

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

AUGUST 2008

ISSUE 443

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

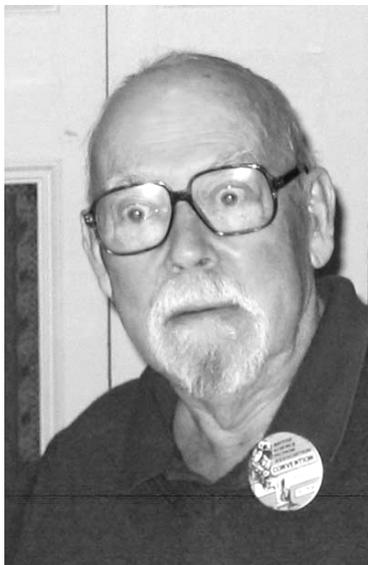
COMMITTEE: VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN);
VICKY COOK (SECRETARY); PAT BROWN (TREASURER);
ROG PEYTON (NEWSLETTER EDITOR); WILLIAM MCCABE;
NOVACON 38 CHAIRMAN: HELENA BOWLES

WEBSITE:
www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/

EMAIL:
bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk

NEWSFLASH!

HARRY HARRISON named 2009 DAMON KNIGHT GRAND MASTER



Brum Group President Harry Harrison was somewhat surprised to learn that he is to be honoured by being made the 2009 Damon Knight Grand Master by the Science Fiction Writers of America.

“Harrison’s selection was announced by SFWA President Russell Davis

September 12th– we welcome fantasy author JAMES BARCLAY on his first visit to the Group.

after consulting with the Board of Directors and participating past presidents. The Nebula Awards Weekend will be held April 24-26 in Los Angeles with the awards presentation banquet to be held on the UCLA campus to tie in with the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books. Past SFWA President and Grand Master (2004) Robert Silverberg will be presenting.

“There are few moments in life that can be taken out and savoured in memory. One happened today,” Harrison said. “A phone call from our President Russell Davis with the startling news that I was to be the 2009 Grand Master nearly led to the collapse of a stout writer!

“It’s still soaking in,” he said. “But may I express my fervent thanks to all involved for this signal honour.”

Already an established illustrator and freelance non-fiction writer, Harrison published his first science fiction story, “Rock Diver”, in the August 1951 issue of *WORLDS BEYOND*. From that point he went on to produce more than 62 novels, eight short fiction collections, six non-fiction books and countless short stories. He also found the time to edit 35 anthologies over the span of his career.

His active involvement in the science fiction community throughout the 1950s led to his becoming a charter member of SFWA.

“Why, I can recall with a tear in one rheumy eye, when SFWA was a just a wild idea put forward by Damon Knight,” Harrison said. “A few of us nodded and agreed with him and thus, with great hope and no money, this organization was born. I won’t dwell on the fact that this was over 50 years ago...

“Enough! Let’s look to the future not the past as we go from strength to strength and march, banners flapping, into the SF future,” he said.”

Harry is the 26th writer recognized by SFWA as a Grand Master. He joins Robert A Heinlein (1974), Jack Williamson (1975), Clifford D Simak (1976), L Sprague de Camp (1978), Fritz Leiber (1981), Andre Norton (1983), Arthur C Clarke (1985), Isaac Asimov (1986), Alfred Bester (1987), Ray Bradbury (1988), Lester del Rey (1990), Frederik Pohl (1992), Damon Knight (1994), A E van Vogt (1995), Jack Vance (1996), Poul Anderson (1997), Hal Clement (1998), Brian Aldiss (1999), Philip Jose Farmer (2000), Ursula K LeGuin (2003), Robert Silverberg (2004), Anne McCaffrey (2005), Harlan Ellison (2006), James Gunn (2007) and Michael Moorcock (2008).

<<From myself and all the Group, Harry – Congratulations! – RGP>>

THE AUGUST MEETING – TICKET ONLY!

The August meeting – Friday 8th – is the Summer Social. Once again we’ll dine and drink at the Black Eagle, Handsworth. This meeting is ticket **ONLY** – please see note on the back page of this newsletter for your status. If you didn’t buy a ticket and wish to go, contact me in case of any cancellations (email address on back page)

RGP

SIGNING IN PROBLEMS

Are you signing in when you attend meetings? Our Treasurer is finding we have too much money. Not a bad thing in itself but it's because of the chaotic nature of people paying at the door; persons paying for two or more are possibly only signing the book for one person. Vernon, our Chairman, is NOT HAPPY. As you're all aware, Vernon believes there's a right way to do things and a wrong way. He only accepts the 'right' way and he will in future take drastic action against anyone flouting rule No 87, paragraph 5, subsection iv in THE VERNON BROWN RULE BOOK.

So please do everyone a favour and ensure everyone signs in! I hold my hands up now and will take my punishment like a man – I paid for Arline and myself but only signed in for me. And I think I did the same the previous month.... Please, Vernon, oh, no, NO - not that...Aaaaagh!!!! *RGP*

DID YOU KNOW?

The oft quoted 'ancient Chinese curse' "May you (he) live in interesting times" is unknown to the Chinese themselves although it may be a paraphrase of a translation of the Chinese proverb "It's better to be a dog in a peaceful time than be a man in a chaotic period". It's first known usage is in the SF story "U Turn" by Duncan H Munro (pseudonym of Eric Frank Russell) in ASTOUNDING SF April 1950, although it became popular after an American politician (obviously intelligent and wellread!) used it in the 60's and it was picked up by the media.

<< The person who researched it's first usage is Stephen DeLong.>>

VB

...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 member **Dave Corby** on Sunday July 20th: "This is just a quick note (because I have not had any sleep since Friday night): This is to announce the birth of my daughter, Alice Valerie Corby at about 1:50 this afternoon (I say 'about' because I am working from memory, which is very tired right now!) weighing 8 pounds and seven ounces (3 kilos, 800 grams). After a long (well, 24 hours seems long enough to me) and exhausting labour Alice finally arrived via C-section. Both mother and baby are doing very well, Alice is perfect and very cute, Lisa is recovering in hospital



from the mother-of-all spine-blocking anaesthetics, but despite being numb from the waste down is happy and proud (as I am of her!).

<<Congratulations to both of you. – RGP>>

JOHN W CAMPBELL AWARD - WINNERS

1 - IN WAR TIMES by **Kathleen Ann Goonan**

2 - THE YIDDISH POLICEMAN'S UNION by Michael Chabon

3 - THE EXECUTION CHANNEL by Ken MacLeod

THEODORE STURGEON MEMORIAL AWARD WINNERS

1= - “Tideline” by **Elizabeth Bear**

1= - “Finistera” by **David Moles**

2= - “Memorare” by Gene Wolfe

2= - “The Master Miller's Wife” by Ian R. MacLeod

SHIRLEY JACKSON AWARD WINNERS

The winners of the first Shirley Jackson Award are:-

Novel: GENERATION LOSS by Elizabeth Hand

Novella: “Vacancy” by Lucius Shepard

Novellette: “The Janus Tree” by Glen Hirshberg

Short Story: “The Monsters of Heaven” by Nathan Ballingrud

Collection: THE IMAGO SEQUENCE AND OTHER STORIES by Laird Barron

Anthology: INFERNO edited by Ellen Datlow

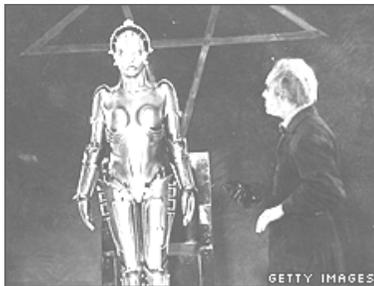
NEWS IN BRIEF . . .



.... SF author, critic, and poet **Thomas M. Disch**, born 1940, committed suicide July 4, 2008. Disch had been depressed for several years, especially by the death of long-time partner **Charles Naylor**, and worries of eviction from his rent-controlled apartment. He was the author of several novels including **THE GENOCIDES** (1965), the classic **CAMP CONCENTRATION** (1968) and **334** (1974). The 1993 **ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE**

FICTION wrote “Because of his intellectual audacity, the chillingly distanced mannerism of his narrative art, the austerity of the pleasures he affords, and the fine cruelty of his wit, Disch has been perhaps the most respected, least trusted, most envied and least read of all modern first-rank SF writers.” The winners of the Prometheus Award for Libertarian science fiction have been announced. - (tie): **THE GLADIATOR** by **Harry Turtledove**, and **HA'PENNY** by **Jo Walton** The Hall of Fame Award went to **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE** by **Anthony Burgess** The Cordwainer Smith Award was presented at Readercon to **Stanley G Weinbaum**, whose career only lasted two years, but

included several notable stories, including “A Martian Odyssey”. **Patrick Nielsen Hayden** - senior editor and manager of science fiction at Tor Books has announced the July 20 launch of Tor's new SF/fantasy site. Tor.com will feature original fiction, a group blog, lightweight social networking features and an extensive art gallery The long-lost original cut of **Fritz Lang's** 1927 silent film **METROPOLIS** was discovered in the archives of the Museum of Cinema in Buenos Aires earlier this year. The museum's Paula Felix-Didier said it was the only copy of the complete film. Soon after its initial release at the height of Germany's Weimar Republic, distributors cut Lang's three-and-a-half-hour masterpiece into the shorter version since viewed by millions worldwide. But a private collector carried an original print to Argentina in 1928, where it has stayed. Around 20 to 25 minutes of footage that fleshes out secondary characters and sheds light on the plot would be added to the film pending restoration, Possmann said, but around 5 minutes of the original was probably still missing The creators of ABC's upcoming time-shift series **LIFE ON MARS** told reporters on July 16 that they have moved the series' location to New York and changed character traits to adapt the hit British series for an American audience.... *RGP*



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(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.**

***THE STEEL REMAINS* by Richard Morgan**

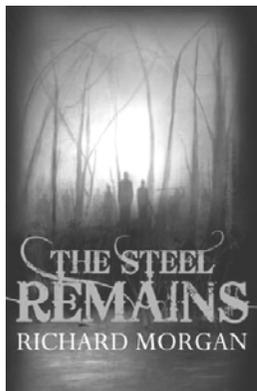
Gollancz / 416pgs / £12.99 / hardcover / ISBN: 978-07528-91507

Reviewed by Ian Allwyn

THE STEEL REMAINS takes place years after a war with the scaled folk, in which the novel's hero, Ringil Eskiath, played an important fighting role. The empire, divided between a barbaric rural north and a trading wealthy south, is slowly returning to normal. Trade links are opening up, slavery has been reintroduced and the merchant classes have begun to replenish their fortunes.

This fantasy debut features three distinct narratives; Ringil's being the most significant. In exile in the north, he is summoned back to the south by his mother to recover a cousin whose debts have sold her into slavery. The other stories feature what has happened to his previous fighting allies and how a new threat will lead to their paths crossing once again. Egar the Barbarian has returned to his tribe a hero and tribe leader although his exposure to the more civilised south puts this coveted role into question as others jockey for his job. The third story is that of Archeth, an advisor to the Emperor,

sent to the north to investigate the ransacking of a port by forces unknown which resulted in only one, damaged survivor.



The Yhelteth Empire is a well-realised fantasy setting with plenty of potential for the novel to be the start of a series. Morgan's clear prose is evident and the supernatural darkness of various sections in the story indicates his potential as a horror writer, especially with the great opening chapter. However, as each chapter continues one of the three strands of story, it becomes frustrating to leave the other characters in the midst of either an action sequence or a plot-turning revelation. Whilst this is a common structural form within multi-plotted novels, for the longest part of this novel, it's not obvious as to how the three strands of story fit into one narrative and it ended up similar to trying to watch three different movies simultaneously by swapping from one to another after every scene.

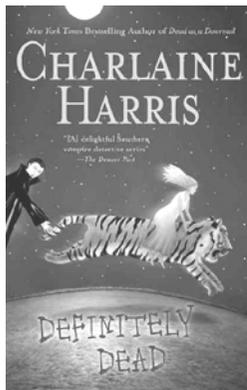
THE STEEL REMAINS reads as a conscious attempt to try something different for Morgan although the novel reads as a more traditional sword and sorcery style fantasy rather than one of his more groundbreaking science fiction novels. *IA*

***DEFINITELY DEAD* by Charlaine Harris**

Gollancz / 324pgs / £6.99 / paperback

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

This novel is part of a continuing narrative as told by Sookie Stackhouse. Sookie is a telepath. She only knows one other person like her and he does not feature in this particular volume (though he gets mentioned). The book is set five years after vampires came out. Not everyone is happy to find that vampires have been in their midst for centuries and that they must now be considered as an ethnic minority. What humans do not realise is that there are also enclaves of weres (wolves, panthers, tigers) and fairies. Sookie is a barmaid in the Louisiana town of Bon Temps. The bar in which she works is frequented by supes (the supernatural races).



The main thrust of the story is Sookie's visit to New Orleans to sort out her cousin's effects. Hadley was a vampire and the lover of Louisiana's vampire queen. The queen has recently married the king of the Arkansas vampires. Unfortunately, Hadley stole a bracelet, a wedding gift, from the queen, in a fit of pique. The queen needs it back and hopes Sookie will find it amongst Hadley's possessions. This is not Sookie's only problem as a family of werewolves have unfinished business with her about the death of their daughter. As a result of their vendetta, Sookie and her new boyfriend, a weretiger, find themselves pursued through the Louisiana swamps.

The big problem with this novel is that it doesn't get on with the real story until about half way through. It is light, a little frothy and reads more

like a diary with the dates taken out and includes a lot of things that do not add to the thrust of the action, even though they might seem important to Sookie as a person. This book will while away an hour or so on a long train journey. PM

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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 contact addresses.

Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk

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:-

21st August — **MAKING MONEY** by **Terry Pratchett**

Future dates — 18th September, 16th October, 20th November, 18th December

DAN DARE AND THE BIRTH OF HI-TECH BRITAIN is an exhibition about Britain in the years following World War II. It runs until September 2008 at the Science Museum, South Kensington, London. For more details see http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/galleries/dan_dare_and_the_birth_of_high-tech_britain.aspx

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

ZOMBIECON! The creators of AliensStoleMyHandbag, DamnFineCon & TheyCameAndShavedUs, bring you the fourth part in the Weird-Assed-Weekend-Trilogy – ZOMBIECON !! 5th-7th September 2008 at the Quality Hotel, Walsall. ZombieCon promises to be two and half days and two long nights of all the Zombie related fun, frolics and sickness you can handle; consisting of demonstrations, workshops, talks, games, masquerade, and two discos. It offers the discerning connoisseur of all things undead and gory. Please send postal enquiries to ZombieCon, c/o Stefan Lancaster, 54 Bridge Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB82QP.

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 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG 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.

LX2009 – the 2009 Eastercon. April 10-13, 2009 – Cedar Court Hotel, Bradford. Guests of Honour: Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Dirk Maggs, Tim Powers, David Lloyd. Fan Guests of Honour: Mary and Bill Burns. Website is www.LX2009.com

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

10th October – to be announced

7th November – fantasy author and Brum Group favourite **GRAHAM JOYCE** returns... (**NOTE: One week earlier than usual**)

6th December – Christmas Social – Skittles and buffet at the Selly Park Tavern. Tickets will be on sale in September.

January 2009 – Annual General Meeting and Auction

February – Quiz against Birmingham University SF Group

March - 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.

Cover photo courtesy Peter R Weston. Photo page 3 courtesy Dave Corby

If you have booked a seat at the meal, there should be a tick here [] and an information flyer inside. If you have booked, and there’s no tick, please email me (Rog – rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk) as a matter of urgency, not the BSFG email address as Vicky is on holiday. She’s also moved – see new address below.

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, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG