

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JANUARY 2014

ISSUE 508

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Annual General Meeting and Book Auction Friday 10th January 2014

A Happy New Year to all our members from the committee. We hope that you enjoyed your Christmas and that the New Year will be a good one.

January is once again the time for the Annual General Meeting followed by the Book Auction. The Annual General Meeting is a legal necessity. A new committee needs to be elected and is also the time for you to voice your views on the Group and any changes you would like to be

February 14th - Annual SF Quiz

considered. Full details of the committee member roles and requirements were included in the December newsletter. To stand for a Committee post you must be a member of the group and ideally should have been a member for at least 12 months.

The AGM is usually completed very quickly and we can get on with the main event of the evening - **the Auction**. Rog will once again be trying to empty our wallets/purses with as little pain as possible. But we do need items to sell so please donate. All of the proceeds go to help the running of the Brum Group - without the money raised from auctions we would most likely have to increase the membership fees. So please bring a few items with you - books, magazines, fanzines, artwork, posters, DVD's, CD's etc.

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 normally 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

JOEL LANE 1963-2013 by Chris Morgan

Joel Lane died in his sleep on Monday 25th November; he was 50. He was an award-winning poet and writer of supernatural stories. His last book, **WHERE FURNACES BURN** (published by PS in 2012) was a World Fantasy Award winner at the World Fantasy Convention in Brighton in October 2013.

Joel was always interested in horror and fantasy fiction, consuming it from a young age. Rog Peyton remembers him as an Andromeda Bookshop customer from the age of twelve, wearing the uniform of George Dixon School, of which Rog had also been a pupil. At that time Joel was reading and being influenced by Arthur Machen, Walter de la Mare, Fritz Leiber, Robert Aickman, Harlan Ellison and Ramsey Campbell, subtle writers all.

After gaining degrees at Cambridge University (a First in Natural Sciences and an MA in Philosophy) Joel returned to Birmingham and worked in a number of editorial, proof reading and journalistic jobs. In his spare time he was a prolific writer, with hundreds of poems and stories published. He received an Eric Gregory Award for his poetry (for the best British poets under thirty) and numerous accolades for his stories. His first

collection of stories, *THE EARTH WIRE* (1994), with elements of horror, fantasy and SF against a Birmingham and West Midlands setting, won a British Fantasy Award that year. More recent collections are *THE LOST DISTRICT* (2006) and *THE TERRIBLE CHANGES* (published in English in Romania, 2009), the novella *THE WITNESSES ARE GONE* (2009) and a crime story booklet *DO NOT PASS GO* (2011). His other writing includes three poetry collections, two literary novels, three anthologies that he edited or co-edited and perceptive articles on supernatural horror writers.

His stories appeared in some major and many small press magazines and anthologies. They were quite often reprinted in *YEAR'S BEST* anthologies. In 1999 a story jointly written with me, "Feels Like Underground", appeared in *Fantasy & Science Fiction Magazine*.

WHERE FURNACES BURN is a linked collection of 26 supernatural crime/horror stories narrated by an unnamed plainclothes policeman working in the West Midlands over a 24-year period. It's a magnificently bleak book, Joel's best, well deserving of its World Fantasy Award. It enhanced his already considerable reputation. It's a suitable epitaph to a writing career cut tragically short.

Joel attended many Brum Group meetings over the decades, particularly supporting fantasy and horror authors like Ramsey Campbell and Graham Joyce. Those who met him will remember not only his intellectual conversation and great sense of humour but also his tireless encouragement of other writers. He will be very much missed by friends and fans in Britain and around the world. *CM*

NOVA AWARDS CORRECTION

Apologies to Dave Hardy. As I did not attend the Nova Awards Ceremony I found the result via the Internet. As a consequence I was unaware that as well as the customary awards, there had also been a Special Award. This year it was awarded to Brum Group member, **Dave Hardy**. This award is not a regular award but is occasionally given to someone who is considered to have made significant contributions to SF and Fandom. As well as the Nova Award, Dave was also presented with a bottle of single-malt whiskey as thanks for producing the cover for the GoH "Special" (and badge) for the last 8 years.



STARGAZING LIVE 2014

BBC Stargazing LIVE is back in 2014. It aims to encourage everyone, from the complete beginner to the enthusiastic amateur, to make the most of the night sky. As well as TV programmes, this will bring together astronomical societies, museums and discovery centres, country parks and local authorities to present exciting events including planetarium shows, rocket making, star parties, “alien activities” and night-time star guides as well as topical talks and discussions all contributing to a national stargazing celebration. Local events include:

- **SPACE DAY, 11th January, Droitwich Spa.** The West Midlands branch of the British Interplanetary Society is hosting **SPACE DAY** on Saturday 11th January at Droitwich Library. There will be lots of organisations associated with space and science present. There will be representatives from the Spaceguard Centre, Midland Spaceflight Society, Bromsgrove and Worcester Astronomy Societies, Rocket Workshops, the British Interplanetary Society and most importantly our own **Birmingham Science Fiction Group**. There will also be talks and children’s activities. The event is free admission and the address is Droitwich Library, Victoria Square, Droitwich Spa, WR9 8DQ. The event runs from 9.30 to 16.30. Further details can be found at www.bis-space.com/2013/11/29/12195/space-day-2014.
- **STARGAZING LIVE, 11th January, Leicester** At the Leicester Space Centre from 10am – 9pm. Dedicated to Mars and the 10th anniversary of Beagle 2, it includes talks, workshops and stargazing. Tickets £13 including access to the Space Centre. Includes a free upgrade to an Annual Pass if purchased in advance. See www.spacecentre.co.uk/
- **ASTRONOMY IN THE CITY, 29th January, Birmingham** A night of astronomy observing opportunities on campus and at the Observatory. Tours of the observatory, talks, demonstrations and use of the research telescope. Free but booking essential. Details at www.sr.bham.ac.uk/observatory/astronomyinthecity.php. Book at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/astronomy-in-the-city-tickets-9552856355>

Details of other *BBC Stargazing LIVE* events are on the BBC website www.bbc.co.uk/thingstodo/project/stargazing-live

CG

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 goodwincd@yahoo.com

Hi Carol,

Thanks for the Brum Group News. In response to page 3's 'What did you think?' I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the job you've been doing. You followed through seamlessly from Rog's editorship – excellent job!

All best,

Dave

Dear Dave,

Thanks for taking the trouble to write regarding the Newsletter. Thanks for the kind comments.

Thanks

Carol

NEWS IN BRIEF

Colin Wilson, the writer has died aged 82. He became a celebrity in 1956 with the publication of **THE OUTSIDER**, which looked at the role of

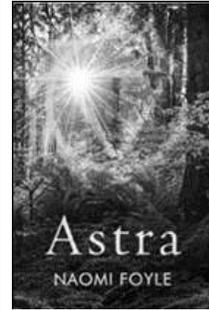
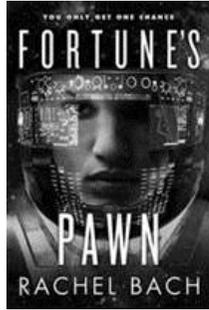
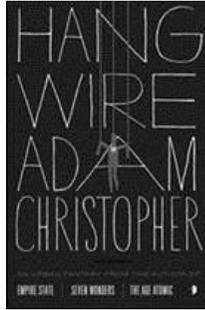
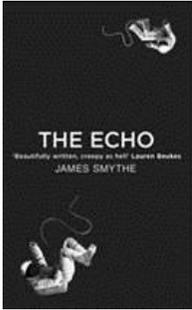


outsiders in the arts such as Van Gogh, Kafka etc. He was a prolific writer and was later known for his many non-fiction books on crime and the paranormal. His genre work included two novels set in the Cthulhu Mythos, **THE MIND PARASITES** (1967) and **THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE** (1969) and separately **THE SPACE VAMPIRES** (1976) written as an homage to the AE van Vogt story "Asylum" Actor **Peter O'Toole** died on December 14th. He was probably best known for his mainstream roles in the films

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, **BECKET** and **THE LION IN WINTER**, he also appeared in many genre films including **STARDUST**, **SUPERGIRL**, **HIGH SPIRITS** and episodes of *The Ray Bradbury Theater* Author **Hugh Nissenson** has died. As a reporter he covered Adolph Eichmann's 1961 trial. As well as writing numerous non-genre

works, he also wrote the science fiction novel **THE SONG OF THE EARTH** which was nominated for the 2001 James Tiptree, Jr. Award. His SF short story “Forcing the End” appeared in Jack Dann’s anthology **MORE WANDERING STARS** The Science Fiction Writers of America has announced that **Samuel R. Delany** will be the next Damon Knight Grandmaster. The award is announced in advance and will actually be awarded at the Nebula Award ceremonies in May. Delany has previously won four Nebula Awards (**BABEL-17**, **THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION** novels and the short stories “Aye and Gomorrah...” and “Time considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones”), two Hugo Awards and was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2002 and became a SF Grand Master in 2013 **Neil Gaiman’s** book, **THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE** has been named as the National Book Awards Book of the Year 2013 (now known as the Specsavers Book Awards) **Amazon Publishing** has launched a new short fiction imprint, **StoryFront** for short stories from all genres. Forty-three stories were included at the launch including genre stories by Christian Cantrell, Rebecca Adams Wright and J A Konrath. They can be found by typing “StoryFront” in the Search Box on the Amazon website (UK and US versions) The Kuwaiti and Qatari governments have reportedly **banned a SF/Fantasy novel, HAWJAN (aka HWJN) for blasphemy**. Written by Saudi authors, Ibraheem Abbas and Yasser Bahjatt, it tells the story of a romance between a human and a jinn. It had shot to the top of the best-seller list on release in Saudi Arabia but was withdrawn for examination by the Saudi Arabian Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in November **China’s Chang’e probe** and its moon rover, **Yutu (Jade Rabbit)** have successfully reached the Moon. The rover has landed in the Sinus Iridum (the Bay of Rainbows) in the North of the Moon. Part of its mission is to prospect for mineral resources which could potentially be mined in the future Scientists using the NASA Hubble Space Telescope appear to have discovered **water geysers on Europa** (Jupiter’s moon) erupting from the South Polar region and extending 125 miles into space. They provide further evidence to support speculation that there may be a subsurface ocean of liquid water. They also provide a possible way to sample the ocean’s contents without breaking the surface crust Comet **Ison**, hailed by some people as “the comet of the century”, unfortunately broke up on its close approach to the Sun The Guardian (13th December) had an interview with **Brian Aldiss** in which he admits that “These days I don’t read any science fiction. I only read Tolstoy (www.theguardian.com/books/2013/dec/13/brian-aldiss-science-fiction-author-review)

FORTHCOMING BOOKS



THE ECHO by James Smythe / Harper Voyager / 320 pgs / £16.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0007456796 / January 16th. SF. Sequel to **THE EXPLORER**. Twenty years after spaceship Ishiguro disappeared into the “Anomaly”, scientists mount a second expedition.

HANG WIRE by Adam Christopher / Angry Robot / 384 pgs / £9.25 paperback / ISBN 978-0857663177 / January 28th. Urban Fantasy. In San Francisco, Ted Hall’s sleepwalking incidents appear to coincide with murders by the Hang Wire Killer

FORTUNE’S PAWN by Rachel Bach / Orbit / 368 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356502359 / February 6th. Military SF. The spaceship *Glorious Fool* has a reputation for bad luck which imperils mercenary heroine.

ASTRA by Naomi Foyle / Jo Fletcher Books / 464 pgs / £14.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1780876344 / February 6th. SF. “Is-Land” children are taught “Non-Lander infiltrators” are a threat but young Astra uncovers hidden and devastating truths.

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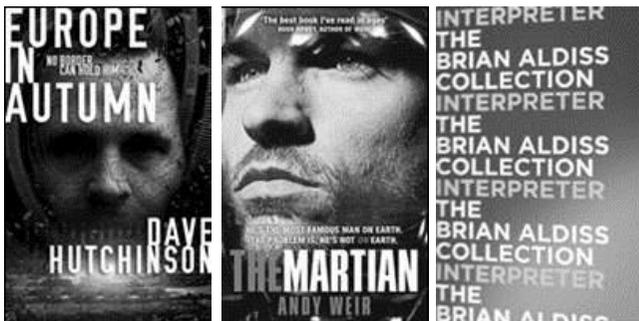
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10% discount for members

The Water
Knife -
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AVAILABLE



THE WATER KNIFE by Paolo Bacigalupi / Orbit / 364 pgs / £18.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0356501741 / February 13th. SF. In a drought-blighted future, the Las Vegas water knives defend the dwindling water supplies from rival city, Phoenix.

EUROPE IN AUTUMN BY Dave Hutchinson / Solaris / 384 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781081952 / February 13th. A spy thriller set in a future Europe. Rudi, people smuggler and spy begins to realise there is something deeper manipulating things.

THE MARTIAN by Andy Weir / Del Rey / 384 pgs / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0091956134 / February 13th. SF. Story of an astronaut stranded on Mars and his fight to survive.

THE INTERPRETER by Brian Aldiss / The Friday Project / 200 pgs / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0007482429 / February 13th. SF. The Universe is dominated by the alien Nuls but a charge of Nul corruption on insignificant Earth sets off a dramatic chain of events.

    **BOOK REVIEWS**    

(REVIEWERS please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at goodwincd@yahoo.com Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting).

ARCTIC RISING by Tobias S. Bucknell
DelRey / 335 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN: 978-00919535
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is a book that has good ideas and a well thought out future. With climate change and global warming, the Arctic icecap has melted with the exception of the area immediately around the pole. That is only kept frozen by artificial means and is largely a symbol of the past, a reminder of

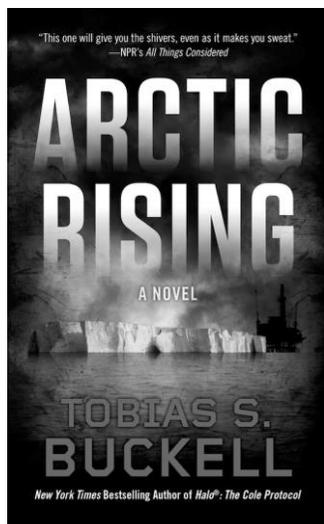
when the planet was in better shape. The fabled North West passage has long been opened up to shipping and is the most direct route between Europe and Asia as it runs along a great arc to the north of Canada.

Anika Duncan is a pilot. That is all that she has ever wanted to be. Her experience is varied but now she is working for the United Nations Polar Guard flying an airship. Airships use less fuel than conventional aircraft and are thus more economical in a world that restricts the uses to which petro-chemicals are put. She and her co-pilot, Tom Hutton, patrol the passage looking, in particular for rogues dumping industrial waste including radio-active materials. When one ship seems to be going a bit too fast and the instruments register radioactivity, they request it to stop for inspection. Instead of complying, the crew opens fire causing the airship to crash, killing Tom. Anika now finds herself part of an action-packed thriller where unknown parties are trying to kill her because she saw the ship and are afraid she will be able to identify the crew. With the aid of some new friends she has to take the fight for liberty and justice outside of the official channels.

There are many readers for whom this kind of fast paced adventure is exactly what they want to read after a difficult day at the workplace; however, the discerning will find it flawed. Most of the defects are character driven. Anika is supposed to be a person who is passionate about flying. It is what her life has revolved about to the point that the story starts. As the story progresses, she seems to lose interest in it, regarding aircraft as just another means of getting to where she wants to be.

There is also the problem of Anika herself. She is described as a black lesbian, yet there is no feeling for these character traits, or at times that the character is actually female. If an author is going to write about someone who will stand out in the society they are portrayed against, it would make sense to use those qualities to develop the plot and advance the situations they find themselves in. Here, opportunities are lost almost as if they are forgotten in the course of the plot. A shame as this could have made the book outstanding.

Despite the well-structured future and the pace of the action, I am not sufficiently interested to seek out the next volume in this saga (There has to be one as this ends on a cliff-hanger.)



NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

Listings should not be necessarily taken as recommendations. Release dates are subject to change. View at your own peril!

DEVIL'S DUE - Release date January 16th. Horror. A newly-wed couple notices disturbing changes in his pregnant wife.

HER - Release date January 24th. Story of a man who falls in love with his operating system (voiced by Scarlett Johansson).

I, FRANKENSTEIN - Release date January 24th. An intelligent "Creature" is caught up in an ancient war.

MR PEABODY & SHERMAN - Release date February 7th. Animation. A boy and his genius dog have to repair history after they break the rules of time travel.

ROBOCOP - Release date February 7th. Remake. Critically injured policeman is rebuilt as a cyborg Robocop.

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 is always welcome - please send to Carol at goodwincl@yahoo.com

STORIES IN WINTER, 29th January, Birmingham Spoken word event with a winter theme, to promote authors from the West Midlands area. Hosted by Pigeon Park Press in the basement of the 6/8 Kafe in Birmingham from 6:30 - 8:30pm. Free entry. Any storytellers, writers and poets wishing to read at the event should email info@pigeonparkpress.com as soon as possible.

CLASSIC GHOSTS, 12th - 15th February, Wolverhampton Actor Jack Shepherd stars in two classic ghost stories, "The Signalman" by Charles Dickens and "Oh, Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad" by M R James. At the Grand Theatre. Tickets £11.50 - £25.50 plus transaction fee. Box Office 01902 429212 or online at <http://grandtheatre.irstickets.co.uk/>

CONVENTIONS

E-M CON (EAST MIDLANDS CON), 16th March 2014, Nottingham. First year of one day mixed media convention. Guests to date include Virginia Hey (Farscape), Craig Charles (Red Dwarf) and Sam Stone (horror/fantasy writer). Tickets £8.50/£12 (early bird). Details at www.em-con.co.uk/

SCI-FI WEEKENDER (formerly SFX Weekender), 27th - 30th March, Hafan Y Mor, North Wales Commercial multi-media convention. Various prices depending on level of access/accommodation. See www.scifiweekender.com

SATELLITE 4 (EASTERCON), 18th - 21th April 2014, Glasgow Guests of Honour include John Meany, Juliet McKenna, Alice & Steve Lawson, Jim Burns, Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell and Sir Terry Pratchett (limited appearance subject to health). £65/50 concessions. Membership form at www.satellite4.org.uk

LONCON 3 (WORLDCON 72), 14th - 18th August 2014, London. Held at ExCel exhibition centre. Guests of Honour include Chris Foss, and Robin Hobb. £115 Adult membership. See www.loncon3.org

SHAMROKCON (EUROCON), 22nd - 24th August, Dublin. Guests include Hugo Award nominated Seanan McGuire, Andrzej Sapkowski (THE WITCHER also now a TV series and game) etc. Price is £35) at www.shamrokon.ie

ANDROMEDA TWO, 20th September, Digbeth, Birmingham. Guests of Honour are Sam Stone and Dave Hardy. Other guests include Stan and Anne Nicholls, Tom Fletcher, Jaine Fenn, etc. Early Friday registration will include movie double bill at the venue. Price from January 1st is £25 (£20 Brum Group). See <http://terror-tree.co.uk/andromeda-tw/>

NOVACON 44, 14th - 16th November, Nottingham. Guest of Honour: Kari Sperring and Science Guest: John Gribbin. Cost £45 (subject to review after Easter). Details at www.novacon.org.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

February 14th - Annual **SF Quiz**.
March 14th - **Stan and Anne Nicholls**.
April 11th - Writer **Gavin Thorpe**.
May 9th - Senior lecturer in robotics, **Dr Nick Hawes**.
June 13th- SF and fantasy author **Stephen Hunt**
July 11th - **tbc**.
August 8th - **Summer Social** meal.
September 12th - **tbc**
October - Date and guest **tbc**
November - Date and guest **tbc**
December 5th - **Christmas Skittles Social**

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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