

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

MAY 2008

ISSUE 440

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

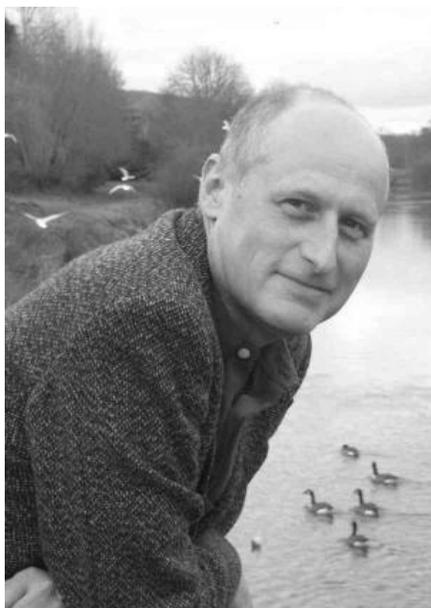
COMMITTEE: **VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN);**
VICKY COOK (SECRETARY); PAT BROWN (TREASURER);
ROG PEYTON (NEWSLETTER EDITOR); WILLIAM MCCABE;
NOVACON 38 CHAIRMAN: HELENA BOWLES

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Friday 9th May

Ian R MacLeod

Double World Fantasy Award winner and local Midlands lad Ian R MacLeod has been on the scene now for many years, producing literate and ambitious short fiction and novels. He's been a regular in the YEAR'S BEST anthologies - in SF, but also in fantasy and horror. His two most well-known works are probably the Dickensian fantasies *THE LIGHT AGES* and *THE*

June 13th – SF author ERIC BROWN has overcome his fear of public speaking and finally agreed to talk to the Group. Author of the brilliant *ENGINEMAN* and *THE TIME-LAPSED MAN & OTHER STORIES*, this is definitely one not to miss!

HOUSE OF STORMS, but he's also produced several other novels and three short story collections, all which have been widely translated and received considerable critical acclaim, not to mention nominations and awards. After a few years' break from shorter fiction, Ian's got a lead novella in the June issue of *Asimovs* and several other shorter pieces due out, and a major new novel from PS Publishing, *SONG OF TIME*, a characteristically ambitious work which looks back at this current century from the viewpoint of an old woman contemplating the leap into virtuality.

Ian has spoken to the Group twice in recent years and both meetings were well received. So much so that we've asked him to be Guest of Honour at Novacon this year and invited him back to talk to the Group once more.

*The meeting will take place in **OUR NEW VENUE** - the conference room on the first floor of the Briar Rose Hotel, Bennetts Hill just off New Street. The entrance to the hotel is adjacent to Wetherspoon's on the right.*

At the bottom of the ramp from New Street Station, turn left and walk up New Street. Bennetts Hill is the third road on the right.

The doors open at 7.30pm and the meeting will commence at 8.00pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar on the ground floor, and be seated in plenty of time.

THE 2007 NEBULA AWARD RESULTS



The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America presented the Nebula Awards for 2007 on April 26, 2008.

Best Novel: THE YIDDISH POLICEMEN'S UNION by Michael Chabon

Best Novella: "Fountain of Age" by Nancy Kress

Best Novelette: "The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate" by Ted Chiang

Best Short Story: "Always" by Karen Joy Fowler

Best Script: PAN'S LABYRINTH by Guillermo del Toro

Other presentations included:

Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy:

HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS by J. K.

Rowling

Damon Knight Grand Master for 2008: Michael Moorcock

SFWA Service Award: Melisa Michaels and Graham P. Collins

In addition Ardath Mayhar was honoured throughout the weekend as **Author Emeritus**.

Presenting the Grand Master Award to Michael Moorcock, SFWA President Michael Capobianco said, “Mr. Moorcock has made enormous contributions to both science fiction and fantasy, and occupies a special place in the history of the genres. His works encompass 50 years of uniquely creative story-telling, almost all of it intertwined in a way only speculative fiction can do. He has deftly woven our genres into a series of books that defy pigeon-holing, and extend their influence into the mainstream.”

