

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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HONORARY PRESIDENTS: **BRIAN W ALDISS, O.B.E.**
& **HARRY HARRISON**

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FRIDAY 9TH JUNE

DAVID A HARDY

Regrettably, our meeting with Jim Burns as speaker has had to be postponed. Jim was Guest of Honour at a convention in California in May and he has a family holiday booked in July leaving him only June to actually produce work – and since agreeing to/arranging all this, the work has piled in and he is going to be hard pushed to get the commissioned work done in time. So Jim will be with us later this year.

At very short notice our own resident Space Artist Dave Hardy has agreed to stand in. Dave will be trying out a brand new presentation – NOT on Space Art as one would expect from the #1 practitioner in the field, but a show around Science Fiction Art. So this will be something new that none of us have seen before. It's the talk he will be giving when he is Guest of Honour at a convention in Europe next year. How's that for a Brum Group scoop!

See you at the meeting!

RGP

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

July 14th – JUSTIN RICHARDS is the author of several DR WHO books plus other media novelisations. He will be speaking about his work.

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.

THE SUMMER SOCIAL

AUGUST 11th - MEAL 7.30 for 8.00

A table has been booked, subject to confirmation, at the Black Eagle Hockley for our annual meal. If you have already reserved a place, your confirmation is enclosed with this newsletter. If it isn't please email the Secretary ASAP. If you have not reserved a place but would like to go, please give your name to Pat on the door at this month's (June) meeting with a £5 deposit. If you won't be at the meeting please send your name and deposit to the Secretary (address on back page of newsletter). There are currently five places still available but we could get a couple more if necessary. However the deadline for booking MUST be Saturday 10th, June.

If you are going directly to the Black Eagle it's in Factory Road Hockley, off St. Michael's Road. Going out of Birmingham, St Michael's Road is about 3 roads past Hockley flyover by a church and opposite Villa Road and a temple. Coming the other way it's 100 yards or so past the last shops in Handsworth. Otherwise meet with the rest of us at the entrance to Snow Hill Station, Colmore Row at 7.0pm to catch the Metro to Benson Road to arrive about 7.15 / 7.30. If you decide to go by yourself by metro turn right out of Benson Road Station, down the hill, over the cross roads and the Black Eagle is on your left.

DON'T FORGET THE DEADLINE.

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NEBULA AWARDS 2006

Novel: CAMOUFLAGE by Joe Haldeman

Novella: "Magic for Beginners" by Kelly Link

Novelette: "The Faery Handbag" by Kelly Link

Short Story: "I Live With You" by Carol Emshwiller

Script: SERENITY by Joss Whedon

Andre Norton Award: VALIANT: A MODERN TALE OF FAERIE
by Holly Black

Grand Master Award: Harlan Ellison

Author Emeritus: William F Nolan

JOHN W. CAMPBELL MEMORIAL AWARD

The John W. Campbell Memorial Award is given each year to recognize excellence in novel length science fiction. The nominees are

TRANSCENDENT by Stephen Baxter

THE MEQ by Steve Cash

CHILD OF EARTH by David Gerrold

MIND'S EYE by Paul J. McAuley

SEEKER by Jack McDevitt
LEARNING THE WORLD by Ken MacLeod
THE SUMMER ISLES by Ian R. MacLeod
COUNTING HEADS by David Marusek
MINDSCAN by Robert J. Sawyer
ACCELERANDO by Charles Stross
THE WORLD BEFORE by Karen Traviss
SPIN by Robert Charles Wilson

THEODORE STURGEON AWARD

The Theodore Sturgeon Award is given each year to recognize excellence in short fiction. The nominees are

“The Calorie Man” by Paolo Bacigalupi
“Second Person, Present Tense” by Darryl Gregory
“Magic for Beginners” by Kelly Link
“Keyboard Practice” by John G. McDaid
“The Little Goddess” by Ian McDonald
“Little Faces” by Vonda McIntyre
“The Blemmye's” Stratagem, by Bruce Sterling
“Panacea” by Jason Stoddard
“The Inn at Mount Either” by James Van Pelt
“Inside Job” by Connie Willis

THE STARRY MESSENGER: VISIONS OF THE UNIVERSE (7 July - 10 September 2006) by Robert Day

Compton Verney (near Wellesbourne, Warwickshire) is a Grade-1 listed mansion house designed by Robert Adam in the 1760s. It is set in more than 120 acres of classical parkland landscaped by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

When the Peter Moores Foundation bought Compton Verney in 1993, the house and grounds were in a state of decay after decades of neglect. The Compton Verney House Trust was established to transform the mansion into a gallery of international standard where visitors can enjoy art in a welcoming, accessible environment. It opened to the public in March 2004 after a £64 million restoration project. Compton Verney can be found on the B4086 between Wellesbourne and Kineton.

'The Starry Messenger' explores man's ultimate quest in understanding the solar system. It examines visual representations by artists, scientists and thinkers throughout the ages, and how they have used various means in order to attempt to understand the incomprehensible mysteries of the universe and man's place in it. The exhibition includes a vast and diverse selection of both historical and contemporary work.

Themes within the exhibition include the visionary imaginings of William Blake and the Surrealists; science fiction; time travel; moon landings, and paintings and drawings dating back to Galileo's invention of the telescope in 1610.

Their website address is www.comptonverney.org.uk

RD

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Fantasy writer **Lisa A. Barnett** died Tuesday, May 2, 2006 at her home in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, from a brain tumor. Her collaboration with Melissa Scott produced three novels: POINT OF HOPES and POINT OF DREAMS (Lambda Literary Award winner, 2002), both set in the fantasy city of Astreiant, and THE ARMOR OF LIGHT, set in an alternate Elizabethan England Writer/Director **Val Guest** (b.1911) died on May 10 in Palm Springs. Guest directed and wrote the *Quatermass* films and THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE, as well as writing CASINO ROYALE. His career began as an actor in 1932 and lasted until 1986 Author and mathematician **Arthur Porges** (b.1915) died on May 12th. Porges began publishing science fiction in 1952 with "The Fly," and continued to publish until at least 1970. Over that period, he sold more than seventy stories, some of them co-written with his brother, Irwin Porges Multiple award-winning SF author **Spider Robinson** told SCI FI Wire that he recently completed VARIABLE STAR, a novel based on a detailed outline created by the late legendary SF author **Robert A. Heinlein** in 1955. "VARIABLE STAR is the story of a young man so unlucky in love that it drove him clear out of the solar system, ... and then that turned out to be the good news," Robinson said in an interview. "Most of it takes place in a starship on an 85-light-year journey." The trustees of the **Robert A. and Virginia Heinlein** Prize Trust announced May 25, 2006 that the first-ever Heinlein Prize for contributions to the commercialisation of space will go to **Dr. Peter H. Diamandis**. Dr. Diamandis will be honoured at a dinner and award ceremony and receive \$500,000, a gold Heinlein Medallion, the Lady Vivamus Sword (as described in Heinlein's book GLORY ROAD), and a Laureate's Diploma. Diamandis is a pioneer and leader in the commercial space arena. In the past 25 years he started more than a dozen leading non-profit and for-profit space organizations. Diamandis is best known as Founder and Chairman of the X PRIZE Foundation, whose \$10 million Ansari X PRIZE sparked the birth of the personal spaceflight industry Christie's, the New York auction house, will sell more than 1,000 props, costumes, weapons, set dressings and spaceship models from the original **Star Trek** series and its spinoffs Oct. 5-7. The auction of items drawn from the archives of CBS Paramount Television commemorates the 40th anniversary of the original series, which aired on NBC from 1966-'69, and its spinoff series and movies The auction includes items from every incarnation of *Trek*, from the original series to the last movie, STAR TREK: NEMESIS, Christie's announced. The auction items will be on view at various

conventions and Christie's sites around the world, beginning this week Director **Jon Favreau** (ZATHURA) told SCI FI Wire that Paramount has put the long-gestating film adaptation of **Edgar Rice Burroughs'** *John Carter of Mars* on hold, pending the success of his next directing project, IRON MAN, and the upcoming 11th *Star Trek* film. The 11 volumes of Burroughs' classic adventure series center around a Civil War veteran who takes shelter in a cave when pursued by a group of Apache Indians. Once inside, he suddenly finds himself transported to Mars, where he's taken prisoner by 12-foot-tall green men BBC News reported that the cult 1960s TV series THE PRISONER will be remade into a six-part series for the UK's Sky One network, with former *Doctor Who* star **Christopher Eccleston** linked to the title role originally played by **Patrick McGoohan** Director **Christopher Nolan** (BATMAN BEGINS) told SCI FI Wire that he's well into development on his next project, a supernatural period movie called THE PRESTIGE. "It's a film about two magicians in turn-of-the-century London," Nolan said in an interview at the Saturn Awards in Universal City, Calif., on May 2. "And they enter into a deadly rivalry. And it's the story of how the two of them essentially try and sabotage each other's careers over the years." THE PRESTIGE is based on the book of the same name by **Christopher Priest** and features Nolan's *Batman* star **Christian Bale** and X-MEN's **Hugh Jackman** as the competing magicians, whose escalating conflict eventually leads to murder. Bale's *Batman* co-star **Michael Caine** also stars, as well as KING KONG's **Andy Serkis** and THE ISLAND's **Scarlett Johansson**. SF/fantasy author **Storm Constantine**, whose *Wraeththu Histories* series concludes in June with THE GHOSTS OF BLOOD AND INNOCENCE, told SCI FI Wire that the androgynous beings known as *Wraeththu* first came to her as an idea many years ago. "I'd been reading up about the magical meaning of the hermaphrodite, and I became fascinated with the idea of what it would be like if there was only one gender in the world," Constantine said in an interview. "The magical, or alchemical, androgyne is regarded as the perfect manifestation of male and female attributes, but in creating the *Wraeththu*, an androgynous species, I wanted to explore the possibilities of them possessing some of the worst traits of both genders, too." The BBC reported that the children's TV channel Jetix Europe is developing a show spun off of the hit *Doctor Who* series, centered on K9, the Doctor's trusty robot dog. K-9 Adventures will feature an updated version of K9 and will mix live action and computer animation **Will Smith** will star in I AM LEGEND, the long-gestating Warner Brothers adaptation of **Richard Matheson's** classic SF novel Variety reported. Matheson's book was the basis of previous movie adaptations, including the **Vincent Price** movie THE LAST MAN ON EARTH and the **Charlton Heston** vehicle THE OMEGA MAN

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RGP



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 QUEEN OF SINISTER* by Mark Chadbourn**

Gollancz / 435pgs / £6.99 / paperback

***THE HOUNDS OF AVALON* by Mark Chadbourn**

Gollancz / 374pgs / £10.99 / trade paperback

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Star rating: * * * *

These two books comprise the second and third volumes of *The Dark Age* series which in turn is a continuation of *The Age of Misrule* trilogy. In the first series, life in Britain radically changed overnight when all the myths became real and the countryside was overrun by the monsters of nightmare. Five people, the Brothers and Sisters of Dragons, were chosen by a higher power to fight for humankind. Although they triumphed in that the world was not completely destroyed, mythical creatures are still around and normality has not been restored. To counter the next threat, five more Brothers and Sisters of Dragons are chosen.

At the start of *THE QUEEN OF SINISTER* a plague has taken hold of the country. It resembles the Black Death but is actually supernatural in origin. Dr Caitlin Shepherd is supremely efficient until the plague takes her husband and son. This event drives her over the edge and colours all her actions in the rest of the novel. At this time, the lament-brood, an army of the undead, begins to stalk the countryside. Some of them seem to be searching for Caitlin. Also arriving on the scene is the mysterious Crowther. He persuades Caitlin that the cure to the plague lies in the Otherworld where all the monsters have come from and that she has a chance of getting her son and husband back if she goes there. He also tells her she is a Sister of Dragons. Several others join them in their journey. At the end of it, Caitlin has to make a decision. She is not given all the information to make an informed choice, and her emotions get in the way of clear thinking.

In *THE HOUNDS OF AVALON*, we are introduced to a Brother and another Sister of Dragons, Mallory and Sophie. It is possible that volume one of this trilogy revolve around them as they seem to be well formed characters with a developed relationship. Caitlin is by now no longer a Sister of Dragons but desperately wants to get her status back. Much of the action revolves around Oxford where the remnants of government have retreated. Here we meet Hunter, a military assassin. He discovers he is also a Brother of Dragons. To stand any chance of defeating the forces that are rapidly approaching in the midst

of an unusual July winter there must be five. It may be up to Hal, Hunter's quiet, unassuming and bookish friend, to discover the answers.

Both these books are good, fast paced adventures and can be read together as a pair if the first is unavailable. It is probably better not to dwell too much on issues that are ignored. For example, we are told that Britain is isolated from the rest of the world, yet there are still helicopters and, in Oxford at least, electricity and a semblance of normality. Is the rest of the world in a similar turmoil or has Britain disappeared from the view of the Continent? Are they trying to break through? No mention is made of Ireland which shares the Celtic mythology that is overwhelming the island. And why only the Celtic myths? Unless, in India chaos has resulted from the return of the demons and such gods as Kali and Shiva. Is China ravaged by real dragons? Perhaps there are stories yet to be told about the return of the gods and demons of other cultures. *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.

Books to be discussed:-

22 June 2006 - **Alan Cash - The Janus Effect**

20 July 2006 - tba

Next BFS Open Night will be held on 2nd June 2006 at the Devereux - 20 Devereux Court, Essex Street, The Strand, London, WC2R 3JJ. Entrance: FREE. Starts at 6.30pm. GoH: **Sean Wright** and **Allen Ashley** will be promoting Allen Ashley's "Urban Fantastic" book which, coincidentally, is published by Crowswing on the same day.

Nottingham Arts Theatre presents Terry Pratchett's GUARDS, GUARDS

Adapted by Stephen Briggs. Monday 12th June - Vimes Value Night - Come in Costume and Get A Free Drink! Mon 12th - Sat 17th June 2006 at 7.30pm. Saturday Matinee at 2.30pm. Tickets - £8 (conc. £6.50) **BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW ON 0115 947 6096**

Fantasycon 2006 - Date: 22nd - 24th September 2006. Place: The Britannia Hotel, St James Street, Nottingham. GoHs: **Neil Gaiman, Juliet E. McKenna, Ramsey Campbell, Raymond E. Feist & Clive Barker;** with MC: **David J. Howe** For more information check out www.fantasycon.org.uk. For those of you who would prefer to make your booking via credit card, please email Debbie Bennett at fcon-admin@britishfantasysociety.org.uk ... this facility is by request only and will not be available on the main website. For any other queries email fcon@britishfantasysociety.org.uk

Further information can be found at our new website, www.fantasycon.org.uk or email Vicky on fcon@britishfantasysociety.org.uk

Juliet E McKenna will be tutoring a residential creative writing course focusing on SF&F at the Castle of Park in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, from 1st to 7th October 2006.

This week will cover key elements of writing strategy, and practical approaches. Group work will develop skills for exploring ideas on plot, character and world building while individual exercises will enable participants to relate the sessions to personal projects. For more details, visit www.castleofpark.net or www.julietemckenna.com

NOVACON 36 – the BSGF’s own convention will again be held at the Quality Hotel, Walsall, Nr Birmingham. Guest of Honour will be **Ken MacLeod**. Registrations are currently £33. Cheques to ‘Novacon 36’, Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. Email: x15@zoom.co.uk
Website: www.novacon.org

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 OF THE BSGF

July 14th - **JUSTIN RICHARDS**

August 11th – **SOCIAL EVENING** – a meal out at the Black Eagle, Hockley. We tried this two years ago and due to it’s popularity we’ve decided to repeat.

September 8th – we’ll be trying to get one of the Big Names visiting the area for Fantasycon, **Neil Gaiman or Raymond E Feist..**

October – award-winning SF artist **JIM BURNS**

November 3rd – tba

December 1st – **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL** – details to be announced.

Newsletter 417 copyright 2006 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the general membership or, for that matter, the person giving the ‘opinion’.

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

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 Secretary, 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH