

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

FEBRUARY 2009

ISSUE 449

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

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Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February

## THE QUIZ

This month we have the Annual Quiz versus members of the Birmingham University SF Group. A Pub Quiz style event with several teams from each Group competing for honours and prizes. Questions will be from all aspects of the SF world – books, magazines, artwork, films, TV series, plays, authors, editors, artists, actors, etc., even children's fantasy like DR WHO so if you have a particular area of weakness, NOW is the time to start revising. Or have you already left it too late to re-read every issue of ANALOG again, or rewatch every surviving episode of DR WHO? Only you know your weak areas – start reading and start watching!

*RGP*

*The meeting will take place in 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.*

**March 9th – SF author TONY BALLANTYNE will be speaking to the Group. His books are RECURSION, CAPACITY and DIVERGENCE. Have you read them yet?**

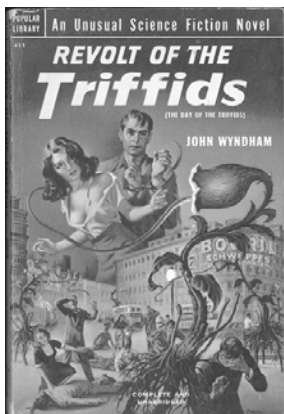
## THE NEW DR WHO



\*real\* new doctor was announced as Matt Smith just one day after the newsletter was posted. Our apologies, but in our defence please note the wording ‘reportedly confirmed’. We give you the information we have. Checking and confirming its accuracy is not always possible. The secrecy surrounding the new Doctor was something I personally had no knowledge of until later. RGP

## ‘THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS’ DAWNS AGAIN By Vernon Brown

Another visual interpretation of Wyndham’s THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS is set to hit the small screen in the autumn as a four-hour mini-series on BBC1. Last seen in 1981 as a television adaptation which was much better, to say the least, than the 1961 film version, this new production will cost around £10 million.



However, I wonder whether this will be another example of PC and CGI in a film obscuring the essence of the original story, much as, say, the latest film version of THE TIME MACHINE has moved a long way from the novel.

Speaking of the 1981 triffids the producer Justin Bodie says that they were a bit like ‘shuffling leeks’. “We have spent a year creating the new triffids. You will not be able to just run away from them”. Presumably they have now been crossed with cheetahs! He also says that people kept them as pets so “they have to be beautiful as well as being able to turn into something terrifying and ugly”. He’s wrong - it became a fashion to have a

docked triffid in the garden just as nowadays a rotweiller is fashionable in some quarters. Fashion does not necessarily equate with pets or beauty.

He also says that the film will be closer to the book than previous versions. “It’s chillingly topical, dealing with Man’s rush to do anything it can to replace fossil fuels irrespective of damage to the environment and the impact of something going wrong”. He must have read a different version of the book that I read! In my book triffids were developed as a renewable source of food oils for humans and animals, replacing fish and whale oils among others. In other words they were environmentally green! And I doubt that anyone could possibly foresee that a meteor storm would trigger satellite weapons that malfunction and blind most of humanity.

Perhaps I am a little too harsh. It’s impossible to reproduce exactly on screen, material that has been written to be read. The techniques used to create the desired impact in the viewers/readers mind are so different, but I hope that not too much of the original classic story has been altered. Either way, I look forward to seeing what has been created. VB

[Mini-series information adapted from The Sunday Telegraph Seven Magazine 04.01.09 ]

### **NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS**

1) Cover of the hardcover First Edition – Doubleday USA 1951

2) The first paperback edition – Popular Library USA 1952. REVOLT of course, sounds far better than DAY!!!! Also note the scantily clad female later used in movie posters, etc. I haven’t read this book for 50 years but didn’t everyone cover up with plenty of clothing because the triffids gave a very serious sting? Brave girl!

3) Italian poster for the 1961 movie. Translated as INVASION OF THE GREEN MONSTERS which sounds ever better than REVOLT!!!!. Note the destruction to the skyscrapers – not in the book, not in the movie.

## **THE BRITISH SF AWARD NOMINATIONS**

The British Science Fiction Award nominations have been announced. The winners will be named in April at LX2009 (Eastercon)

### **Best Novel:**

FLOOD by Stephen Baxter

THE GONE-AWAY WORLD by Nick Harkaway

THE NIGHT SESSIONS by Ken MacLeod

ANATHEM, by Neal Stephenson

### **Best Short Fiction:**

“Exhalation” by Ted Chiang

“Crystal Nights” by Greg Egan

“Little Lost Robot” by Paul McAuley

“Evidence of Love in a Case of Abandonment” by M. Rickert

### **Best Non-Fiction:**

“Physics for Amnesia” by John Clute

SUPERHEROES!: CAPES AND CRUSADERS IN COMICS AND FILMS by Roz Kaveney

WHAT IT IS WE DO WHEN WE READ SCIENCE FICTION? by Paul Kincaid

RHETORICS OF FANTASY by Farah Mendlesohn

### **Best Artwork:**

Cover of SUBTERFUGE by Andy Bigwood

Cover of FLOOD by Blacksheep

Cover of *SWIFTLY* by Blacksheep

Cover of *MURKY DEPTHS 4* by Vincent Chong

Cover of *INTERZONE 218* by Warwick Fraser Coombe

## ***PHILIP K. DICK AWARD NOMINATIONS***

The Philip K. Dick Awards are presented for best paperback original publication. The awards are sponsored by the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society and the Philip K. Dick Trust with the ceremony being sponsored by the NorthWest Science Fiction Society. This year's awards will be presented on Friday, April 10, 2009 at Norwescon 32. The judges are Tobias Buckell, M. M. Buckner (chair), Walter Hunt, Rosemary Kirstein, and William Senior.

EMISSARIES FROM THE DEAD by Adam-Troy Castro

FAST FORWARD 2 edited by Lou Anders

JUDGE by Karen Traviss

PLAGUE WAR by Jeff Carlson

TERMINAL MIND by David Walton

TIME MACHINES REPAIRED WHILE-U-WAIT by K. A. Bedford

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

.... **Donald E Westlake** died of a heart attack in Mexico on New Years Eve. He was 75. Westlake's career as a novelist and screen writer spanned over 50 years, during which he had over 100 books published, primarily mysteries. He was a science fiction fan who contributed letters to fanzines and wrote short fiction. A collection of his science fiction detective stories was published as *TOMORROW'S CRIMES*, in 1981. Westlake received three Edgar Awards and was named Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America in 1993. His screenplay for the motion picture *THE GRIFTERS* was nominated for an Academy Award in 1991 .... Producer **Charles H Schneer** (b.1920) died on January 21. Schneer produced the films *CLASH OF THE TITANS*, *THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD* and *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* in addition to many more films ....



Actor **Patrick McGoohan** (b.1928) died on January 13. McGoohan won two Emmys for his work on *Columbo* but is best known for his role as Number Six in *The Prisoner* .... Actor **Ricardo Montalban** (b.1920) died on January 14. Montalban is best known for his portrayal of Mr. Roarke on the original *Fantasy Island* and for the role of Khan in the "Space Seed" episode of *Star Trek* and again in *STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN*. Montalban also appeared in

*CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES* and the made-for-television *Wonder Woman* movie .... Celestis, Inc. has announced that it will launch a spacecraft next year which will contain the remains of **Gene Roddenberry** and **Majel Barrett Roddenberry**. Some of Roddenberry's ashes were previously launched into space on a 1997 Celestis launch, but this launch will take the remainder of his remains and tributes from fans on a journey which will not return them to Earth .... **Neil Gaiman's** *THE*

GRAVEYARD BOOK won the John Newbery Medal, presented by the Association for Library Service to Children. The award, given each year since 1922 is considered to be one of the most prestigious honours in children's literature .... **Gavin J Grant** has announced that the venerable YEAR'S BEST FANTASY AND HORROR series, begun in 1988 will not have an edition released this year. The anthology series was edited by **Ellen Datlow** and **Terri Windling** from 1988 through 2003. **Grant** and **Kelly Link** took over for Windling in 2004. Datlow has announced that Night Shade Press will be publishing at least two years of a Year's Best Horror anthology, covering 2008 and 2009 .... HarperCollins UK has announced the forthcoming publication of a previously unpublished work by **J R R Tolkien**. THE LEGEND OF SIGURD AND GUDRZN was written by Tolkien in the 1920s and 30s, before he wrote THE HOBBIT. It is a retelling of the Norse tales of Sigurd and the Fall of the Niflungs. The manuscript has been edited by Tolkien's son, Christopher Tolkien .... The Science Fiction Poetry Association has announced the recipient of the 2008 Dwarf Stars Award, which is given to the best short speculative poem of 10 lines or less published in the previous year, as voted upon by its membership. The 2008 winner is "Place Mat by Moebius" by **Greg Beatty**, originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction*. The winner receives a certificate and a year's free membership to the Science Fiction Poetry Association .... **Gordon van Gelder** has announced that the **Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction** will change to a bi-monthly publication schedule rather than its current eleven issues per year. According to van Gelder, the change is aimed at keeping production costs down. Although only six issues will be published each year, there will only be a cut of about 10% of the wordage due to an increased size for each issue .... In a sudden announcement, **Realms of Fantasy** Managing Editor **Laura Cleveland** has announced that the April issue of the magazine, currently at the printer, will be the magazine's final issue .... **Warren Lapine**, one time publisher of DNA Publications, has announced the creation of Tir na Nog Press, a small press specializing in science fiction and fantasy. He also plans to relaunch **Fantastic Stories** as a quarterly magazine with payment on acceptance. Lapine has said that any unfulfilled DNA subscriptions, including SF Chronicle, Absolute Magnitude, Mythic Delirium, Dreams of Decadence, and Weird Tales, will be filled with issues of Fantastic Stories .... Marvel Comics is scheduling the release of a special edition of **Amazing Spider-Man** #583 in which the webslinger teams up with **Barack Obama**. **Joe Quesada** stated that after learning that Obama was a Spider-Man fan, the project seemed natural .... ABC has ordered a pilot for a television series based on the 1984 science fiction series "**V**" about an alien invasion of Earth. The original series was based on a miniseries and ran for 19 episodes and spawned several novelizations .... The cast of the British SF series **Red Dwarf** will be reunited for a two-episode story in which they return to Earth. The two-parter is scheduled to run on Easter weekend on UKTV digital channel Dave. The episodes will air in conjunction with "Red Dwarf Unplugged", an improvised episodes with no sets or special effects, and "Red Dwarf: The Making of Back to Earth", a behind-the-scenes view of the show .... Some scientists believe that a comet struck the Earth, or exploded above the Great Lakes, 13,000 years ago, leading to an extinction event that killed off sabre tigers, mastodons, and mammoths. The results are based on the discovery of a layer of nanodiamonds that correlate to the period. They also believe that the event may also have resulted in the end of the Clovis civilization in North America. More details can be found at [http://www.upi.com/Science\\_News/2009/01/02/scientists\\_say\\_comet\\_triggered\\_extinctions/](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/2009/01/02/scientists_say_comet_triggered_extinctions/) UPI-58501230875010/ ....

