

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

OCTOBER 2018

ISSUE 565

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DAVID LEACH

October 12th

Our October guest is a professional cartoonist, illustrator, author and editor of comic books. David Leach's career in cartoons and comics spans 30 years during which he has worked for many big names including *Marvel* (UK and US), BBC Worldwide and is currently an editor for Titan Books. His work has also appeared in *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily*



November 16th - Astrophysicist & NASA Kepler mission leader, **Professor Bill Chaplin**. NB Date is one week later than usual.

Telegraph and *Private Eye*.

More recently he is the editor of a new *Dan Dare* series (written by Peter Milligan) as well as the editor of the new *Fighting American* comic. He also wrote the original plot and edited the new *Prisoner* comic, as well as *Anno Dracula*, *Captain Kronos* and next year will be editing the all-new *Blade Runner* comic. He also writes his own comics *Psycho Gran* and *David Leach Conquers the Universe*. With all that experience and talent, he is sure to be a fascinating guest. 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 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 for members and £6 for non-members.

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

MANDY - Release date October 12th. Horror. A devastated man hunts a religious sect who slaughtered the love of his life.

HALLOWEEN - Release date October 19th. Horror. Final confrontation after four decades between the masked Michael Myers and original victim Laurie Strode (played by Jamie Lee Curtis).

GOOSEBUMPS 2: HAUNTED HALLOWEEN - Release date October 19th. Comedy Horror based upon R L Stine's best-selling children's books.

THE NUTCRACKER AND THE FOUR REALMS - Release date November 2nd. Fantasy. A young girl searches for a magical key in a parallel world.

OVERLORD - Release date November 7th. Horror. US soldiers in Europe after D-Day discover secret Nazi experiments.

FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE CRIMES OF GRINDELWALD -
Release date November 16th. Fantasy. Second Harry Potter prequel.
Zoologist magician, Newt Scamander and a young Albus
Dumbledore try to stop an evil magician, Grindelwald. CG

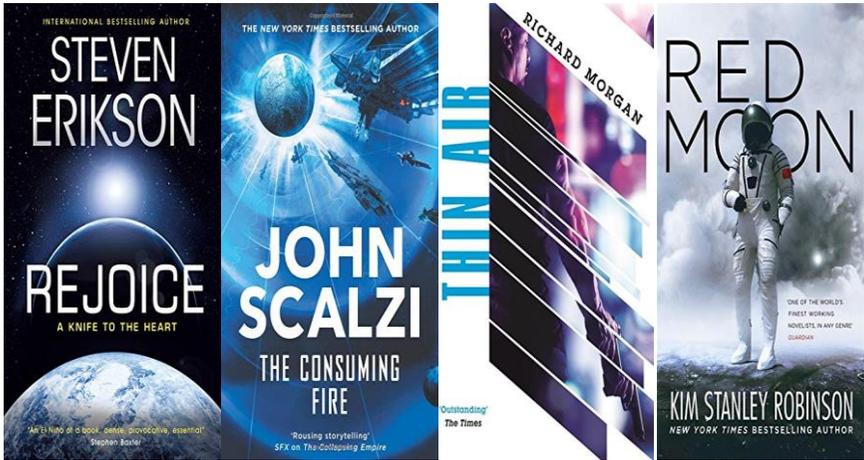
HALLOWEEN THEMED EVENTS AROUND BIRMINGHAM

As usual there are a number of Halloween-themed events around, so I have listed them separately here.

- **FESTIVAL OF TERROR, 25th October - 4th November at Mockingbird Cinema.** Includes SUMMER OF 84 (25th Oct, 2nd - 4th Nov), BEETLEJUICE (27th & 31st), PUMPKINS, DOG SOLDIERS and HELLRAISER (27th), HALLOWEEN 40 (31st & 1st Nov), THE SNARLING (1st Nov). Custard Factory, Digbeth. Book: 0121 224 7456 or www.mockingbirdcinema.com/
- **RETURN TO THE BREWERY OF MADNESS, 29th October at Gunmakers Arms.** Horror based book readings, poetry etc. at Gunmakers Arms, 93 Bath St, B4 6HG Free. Tel: 0121 238 5197 Details at www.facebook.com/events/229975920898648
- **THE WALPURGISNACHT HAUNTINGS, 29th & 30th October, Old Joint Stock Theatre.** Performance of three original ghost stories. £10 at www.oldjointstock.co.uk or 0121 200 0946.
- **HALLOWEEN SILENT MOVIE SPECIAL: DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE (1920), 31st October at Birmingham Town Hall.** Screening of the black & white classic with live organ accompaniment, 7:30pm. £15. Book at Town Hall/Symphony Hall Box Office (0121 780 4949) or www.thsh.co.uk
- **WINTER TALES, 2nd November at Blue Orange Theatre, Great Hampton Street, Jewellery Quarter.** Three supernatural tales. 7:45 pm. Tickets £12. Box Office 0121 212 2643 or at www.blueorangetheatre.co.uk

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

(NB Prices given are Recommended Retail Price and may be available at cheaper prices)

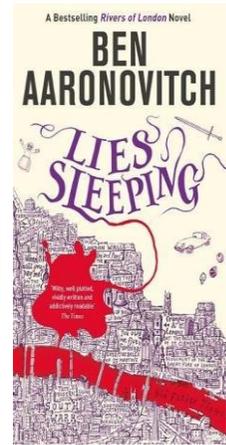
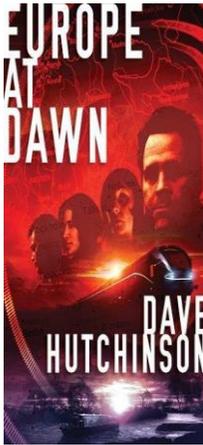


REJOICE by Steven Erikson / Gollancz / 432 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473223806 / October 18th. SF. An alien AI imposes draconian rules to protect Earth's ecosystem. Will humanity accept loss of free will in exchange for a non-violent world?

THE CONSUMING FIRE (Interdependency 2) by John Scalzi / Tor / 336 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1509835164 / October 18th. SF. As the Flow, the connection between stars is collapsing, a power struggle ensues within humanity's interstellar empire.

THIN AIR by Richard Morgan / Gollancz / 544 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-0575075146 / October 25th. SF. When a high-level auditor is kidnapped on Mars, his wounded bodyguard's investigations lead to some dark places.

RED MOON by Kim Stanley Robinson / Orbit / 464 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356508795 / October 25th. SF. An US engineer visiting China's Lunar Science Foundation witnesses a murder and is forced into hiding.



EUROPE AT DAWN (Fractured Europe 4) by Dave Hutchinson / Solaris / 320 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781086094 / November 1st. SF. Rudi and Rupert discover that the defunct Line across Europe may be being used for nefarious means.

SKYWARD by Brandon Sanderson / Gollancz / 528 pgs / £15.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473217850 / November 6th. SF. Spensa dreams of becoming a pilot, fighting the alien Krell besieging her home planet.

SOMEONE LIKE ME by M R Carey / Orbit / 512 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356509464 / November 8th. One side of Liz is a peaceful devoted mum, until her dark, ruthless alter-ego takes control.

LIES SLEEPING (Rivers of London 7) by Ben Aaronovitch / Gollancz / 416 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473207813 / November 15th. As the hunt for the unmasked Faceless Man intensifies, PC Peter Grant uncovers clues about his devastating long-term plan. CG

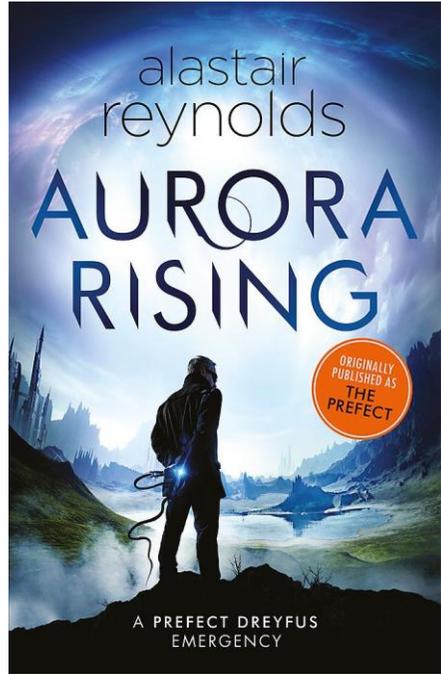
📖📖📖📖 **BOOK REVIEWS** 📖📖📖📖

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

AURORA RISING (Inspector Dreyfus 1) by Alastair Reynolds / Gollancz / 502 pgs / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473223363

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

It always seems a strange decision to change the title of a book even if it is being reissued after ten years from original publication. When it first appeared in 2007, this book was called **THE PREFECT**. It may not have sounded as exciting as the current one, **AURORA RISING**, but it does encapsulate the essence of the book. While a publisher might express all kinds of logical reasoning for the change, it does confuse readers, especially those enthusiastic about Reynolds work, as the new title will suggest a new novel. Granted, there is a label in the cover stating the original title but it still doesn't excuse it.



AURORA RISING is set in the same universe as the *Revelation Space* series. Those familiar with the series will know that in this distant future, there are three kinds of people - baseline humans who are relatively unchanged from current stock, Ultras who have elected to enhance their bodies and brains with hardware and Conjoiners who live in a mentally connected state with others of their kind. The planet where Chasm City is the centre of population is Yellowstone. Orbiting around it is the Glitter Band made up from ten thousand habitats. Each habitat is different. Some citizens have opted to live in a Permanent Vegetative State in their habitat. Others have chosen a tyranny, a democracy or a theocracy. If enough people want a particular life-style, they can have it. All however have the right to vote. Overseeing it all and policing the habitats of the Glitter Band is Panoply and its prefects.

Tom Dreyfus is a field prefect. We meet him first when his team is enforcing a lock-down in one of the habitats for polling fraud. They are being removed from the Band-wide communication network. The loop-hole the case has thrown up can be plugged and Thalia Ng volunteers to install the new software in four habitats. As she sets off,

another crisis arises when a habitat is destroyed by the engines of an Ultra ship. Then Thalia's upgrade triggers a take-over by Aurora, an alpha-level simulation. The whole of the Glitter band is now under threat, its citizens facing death. Dreyfus's investigations bring him close to Aurora but at a critical time he is arrested on suspicion of murder.

The threads of the plot lead back to a number of past incidents the consequences of which come together at this junction in time to exacerbate the crisis. To complicate matters, Dreyfus has to face the results of his own past actions, and there is a traitor within Panoply determined to thwart him.

Although the Ultras and Conjoiners only have a small part in this story, their presence is crucial to the unravelling of the complex situation. Reynolds expertly weaves together the elements of his plot. He brings out the characteristics of Dreyfus and his colleagues, showing their failings as well as their strengths. They make mistakes and some are misguided in their beliefs. There are even hints of sympathy for those who have chosen the wrong side.

For those unfamiliar with Reynold's work, this is a good place to start.

PM

(Review copy kindly donated by Orion Gollancz)

***FOUNDRYSIDE (The Founders 1)* by Robert Jackson Bennett**
Jo Fletcher Books / 512 pgs / £14.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1786487865

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin.

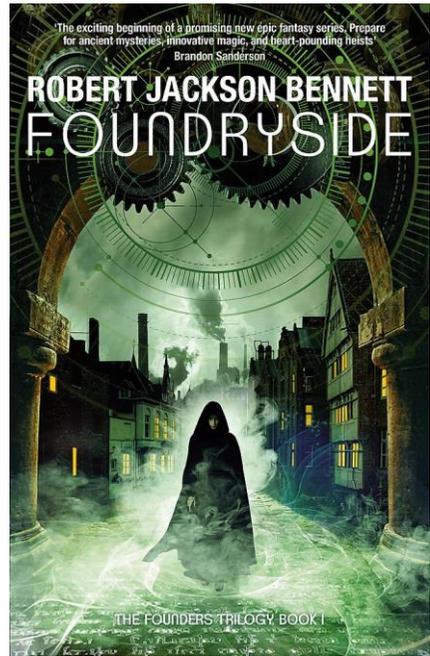
As anyone who has read my previous reviews can probably easily work out, I do like things that are different and don't fit neatly into standard tropes. **FOUNDRYSIDE** by Robert Jackson Bennett ticks those boxes for me and then some. It's a crackingly good fantasy and one of those rare books that I didn't want to put down until I had finished it. Set in the city of Tevanne, the plot starts with a burglary. Sancia is a thief with a unique ability to sense the nature of inanimate objects, which allows her to discern the best way to climb a wall or to open locks. When she steals a mysterious small box from a guarded warehouse she starts a chain of events which threaten to destroy not only the great merchant houses of the city but ultimately the world itself. Whilst that might sound like the start of many a standard fantasy, this is a unique book with a lot of depth and thought.

The city of Tevanne is one undergoing a magical “industrial revolution” after the discovery of magical “sigils” which when combined and inscribed onto objects can change their “reality”. Using these symbols and in particular a symbol for “meaning” or “equal to”, all kinds of objects can be crafted to have different properties, leading to great improvements in wealth and comfort. However, this is controlled by four great merchant houses and those not in their direct employ are left in poverty and squalor with no-one to protect or represent them.

The magical system in this book is one of the things I really enjoyed. Unlike many fantasies, the ability to use and manipulate the sigils is not based upon any innate ability but from study and creative combining of different symbols. I found myself constantly comparing it to a magical version of computer programming. There is no “chosen one” whose special genetics make them the best wizard/Jedi etc in this book.

The worldbuilding that follows from that set-up is inventive and imaginative. The disruptive effect of this new “technology” on various sections of society and the emergence of winners and losers is very credible and mirrors many of the problems of the real world’s industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism. The book does have serious themes which include slavery, empire building, and the morality of programming humans in the same way as objects, which I think add to its depth and enjoyment. That being said this is also a fast-paced and fun book with some very amusing dialogue.

The consequences of Sancia’s theft and the object she has stolen mean that she is chased by various deadly enemies and factions and she must use her wits and abilities to outwit her pursuers, all of which make for enjoyable reading. With her sometimes reluctant allies, Gregor (a high-ranking ex-soldier), Orso (chief sigil programme



designer to one of the houses) and Berenice (Orso's assistant and a practical engineer) they must break into a heavily guarded merchant compound to retrieve a missing magical artefact and to stop a ritual that threatens to destroy the world. To the reader this is a greatly entertaining and ingenious heist - a fantasy *Ocean's II* - especially some of Sancia's "re-programming" of the various security measures. The characters in the book are complex and have interesting back stories, the gradual uncovering of which feeds well into the development of the plot, particularly with Sancia and Gregor who have more in common than their very different backgrounds would initially indicate.

I could go on in more detail but essentially if you like your fantasy with great worldbuilding, characters and depth then go and read this book. I can't wait for the next in the series.

CG

(Review copy kindly donated by Jo Fletcher Books)

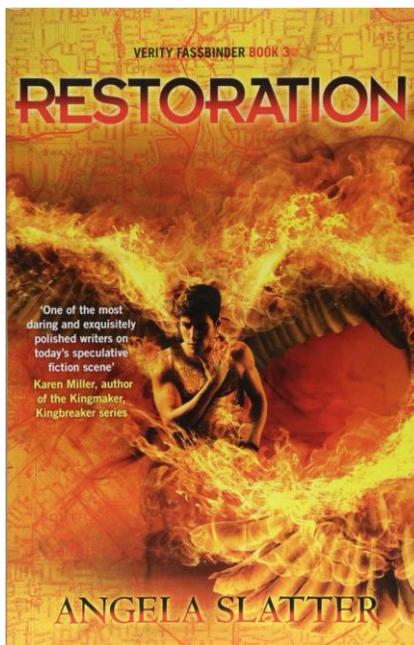
RESTORATION (Verity Fassbinder 3) by Angela Slatter

Jo Fletcher Books / 400 pgs / £16.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1784294380

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

Urban fantasy, with its juxtaposition of the contemporary world and the magical, has become an increasingly popular category of fantasy in recent years. Many of the books written are centred around US or UK (particularly London) locations. Angela Slatter's *Verity Fassbinder* series is different and refreshing in that it is based around a version of Brisbane (Australia) which the heroine jokingly refers to as Brisneyland. The main protagonist is Verity, who with half "normal" and half "Weyrd" parentage, does not quite fit with either the magical (Weyrd) or non-magical community. The only power she has is abnormal strength which is not much defence against her many powerful enemies. In this book, in order to protect her family, including her new-born child, she has had to give up her work as an investigator/problem solver/police liaison for the Weyrd council. Instead she has been forced to work for a mentally unstable fallen angel to help him find a lost treasure - a mysterious grail to help him heal. As if that wasn't hard enough she has to avoid a vengeful and powerful Weyrd member, Dusana Nadasy, try to outwit both the angel and the murderous spy fox-spirit assassin, Joyce that the angel has insisted accompany her, and solve the mystery of Normal women who disappeared decades ago now turning up as dead bodies apparently affected by Weyrd magics.

While in lesser hands all these complicated plot strands could become confusing and not tie together, with this author it all works well and comes to a satisfying and credible conclusion. Verity, as in previous books is a believable and very entertaining character. She is sarcastic, funny and despite her strength succeeds mainly due to her brains and her refusal to be cowed by people with vastly more power and potential to cause harm. On the emotional side, the reader is also moved by the real distress and pain she feels from her enforced separation from her family. As before, the various strange, diverse (and pleasingly non-standard “creatures”) of the



Weyrd community with their politics and prejudices work well and add more substance and motivation to the narrative. The story rattles along at quite a pace and packs in a lot and is thoroughly enjoyable. Any fans of Jim Butcher's *Dresden Files* will find much to like here. *CG*
(Review copy kindly donated by Jo Fletcher Books)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organizers before travelling. Any information about forthcoming SF/Fantasy/Horror events is always welcome - please send to Carol at goodwincd@yahoo.com

DRACULA play, 11th - 20th October. Blue Orange Theatre, Great Hampton Street, Jewellery Quarter. 7:345 pm. Tickets £12. Box Office 0121 212 2643 or at www.blueorangetheatre.co.uk

THE MUSIC OF HARRY POTTER, 12th October. Live orchestra and choir perform music from the *Harry Potter* films. Symphony Hall. £13 - £52. Book at Box Office (0121 780 4949) or www.thsh.co.uk

WALLY FUNK'S RACE FOR SPACE, 15th October, Leicester. Listen to Wally Funk, one of the 13 members of the 1961 Women in Space Programme. National Space Centre. £15 at <https://spacecentre.co.uk> or 0116 261 0261

SYMPHONIC FANTASY, 19th October. Music from GAME OF THRONES, LORD OF THE RINGS etc. Symphony Hall. £19.50 - £45. Book at Box Office (0121 780 4949) or www.thsh.co.uk

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, 24th - 27th October, Old Joint Stock Theatre. Trapped underground, a man listens on his two-way radio as the world falls apart. £12 at www.oldjointstock.co.uk or 0121 200 0946.

VICTORIA PRICE Q&A + THEATRE OF BLOOD SCREENING, 10th November. Vincent Price's daughter talking about her father. £10.69. 6:30pm. Custard Factory, Digbeth. At www.mockingbirdcinema.com/ Tel: 0121 224 7456

CONVENTIONS and EXHIBITIONS

BRISTOLCON, 27th October, Bristol. Guests of Honour Joanne Hall & Dave Hutchinson. Doubletree Hotel. £25. Details at www.bristolcon.org

FANTASYCON, 19th - 21st October, Chester. The Queen Hotel. GoH Adrian Tchaikovsky & Claire North. Tickets £61.50 + £36 Awards Banquet www.hwsevents.co.uk/shop-2

SLEDGE-LIT 4, 5th November, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guest of Honour Dave Hutchinson and Mark Morris. Tickets £25 at <https://www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/sledge-lit-4.aspx>

NOVACON 48, 9th - 11th November, Nottingham. Guest of Honour is Chris Beckett. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £52. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

SFX BOOK CON 2, 10th November, London. SFX magazine and Foyles Book shop one-day convention. Authors include Mike Carey, Tade Thompson, James Smythe, John Gwynne etc. Tickets £18. Foyles, 107 Charing Cross Road, £18 at www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sfx-book-con-2-tickets-48949450123?aff=efbeventtix

TOLKIEN 2019, 7th - 11th August 2019, Birmingham. 50th Year Anniversary of Tolkien Society, MacDonald Burlington Hotel (New Street). £95 www.tolkiensociety.org

WORLDCON 2019, 15th - 19th August 2019, Dublin. Guests of Honour Ian McDonald, Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Steve Jackson, Diane Duane, Ginjer Buchanan and Bill & Mary Burns. Convention Centre. 210 Euros. <https://dublin2019.com/>

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

November 16th - Astrophysicist & NASA Kepler mission leader, **Professor Bill Chaplin**

December 7th - Christmas social

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<p>Durdles Books is run by Ian & Lou Morley, BSFG members We want to buy books hardbacks and pre 1980 paperbacks, individual items or whole collections. Send us details of your surplus items or speak to us at the next meeting BSFG Members offer: use code BSFG18 to receive 10% discount on orders Visit www.durdlesbooks.com email info@durdlesbooks.com or call 0121 777 0209</p>	 <p>Durdles Books <small>www.durdlesbooks.com</small> Science Fiction Fantasy Modern Firsts Comics</p>
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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. Details of how to join/pay can be obtained at a meeting or by email to bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk