



Flame Nebula (NGC 2024)  
Canary Islands 1 High Mag  
Sep 15th, 2011 04:28:36 UTC  
Taken by Keith Smith



Flame Nebula  
(Photo by Keith Smith.)

**Issue XXVI - Apr 2012**

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## Musings from Under the Mountain

She's hiding under my skirt, having just figured out that she can climb up the inside to get onto the couch, and she's purring loudly. She is, of course, a kitten, provisionally named Katerina, and generally known as Kit-Kat. And she is so cute...

We have acquired a kitten because when we took our mamma cat, Kitty, to the vet a month ago, we learned that she had a terminal tumour, and the only thing we could do was to give her a painless ending. The vet's receptionist brought in a tiny kitten to show us, too young to be homed at that stage, but the image of a miniature Kitty. She's not exactly alike, but she is a female tabby, just with not quite so much white, and she's a feisty wee thing. And so the cycle of life turns another circle. Now, I'm going to have to get her out from her warm posie so I can go to the club meeting. Sometimes, you just can't let sleeping cats lie. Next Day. I'm still Editor, and Kit-Kat is busy grooming herself, inside the cat tunnel we borrowed from a friend whose kitten had grown out of it. It's a funny thing about science fiction fans and cats. You look around our club members, and those that have pets, they almost always have cats. I have met dog-lovers who are science fiction



fans—I'll never forget the ever-changing (and exceedingly patient) costumed dog in the children's room at LA Con IV, but they do seem to be a minority. SF writers are often cat people as their biographies attest, and intelligent cats and cat-like aliens are a staple of

science fiction, especially in the works of female writers like Anne McCaffrey, Andre Norton and Mercedes Lackey.

Now, there are a number of other factors that ensure the presence of the cat in science fiction. One is the traditional ship's cat. It's not much of a leap to place the cat aboard a spaceship in its traditional role as eradicator of vermin, terrestrial and otherwise; although the reality is that we don't actually know how cats would react to the conditions of space travel (no-one has put a cat into space since the French launched the astrocat Félicette in 1963, and that was a 15-minute flight that never reached orbit). Another is the thought experiment known as Schrödinger's cat, which together with the feline ability to sneak quietly and appear suddenly, gave us the "Cat who Walks through Walls". But, mainly it's just that we love cats and find it easier to imagine a future with felines in it!

Jacqui

## The View from the Comfy Chair

This may... or may not be... my last Presidential column. As I write this, the AGM is tonight and with it, the possibility that the club's reins will be handed over to someone else. If that happens, I wish them luck and hope that they manage to come up with innovative ideas that can revitalise Stella Nova. So, I guess this column is a time for reflection of what has occurred over the past year. I have to admit, when I got nominated it was a case of 'you have got to be kidding' and 'why me' sprang to mind along with an 'oh my ghod, what am I letting myself in for', along with the nagging suspicion that I may be presiding over the end of Stella Nova. Well, it hasn't quite come to that although with the lack of attendances at meetings has led to discussion on turning Stella Nova into an e-club or meeting at other people's places. The trouble with an e-club is that you can't just assume everyone has access to social media such as Facebook, or even assume that they have an email address or even access to the Internet itself. We need to remember that there are people who don't, for whatever reason, and cater to them as well. As humans, we need that face to face contact in order to effectively communicate. Mind you, the sheer area that the urban sprawl of Auckland occupies can make it difficult to get together on a regular basis. It's over an hour to get across from South to North for instance and our members are well spread out.

Some things worked, others – not so much. Getting guest speakers in appears to be a good move and one that I would want to see repeated. Combining SPACE with other activities didn't work out as well as we had hoped. What we do need to do is to make meetings more interesting to attend and it may be only then that we can get the membership back up as well as attracting back ex-members.

My thanks go to the hard working current crew who have done a lot for the club, especially the Treasurer and the Novazine Editor, but it's you ... the club members who make Stella Nova what it is. And if you have any suggestions, comments, or any ideas that will help Stella Nova work for you then we definitely want to hear them. Even constructive criticism is welcome. And best of luck to the incoming crew.

Keith, President Stella Nova

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# The Sky at Night – May 2012

This month, it's a slight diversion away from the stars as I want to tell you where some of the pictures I have been using to illustrate these articles come from. So here is a review on the online facilities I have been using.

I've been interested in astrophotography for quite some time and, when it was decided to form an astrophotography group as part of the astronomical society, I jumped at the chance to actually use a CCD camera on a largish telescope. We did have a few sessions and were planning on getting in some serious work when the "summer that wasn't" happened and it was basically one cloudy night after another for weeks which basically put a damper on everyone's enthusiasm. I've also been investigating using the Zeiss at Stardome as well. That's just a matter of getting the right attachments for my camera as well as learning to operate it. Just completed the first, need to do the second.

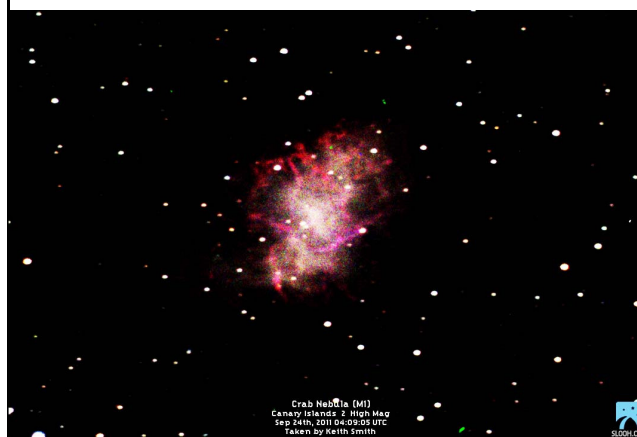
However, last August, I discovered, through an article in an astronomy magazine, a site called Slooh.com. So I signed up. It does cost money but I have access to robotic telescopes in the Canary Islands and Chile. Unfortunately, the Chile setup is currently experiencing severe technical difficulties and has been offline for sometime. There also used to be a site in Australia but that was shut down as the location proved to be less than perfect weather wise.

Slooh was founded in 2002 and became operational in December 2003, but wasn't released for public use until 2004. It is not the first set of robotic telescopes, but is the first that allows live views. The others email the finished image to the user. Slooh divides the night into ten or five minute timeslots (depending on the telescope) called 'missions' and each mission imaged the selected object in that timeslot in such a way that the user can see the image building up. They can elect to 'snap a picture' at any time through the process which leaves a copy of that image on the server in the user's workspace. They can then download it to their own computer and/or share it on social network sites. All Slooh asks, is that, any images taken have the Slooh logo on to acknowledge Slooh. Apart from that, image copyright belongs to the user. Of course, there's nothing to stop anyone from also viewing the same image and taking their own pictures of the same mission.

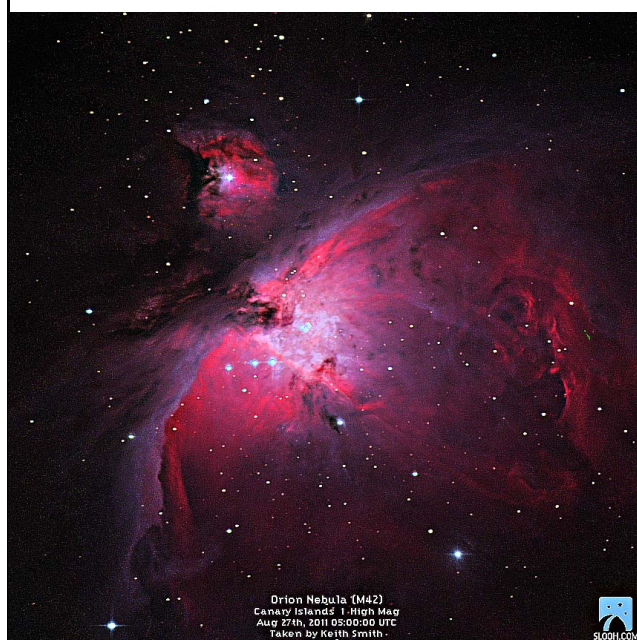
The service has gone through several revisions and changes. When I signed up, the system alternated between missions that were selected by Slooh, and mission slots that could be reserved by members for their own missions. Members were restricted to reserving five missions in any given week, presumably so everyone got a chance. Now, all missions except for the first and last few in a night are available for members to reserve and we can set up five reservations at a time but, once that reservation is done, that slot is immediately available for reuse.



Leo Triplet



Crab Nebula (M1)  
Canary Islands 2 - High Mag  
Sep 24th, 2011 04:09:05 UTC  
Taken by Keith Smith



Orion Nebula (M42)  
Canary Islands 1 - High Mag  
Aug 27th, 2011 05:00:00 UTC  
Taken by Keith Smith

by  
Keith  
Smith

# SKY AT NIGHT

by  
Keith  
Smith

Mission timeslots can be reserved by selecting any available time slot, then entering the object in one of three ways. The first and easiest, is to select from a pull down list of objects that are optimally placed for viewing at that time. The second is to enter the catalogue number of the object, and the last is to enter the Right Ascension and Declination co-ordinates for the area of sky that the user wants to image. All mission options except the first also have an option for 'Auto Snap' (recently added) which means that, once the mission is running, photos will be automatically sent to your workspace which means you don't have to be at the computer at that time to take the picture.

Members do all sorts of things with Slooh. Tracking comets, watching Jupiter's moons spin around, image various objects. I use it for collecting images of objects as well as taking images to make mosaic panoramas, some of which are reproduced below.

