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Sailor Pluto at Manuggeddon!

(Photo by Keith Smith)

Issue Fifty - Autumn 2016

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Musings from Under the Mountain

Death stalks the Earth this Autumn,...

Or so it seems, from the sheer number of favourite celebrities that have died in the first few months of this year. In reality, it's partly a statistical anomaly, and partly a combination of television, celebrity lifestyles and aging.

Think about it. Television had been in homes since at least the 1940's, but it didn't really hit its stride until the 1960's with cheaper sets and the advent of colour. I can distinctly remember the first time I saw a colour TV; it was so real compared with the tiny B&W set we had at home. The earliest TV broadcast that I have a clear memory of, and can put an actual date on, is the first Telstar transmission on 23 July 1962. It was totally amazing back then to see pictures directly from the US in England! Now, of course, satellite broadcasts are ubiquitous, and the world is a smaller, and perhaps sadder place. Sadder, because the world seems to be much better at sharing the death, the pain and the suffering than the joy. We need more good news!

Television gave the world the means to make celebrities recognisable. And those celebrities, in their twenties and thirties back then, are now, fifty years later, in their seventies and eighties. So, it is hardly surprising that they are now dying. Sylvia Anderson, who died aged 88, Paul Daniels who was 77, and Ronnie Corbett, who was 85, all died in March. These people all entertained us in their prime, each giving the world something special that will outlive them, but they were no longer young, and no doubt as ready to pass on as anyone ever is.

Others are dying younger than they perhaps should... the rock musician known as Prince was only 57 when he died of an accidental opioid overdose. And it seems quite likely that the head injuries incurred in his career as a boxer were connected to Muhammad Ali's death at 74 from Parkinson's Disease.

But, what really hurt for me, at least, was the loss of our own dear friend, Marie Williams, in February. We had all thought that she had beaten the cancer. But it came back, and took her from us. She was only 54, which is far too young... but that can be the way with cancer. I'll miss Marie. She was always there, and always ready to help. She loved her books more than anything, and it was such a sweet thing to learn that her bookstore will go on, as a gift to the hospice where she spent her last days.

And now I have my own health problems to worry about. Is the reaper stalking me? Perhaps, but I think not. I do intend to get over this, although it hasn't been pleasant, and there is more

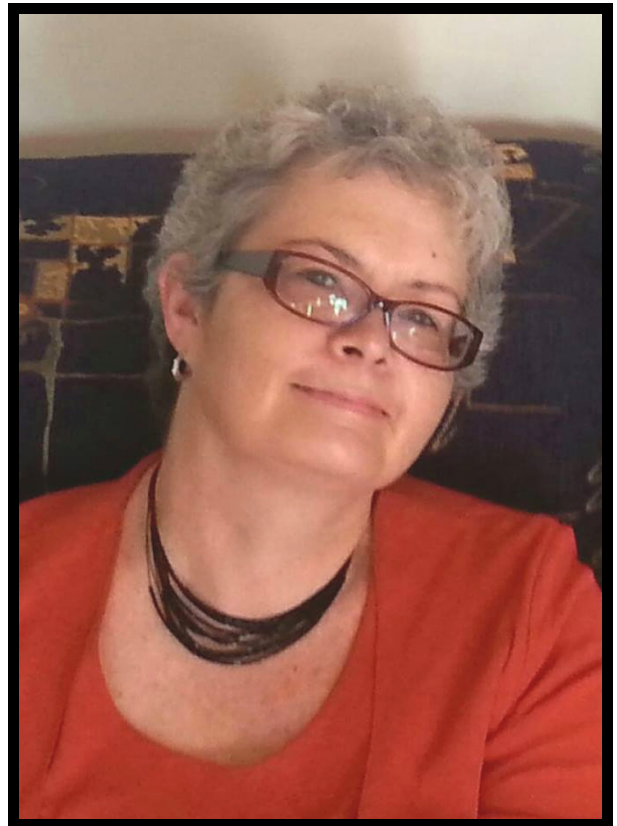
unpleasantness to come. Although I will say this. It is a smart move for Auckland hospital to provide free wi-fi for patients. Distraction is a great way to help people deal with pain, and it also helps patients keep in touch with friends and family.

I tend to believe that a positive attitude is a great help in times like this. Always look on the bright side of life... and of death, as Monty Python once said. Anyway, being unwell and in hospital would be two very good reasons why this issue has been delayed for far longer than it should have been. I promise the winter issue will be prompter.

Jacqui Smith,

Editor and President,

Stella Nova.



Rest Peacefully, Marie Williams

(Photo from her facebook page)

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by
**Jacqui
Smith**



MANUKAU ARMAGEDDON



Keith went to Manukau Armageddon in March and took lots and lots of photos. Here and overleaf are a selection. Keith enjoyed himself, although I gather the convention wasn't a financial success and there probably won't be another in Manukau. Which is sad because the cosplay looks great! (Sorry, I haven't been able to name any of these cosplayers, but I'm impressed by the costumes—Ed).

Photos by Keith Smith

MANAGED ZONE



Photos by Keith Smith

The Sky at Night Autumn 2016

Orion – More than Meets the Eye

No, no ... I'm not suggesting that the constellation represents a Transformer (or a Deceptacon) but, when you're looking up at the constellation, there is actually a lot more there that you're not seeing.

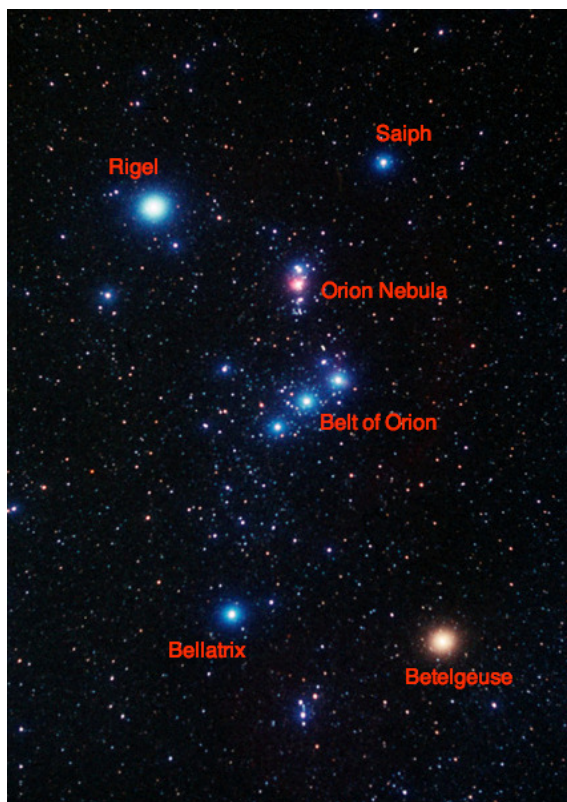
Orion lies in the Milky Way and its appearance in the morning sky, around July/August tells us that Spring is on the way. December/January/February is when it is most easily observed in the evening sky, and its collection of bright stars, and its distinctive shape makes it, usually, the first constellation that people learn to identify, certainly either the second or third, after the Southern Cross, Scorpio or Ursa Minor.

Many of the stars in Orion, with the noticeable exception of Betelgeuse (a really massive red super-giant) are hot young blue stars. Many of them share the same proper motion making them part of the Orion OB1 association. An OB Association is a group of stars, of spectral type O and B that formed in the same molecular cloud. The Belt stars, the sword stars and the ones in M42 and M43 are part of this group. Rigel is believed to be an outlying member of the group and, even Betelgeuse is believed to be formed in the same place but evolved more rapidly than the others because of its larger mass.

The Orion OB1 association is part of the Orion Molecular Cloud Complex which also includes M42, M43, IC434, the Horsehead Nebula, Barnards Loop, M78, the Flame Nebula and Sh2-264 (the Lambda Orionis molecular ring). The Witch Head Nebula (IC 2118) and the Keyhole Nebula (NGC 1999) may also be associated with it. Basically there is a large amount of young stars and star forming material in this area, located roughly 1500-1600 light-years away and is hundreds of light years across. Visually it spans the area occupied by Orion's Belt and Sword.

