

BRUM GROUP NEWS

The Free Monthly Newsletter of the
Birmingham Science Fiction Group

October 2007

Issue 433

Honorary Presidents

Brian W Aldiss O.B.E. & Harry Harrison

Committee

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Pat Brown (Treasurer), Tim Stock (Publicity), William McCabe

Novacon 37 Chairman - Steve Green

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Friday 12th October

Andy Remic

When not motorcycling, mountain biking, snowboarding or climbing, there's little har man Andy Remic likes better than penning hardcore SF novels such as Spiral, Quake and Warhead. He is a young British writer and teacher from Lancashire. During his teaching career he developed an interest in martial arts and is now expert in unarmed combat. He can kill a man with a single blow but prefers writing and hacking computer systems.

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, crossover the road and you'll find Union Passage about 20-30 yards along). The meeting will commence at 7.45 pm.

Admission £4 (Members £3)

Next Meeting - 9th November : A quiz with the participation of students from the University.



NEWS



An ITV survey of the most popular children's authors among 16-34 year olds put Roald Dahl at the top of the list. JK Rowling only makes it to no. 4 and Pratchett doesn't appear in the top 10. The survey was commissioned for a

Roald Dahl Weekend on the TV channel. The full list is 1. Roald Dahl, 2. CS Lewis, 3. JM Barrie, 4. JK Rowling, 5. Anthony Horowitz, 6. Jacqueline Wilson, 7. Dr Seuss, 8. Philip Pullman, 9. Francesca Simon, 10. Enid Blyton.

Virgin comics are planning a new series of **Dan Dare** Comics.

Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic **The Road** has now won the american **Quill** award for general fiction. There is also a film version in production.

The SF Writers of America (SFWA) has disbanded its e-piracy initiative after forcing a website to remove copyright material that it (the SFWA) had no right to.

The velociraptor made famous by the "Jurassic Park" films looked even less like it did in the movie. Apart from being much smaller (3 feet tall) a recent piece of research shows that they also had feathers.

A three-bedroom bungalow in Poole where J.R.R. Tolkien retired is going to be destroyed. Tolkien sold the house following his wife's death in 1972 and moved back to Oxford. The buyer has now sold the house which will be demolished and the site used for two four-bedroom houses. He also plans to sell some of Tolkien's old possessions before the house is destroyed.

Terry O'Quinn won a best supporting actor emmy for his part in Lost. Battlestar Galactica and Nightmares & Dreamscapes won awards for special effects.

Google has announced a prize of \$25 million to someone who can get a working rover onto the surface of the moon.

The Americans are going to make their own version of the ITV show 11th Hour. For those (like me) who hadn't heard of the show, it involved Patrick Stewart saving the world from "the worst abuses of science". It only ran for 4 episodes.

Awards

Three sets of awards were presented at this year's worldcon. The Japanese national awards, the Chesley awards for artwork and the Hugos. These

are the winners.

Seiun Awards

Japanese Long Fiction: Japan Sinks, Part 2, by Sakyu Komatsu and Koshu Tani

Japanese Short Fiction: "A Furoshiki and Spider's Thread," by Housuke Nojiri

Translated Long Fiction: Mortal Engines, by Phillip Reeve (Translated by Rei Anno)

Translated Short Fiction: "The Astronaut from Wyoming," by Adam-Troy Castro and Jerry Oltion (Translated by Hisashi Asakura)

Media: The Girl Who Leapt Through Time

Comics: Quiet Country Cafe (Yokohama Shopping Trip), by Hitoshi Ashinano

Artist: Yoshitaka Amano

Non Fiction: Passport Into Space 3: Space Pioneers A Frontline Report, by Yuichi Sasamoto

Special Award: The M-V Launch System — Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency

Special Award: Yoshihiro Yonezawa

Chesley Awards

Best Cover Illustration – Hardback: River of Gods, by Stefan Martinière

Best Cover – Paperback: Moon Called, by Daniel Dos Santos

Best Cover - Magazine: Fantasy Magazine Summer 2006, by Renee LeCompte

Best Interior: Cricket Magazines, by Omar Rayyan

Best Unpublished Color: "Galadriel's Harp," by Stephen Hickman

Best Unpublished Monochrome: "Red Sonya," by Donato Giancola

Best 3-D: "Ice Dragon," by Laura Reynolds

Best Gaming Related: "Dragons of Fearum," by Todd Lockwood

Best Product: "Pan's Labyrinth," production design by Eugenio Caballero & conceptual design by William Stout

Artistic Achievement: John Jude Palencar

Best Art Direction: Irene Gallo, Tor Books

Hugo Winners

Best Novel: Rainbows End by Vernor Vinge

Best Novella: "A Billion Eves" by Robert Reed

Best Novelette: "The Djinn's Wife" by Ian McDonald

Best Short Story: "Impossible Dreams" by Tim Pratt

Best Related Non-Fiction Book: James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B Sheldon by Julie Phillips

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form: Pan's Labyrinth. Screenplay by Guillermo del Toro. Directed by Guillermo del Toro

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: Doctor Who - "Girl in the Fireplace." Written by Steven Moffat. Directed by Euros Lyn

Best Editor, Long Form: Patrick Nielsen Hayden

Best Editor, Short Form: Gordon Van Gelder

Best Professional Artist: Donato Giancola

Best Semiprozine: Locus ed. by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten Gong-Wong and Liza Groen Trombi

Best Fanzine: Science-Fiction Five-Yearly ed. by Lee Hoffman, Geri Sullivan, and Randy Byers

Best Fan Writer: Dave Langford

Best Fan Artist: Frank Wu

Campbell Award: Naomi Novik

British Fantasy Award Winners

The Sydney J. Bounds Best Newcomer Award: Joe Hill

Best Non-Fiction: Cinema Macabre, by Mark Morris

Best Artist: Vincent Chong

Best Small Press: Peter Crowther, PS Publishing

Best Collection: Fragile Things, by Neil Gaiman

Best Anthology: Extended Play: The Elastic Book of Music, by Gary Couzens

Best Novella: "Kid," by Paul Finch

Best Short Fiction: Whisper Lane," by Mark Chadbourn

BFS Special Award: 'The Karl Edward Wagner Award': Ellen Datlow

Best Novel: 'The August Derleth Fantasy Award': Dusk, by Tim Lebbon

Obituaries

Children's SF writer **Madeleine**

L'Engle died on September 6th. She was best known for the "Meg Murray" series including the award-winning "A wrinkle in time".

Joseph L. Hensley was a member of "First Fandom" and a published writer since the 50s. He mostly wrote mystery novels but also wrote many short SF stories and at least one SF novel "The Black Roads". He died on 27th August.

James Rigney jr. better known as **Robert Jordan** writer of the Wheel of Time fantasy series died on September 16th leaving the last volume of that series incomplete.

Quiz

There have been several TV shows on the history of comics of late and there's the big show next month so.. Which comic did each of these characters first appear in?

1. Judge Dredd
2. Dan Dare
3. V (for vendetta)
4. Tank Girl

Last month's Quiz Answers

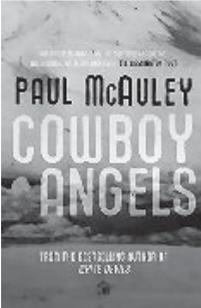
- 1 H G Wells
- 2 Edmond Hamilton
3. John Christopher
4. Mike Resnick
5. David Brin & Greg Benford
6. Jack Williamson

Book Reviews



COWBOY ANGELS by Paul McAuley, Gollancz £18.99 hardcover/£12.99 trade paperback. 425 pages

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.



This is an alternative world/parallel worlds novel with a bit of time travel thrown in for good measure. At places where decisions are important for the future course of history, the time line has branched. In one of these alternative worlds or sheaves, the scientist Alan Turing emigrated to America and invented a gate into the alternative histories. This one is referred to the characters as the Real. The cowboy angels of the title were a team who went through the gates and helped the Americans in the other sheaves to take control of their destiny so that America becomes the

dominant force for democracy in all of them.

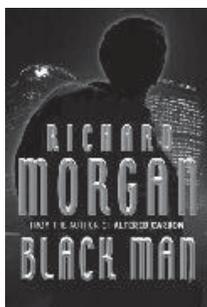
The action is set mostly in 1984 when Carter has become the US president. Adam Stone, one of the early travellers through the gates, is hauled out of retirement as his old comrade in arms, Tom Waverley has gone on a killing spree. In ten days he has killed six doppelgangers of same woman in six different sheaves. He will only talk to Adam. Waverley's daughter, Linda, is assigned to Adam as his driver and local contact. When they finally catch up with Waverley, they find he is suffering from terminal radiation sickness but tells them that if they want to understand why he has killed the same woman six times, they must look for clues. He gives them a starting point before killing himself.

The plot twists backwards and forwards across the different sheaves and is well up to McAuley's usual standard of complexity, both in the way he handles ideas, settings and the characters. His scenarios are well thought out and he avoids the pitfalls that this kind of novel can produce.

BLACK MAN by Richard Morgan, Gollancz £14.99 hardcover 560 pages

Reviewed by Ian Allwyn

As a child, Carl Marsalis was genetically engineered by a secret government programme to be a 'Thirteen', an alpha-male built as a perfect soldier. Now, during a difficult global peace, he works for the government hunting down other Thirteens working illegally in the global criminal



underworld, rather than live a free but sedentary existence on the colony planet Mars.

Marsalis is hired to hunt down a Thirteen who has stolen a Mars shuttle and returned to Earth for reasons unknown. The UN have linked the return to a series of very graphic murders throughout the globe and the plot is driven by Marsalis and his two UN companions hunt for this killer whilst the investigation leads to exploration into what happened to the Thirteens once they'd completed their fighting purpose.

Black Man (US Edition title - 'Thirteen') is violent, explicitly so and makes no apologies. Readers of Morgan's earlier and very successful SF thrillers will find few surprises there. The book begins with Morgans' now trademark left-wing leaning acknowledgements page together with tender dedication which soon give way to unremitting gun-fights, brawls and cannibalism. But Black Man is not simply violent for its' own sake, the plot is an exploration of violence not a glorification. The effects of violence, personal, social, political are what drive the narrative as much as its' fast paced plot. Unlike the worst of Hollywood, this violence hurts with scars both physical and mental and grief becomes an important theme.

The novel has excellent cyberpunk dystopian world building (In particular the separation of America and the mid-west "Jesusland"). Recommended to those with a strong stomach who want a thought provoking, entertaining thriller.

THE SEPARATION by Christopher Priest, Gollancz, £7.99 paperback, 374 pages

This is the story of two identical twins, Jacob and Joseph Sawyer and the effect that they had on the war between England and Germany in 1941. The story presents several alternate histories that blur into one another to such an extent that people from one time-line are often confronted with people and stories from another. To add to the confusion, stories are presented from personal recollection, diaries and state papers. Some parts are even common to more than one history.

I can't comment on the accuracy of the portrayals of historical figures and I suspect that there is enough disparate opinion that very few people could say for sure. The story-telling is good and the variations are often subtle enough to pass without notice but sometimes the segments are blatantly from a different alternate. I suspect that this could become more confused the more attention I paid to the plot. This story could get much worse or much better with re-reading.

Your Committee needs you!

Last year we only elected six committee members and one has stepped down since so we need people to seriously consider volunteering at the next A.G.M. in January. This is a rough outline of their jobs:-

Chairman. Organises and chairs BSFG meetings and committee meetings. Deals with the relevant venue for those meetings.

Secretary: Handles all correspondence. Keeps minutes of committee meetings and circulates them to committee members. Keeps track of members names, addresses and subscription status.

Treasurer. Handles the groups money. Collects entrance fees and subs.

Publicity officer. Advertises the group and its meetings by any means possible.

Newsletter editor. Produces the group's monthly newsletter.

All of the above report to both the committee at committee meetings and the group at the A G M.

There are also places for two ordinary members who generally assist the other members of the committee.

There will be at least 4 committee meetings per year but there has been one per month for the last few years. The group website is run by a member of the committee but it is not attached to a specific post.

FUTURE 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:- November 15th -Jonathan Lethem - Girl in landscape

Future dates - December 13th

Metro Cinema at the University of Derby will be running a **special Dr Who event** at 7pm on the 11th October. There will be screenings of "two classic episodes" and a reading by Paul Magrs. Tickets are £5.85. Call 01332 340170 for advance bookings.

Birmingham Book Festival 11th - 21st October at various venues across

the city closes with local author **Jim Crace** on his new novel “The Pesthouse” described as “a journey across post-apocalypse America”

The **Birmingham International Comics show** runs from 13th to 14th of October at the ThinkTank, Millennium Point. Guests include Mike Mignola, Kevin Nowlan, Dave Gibbons and Ian Edginton. Ticket prices start at £5. See <http://www.thecomicsshow.co.uk> for further details.

Novacon 37 – the Brum Group’s own convention – will again be at the Quality Hotel, Bentley Nr Walsall. It’s the weekend of 2-4 November and the Guest of Honour is **Charles Stross**. Registrations are £38. Cheques to “Novacon 37”, Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. Email: x15@zoom.co.uk Website www.novacon.org or www.novacon37.org.uk

Tolkien’s Birmingham - 9th - 11th November A weekend event organised by the “Birmingham Tolkien Group” includes a guided tour of all relevant local locations, a welcome reception attended by the Lord Mayor and a party on Saturday night. Prices from £150 per person including accomodation. For Further details see www.shireproductions.co.uk.

Future meetings of the BSFG

9th November - Quiz with a team from Birmingham University (to be confirmed)

7th December – Christmas Party at the Selly Tavern

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Thank you to all the named contributors.

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