

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE FREE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

MARCH 2004

ISSUE 390

HONORARY PRESIDENTS: BRIAN W ALDISS & HARRY HARRISON

COMMITTEE: VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); VICKY COOK (SECRETARY);
PAT BROWN (TREASURER); ROG PEYTON (NEWSLETTER EDITOR);
TIM STOCK (PUBLICITY); STEVE JONES & WILLIAM McCABE;
NOVACON 34 CHAIRMAN: MARTIN TUDOR

Friday March 12th

DOMINIC HARMAN

Our speaker this month will be award-winning artist Dominic Harman. Since his first professional sale in INTERZONE in July 1997, nearly 300 of his paintings and illustrations have appeared in ANALOG, ASIMOV'S, INTERZONE magazines plus book jackets for Macmillan, HarperCollins, Baen, Warner, etc., many of which have been reproduced as posters and calendars.

He was influenced from an early age by the works of Derek Riggs, who designed the album covers of the British rock band, Iron Maiden.

Although employing oil and Acrylic and the traditional techniques of painting when he started, his work now is mainly a composite of different media - for example pencil, charcoal, photography, scanned and painted textures and 3D software with the final piece in the digital format.

Due out later this year are numerous book covers, magazine covers, and CD covers, and also a feature in INTERZONE Magazine due out March/April.

The 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. At the bottom of the ramp from New Street Station, turn right, cross over the road and you'll find Union

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* **APRIL MEETING - 16th April** *
* Due to Eastercon falling over the second Friday, our April meeting will be *
* on the third Friday, the 16th. Speaker is not finalised yet..... *
*.....

Passage about 20-30 yards along). It will commence at 7.45pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar and be seated in plenty of time. RGP

It's Award-nominations time and if I report here on all of them it will fill up about 6 pages! So I'm sticking to the important stuff....

2003 CLARKE AWARD NOMINEES

COALESCENT - Stephen Baxter (Gollancz)
DARWIN'S CHILDREN - Greg Bear (HarperCollins)
PATTERN RECOGNITION - William Gibson (Viking)
MIDNIGHT LAMP - Gwyneth Jones (Gollancz)
QUICKSILVER - Neal Stephenson (Heinemann)
MAUL - Tricia Sullivan (Orbit)

2003 NEBULA AWARDS NOMINEES

NOVEL

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY - Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen 2002)
THE MOUNT - Carol Emshwiller (Small Beer Press 2002)
LIGHT MUSIC - Kathleen Ann Goonan (Eos 2002)
THE SALT ROADS - Nalo Hopkinson (Warner 2003)
CHINDI - Jack McDevitt (Ace 2002)
THE SPEED OF DARK - Elizabeth Moon (Ballantine 2003)

NOVELLA

"The Potter of Bones" - Eleanor Arnason (Asimov's 9/02)
"The Empress of Mars" - Kage Baker (Asimov's 7/03)
CORALINE - Neil Gaiman (HarperCollins 2002)
"Stories for Men" - John Kessel (Asimov's 10-11/02)
"Breathmoss" - Ian R MacLeod (Asimov's 5/02)

NOVELETTE

"The Mask of the Rex" - Richard Bowes (F&SF 5/02)
"Of a Sweet Slow Dance in the Wake of Temporary Dogs" - Adam-Try Castro
(IMAGININGS)
"OwnzOred" - Cory Doctorow (Salon 8/02)
"The Empire of Ice Cream" - Jeffrey Ford (Sci Fiction 26/2/03)
"The Wages of Syntax" - Roy Vukceovich (Sci Fiction 16/10/02)

SHORT STORY

"Knapsack Poems" - Eleanor Arnason (Asimov's 5/02)
"Goodbye to All That" - Harlan Ellison (McSWEENEY'S MAMMOTH
TREASURY OF THRILLING TALES)
"Grandma" - Carol Emshwiller (F&SF 3/02)

"What I Didn't See" - Karen Joy Fowler (Sci Fiction 10/7/02)

"Lambing Season" - Molly Gloss (Asimov's 7/02)

"The Last of the O-Forms" - James van Pelt (Asimov's 9/02)

2003 BSFA AWARDS NOMINEES

NOVEL

FELAHEEN: THE THIRD ARABESK - Jon Cortenay Grimwood (Earthlight)

PATTERN RECOGNITION - William Gibson (Viking)

MIDNIGHT LAMP - Gwyneth Jones (Gollancz)

ABSOLUTION GAP - Alastair Reynolds (Gollancz)

NATURAL HISTORY - Justina Robson (Macmillan)

MAUL - Tricia Sullivan (Orbit)

SHORT FICTION

DEAR ABBEY - Terry Bisson - (PS Publishing)

THE WOLVES IN THE WALLS - Neil Gaiman & Dave McKean (Bloomsbury)

"Entangled Eyes are Smiling" - John Meaney (Interzone 7-8/03)

"Birth Days" - Geoff Ryman (Interzone 4/03)

"Router" - Charles Stross (Asimov's 9/02)

"Nightfall" - Charles Stross (Asimov's 4/03)

MERCEDES LACKEY - INTERVIEWED

by Steve Mazey

SM: When did you first feel that you were an author?

ML: Now, do you mean 'storyteller', 'writer', or 'author'? I've known I was a storyteller since I was in my early teens and used to tell made-up stories to the kids that I was babysitting. I knew that I was a writer when I began writing amateur fiction ('fanfic') and costuming articles and getting them published in fanzines and getting some nice comments. I knew I was an author when DAW bought my first trilogy and I got the cover-flat with my name on it!

SM: Where is your favorite place to write?

ML: In foul weather, in my office, in my zero-gravity chair, with 25 disks in the CD changer and a scented candle going. In beautiful weather, beside my little pond, in the hammock-chair and mosquito-net over the whole rig to keep the bugs off.

SM: What influences the names of people and places in your work?

ML: I use an old SF-writer's trick; I find a name that feels right, then do a creative respelling of it, if it seems to be too common. Maree for Mary, for instance, or Keren for Karen.

SM: Can we expect more stories from the Five Hundred Kingdoms?

ML: I certainly hope so! I deliberately created a setting with a lot of room in it for more stories.

SM: Tell us about your music CDs. What musical influences inspired their creation?

ML: Since I don't write music, I have to depend on other, far more talented people to create the melodies. My inspiration for the lyrics is usually Rudyard Kipling, although I've been inspired once by Billy Joel's "Piano Man" and once by Duran Duran's "Hungry Like The Wolf".

SM: Who is your favorite author?

ML: I don't really have 'a' favorite author. Some of my favorites are Dorothy L Sayers, J R R Tolkien, Rudyard Kipling, Saki, Elizabeth Goudge, Lord Dunsany. Of modern writers I like Terry Pratchett, Charles de Lint, Garth Nix, J K Rowling, Neil Gaiman.

SM: Do you always know a story's ending when you begin writing?

ML: Yes, because I always work from an outline, so I know all of the broad events and some of the finer details before I ever begin actually writing the book.

SM: What's the most memorable thing said in a review of your work?

ML: "...the prolific Lackey..." I'm not actually that prolific. Andre Norton was producing four and five books a year by herself in the 1960s, and that was with 1960s technology - handwritten manuscripts, then hand-typed, then hand-corrected, then retyped. In contrast, I'm not doing more than 2 solo books and 3 collaborations a year.

SM: What do you feel is the key element in creating the vivid worlds and universes of your stories?

ML: I try to use all of my senses when describing a setting, and try to think of everything that would impact a character in any given scene.

SM: What guide do you rely on to prevent magic from becoming simply *deus ex machina* in your fiction?

ML: Magic, like technology, is a tool, and never really a 'problem solver'. For instance, think about what 'the power of the atom' was supposed to do for us back in the 1950s - practically free electric power, atomic cars that would run forever without needing refueling, irradiated food that would stay fresh on the shelf forever, irradiated plant seeds that would grow enormous vegetables and feed the world. None of that has happened, and magic would be the same way, creating as many problems as it solves (if not more). I suppose you just have to think like a pessimist and see all the things that could go wrong!

SM: Many publishers ask for three chapters and an outline before they will view a complete manuscript. Do you outline your work, and if so has this outline ever sold a story on its own?

ML: I always work from an outline, and now that I am an established writer, yes, I usually sell books based on the outline alone. However, I have never personally

known anyone who sold a first novel based on the outline, nor on three chapters and an outline. This is for the very good reason that publishers want to know that a new writer can finish what they start, and there are hundreds of books that new writers have been unable to finish after only a couple of chapters.

SM: What do you feel the next evolution in fantasy literature will be?

ML: The admission of 'on screen' romance to fantasy literature is reasonably new. What's next? If I knew that, I would be making a fortune in Las Vegas and the stock market! All a writer can really do is their best job, and hope that readers like it.

SM: Is there a book or story you wish you had written?

ML: Any of the 'Sam Vimes' books by Terry Pratchett. And the 'Firefly' series by Joss Whedon is so good that when I saw it I had to say that I could never have written anything that good.

SM: If you could give one piece of advice to a would-be author, what would it be?

ML: Books don't get written by talking about them, by looking for a 'secret formula' or by agonizing over them. Books get written by glueing one's behind to the chair and writing them.

SM: Many Thanks.

SM

NEWS IN BRIEF

.... **Donald Barr**, who wrote *SPACE RELATIONS* and *PLANET IN ARMS*, died of heart failure on February 5. He was 82 **Julius Schwartz** passed away February 8. Born in the Bronx on June 19, 1915, "Julie" was involved in the beginning of SF fandom, co-editing one of the first fanzines, *THE TIME TRAVELER*, in 1932. He founded Solar Sales Service literary agency in 1934 and represented such authors as **Alfred Bester**, **Robert Bloch**, and **Ray Bradbury** until 1944. Bester introduced Julie to comics and hired him as a writer for *GREEN LANTERN*. Julie worked for DC comics for 45 years. A leader in DC's Silver Age, he edited such comics as *ALL STAR COMICS*, *FLASH*, *GREEN LANTERN*, *MYSTERY IN SPACE* and *STRANGE ADVENTURES*. For 16 years he edited the entire *SUPERMAN* line *ASIMOV'S MAGAZINE* pornographic!!!!??? Reporter Kristi Andersen and the News 8 anchors portrayed *ASIMOV'S* as a pornographic magazine. They characterized it as "full of sexual content," "an adults-only magazine," and said that it "contained stories about sex, drugs, and molestation." 2 writers, **Dan Harris** and **Michael Dougherty** will adapt **Orson Scott Card's** beloved SF novels *ENDER'S GAME* and *ENDER'S SHADOW* for the screen, to be directed by **Wolfgang Petersen** On Tuesday, February 10, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals partially reversed a lower court ruling that dismissed **Harlan Ellison's** copyright infringement case against AOL. This should permit Harlan to have his 'day in court' to resolve the issue

grammy-winning R&B singer **Beyonce Knowles** confirmed that she is indeed up for the role of Lois Lane in the proposed new SUPERMAN movie **BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER** star **Sarah Michelle Gellar** is rumored to be at the top of the list for the title role in a proposed WONDER WOMAN movie, which would put her in direct competition with former co-star **Charisma Carpenter**, according to a report in the tabloid DAILY STAR **Phil Collinson** has been announced as the new producer of DOCTOR WHO. He has previously worked as a producer on BORN AND BRED, LINDA GREEN and the paranormal drama SEA OF SOULS (currently airing on BBC One). "I am delighted to be joining the team bringing back such an iconic and exciting series," Phil told DWM. "I'm going to relish terrifying a whole new generation and putting such a well-loved character back on our TV screens where he belongs." **Russell T Davies** also reveals that plans are going well for the new series. It is still hoped that 13 x 45 minute episodes will be made, with Russell writing seven episodes at the moment. The other writers will be contracted soon and none of Russell's ideas for the series have been compromised.
RGP

A DRABBLE - 2nd in an irregular series...

Want to write a drabble? Each one must be exactly 100 words long (excluding the title)... Go on, you can do it! Brum Group members are invited to try their luck. There might even be a prize at the end of the year for the best one...!

UNCERTAINTY by Jinnie Cracknell

"Heisenberg's uncertainty principle: 'The more precisely the **POSITION** is determined, the less precisely the **MOMENTUM** is known'. So you can know where you are or how fast you're going, but not both at the same time" explained the sobbing quark, continuing, "And that's why I'm suffering from depression, being so uncertain all the time!" He then collapsed into a weeping heap.

"There, there" soothed the doctor quark "We all go through this crisis at some point, you just have it a little... stronger than other quarks. Take these twice daily." Then the doctor thought to himself

"What a strange quark!"

