

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JULY 2012

ISSUE 490

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

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Friday 13th July

JO FLETCHER

Jo Fletcher is an editor, writer, poet and journalist. Her fiction has appeared in many anthologies such as **THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF DRACULA**, **DARK OF THE KNIGHT**, **NOW WE ARE SICK**, **THE TIGER GARDEN**, **VOICES ON THE WIND**, **WHITE OF**

THE MOON and others. She is the winner of the International Society of Poets Editor's Award and the British Fantasy Society's first Karl Edgar Wagner Special Award and the World Fantasy Award –Professional. Her poetry collection, **SHADOWS OF LIGHT AND DARK** was also short-listed for the British Fantasy Award. Jo edited the World Fantasy Convention anthologies **GASLIGHT**

AUGUST 10th -Summer Social at the BLACK EAGLE in Hockley (7.00 to 11.00 pm). Only two tickets remaining at time of going to press. See Pat at meeting or Membership Secretary (see back page)

& GHOSTS and SECRET CITY: STRANGE TALES OF LONDON (both with Stephen Jones) and has been a ghost writer in many fields including fantasy, history and military memoirs.

A career in journalism was successful but she moved into publishing and spent a successful 16 years at Gollancz, where her authors included Sir Terry Pratchett, Charlaine Harris and Alastair Reynolds amongst many. Since her last visit to the Group in 2010 she has left Gollancz and launched Jo Fletcher Books, associated with Quercus Books (an independent publishing house). The first book, THE VAMPIRE SHRINK was released in September 2011 and further books have followed with a mixture of known and new authors. Further details will hopefully be forthcoming at the meeting. Her website is www.jofletcherbooks.com

CG

The meeting will take place in the conference room on the first floor of The Briar Rose Hotel, Bennetts Hill, off New Street.

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 entrance fee for our January AGM is free and the August and December socials are ticket only events. All other meetings the entrance fee is £3.00 for members and £4 for non-members.

RAY BRADBURY by Carol Goodwin

Ray Bradbury, the SF, fantasy and horror writer died on June 5 after a long illness. He was 91. He was born in Waukegan, Illinois and the family moved frequently, as his father looked for work during the Great Depression. Although they later settled in Los Angeles, the experiences of his childhood in the rural Mid West featured strongly in his fiction. In contrast to many of his contemporaries, Bradbury's stories were less about technology and more about people and the effect of 'progress'. Indeed, for a science fiction writer he was actually against much technology - he never learned to drive and was strongly against the Internet. He also retained his childhood interest in conjuring and magic and this also features in many of his stories



Another thing that set Ray Bradbury's stories apart was his use of vocabulary, metaphor and imagery which gained him recognition outside the field of fantasy and science fiction and helped convince many in the literary establishment of the merit of the science fiction/fantasy genre.

He was a prolific writer and produced nearly fifty books, hundreds of short stories as well as film scripts and, increasingly in his later years, many poems. Among his more famous works were FAHRENHEIT 451, THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, DANDELION WINE and SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. He also wrote scripts for

Hollywood including John Huston's version of *MOBY DICK* which was nominated for an Academy Award and he hosted the television show, *The Ray Bradbury Theater*, from 1985 to 1992 for which he adapted over 60 of his own short stories.

The 2000 National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, the 2004 National Medal of Arts, and the 2007 Pulitzer Prize Special Citation were among his many prestigious awards. Within the genre he received the World Fantasy Award for life achievement, the Stoker Award for life achievement, SFWA Grand Master, SF Hall of Fame Living Inductee, and First Fandom Award.

His influence has also been recognised by awards and locations which have been given his name. For example, the Ray Bradbury Award presented by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, a star on Hollywood Boulevard, an impact crater on the moon was named Dandelion Crater by the Apollo 15 astronauts, an asteroid discovered in 1992 (named 97 Bradbury) and Ray Bradbury Park in his childhood home town of Waukegan.