Of course, viewing with Slooh is weather dependant. Sometimes the domes cannot open owing to rain, high winds, dust storms and even snow. Occasionally technical issues can also affect missions. It happens sometimes and that has to be accepted. After all, it may be better the following night.

Personally I believe Slooh is good value for money. A year's subscription costs \$60US for three months, \$150 for one year, and \$250 for two years. I intend to take up a two year subscription when it's due.

However, Slooh isn't the only system out there. I'm currently looking at another one called iTelescope.net (previously known as GRAS). Maybe I'll talk about that in another article.

Next month, I'll mention the upcoming Transit of Venus and hopefully there will be pictures from the Dark Sky evening that the Astronomical Society is organising on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April.

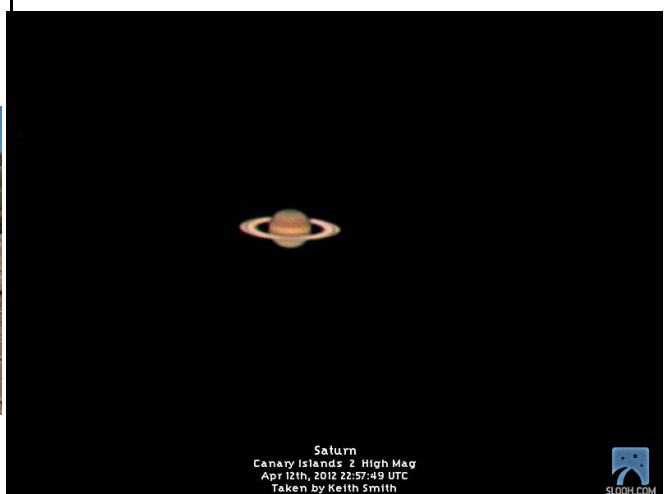
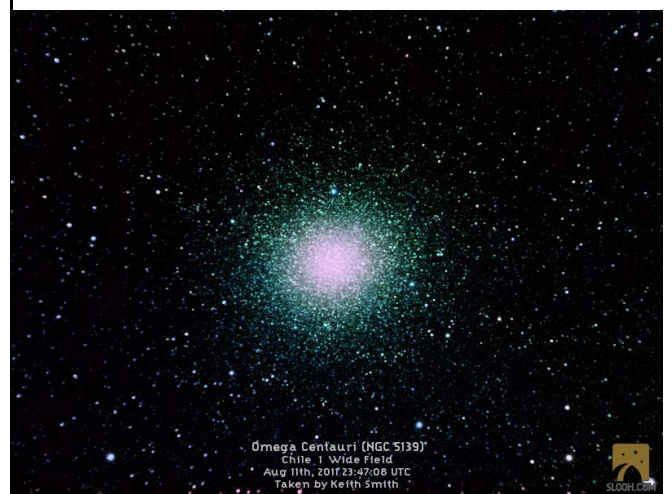
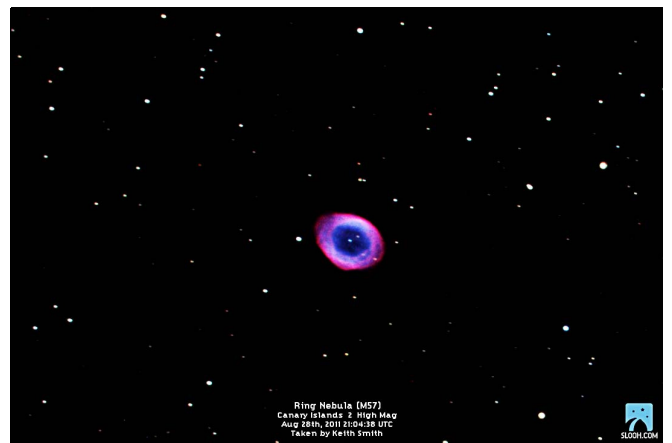
Events:

Mars and Saturn still dominate the evening sky.

Full Moon:	6 <sup>th</sup> May
Last Quarter Moon:	13 <sup>th</sup> May
New Moon:	21 <sup>st</sup> May
First Quarter:	29 <sup>th</sup> May



One of the Slooh telescopes

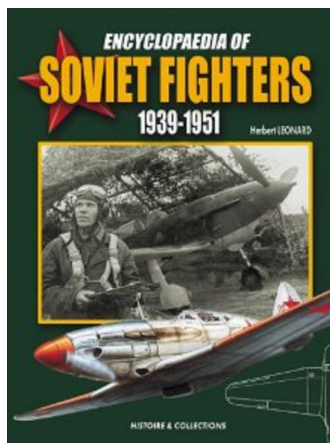


# Uncorked

by Broderick Wells

For a while now, I've been buying books on-line. I used to be a member of Doubleday's *Fantasy and Science Fiction Book Club*, but after a while they stopped offering anything I wanted to read. I progressed to Doubleday's *History Book Club*. That was good up until the point they sent me a book I hadn't asked for. This I sent back, which they didn't acknowledge. Instead, they sent me a new billing. So I complained and they sent me a form to say I'd returned the book. Which I duly filled out, put in the free post envelope and then into the posting box. They sent me another billing. I need to point out that this was progressing over several months, and each month they added a late payment fee. Again I complained. So they sent me another form, and a threat of action by a debt collector. However, I'd kept notes as to when each form had been asked for, received and posted. Finally they got my form detailing my return, and the details of the other paperwork, and a written complaint. The threat of action via a debt collector was dropped. So was my membership.

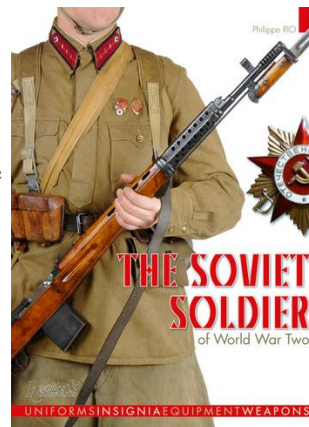
So I cruise Amazon and Book Depository, and a few other book sellers, feeding my bibliographic addiction. A while ago I spotted this (the book pictured to the right). It was on a French publisher's site and was one of many books in English. A quick comparison with Amazon's pricing indicated that, even with free postage from the big river, France was cheaper. So an order was placed. What I received was the magazine pictured to the left. All well and good, it had a certain *je ne sais quoi*, but *mon français n'est pas très pour il*.



After waiting a fortnight or two more, the above had not arrived. Once more into the breach – I sent an inquiry to the publisher asking where my book, which I'd paid for, was. They produced an order for that magazine to the left. Which I'd not ordered at all. Certainly the sums involved did not support the idea that the magazine was that which I had ordered. Some of this conversation was conducted in French, or possibly Franglais, and some in

English. After a fortnight of correspondence, the good people in France relented and said, "We will send you a new book." Naturally, I was thrilled. What arrived was the book pictured right. I thought about complaining, but

comparing the price of the two volumes, I'm well ahead. It is now also sold out. I think they sent me the last copy. I'm just wondering what I'll end up with if I shop there again.



## Obituaries

March 20

**Noboru Ishiguro**, (aged 73), Japanese animator who was noteworthy for directing the several anime series including *Space Battleship Yamato*, *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross*, *The Super Dimension Century Orguss*, *Yōkai Ningen Bem*, *Megazone 23*, *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*, *Noozles*, and the 2008 completed series *Tytania*.

March 24

**Sir Paul Callaghan**, (aged 64), New Zealand physicist, known for developing NMR methodologies for the study of molecular dynamics and molecular organization in complex fluids, soft matter and porous materials, but more importantly as a spokesman for science in New Zealand.

March 27

**Warren Stevens**, (aged 92), American actor best known as the ill-fated "Doc" Ostrow in *Forbidden Planet*, and as Rojan in the 1968 TOS episode *By Any Other Name* among many other roles.



April 5

**David Axon**, (aged 61), British astrophysicist, noted for the discovery of the first, X-ray selected BL Lac object, discovery of the first "superwind" galaxy, and discovery of strong magnetic fields in the jets of young stellar objects

April 13

**Jonathan Frid**, (aged 87), Canadian actor played the role of vampire Barnabas Collins on the gothic television soap opera *Dark Shadows*.



April 15

**Paul Bogart**, (aged 92), American Emmy Award-winning television director best known for his work on *All in the Family* and *Get Smart*.

Compiled by Jacqui Smith

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Directed by Peter Lord, Jeff Newitt (Co-Director)  
 Produced by Julie Lockhart, Peter Lord, Carla Shelley  
 Written by Gideon Defoe  
 Based on "The Pirates! in an Adventure with Scientists"  
 by Gideon Defoe  
 Starring Hugh Grant, Salma Hayek, Jeremy Piven  
 Imelda Staunton, David Tennant,  
 Lenny Henry, Brian Blessed  
 Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

First week of the second holidays, the movie cupboard looked pretty bare for the Smiths—none of the holiday movies appealed to Master Smith, and I was beginning to think that this would be the first holiday we hadn't visited the cinema for some years.

Then, in the second week, something inspired me to have a closer look at "The Pirates", and it rapidly became clear that this might be a movie worth seeing. First, it's by Aardman Animation, and I've been fond of their work since I first saw "The Wrong Trousers". Second, it's got David Tennant in it (he plays Charles Darwin) which was a definite plus for Paul. With a hatful of fine British comedic talent, names that Keith and I both knew. Third, it was scoring an impressive 92% on Rotten Tomatoes.

So, we bought tickets on line (honestly, it was worth the extra \$1 each just to avoid the queue) and headed down to Manukau. It rapidly became obvious that whatever all those people were standing in line for, it wasn't "The Pirates" because the cinema was mostly empty. More fool them, because they were missing out on a real treat. Now, don't get me wrong, "The Pirates" isn't a "great cinematic experience" and I'd be surprised if it wins any Oscars (a BAFTA or two, maybe). But it's a whole

treasure chest full of fun, with moments of very funny, very laugh-out-loud humour.

The storyline centres on Pirate Captain's attempt to become "Pirate of the Year". To do this, he must accumulate more treasure than his rivals, Black Bellamy and Cutlass Liz. However, he is chronically unlucky, and attacks a string of lacklustre ships culminating in the "Bounty". Charles Darwin recognises the ship's parrot for what it really is—definitely not a parrot! He then insists that they enter the bird in the Royal Society's competition for best discovery of the year, implying that there is a big prize... Pirate Captain falls for this ploy and they sail for London where Queen Victoria reigns—who absolutely hates pirates, but loves rare animals and birds, the rarer the better. Greed gets the better of Pirate Captain, and he makes his big mistake. It seems that he gets what he wants, but his victory is hollow and all too brief. Found out, he must redeem himself, and get back what he sold; through pain, suffering, and some really bad jokes. It helps if you know what happens when the vinegar hits the baking soda!

It's a point of historical fact that the Victorians did eat some very odd things—and contrary to the movie, it wasn't so much Queen Victoria, but Charles Darwin who was into unusual dining, on such delicacies as roast squirrel and candied maggots. He was a founding member of the "Glutton Club" at Cambridge, who ate rare birds, rodents, and once, it is said, even a puma...

But this is a movie, superficially just a fantasy for kids. Historical accuracy isn't important, and the glaring anachronisms were more humorous than anything else. Basically, yes... but kids won't get a lot of the jokes—I know Paul missed a few that I caught, and I suspect I missed some. There's a lot of humour hiding in corners in this movie, and I'm looking forward to getting the DVD to check it out. And that's another thing. This is a very British movie, you have to be able to get British humour to enjoy it, and there's no laugh track to assist the poor Americans. I have a feeling those approval ratings may drop when it opens in the US next week.

The animation is, as you might expect, outstanding. Aardman have chosen to use their trademark claymation for the characters, complemented by some glorious CGI for the backdrops. The ocean ripples beautifully, and the silly ship does improbable things. They even make visual jokes out of that—like the distinct edge of the London fog as the ship heads up the Thames.

The only bad thing about this movie is the sad lack of publicity. It's less than obvious in the posters that this is an Aardman movie. I think I may have seen one trailer, and it didn't quite grab me. It's not like the up-coming "Brave" from Pixar which has been pushed for the last year or so. So, I'll say it for the makers of "The Pirates"... Borrow a child if you feel you need to and go see "The Pirates" because you will not regret it. Oh, and if there was an Oscar for end credits, it would surely go to "The Pirates" because they were seriously the BEST end credits ever!!! You had to sit through to the very end, if only to see which little visual gags you missed. Excellent stuff.



Directed by Peter Berg  
 Produced by Peter Berg, Brian Goldner etc.  
 Written by Erich Hoeber, Jon Hoeber  
 Starring Alexander Skarsgård, Brooklyn Decker,  
 Taylor Kitsch and Liam Neeson

Reviewed by Marie Williams

Yes this movie is loosely based on the old Battleship game. I used to have a set and I really enjoyed it. I really enjoyed this movie also. Basic plot is: NASA has a project running looking for “goldilock” planets and found one that they thought would be capable of sustaining human life. So an array is created and a powerful signal is sent out aimed at the planet. However the answer sent back is not a friendly one ...

Alex Hopper (Taylor Kitsch – the guy from John Carter) is a man always getting into trouble. His long-suffering brother Stone (Alexander Skarsgard – True Blood) has had enough after one incident too many and demands that he join him in the Navy. Story cuts forwards and Alex is still getting into trouble and about to get kicked out of the Navy when the aliens arrive, annex Hawaii and commence taking over the Earth...

Classic story of redemption, Alex has fallen for the admiral’s daughter (Liam Neeson and daughter – Brooklyn Decker) and hope’s that saving the world is going to be a pint in his favour! Coming back to the original game, there’s a really cute bit in the movie where they have to use a grid system to try and hit the enemy’s alien battleship – E1, F3, H5 and so on.

I was impressed with the “aliens”. They came from a world similar to our own but the creators made them noticeably different. Humanoid but not human although

they functioned, breathing our air. They were bipedal but taller than us, walked funny I guess joints were in different places, they only appeared to have three large fingers, appendages coming off their face, eyes that looked like lizards and were light sensitive and they communicated but we couldn’t understand them. But they brawled the same as us and lost teeth in a fist-fight! It was a very sensible approach to “aliens”. Always seems funny when stories take us to another world where everyone looks like us and speaks English!

A light weight but entertaining film, I gave it an 4 out of 5. Professional reviewers gave it a good review as well!

## UnCONventional 2012 Update

Progress reports will be emailed to all registered members - if you have not yet registered, please do so, and keep up to date with all our announcements.

### Writer Workshop with GOH Trudi Canavan

"That Got Your Attention!"

This is a 2 hour workshop on Friday afternoon. It is free to registered members, but spaces are limited.

*How do you get the reader hooked from the first word and keep them reading until the last page without sacrificing the detail, grand scope and vision so loved in fantasy and science fiction? Trudi will show you ways to add tension to your writing, and work out the most relevant information to deliver about your characters and settings – and when – without slowing down the pace.*

Trudi will also be hosting a kaffeeklatch on Friday. Again, this is free to registered members, but spaces are limited. Register for these events on our website by clicking 'drop us a line' from the NEWS tab.

### Authors signing / promoting their recent books:

Russell Kirkpatrick  
 Beulah Pragg (Silver Hawk - Book 1 of the Chronicles of Tyria Trilogy)  
 Steve Wheeler (Burnt Ice) *published this month*  
 Edwina Harvey (The Whale's Tale) is one of the editors of Andromeda Spaceways  
 Darusha Wehm (Andersson Dexter novels)  
 Simon Petrie (Rare Unsigned Copy) is also involved with Andromeda Spaceways  
 Helen Lowe (The Heir of Night)  
 Mary Victoria (Chronicles of the Tree series)

In addition, Simon Petrie will be launching his latest book "Light Touchpaper"

### Your Con Needs YOU!

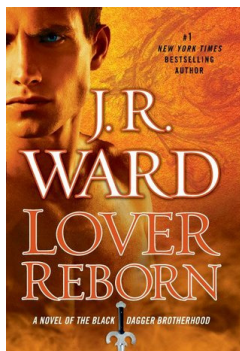
More 'Con Angels' are needed  
 We are also looking for a DJ (Saturday night) - sound system provided, and an auctioneer (Saturday afternoon)

Website: <http://unconventional2012.wordpress.com>

Our website is updated regularly - subscribe to updates (also sent to our FaceBook page and Twitter).

**Lover Reborn –  
Brotherhood of the Black  
Dagger Book 10**

by J R Ward  
Published by Piatkus  
Supplied by Hatchette  
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



When a vampire dies by any 'natural' means or are pure they move unto the Fade, but bad people end up in Dhunhd (hell). If they commit suicide, it's either wither away in the 'in between' or move into hell. No'one was raped by a sympath, before being found and sheltered by Darius and Thor. She gave birth to Xhex, and then committed suicide with Thor's dagger. She has spent the last few hundred years in the service of the Scribe Virgin, working as a servant to try to forgive her sins. She was a bit too passive for me, letting Thor treat her horribly and being a martyr. I was pleased he got to know Xhex though.

Thor is still devastated over the loss of his shellan, Wellsie and unborn son, murdered by a lesser. He's fighting lessers every night and has a death wish. Then he learns Wellsie and the baby are trapped in the In-Between by his refusal to let them go. They can't get to the Fade and are disappearing, doomed not to have peace. He has to move on and has help from No'one and Lassiter, a fallen angel. Thor was a bit of a whiner - oh poor me, I'm broken - and needed a good kick over how he treated No'one (and the memory of Wellsie).

The Band of Bastards has a plot against the Blind King, with the intent of claiming the throne for Xcor. They have a series of secret meetings with members of the glymera, to gain support for dethroning Wrath. Xcor is a great character, I started off not liking him, then hoping someone see below his exterior and he gets his HEA.

There are multiple storylines, and reading the previous books first is recommended, to grasp the back-story. These are not a teenager's vampires. The Brotherhood is rough, violent, raw, and very, very sexy. Definitely adult only. Finally! Thor's story! The original brothers all have their HEAs now; it's time for the secondary characters to get theirs. Qhuinn & Blay are the next story! But what of Layla? She now has feelings for someone, but – read the book. In 2013 all will be clear.

**Spirit Bound**

by Christine Feehan  
Published by Piatkus  
Supplied by Hatchette  
Reviewed by Cindy Hargreaves

This is the second book in the Sisters of the Heart by the very talented Christine Feehan. So far, this series, and the one this follows on from the Drake Sisters, are my favourite by her. Once I

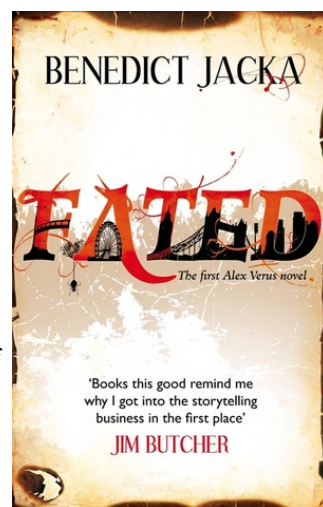


got started, I couldn't put it down. No, seriously, I did nothing but go to work, sleep and read until it was finished. Then I went backwards and read the Drake Sisters. Stefan Prakenskii is a undercover agent lethal in so many ways and double that is his knowledge of pleasuring a women. He's looking forward to his latest mission to go to the town of Sea Haven and get to know the mysterious beauty who has ties to his past. The mysterious beauty Judith Henderson is an artist on the rise; she has captured the attention and interest of two men. Only one man can survive her secrets.

What I love about this book is that it was so easy to fall into; too easy. The characters are well developed and I like how you saw glimpses of previous main characters. The story had enough suspense that it kept me interested. And even though it is part of a series it was a complete story all of its own at the same time keeping the series storyline going.

**Fated –  
Alex Verus Book 1**

by Benedict Jacka  
Published by Orbit  
Supplied by Hatchette  
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



Able to see the possible future, Alex Verus runs a magic shop in London. A small minnow in the world of magic, he keeps his head down and tries to avoid being noticed. His magic allows him to see the into future, useful when fighting an opponent through knowing which direction they will come from and what powers they'll use.

Alex has a dark past he's trying to hide from, involving an apprenticeship to a Dark mage, a lost love, and a body count. This has left him with strong desire to stay away from all Dark mages. The White Council have unearthed a relic from the fabled Progenitors though, and they need a probability mage to help them find and understand it. Before the Dark mages do.

I wanted to read this as Jim Butcher recommended it and am so glad I did. Like Harry Dresden, Alex lives in a world of magic that exists alongside the normal one. There's a White Council that ignores unpleasant truths, Dark and Light mages, a hierarchy of abilities and prestige. Yet it's totally different; the world, the magic, the rules. The first half explains how the magic works, while the second is full of action and a rollercoaster of excitement. Read this book! If you liked the Dresden world, you'll love this unique one. There is no romance in this book, though the possibility is there for later in the series, so is safe for boys! I'm looking forward to the next in the series, Cursed.

(I gave my review copy to mine husband to peruse yesterday – and he refused to put it down until he finished it. Go figure – Ed.)



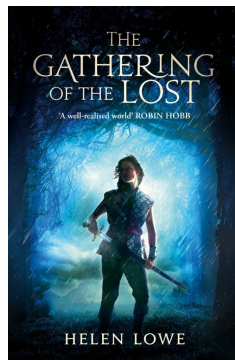
**The Gathering of the Lost –  
The Heir of Night Book 2**

by Helen Lowe

Published by Orbit

Supplied by author

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



This book is weighty and comprises a prologue and five parts. A long wordy story, but unputdownable, and a fantastic tale. If you enjoy epic fantasy, read this! It can be read alone but for back-story you should read “The Heir of Night” first. Malian and Kalen have fled the Derai world and are resting in the Winter Country, before resuming their flight to the south, separately. The prologue contains Malian’s dream and explains why the two must travel separate paths. Jehane Mor and Tarathan of Ar are the Heralds thought to have helped Malian and Kalen flee The Wall of Night into one of the lands of Haarth. They head for Ij and the festival there, and encounter new characters on their journey, such as Tirorn and Aravenor. There, complex alliances are revealed, before the mystery and action begins.

The next part introduces Maister Carick and the knights and damosels of Normarch. They have many adventures and end up in Emer for a tourney and the Midsummer Festival. There, the alliances grow more complex and many different forces come into play. Meanwhile, Malian is still searching for the legendary weapons of Derai’s great hero, and aid for defeating the Swarm, who threaten the Wall of Night and all the lands of Haarth.

The characters were very ‘real’, you felt you knew them. The plot was fast-paced, tightly woven and there were unexpected twists. I didn’t see a lot of things coming and when the unexpected was revealed it was “oh, of course, that makes sense!” My one complaint is it ended too soon and now I have to wait for the next one. It will be worth the wait though. This series is addictive.

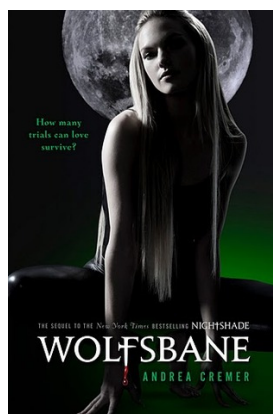
**Wolfsbane –  
Nightshade Book 2**

by Andrea Cremer

Published by Atom

Purchased by reviewer

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



The first book ended with Calla fleeing with Shay as he was the blood sacrifice to cement her mating with Ren. She left her pack behind while Ren lied to the Guardians, in order to help her escape. This book introduced an interesting new world, even though it felt ‘very YA’. I was looking forward to the rest of the trilogy to see what happens. The second book in the series was disappointing though. I will read the third book to see how things end though.

Calla Tor wakes up in the custody of Searchers, who have been the enemies of Guardians for as long as she can remember. They offer to include her in their war to

destroy the Keepers, who control the lives of her and other guardians. Calla agrees in order to free her family, pack and Ren. Shay is with Calla and her love interest. She still has feelings for Ren though, and is confused with her complicated love life.

The characters didn’t stay true to those from Nightshade. Ansel sells out his beloved sister to the Keepers to regain his wolf form – the same Keepers that killed his mother? Calla also doesn’t seem to care much about her mother being dead – “oh no, so sad, Shay’s here but Ren’s in my head, this is TERRIBLE!” Calla also returned to save Ren and he beat her up and tried to rape her to get her to stay with him - what?! Also Calla feels guilty and tries to blame herself for this – get a backbone girl! Shay also turned into a jerk, telling her what to do and pressuring here for sex. She really needs to stand up for herself. Calla changed sides too quickly. She spent her whole life believing the Guardians, and then gets told they are lies, and bam, she works against them to destroy them?! She also doesn’t ask questions of the Searchers, just accepts what they tell her. The constant joking of the Searchers also got annoying – your friend just died and you’re making smart-ass quips?!

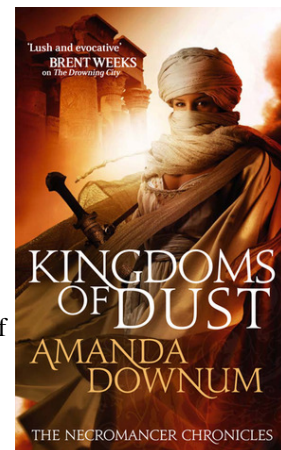
**The Kingdoms of Dust -  
Necromancer Book 3**

by Amanda Downum

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Cassie Craig



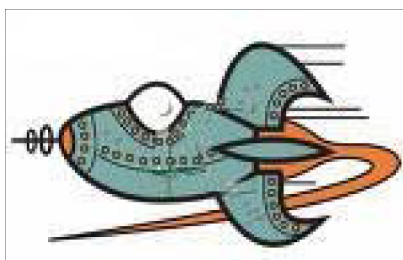
*The Kingdoms of Dust* by Amanda Downum is the third of the Necromancer Chronicles. I undertook to read this novel without reading book one or two. I was able to immerse myself in the story and characters, although I did find that Amanda introduces characters quite fast and I had to back read to figure out who was who.

The heroine Isyllt Iskaldur, necromancer and sometime spy starts off the adventure by rescuing her one time spy, lover and friend Adam. Isyllt seems a bit dysfunctional and beset by her own personal demons. She is not a character I warmed to as the reader does not know a lot of personal information about her. We are introduced as we go to the characters who share in the adventure to find out where the Ghost Wind comes from. Isyllt has an apprentice called Moth, who seems an innocent and one wonders what her role is. Melantha an assassin with a past who changes identities but she cannot change her heart is sent to recruit Isyllt.

The story was slow moving until about halfway along and then it picked up speed. Some characters are not what they seem. Seemingly normal humans with hidden identities, mages with ghost like abilities, powerful creatures tethered by magic make this an interesting novel. We are taken across sea into deserts, before queens and evil mages with plots of their own. Even though I didn’t enjoy starting reading this novel, I was engrossed by the end.

# UnCONventional 2012

33rd New Zealand  
National SF Convention  
Auckland  
1-4 June 2012



UnCONventional will be held at the Surrey Hotel which is located at 465 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn.

Our GOH is Trudi Canavan: award-winning author & self-proclaimed 'chocoholic'.



Our Fan GOH is Lorain Clark.

Join us as we:

- Debate the merits of the latest film and TV offerings...
- Remember our old favourites...
- Discuss the latest news in the world of spaceflight and technology...
- Battle it out on the game boards and online...
- Learn how to polish our short stories and avoid copyright issues...

Email: [enquiries@unconventional.sf.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@unconventional.sf.org.nz)  
<http://unconventional2012.wordpress.com/>

This year, we have selected two worthy charities:  
WSPA and Breast Cancer NZ.



**Stella Nova Wiki:**

[http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main_Page)

**Nova Zine Back Issues:**

<http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/StellaNova:Novazine-new>

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**This Month:**

BOOK April 23rd (St. Georges Day)  
7:30pm at Chez Smith

SPACE May the Fourth be with you!  
celebrate Star Wars Day  
at Palac Stefan & Co.  
7:30pm Friday 4th May

**Next Meeting:**

Annual General Meeting  
Wednesday 16 May, 2012, 7:30pm  
Auckland Horticultural Centre,  
990 Great North Road,  
Western Springs



**Upcoming Events:**

Saturday, April 28, 2012 at 10:00am  
**AETHER AND IRON** at MOTAT

June 1-4th 2012 **UnCONventional 2012**  
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