JC

FILM ROUND-UP

BY VICKY COOK & TIM STOCK

PAYCHECK, reviewed at UGC Cinemas, Great Park, Rubery, on the 19/01/2004

There has not been a huge amount on at the cinema with an SF emphasis recently. I have been waiting for an absolute cracker to be released, but even after this I am still waiting. This runs much in the same vein as the recent SF thrillers of

the last few years, such as IMPOSTER, MINORITY REPORT, EQUILIBRIUM and the best one of the lot, CYPHER, from 2002, though 'best' isn't really saying an awful lot. PAYCHECK contains an awful lot similar to these so you find yourself scratching your head over where you've seen a certain bit before.

To summarise: Ben Affleck (a sign of a good film for me is being able to remember the characters' names...since I cannot here, I will have to make do with the actors) is an engineer with an identity problem, happy to take on important tasks, so important that they necessitate having his memory wiped afterwards. But he bites off more than he can chew when he teams up with old school pal Jack (Aaron Eckhart) for a 3-year project. And then he meets Uma Thurman, a biologist at the plant...3 years later he has been paid well, but all is not as it seems....

It is hard to say what is bad about this film. After all it is exciting, and the twist while not spectacularly hard to work out, is quite clever in its execution, and leads to relatively exciting scenarios, aided by some spectacular stunts as provided by the master of action scenes, director John Woo. Ben Affleck, while giving the audience a hard job in believing he is a genius engineer, does a routine job at looking confused, while the token comedy friend (Paul Giamatti) is suitably strange looking and geeky. Uma Thurman does not do an awful lot – and rather disappoints after her rave reviews for Kill Bill (which I haven't seen, but apparently she is quite good in it) – she smiles and simpers and loves her birds, and her character does not get much beyond being the token girlfriend.

I think the word I am looking for here is 'mediocre'. I am not saying I didn't enjoy it, but while it kept my attention for much of it, I have seen better and no doubt will see better again. I can't see myself thinking back to this film in the future – I mean, someone asked me the other day what I had watched and I couldn't remember the title then! Worth a watch if there isn't a lot else on, which to be honest, at the moment there isn't.

VC/TS



BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk) Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.

RGP

THE SEPARATION by Christopher Priest

Gollancz / 328 pages / £ 9.99 / hardcover.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan. Rating: * * * * *

This is the first hardback edition of this book but first publication was in the Autumn of 2002 as a trade paperback from Scribner which slipped into bookshops almost unnoticed. Yet between that initial appearance, and the issue of

this edition *THE SEPARATION* has, deservedly, won both the prestigious Arthur C. Clarke award, and the British Science Fiction award.

Priest is a talented and evocative writer, able to use only a few words to place the reader in the centre of a scene. Here, the backdrop is predominantly the Second World War and is a complex interweaving of duality and ‘What If...?’ It is told as a series of letters, memoirs, and documents. Popular historian, Stuart Gratton, is intrigued by a reference by Churchill of a J.L. Sawyer who seemed to be both a registered conscientious objector and an RAF pilot. Most of the book this mystery, which seems quickly resolved. Until 1936, identical twins Joe and Jack Sawyer were as close as twins often are – doing things together, working together, thinking similar things. They rowed coxless pairs in harmony and were picked for the Berlin Olympics. This is where their separation begins. Joe smuggles the daughter of their hosts back to Britain (although it is never stated we assume that the family is Jewish) and marries her. He has seen what is coming in Nazi Germany. Jack doesn’t allow the outside world to impinge on his enthusiasms – rowing to begin with, then flying. When war breaks out it seems natural for him to join the RAF as a bomber pilot. Joe registers as a conscientious objector and becomes a driver for the Red Cross.

Priest doesn’t let us get away with it that easily. The pivotal point, around which there is not so much as a separation, but a fragmentation is May 10th 1941. It is the date on which Hess crash-landed in Scotland. It was the date of a bombing raid on Hamburg, as a result of which Jack Sawyer crashed into the sea. It is the date Stuart Gratton was born. It is the date Joe’s daughter was born. But in Gratton’s world, the Second World War ended in 1941. So, how many, if any of these things are true. The possibilities blend into one another.

Priest has done an immense amount of research, just to put these doubts into our minds and each scenario is equally convincing. This novel is not just about separation, whether it is of alternate streams of history or ideals, it also explores duality and identity.

This is a glorious book to read – not for nothing was Priest included in the line-up of Britain’s best young novelists some years ago. *THE SEPARATION* does what so few books do these days, whatever genre they are written in; it encourages the reader to think.

PM

***LUCIFER'S DRAGON* by Jon Courtenay Grimwood**

Pocket Books / 377pgs / £6.99 / paperback

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan. Rating: * * *

This book was actually the author’s second published novel (Hodder Headline 1998) reprinted here in the same format and cover design as his later books. They make a nice matching set.

LUCIFER'S DRAGON suffers from some of the problems encountered by many writers trying to deal with a lot of ideas unfamiliar to the reader. The

setting is a far future, high-tech Earth. Somehow, the extrapolations that are taken for granted by the inhabitants but are unfamiliar to a early 21st century reader, have to be conveyed. There are a lot of jargon words and sections providing information without taking the plot onwards, especially in the beginning of the book. Initially, they get in the way. Later, the novel settles down as the story unfolds.

Angeli is a policeman in neoVenice, who was briefly called in to investigate the death of a security guard at the Doge's palace. He knows he is not expected to solve the crime, but intends to anyway. It is rumoured that the Doge has been kidnapped and Angeli suspects that the two incidents are connected. This is why he is interested in Karo who he recognises as a rich kid, slumming it. He wants to know how she gets to the 'levels' as a sonic barrier very effectively prevents travel between the levels and the privileged sector. As part of his investigation he reviews the history of how Passion diOrchi created the city.

Bound up with the events Angeli wants to unravel is Razz. She is an enhanced, silver-skinned bodyguard to the young Doge. She is killed at the start of the novel and awakens in Zurich in a younger, unaltered body without any notion as to what is going on.

The three sections of the novel are intimately linked and there is a lot of subtlety within it although it is sometimes difficult to see exactly how Razz's story and Angeli's section fit together. There is an explanation but it isn't entirely convincing. Razz's latter story line is surreal, but insufficient. Once the initial scene-setting is overcome, the details of life in the levels and the interactions between the characters and the events they set in motion is exciting and well plotted. However, there are questions that are hinted at but are not resolved, loose ends that have become entangled in the action and forgotten. This is a promising early novel, and a good indication of the reasons for the large following of readers Grimwood has accrued with his later novels. PM

***WHITE DEVILS* by Paul McAuley**

Tor / ???pgs / hardcover (prices vary due to exchange rate)

Reviewed by Steve Mazey. Rating: * * * * *

Paul McAuley gives us a vision of an Africa of the future completely devastated by civil wars, disease and genetic experimentation gone awry. This is an age of multinational corporations, larger, richer and more powerful than many countries, eager to maintain their position and protect their interests.

Nick Hyde, is a charity worker on a humanitarian project. Whilst investigating the scene of a massacre in Congo his party is attacked by a group of large hairless and very aggressive white apes. During the attack, one of the apes is killed and the survivors of Nick's party escape taking the corpse of the creature, and a still-living infant Nick had discovered during the initial search, with them.

Following his return from this mission, Nick is debriefed by the military and told that what they faced were kidogos, child soldiers who were painted white

to elicit fear in their opponents. When Nick refuses to accept the official line he is given notice of his deportation from Congo.

Obligate is one of the leading multinationals, and they seem determined to cover up for something they did in the past, something that may have led to the existence of the apes. Nick sets about trying to uncover the truth and bring to light what Obligate did.

Cody Corbin is an eco-terrorist, a religious-nut evangelist. He too is keen on discovering what exists in the wilds of Congo - but his aims are to destroy these creatures he considers abominations in the sight of God and, for that matter, anyone who gets in his way.

This is an intense tightly-written near future thriller. It's dark, no - make that *very* dark. This is a bleak vision of the future that has a lot of similarities with Philip K Dick's image, although updated to include the advances in technologies that have come about in the twenty years since Dick's death. It's a comparison that Paul McAuley deserves and indeed comes out of it in good light. His writing in this book is at least Dick's equal and in many ways he improves on the subgenre Dick created.

His world also shares elements with cyberpunk, although not to the sacrifice of all else. He has carefully melded together elements from various sources to fully flesh out his tale.

His world is a dangerous place. This is a world where no one has a guarantee of survival, no character seems a safe bet, and this serves to keep the tension going throughout the book. I'm just hoping this does not turn into an accurate prophecy of the 21st Century.

McAuley has served notice for the rest of the SF books of 2004, this is the standard by which you will be judged. *SM*

***THE COMPANIONS* by Sheri S Tepper**

Gollancz / 452pgs / £10.99 / trade paperback.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan. Rating: * * * * *

Many authors in the past have envisioned the human race going out and discovering the aliens - an extension of imperialism that has not been confined to British writers. Members of the humans think they are important. The rest of the universe is inclined to disagree. Tepper also looks at our mistakes and failings and these tend to come to the fore in her novels. She also takes the approach of asking 'why should they look like us?' and 'why should we be able to understand them?' In *THE COMPANIONS*, although the human race has spread out into the galaxy, it is only a recently sentient species. The other races are very different in appearance and communication can be a problem.

Jewel's brother, Paul, is an exceptional linguist but he has the arrogance that is still a predominant human characteristic. Jewel, who travels with him in the guise of his organiser is actually the more observant and considerably more

diplomatic. She acts as a spy, gathering information for a small group who believe that mutual co-operation is the best way to get along with other species and that knowing their customs and mores is a vital part of this.

Earth itself, however, is in deep trouble. Most of it has been covered by huge, towering conurbations resembling termite hills. Food is manufactured from algae. Just before Jewel and Paul leave for the planet known as Moss, a decree is announced banning all animal life from Earth in order to make more food, air and space available for people. As Jewel is also involved with the arkists, a group dedicated to preserving biodiversity and settling Earth animals on other planets, she takes the opportunity to take with her six genetically enhanced dogs and their handlers.

On Moss, Jewel and her friends not only have the problem of deciding if some of the life there is sentient, but of unravelling the language – which is based on smell. Then there is the mystery of local disappearances, and the build up of Derac forces on the planet (the Derac are a warlike reptilian race that no-one really trusts). Gradually the pieces of the puzzle begin to fall into place.

Tepper always tells a good story. She gives the reader plenty to think about. Usually, she has a message for those who care to take note of it. One of the functions of early Science Fiction was to warn the readers of the dangers lurking in our future if we followed certain paths. Tepper is treading in the foot-marks of her predecessors. Perhaps it is time the world started to listen. *PM*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group meets on Thursdays at 5.30pm to 7pm monthly, in GP5 on the 5th Floor at the Central Library, Chamberlain Square, B3 3HQ. It's a small friendly group meeting to discuss SF & fantasy books. Contact person is Pam Gaffney on (0121) 303 3398. Future meetings to be announced...

18th March - Garth Nix, **SABRIEL**

Birmingham Screen Festival 4-11 March features a SF film quite prominently - **CODE 46** with Samantha Morton and Tim Robbins. For further details go to - www.birminghamscreenfestival.com

CONCOURSE - the 55th National SF Convention (Eastercon) will be held at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool from the 9th to 12th of April 2004. Guests of Honour are Mitchell Burnside Clapp, Danny Flynn, Sue Mason, Christopher Priest and Philip Pullman. Contact address is 479 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8JJ. Tel: 07092 221701. email enquiries: concourse@eastercon.com
website: <http://www.eastercon.com/concourse>

A COMMONWEALTH OF SCIENCE FICTION, Liverpool Foresight Centre, Liverpool, UK (Thursday 5 to Sunday 8 August 2004). Guests of Honour: Damien Broderick, Jon Courtenay Grimwood and Nalo Hopkinson. (An Event Organised By the Science Fiction Foundation).

NOVACON 34 - the Birmingham SF Group's very own convention will again be held at the popular Quality Inn, Walsall. Guest of Honour is Ian Watson. Cost of registration is £35 - send to NOVACON 34, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

email: xl5@zoom.co.uk **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

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Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue and to William McCabe who sends me reams of news items every month from which I sift through for the best/most entertaining items.

The BRUM GROUP Website address is www.bsfg.freesevers.com
NEW! ----The email address is bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk ---- **NEW!**
Contributions, ideas, etc. always welcome.

ABOUT US... The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month. 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