

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JANUARY 2009

ISSUE 448

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.birminghamsgroup.org.uk/](http://www.birminghamsgroup.org.uk/)

EMAIL:  
[bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk)

## Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by THE AUCTION

A Happy New Year to all our members from the whole of the committee. We trust that the New Year will be as good as the one you wish yourself.

January is traditionally the month we hold our Annual General Meeting followed by an Auction. Full details of the proceedings of the AGM were included in the December newsletter so I trust you've all had time to peruse at length and decide which of the committee posts you'd love to stand for. Now you \*know\* you want to volunteer!!!

**Because the 'Briar Rose' will be closed during January to have a new lift fitted our meeting this month will be at 'B' (otherwise known as Bennetts), a few yards up the hill on the opposite side of the road from the 'Briar Rose'**, on the corner of Waterloo Street. Walk into the bar area and you will find the entrance to our meeting room, the Boardroom, in the corner to your left. The AGM will start promptly at eight o'clock so please be on time - we have the room from seven so there will be plenty of time in which to

**February 13th – A QUIZ versus The Birmingham University SF Group. Volunteers required to represent the BSFG!!!! Your Group needs YOU!**

settle in.

The AGM should be over very quickly and we can get on with the main event of the evening – the Auction. Once again, I will try to empty your wallets/purses with as little pain as possible. But I do need items to sell so please donate. Other members \*need\* the items you've finished with. They are not aware of that yet but that will be my job to 'persuade' them.

All the proceeds go to help the running of the Brum Group – without the money raised from auctions we'd most likely have to increase the membership fees. So please bring a few items with you – books, magazines, fanzines, artwork, posters, videos DVDs, CDs, etc. *RGP*

## ***RECENT MEETINGS by Vicky Cook***

### **7th November 2008 meeting:**

'William Heaney' was the speaker for the November meeting. The main theme of his talk was what is real and what is make-believe. After being wittily introduced by Rog Peyton, saying 'he rather resembled another well known author', William started by saying he had been asked a couple of times before but not wanted to come as he had nothing new to say...until now. He talked at length about memoirs which are apparently written by celebrities – often this is complete fiction as they employ ghost writers. A recent development of this is to sell fiction books 'written' by the celebrities. More people will buy this than an SF novel – they 'buy into' the 'fiction'. He waxed lyrical about literary hoaxes and the exaggeration of biographies and how writers are under pressure to find something new to say. He went on to talk about book forging and this led onto the subject matter of his new book, MEMOIRS OF A MASTER FORGER, which he called 'a grand forgery'. There was some lively debate at this point about what it means to have a psychic disorder. He talked about the battle with the subconscious which tries to distract you, for instance with housework, or spending an hour balancing a pencil – he represents this idea in his new book with a 'demon' which represents something contrary from what you want to do.

William has his own blog and website. His use of a Victorian-style jacket and cover to the book is also buying into the fantasy though people will not really be fooled. He said the book has done better in terms of sales than many books written by his (spoiler alert!) alter-ego Graham Joyce! He said further William Heaney books were not anticipated but may be written after the success of this one.

William/Graham proved to be a lively and entertaining speaker, and his popularity was shown by the fullness of the room – many turned out to see him and it made for a good night out. I hadn't been in some months but it was a pleasant return for me. Hopefully he may return again when he has something he feels is worth speaking about, whether it be in one of his current, or an entirely different incarnations.

### **5th December – Christmas social**

This was held, as in the last few years, at the Selly Park Tavern. As is the custom, the students from the SF group at the University of Birmingham were invited, and a good large group turned out to join in the festivities. They managed to outnumber the regulars from the Brum Group even! It was nice to see a couple of people there who had not been to the Brum Group before. Several inventive games were held using the skittle alley, and a good feast was put out by the pub (though a few more of the hot food items may have been

nice as they disappeared pretty much instantly). My other half was one of the lucky few who got to partake of a vegetarian sumptuous feast as provided by Vernon and Pat (with thanks to Holland and Barrett) though the presence of a bag of frozen peas did cause some confusion until we were informed this was for cooling purposes not to be eaten!

In the middle of the evening there was also a presentation. At Novacon 38, the Nova Award for Best Fanzine went to Peter Weston for PROLAPSE but as he was unable to accept the award at the con, Rog Peyton had accepted the award and passed it on to Peter tonight.

All seemed to enjoy themselves, and hopefully we may see some of the students back again in February for a quiz and social. VC

## ***CHESLEY AWARDS – THE WINNERS***

The Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists announced the winners of the 2007 Chesley Awards on November 17, 2008.