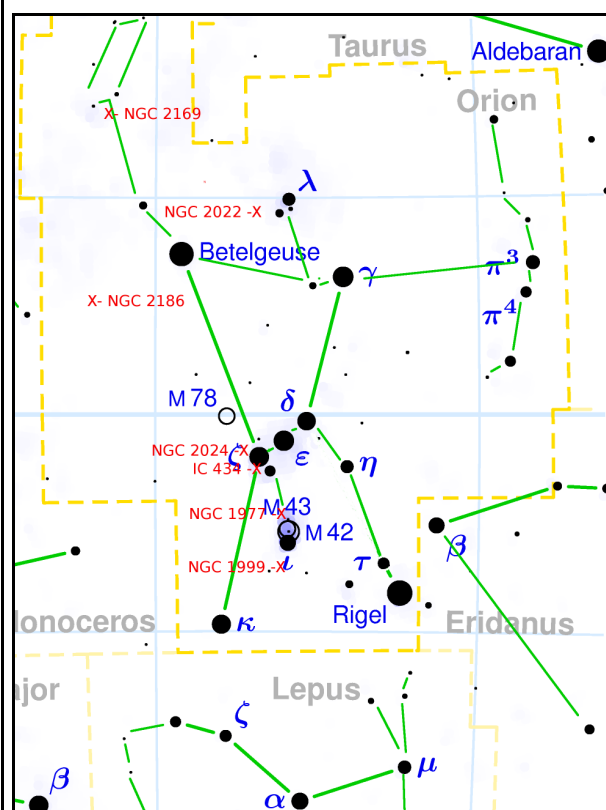
The most visible part of this is the Orion Nebula (M42) which can be seen as a rather fuzzy 'star' halfway down Orion's sword. It is located approximately 1350 light years away and is 20 light-years across. The central part is lit by the Trapezium, being a group of four stars, two of which are binary, which can be resolved through a large telescope on nights of good seeing, giving a total of six. The Trapezium are all young stars and are members of the Orion Nebula Cluster, which consists of 2800 stars. This will be what is left once all the gas and dust in the nebula is used up or ejected in 100,000 years. The nebula may have also been the birthplace of the runaway stars, AE Aurigae, 53 Arietis and Mu Columbae, which were ejected from the cluster by a powerful supernovae event, the same one which formed Barnard's Loop. Near M42, and separated by a dark lane of material is M43, also known as De Marian's Nebula. It is actually part of the Orion Nebula and is lit by the variable star NU Orionis.

If it was possible for our eyes to readily see Ha light, Barnard's Loop (Sh2-276) would stand out as a bright red letter 'C' that encircles the sword and belt of Orion. It has been claimed that it is visible to the naked eye under an extremely dark sky but, long exposure photography is



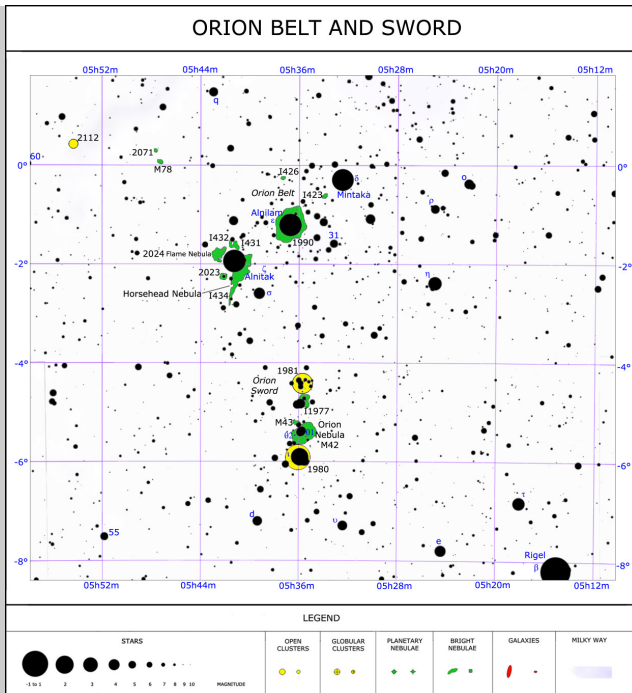
required to bring it out in all its glory. Another structure that would be visible is a large blob of nebulosity that surrounds the group of stars that makes up Orion's head. It is thought to be formed from a massive supernova event that occurred around two million years ago which also ejected several stars into deep space. It is believed the stars ejected were all part of a multi-star system as was the progenitor of the supernova.

The other large Ha region around Orion's head is Sh2-264 otherwise known as the Lambda Orionis Ring or the Angelfish Nebula.



by
Keith
Smith

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The Running Man Nebula (NGC1977) is a reflection nebula which is located half a degree northeast of the Orion Nebula and separated from M43 by another dark lane. M42, M43 and NGC1977 make up one area of nebulosity in the sword. Located to the edge of the Belt, right next to Alnitak (the east most belt star) is another group consisting of NGC2024, B33 and IC434. NGC2024 is the Flame Nebula, which is lit by UV radiation from Alnitak. Just below that is B33, the dark Horsehead nebula, which stands out against the light from IC 434. NGC2023 is the reflection nebula located a third of a degree away from the Horsehead and is usually seen (but not identified) in pictures of the Horsehead.

The Witchhead Nebula, a blue reflection nebula located near Rigel and lit by that star, is believed to be another supernovae remnant. It's also affected by the solar winds caused by the Orion OB1 association as all the cometary heads in the nebula point towards that association. NGC1999, the Keyhole Nebula, is a dust filled bright nebula with a vast hole of empty space in it. It is not sure what caused the hole. Originally it was thought to be dark nebulosity, but observations with radio telescopes showed it to be an actual empty hole.

M78 is a bright reflection nebula. It is part of a group of nebula including NGC 2064, NGC 2067 and NGC 2071. Finally there is the Monkey Head Nebula (NGC2174), located about 6400 light years away and is associated with the open star cluster, NGC 2175.

With all these star forming regions, it is not surprising there are quite a few star clusters in Orion. As well as NGC 2175, there is NGC 1981, located just on top of the sword. It lies 60 light years closer than the Orion nebula. Another open cluster, called Collinder 70 (prefix Col or Cr), includes the three stars in the Belt. In total, this cluster contains 100 stars and takes up three degrees of sky.

The Collinder Catalogue is a catalogue of 471 open clusters that was constructed by the Swedish astronomer Per Collinder (18940-1974) in 1931 as an appendix to his paper "On the structural properties of open galactic

clusters and their spatial distribution". The Hyades cluster is Cr50, the Pleiades is Cr42 and the Beehive Cluster (M44) is Cr189. An asterism, known as the Coathanger or Brocchi's Cluster is Cr399. From this catalogue, Orion contains Cr55 (NGC 1662), Cr69 (the Lambda Orionis Cluster), Cr72 (NGC 1980), Cr73 (NGC 1981), Cr74, Cr 76 (NGC 2112), Cr79 (NGC 2141), Cr83 (NGC 2169), Cr84 (NGC 2175), Cr85 (NGC 2186) and Cr87 (NGC 2194).

There is even a planetary nebula in Orion, the 12th magnitude NGC 2022, where a star blew off it's outer layers in an explosion. It is located near Lambda Orionis, about a third of the way from there in the direction of Betelgeuse.

The star Rigel is also more than meets the eye. To the naked eye, it looks to be a bright bluish star, but it is in fact two, and is said to be a test. The companion shines at mag 6.8 and is located 9.2 arcseconds from it's much brighter partner. As well as Rigel, two of the Trapezium stars are doubles as is Rho Orionis, Delta Orionis (Mintaka), Eta Orionis, Sigma Orionis, Lambda Orionis and Zeta Orionis (Alnitak).

I even discovered that there are even faint galaxies that can be found in Orion, even though the Milky Way runs through the constellation. Check out InTheSky.org to find out what can be found in constellations and when it is visible from your location.

Anyone else know of any other constellations with so many hidden wonders? Please let me know. And feel free to let me know if I missed any in Orion.

The Moon in August 2016:

- New Moon—2nd August
- First Quarter—10th August
- Full Moon—18th August
- Last Quarter—25th August

Don't miss the Perseids meteor shower on the 10th to 12th August. They're northern, so look for them towards a clear northern horizon, between 3 am and dawn.



Obituaries

January 1, 2016

Vilmos Zsigmond, (aged 85), Hungarian-American cinematographer, considered one of the most influential cinematographers in history. He won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography for his work on *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.



January 2

Brad Fuller, (aged 62), American video game composer, best known for his work for Atari. He composed the soundtracks for *Blasteroids*, released in 1979, *Marble Madness*, released in 1984, and *Tengen Tetris*, which was originally released by Atari in 1988.

January 3

Leonard White, (aged 99), British television producer, whose credits include *Police Surgeon* and its spin-off *The Avengers*, which he co-created with Sydney Newman, as well as many episodes of the anthology series *Out of This World*, *Armchair Theatre* and *ITV Playhouse*.

January 3

Peter Naur, (aged 87), Danish computer science pioneer, who won the 2005 Turing Award for his work on defining the ALGOL 60 programming language.

January 4

Frank Armitage, (aged 91), Australian-born American painter and animator, known for painting the backgrounds of several classic animated Disney films, including such as *Peter Pan*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Mary Poppins*, and *The Jungle Book*. He also created the production illustration and Academy Award-winning set designs for the 1966 film *Fantastic Voyage*.

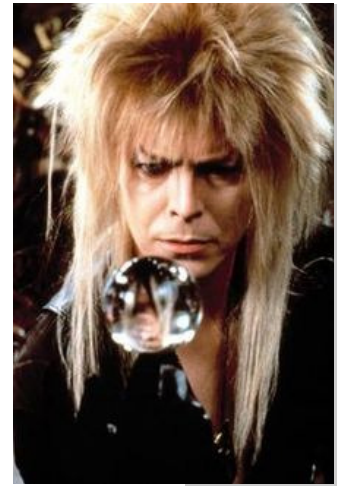


January 8

Maria Teresa de Filippis, (aged 89), Italian racing driver, and the first woman to race in Formula One. She participated in five World Championship Grands Prix, debuting on 18 May 1958, but scored no championship points. Though largely unsuccessful in her Formula One racing career, she won races in other series and is remembered as a pioneer in the sport.

January 10

David Bowie, (aged 69), English singer, songwriter, actor and record producer. He was a figure in popular music for over five decades, considered by critics and musicians as an innovator, particularly for his work in the 1970s. His work often employed science fiction themes. "Space Oddity" was his first top-five entry on the UK Singles Chart after its release in July 1969. During his lifetime, his record sales, estimated at 140 million worldwide, made him one of the world's best-selling music artists. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1996. He also appeared in a number of movies, most memorably as the Goblin King in *Labyrinth*.



January 14

Alan Rickman, (aged 69), English actor and director, known for playing a variety of roles on stage and screen. He was nominated for a Tony Award for his role as Vicomte de Valmont in the stage production of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* in 1985, and received the BAFTA Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for playing the Sheriff of Nottingham in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. We all loved him as the cynical Alexander Dane in *Galaxy Quest*. But it is as Severus Snape in the *Harry Potter* film series that he will be remembered by most.



Robert Banks Stewart, (aged 84), Scottish television writer who contributed scripts to a number of series including *The Avengers* and *The Sweeney*. He wrote two highly regarded stories for Doctor Who: *Terror of the Zygons* (1975) (which was set in his native Scotland and drew on the Loch Ness Monster legend) and *The Seeds of Doom* (1976).

January 31

Sir Terry Wogan, (aged 77), British radio and television broadcaster who worked for the BBC for most of his career. Before he retired in 2009, his Radio 2 weekday breakfast programme *Wake Up to Wogan* had eight million regular listeners, making him the most listened-to radio broadcaster in Europe. He hosted TV shows including *Children in Need*, the game show *Blankety-Blank*, and *Come Dancing*.



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Smith

February 6

Dan Gerson, (aged 49), American screenwriter best-known for his work with Pixar and Walt Disney Animation Studios. He co-wrote the screenplays of *Monsters, Inc.*, *Monsters University* and *Big Hero 6*; the latter two with his regular writing partner Robert L. Baird. At the time of his death, it was reported that he would be a co-writer of the upcoming *Cars 3*, again with Baird.

February 8

Norman Hudis, (aged 93), English writer for film, theatre and television, and most closely associated with the first six of the *Carry On...* film series, for which he wrote the screenplays. He moved to the US in 1966, and his American television writing credits include *The Wild Wild West*, *The F.B.I.*, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *Cannon* and *Baretta*.

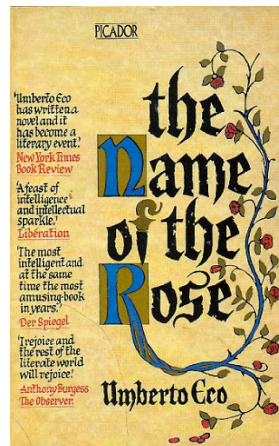


February 17

Ray West, (aged 90), American sound engineer. He won an Academy Award for Best Sound for the film *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*. He worked on over 60 films between 1977 and 1993. He also did extensive work in television, and was nominated for thirteen Emmy Awards.

February 18

Umberto Eco, (aged 84), Italian novelist, essayist, literary critic, philosopher and semiotician. He is best known for his 1980 historical mystery novel *Il nome della rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*), an intellectual mystery combining semiotics in fiction, biblical analysis, medieval studies and literary theory (a very dense novel which I actually managed to read years ago). He later wrote other novels, including *Il pendolo di Foucault* (*Foucault's Pendulum*) and *L'isola del giorno prima* (*The Island of the Day Before*). His novel *Il cimitero di Praga* (*The Prague Cemetery*), released in 2010, was a best-seller.



February 21

Vlasta Dalibor, (aged 94), Czech-born British puppeteer, who with her husband, Jan Dalibor (1921 – 2013), was responsible for devising and developing the characters Pinky and Perky on children's television in the 1950s and 1960s. Yes, these two little pigs were part of my childhood.



February 25

Jim Clark, (aged 84), British film editor with more than forty feature film credits from 1956–2008, including *The World Is Not Enough* (1999), and *The Jackal* (1997). He received an Academy Award and a BAFTA Award for the editing of *The Killing Fields* (1984); he received a second BAFTA Award for editing *The Mission* (1986).

February 26

Antony Gibbs, (aged 90), British film and television editor with more than 40 feature film credits, including *Dune* and *Rollerball*. He was nominated four times for the BAFTA Award for Best Editing, for the films *Performance* (1970), *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971), *Rollerball* (1975), and *A Bridge Too Far* (1975).

February 28

George Kennedy, (aged 91), American actor who appeared in more than 200 film and television productions. He is best remembered for portraying "Dragline" opposite Paul Newman in *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), for which he won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor. He was the only actor to appear in all four films in the *Airport* series, having reprised the role of Joe Patroni three times. He was also widely recognized as Police Captain Ed Hocken in the *Naked Gun* series of comedy films and corrupt oil tycoon Carter McKay on the original *Dallas* television series.



March 2

Tony Dyson, (aged 68) British SFX designer, best-known for building the R2-D2 droid model used in the *Star Wars* film series. He also created robotics and props for *Superman II*, *Moonraker*, and *Dragonslayer*.



March 5

Ray Tomlinson, (aged 74), American computer programmer who implemented the first email program on the ARPANET system, the precursor to the Internet, in 1971. It was the first system able to send mail between users on different hosts connected to ARPANET. To achieve this, he used the @ sign to separate the user name from the name of their machine, a scheme which has been used in email addresses ever since. This was indeed the man who invented email, and gave humans a whole new way to communicate.

March 15

Sylvia Anderson, (aged 88), English television and film producer, writer and voice actress, best known for her collaborations with Gerry Anderson, her husband between 1960 and 1981. In addition to serving as co-creator and co-writer on their TV series during the 1960s and early 1970s, Anderson was involved in character development and costume design. She regularly directed the bi-weekly voice recording sessions, and provided the voices of many female and child characters, in particular Lady Penelope in *Thunderbirds*.



March 17

Paul Daniels, (aged 77), English magician and television performer. who achieved international fame through his television series *The Paul Daniels Magic Show*, which ran on the BBC from 1979 to 1994. He was awarded the "Magician of the Year" Award by the Academy of Magical Arts in 1982, the first magician from outside the US to receive it. He also won the Golden Rose of Montreux in 1985.



March 24

Garry Shandling, (aged 66) American stand-up comedian, actor, director, writer, producer, voice artist, and comedian, best known for his work in *It's Garry Shandling's Show* and *The Larry Sanders Show*. He was nominated for 18 Emmy Awards for the show and won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series in 1998 for writing the series finale. In film, he had a recurring role in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, appearing in *Iron Man 2* and *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*.

March 31

Ronnie Corbett, (aged 85), Scottish stand-up comedian, actor, writer and broadcaster, best known for his long association with Ronnie Barker in the BBC television comedy sketch show *The Two Ronnies* (great show—still funny thirty years later). He subsequently starred in sitcoms such as *No – That's Me Over Here!*, *Now Look Here* and *Sorry!*



Douglas Wilmer, (aged 96)

English actor, best known for playing Sherlock Holmes in the 1965 TV series *Sherlock Holmes*. He was an honorary member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, which considered Wilmer "the definitive Holmes"

In honour of the late Sylvia Anderson, I give you...

Lady Penelope's Fabulous Quiz

- Sylvia Anderson was born in 1927. What was her birth name?
A Sylvia Brooks C Sylvia Thamm
B Sylvia Creighton D Sylvia Thomas
- What was Sylvia Anderson's main role in the first AP Films productions, such as *Torchy the Battery Boy*?
A Character Development C Production Assistant
B Costume Designer D Voice Artist
- Sylvia Anderson is perhaps best known as the voice of Lady Penelope. But which was the first character she voiced in a science fiction Supermarionation series?
A Dr. Horatio Beaker
B Jimmy Gibson
C Mike Mercury
D Professor Rudolph Popkiss
- Sylvia Anderson voiced a character called Doctor Venus in which series?
A Captain Scarlet C Stingray
B Fireball XL5 D Supercar
- In which *Thunderbirds* episode did Lady Penelope first appear?
A Day of Disaster
B The Duchess Assignment
C The Perils of Penelope
D Trapped in the Sky
- FAB 1 is Lady Penelope's Roll-Royce. But what is FAB 3?
A A helicopter C A private yacht
B A locomotive D A racehorse
- In which English county is the Creighton-Ward Mansion situated?
A Buckinghamshire C Northumberland
B Kent D Somerset
- Which household item does Lady Penelope regularly use to communicate with International Rescue?
A Coffeepot C Teapot
B Jug D Vase
- Sylvia Anderson published an autobiography in 1991. What was its original title?
A FABulous C Yes, M'Lady
B Lady Penelope and Me D You Rang?
- Sylvia Anderson's last role was in the 2015 series *Thunderbirds are Go*. Which character did she voice?
A Grandma Tracy C Kyro Kyrano
B Great Aunt Sylvia D Lady Penelope

(Answers on page 10)



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by
Jacqui
Smith



Directed by J. J. Abrams
Produced by Kathleen Kennedy, J. J. Abrams, Bryan Burk
Written by Lawrence Kasdan, J. J. Abrams, Michael Arndt
Starring Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Adam Driver, Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, Lupita Nyong'o, Andy Serkis
Reviewed by Ben Rastrick

This film is a trip into nostalgia that reboots the series which has largely been left to wither since the release of “Star Wars III – The Revenge of the Sith”. It features an opening scene that has the feel of the early movies; Star Wars IV – A New Hope, Star Wars VI – Return of the Jedi. The Desert Planet has the feel of Tatooine in Star Wars I – The Phantom Menace and Star Wars II – The Clone Wars. It also features the return of actors; Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill who reprise their roles as Han Solo, Princess Leia and Luke Skywalker.

The story centers around the two characters, Kylo Ren, of the New Order and Rey, who are both force sensitive and ultimately end the film in what is an inconclusive battle as the climax of the movie comes about. The story also features another character FN2187, later called Fin, who is a Stormtrooper who was recruited at birth by the New Order to wage its wars. Not too much is revealed about Fin, who I hope will have his story expanded upon in the next movie.

The story screams out for a lot of nostalgia, much of it I could somewhat connect to, the rest I can only

say should have been done differently since the tie in with the previous movies is great, and all but as a climax to a 7-movie marathon should have been done a little differently.

Over all the movie has its good points, such as a new kind of lightsaber that some fans were wondering why it wasn't a thing before while the rest just asked why, and it's not so good ideas like nostalgia points I see as unnecessary. Definitely worth watching again, just watch your nostalgia.

Directed by David Ayer
Produced by Charles Roven, Richard Suckle
Written by David Ayer
Starring Will Smith, Jared Leto, Margot Robbie, Joel Kinnaman, Viola Davis, Jai Courtney, Jay Hernandez
Reviewed by Karen Dransfield

I went and saw Suicide Squad on Friday night. And I really liked it. I thought there was an interesting mix of characters, cool costumes and special effects, with enough action, and enough funny quirky bits for me to have a good time. I hope they do more with Harley Quinn and The Joker cause they were awesome on their own and together. And I thought Will Smith was on form as Deadshot. The music soundtrack really gets you into the vibe of the characters... After all, they are all bad guys. I liked the links to the previous Superman V Batman film and the cookies. Yes, there is a cookie right at the very end of the film credits... as well as the other stuff during the early credits. I'm not DC knowledgeable apart from some of the basic storylines of the big main DC characters, so this was a great introduction to new characters for me. I hope they get the whole movie to movie story flow thing going properly... I look forward to the DVD release to see what they cut out from their initial 3+ hours of film to get to the 2-hour theatrical release.

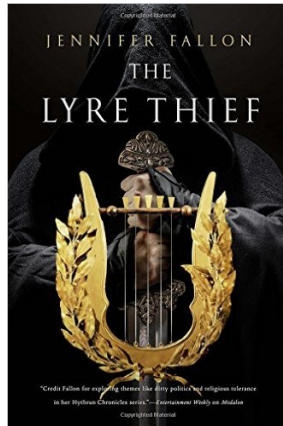


The Lyre Thief

by Jennifer Fallon
Published by Harper
Voyager
Supplied by Harper Collins
NZ

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith
I picked this book up with interest, knowing that I enjoy high fantasy, and it did not disappoint. I hadn't actually read any of Jennifer Fallon's work before, but that wasn't a problem. I did have a bit of an issue half-way through when I realised that it wasn't a novel complete in itself, but the first part of a trilogy. But I got back to it and was pleased to find that the ending, although it clearly led in the direction of the next book, was still a satisfactory conclusion in itself.

The story focuses around two sisters from the harem of King Hablet of Fardohnya, one of whom is rather more royal than the other. Identities are switched and characters head off in different directions, only to find themselves embroiled in the same messy conspiracy. The villain here is undoubtedly quite mad, in more ways than one; and there is a sub-plot involving the Demon Child which I'm pretty sure will collide with the main plot at some point. It's complicated, and yet elegantly simple at the same time, and definitely goes somewhere. I finished the book, which is more than I can say for "A Game of Thrones", and that has to be a good thing.



seemed strikingly modern. Or simply that I read too many of Mary Renault's excellent historical novels when I was young, which set the bar too high. But I failed to get past the first few chapters of this work, before casting it aside in annoyance. I suspect others like it better, but for me it was definitely opportunity lost.

Sleeping Giants

by Sylvain Neuvel
Published by Michael Joseph
Supplied by Penguin Random House NZ
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

There are two important aspects to reviewing any novel, the story and how it is told. In the case of "Sleeping Giants" how it is told is so unusual, that I have to question whether it is technically a novel. It is certainly a work of fiction, but is written as a series of transcripts of interviews and reports, mostly involving a mysterious "Man in Black". This gives a strange sense of remoteness from the characters and from events. The characters speak for themselves certainly, but the reader never gets inside their heads, and is unable to know what they are really thinking. If that style is going to irritate you, then don't invest your time and money in this book.

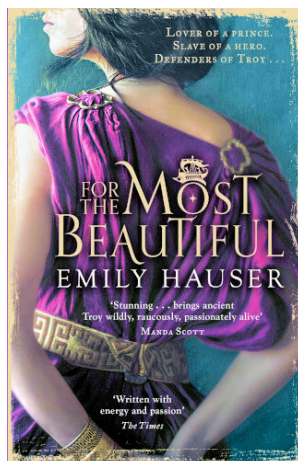
Then there's the story. Now, this is proper science fiction, utilising the well-trodden trope of alien artefacts, long buried on Earth, coming to the surface. Literally, in this case. Where the author puts a contemporary spin on the story is to have various parts of the artefact spread around the planet, sometimes in less than easily accessible places, resulting in interesting political complications. I'm not entirely convinced by some of the events – the author stretches the long arm of coincidence a bit too far in places. And really the whole "backwards knees" thing is unnecessary (and most likely based on a common fallacy regarding avian anatomy). However, I did appreciate the references to Biblical and Greek mythology (the series is called the Themis Trilogy for a good reason). Overall, for me this book proved to be a win. There are negatives, but there are strong enough positives that it was an enjoyable read, and one I can safely recommend.



For the Most Beautiful

by Emily Hauser
Published by Doubleday
Supplied by Penguin
Random House NZ

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith
This is apparently an attempt to write the events of the Iliad from the point of view of the female characters... to re-write an ancient story of war as romance. The problem with this is that Homer doesn't give you a lot of female characters to work with. So the author decides to choose Krisayis (Chryseis) as her central character. The problem with this is that Chryseis has a tiny role in the Iliad with no connection to Troilus, and her story wasn't developed into the romance of "Troilus and Cressida" until medieval writers got hold of it. So, we're already several steps away from Homer. And that was only part of what irritated me... Maybe it's just that I'm not into love stories. Or maybe it was that the attitudes of the characters



Answers for Lady Penelope's Fabulous Quiz:

1. D Sylvia Thomas
2. C Production Assistant
3. B Jimmy Gibson
4. B Fireball XL5
5. D Trapped in the Sky
6. D A racehorse
7. B Kent
8. C Teapot
9. C Yes, M'Lady
10. B Great Aunt Sylvia

LEXICON

The 38th New Zealand National

Science Fiction & Fantasy Convention

LEXICON
UPDATE

Where: Taupo
When : Queens Birthday Weekend
2-4th June, 2017
Venue: Suncourt Hotel Taupo

Guest of Honour:

Seanan McGuire is a renowned Californian urban fantasy and SF horror writer, filk singer, and cartoonist. She is the author of the October Daye urban fantasies, the InCryptid urban fantasies, and several other works.

She writes science fiction horror novels, including the Newsflesh and Parisitology trilogies, under the pseudonym Mira Grant. She also records CDs of her original filk music and is creator of the autobiographical web comic "With Friends Like These...".

Winner of the 2010 John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, her novel Feed (as Mira Grant) was named as one of Publishers Weekly's Best Books of 2010. In 2013 she became the first person ever to appear five times on the same Hugo Ballot.

Fan GoH:

John Toon, a dedicated contributor to the New Zealand fan community and a familiar face at local conventions, is confirmed as the Fan Guest of Honour at LexiCon. President of the Wellington

Phoenix SF Society and winner of the 2013 and 2016 Sir Julius Vogel Awards for fan writing, John is also Treasurer of SFFANZ (Science Fiction and Fantasy Association of NZ Inc.)

Charity:

RainbowYOUTH - a national organisation based on providing support, information, and advocacy for young queer and gender diverse people.

Website:

<http://www.lexicon.cons.nz/>



CONTACTS
CALENDAR

Stella Nova Wiki:

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>

Postal Address:

Stella Nova
PO Box 74-013, Market Rd, Auckland 1543

President:

Jacqui Smith
president@stella-nova.sf.org.nz

Editor:

Jacqui Smith
editor@stella-nova.sf.org.nz

This Month:

SPACE

Friday 2nd August, 7:30 pm Venue TBA

BOOK

Monday 22nd August, 7:30 pm, Chez Smith

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 17th March 2016, 7:30 pm
Chez Smith



Upcoming Events:

Fri Oct 21st - Mon Oct 24th 2016

Armageddon Auckland 2016

ASB Showgrounds, Greenlane
<http://armageddonexpo.com/nz/>

June 2-4th 2017

LEXICON 2017

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