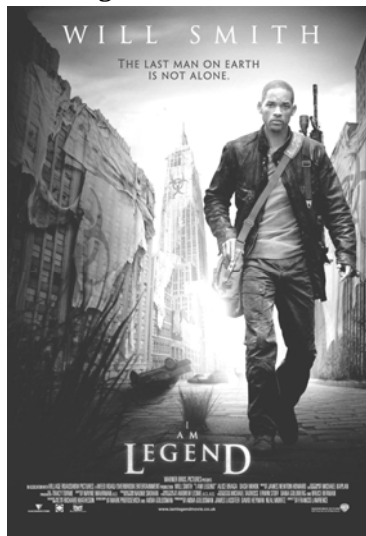
RGP

# 😊😊😊😊 FILM ROUND-UP 😞😞😞😞

## BY VICKY COOK

### ***I AM LEGEND* – 2007 (dir: Francis Lawrence)**

**Starring Will Smith and Alice Braga**



This is the third adaptation from the 1954 Richard Matheson novel. This one stars Will Smith as Robert Neville, a scientist left alone when a disease-destroying drug turns every other person on the planet into crazed monsters. With an aversion to UV light, they hide away by day and come out at nightfall. The film follows his actions by day with the whole city to himself and follows his emotional journey as he faces loneliness, depression and internal as well as external demons. He also strives to discover a cure for the virus, using lab rats and later a captive. This leads the Alpha male of the other beings to seek him out, leading to a final stand-off.

The film leaves out much which made the book so memorable and different to the norm, which to my mind is a real shame. Matheson explored the idea of two types of ‘infected’ – depending whether they lived or died - and the former being more human and less ‘crazed’ are

able to communicate and develop. It is a shame the film never delves into this idea. The ‘I Am Legend’ which refers to the scientist being a sort of ‘bogeyman’ himself to the more developed ‘infected’ is changed utterly. Smith is ‘legend’ due to his inexplicable immunity to the virus, which is airborne as well as through contact. The film, like the book, introduces a female protagonist but without giving too much away, she is dealt with completely differently here.

Overall though, I enjoyed the film. The latter part of the film, as the action picked up, did not affect me but I was really struck by the depiction of the main character in the middle of this world-changing event. He was not just a macho tough guy blasting zombies - you could really feel for him. I’d say purists of the book might not like the omissions and changes, and unfortunately some people did not like the film because it was too slow, but I, not usually a fan of this sort of film, appreciated the more thought-provoking aspects and that the monsters were not just plain zombies but evolved into a sort of semi-vampire, semi-monster. CGI being what it is nowadays, they were surprisingly less gruesome than I expected. Worth watching. In order to compare, we’ve just ordered *THE OMEGA MAN* and *LAST MAN ON EARTH* (the two other film versions of this book) to watch too.

### ***THE ILLUSIONIST* – 2007 (dir: Neil Burger)**

**Starring Edward Norton, Paul Giamatti and Jessica Biel.**

Now to a completely different film. Starring Edward Norton, *THE ILLUSIONIST* features a magician who can apparently summon up spirits of the dead, shocking the 19th century populace. The plot thickens when he falls in love with the fiancé

of a prince. The film leaves you to consider whether or not these spirits are real. The ending implies not, but the question is never explained fully. Most of the film is from the viewpoint of Inspector Uhl - Paul Giamatti (excellent) as he learns more about the magician's tricks and we share his surprise and shock at new developments. Quiet, interesting film leaving you with questions unanswered.

### ***THE HAPPENING* – 2008 (dir: M Night Shymalan)**

#### **Starring Mark Wahlberg and Zooey Deschanel**

THE HAPPENING is the latest offering from M.Night Shymalan and involves a family caught up in the midst of a strange spate of apparent suicides. As the number of casualties grow, we share the main character's confusion and growing fear at this event they cannot comprehend, and as they try to work out why it keeps happening. Badly rated on first release, we found it an interesting film. It doesn't easily slot into any particular genre, with elements from science fiction, horror and drama, which may confuse the more mainstream audience.

### ***THE INVASION* – 2007 (dir: Oliver Hirschbiegel)**

#### **Starring Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig**

THE INVASION is INVASION OF THE BODYSNATCHERS brought up to date. Again we found it was better than critics would suggest; again it was badly panned on first release. It loses some of the older film's originality and suspense but is still watchable. Nicole Kidman does a good job as usual and there are suitably poignant scenes as she battles with herself as well as the external aliens. The original film (1956) strongly referenced Communism and it would be hard to attract a modern audience in the same way but the change of method of infection to an alien flu-like virus was, if a bit predictable, a good way to do that.

VC



## **BOOK REVIEWS**



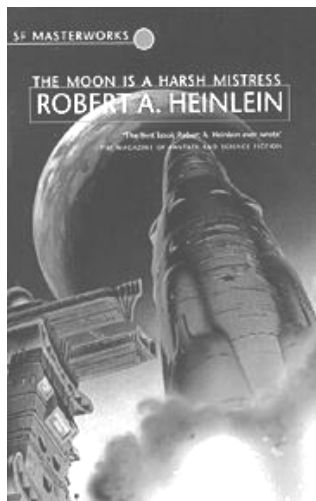
(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**

***THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS* by Robert A Heinlein**  
**Gollancz SF Masterworks / 382pgs / hardback / £7.99 / ISBN: 978-0575 082410**

**Reviewed by Michael Jones**

First published in 1966, this is one of Heinlein's several Hugo Award winning novels. It is set on the Moon where what began as a penal colony is now a thriving community of some three million inhabitants. The main theme is the successful move by this colony to break away from Earth control and become independent, an idea having an obvious resonance in the USA which fought its own War of Independence a couple of centuries ago. A secondary theme describes how a computer system on the Moon achieves spontaneous Artificial Intelligence leading to self-awareness and this computer entity

becomes an ally of the rebels – it is safe to say that without its help their rebellion would have been quite impossible.



It is typical of Heinlein's writing that life in the Lunar Colony is fully realised and conveyed to the reader in total detail virtually by inference alone, with no lengthy pauses for explanation, in the same way that a mainstream writer finds no need to explain the function of a street lamp, say, or a bus stop. Having said that, it must be admitted that he veers into the polemical at times to express his belief in the freedom of the individual as opposed to a heavy-handed system of government, a proposition which a science fiction story of this kind is well-suited to display.

For all that, the story mostly rattles along at a tremendous pace, with incidents of excitement and emotion, and one finds oneself rooting for the Loonies all the way even if they are a bunch of scruffy rebels.

One has to bear in mind that this was written over forty years ago. There are incipient signs of the strangeness which infused Heinlein's later work (having perhaps begun with *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND* a few years earlier) but apart from that SF readers have probably become more sophisticated since then. It is easy to look back from our present-day perspective and decry much of this book but to do so is to belittle its many good points. To be sure there are faults to be found if you really want to seek for them, but this nevertheless represents one of the all-time greatest SF writers at his cracking best.

*MJ*

## ***THE FADE by Chris Wooding***

**Gollancz / 312pgs / paperback / £7.99 / ISBN 978-0575082984**

**Reviewed by Michael Jones**

This story is set in vast underground caverns beneath the surface of a moon of a giant planet orbiting in the system of a double star. Here dwell various apparently human-derived races who were forced to retreat from the surface when the stars became much hotter than previously. Now, two of the leading races are fighting a bitter and seemingly endless war. It is told from the point of view of a female soldier, a kind of super-ninja, who as well as being a ruthless killing machine can on demand serve as a spy or an assassin.

At the beginning of the book she is fighting in a vicious battle which ends with her and her fellows betrayed and she taken prisoner. Following is the story of her escape and seeming rehabilitation as she attempts to achieve vengeance for her betrayal and personal loss.

All this is set against the detailed and





excellently realised background of a strange world and its totally alien flora and fauna. It is so well described as almost to banish the doubts one might otherwise feel about the plausibility of it all.

I might have liked the book better had it not been written mostly in the present tense, which I always think is a very contrived affectation, even if it does in fact pass largely unnoticed (so why bother?). Worse still, it is laid out so that it begins with Chapter 30: subsequent chapters count down to 0 and are interlaced with a series of flashback chapters counting up to 40 but in reverse order as regards the times to which they refer. Again - why? - although it is possible to detect some underlying connections if one studies hard enough.

In fact this is probably a better book than I have made it sound. It has a fascinating background, characters one can empathise with, moments of excitement and a dramatic and unexpected denouement. Most of all, the more effort you are prepared to put into reading it the more you will get out of it.

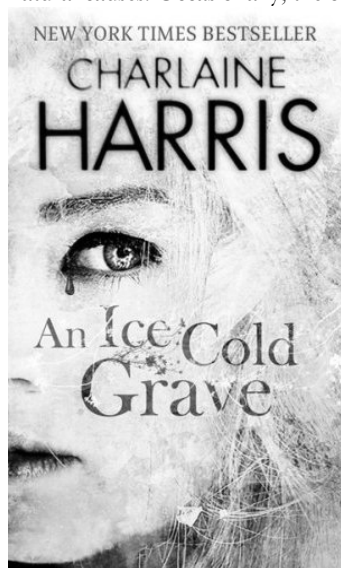
MJ

### ***AN ICE COLD GRAVE by Charlaine Harris***

**Gollancz / 280pgs / £6.99 / paperback / ISBN: 978-0575083998**

**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan**

Harris is the creator of off-beat heroines. In this series, of which this is the third, Harper Connelly has become able to find dead bodies. The corpses can tell her who they are and how they died, but not, if they were murder victims, who killed them. She works with her step-brother, Tolliver Lang, who acts as her manager and driver. Sometimes she is just asked to find out if someone died peacefully, perhaps to confirm that death was from natural causes. Occasionally, the corpse is a murder victim.



In AN ICE COLD GRAVE, Harper is invited to Doraville in mid-winter to look for a missing boy. His grandmother and the local sheriff have exhausted the usual methods and now Twyla Cotton, the grandmother, is prepared to explore psychic avenues. Despite the problems of not knowing where to begin searching, Harper is far too successful and finds the grisly remains of eight boys, all tortured to death and buried in an isolated spot. As the weather closes in, Harper becomes the target of the killer trying to cover his tracks, thinking she knows more than she does.

As in all of Harris's novels, she does not only tell an excellent story, but also allows her characters to develop and moves their lives along. In AN ICE COLD GRAVE, the relationship between Harper and Tolliver undergoes a dramatic change, which will colour how she deals with them in future novels. This is light, enjoyable reading which sucks you into the lives of the characters.

## **THE COLOUR OF MAGIC & THE LIGHT FANTASTIC**

**by Terry Pratchett**

**Gollancz / 424 pages / hardcover /**

**£20 / ISBN 978-0575085091**

**Reviewed by Michael Jones**

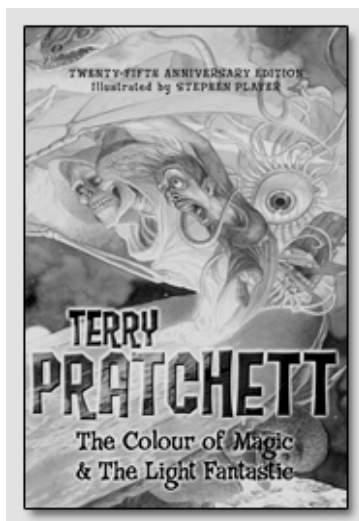
1983 saw the publication of the first of the *Discworld* novels, *THE COLOUR OF MAGIC*, and this handsome volume has been produced to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of that event. *THE LIGHT FANTASTIC* is also included, despite not coming along until three years later, but both of those volumes were published by the tiny publisher Colin Smythe and prices for first editions are now into four-figures. The 25 year marker seemed the perfect chance to get these two books republished under the Gollancz imprint.

The *Discworld*, and the books about it, have changed enormously through the intervening years and it is interesting to look back at these first efforts. The first was written as a spoof, an ‘anti-fantasy’ counter to all the works of heroic fantasy which preceded it and with no conception of the series to which it would lead. Consequently, of the characters who have become the mainstay of the later books only Rincewind, the cowardly wizard, and Death are significantly present although embryonic versions of such organisations as The Unseen University, The City Watch and The Patrician’s Office are also to be found. Very much in evidence however are the style, the humour and the plundering ( and merciless sending-up ) of familiar fantasy sources such as Anne McCaffrey and Robert E. Howard ( to name but two of many ). The second book was more structured, more of a story with a plot rather than a series of loosely-related episodes.

Anything by Pratchett is always worth reading for itself and these early efforts are no exception. He has however gone on record as saying that if he had known then what the *Discworld* concept would later become, these first books would have been different, and better. Whatever, if this publication can bring new readers into the fold, whether or not it be on the back of the TV movie, it cannot be a bad thing.

Whether existing and confirmed readers will need this new production is another matter. A good deal of effort has gone into justifying the high price. Careful printing with judicious use of coloured ink for paragraph dividers and page numbers is set against colourful illustrations and there are pictorial endpapers and even a ribbon bookmark. It is certainly a volume which will grace a collector’s bookshelf and would enable a couple of tatty worn-out paperbacks to be discarded, although it might be no replacement for precious first-editions. However, it only contains the same words as any other edition and at the end of the day the words are what is important and there are less expensive ways to find them. So, whether a new reader or an old collector, you pays your money and you takes your choice as the saying goes.

*MJ*



# ***Terry Pratchett's THE COLOUR OF MAGIC: THE ILLUSTRATED SCREENPLAY***

***By Vadim Jean***

**Gollancz / 255 pages / hardcover /  
£20 / ISBN 978-0575080454**

**Reviewed by Michael Jones**

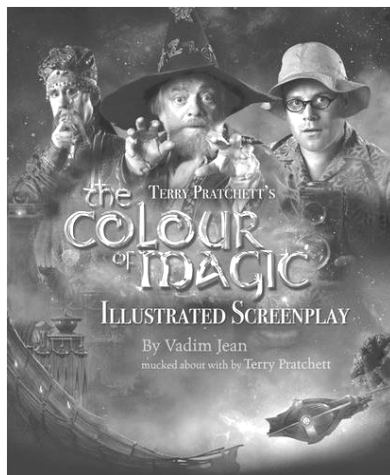
This is the screenplay of the Sky TV adaptation broadcast last Easter. It is profusely illustrated, with both publicity stills and shots from the broadcast as well as design drawings and bits of storyboard to make a pleasing souvenir of the production. Plus its main *raison d'être*, the script (one must understand that the original script as written may be changed as production rolls along).

One wonders at whom this is actually aimed. It provides little, if anything, which could not be enjoyed to better effect by watching the TV movie (which is now available to buy on DVD for less than the cost of this book) while on the other hand it cannot possibly serve as an effective alternative to the original book as a version to read – although it could perhaps be regarded as a kind of graphic novel. Perhaps the best way to use it would be to have it on one's lap while watching the TV, thereby hoping to enhance understanding and enjoyment - if one is sad enough!

However, the publishers did the same thing for the previous HOGFATHER broadcast and that must have sold well enough for them to think it was worth doing again. There must be a lot of fanatical collectors out there!

Be that as it may, the most useful purpose this review can serve is to let you know that such a book exists. A keen collector may well choose to buy it as a souvenir and will probably not be disappointed. Someone more cynical might dismiss it as a money-making publicity exercise.

*MJ*



## ***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@rogceyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rog@rogceyton.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:-**

26th February - **THE BLADE ITSELF** by Joe Abercrombie

Future dates — 26th March, 23rd April

**REDEMPTION '09 - The Multimedia Science Fiction Convention** takes place 20-22 February 2009 at the Britannia Hotel, Coventry CV1 5RP. Guests of honour are Paul Cornell, Rob Shearman and Kev F. Sutherland. Full details from: <http://www.conventions.org.uk/redemption/index.php>

**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)**

**FANTASYCON 2009** will take place on the weekend of September 18-20, at the Britannia Hotel, 1 St James Street, Nottingham. Ian Watson will be the Master of Ceremonies. The guests of honour to be announced. Details from British Fantasy Society website <http://s256537080.websitehome.co.uk/>

## ***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> – fan, editor and now literary agent, JOHN JARROLD**

**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**

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