### **Best Cover Illustration – Hardback**

**Book:** Donato Giancola, THE OUTBACK STARS by Sandra McDonald, Tor. (artwork without title lettering shown here)

### **Best Cover Illustration – Paperback**

**Book:** Donato Giancola, CRYSTAL DRAGON by Sharon Lee and Steve Miller Ace

**Best Cover Illustration – Magazine:** Cory and Catska Ench, Fantasy & Science Fiction, 3/07

**Best Interior Illustration:** James Gurney, DINOTOPIA ;JOURNEY TO CHANDARA, Andrews McMeel, 9/07

**Best Gaming Related Illustration:** Donato Giancola, “Vanguard: Saga of Heroes”, Sigil Games Online

**Best Product Illustration:** Todd Lockwood, “War of Angels”, poster for Bullseye Tattoo

### **Best Monochrome – Unpublished:**

Donato Giancola, “Season of Change”, Pencil and Chalk on Toned paper

**Best Color Work – Unpublished:** Donato Giancola, “Red Sonja”, Oil

**Best Three Dimensional Art:** Vincent Villafranca, “Conscious Entity and Its Maker”, Bronze

**Best Art Director:** Irene Gallo, Tor Books

**Award for Artistic Achievement:** Michael Wm. Kaluta

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

.... Forrest J Ackerman (b. 1916) passed away in his Los Angeles home on Thursday, December 4, 2008. He had congestive heart failure and was preparing for the end at home where he could be happy, comfortable and surrounded by his friends. He was 92. Forry was a Lifetime Active member of Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. His

private residence was a living SF museum - an incredible 18 room mansion known as the Ackermansion. It included: Ray Harryhausen's White House from EARTH VERSUS THE FLYING SAUCERS; Lon Chaney's top hat and cane from LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT; Bela Lugosi presented him with Dracula's cape and ring; King Kong's paw;



the golden Idol that Indiana Jones stole in RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK; Tribbles from *Star Trek*; and Yoda from *Star Wars*. Many others donated to his collection which was one of the largest private collections of SF and fantasy in the world. One of his favorite (if not his favorite) movies was Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS. Forry saw it over 100 times. The major focal piece in his living room, whose theme was METROPOLIS, was the larger than life size silver female robot, Maria, from the movie. He sold most of his collection to pay medical and legal expenses a few years ago. He attended the first World Science Fiction Convention in 1939 and wore the first costume

to that convention. He has only missed 2 or 3 Worldcons since they started. He authored and edited numerous books and magazines - he created FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND magazine in 1958, and the character Vampirella .... **Majel Barrett-Roddenberry**, who died on Dec. 18 at the age of 76, was more than just an actress, producer and wife of *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry: She was the keeper of the Trek flame and of Gene's creative legacy long after he himself passed on in 1991. Often



referred to in fan circles as the First Lady of *Star Trek*, Barrett-Roddenberry was best known for appearing in or giving voice to roles in every incarnation of Trek, from the unaired pilot for the original series straight through to J.J. Abrams' upcoming reboot *Star Trek* movie - the only thespian with such a Trek lineage. Majel Barrett was already a working actress when she met Gene Roddenberry, who cast her as Number One in his original 1966 *Star Trek* pilot, "The Cage". NBC executives, who already detested the character of Spock, insisted that audiences would not accept a woman in a role of such power and compelled Roddenberry to drop Number One and give Barrett a different role. As a result, she was cast as Nurse Christine Chapel, a minor role that Barrett-Roddenberry played in the ensuing *Star Trek* series and in STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE and STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME; for the movies, the character was promoted to Dr. Chapel. Later, when

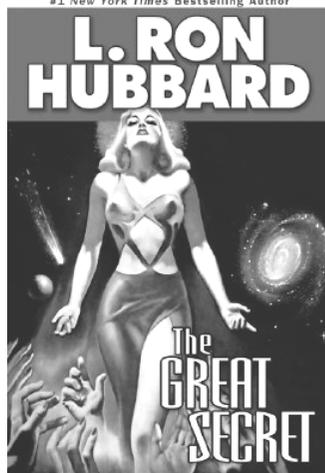
Gene Roddenberry launched STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, Majel beamed aboard as Lwaxana Troi, the Betazoid mother of Deanna Troi .... Illustrator, comic artist, essayist and screen writer, **James Cawthorn** died December 2, 2008, following hospitalization at Queen Elisabeth Hospital in Durham, UK. He died 19 days before his 79th birthday. Cawthorn was long associated with Michael Moorcock and created the first

British graphic novel of THE JEWEL IN THE SKULL, based on Moorcock's novel of the same title. He began his career with fan illustrations in fanzines in the 1950s. In the 1960s, he was a staff artist at New Worlds. His illustrations were used in books by science fiction and fantasy writers as diverse as Arthur C. Clarke, Poul Anderson, Michael Moorcock, L. Sprague de Camp, and Robert E. Howard. He is probably best known for his many illustrations for the work of Edgar Rice Burroughs, as well as J. R. R. Tolkien's THE LORD OF THE RINGS. With Michael Moorcock, he wrote the screenplay for the 1975 movie, THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT .... Actress/singer **Eartha Kitt** died on Christmas day, aged 81. Famous for her role as Catwoman in the 1960s BATMAN TV series, she had chart hits in the US and UK between 1953 and 1994, notably "Santa Baby" in 1954 .... Author **Hugh Cook** (b.1956) died on November 8. Cook published ten novels in his *Chronicles of an Age of Darkness* before the series, projected as sixty volumes, was cancelled due to poor sales. Cook was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and underwent chemotherapy and radiation treatment in 2005 .... **Paterson Joseph** is to be the



first black Doctor Who. Sources close to the BBC have reportedly confirmed that he has been asked to be the new Doctor and that he accepted in early December. He was in the TV series SURVIVORS, as Greg Preston, one of the lucky (?) 5 per cent to survive a global meta-plague. London-born, **Paterson Joseph's** fantasy and SF resume includes the Marquis de Carabas in NEVERWHERE, a bit part in the *Doctor Who* episode "Bad Wolf," as Giroux alongside Charlize Theron in Paramount's AEON FLUX movie; as Space Marshall Clarke in the BBC SF sitcom HYPERDRIVE, and he played Benjamin in the BBC's fantasy horror series JEKYLL .... **Harry Turtledove's** THE UNITED STATES OF ATLANTIS, the sequel to OPENING ATLANTIS, is now out from Ace in hardcover at

\$25.95 .... **Larry Niven** and **Jerry Pournelle** have a new book out in February, titled ESCAPE FROM HELL (Tor hardcover) .... FROM THE PEN OF PAUL: THE FANTASTIC IMAGES OF **FRANK R PAUL** containing many illustrations from the pulp era is due for publication in March (Shasta-Phoenix hardcover) .... Our co-president **Harry Harrison** is writing a new *Stainless Steel Rat* book, called, somewhat appropriately, THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT RETURNS. It will be published in the US by Tor, hopefully before the end of 2009 .... Galaxy Press has started a major reissue of the pulp fiction of **L Ron Hubbard**. The first 5 are out and are all 116 to 124pgs long and date from the 1930s and 1940s. SF, fantasy, westerns, mystery, aviation, jungle adventure, espionage, pirate tales, etc., will all be covered in this series. There is a total of 153 stories to be published but as many were very short, some books may be collections. The first five books are THE GREAT SECRET (3 SF stories), IF I WERE YOU (circus + fantasy), SPY KILLER (espionage), BRANDED OUTLAW (western) and UNDER THE



BLACK ENSIGN (pirate). All are \$9.50 trade paperbacks .... More old stuff brought back to life – THE GAME OF STARS AND COMETS by **Andre Norton** collects the four novels THE X FACTOR, VOORLOPER, EYE OF THE MONSTER and THE SIOUX SPACEMAN. Baen trade paperback at \$14.00 .... **Lee Harris**, the founder and co-editor of Hub magazine, has been hired as an assistant editor for HarperCollins new Angry Robot science fiction imprint. Harris will be resigning his position from Hub. Harris may continue his work in publishing Prism, the newsletter of the British Fantasy Society .... And finally, this month's unbelievable news – **SPIDER-MAN** is to become a Broadway musical! No, I checked the calendar – April 1st is still 3 months away. Music will be by Bono (of U2). It opens in June ...

RGP



## BOOK REVIEWS



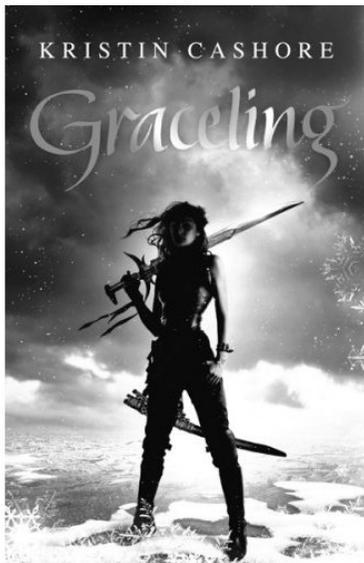
(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**

### **GRACELING** by *Kristin Cashore*

**Gollancz / 381pgs / hardcover / £18.99 / ISBN: 978-0575084490 /**

**Trade paperback / £9.99 / ISBN: 978-0575084506**

**Reviewed by Anne Nicholls**



For a book which plunges headfirst into the plot, GRACELING takes quite a while to find its feet. Once it does hit its stride, it's a fast-paced story with an intriguing premise, some likable characters and villains you'd love to hiss. There are enough ideas here for a series too.

Katsa is the niece of one of seven squabbling kings. But that's not the reason she's valuable to her lord. She's a killer, fast and deadly. Her talent, or 'Grace', develops in childhood and like all 'Gracelings', she has distinctive eyes. Now a young woman, she doesn't like murdering dissidents and torturing debtors but she has to obey her king ... doesn't she? Feared, she has few friends, and with her odd eyes she can't even disguise herself. To salve her conscience she sets up the Council, a secret network that rescues victims of the kings' greedy wars.

On a rescue mission, she literally bumps into one of a rival king's sons. And he's almost as good a fighter as she is. Can she survive? Can he? By the end the reader really cares.

Once past the info dump, the tale rattles along in page-turning style. This is a fabulous and enjoyable world well worth a visit. AN

## ***THE SPIRIT STONE* by Katharine Kerr**

**(Deverry Cycle Pt 3, Dragonmage 5)**

**Voyager / 416pp / paperback / £7.99 / ISBN: 978-0007128730**

**Reviewed by Vicky Cook**

This is a complicated book featuring many characters, which, without any preamble, plunges you straight into their various stories. As usual with a book of this ilk you are pretty much expected to have read the previous instalments, otherwise, as I found,



things quickly get confusing. One of the most interesting characters is a Merlin-type character, Nevyn, who is incredibly long-lived then lives on in another younger man. This seems to be a feature with several characters where death is not the end, and the newborn versions have faint memories connected with their past lives. Nevyn/Neb features with his adventures for much of the book as he travels far and wide spreading his wisdom. Another interesting character is Salamander who is first seen as a little boy then in the latter half of the book as an intriguing, magical adult – he appears to be a major character throughout the series, and this may be a deliberate flashback to his earlier years to provide some back-story. The story weaving the characters and expanses of time together involves a fight against their ancient enemies, the Horsekin. The elven, dwarven and human races must join together against them, along with a couple of dragons thrown in for good measure. The Horsekin however think they have the best ally in the form of a goddess. Religion

and various deities feature prominently – there are several religions, all believing theirs is the true one.

Interestingly the book swaps from viewpoint to viewpoint – we see not just the one side's point of view but also the enemy's, so we don't end up believing either are the bad guys. The Horsekin seem primitive at first but through a newcomer to their midst we learn more about their customs and beliefs. The sheer expanses of time and intricate relationships are also well executed here, which I appreciated despite the obvious confusion caused by joining the tale 5 books in. Overall I think this is worth a look with a view to reading others in the series, so that one can understand the context of this book.*VC*

## ***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](mailto: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:-**

29th January 2009 - **THE EXECUTION CHANNEL** by **Ken MacLeod**

Future dates— 26th February, 26th March, 23rd April

**LX2009, the 2009 Eastercon.** April 10-13, 2009 will be held at the Cedar Court Hotel, Bradford. Guests of Honour: Tim Powers, Jon Courtenay Grimwood, David Lloyd. Fan Guests of Honour: Mary and Bill Burns. **Website is [www.LX2009.com](http://www.LX2009.com)**

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

**February 13<sup>th</sup> – QUIZ** against Birmingham University SF Group

**March 13<sup>th</sup> – SF author TONY BALLANTYNE**

**April 3<sup>rd</sup> – to be announced**

**May 8<sup>th</sup> – to be announced**

**June 13<sup>th</sup> – to be confirmed**

**July 10<sup>th</sup> – JO FLETCHER returns with more editor's tales**

**August 14<sup>th</sup> – Summer Social**

**September 11<sup>th</sup> – to be announced**

**October 9<sup>th</sup> – to be announced**

**November 13<sup>th</sup> – to be announced**

**December 4<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Social**

**BRUM GROUP NEWS #448** copyright 2009 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton (19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL – phone 0121 477 6901 or email [rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)). Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the general membership or, for that matter, the person giving the 'opinion'.

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

**ABOUT US...** The **Birmingham Science Fiction Group** meets on the second Friday of each month. Membership is £16 per year per person (or £21 for two members living at the same address). This includes the 12 free issues of the Newsletter plus reduced entrance fee at each meeting. Cheques should be made payable to "The Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to our Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG