

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

APRIL 2007

ISSUE 427

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

COMMITTEE: **VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); VICKY COOK (SECRETARY);**  
**PAT BROWN (TREASURER); ROG PEYTON (NEWSLETTER EDITOR);**  
**TIM STOCK (PUBLICITY); WILLIAM MCCABE;**  
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Friday 13<sup>th</sup> APRIL

## KEN MacLEOD

Those of you who attend conventions, and in particular Novacons will know our speaker this month. Ken has been around the convention scene for several years and was Guest of Honour at last year's Novacon.

His first book, *THE STAR FRACTION*, was published in 1995 – it was the first book in the *Fall Revolution* series and won the Prometheus Award for Best Novel and was also a nominee for the Arthur C Clarke Award. The other three books in that series are *THE STONE CANAL* (1996), *THE CASSINI DIVISION* (1997) and *THE SKY ROAD* (1999). The gap in 1998 was taken up with a book for younger readers – *CYDONIA* was the 8<sup>th</sup> volume in the bestselling *The Web* series.

The *Engines of Light* trilogy followed and consisted of *COSMONAUT KEEP* (2000), *DARK LIGHT* (2001) and *ENGINE CITY* (2002). One-off works are the short novel *THE HUMAN FRONT* (2001), *NEWTON'S WAKE* (2004), *LEARNING THE WORLD* (2005) and April sees the publication of his new novel, *EXECUTION CHANNEL*. In addition there is a collection published only in the USA – *GIANT LIZARDS FROM ANOTHER STAR* (2006)

**MAY 11th 2007 - Peter Lavery has cancelled due to pressure of work following illness. We're currently negotiating for an alternative speaker.**

collects, short stories, essays, articles and various other pieces.

To date, Ken has won the Prometheus Libertarian Award three times, nominated for it a further four times, nominated for a Hugo three times, a Nebula once, the Arthur C Clarke Award four times and the British SF Award twice. The new novel, EXECUTION CHANNEL is published April 5<sup>th</sup>, one week before our meeting and copies will be available to buy along with the collection and paperbacks of his other novels.

Do not miss this meeting! Come along and hear the author who is being called the modern-day George Orwell! 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 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.*

## **MARCH MEETING – JUSTINA ROBSON**

In February, our Guest Speaker turned up but only three members turned out due to the chaos caused by heavy snow. In March, Justina Robson, seven months pregnant, was feeling unwell and not up to driving from Leeds to Birmingham and was forced to cancel. She was extremely upset at having to cancel at such short notice and has promised to speak to the Group after her baby is born and the hectic period of dealing with a young child, is over.

An impromptu Ask the Experts type meeting was held with Vernon Brown, Dave Hardy, Chris Morgan and yours truly answering questions from members on any and every aspect of science fiction. We thought it went down well and hope that you all enjoyed it.

## **A LETTER FROM ROB HOLDSTOCK**

Dear BSG,

Well, it was the snow that did it! I set off on Feb 9<sup>th</sup> in hazy sunshine, assured that the weather was good in the Midlands, but yet should have known better! The snow hit just after the Coventry M6 turn-off. I'd always loved the Novacons at the Royal Angus (now Thistle), so much so that as I drove through the 'white out' on the A38, I could see the old hunting ground in my mind's eye. It took an hour to get there; to park; to ring for Rog; to discover that he was stuck in the gridlock; to realise that indeed Birmingham (snow-bound) was truly stationary; to pack some clothes and books, walk through the slush and sleet, find the hotel, collapse and warm up.

Later, at the Britannia, it was a pleasure to meet Mike and William. Two intrepid voyagers. Rog turned up later, ready and willing for a glass or two, and though the bar in the Britannia hotel is bloody freezing, we had a mini-get

together – and a good talk -- that at least made me feel that the effort had been worth it. Rather like the last night of a Con, I remember saying.

I have a new book, *THE BROKEN KINGS*, and a whole batch of re-issues, all important to me, and all of which I wish to prattle on about, and hopefully arm-twist into some purchases. Quite seriously: I look forward to having the evening that was so frustrated by snow and ice and bloody gridlock! The new date is June (the 8<sup>th</sup>). So turn up and question me on my creative way with mythology. Listen to me explain how mythology is just a bunch of badly remembered stories anyway! I promise not to read (too much) but if I start getting sentimental and indiscreet about the ‘old days of fandom’, for God’s sake stop me! There are things that must never be revealed. RH

## ***MORE CRAZY BOOK TITLES – Robert Day***

Interest in the Diagram Prize for Oddest Book Title of the Year is growing now that The Today Programme on Radio 4 has picked it up. (However, they are working under two misapprehensions: 1) that it is new, and 2) that it refers to novels. Pah.)

The latest batch of hopefuls contains some gems:

A GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE COUNTING METHODS OF  
CHOPPED YARROW STALKS IN THE BOOK OF CHANGES  
PIGGY POTIONS; NATURAL REMEDIES FOR GUINEA PIGS  
LET'S DISCOVER F WORDS  
NEVER SUCK A DEAD MAN'S HAND: CURIOUS ADVENTURES OF A  
CSI  
CELEBRATING BOXES  
CHARLES DICKENS IN CYBERSPACE; THE AFTERLIFE OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY IN POSTMODERN CULTURE  
LAWYER'S POKER; 52 LESSONS THAT LAWYERS CAN LEARN FROM  
CARD PLAYERS  
SALMONELLA MEN ON PLANET PORNO

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

.... SF fan and writer **Lee Hoffman** died February 6<sup>th</sup> of a heart attack. She was 74. In the 50s she edited 30 issues of her fanzine QUANDRY and was assistant editor of the magazines INFINITY SF and SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES with her husband **Larry T Shaw**. In the 60s and 70s she wrote SF novels TELEPOWER (1967), THE CAVES OF KARST (1969), ALWAYS THE BLACK KNIGHT (1970) and CHANGE SONG (1972) .... Author **Fred Mustard Stewart** (b.1932), died on February 7<sup>th</sup>. His novel THE MEPHISTO WALTZ was turned into a film in 1971. Other novels of genre interest include THE STAR CHILD and THE METHUSELAH ENZYME .... **David I Masson** (b. 1915), author of the classic SF collection THE CALTRAPS OF TIME, died February 25<sup>th</sup> .... Author **Leigh Eddings** (b.1937) died on February 28<sup>th</sup>. For many years, Leigh was a silent co-

author with her husband David, of his novels, including *The Belgariad* and *The Malloreon*. Beginning with BELGARATH THE SORCERER in 1995, Leigh received co-credit on their novels. Leigh Eddings had suffered a series of strokes leading up to her death .... Actor **Gareth Hunt** (b.1942), best known for his role as Mike Gambit on *The New Avengers*, died from pancreatic cancer on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Hunt appeared in the Doctor Who serial “Planet of the Spiders” as well as on the shows SPACE: 1999 and THE NEW ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD .... Hugo Award winning fan artist **Alexis Gilliland** has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. According to his family, the cancer was found early and Gilliland has an excellent prognosis for recovery .... The Crawford Award for the best debut fantasy book has been presented to **M. Rickert** for her collection MAP OF DREAMS. The Crawford Award was first presented in 1990 and is given to a book published during the preceding 18 month period .... The April issue of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION is a **Gene Wolfe** Special with an 86 page story by Wolfe and three articles about his writing .... **Philip Jose Farmer** has sold a 140,000 word book of uncollected material to Subterranean Press in the USA .... Tor books are about to publish ANTAGONIST by **Gordon R Dickson** and **David W Wixon**. It’s the final book in the *Childe Cycle*, started by Dickson and completed by Wixon (Dickson & Wixon! Sounds like a great double act!) .... Books handed in to publishers – **Charles Stross’s** HALTING STATE, **Stephen Baxter’s** CONQUEROR, ’s THE SUNRISE LANDS and **Jack McDevitt’s** CAULDRON .... **Andy Cox**, editor and publisher of the British SF magazine INTERZONE, reports that the magazine is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year with a special March/April issue. “[The issue] contains new stories by established names and rising stars, [such as] **M. John Harrison, Gwyneth Jones, Alastair Reynolds, Hal Duncan, Daniel Kaysen** and **Jamie Barras**,” Cox said in an interview .... The Lord Ruthven Award was presented at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in Fort Lauderdale on March 17. The award recognizes excellence in vampire fiction. This year, awards were presented to **Barbara Hambly** for her novel RENFIELD: SLAVE OF DRACULA and **Bruce McClelland** for SLAYERS AND THEIR VAMPIRES: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF KILLING THE DEAD .... According to various reports, *Harry Potter* series author **J K Rowling** is prepared to go to court to sue auction website eBay because she says it offered and sold unauthorized electronic versions of her books. Rowling is said to be suing for breach of copyright after sellers used the Indian version of the website to sell versions of her books in electronic form. In 2004, Rowling, along with Warner Bros., successfully obtained an injunction which strictly prohibits eBay from selling illegal copies of her work. Rowling has never authorized any e-books. The court order is binding until the hearing resumes on May 23 .... The GUARDIAN newspaper’s ‘100 Books You Can’t Live Without’ has only two SF books in its top 20 – **George Orwell’s** NINETEEN-EIGHTY-FOUR at #8 and **Audrey Niffenegger’s** THE TIME-TRAVELER’S WIFE at #19. There were five fantasy books/series in the top 20 – **J R R Tolkien’s** LORD OF THE RINGS (at #2), the *Harry Potter* series by **J K Rowling** (at #4), THE BIBLE by various authors (at #6), **Philip Pullman’s** *His Dark Materials* trilogy (at #8) and **Tolkien’s** THE HOBBIT (at #16) .... SCI-FI LONDON 6: THE SIXTH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASTIC FILMS will take place on May 2-6. More info can be found on <http://www.sci-fi-london.com/> but if I say that it has animee and DR WHO included, you may want to save yourself the wasted effort. The only science fiction I could find was the brilliant BBC TV series LIFE ON MARS – the rest was largely children’s stuff (DR WHO, etc.) .... RGP



## BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note:- 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 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting. RGP

### ***THE POISONED CROWN by Amanda Hemingway***

**Harpercollins / 437pgs / £12.99 / trade paperback**

**Reviewed by Vicky Cook**

**Star rating: \* \* \***

This third volume of the *Sangreal* trilogy features a young boy who has disturbing dreams that transport him to other worlds. As time goes on it is apparent that these dreams are not make-believe but reality and he has to use these dreams to fulfil a purpose. He is aided by his mother and ‘uncle’ Bartlemy as well as his friend Hazel who is a witch-in-training.

This book sounds like a children’s book but as an adult I found it quite gripping. The heroes are indeed children but they are on the verge of adulthood and there are enough adult themes to keep me interested – young love, power-hunger, deities trying to take over the world, etc. The book is too long really for younger people, so it has to keep a good balance so that adults would enjoy it too, and for the most part here it seems to work well. Much of the action in other worlds is set on a world full of water with no land, and the book starts here through the eyes of an albatross which makes for an interesting viewpoint.

If I had one criticism it is that I found Nathan hard to warm to. I warmed to his mother and enigmatic uncle Bartlemy and some other characters but couldn’t quite get to grips with him. The book is the third in a trilogy and I wonder if it suffers from a common fate – that by this point the author ‘expects’ people to be familiar with the characters – I felt I had missed out on a few events which had taken place previously and this meant some elements of the book were closed off to me. References are made to earlier events but without a proper prologue I could not catch up.

So, an entertaining original idea but one which did not quite grab my attention, possibly due to the trilogy element. VC

## **MYTHAGO WOOD by Robert Holdstock**

**Gollancz / 296pgs / £14.99 / Hardcover**

**Reviewed by Dave Corby**

**Star rating: \* \* \* \***

What has not been written about a book published in 1984 that has been so well regarded and critically acclaimed, having won the 1986 World Fantasy Award and the Grand Prix de L'Imaginaire? Well, this new edition of MYTHAGO WOOD may well be familiar to many, but this reviewer, despite his not inconsiderable knowledge of fantasy, is almost embarrassed to admit to never having read this one before. So I opened it up with no small anticipation...

Initially the book seemed to come across to me a bit like THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE, but as written by H P Lovecraft. The hero's wartime experience as backdrop and mysterious discovery of another world, which may not be entirely easy to enter, recall C. S. Lewis, but the altogether more sinister feeling of dark secrets leans it curiously in the *Cthulhu Mythos* direction. The book establishes a very strong narration; our hero has witnessed his own father's fascination with the wood sitting on the borders of their home, and returns from WWII to find his own brother mixed up in the same obsession. It soon transpires that Ryhope Wood is clearly more than it seems and it maintains a sense of mystery throughout.

Holdstock just about has the knack of parcelling out the bits of mystical knowledge in just the right trickle to keep the reader interested, although I occasionally found it mildly frustrating to have elements that seemed as if they should be simple kept tantalisingly out of my imaginative grasp. Nonetheless the writers of the popular, but drawn-out, TV series *Lost* and *Heroes* could learn much from Holdstock's pacing.

As the book develops, it deepens almost constantly, eventually opening up into grand vistas of hidden worlds. However, it never devolves into a genre piece; despite, or perhaps because of, the use of so many conventions of mythical stories, it remains very original, although the reader will occasionally feel as if it all *should be* familiar. Many of the devices employed are drawn from Celtic English myth, but the central core to the idea is far more unusual.

Some may find the book downbeat as Holdstock believes in real, sensible characters – these are human beings, with all the foibles they should have, and not typical fantasy heroes. There are no Catholic definitions of good and evil here, only nature and the inscrutable id to guide us. And this is also a strength of the writing; the hero is easily identified with – he could be any of us.

In all I found MYTHAGO WOOD to be refreshing, enjoyable, occasionally exciting and impressive by turns, but not wholly satisfying. MYTHAGO WOOD has several 'sequels' set in the same setting, LAVONDYS (1988) and THE HOLLOWING (1993) being chief. Like MYTHAGO WOOD's hero, I find myself thinking about delving deeper in order to uncover

the core secret, but knowing secretly that the ultimate truth may possibly be forever hidden deeper... DC

***THE SNOW* by Adam Richards**  
**Gollancz / 360pgs / £6.99 / paperback**  
**Reviewed by Vicky Cook**  
**Star rating: \* \* \***

Tira is an Indian woman, leading a normal life, until one day there is a blizzard which goes on and on and on until the snow is three miles thick and covers the whole world. The story is told by two people who gradually open up a world of lies and intrigue and terrorism, as well as describing the new post-apocalyptic world of beauty and mystery. It is immediately apparent that the two main protagonists survive the snow onslaught – the emphasis is more on the web of intrigue – who or what caused the snow, as it is too much to be natural, and what are the governments now trying to hide?

I was fascinated by the idea that the world is ‘ended’ by snow and thus found the parts of the book which dwelled on this, gripping to read. The other parts of the story are rather political in nature, dealing as they do with terrorism, people’s beliefs and running for government positions. The story jumps about all over the place: first Tira tells her part of the story, then one of the other main characters, with whom Tira is familiar, takes over, all in the format of a confidential document recorded after the event. It is immediately obvious that the two are in some sort of detention, even though this is only revealed later, and confessing their stories, but the whys and wherefores do not become apparent till later on.

Slightly different to what I have been reading, with no coherent storyline structure as such. I found it an interesting read if a little slow-paced once the main apocalyptic events have happened. The parts where she is learning to live in a military base are a little slow, but the action comes back in patches a little later. The deliberate confusion, for instance the blanks left in the text to hide names, etc., can be annoying as the novel moves along, but it certainly makes for interesting reading. There are a few themes throughout the book – whiteness, terrorism, racism which distract from the snow. All discussions about cause of snow seem vague and never explained properly, which annoyed me as I was more interested by the ‘natural’ than political events.

Tira has involvement as the wife of a prominent government minister and lover of a rebel seeking to topple the government, this is why her story is often questioned; can we trust her, or can we trust her lover who is unpredictable? The Americans and some other characters are a bit clichéd, but is this just her perception of them? I personally wasn’t that interested in any of the characters and more interested in the ‘snow’ so I was frustrated that this never got explained, or the unlikely bits such as how did the American helicopters, etc., survive the disaster when so much else didn’t?

The book in general is a claustrophobic read but with excellent descriptions of the world preserved beneath the blue and white expanses. I did enjoy some of it while other parts left me frustrated. VC

## ***THE GHOST FROM THE GRAND BANKS***

**by Arthur C Clarke**

**Gollancz / 288pgs / £6.99 / paperback**

**Reviewed by Vicky Cook**

**Star rating: \* \***

This tells the story of the race to raise the *Titanic* on the centennial of its sinking, and that about sums up the plot. The novel covers some fairly stereotyped characters ranging from a world-weary engineer to a married couple, and is very heavy on engineering and techno-babble. This did not unfortunately appeal to me particularly, and I did not warm to the characters either – I would have preferred better-created characters and a human story. The lack of characterisation has been said to be typical of Clarke, so perhaps this is not surprising, but this book just did not gel with me like some of his others have (RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA, for instance).

There is some improvement near the end when the action finally picks up and things move away from all the talking and engineering – for instance there are some excellent action scenes involving an octopus and a tsunami, but on the whole it was too little too late and just not convincing. The book is too slow with not enough human story. The fact it is set in the future, but too close to our own present, grates too, though his treatment of the then much-feared Y2K subject is interesting. The story idea of having a race to raise the *Titanic* is also an original and interesting one.

I enjoyed the *Rama* series so read this to expand my familiarity with the author. However, to be honest, I was left a little disappointed by this one. VC

## ***THE MARK OF THE BEAST AND OTHER FANTASTICAL TALES*** by Rudyard Kipling

**Gollancz / 785 pages / £7.99 / Paperback (Fantasy Masterworks 50)**

**Review by W A McCabe**

**Star Rating \* \* \***

Rudyard Kipling was one of the greatest writers of his time. He wrote stories that covered every genre from Science Fiction to Journalism. He produced stories that helped define modern fantasy. So why does this collection feel at times like someone is scraping a barrel?

The most obvious omissions are in the ‘children’s’ stories. None of them are included. Since most of Kipling’s best fantasy was included in books like JUST SO STORIES or PUCK OF POOK’S HILL this could be a problem.

The ‘solution’ has been to include non-genre material that has some tenuous connection. The collection begins with the poem “The Vampire” which has nothing to do with the supernatural creatures we usually associate with the name. There is also “The city of dreadful night” which reads like a gruesome tabloid travelogue with the dead walking the streets but ‘dead’ seems to relate more to the way people look and feel when the temperature is still over 100 degrees at night. This isn’t entirely a bad thing. You also get “The Man Who Would Be King”, one of Kipling’s best adventure stories.

Some of the stories included lose a great deal from their period. Occasionally it would help to have a glossary or footnotes. Some seem to concentrate on things that belong to a certain time or place. “The Joker” seems to rely on a knowledge of Euchre (a card game). Many stories need the reader to know how much the Europeans knew of India at the time. Some of the stories aren’t that well written.

On the other hand, there is a lot of worthwhile material. There are classic ghost stories like “The Phantom Rickshaw”, early SF (both “With the Night Mail” and its better sequel “As Easy as ABC”) and adventures like “The Man Who Would Be King”.

This is a broad selection of Kipling’s adult fiction. It’s not the best of anything, nor does it belong to any particular genre. Take it as anything else and you do a great writer a disservice.

*WAM*

## 😊😊😊 **FILM/TV ROUND-UP** 😞😞😞 **BY VICKY COOK**

We start with a slightly older film, TRAPPED IN SPACE, based on a short story by Arthur C Clarke. Made in the nineties, this film maintains the tone of a lot of the space films of this decade, by being strongly reminiscent of ALIENS with its claustrophobia and dark mining-type ship. A crew of stereotypes find themselves adrift in space, abandoned by their captain, having to cope with the fact their air and supplies are gradually running out, and what their own minds are doing to them. This reminds me of a George R.R. Martin story I’ve just read, where hapless humans find themselves on a ‘ghost-ship’ intent on driving them all mad or to their deaths... An interesting film let down by a certain amount of predictability and maybe too many drawn-out slow bits, and rather bad effects due to an obviously low budget.

The current series of PRIMEVAL ended last week. This series has gone from strength to strength since my last review on it. As predicted the third episode was much better and the monsters and character and plot development improved and became more adult in theme. It was unfortunately let down by an ending which left everything completely open. Nothing was really resolved, the characters seemed to reveal yet more hidden depths and it was almost as if ending in the middle of a conversation. I was disappointed by this. There must be

a second series in the making, but it was surely a bit dangerous to end on this note. Without some sort of resolution, the programme will surely be remembered with confusion and slight bafflement.

Meanwhile DOCTOR WHO is set to return. Trailers are showing a wealth of monsters-of-the-week, along with a new improved assistant (please let her be nowhere near as annoying as Rose – probably best if she does not fall in love with the Doctor nor becomes the salvation of the world at any point). Watch out for that one.

Film-wise, I've been watching X-MEN 3 and SERENITY. Now, possibly because I never caught much of the original 'Firefly' series, the latter film (2005, directed by Joss 'Buffy' Whedon) didn't make much sense to me. It seemed to assume much pre-knowledge from the viewer which left me at a distinct disadvantage, and was just too dark, too confusing and with not enough explanation of anything, and just too dull in parts. The 'monsters' (cannibalistic clichéd ones) were odd – they were apparently savage and crazed in their appetites, but flew super spaceships – surely civilisation would have meant a more cultured approach to their meals rather than launching themselves zombie-like to get a chomp? I have read several good reviews of this which make me wonder if I was just in the wrong mood when I watched it, but I could not get into the characters at all and the constant action got rather tiring. Not recommended.

Meanwhile X-MEN 3: THE LAST STAND (2006, directed by Brett Ratner) has left me in two minds. It was a good adventure action movie, and the time passed quickly, but I was slightly baffled as to why they have started killing off the main characters. Last I heard film number 4 was definitely being made – do they plan a whole new breed of mutant heroes and getting away from the traditional gang? Hugh Jackman may melt a thousand hearts as Wolverine but, as my unaffected boyfriend pointed out, he looks slightly too young in the part. In the comic he was a bit like a dad to the rest of them, being slightly older, but here he is much the same age if not younger and does not quite ('quite' I say, as I tend to like what he has done with him) convince. His bordering-on-obsessive love for Jean Gray is a main focus here, even though she herself seems to be finally embracing those long-hidden and much-hinted-at powers of hers. Jean herself is slightly baffling as a character and spends much of the movie apparently hiding in the forest while the other characters have a go at destroying everything. There are a few storylines in the movie which are rather rushed through and could do with a bit more development on another occasion. On the whole though the film entertained and passed quickly, and unlike SERENITY, the last film I reviewed, had rounded-out characters one can warm to. Recommended (especially to fans perhaps) - I did enjoy this one. *VC*

## ***ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S QUIZ***

- 1 Frank Belknap Long.
- 2 The Cybermen and Daleks.

- 3 Sylvester Stallone played the lead characters in both DEMOLITION MAN and JUDGE DREDD.
- 4 Barad-Dur and Orthanc are the two towers in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.
- 5 Vila Restal (Michael Keating).
- 6 Howard the Duck.
- 7 Quaxxan (home of *2000AD* 'editor' Tharg the Mighty), 'Zarjaz' means fantastic.
- 8 DR JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE.
- 9 Joss Whedon.
- 10 Nic Coppola adopted the surname "Cage" in tribute to the Marvel comic-book *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire* and named his son Kal-El after the Kryptonian name of Superman.
- 11 *Century City*.
- 12 The Aston Science Fiction Group, chaired by the Brum Group's own Vernon Brown (we took over the following year). By the way, have you booked your membership yet for Novacon 37?

And again, the winner was our US member Wendell Wagner with a full 12 out of 12 correct. You win another pint, Wendell!!! Jinnie Cracknell was runner-up with 11 correct answers. Me? I got a mere ONE (#12). I should have got #1 – the rest I'd never heard of. Movies, TV, comics, fantasy – get outta here!

## ***FORTHCOMING EVENTS***

**The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group** meets on Thursdays at 5.45pm 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:-**

April 9th - Maureen F McHugh - CHINA MOUNTAIN ZHANG

May 17th    June 14th    July 19th    (All to be announced)

**FANTASYCON 2007** will be held over the weekend of September 21-23 at the Britannia Hotel, 1 St James Street, Nottingham. Guests of Honour are Steve Jones and Michael Marshall Smith. Full details from their website <http://www.fantasycon.org.uk/>

**NOVACON 37** – the Brum Group's own convention – will again be at the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Nr Walsall, W Mids. It's the weekend of 2-4 November and the Guest of Honour is Charles Stross. Registrations are currently £35. Cheques to 'Novacon 37', Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. Email: x15@zoom.co.uk Website: [www.novacon.org](http://www.novacon.org)

**WAR OF THE WORLDS Returns** - Following a hugely successful and critically acclaimed sell-out UK tour in 2006, the award-winning Jeff Wayne's

Musical Version of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS is set to head back to The NEC Arena in December 2007. For 2007, the production will be boasting a raft of exciting new features, including new innovative technology by Californian company EON Reality who will create a new Richard Burton 'head'. With 3D GGI photo-real holographic imagery it aims to take the replication even further than last year's tour and to set the bar for all theatrical technology in the future. Tickets now on sale priced at £39.50 plus booking and transaction fees.

*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)*

## ***FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG***

May 11th - tba

Jun 8th – **ROBERT HOLDSTOCK**

Jul 13th - tba

Aug 10th – **Summer Social** – a meal at the Black Eagle

Sep 14th – the group of fantasy writers, **The Write Fantastic**, now numbering eight – **JAMES BARCLAY** and **DEBORAH MILLER** have joined since their last appearance - will be visiting us.

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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 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