He was a lasting influence on many famous writers and directors including Neil Gaiman, Stephen Spielberg, Stephen King and his friends Charles Addams, Gene Rodenberry and Ray Harryhausen. There have been an enormous amount of tributes many of which can be found ironically on the Internet. CG

DAVID GEMMELL LEGEND AWARD 2012 WINNERS

The 2012 David Gemmell Legend Award winners have been announced. The awards were presented at a ceremony held at London's Magic Circle headquarters on June 15, 2012. Next year's awards will take place as part of the 2013 World Fantasy Convention in Brighton, United Kingdom October 31-November 3, 2013. (For more information see the David Gemmell awards website <http://gimmellaward.com>. The winners were:

Ravenheart Award (best cover art): Raymond Swanland - BLOOD OF AENARION

Morningstar Award (best debut): Helen Lowe - HEIR OF NIGHT

Legend Award (best novel): Patrick Rothfuss - THE WISEMAN'S FEAR

LOCUS AWARDS WINNERS

Winners were announced during the Locus Awards Weekend in Seattle WA, June 15-17, 2012

Science Fiction Novel: EMBASSYTOWN by China Miéville (Del Rey; Macmillan)

Fantasy Novel: A DANCE WITH DRAGONS by George R R Martin (Bantam; Harper Voyager UK)

First Novel: THE NIGHT CIRCUS by Erin Morgenstern (Doubleday)

Young Adult Book: THE GIRL WHO CIRCUMNAVIGATED FAIRYLAND IN A SHIP OF HER OWN MAKING by Catherynne M. Valente (Feiwel and Friends)

Novella: "Silently and Very Fast" by Catherynne M. Valente (WSFA; Clarkesworld)

Novelle: “White Lines on a Green Field” by Catherynne M. Valente (Subterranean Fall ’11)

Short Story: “The Case of Death and Honey” by Neil Gaiman (A Study in Sherlock)

Anthology: THE YEAR’S BEST SCIENCE FICTION: TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL COLLECTION by Gardner Dozois, ed. (St. Martin’s Griffin)

Collection: THE BIBLE REPAIRMAN AND OTHER STORIES by Tim Powers (Tachyon)

Non-fiction: EVAPORATING GENRES: ESSAYS ON FANTASTIC LITERATURE by Gary K. Wolfe (Wesleyan)

Art Books: SPECTRUM 18: THE BEST IN CONTEMPORARY FANTASTIC ART by Cathy Fenner & Arnie Fenner (Underwood)

Artist: Shaun Tan

Editor: Ellen Datlow

Magazine: Asimov’s SF

Publisher: Tor

MEMBERS’ SUCCESS STORIES

Congratulations to **Theresa Derwin** on her book signing at Forbidden Planet, Shaftesbury Avenue, London on 30th June as part of the Small Press Expo. Unfortunately we found out too late to feature in last month’s newsletter.

David Hardy has sent us the following link of an interview he gave to *Universe Today* <http://www.universetoday.com/95395/visions-of-the-cosmos-the-enduring-space-art-of-david-a-hardy/>

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 or queries to me at rog [dot] peyton [at] binternet [dot] com

From regular reviewer Jim Pearce: “I’m just writing to let you know that I very much like the impact that Carol Goodwin has made to the June issue of *Brum Group News*. Including items covering forthcoming books and new film releases has added a welcome extra dimension to an already excellent newsletter (I certainly appreciate being made aware of the existence of a ‘prequel’ to David Brin’s excellent *Uplift* novels). I look forward to seeing what other new developments she may introduce.

Talking about the newsletter features, I feel that I should, very belatedly, thank you for your very enjoyable series covering your 100 ‘favourite’ SF novels many of which I am happy to say I have. You added to my reading list encouraging me to read those I had not previously tried. You did hint that you might produce a list of your 100 favourite fantasy novels. I for one would very much like to see these. Would it include some of my favourite fantasy authors, e.g. Kelly Armstrong, Jim Butcher & Kim Harrison, to mention just three?

<<Carol is going to make an excellent newsletter editor. In fact she has produced this newsletter single-handedly, my input being only to make minor adjustments, mainly to layout.

At no time have I ever said I would produce a list of my favourite 100 fantasy novels. 100??? You must be joking – I'm a science fiction fan. I'd be hard pushed to find 20 or 30 fantasy novels that I consider worth reading. And sorry Jim, no urban fantasy would be included. – RGP>>

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Author and fan **Suzanne Allés Blom** (b.1948) died on June 23 from complications of intestinal cancer. Blom wrote the 2001 alternate history novel **INCA: THE SCARLET FRINGE**. Her first short story "In Memory of Prince Edward" appeared in the April 1993 issue of *Tomorrow*. and she was one of the creators of the Verdant Lore Tarot. Actor **Victor Spinetti** (b.1933) died on June 18 after a battle with cancer. Spinetti may be best known for his roles in the first three Beatles films, **A HARD DAY'S NIGHT**, **HELP** and **MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR**. He also provided the voice of Mr. Tumnus in the animated **THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE** and played the Historian in **THE LITTLE PRINCE**. On television, he provided the voice of Texas Pete on *SuperTed* and appeared in a multiple episodes of *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* Actress **Caroline John** (b.1940) died on June 5. John portrayed Dr. Elizabeth Shaw in four series of *Doctor Who* opposite Jon Pertwee, as well as reprising the role in **THE FIVE DOCTORS** and performed in numerous *Doctor Who* audio plays. She also appeared in the P.R.O.B.E. series. She was married to **Geoffrey Beevers**, who played The Master in one *Doctor Who* serial and also appears in the *Doctor Who* audio plays Actor **Richard Lynch** (b.1940) died on June 19. Lynch appeared in numerous science fiction films and television shows, including the original *Battlestar Galactica* and *Galactica 1980*, *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Highlander* and **THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER**, in which he played the villainous Cromwell **Ian Macauley** (b.1935) died on June 3. Macauley was active in fandom in the early 1950s and published the fanzine *Cosmag* beginning in March of 1951, which became *Asfo*. He also belonged to "Fanvariety Enterprises". Macauley went on to work for the New York Times for more than 30 years, where he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. In 1998, he edited the **Arthur C. Clarke** essay collection **GREETINGS, CARBON BASED BIPEDS** **Gerry Anderson** (*Thunderbirds*, etc.) has revealed he is suffering from Alzheimer's disease **Sir Terry Pratchett** has won the Wodehouse prize for comic fiction for his novel **SNUFF**. As part of his prize, a Gloucestershire Old Spot pig will be named after his novel The **Space Command** project seeks to bring classic Sci-Fi back to the mainstream. Legendary sci-fi writer **Marc Zicree** (*Star Trek*, *Babylon 5*, *Sliders*), special effects wizard **Doug Drexler** (*Star Trek*, *Battlestar Galactica*) and designer **Ian McCaig** (*Star Wars*, *Avengers*) are planning a series of movies that will highlight the great Sci-Fi of the '50's to reignite a legacy of vivid, optimistic science fiction. They're using crowd-funding website Kickstarter.com to directly communicate with and

enlist the direct support of fans. Two actors currently tapped for the project are Ethan Phillips and Armin Shimerman, both known for starring in the *Star Trek* franchise as Neelix and Quark respectively. More details can be found at www.spacecommandmovie.com. Approach with caution! **SciFi London** were the only bid for **WorldCon2014** but ratification by vote at WorldCon2012 is still needed. Dublin has successfully bid for **Eurocon2014** to be held one week after the presumed London Worldcon The **European Space Agency** has approved a billion-euro mission to Jupiter. The probe, called Juice, will survey Europa, Ganymede and Callisto for evidence of oceans and life beneath the ice. The launch will be in 2022, with a further eight years to reach the Jovian system China's manned space station has successfully docked with the **Tiangong space lab**. The crew included the first female astronaut, **Liu Yang**... British film-maker Joe Cornish is to follow up the successful sf film **ATTACK THE BLOCK** with an adaptation of **Neal Stephenson's** cyberpunk novel, **SNOW CRASH** *CG*

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(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [rog \[dot\] peyton \[at\] binternet \[dot\] com](mailto:rog@peyton.binternet.com)) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**

A FISTFUL OF CHARMS by ***Kim Harrison***

Harper Voyager / 424 pages / £7.99 paperback / ISBN: 978-000745980

Reviewed by **Pauline Morgan**

Looking at the number of Urban Fantasy books on the shelves these days it would seem that our city streets are crawling with vampires, that werewolves run rampant every full moon and that witches dwell down every street. This must be so, in the same way that Colin Dexter's Oxford has potential serial killers in every college or that murder is a hobby amongst the inhabitants of the sleepy country villages of Midsomer. So many of these books put the emphasis on the supernatural inhabitants at the expense of us ordinary humans. Sometimes this can be excused if the plot is exciting and the characters are vivid and this is necessary to stand out in an increasingly crowded market. A series needs to grab the reader if they are to want to read other books with the same setting.



Kim Harrison's series is set in Cincinnati, a minor problem to readers who don't have a good foundation in American geography. It features Rachel Morgan, a witch. She lives in a deconsecrated church with a screwed up vampire as a housemate and with pixies in the garden. Her ex-boyfriend is human but her current one is another vampire. As *A FISTFUL OF CHARMS* is the fourth book in a series

that currently runs to nine there is a lot of history between the characters that is important to them but unknown to anyone starting from here. It makes full comprehension of the nuances difficult.

At the start of this novel, Rachel is acting as back-up for David, a werewolf. She is registered as the alpha female (and only member) of his pack. Her position is challenged by a jealous were-female from another pack. As Rachel cannot shape-change she is in a dangerous situation and has to resort to trickery. This is a minor skirmish but sets in motion a useful set of events to counter the real mess that is the thrust of this novel. Rachel needs to shape-change to prove that she is a legitimate pack member. To this end, she asks her friend Ceri to help her cook up a spell from a book of demon curses. This is not going to be a real problem - except perhaps in later volumes as characters in this kind of book tend to accumulate problems. The situation she has to solve that is at the heart of this book concerns her pixie partner, Jenks. His eldest son has been lured into a life of crime by Rachel's human ex, Nick. As pixies are only four inches tall, she needs another spell to temporarily make Jenks big or he won't be able to cope with the lower temperatures further north. Simple job you might think, except Nick has stolen a powerful artefact that was thought to have been destroyed centuries ago. Now he has several werewolf packs desperately trying to get their paws on it and some vampires that are not too happy either. Rachel and Jenks land in a situation that could result in an all-out bloody war between werewolves and vampires unless they can find the artefact before anyone else does.

Once the action gets going, the pace picks up, carrying the reader along. However, at the start there are a lot of domestic issues that circle around the central situation. Although well written and, in places, fun, there is nothing that really makes it stand out on the shelf. It is well written and largely enjoyable. The characters are well drawn but I didn't feel emotionally connected to any of them.

On another note, the titles of the books in this series are all cute parodies of Clint Eastwood film titles.

PM

THE SCIENCE OF AVATAR by Stephen Baxter

Victor Gollancz / 273 pages / £18.99.Hardcover / ISBN: 978-0575130951

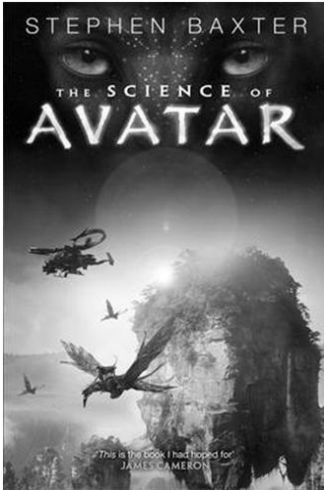
Reviewed by Dave Hardy

Purely by coincidence, immediately before starting this book I was reading the same author's DEEP FUTURE. This was published in 2001, and it attempts to divine what will happen at various stages in the Earth's future; will we have star travel, shall we make contact with alien races - are there any civilizations out there? There is a chapter on the Fermi Paradox: if there are people out there, why can't we see or hear evidence of them, e.g. by radio signals? Since more than a decade has passed since he wrote this, some of Baxter's predictions have proved good, while others have not (at least as yet) worked out quite as he expected.

My point? I think that Steve used THE SCIENCE OF AVATAR to update that previous book. Certainly there are many references to the film, and some chapters deal with it almost exclusively, but others are more general musings on the possibilities of interstellar travel, on how we may change and 'genetically

engineer' our own bodies and minds; even interfacing these with computers, on the chances of meeting with aliens, and what they might look like. There is also a section of illustrations, with scenes, colour sketches and development drawings.

I must admit that I probably would not have read this book were it not for



this review copy, but I'm glad I did. AVATAR is the first and still the only film I've seen in a cinema in 3D, and it blew me away! I sat near the front of the stalls, and it wasn't like watching a screen: there was this whole world stretching away in front of me, with strange 'jellyfish' floating in front of my face, or I was swooping down into a jungle-covered valley on the back of some dragon-like creature. I know everyone says "But it isn't very original," and I agree that the basic story seems pretty familiar: huge conglomerates literally riding roughshod over land that has belonged for millennia to indigenous people, cutting down ancient trees, destroying and desecrating virgin rainforests and 'sacred' ground, mining and polluting, etc., etc. Trees are certainly important here, because

'Hometree' is central to the life, beliefs and culture of the Na'vi, connecting all to the Tree of Souls and thus to their mother goddess, Eywa. If you haven't seen the movie (is there anyone who hasn't?) you probably won't be reading this, but it takes place in 2154, when we have star travel. James Cameron started working on AVATAR in 1994, but because the necessary technology (such as motion capture) was not then available work did not start seriously until 2006; although work on the Na'vi language started a year earlier. This is typical of Cameron's attention to detail; what may to most appear just a very pretty fantasy has actually been worked out in the finest detail, as Baxter is at pains to point out in this book. The science behind avatar technology, the problems of travel to the planet (or in this case Pandora, the moon of a planet, Polyphemus) of another star (Alpha Centauri A), and the problems of the time taken (solved here by cryosleep), the ecology of this alien world, the orbital dynamics of the Alpha Centauri triple star system with its consequent gravitational and lighting effects, and much more, have been researched and incorporated into this film.

The reason for humans being on Pandora is a 'new mineral': unobtainium. This sounds like a joke, and in a way it is, because the mineral was given the name simply because it is so rare and difficult to obtain. It has been found only on Pandora, but is seen as the solution to Earth's energy crisis. It's a superconductor, worth \$40 million per kilogram, with unusual magnetic properties which enable it to levitate, and it is also used to contain the matter/antimatter propulsion of their starships. Although Baxter doesn't mention this, it explains something that even SF fans found a little difficult to swallow: the 'Hallelujah Mountains', which float in the atmosphere. Many of us felt that Roger Dean should have received a credit for

these, since they appear so similar to the flying mountains or islands that he painted in the 1970s as album sleeves for rock groups like Yes! But Baxter explains how the magnetic properties of unobtainium enable these rocks to levitate: the magnetic fields of Pandora also make navigation and weapons-guidance very difficult for the humans when it comes to the final battle, and they have to resort to more old-fashioned methods.

If you enjoyed the film, you'll find this book explains and enhances a lot in it (I watched it again on Blu-Ray!). If you didn't, you might just find that it makes the experience more enjoyable. Personally, science apart, I found it an extremely beautiful film and indeed, a work of art in its own right. *DAH*

FORTHCOMING BOOKS



JACK GLASS by Adam Roberts / Gollancz / 384pgs / £14.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-057512723 / July 2

In this mixture of SF and crime, there are three gripping whodunits - described as gruesome but humorous.

YEAR'S BEST SF: THE TWENTY-NINTH COLLECTION by Gardner Dozois. / St. Martin's Griffin / 704pgs / £15.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-125000354 / July 3

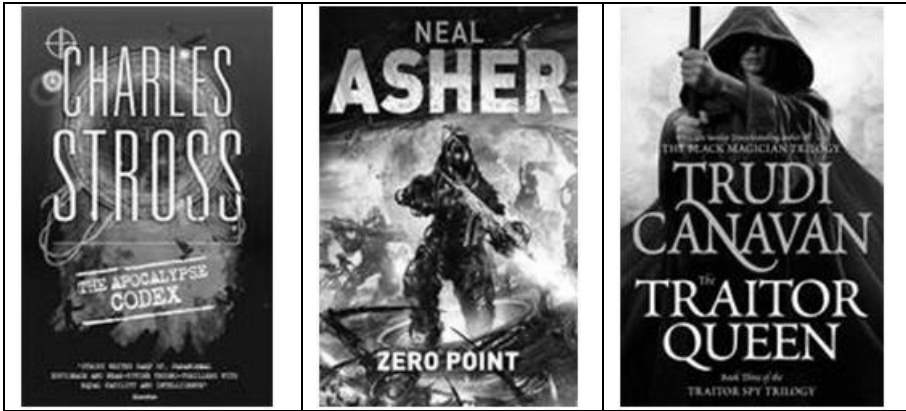
The latest collection by award-winning editor, Gardner Dozois. NB The paperback edition is released on 13th August

SKY DRAGONS by Todd and Anne McCaffrey / Bantam Press / 352pgs / £18.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-05930218 / July 5

This is the 21st Dragon of Pern book and the last involving Anne McCaffrey following her death earlier this year. Xhinna, a female blue dragon rider fights to raise sufficient dragons to maturity whilst coping with threats from animal and human adversaries

THE MECHANICAL MESSIAH AND OTHER MARVELS OF THE MODERN AGE: A NOVEL by Robert Rankin / Gollancz / 496pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-057508388 / July 12

Victorian steam-punk with the expected humour and fantasy of the eccentric Mr Rankin including a talking monkey, aliens, and Darwin!



THE APOCALYPSE CODEX (LAUNDRY FILES No.4) by **Charles Stross** /Orbit / 416pgs / £ 7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-035500980 / July 19. Bob Howard is a reluctant member of the Laundry (the British Secret Service branch which deals with otherworldly threats) who must now work with “freelancers” to investigate a seeming miracle worker with links to Downing Street

ZERO POINT by **Neal Asher** /Tor / 400pgs / £17.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0230750708 / August 2. This science fiction/space opera book is the second in the Owner series (following on from The Departure) and deals with the aftermath following Alan Saul’s destruction of the Committee’s control systems and robotic enforcers.

TRAITOR QUEEN by **Trudi Canavan** / Orbit / £18.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-1841495958 / August 2. Book Three of a fantasy trilogy in which Lorkin the magician has to broker a deal between the rival Magician’s Guild and the outlaw “Traitors” group of magicians.

NEW FILM RELEASES

Listings should not be necessarily taken as recommendations. View at your own peril!

STORAGE 24 - Release date June 29th. Noel Clarke (from *Doctor Who* and *KIDULTHOOD*) stars in a British horror/SF film where four young Londoners are trapped in a dark storage facility and hunted by a savage alien.

QUATERMASS AND THE PIT - Release date July 3rd One Day Only at Cineworld Broad Street and the MAC Centre, Cannon Hill Park. A re-showing of the 1967 Hammer film (based upon the BBC series written by Nigel Kneale) Workers in the London Underground uncover an ancient skeleton and an ‘unexploded bomb’ which turns out to be an alien spacecraft.

SEEKING A FRIEND FOR THE END OF THE WORLD - Release date 13th July. Billed as a comedy starring Steve Carrell and Keira Knightley as an odd couple ‘seizing the day’ as a 75 mile wide asteroid is on a collision course with the Earth.

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES - Release date July 20th. The third of director Christopher Nolan’s *Batman* films featuring new villains, Bane (Tom Hardy) and Catwoman (Anne Hathaway)

BRAVE - Release date 3rd August. This latest Pixar animation is a fantasy/comedy (with plenty of British voice talent) about a Scottish princess who does not want an arranged marriage. Using a magic wish to evade this causes chaos which only she can undo.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organizers 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 [dot] peyton [at] btinternet [dot] com

Shock & Gore 2012, 6th to 12th July, Birmingham. Independent cinema, The Electric (47-49 Station Street, B5 4DY), is the host for this Midlands horror festival. As well as new films like DETENTION and GOD BLESS AMERICA, there'll be screenings of horror classics like Cronenberg's VIDEODROME, Hammer's DRACULA and George Romero's MARTIN. Other highlights include literary event This Is Horror (featuring horror scribes David Moody, Conrad Williams and Sam Stone), a 10.30-3.00am 'allnighter', and a quiz. Website: www.shockandgore.co.uk. Phone: 0121 643 7879
Email: david@theelectric.co.uk Twitter: [@shockgore](https://twitter.com/shockgore)

Christopher Nolan season 1st to 22nd July To tie-in with the release of THE DARK KNIGHT RISES, BFI Southbank will be screening seven Nolan films, including THE PRESTIGE, INCEPTION, and his two previous *Batman* movies. Tickets go on sale on 19th June, at 11.30am. Website: <https://whatson.bfi.org.uk>

Edge-Lit 14th July, Derby. This literary event at QUAD (Market Place, DE1 3AS) brings together over 30 speakers from the genre. Guests include Christopher Fowler, Geoff Ryman, Adrian Tchaikovsky, Justina Robson, Jaime Fenn and Sarah Pinborough. Tickets: £25.00. Website: www.derbyquad.co.uk/edgelit. Phone: 01332 290 606

Pandorica 14th July, Birmingham. This one-day *Doctor Who* convention takes place at the Old Joint Stock Pub and Theatre (4 Temple Row West, B2 5NY), from 12.00 to 7.00pm. Guests include '60s companions William Russell (Ian) and Frazer Hines (Jamie). Tickets: Adults £40, children £25. Website: www.fantomfilms.co.uk/events/pandorica2012. Email: enquiries@fantomfilms.co.uk

Continuum 2012 20th to 23rd July, Leicester. Three-day, residential games convention, held at John Foster Hall (Manor Road, Oadby, LE2 2LG), part of the University of Leicester's Halls of Residence. As well as table-top role-playing games, board games, card games and freeform/LARP games, there'll be discussion panels and 'all manner of general silliness'. Tickets: Registration £30, with accommodation £47 per night (or £120 for all three nights); if you don't need accommodation you can get a weekend pass for £35 and day passes for £10 (Friday only) and £15 (Saturday or Sunday). Website: www.continuum.uk.net

Ian M Banks 1st August (7:30 pm), London..As part of the Guardian Book Club , Ian M Banks will discuss his novel USE OF WEAPONS. Price £9.50 (online) or £11.50 Box office. Tel: 020 7520 1490. Internet: <http://www.kingsplace.co.uk/whats-on-book-tickets/spoken-word/guardian-review-book-club-with-ian-m-banks>

Tom Pollock signing 9th August, London. Debut author Tom Pollock will be launching his first novel, urban fantasy THE CITY'S SON, with a signing, reading and

Q&A at Forbidden Planet's London Megastore (179 Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2H 8JR). It takes place from 6.00pm to 7.00pm. Website: <http://forbiddenplanet.com>

Congenial 10th to 12th August, Cambridge. Panel discussions, quizzes and gaming at The British Roleplaying Society's latest convention, which takes place at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. The guests of honour are Phil and Kaja Foglio, creators of the steampunk webcomic *Girl Genius*. Tickets: Membership rates £30 (adults)/£15 (children under 16); room rates from £97 to £43.75. Website: <http://congenial.org.uk/> Email: info@congenial.org.uk

CONVENTIONS

FANTASYCON 2012, 27th-30th September, Brighton. This year's British Fantasy Society meeting once again takes place at the Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton (35 Old Steine, BN1 1NT). Guests include Muriel Gray, Joe R Lansdale and Brent Weeks. The highlight will be the presentation of the British Fantasy Awards on the Sunday afternoon. Tickets: Weekend membership £55 (£50 to existing BFS members). Email: info@fantasycon2012.org

NOVACON 42, 9th-11th November, Nottingham. Now in its fifth decade, Novacon is held at the Park Inn Hotel in Nottingham. **Guest of Honour Jane Fenn.** Website www.novacon.org.uk Twitter: @Novacon42

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

Aug 10th - **SUMMER SOCIAL** - meal at the Black Eagle

Sep 14th - Comic Fantasy/SF author **SIMON R GREEN**

Oct 12th - horror writer **ADAM NEVILL**

Nov 2nd - SF author **ERIC BROWN**

Dec 7th - **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL** - Skittles and buffet

BRUM GROUP NEWS #490 (July 2012) copyright 2012 for Birmingham SF Group. This issue produced by Carol Goodwin and designed by Rog Peyton (19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL – phone 0121 477 6901 or email [rog \[dot\] peyton \[at\] bunternet \[dot\] com](mailto:rog@bunternet.com)). 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 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 Membership Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG