

Birmingham Science Fiction Group

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the third Friday of every month, at 8 p.m. in the Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, Birmingham (just off New Street). Non-members welcome. Membership is £1.50 per year (£1 extra for an additional member sharing newsletters). Money should be sent to the Treasurer, Dave Holmes, c/o Andromeda, 57, Summer Row, Birmingham.

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NEWSLETTER 93

MAY 1979

For those members who've been on Mars for the past two months, the Group held its 100th meeting on April 20. And what better way to celebrate the occasion than to play host to one of our presidents, Brian Aldiss, who gave one of the funniest talks we've had the pleasure to hear in years. For those who missed Brian's hilarious description of sf "fandom" in the USSR - and a slice of our birthday cake - my sympathies.

Guest at our May 18 meeting is Brian Ball, a well known British author whose books include THE SPACE GUARDIANS, TIMEPIECE and TIMEPIVOT. Brian's view of the current state of sf should be of interest to all, so don't be late if you want to make sure of a seat..



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

- June 15: Robert Lionel Fanthorpe, president of the Norwich SF Group and prolific British author, will at last visit the BSFG. Robert, who has written more than 160 novels of debatable quality under a variety of pseudonyms (Karl Zeigfreid and Bron Fane among them), was unable to attend the meeting scheduled for last October.
- June 28: Our outside visit for 1979 ; not a barge trip this year, but a "Beer & Skittles" evening at the White Swan Bowling Alley, Harborne Road, Harborne. We're beginning earlier than usual, at 7 p.m., but come along later if you can't make it that early. Tickets are £2.00 each, on sale at our May meeting, or send s.a.e. and P.O./cheque to Dave Holmes.



Frank Herbert has sold the film rights to DUNE to Italian producer Dino DeLaurentis, whose BUCK ROGERS tv series will make its debut later this year. Herbert will receive \$1m, plus a percentage of the adjusted gross after three times negative cost, as well as an additional fee for the script he'll write. Herbert's DUNE 4 will be completed after this screenplay...

Most of you will know by now that BSGF co-prez Brian Aldiss is currently acting as an advisor to the legal firm Columbia has hired for the STAR WARS vs. BATTLESTAR: GALACTICA lawsuit. More on that case, and Brian's involvement, as we hear.. Meanwhile, Sphere have bought the book rights to the STAR WARS sequel, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, for a neat \$420,000, which - I'm told - is a lot more than they expected to pay.. So who pushed the price up? The film itself is deep into production over at Elstree; Sir Alec Guinness is in the script, but no one is sure whether or not he'll actually appear in the film...

The BSGF's other co-president, Harry Harrison, is also hard at work in America at the moment, sewing up his long-promised movie collaboration with producer Lester Goldsmith of Limelight Films.. Novels due to be

adapted if the deal goes through include: THE BICENTENNIAL MAN (Asimov), THE FOREVER WAR (Haldeman) and Harry's own THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT. It could be the best thing to happen to the sf cinema in decades...

In the works: John Varley's sequel to TITAN, under the provisional title of TITAN 2.. Bob Silverberg's LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE (the first draft was 603 pages long: he's now working on a second); the paperback rights have been bought by Pan for a five-figure sum.. Andy Stephenson (a surprise visitor to the Group last month) has a new novel on the way: it's set in the year 2092... Harlan Ellison and Isaac Asimov are adding the last touches to their I, ROBOT script; the movie adapts six Asimov stories...

Small screen news: new television shows include QUATERMASS, starring Barbara (1990) Kellerman, and DAN DARE, based on the ever-popular comic strip (DD is currently re-incarnated in IPC's 2000AD)...

The eighth Vancouver science fiction convention, V-Con 7, will be held at the Gage Convention, UBC, Vancouver. Jack Vance is GoH, Frank Herbert toastmaster. The dates are May 25 - 27, and membership is \$8. Details from: V-Con 7, P.O. Box 48701, Bentall Station, Vancouver, BC V7X 1A6...

New English Library have decided not to publish the fifth volume of Mike Ashley's HISTORY OF THE SF MAGAZINES after holding onto his copy for over a year; no info on what Contemporary intend to do, but the book may appear - translated - in Italy, like the first two volumes...

Magazine news: Omar Gohagen is the new editor of FANTASTIC.. GALILEO are planning newstand distribution through Dell.. ARIEL have a new publisher contract and are rumoured to be looking for a new distributor in the US.. ANALOG editor Stanley Schmidt says he has now caught up with his submissions backlog.. DESTINIES has gone back to a quarterly schedule; editor Jim Baen says it's due to a lack of sf worth publishing bimonthly...

JUNE BOOKS:

Dell: SLAVES OF SLEEP (Hubbard); HEGIRA (Bear).
Signet: SOVEREIGN (Meluch); THE MAN WHO SOLD THE MOON (Heinlein).
Doubleday: A WIZARD IN BEDLAM (Stasheff); STAR-ANCHORED, STAR ANGERED (Elgin).

Del Rey: THE DRAWING OF THE GODS (Powers); THE TAI-AIYM KRANG (Dean Foster); THE BEST OF HAL CLEMENT (intro. Lester Del Rey); THE JUPITER THEFT (Moffitt); THE SILVER STALLION (Cabell)...

Art this issue:

Martin Longley ("Suck Mah Brainz Out"); Jim Barker ("Half Life" - script by Chris Evans). Thanks to all who found time to contribute.

LETTERS:

A. J. Unsworth,
Montalt Road,
Coventry.

I've just been to see DAMNATION ALLEY despite being warned by bad reviews (the one in F&SF being a real corker). I went because (a) it's my favourite Zelazny, (b) I always see George Feppard movies and (c) I always feel a bit guilty if I don't make an effort on sf films, being a lifetime buff. What a whitewash job! Gone was Hell Tanner, the world's last Hell's Angel, replaced by a good-natured slightly dropped-out USAF career type. Oh, yes, he did ride a motorcycle. My point is, the Hollywood mentality can't stop itself from re-moulding a perfectly good novel into its own form of a tried-and-true product despite the fact that the sf reader (and any other reader for that matter) plays his own "movie-in-the-head" every time he reads a story. Every author is different - unique - but in the movie business it always comes out the same. /("Sameness of product" is a constant fault with the Hollywood Machine: the same goes for television series, only more so, because tv is a larger medium. One answer would be to totally ignore this kind of cinematic trash, but knowing how Hollywood "minds" work, they'd take it as an indication of waning interest in sf, and cancel all projects.)/

Interested in joining a special party going to the Boston Worldcon in 1980? Send an s.a.e. for full details to: C. Smith, 60, Henley Street, Sparkbrook.

BOOK REVIEWS:

THE INFINITY BOX

Kate Wilhelm

Arrow; 95p.

Those who enjoyed Kate's Hugo-winning novel WHERE LATE THE SWEET BIRDS SANG are in for a disappointment if they expect this collection of "speculative fiction" to equal the quality of that earlier volume. A big disappointment. The majority of the stories selected (all written in the years 1970 - 1973) are virtually text-book examples of how not to write short fiction, tediously crafted prose with no true evidence of plotting or purpose. In other words, deeply written, atmospheric, insomnia cures. Like Harlan Ellison (who edited one of the better stories in this collection, "The Funeral", for one of his DANGEROUS VISIONS anthologies), Kate drenches much of her writing in emotion and subtle links with reality, but she simply hasn't got Harlan's style or skill. The few stories of reasonable merit - the title piece (an intriguing and fairly well-constructed tale of telepathic possession), "The Funeral" and "The Red Canary" - are well worth reading, but they hardly make up for the rest of this glossily-packaged rubbish.

THE ROAD TO CORLAY

Richard Cowper

Pan; 80p.

An intriguing expansion of themes present in Richard's BFS Award-winning novella "The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn", and an excellent example of how atmospheric fantasy should be written. The action takes place in the partly submerged Britain of AD 3018, nearly two decades after the death of Thomas, the messianic central character of the earlier story. The spirit of "Kinship" preached by Thomas, and his belief in the mythical "White Bird", has grown to a point where it threatens the hold of the dictatorial Church.

Cowper's writing skill is strongly in evidence, giving the novel a truly 'medieval' feel and a real sense of the protagonist's unchangeable destiny. His only error is to link the plot to contemporary science through a rather ridiculous "telepathic time travel" sub-plot, which is out of key with the rest of this otherwise impressive book.

LAST NIGHT, I HAD DINNER
WITH MILTON MONROE, THE
GRAND OLD MAN OF
SCIENCE FICTION.



HE'S OFTEN
DESCRIBED AS THE
SHAKESPEARE OF
SCIENCE FICTION.



DURING HIS CAREER HE'S
BEEN SHOWERED WITH
HONOURS...



I, TOO HAVE BEEN COMPARED
WITH A FAMOUS HISTORICAL
FIGURE.



NEBULAS, HUGOS, THE
QUEENS AWARD TO INDUSTRY...



I WAS ONCE CALLED THE
GENGHIS KHAN OF LITERATURE!!



HALFLIFE

The life & times
of Elmer T. Hack

MY LAST NOVEL WAS
NOMINATED FOR A
NEBULA



A STUDY OF THE
ANIMAL AS GOD - FIGURE



MY LATEST NOVEL IS A
SELECTION OF THE S.F.
BOOK CLUB



COUPLED WITH A MAJOR
RE-INTERPRETATION OF
THE ATLANTIAN MYTH



WHAT ARE YOU WORKING
ON THESE DAYS?

"KING KONG VERSUS
THE MERMEN"



CHRIS EVANS & JIM BARKER.