouts and examples to help you write better poetry. Please bring a recent poem of your own for detailed analysis).

**Monday 1st July** at Stone Hall Education Centre (0121 706 2744) **WRITING DRAMA FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION** 9.30am-12.30pm. Cost is £5.00 (3 hours - this will be an introduction to writing plays for radio and TV, with handouts, audiovisual examples and exercises).

**Thursday 4th July** at Northfield Adult Education Centre (0121 475 3638) **DEVELOPING CHARACTERS AND DIALOGUE FOR SHORT STORIES** 10.00am-noon and 1.00-3.00pm. Cost is £6.50 and £3.20 (4 hours of developing characters and their dialogue for short stories: lecturettes, examples, handouts, exercises).

**Saturday 6th July** at Archbishop Ilseley School (0121 706 2744) **WRITING SHORT STORIES** 9.30am-12.30pm. Cost is £5.00 (3 hours of developing characters and dialogue for short stories: lecturettes, examples, handouts, exercises. *Note that this will be an edited version of the 4th July workshop at Northfield*).

**Tuesday 9th July** at Northfield Adult Education Centre (0121 475 3638) **HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL** 10.00am-noon and 1.00-3.00pm. Cost is £6.60 and £3.20 (4 hours of plotting and planning for novels: exercises, examples, handouts).

**Thursday 11th July** at the Clock Tower Centre (0121 427 3213) **HOW TO WRITE FOR CHILDREN** 10.00am-noon and 1.00-3.00pm. Cost is £6.60 and £3.20 (4 hours of new lecturettes, examples, handouts and exercises).

**Saturday 13th July** at the Clock Tower Centre (0121 427 3213) **WRITING COMEDY** 9.30-11.30am and noon-2.00pm. Cost is £6.60 and £3.20 (4 hours of hysterically funny examples, exercises and handouts. Note that this is a repeat of the workshop of the same name held at Stone Hall in July last year).

too soon to register! Especially if you require a single room. **BOOK NOW!**

*All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organisers before travelling. Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses.*

*Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at [rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk), tell me about it in the shop or phone me at the shop on 0121 643 1999.*

## **2002 NEBULA AWARDS**

Best Novel  
**THE QUANTUM ROSE**  
Catherine Asaro (Tor)

Best Novella  
"The Ultimate Earth"  
Jack Williamson  
(Analog Dec 2000)

Best Novelette  
"Louise's Ghost"  
Kelly Link  
(Stranger Things Happen,  
Small Beer Press)

Best Short Story  
"The Cure for Everything"  
Severna Park  
(Sci Fiction 06.22.00)

## **2002 HUGO NOMINATIONS**

**AMERICAN GODS**  
Neil Gaiman (Morrow)

**THE CHRONOLITHS**  
Robert Charles Wilson (Tor)

**COSMONAUT KEEP**  
Ken MacLeod (Orbit UK, 2000; Tor)

**THE CURSE OF CHALION**  
Lois McMaster Bujold (Eos)

**PASSAGE**  
Connie Willis (Bantam)

**PERDIDO STREET STATION**  
China Miéville

(Macmillan UK, 2000; Del Rey)  
< < *Er - is this the first time that TWO authors from the UK, both with books published first in the UK, have been nominated in the same year???* - RGP > >

## **THE PRISM AWARDS**

The PRISM is a contest for published authors sponsored by the Fantasy, Futuristic, and Paranormal subchapter of RWA (Romance Writers of America). The winners will be announced at the RWA's annual National Conference in July.

*Light Paranormal Category*  
JUST WEST OF HEAVEN by  
Kathleen Kane, HEARTS ACROSS  
FOREVER by Mary-Montague Sikes,  
SEVEN RINGS BINDING by  
Catherine Snodgrass

*Fantasy Category*  
SHADOW IN STARLIGHT by  
Shannah Biondine, GODDESS BY  
MISTAKE by P.C. Cast, BUTTER-  
CUP BABY by Karen Fox

*Time Travel Category*  
THE PLEASURE MASTER by Nina  
Bangs, THE ENCHANTMENT by

Pam Binder, ACROSS A MOON-SWEPT MOOR by Julie Moffett

### *Futuristic Category*

THE STAR PRINCE by Susan Grant,  
LOCAL CUSTOM by Sharon Lee &  
Steve Miller, SCOUT'S PROGRESS by  
Sharon Lee & Steve Miller

### *Dark Paranormal Category*

SECRET OF THE WOLF by Sue  
Krinard, RAPTURE IN MOONLIGHT  
by Rosemary Laurey, DANEGELD by  
Susan Squires

<< Wow! Only the 2 Sharon Lee and Steve Miller titles really fall into the category labelled science fiction - they were first published by Meisha Merlin in the US in one volume and are currently being published in paperback - as SF - by Ace. But as for the rest...???? The ones I have seen are what could only be best described as 'bodice-rippers'. But that doesn't mean they are not good books - just much further away from the hard centre of science fiction. Is there a title up there that anyone in the group has read??? Hmm. I thought not. - RGP >>

## **WE'VE KNOWN ALL THE TIME...**

Over the past decade or so the values in Drake's Equation have been well enough to give quite a reasonable idea of whether there is life elsewhere in the universe. Now a couple of statisticians at the University of New South Wales in Sydney have taken the latest evidence of when life originated on Earth to come up with the probability of 95% that there is a one-in-three chance of life starting on a

physically Earth-like planet. Put this into the Formula and it is, near as dammit, certain that there's life on other planets; all we have to do now is go and look. VB

## **BUT HOW DO THEY KNOW?**

"Many of New Zealand's species of wildlife are unique to this planet" says the magazine for tourists put out by THE GUARDIAN in association with Tourism New Zealand.

VB

<<Both above items from NEW SCIENTIST 18th May 2002 >>

## **NEWS IN BRIEF ....**

.... the science fiction field has lost more authors in recent weeks - **John R Pierce** (b.1910), **R A Lafferty** (b.1914), **Damon Knight** (b.1922), **Richard Cowper** (b.1926), **Henry Slesar** (b.1927) and **George Alec Effinger** (b.1947) .... **DECLARE** by **Tim Powers** has been judged ineligible for the Nebula Award as there was a limited deluxe edition from Subterranean Press in 2000 .... Winner of the Philip K Dick Award for Best Novel published as a paperback original is **SHIP OF FOOLS** by **Richard Paul Russo** (Ace books) .... Winner of the James Tiptree Award is **THE KAPPA CHILD** by **Hironi Goto** (Red Deer Press) .... It has been proposed that NASA should be funded by taxing science fiction. Now that's what I call a brilliant idea. Can you imagine all those authors out there suddenly declaring their works are definitely NOT science

fiction - and all of a sudden the literati would start reading it. And like John Wyndham, Kurt Vonnegut, etc., the sales shoot up. Great! The downside is, of course that there'd be nothing left for NASA...



## BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note:- in future all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)) Deadline for each issue is the first of the month.

Despite my plea last month, outstanding reviews have still not appeared, and because of the situation at Andromeda, the supply of review copies coming in has been suspended.

### **BRING AND BUY BOOKS**

Yes, this is your chance to sell those unwanted books - mainly turkeys, I'm sure - and realise CASH! You'll also free space on those shelves. Just grab a handful or two off the shelf, shove them in a bag, bring them along with you to the meeting, lay them out on a table and watch the vultures pounce! Grab their cash before they can object, stuff it in your wallet, go down to the bar and buy a round of drinks for the committee. Simple, huh? Ok, well... not quite like that. But you CAN make money by parting with those unwanted books - c'mon, even YOU can't read everything you have

again. Do you REALLY want to reread Ursula LeGuin AGAIN. Once is too much for anyone. Ok! Ok! I'm in the minority, but there ARE those books sitting there doing nothing - and trying to sell them brings so much joy and interest to the meetings.

### **THE RAFFLE**

Raffle tickets are available as soon as you get to the meeting. You do NOT have to wait until the break when someone twists your arm - do it voluntarily.

The Group needs your cash to pay visiting authors' expenses, the salubrious surroundings of our regular meeting room, etc. It's just a quid - not even the price of half a pint! And you could WIN this month's prize...

### **FUTURE MEETINGS**

**July 12th** - local author, editor, fan, Mike Chinn will be talking about, among other things, the joys and sorrows of editing fantasy/horror anthologies and the problems of getting published.

**August 9th** - as many members are on holiday this month, we will be having an informal meeting at the Tap and Spile, in Canal Street, off Broad Street.

**September 13th** - under negotiation

**October 11th** - our speaker will be local comics writer, Ian Edgington. Ian has written a series of sequels to the new PLANET OF THE APES movie, published in comics form.

**November 8th** - the annual competition versus the Birmingham University Science Fiction Group. At their request, this year will be a quiz.

**December 13th - Christmas Social** - It may seem a bit early to be thinking of Christmas jollities but as more places get rid of their skittle alleys in order to pack in more drinking customers, the competition for the remainder becomes quite fierce. I booked this year's alley (the one we used last year) a couple of months ago, only to find later that I had been double-booked against a Japanese society (!!!). However, I have managed to book another, possibly better one, which is a bit out of town although well-served by public transport; it has its own bar and facilities and the real ale is excellent. Tickets will probably cost £10 which will include a basket or balti meal and prizes. More details later but put the date - 13th December 2002 - in your diary NOW. Tickets are available to members and their friends, relations, whatever. Bring friends along to make it a special occasion. VB

**January 11th 2003** - the Annual General Meeting.

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Thanks to Vernon Brown and to LOCUS for news and info this month.

The BRUM GROUP Website address is [www.bsfg.freesevers.com/](http://www.bsfg.freesevers.com/) Contributions, ideas, etc. always welcome.

Oh well, here we are again...I've cramped stuff up in small type and it comes to 5 pages. So I've reset it, expanded it, woffled a bit and it's now seven pages. Trying to get this newsletter into a multiple of four pages seems to get more difficult each month.

SO it's up to YOU. Let me have your letters, opinions, brickbats, praise, rudeness, cheerfulness, bitterness... just about anything except your continued bloody SILENCE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I am on the verge of resigning from doing this newsletter and if I do resign it could be up to YOU to produce it. And you wouldn't want that, would you?????????

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month at the Britannia Hotel, New Street. Membership is £16 per year per person (or £21 for two members living at the same address). This includes the 12 free issues of the Newsletter plus reduced entrance fee at each meeting. Cheques should be made payable to "The Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to our Treasurer, Pat Brown, 106 Green Lanes, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield West Midlands, B73 5JH

Please list below, or on a separate sheet of paper should you wish to keep your newsletter pristine, a list of:-

- 1) Your top 10 favourite SF books
- 2) Your top 10 favourite fantasy books
- 3) Your top 10 SF/fantasy movies
- 4) Five speakers you would REALISTICALLY like to see at the Brum Group (preferably still living!). Yes we can dig up bodies, but it wouldn't make for very interesting talks.....
- 5) If you feel unable to answer ANY of the above questions, just send in a top 10 list of ANYTHING - soaps, hates, football clubs, likes, real ales, women, men, etc., etc. - just about ANYTHING! Please prove that you are still alive....there's a special prize for anyone who DOESN'T send their list in - and you WILL NOT like the special prize! Trust me! Get listing!

All answers by email or snail mail - to [rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)  
or Rog Peyton, 19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL