

Brum Group News

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

DECEMBER 2002 ISSUE 375

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+ Steve Jones & William McCabe

NOVACON 32 Chairman: Martin Tudor

Friday 13th December

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

The Christmas Social - what does that mean? Well, the obvious thing is that it's held around the Christmas festivities time (the whole of December!!!). It also means that we are sociable. Does that sound obvious as well? I would have thought so but unfortunately it is the one event of the year when certain regular attendees turn their backs on the rest of the Group and are ANYTHING but sociable. Still, their loss. For the rest of us, this one meeting of the year is where we all turn up for a good evening and ALWAYS have a GREAT relaxed fun time.

This year will be no exception. The Lighthouse on the borders of Blackheath and Halesowen is, in many ways, a typical Black Country pub - great food, great beer, great atmosphere. But it does have one thing that most of the others do NOT have - a skittles alley. Yes, it's that game we all love (when we knock the poor little loves down) or we all hate (when the bl***y ball goes ANYWHERE except where we think we've aimed it!).

So, you've got your tickets, you've ordered your food and you're ready to roll. What now? Wait. Until next Friday, the 13th December (unlucky for some - they forgot to order their ticket. But lucky for you!).

WE MEET at the #9 bus stop in Colmore Row at 6.30pm (at the LATEST!) where we will travel to Halesowen after paying out 95p bus fare (or,

January Meeting - the Annual General Meeting. Make yourself heard - this is your chance to stand for committee. THINK about it? More propaganda next time....

like Vernon, you get to go free with your pass!). Arriving at Halesowen approximately 30 minutes later, we will get local taxis (about £4 for four people) to the Lighthouse about 10-15 minutes later. There may well be a local bus from Halesowen that goes out to the Lighthouse (we're still trying to find out).

At the Lighthouse, the evening's fun will begin. Drinks, skittles and, at about 8.45pm, the FOOD! Followed by more skittles, more drinks, more fun.

At approx 11.00pm we will be collected by minibuses (minibi?) to take us back to Birmingham City Centre. RGP

WHAT'S IN A WOR(L)D?

Vernon Brown

Several times lately when I mentioned Paracliology, I was asked what it was, which indicates that although I came across a version of the word years ago, it has yet to enter common usage. This is annoying because 'Paracliology' neatly fills a gap left by a general term for the other-history genre in science and science fiction. Granted, many people use 'alternate', 'alternative' and/or 'parallel' to describe other-history worlds - worlds where something in the past happened differently; a battle lost instead of a battle won perhaps, leading to a history and a present different from the one we know. Not only do they use the terms interchangeably but the words actually describe the subdivisions of the genre, which is like calling the study of the world around us 'biology', 'chemistry' and/or 'physics' rather than 'science', the correct term to use.

A quick glance at the word shows how well it fits its role. 'Para' means 'beside', 'near', 'beyond', 'resembling' and/or 'modification of', while 'Clio' is the Muse or goddess of History; the two together mean all histories different from our own. 'Logy', of course, is one of several suffixes used depending on context. The only difficulty I foresee is that people will abbreviate it to PC which has many other meanings. However, the original form of 'Clio' was the Greek 'Kleio', so the abbreviation PK could be used instead.

But why can't PK worlds continue to be called 'alternate', 'alternative' and/or 'parallel'? It's simple! As outlined above, not only are the words used arbitrarily but each is specifically linked to a particular type of PK world, which differ from one another in the way in which they were formed and therefor affect the rationale of the work in which they appear. An analogy helps here but 'Timeline' must be introduced first.

Imagine drawing a straight line and marking it off into 365 bits. Label the marks from January 1st to December 31st and title it 2002. Against each date write something you did that particular day. This is now your own basic timeline, representing what you did in 2002. History textbooks use this type to help the reader visualise a sequence of events. Physicists sometimes use a version of this to represent Time itself - the Fourth Dimension. Time is necessary to specify

position - e.g. it's no good agreeing *where* to meet without specifying *when*. This sort of timeline is/represents Time with the Present, in three dimensions, moving along it - a concept that appears in many forms.

Back to PK worlds where, for the sake of simplicity, we will only consider *our* world, Earth, and ignore elsewhere. *A la Einstein*, consider a thought-analogy: an engineer leading a self-sufficient construction team is left on the coast of a continent on an uninhabited planet where his task is to build a road to the opposite coast, using only local materials. He begins the road with flagstones, merging into crushed rock and then packed earth followed by clay bricks and so on to the far shore, moving as a unit and leaving no-one behind. He marks each day's work on a map which, because he moves at a constant pace, has equidistant date-marks. The map is like a timeline with each day's roadway, or events, emerging from the previous one and giving rise to the next in a continuous manner. This analogy of a road with a timeline will be the basis of our PK discussion.

The road represents our current timeline. Let's alter it. The engineer finishes early so he takes his unit some distance back down the road and reconstructs the last stretch of it, arriving back at the coast just in time for pickup. Because he took materials and knowledge back with him, the new length of road is very different from the old one and there is a discontinuity between it and the remaining older road. The road now represents the timeline of an alternate PK world where something has gone back in time to introduce a change that does not arise from the time before it arrives. The word 'alternate' means one thing being replaced by another different thing, which describes this PK world.

'Alternative' means a choice of two (or more) things. Here our engineer finds a mountain in his way and can pass it on either side. He duplicates himself (ignore how he does this!) and drives his road both ways, so two different roads reach the other shore. In an alternative PK world, where an action has two equally probable results, like tossing a coin, the world splits with a tail landing in one and a head in the other. There are now two timelines like a 'Y' shape.

In the third scenario several engineers are left along the coast and each builds a road independently of the others, never EVER meeting. This corresponds to parallel PK worlds, created independently at the beginning of time and developing completely separately.

But is this discussion making mountains out of impossible molehills? Not really, because PK worlds may well exist. The Universe and its laws can be described by equations such as Einstein's $e=mc^2$, which can be manipulated mathematically. This can give logical but peculiar results; some of Einstein's early work implied that negative matter could exist, an impossibility at the time but now a reality. His work also showed that under certain very rare conditions matter could naturally be thrown back in time. Quantum theory, developed to explain the very minute, has interpretations that imply the existence of alternative worlds, while cosmology, in explaining the origins of the Universe, indicates that multiple

universes may have formed simultaneously and evolved into completely separate space/time continua.

This may sound very hypothetical but there is an interesting experiment that can be done in any decent laboratory. Light can act as a stream of energy particles, called photons, like bullets from a machine-gun, or as waves like ripples in water. The experiment depends on what happens when waves pass through holes. If a container of water is divided by a partition with two gaps in it, and ripples or waves are generated on one side, they pass through the gaps. When they emerge, each hole acts as a wave source so two lots of waves are produced. Where the waves meet they interfere, i.e. if two peaks meet, a larger wave is formed, if two troughs coincide, a deeper trough is formed while one of each cancel out; overall a series of larger waves is formed.

A similar experiment can be done with light, using a partition with two tiny slits in it, very close together. When light is shone on the partition it passes through the slits, which then act as light sources, and an interference wave pattern is formed which shows on a screen as a series of light and dark stripes. The light source is now adjusted so that light is emitted as single photons like bullets from a slow machine-gun, which, like bullets can only go through one or the other slit in the partition. The screen is replaced by a photographic film to show where each photon hits. Because the photons are going through the slits singly and at random, one would expect a cluster of hits to show opposite each slit. However, a series of light and dark interference strips slowly builds up instead. A cluster only forms if one slit is closed. So what is happening?

No-one knows for certain, but for the interference pattern to form, each photon must be interfering with another one going through the other slit. What other photon? Maybe one in a neighbouring universe. Many scientists believe that the only explanation involves other universes that form or impinge on ours during the experiment. PK universes perhaps? VB

NOVACON 32 - THOUGHTS FROM A FIRST TIMER

by Steve Mazey

Although by nature I'm not a person for mass gatherings (partly due a hearing problem I have which means when I am in a crowd of people I have difficulty distinguishing voices), we decided to go to NOVACON 32. This was our first convention. We were members 235 & 236.

We arrived on Friday night, late unfortunately having been held up on the way from work and missing both the Opening Ceremony and the GoH interview. There was however a large group of people milling around in the bar area, all wearing their little NOVACON badges and catching up with people they may not have seen since previous Con's. It was an interesting phenomenon to watch although not the easiest thing to break into. Like just about every group of people,

SF fans do have a tendency to be a little clique.

Saying that, there were some people we talked to, and people did seem affable, so maybe it's just my reluctance to break into a group of people chatting away, and the difficulty a lifelong teetotaler can have with a party of people relaxing and drinking together, that is more at fault.

Leaving these groupings to their discussions and their ale we wondered into one of the scheduled entertainments. We popped into a science presentation on how you get a satellite into space. Sounded good, we both like science and thought this would be just the thing for us. Didn't quite turn out that way. The discussion being aimed more at the business processes involved and the bureaucracies you have to interact with to get your payload onto a rocket. If it turned more into the science later, I couldn't tell you as we didn't stay long enough.

I think it was a good thing that we did leave the talk and move back to the bar. Because at that time we were a little disappointed with the event. Okay, the first part of missing the opening was our fault, but it had looked like a chance for fans to get together and drink. Not my scene. We were on the verge of writing the experience off as something other people might enjoy but not me.

Fortunately we decided not to leave, headed to the bar and bought more drinks (diet cokes). This is when things improved. We spent the rest of the evening in a discussion with Vernon & Pat Brown on reading habits, authors, and the outlook for the event over the next two days.

We travelled over again on the Saturday morning - once again falling victim to the Birmingham area's unpredictable traffic system. Despite it being a Saturday we were stuck in a traffic jam and were once again late and missed the book auction - an event that every book collector would want to be in.

Having missed this opportunity to spend money we made up for it instantly by heading straight to the dealers' room. The fact that I am sitting here in a room where both the wall to my left and right are lined with bookshelves containing about 2,000 books, and that we are at the stage that my mother describes as 'having too many books' whilst we describe it as 'having a house that's too small', this is the room for me. We know where a lot of the UK's good second-hand book stores are, but nothing compared to what was in this room for SF. Although having been told that the larger events (such as WorldCon) make this seem insignificant, it was both an exciting and costly part of the event. We left that room with about 60-70 new books for the collection.

We also found the Saturday a little more open than the Friday night. Whereas on the first night it seemed many people were forming groups and catching up with friends they hadn't seen in some time, the Saturday was more loose and conversations were easier to get into. We had a few chances to sit down with people and discuss our mutual favourite topic - SF.

We viewed the art exhibition, resisting the urge to place bids on several of the items for the following days Art Auction. Having bought so many books in the dealers' room (and blown the budget we'd set ourselves) we had to be

restrained, although it hurt!

We spent a pleasant afternoon in the hotel in Walsall, before leaving to make another commitment arranged earlier. That was the end of my NOVACON experience, with the Sunday washed out completely having come down with a stomach bug overnight, and so I missed the other event I fancied attending - a lecture by Kevin Warwick, Professor of Cybernetics at the University of Reading.

Overall my feelings from the event were positive and I realise a lot of the downside of a gathering such as this, for me comes from my not taking a more active role in social situations, but I have always preferred small groups to larger gatherings. And as for the events I am probably not the best judge having not really attended any, but this will not be the last convention we will attend, and next time we must make sure we attend some of the events. SM

MAN vs MACHINE

Many of you may remember that back in the October newsletter we reported on the forthcoming chess match between world chess champion Vladimir Kramnik and the computer programme Deep Fritz 7. Vernon sent me the result but somehow I misfiled and didn't use the piece last month.

Apparently it was a stalemate. Kramnik had previously never lost a game to a computer. And, like Kasparov five years ago, he resigned in the 6th game when he could have forced a draw.

But Kramnik still picked up a cheque for \$800,000. Beat that one, you...you.... ROBOT!

World fantasy Awards

The winners of the World Fantasy Awards were presented November 3:-

Best Novel: **THE OTHER WIND** - Ursula LeGuin (Harcourt US/Gollancz UK)

Best Novella: "The Bird Catcher" by S P Somtow (from **THE MUSEUM OF HORRORS** edited by Dennis Etchison, Leisure)

Best Short Story: "Queen for a Day" by Albert E. Cowdrey (F&SF Oct/Nov 2001) Best

Anthology: **THE MUSEUM OF HORRORS** edited by Dennis Etchison (Leisure)

Best Collection: **SKIN FOLK** by Nalo Hopkinson (Warner Aspect)

Best Artist: Allen Koszowski

Special Award - Professional (tie): Stephen Jones (for editing)

- Jo Fletcher (for editing the Fantasy Masterworks series, Gollancz)

Special Award - Non-professional: Raymond Russell & Rosalie Parker (for Tartarus Press)

Life Achievement Award: George Scithers and Forrest J Ackerman

NEWS IN BRIEF

The SF world loses more good people **Charles Sheffield**, 67, died of cancer on November 2, following a three-month illness. Born in the UK Sheffield was a physicist known for his writing in SF and science. He won the Nebula and Hugo awards for his novelette "Georgia on My Mind". His fiction writing didn't begin until he was nearly 40, and his intention was to sell three stories, just to prove that he could, and then stop forever. He published 27 novels and 6 short story collections **Gerald Allan Sohl Sr.**, - '**Jerry Sohl**' - author of SF novels and screenplays, passed away in Thousand Oaks, California on November 4. He was 88. The author of 16 novels, including *COSTIGAN'S NEEDLE* and *THE TRANSCENDENT MAN*, Sohl was better known for his work for television, which included *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*, *THE OUTER LIMITS*, *THE INVADERS*, *STAR TREK* and others. His best known pseudonym was **Nathan Butler**, but he also wrote as **Roberta Jean Mountjoy**, and **Sean Mei Sullivan** Actor **Jonathan Harris**, 87, died from a blood clot in his heart while receiving therapy at a California hospital. The Bronx born actor's career spanned 60 years. He was best known for the role of Dr. Zachary Smith on the 60's TV show *LOST IN SPACE*. More recently he did much voice work, including the voice of Manny the preying-mantis in the movie *A BUG'S LIFE* **Neil Gaiman** has won on all nine counts of his lawsuit for violation of copyright and non-payment of royalties against "Spawn" creator **Todd McFarlane**. He was awarded the \$45,000 he requested plus court costs. Damages are still to be decided The new **Jonathan Carroll** novel *WHITE APPLES* has appeared in the USA from Tor and will be out in the UK next spring from Pan/Macmillan. There has also been a 30,000-copy print run of the book in Poland, where Carroll is a bestselling author with over 700,000 copies of his books in print **Harry Turtledove's** new novel is *RULED BRITANNIA* - it's an alternate wor....no, it's an alternative nov...or should that be parallel (hmmm, must go back and reread Vernon's article) - anyway his new what-if novel has appeared in the US **Chris Priest's** new book *THE SEPARATION* apparently only appeared in trade paperback and was out of print within days. Despite there being no hardcover, it still appeared on Amazon UK's site and the ISBN for it is listed in the November *LOCUS* Looks like the end of the line for **Buffy** - again. Having been killed off at the end of the last season, she returned from the grave (literally), and even broke a nail while clawing her way out of a coffin buried 6ft down! Boy is that girl strong! But producer **Joss Whedon** has now stated that this season will be the last. Meanwhile, the planned animated *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* has been scrapped even before production started due to lack of interest from the networks The 2002 **James White Award**, for best short story by an unpublished writer, has been won by **Julian West**. The award was presented at *NOVACON 32*. His winning story will be published in *INTERZONE*. The award was presented at *NOVACON 32*. Details are on the award's website: <http://www.jameswhiteaward.com/> RGP



BOOK REVIEWS



These reviews reprinted with permission from Steve Mazey's website...

<http://www.eternalnight.co.uk> - RGP

(REVIEWERS please note:- in future all reviews should be emailed direct to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk) Deadline for each issue is the 1st of the month.

***RIDING THE ROCK* by Stephen Baxter**

PS Publishing / £25 hardcover & £8 pbk. Reviewed by Steve Mazey

The novice Luca is chosen by Commisary Dolo to accompany him on a trip to the inner core to investigate reports of anti-doctrinal behaviour amongst the troops of the Green Navy. He travels out to the Asteroid base in question, on the very edge of human controlled space, the frontier between humans and the territory controlled by the alien Xeelee. Once he arrives on the asteroid he quickly discovers much evidence of behaviour and beliefs at odds with the doctrine of 'the Race must survive, the individual is expendable', even the beginnings of an almost religious belief system. He also finds out more about the lives of the soldiers in the Green Navy and what they have to endure as part of their lives which causes him to doubt everything he knows and believes. This in some ways is secondary (to Luca) to the woman he meets. At the very start of his assignment he is introduced to Captain Teel, and is instantly infatuated - but as a serving officer in the Navy she and he are on opposite sides of a millennia-old struggle between the military and the Commisary for Historical Truth.

This is a new story set in Stephen Baxter's *Xeelee* sequence and will please anyone who has read and enjoyed his previous *Xeelee* sequence stories; but even if you are new to Mr. Baxter's writing it will not be that disadvantageous for you as he skilfully includes enough detail for new readers without padding the text with information repetitious to his core fans. It does, however, leave someone like myself, who has read a little of the *Xeelee* sequence, with a strong desire to read more. This is an author whose work is compelling, his reputation amongst the best of British SF most definitely is deserved.

This is a very short book, but the reader is certainly not left feeling lacking full measure, as the author narrative is concise, precise and complete with enough description to allow the reader to fill in the gaps. Also, despite this being a novella set mainly in a military base during an interstellar war, this is not militaristic SF. It is more a tale of a young man growing up and coming to understand a little more of the world. He reacts to events and situations around him with a wonderfully believable naiveté, struggling to fit his newly acquired knowledge into his beliefs in his Doctrine, but slowly coming to accept that it will not cover everything. This book lives up to the standards Stephen Baxter seems to have set for his writing.

SM

V.A.O. by Geoff Ryman

PS Publishing / £25 hardcover & £8 pbk. Reviewed by Steve Mazzy.

Alistair Brewster is a hacker turned IT security specialist who grew old. Unfortunately, he has grown old in a world that cares little for the elderly. In this extrapolated future of an ageing population the old must have the means to pay for their care or they will be thrown on the mercies of their family or more commonly, onto the streets. Brewster lives in 'The Happy Farm', a \$100,000-a-year home for the elderly. Not having the finances to pay for his care, Brewster utilises the skills of his career and hacks, siphoning off funds from many different accounts, a small amount from one account and then another - with each amount hopefully escaping notice. He also hacks to pay for the care of his former hacking colleague Jazzanova who is so far gone from Alzheimer's that he would not be able to manage it himself.

Into this world steps Silhouette, an elderly person who leads a campaign of Age Rage, when elderly people commit crimes against the young. Brewster is suspected of being Silhouette, despite his own granddaughter having been the victim of one of the attacks. Following a visit from the authorities investigating the case, he decides to find out who Silhouette is himself and, with the help of fellow residents at the Happy Farm, he begins his search.

This is an odd book. I've been working in IT for a decade or so, and it's still a relatively young industry. The idea of geriatric programmers is still a little new. Although I wouldn't mind still being up to doing it in my eighties. Being set sufficiently in the future means that most of the characters' references will feel very familiar to today's reader, and serve to help you into the tale, setting background detail in a concise understated way - and in a story of only 67 pages this helps fill in backstory necessary for a full understanding of the novella.

It's also a compelling little tale. You do feel for the old folks in the tale, despite their being a little cantankerous from time to time. The main character is one I'd definitely say growing old disgracefully applies to, and he gives me a certain kind of hope - maybe it will be okay to not conform to the ideas of old age when I get there.

It's also a relief that the main character is written well. This is essentially a single person narrative, with cameos here and there from the supporting characters. You will find yourself willing Brewster on, and hoping he will be able to make things okay. But as with a lot of well written fiction you will not know exactly what the ending is likely to be before you actually read the last page.

If you have ever read and enjoyed a modern SF tome involving computers, cyberpunk or otherwise, this is probably a book that will appeal. And if you are in IT and are curious what you might be like as an octogenarian then read these pages. Oh, and as for the title, V.A.O. stands for Victim Activated Ordnance.

SM

😊😊😊😊 FILM ROUND-UP 😞😞😞😞

BY VICKY COOK

This month's review will be mainly devoted to horror movies, Hallowe'en having just been and gone, without conspiracy theories/aliens/the undead taking over the planet for another year. There has been a good smattering of horror/dark fantasy movies, good, bad and ugly, so I will review just a few of these.

Firstly I went to watch RED DRAGON, the next instalment in the Hannibal 'trilogy'. Critics on this are divided into two camps, the MANHUNTER supporters and the MANHUNTER-haters. Maybe RED DRAGON does lack some of the tenseness of the older film, and it could be argued that Brian Cox did a 'better', i.e. more menacing, job with the famous cannibal. Anthony Hopkins this time round seems determined to ham up the character, which makes him distinctly less of a scary figure to behold. But to my mind this is fine, the evil and menace is provided in bucket-loads by the excellent Ralph Fiennes, as the man obsessed to madness by the Red Dragon painting of the title, and Hopkins, as a much more cameo role, adds some light relief and has a good sparring relationship with his old enemy played by Edward Norton (excellent as usual). Gory but compelling, well worth a look when it is released on video.

Among the spate of horror films was the usual teen-trash. For instance the awful MY LITTLE EYE. Seemingly Big Brother gone horribly wrong, it focuses on a group of strangers forced to live in a house, with them all standing to win a million dollars if they stuck out the six months, and all forfeiting the money if one leaves. But of course there is a bad guy involved, and they must find out who is intent on murder before it is too late - absolute trash I am afraid. Hammy acting, plenty of gore, only for the obsessive Big Brother fan.

We then went off to watch 28 DAYS LATER, much hyped due to the uncanny empty streets of London shown in the first part of the film. Here is the usual fare of human science gone mad, chimps exposed to violence and a virus (somehow), become insanely mad and infect the humans around them, unleashing terror...the token good guy wakes alone in a hospital bed. Although these are all familiar scenes, the film does live up to its hype for the first half of the film, as Cillian Murphy wanders lost around London, without the usual traffic, pigeons, etc. - an eerie sight indeed. And the whole film indeed is worth watching until the plot kicks in and the usual Triffid-like antics start with the murderous zombies closing in on them... A welcome return to form for home-grown Danny Boyle, with an excellent screenplay, and the grainy photography surprisingly effective. One of the best horror movies about, but for best reactions, walk out when the film reaches the garage scene about 3/4 of the way through!

Another film highly rated but far too complex for its own good is DONNIE DARKO. It seems at first to be a teen-horror, starring the much-talented

and newcomer Jake Gyllenhaal. Weird but fun, this film does the job with its demon-rabbit figure, and the usual growing-up issues backed up by excellent acting and beautiful camera-work, but it leaves several unanswerable questions, a la David Lynch: is it a satire on American politics, a meditation on religion or a biting portrait on teenage angst? For some, the enigma might be a turn-off, for others, intriguing, and one of the most original films of the year.

I then turned to the kids' fantasy of the millennium (apparently), HARRY POTTER. Not really wanting to see it, I decided to trust to my friends' advice and give it a go. This one again turned out to be a good rendition of the book, thus pleasing all the trillions of fans, but not providing quite such a good deal for those non-readers like me. I found the going hard, even falling asleep through some quite crucial plot elements! Three hours and twenty minutes, quite hard going for *anyone* surely? I was rather disappointed that my favourite characters from the first film, i.e. Alan Rickman as Snape and Robbie Coltrane as Hagrid, who had done the best acting work and provided the greatest laughs, were relegated to the background. The fact that whenever they did appear they stole the scene, said it all really. This time the kids were to take charge of the plotline and show they have cut their acting teeth. Daniel Radcliffe, it must be admitted, has improved a lot since his first time out when he had to merely stand and gawp at everything. His voice has deepened to a scary extent, maybe next time at this rate he will sound like Barry White?? The film as a story worked ok, though for the newcomer it might prove confusing as it assumes that everyone already knows the background such as Harry's scar, Voldemort, his parents etc. There is a darker tone throughout which makes it scarier than the first film and, if not for the excessive length, quite an interesting plot for adults too. The effects are much better than before, though Dobby the house-elf was a bit tiresome, as all CGI characters can be (remember Jar Jar Binks?) So my summary on this one is that fans will adore it and non-fans might find it too long by far, and confusing if they are complete newcomers.

So what is in store for us next year? Lots of films based on comics heroes about to come out: the first of which is DAREDEVIL, with Ben Affleck in the title role. Unconvinced by this casting but good reports so far. Also watch out for THE HULK, CONSTANTINE, and of course X2, due out in May. Which is the same time as the first MATRIX sequel, so May is possibly an excellent month for film watching.

For those who like their stranger SF films, try SOLARIS, starring George Clooney, with Stephen Soderbergh at the helm. Hyped up as Oscar material, this one. For horror/dark fantasy fans we have THE SIN-EATER starring Heath Ledger in March. The latest Stephen King adaptation is DREAMCATCHER with the well-respected Morgan Freeman - always worth watching - fighting aliens in a snowbound forest.

2003 looks like it has a good bunch of films for the SF fan. It will be interesting to see if the big ones such as MATRIX and X2 live up to their hype.

VC

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

April 18-21 2003 - SEACON 03 - 54th National British Easter Convention will be held at the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, West Midlands. Guests of Honour are Mary Gentle, Christopher Evans and Chris 'Fangorn' Baker. Contact address is SEACON 03, 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 OHR

email - membership@seacon03.org.uk

- info@seacon03.org.uk

- programme@seacon03.org.uk

Website: www.seacon03.org.uk

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

FUTURE MEETINGS

January 11th 2003 - the Annual General Meeting at which you will get your chance to air your views about the group and vote for next year's committee. NOW is the time to consider standing for the committee

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Thanks to William McCabe, Martin Tudor and to LOCUS for news and info this month, not forgetting the named contributors in this issue.

The **BRUM GROUP Website** address is www.bsfg.freesevers.com/
Contributions, ideas, etc. always welcome.

ABOUT US...

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