SIDWISE AWARDS FOR ALTERNATE HISTORY – THE FINALISTS

Best Long-Form

Michael Chabon - THE YIDDISH POLICEMEN'S UNION

Robert Conroy - 1945: A NOVEL

Mary Gentle - ILARIO In two volumes as ILARIO: THE LION'S EYE and
ILARIO: THE STONE GOLEM

(Originally published in one volume as ILARIO: THE LION'S EYE

Jay Lake - MAINSPRING

Sophia McDougall - ROME BURNING

Jo Walton - HA'PENNY

Best Short-Form

Elizabeth Bear - “Les Innocents/Lumiere”

Michael Flynn - “Quaestiones Super Caelo Et Mundo”

Matthew Johnson - “Public Safety”

Jess Nevins - “An Alternate History of Chinese Science Fiction”

Chris Roberson - “Metal Dragon Year”

Kristine Kathryn Rusch - “Recovering Apollo 8”

John Scalzi - “Missives from Possible Futures #1: Alternate History Search
Results”

Full details can be found at www.uchronia.net/sidewise/

THE COMPTON CROOK AWARD - Nominees

The Baltimore Science Fiction Society has announced the nominees for this year's Compton Crook awards for the new SF author who has written the best novel. The award will be presented on May 23 at Balticon 42.

THE BLADE ITSELF by Joe Abercrombie

THE OUTBACK STARS by Sandra McDonald

THE NAME OF THE WIND by Patrick Rothfuss

MAGIC LOST, TROUBLE FOUND by Lisa Shearin

ONE JUMP AHEAD by Mark Van Name

BRIAN ALDISS HAS PACEMAKER FITTED

The April LOCUS reports that our co-President Brian Aldiss had a pacemaker installed in February and that he was recovering well. I've passed on good wishes from the Group – I know we all hope he's soon fully recovered and back to his globetrotting ways.

SUPPORT ALICE LAWSON



Most of you who attend conventions will know Alice Lawson. She has been going to cons for several years and, for what seems like forever, she's handled the hotel bookings for Novacon. Alice, along with two other fans, is trying to raise money for Cancer Research. Full details can be found at, and you can donate at,

www.raceforlifesporsorme.org/sheffieldsf .

This is well worth supporting and several Brum Group members have already made donations. Please make sure **YOU** help....

...AND WHAT DID YOU THINK?

THE LETTER COLUMN OF 'BRUM GROUP NEWS'

Anything to say about the Group, meetings or SF in general? Email your opinions to me at rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk >>

From WILLIAM McCABE - I realise it can be difficult trying to review a TV show. If people are going to watch it, then they have to get in at the beginning of the series and they don't get to see the whole thing. If the review is based on too little it can sound really ridiculous. It is really silly to base a review on a trailer or a single picture. Yet, that was what we got last month in Vernon's opinion of the new FLASH GORDON It isn't a great show but to base an opinion on the look of the characters was just wrong. Even worse is the suggestion that there is some particular look that they had to strive for. *Flash Gordon* has been a comic strip for half a century, film serials and a feature, a TV show and several cartoons. All of the characters have changed several times. Add to that, the strip was never original or even meant to be - characters and plot were lifted from *Fu Manchu* and *Buck Rogers*.

Most of the current TV show seems to have pretty solid history. Flash is still the sports star (an ex footballer as in the movie) and dresses appropriately. Dale Arden is more of the modern woman than she used to be - they couldn't keep the old version where she was only around to be rescued by Flash at the last minute. Zarkov is still the paranoid mad scientist but less likely to go off on some

suicide mission than before. He looks like what they'd call a 'Science geek' nowadays. Ming is the most changed. Sometime in the 80s they decided that the old Fu Manchu look was a little too racist and started trying out variations. At one point he became a lizard. This time around they've gone for the Nazi look. This is the same style as his secret police in every version I've seen. Then there's Aura; she looks the same as always with the harem girl costume that came from Princess Ardala and Fu's daughter although she actually seems to have dropped the maneater character.

I noticed that Vernon doesn't actually say what he thought these characters **should** look like. Maybe he's seen something that I missed and there's a whole lot of versions that I haven't seen.

From DAVE HARDY - I should like to congratulate all concerned in producing the latest issue of the BRUM GROUP NEWS*. Excellent and sensitive obituaries of the late Ray Bradbury and Arthur C Clarke by Rog and Robert Day respectively, and a couple of interesting and thought-provoking pieces by our Chairman, Vernon Brown, who seems to have really got into his stride as a writer! Since he asks a couple of questions: I have only been to the Briar Rose once, but was quite favourably impressed (especially by the beer). I don't like crowded bars, but did get served quite quickly, and the room itself is quite adequate. I look forward to trying out its AV facility one of these days. Pity the toilets are so far away from our room though!

As to the new TV version of FLASH GORDON, the least said the better; I watched the pilot and one episode, to give it a chance, and then gave it up as a bad job. The episodes are obviously going to be very samey, and it bears virtually no resemblance to the original concept, or the film; they have also taken the idea of a 'rift' now familiar from TORCHWOOD and PRIMEVAL, rather than zooming around the galaxy in rocketships as they were intended to do. What a pity. To me, Brian Blessed will always be the definitive Prince Vultan. . . Added to Vernon's list could also be the resurrected BIONIC WOMAN, and even the SARAH CONNOR CHRONICLES, which continue the TERMINATOR story. Neither enhance the genre one bit, in my opinion, and they should have been allowed to rest in peace.

However, the thing that struck me most forcibly about this issue of the BGN was the illustrations, which are peppered liberally throughout. In Rog's previous incarnation as editor, in which he did an excellent job, it was usually type only and images were rare (due, I happen to know, to the fact that he was struggling with his limitations in using digital technology). William, in his stint as temporary editor (at which he also made a very good try) did include illos, though they tended to be a bit soot-and-whitewash. But Rog now seems to have really got the hang of printing half-tones, which brighten up the pages a lot.

I couldn't resist, though, looking back through my collection of newsletters, and discovered to my surprise that it is almost exactly twenty years since I first produced the BRUM GROUP NEWS (**the name I gave it*) when I took over as Editor in February 1988! I produced it digitally, rather than in the

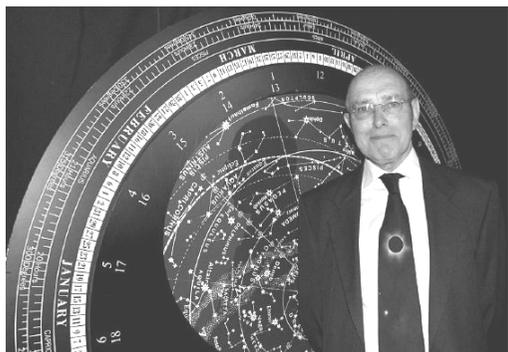
traditional scissors-cut-and-paste style, on an Atari ST computer with 1024k (Yes, k, not MB) or RAM. My current Mac has 4GB. Oh yes -- and I also included illustrations, and even cartoons by Tim Groome. Full circle? (Progress?!)

<< Wow! Two letters of comment in one month! Can we have more bad programmes like FLASH GORDON please, especially if it gets members to **write**. It's actually nice to know that people read the newsletter!!! I was beginning to wonder.

Dave's letter did produce some amusing emails between the two of us which I'm reprinting here for your education and amusement. – RGP>>

A LESSON IN ENGLISH (or DAVE HAS A RANT!)

RGP - Thank you for the LoC. I will, of course, reprint it in the next issue with only one minor alteration to your grammar - 'Vernon Brown, who seems to have really got into his stride as a writer' will be changed to 'gotten into his stride'. Both may be 'correct' but gotten sounds and reads far better (IMO).



DAH - NO, NO, NO -- PLEASE!!!! I can't believe you said that (it isn't April 1st, is it?) 'Gotten' is one of those Americanisms that are entering our English language, and I won't have it! Along with 'off of', 'for free', and pronunciations like 'skedule' for 'schedule'. Feel free to use this in the newsletter if you want to fill a bit of space. but this is one

of my favourite bete noirs; it's OUR bloody language!

RGP - My dictionary states that 'gotten' is the Scottish or US version of the past participle of 'get'. I have used the word 'gotten' in instances (not very often, admittedly) where it sounds far better than 'got' ever since I can remember. I can only assume that I picked this up **very** early in my life because I only read US paperbacks in preference to UK ones. I'm sorry but the phrase 'who seems to have really got into his stride' sounds really ugly to me but, because you insist I shall leave it as 'got' when I put it in the newsletter. It may be 'our' language but language is a changing animal that has new words from other cultures added into the mix every year. You state; 'but this is one of my favourite bete noirs' - bete noirs being pure English, of course.

DAH – Mais oui! OK, since you brought this up, let's develop it. Yes, I'm well aware that the English language is full of foreign words, and indeed is composed of a mishmash of these. How could we make a rendezvous at a restaurant without French? How could I paint with gouache or eat pizza without Italian? I could have said 'pet aversions', but usually expressions like 'bete noir' (I'm not using any

accents because some e-mail programs don't like them) are used because there is no English term that quite says the same thing, or does it so well. And I'm also aware that languages constantly evolve, and that new words enter it all the time. Our younger generations are introducing dozens or even hundreds of new words of their own, all the time.

But introducing Americanisms is a different thing. It would never occur to me to write or say 'gotten', but I can read US books or watch US films with no problem, because that's them speaking their own version of English. If they want to spell 'tyre' as 'tire' (which already has another meaning), or spell 'colour' as 'color', or call braces 'suspenders', that's up to them. But there is no need for us, in Britain where the language originated, to ape them and start doing things *their* way, is there? Why do so many TV presenters now say 'kill-OM-itter' instead of 'KILL-oh-meter'? They don't pronounce millimetre or centimetre that way, do they? The same with 'skedule' for schedule. They wouldn't have pronounced those words that way 10 years ago, so why start now? If British people want to ape the Yanks, that's up to them, but I've been doing it the right (ie. grammatical) way for over 70 years, and I'm not going to change now!

OK, I'll get off my soapbox now, and you can stop winding me up.

RGP - No winding up involved, I can assure you. I know you well enough to know that you'd *never* change your viewpoint even if you *were* wrong! I'm exactly the same. But kill-OM-itter sounds *so* much better!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

DAH - OOOOH, no it doesn't!

<<at which point, fearing I had gotten into a scene from a pantomime, I ceased communication. Thank you, Dave, for taking time out of your skedule to give us a lesson for free. You may now get off of your soapbox and I'll cease turning the key. (Afterthought: isn't it amazing that Dave's canvas for his work spans millions of parsecs, illustrates far distant galaxies, etc., and he's worried about a little spillover of a few words over a few hundred miles.....oh hum...) - RGP>>

BSFG WEBSITE REDESIGNED

William has now completely redesigned the Brum Group website and you can see the vast improvements at... **www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/**

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Actor **Charlton Heston** (b.1924) died on April 5. Heston appeared in numerous movies, including genre films SOYLENT GREEN, PLANET OF THE APES and THE OMEGA MAN. Heston also appeared in *The Outer Limits* and provided voice work for the Disney film HERCULES English actress **Hazel Court** has died aged 82. She co-starred with the likes of Boris Karloff and Vincent Price in popular horror movies of the 1950s and 1960s such as THE RAVEN, THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN and DEVIL GIRL FROM MARS **Ollie Johnston**, the last of Walt Disney's original team of animators known as the Nine Old Men, has died at the age of 95. Johnston worked for

Disney for 43 years, drawing characters for animated *Mickey Mouse* short films before contributing to classics such as SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS, PINOCCHIO, PETER PAN and THE JUNGLE BOOK **Algis Budrys**, now 77, has multiple cancers. It isn't incurable but he wants friends to know now. Budrys is the author of SF classics WHO?, ROGUE MOON and SOME WILL NOT DIE **Charles Stross**, who was Guest of Honour at Novacon 37, has received the Skylark – the Edward E Smith Memorial Award for Imaginative Fiction – from NESFA **Sarah Hall** has won the James Tiptree, Jr. Award for her novel THE CARHULLAN ARMY (published as DAUGHTERS OF THE NORTH in the US). The award will be presented at Wiscon on May 25. Hall will receive \$1,000, a piece of artwork created for the novel, chocolate and a tiara Award-winning SF author **Allen Steele** reveals that his latest novel, GALAXY BLUES, picks up where his previous novel, SPINDRIFT, left off but is much lighter in tone. In SPINDRIFT, Steele introduced Kasimasta the Annihilator, a rogue black hole that's travelling through our neck of the galaxy SF and fantasy author **John Meaney** says that his latest book, BONE SONG (incidentally misprinted in the sequel by Gollancz as BONG SONG!!!), was inspired by a conversation he had about the way some places hold a cold, haunted atmosphere. "I was gripped, as I spoke, by youthful memories of visiting mass graves in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg)," Meaney said in an interview. "They're a relic of World War II, in which each plot, labelled only by the year of death, contains the bones of a thousand people."



.... **DAN DARE** fans will be pleased to hear that Gollancz are releasing the original "Voyage to Venus" story by **Frank Hampson** from 1950 in EAGLE in an audio CD format with a talented cast (Rupert Degas, Tom Goodman-Hill and Kate O'Sullivan) and full sound effects. Part 1 is released in May and will run for 2.50 hours. Price is £12.99. No date yet for Part 2 Watch out in June for **Stephen Baxter's** FLOOD which will have a big promotion from Gollancz and could well be Baxter's best novel for some time Classic SF novel MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! by our co-President **Harry Harrison** is finally back in print! Available as a trade paperback from Tor books in the USA, this was the basis for the movie SOYLENT GREEN Also available from Tor is a new collection of short stories, BUTTON, BUTTON by Richard Matheson **Philip K Dick's** most memorable novel, THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, will be appearing in July in Gollancz hardcover SF Masterworks at £6.99 **Jack McDevitt** has sold a 175,000-word collection CRYPTIC: THE BEST OF JACK McDEVITT to Subterranean Press in the USA CELEBRATION: 50 YEARS OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION edited by **Ian Whates**

appeared at Eastercon. It's an anthology of brand-new stories with excellent stories by **Molly Brown, Ian R MacLeod, Christopher Priest** (a *Dream Archipelago* tale) and **Alastair Reynolds**. To order - email the publisher, Ian Whates at FINIANG@aol.com **Lucasfilm** has sued British prop maker **Andrew Ainsworth** over the sale of Stormtrooper helmets. Ainsworth manufactured the helmets for the original 1977 film STAR WARS and has been selling replicas cast from the same mould. In 2006, Lucasfilm won a \$20 million lawsuit against Ainsworth and is now trying to have it enforced in Britain. Ainsworth is countersuing, claiming a share of merchandising revenue from all six *Star Wars* films The title of the second **X-Files** movie is official: THE X-FILES: I WANT TO BELIEVE. The subtitle is well known to fans of the SF series: It's the motto on the poster hanging on the wall of FBI Agent Fox Mulder (**David Duchovny**).... RGP

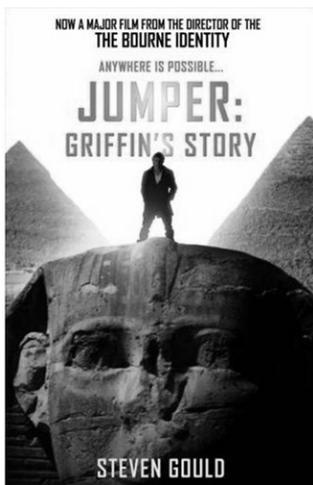


BOOK REVIEWS



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

***JUMPER: GRIFFIN'S STORY* by Steven Gould**
Voyager / 286pgs / £6.99 / paperback / 9780007276004
Reviewed by Rog Peyton



This novelisation of the JUMPER movie has little to do with JUMPER itself as far as characters and plot are concerned. Only the idea of teleportation remains. Whoever decided to buy the rights of the original novel obviously simply wanted to do a movie on teleportation.

Having purchased the rights, the first problem was how to get over the whole idea of teleportation with its advantages and disadvantages, to the general non-SF reading public within the first section of the movie. This is done by having young Griffin being taught how to 'jump' (or teleport) by his parents. Are there other teleports? Why do they appear to be the only ones? None of this is explained and strangely, I found this of little importance having already read JUMPER itself..

It reads like a slow juvenile through this first section but when the real story kicks in, the novel reads much like JUMPER itself – fast and quite dark., and certainly not like a juvenile.

JUMPER had a direct sequel, REFLEX, that was published in 2004. GRIFFIN'S STORY reads like a third book in a trilogy telling the story of a spinoff character, though Griffin does not appear in the other two books. Having Steven Gould himself to write this novelisation certainly helps to connect this to the other two books and it is sufficiently different to make it appear like a third book in a series and not to be a 'distorted' version of JUMPER itself.

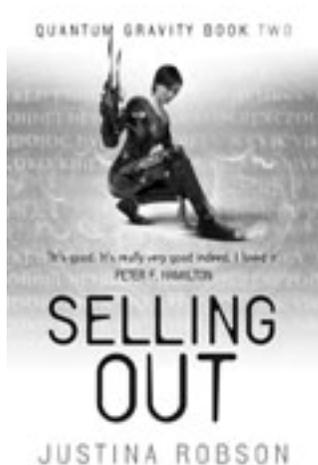
It's impossible to describe the rest of this novel without spoiling the plot and I'm certainly not going to do that. There are too many 'spoilers' in the blurb on the back cover as it is. If you buy this book, and I strongly suggest it's well worth reading, please try to avoid reading the blurb. RGP

***SELLING OUT* by Justina Robson**

Gollancz / 284pgs / £18.99 / hardcover / 9780575078635

Gollancz / 284pgs / £10.99 / trade paperback / 9780575078659

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan



The *Quantum Gravity* series, of which SELLING OUT is the second book, is a delightful blend of science fiction and fantasy. In 2015, an event, known as the Quantum bomb, caused fault lines which made other dimensions accessible to us. These other dimensions include the realms populated by faeries, demons or elves. Don't, however, expect Robson's other races to be cute. They are not. They are tough, mean and dangerous.

The heroine of both this book and its predecessor, KEEPING IT REAL, is Lila Black. After having been badly injured in Alfheim, the elves dimension, Lila was rebuilt and is half human, half machine. In KEEPING IT REAL, she was assigned as a bodyguard to Zal, a rock star elf. By the end of the volume she had the soul of a dark elf lodged within her and had become Zal's lover. He had also revealed that he has become part demon.

In SELLING OUT, Lila is sent to Demonica. Her brief is to find out how an elf can become a demon. One of the problems she faces is that she has not been fully briefed about the structure of demon society and quickly finds herself a target for assassination and, having killed her attacker, the focus of a family feud. She also discovers that Zal has a demon wife.

In this volume, Robson not only explores the complexities of an alien society but also develops the structure of her other dimensions, adding to our knowledge of them. As in any good series, there are new revelations at frequent intervals, taking plot and understanding forward. At the same time Robson has obviously had fun developing her characters and the situations she puts them into. It is probably a good idea to read volume one first but they are accessible, enjoyable and thought provoking. PM

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:-

15th May – **HARM** by **Brian Aldiss**

Future dates -12th June, 17th July

DISCWORLD CONVENTION 2008, Hilton Metropole Hotel, (NEC) Birmingham. 22nd-25th August 2008. Registration £55 (£36 concessions). Guests Terry Pratchett, Stephen Briggs, Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Lionel Fanthorpe, Ian Stewart, Jack Cohen & others. www.dwcon.org

FANTASYCON 2008, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St. Nottingham. 19th-21st September 2008. Registration is £60 (£50 for BFS members). Day rate is £25 Fri/Sun and £40 Sat. Contact 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham. B45 8DH or email membership@fantasycon.org.uk



Novacon 38 will be held at the Quality Hotel, Walsall, over the weekend of 14-16 November 2008; the guests are science fiction author Ian R MacLeod and the Brum Group's own Vernon Brown, who chaired the first Novacon back in 1971. Membership costs £38.00, payable to "Novacon 38" at 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ; registration forms can be downloaded from the convention website, www.novacon38.org.uk, along with the first progress report.

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 BSFG

13th June – Eric Brown

11th July – Christopher Priest talking about the film THE PRESTIGE (which was based on his own novel), and on future projects.

8th August – Summer Social. A meal at the award-winning Black Eagle – we've done this for a few years now and it seems to be mainly the same attendees. So, £5 deposit to Vernon or Pat asap. If you haven't been to the Black Eagle before ask one of us for more details at this month's meeting. The full menu (with specials) is available – it is *not* a set meal – so you spend what you want to spend. Their website is www.blackeaglepub.co.uk

12th September – James Barclay (tbc)

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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.

STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ...

Winner of the 2008 Arthur C Clarke Award, presented Wednesday 30th April is

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