



Margaret Mahy at Confusion in 1988
(Photo by Keith Smith.)

Issue XXX - August 2012

**N
O
V
A
Z
-
N
E**

Musings from Under the Mountain

I have to admit that yesterday was an interesting day... for one thing I tried more different kinds of beer that I'd ever sampled in my life before.

It began with a cup of tea and a gingernut biscuit, then dropping Paul off at school and heading to the dentist—a bit of filling had fallen out the day before, and I've learned that the sooner you get it fixed the less it hurts. No anaesthetic, and just a couple of twinges, all done in under half an hour.

This was a very good thing, because after picking up some computer bits from PB Tech, Keith and I were off to the Food Show. We parked in Cornwall Park, and walked to the Showgrounds—not only did this save money better spent on foodstuffs, but even my walking pace was faster than the queue of cars heading into the official carpark.

Inside the show there was many and varied delicious things. I found myself sampling many more artisan beers and ciders rather than the wines. There were tasty cheeses and sausages, Pitango offered a wonderful Thai chicken curry, there was a lovely truffled chicken pate, and there was bacon! We bought some venison products, some buffalo sausages, a bottle of cream limoncello, a kilo of honey and 2L of chocolate milk for Paul. I am so going to have to figure out how to make ginger syrup because I forgot to go back and get some.

As so to the evening and “British Interplanetary Space” at Chez Smith. Those of you who didn't turn up missed a grand evening. We tasted a variety of interesting British beers, mainly thanks to Maree, with names like “Old Speckled Hen”, “Honey Dew” and “Hobgoblin”. We munched on my home made pork pie, then ate fish fingers and chips, and finally took tea with the cake Keith had made and my homemade gingernuts (recipe as requested on page 7). We chatted about among other things, the Olympics opening ceremony, aging pop stars, and missions to Mars. We petted the cats and teased them with laser pointers. The Royal Jubilee concert played on the telly in the background (hence the talk of elderly entertainers). It was all very civilised, and after all that sampling, I must admit I'm getting a taste for beer. It is, after all, among mankind's oldest beverages, dating back to the very beginnings of agriculture and of civilisation. It certainly goes well with British foodstuffs. I don't doubt there will be beers at the Food Show at the end of the Universe....

And today I bought me a cell phone...
Jacqui

The View from the Comfy Chair

It's raining at the moment, but it has been fine enough to get some work done outside. We now have two raised gardens ready for use, and a third one just missing a wall which won't take long to fix, just a matter of putting the wooden prefab up. Anyone know where I can get hold of a few m³ of fresh topsoil? The next thing to do is to lay the garden path, then the BBQ patio next to it. Be nice to have it all finished by the beginning of summer. Spring flowers are starting to appear too. I can see daffodils starting to poke up in places around the place, unfortunately not where I planted some last autumn. Neither have the tulips made an appearance but the freesias have come up, flowered, and were knocked over by the high winds lately. Hopefully they'll recover from that.

On Food TV, we've been watching a series called “Come Dine with Me” and frankly, if you're going to host a dinner party, would you not try the recipes out first as a trial run beforehand instead of using your dinner guests as experimental subjects? After watching a few, I sometimes wonder just what goes through some people's minds as they compete to be the perfect host to win £1000.

With the NZSA winding down, I have been wondering if the reasons for its demise could also apply to Stella Nova and what we can learn from this. The NZSA was originally formed in order to make it easier to get information from NASA and other such groups as they are more likely to respond to organisations than individuals. Now that the Internet is here, people have been getting their spaceflight information from the Internet and hence it was decided that the NZSA is no longer needed. Increasing costs and declining membership have contributed to the decision to wind up the Society.

Is the same thing happening to Stella Nova? Our paid membership has been declining, and I'm beginning to wonder if there are those out there taking advantage and not paying for it. Is there a need for a formal monthly meeting any more to exchange information? Or can we just do that via social media? I have to admit, I would hate to lose the face-to-face meetings. I remember what it was like to be an isolated fan in the country and only finding out stuff through letters, fanzines and only meeting once a year at conventions. It may not be so bad with the Internet and online social media sites but I'm not sure I want to return to those days.

R.I.P. Margaret Mahy. I remember her books with fondness. She was a guest at two SF conventions as well as an SJV winner.

Keith, President Stella Nova

Margaret Mahy Quiz:

1. In which New Zealand town was Margaret Mahy born (in 1936) and raised?
 - A. Wanganui
 - B. Whangamata
 - C. Whangarei
 - D. Whakatane
2. Margaret Mahy's first published story was called "Harry Is Bad". How old was she at the time?
 - A. 7
 - B. 10
 - C. 14
 - D. 17
3. As a young woman, Margaret Mahy worked in which of these professions?
 - A. Accountant
 - B. Librarian
 - C. Teacher
 - D. Veterinarian
4. What was Margaret Mahy's first published book?
 - A. A Lion in the Meadow
 - B. Mrs Discombobulous
 - C. Sailor Jack and the 20 Orphans
 - D. The First Margaret Mahy Story Book
5. One of Margaret Mahy's best known titles, illustrated by Brian Froud, was "The Man Whose Mother was a".
 - A. Peddler
 - B. Pirate
 - C. Potter
 - D. Puppet
6. Which of these is the title of a Margaret Mahy poem that was published as a picture book?
 - A. Down the Back of the Chair
 - B. Down the Drain
 - C. Down the Gurgler
 - D. Down the Hatch
7. Margaret Mahy was Guest of Honour at two national SF&F conventions. Which were they?
 - A. Confusion in 1988, Constellation in 1996
 - B. Confusion in 1988, Conspiracy in 1997
 - C. Converge in 1988, Conquest in 1995
 - D. Converge in 1988, Constellation in 1996
8. Which accessories was Margaret Mahy noted for wearing when telling her stories?
 - A. Pink parasol and purple tie
 - B. Rainbow wig and long scarf
 - C. Top hat and tails
 - D. Witches' hat and cape
9. Which of Margaret Mahy's works was made into a TV series in 2010 for Maori Television?
 - A. Awesome Aotearoa
 - B. Kaitangata Twitch
 - C. Maddigan's Quest
 - D. Zerelda's Horses
10. Which literary award was NOT received by Margaret Mahy?
 - A. Carnegie Medal
 - B. Hans Christian Andersen Award
 - C. Newbury Medal
 - D. Sir Julius Vogel Award

In Memory of Margaret Mahy

I probably shouldn't be writing this. I have to confess that I've read very few of Margaret Mahy's books, and I don't think there are any in the house. This, in spite of having a child growing up here. I'm not sure that's a good thing, because there's no doubt that Margaret Mahy was one of the greats of children's literature, not just in New Zealand, but in the world. After all, they only hand out the international Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing every second year—known as the "Nobel Prize for children's literature"—and she became the only New Zealander to receive one, in 2006. There was also two Carnegie Medals, in 1982 for "The Haunting", and in 1984 for "The Changeover".

It intrigues me that if you write fantasy for adults that's not considered literature, and you are genre-ised, and rarely receive literary awards outside that genre. Even Sir Terry Pratchett, knighted for services to literature, doesn't get a look in at the Booker Prize. He does, however, have a Carnegie Medal—for a children's fantasy novel, "The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents". You see, fantasy for children is considered literary, and gets awards with more "serious" works. Weird, isn't it...

Which, in a strange way, brings me back to Margaret Mahy, who had a penchant for that sort of weirdness that children adore. She had a talent for language, not just in the way of putting words together as all good authors must have, but in inventing new words which still conveyed meaning. Unlike many children's authors, she didn't specialise in one age group. She wrote for both the very young, and older children, even teenagers.

So, where should I begin, to put together a reading list of Margaret's work? We'll assume this is for an older reader, so we'll consider mainly the teenage end of the spectrum. We'll also assume that the people who award medals and the like know something, so we'll begin with:

The Changeover
The Haunting
Alchemy
The Catalogue of the Universe
Memory
The Tricksters

Among the books for younger children, there's *The Moon and Farmer McPhee* which was New Zealand Post Children's Book of the Year in 2011.



Contents

Editorial and Presidential Address	2
Quiz & Margaret Mahy,	3
Sky at Night	4
Obituaries & Quiz answers	5
Cooks in SPACE!	6
Uncorked	7
Reviews—Books, Movies, PC Games	7-11
Notices and Upcoming Events	12

by
Jacqui
Smith

by
Keith
Smith

The Sky at Night – September 2012

Slooh has been adding a few new features recently, the most noticeable being the availability of FITS files from missions. FITS stands for Flexible Image Transport System and is the file format used for digital astronomical pictures (as well as other things). Even Hubble uses it. Think of FITS as being the equivalent of RAW data files from your digital camera and you won't be far wrong.

The thing about FITS files though is that they have to be processed. Slooh normally does this for you, in real time, producing the PNG format images you have seen in these columns. FITS however are the raw data off the CCD and usually come in sets of four, one for the luminosity image and one for each of the three colour filters: red, green, and blue. Several sets are taken and the results aligned, stacked, and then combined to produce LRGB images that can then be manipulated in programs such as Photoshop or GIMP to produce the finished product. If you have seen my Facebook page, you will see examples of my interpretations of the FITS data I, and others, have obtained. The ones with the blue logo are Slooh's PNGs, the red logo pics are my edited results – and comparing my results with others reveals how differently people interpret the same data, especially with what final tweaks to apply to make it look right.

I've also started recently subscribing to two magazines: *Astronomy* and *Australian Sky and Telescope* so, hopefully there will be two more sources for these columns to supplement the Yearbook and the RASNZ website.

Anyway, on to the good stuff. Believe it or not, Spring is on the way and the usual spring stars are starting to make an appearance. In the Northern sky you can see a triangle of bright stars. This is known in the Northern Hemisphere as the 'Summer Triangle' and consists of the stars Altair, Vega and Deneb. Altair is the higher one, and is flanked by two dimmer stars. Those three stars point straight at Vega which makes the other trailing star, Deneb. These mark the positions of the constellations Aquila, Lyra and Cygnus respectively. Unfortunately Cygnus is always low on our horizon as it contains many interesting objects such as the North American, Pelican, and Veil nebulas.

Sagittarius is now directly overhead. To the east is the triangular shape of Capricorn followed by Aquarius. This area is rather short of bright stars except for one, Formalhaut, marking the position of Pisces Australis. Another bright star, further to the south will be Achernar, reaching the nine-o'clock position around the south celestial pole. On the other side,

the Southern Cross will be at the three o'clock.

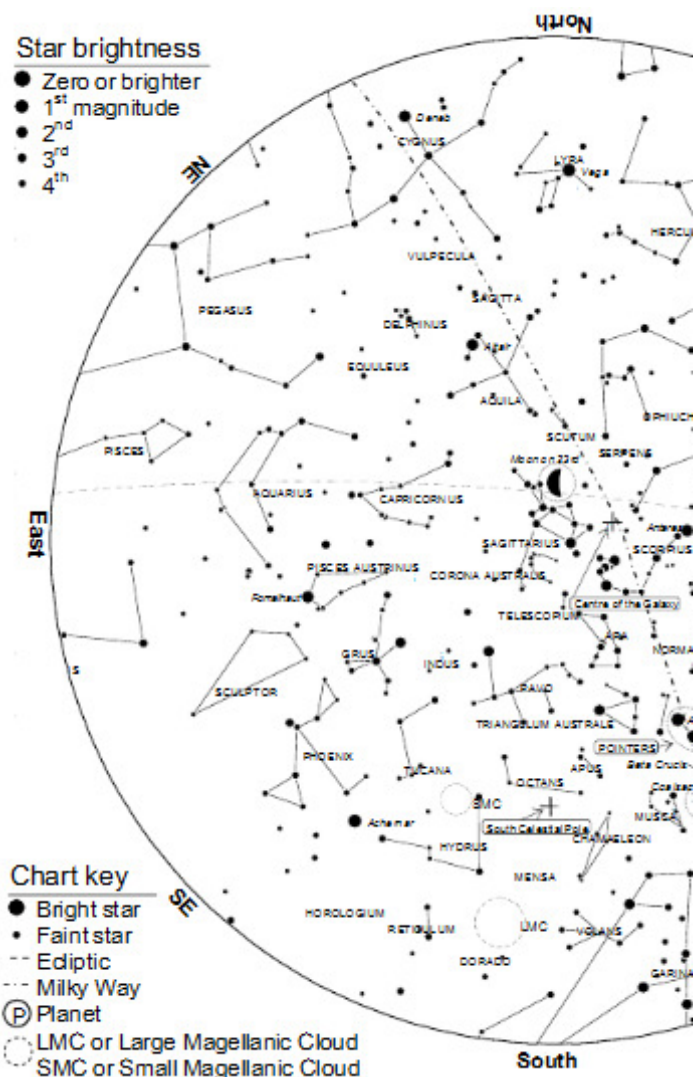
Looking back over to Altair, looking east from it, is the small and compact constellation of Delphinus. Further on and low on the horizon is Pegasus. Back over to Lyra which contains two other interesting objects: the Ring Nebula (M57) and a loose globular cluster (M56).

Saturn is getting very low in the western sky. Mars is not quite as low having moved into Libra. Jupiter is becoming very prominent in the sky rising late in the evening. Venus is being lost in the dawn light and will start appearing in the evening sky next to Saturn at the end of the month. Uranus and Neptune are worth looking for as both of them are near to opposition, meaning that they'll be at their closest distance to Earth. Uranus reaches opposition on the 29th of September and Neptune was on the 25th of August.

Moon: Full – 1st, Last Quarter – 9th, New – 16th, First Quarter – 23rd, Full – 30th.

Events:

Full Moon—1st September
Last Quarter—9th September
New Moon—16th September
First Quarter—23rd September
Full Moon—30th September
The Spring Equinox is also on the 23rd.



Obituaries

July 17

Forrest S. McCartney, (aged 81),
American USAF lieutenant general. He was director of the Kennedy Space Center from 1986 to 1991.

July 20

Simon Ward, (aged 70),
English actor who played Winston Churchill in "Young Winston", the Duke of Buckingham in "The Three Musketeers" (1973), and Zor-El in "Supergirl".

July 21

Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith, (aged 89),
British glaciologist and geologist, who led several research expeditions to the colder bits of Canada. Cape Hattersley-Smith in Antarctica is named for him.

July 23

Margaret Mahy, (aged 76),
New Zealand children's author, winner of the Hans Christian Anderson Award, two Carnegie Medals, and the Sir Julius Vogel Award. One of the great story-tellers, she will be missed.



Moon phase

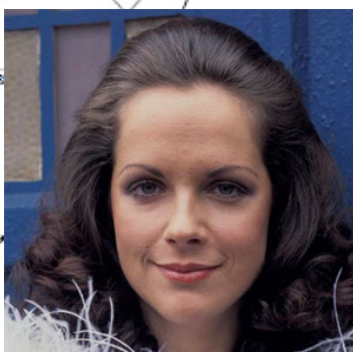
Last quarter: 08th
New Moon: 16th
First quarter: 23rd
Full Moon: 30th



Sally Ride, (aged 61),
American physicist and astronaut, who became the first American woman in space in 1983 at the age of 32—still the youngest ever American astronaut to go to space.

July 24

Robert Ledley, (aged 86),
American physicist (and dentist), inventor of the full-body CT scanner. His parents insisted he learn dentistry so he'd always have a source of income.



July 26

Mary Tamm, (aged 62),
English actress who starred as the first Romana opposite Tom Baker in the 1978–1979 Doctor Who story arc "The Key to Time".

STOP PRESS!

On August 15th 2012, science fiction writer Harry Harrison died at the age of 87. We will be dedicating the next issue of Novazine to his memory.



July 27

Geoffrey Hughes, (aged 68),
English actor best known to most people as Eddie Yates in "Coronation Street", but to SF fans as Mr. Popplewick in the Doctor Who story "The Trial of a Time Lord".

July 30

Jonathan Hardy, (aged 71),
New Zealand-born Australian actor best known to fans for providing the voice of Dominar Rygel XVI in Farscape.



August 6

Marvin Hamlisch, (aged 68),
American composer of musicals including "The Way We Were", and "A Chorus Line". He famously arranged Scott Joplin's music for "The Sting".

August 10

Carlo Rambaldi, (aged 86),
Italian special effects artist most famous for designing the title character of "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" (1982) and the mechanical head-effects for the creature in "Alien" (1979). He had the distinction of being the first special effects artist to be required to prove that his work on a film was not 'real'. Dog-mutilation scenes in "A Lizard in a Woman's Skin" (1971) were so convincing that its director was prosecuted for animal cruelty, but released when Rambaldi produced his collection of props!

August 12

Joe Kubert, (aged 85),
Polish-born American comic book artist, best known for his works on the characters Sgt. Rock, and Hawkman for DC Comics.



Quiz Answers:

- D. Whakatane
- A. 7
- B. Librarian
- A. *A Lion in the Meadow*
- B. Pirate
- A. *Down the Back of the Chair*
- A. Confusion in 1988, Constellation in 1996
- B. Rainbow wig and long scarf
- B. Kaitangata Twitch
- C. Newbury Medal

Compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith

O
B
I
T
S

Cooks in Space!

After British Interplanetary SPACE this month, I was asked to share some of the recipes with you. They are tried and tested in my personal kitchen, and my thanks go to the original authors.

Old English Pork Pie

(Based on a recipe in *The Great British Book of Baking*)

500g boned shoulder of pork, chopped into small pieces
 500g good pork sausage meat
 2 tsp chopped fresh sage
 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
 1 pinch of salt, pepper and grated nutmeg
For the pastry:
 350g high grade white flour
 1 teaspoon salt
 85g lard or white dripping
 185ml water

Start by preparing the filling. Put all the meat into a bowl with the sage, sauce, a little salt, plenty of pepper and a few gratings of nutmeg. Mix the ingredients thoroughly. Cover and leave for the flavours to develop while you make the pastry (or overnight if you prefer).

To make the pastry, sieve the flour, and salt into a heatproof bowl. Put the fat and water into a jug and heat in the microwave 30 seconds at a time until the fat melts, without letting the mixture boil. Pour it into the centre of the flour and mix vigorously with a wooden spoon to make a soft, paste-like dough. Don't worry if it looks a mess to begin with, it will come together as you beat. Wait for the mixture to cool before rolling it out.

Meanwhile prepare a round spring-form cake tin. Turn on the oven and heat it to 200°C/400°F/gas 6.

Cut off a third of the pastry and keep for the lid. On a lightly floured surface roll out the larger piece of pastry to a circle large enough to line the base and sides of the tin. It should be about 5 mm thick. Lightly flour the surface of the pastry, then fold it in four and lift it into the tin. Unfold the pastry and press it on to the base and up the sides of the tin so it overhangs by about 2 cm. Take care there are no cracks or holes. Pack the meat filling into the pastry case, making sure there are no pockets of air. Fold the excess pastry neatly over the filling. Brush this rim with a little water. Roll out the remaining pastry to a circle to fit the top of the tin. Lift the pastry over the filling to cover, then press the pastry edges firmly to seal, and pinch the rim to neatly flute it.

Make a large steam-hole in the centre of the pie. Brush with beaten egg if you like it shiny, then set the tin on a baking tray and bake in the oven for 15 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 180°C/350°F/gas 4 and bake for a further hour or so, until the top is a nice golden brown.

Leave to cool in the tin. Chill overnight to set fully, then unmould, and serve at room temperature.

(I know that looks complicated, but actually I've simplified the recipe in a number of ways. Classic pork pies have a layer of meaty jelly under the lid, but the first time I made a pork pie I found that there wasn't room. Basically, my filling hadn't shrunk in the baking and there wasn't a gap between the meat and the pastry. I never liked the jelly layer much, so I've skipped that bit ever since, and nobody's ever complained. It might be the result of using sausage meat instead of mincing the pork, but I prefer that anyhow).



Crystallised Gingernuts

(from *The Great British Book of Baking*)

350g self-raising flour
 1 tablespoon ground ginger
 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
 200g caster sugar
 115g unsalted butter
 85g golden syrup
 1 egg, beaten
 3 pieces crystallised ginger, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 170°C. Grease or line baking trays. Sift the flour, ground ginger, bicarbonate of soda and sugar into a mixing bowl. Gently melt the butter with the syrup in a jug in the microwave, and set aside until barely warm. Pour this mixture into the dry ingredients, add the beaten egg and the ginger and mix with a wooden spoon. When thoroughly combined, roll the mixture into walnut-sized balls, using your hands. Arrange on baking trays, spacing well apart to allow for spreading. Bake in preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes until a good golden brown. Keep an eye on them and, if necessary, turn the trays around halfway through the cooking period so that the biscuits brown evenly. Store in an airtight container.

(These are MUCH nicer than the store-bought kind, somewhat softer in texture, with a less harsh flavour—but still great with a cup of tea. The original recipe calls for stem ginger, but I find the crystallised ginger you get at the supermarket works just as well—or you can leave it out all together. And they're really easy!)



Uncorked

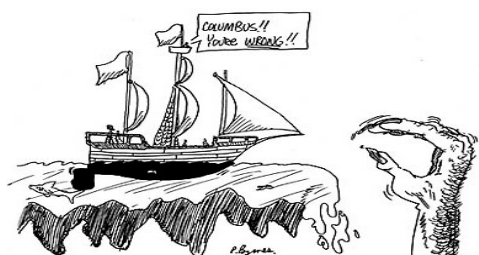
by Broderick Wells

Currently I have the unalloyed joy of tutoring several groups of students at the university in a subject known as Global History¹. I have been given full permission to use the Faculty's electric cattle prod to elicit responses from them. This may cause some of you to say "What?!" The whole point of tutoring students at university is not to ram information down their throat. Rather it is to lead them to the expressing of information that they had discovered earlier. And getting them to have the confidence to share it with others. Generally, this means they talk.

Most of the tutorials consist of me asking them questions about the readings they are supposed to have done over the previous week. The first question is always "Did you read it?" If the answer is no, they're fair game for booting out of the tutorial. How mean is that? Not my rule, but other students have complained that the ones that have done the work don't want passengers cluttering up the tutorials. So, most of my students are reading short articles on aspects of global history. Well, the ones that want to pass are, because miss more than three tutorials and you've failed terms...

But this last week I've been giving them instruction of writing essays, which is getting close to the blind leading the blind. But I'd better be impressing on these wonderful examples of humanity the importance of writing a good essay, because I have to mark them. As my three groups add up to about 65 students, I'm hoping to see some really good pieces of writing. My expectation is that there will be a few examples of great writing, a few examples of absolute dross, and most will fall in between. I've even given them the courtesy of pointing out how the university will assess their joyous little creations. We've got these wonderful little pages that break the essay down into its component atoms with just a few simple questions: Question answered? References adequately used? Logical development of argument? It's all so straight forward. It's also a pity the same system can't be used for marking my MA thesis. Bah humbug.

¹HIST 103/HIST 103G is the study of the interconnections of human society from approximately 1500AD. This date is arbitrary, but reflects the reconnection of the Americas to the rest of humanity through the failed trip to Cathay by Christopher Columbus. It tries to move Europe from the centre stage it has tended to occupy in history studies and move the focus onto other societies. Unfortunately, it is during this period that Europe, and Western Europe at that, does tend to dominate centre stage because of developments during the period in question. And I think this is the first footnote in a Broderick Wells' column. On the strength of this I'm off to the pub to celebrate. Back in September.



The Calling: Darkness Rising Bk 2

by Kelley Armstrong

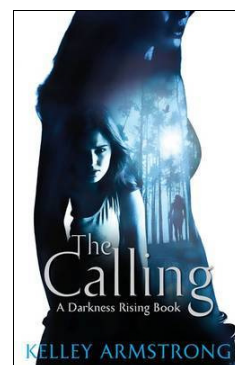
Published by Atom

Supplied by Hachette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Maya and friends are on a helicopter being evacuated from a forest fire. They realise they are being kidnapped just before the helicopter crashes. The group are forced to trek through the woods to safety, using their skills to help them survive. But someone is after them.... Pursued by a mysterious people and a man claiming to be Maya's birth father, the group of friends are hunted and picked off one by one. Maya is a skin-walker, able to change into a cougar, an ability that has been bred into her by the manipulation of genes. The others in the group have supernatural abilities too, that are the result of genetic manipulation.

This was fast paced, exciting, with a lot of action. I had to go back and read the first in the trilogy, The Gathering, after reading this. These books should be read in order to allow a slow build-up of action and answers, but enough background is given to jump straight in. It took me a third of the book before I twigged to who was chasing them and the other Kelley Armstrong series they are from. Once I figured it out, a lot of things made sense. I'm looking forward to the next book in the Darkness Rising trilogy. This is a fun series I'd recommend for teens and adults.



Arise

by Tara Hudson

HarperCollins

Supplied by HarperCollins

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Amelia is dead. Only not. She's stuck between two worlds, the afterlife and her former life, where she can see goings on, but no one can see her. Seers have the ability to see ghosts and luckily for Amelia, her boyfriend, Josh, is one. After months of worrying people because he talks to thin air, Josh is being sent to stay with relatives in New Orleans. He's happy because the relative he's being sent to is a Seer, so Josh can talk to her about Amelia. Meanwhile, Amelia is warned by another Ghost, Eli, stuck in Purgatory, that the demons of the ghost world are after her. He tells her that to control her and her powers, they'll use anyone close to her and to avoid hurting anyone, she must leave them. So Amelia decides to leave town and joins Josh on his trip. In a haunted city like New Orleans though, ghosts are everywhere and Amelia is soon being hunted again. She meets Gabrielle, a ghost who has found a way to live a half-life, and is determined to find the secret.

I just didn't like this book. I thought the heroine was dippy and the hero was boring. The first chapter also raised questions I didn't want to know, namely how does a live person get romantic with a ghost. Secondary characters, like Gabrielle, were interesting though, and hopefully she plays a bigger part in the next book (this was the second in a series). Teens might enjoy it.



Devil May Cry: Dark-Hunters Book 11

by Sherrilyn Kenyon

Published by Piatkus

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

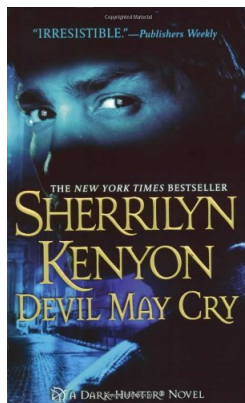
Sin is a Sumerian god who was stripped of his powers by Artemis.

He has spent the last 11,000 years fighting Gallu demons while dressed in black leather, and plotting revenge against Artemis.

Sin's father created the Gallu and his entire family has been destroyed fighting to keep humans safe from them. The only other person capable of fighting them is Ash, and bound by his promise to Artemis, he's unable to help. So Sin is the only one stopping the Gallu from destroying the earth.

Katra is a goddess devoted to fighting evil. She is also a servant of Artemis, carries out her orders, and is also Artie's lookalike daughter. After being ordered by Artemis to kill Sin, Kat is captured by him. After learning how her mother stole his powers, she decides to make things right by fighting with him to defeat the Gallu and avoid the Apocalypse. Kat is also Ash's daughter. He finally finds about her after 12,000 years. They must rescue Sin's twin brother, Zakar, from his torture at the hands of the Gallu, as well as stopping the Gallu demons, the Dimme, from escaping. Dream-Hunters, daimons, dolphoni and Chrontere demons team up to offer their help – yes! Simi! Throughout the book we get a clearer hint of Ash's past, his ties to Artemis, and family.

This is a well-written action-packed story filled with known and new characters and very hot romance. A new Dream-Hunter was introduced, Xipher, who sounds interesting! Ash's servitude to Artemis ends with this book and next in the series is his story – so there's that to look forward to.



The Wise Man's Fear

by Patrick Rothfuss

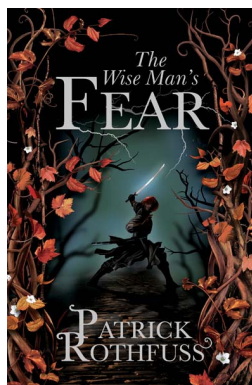
Published by Gollancz

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Cassie Craig

The Wise Man's Fear is the second book of the series The Kingkiller Chronicle: Day Two. I found this book very easy to read despite not reading the preceding novel. The reader goes on a magical journey with the main character Kvothe who is in disguise as a non-descript tavern owner and then he relates his life story to a passing scribe.

The story starts at a slow pace in the university that Kvothe attends and this takes up the first half of the story. The reader is able to follow quite easy as each new person is introduced to the story line. I felt the story was a little slow getting to the main plot where Kvothe leaves the university and travels the countryside. Quite a bit of the story is at the university where Kvothe is not the most popular person and has to work hard to even have a place there. He does have outstanding magical abilities but



these are unrealised so he comes across as an average person. His parentage and love of music influences the story and his reaction to different circumstances. As Kvothe travels around the countryside he uses his unrealised magical abilities to bamboozle not only himself but his opponents. He meets a fairy-tale creature similar to an ancient mariner's siren, who lures men to their death. She introduces and teaches him many forms of lovemaking and fortunately for Kvothe he is able to resist her charms and makes a deal so he can escape. Adding another myth to his magical abilities under his cap of achievements because his companions thought he would surely be dead after being lured by Felurian.

Kvothe travels to the land of Ademre where he becomes a student in the art of self-defence and swordsmanship. He is a barbarian in this land of discreetness and quiet. Most of the language is conveyed by hand signals. Kvothe expertly plays the lute but music is a loud outward show of emotion that Ademre do not use so Kvothe has to hide his love of music.

The story ends quite abruptly, which seems quite peculiar seeing as so much detail was introduced in the beginning and throughout the story. I enjoyed this fantasy and eagerly await the next novel.

Elves: Rise of the TaiGethen

by James Barclay

Gollancz

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Cassie Craig

Book two of the series "Elves" is an action packed novel which grabs the reader's attention from beginning to end. The story follows two elves, Auum and Takaar, who both have two very different ideas about

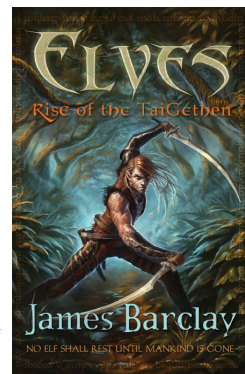
how to free the enslaved elf population of Calaius from man.

This story has mankind in ownership of powerful magic and the elves seem powerless against it. Quite different from how we normally perceive the elven kind. Auum is determined to fight for elfen freedom with those of his TaiGethen cell. He and sets off to the old Elven capital to gather his people to war. Meanwhile Takaar seems to be a traitor and in cahoots with mankind.

Elves have been enslaved for 150 years and according to man they are ready to be slaughtered and exterminated from the land. The enemy typically underestimates their opponent. Man marches to finally conquer all elves with flying mages and sheer force of numbers, elves are viewed in their eyes as nothing more than animals.

Auum races to beat man to the last bastion of hope where elves are still free. A new breed of elves emerges from the forest called ClawBound. These ClawBound elves have changed since their brethren have been enslaved and now they have developed special powers with panthers that their predecessors never had. The ClawBound and Auum's TaiGethen make lightning attacks on man's army. Meanwhile Takaar gathers devotees to be part of his new magical arts

James Barclay is able to plunge the reader into a new universe and the story gallops fast paced the entire novel. This novel is exciting to read and not boring at all.





Directed by Rupert Sanders
 Produced by Sam Mercer, Palak Patel, Joe Roth
 Story by Evan Daugherty
 Based on Snow White by Brothers Grimm
 Starring Kristen Stewart, Charlize Theron
 Chris Hemsworth, Sam Claflin

Reviewed by Maree Pavletich

Vehicle, vehicle, vehicle. Sorry but anyone expecting more than a carrier for two currently hot actors, will be disappointed with this effort. Having said that; it is spectacular to look at but there is no excuse for bad special effects these days.

A script that was more than a once over lightly would have helped, also one that wasn't so obviously hastily rewritten towards the end.

Plot holes: how did SN manage to sprint, jump, ride, and fight while bench-pressing armour, after having been locked up in a small prison cell for 10 years? I know I get puffed climbing stairs and I exercise (Ok, not a lot but not in a two-by-four cell either).

I know it was all very fraught but no one asks the Huntsman "What's your name?"

No mention is made of any other magic than the Queen's, so the whole "woken with true love's kiss" is lost on most of the audience. Are we just supposed to think that this version incorporates the "True love" trope? Surely in ten years William and his Dad would have had spies to get some inkling of the princess's fate?

In the climactic battle, where you would expect the lower class and PTSD'ed Huntsman to get it heroically in the neck, miraculously he survives with nary a scratch and hangs about looking all meaningful at the coronation.

You can just hear the horrified gasps of the suits at the test screening, as they cried "No! You can't have a heroic while totally appropriate death for the Huntsman! He has to be around to be part of a love triangle to come between SN and the loyal, brave, upper class, trained to be consort, William, IN PART TWO!"

Directed by Ridley Scott
 Produced by Ridley Scott, David Giler, Walter Hill
 Written by Jon Spaihts, Damon Lindelof
 Starring Noomi Rapace, Michael Fassbender
 Guy Pearce, Idris Elba
 Logan Marshall-Green, Charlize Theron
 Reviewed by Maree Pavletich

Why does Ridley Scott insist that this is only a sort of prequel? Let's be honest; it is a prequel - and a rehash of Alien Film One. I liked it, despite knowing what was going to happen. The only "surprise" was finding out "what" would survive along with the "Last survivor of the Prometheus." In Film One it was the cat, Film Two, the kid, Prequel, the android. HO (SSDD) HUM.

I know the aliens who developed the creatures (supposedly to kill off humanity; since we were their "failed experiment" perhaps?) have very different and very ALIEN motives from humans, but that is exactly what made this seem like half a movie. I want to know if Elizabeth found the aliens and found out why they created us (or at least meddled in our DNA) and then decided to wipe the slate clean. But then, even if she did, the information never got back to Earth, or Ripley and Co, many years later, would have had a heads up, surely. Or is that explained by a company/government cover-up of massive proportions? Probably, given Ridley Scott's views on such matters.

The film seemed to be a bit of a mishmash, of odd plot points and set pieces that the director had left over from other movies. For example: the android's obsession with Lawrence of Arabia. I waited for this to become relevant to the plot but it never did - maybe in the sequel to the prequel....?



Red Orchestra 2 Heroes of Stalingrad

(Available via Steam \$19.95 US)

Reviewed by Brett Peacock

I had never played the first "Red Orchestra" so I was a bit nervous about picking up this one at first. It was on special for \$US19.95 and included an number of DLC content files...and it was a WWII Shooter/Tactical, similar to the excellent "Brothers in Arms" trilogy. It was a great spend. The game is tense and exciting with technical accuracy, a large part of gameplay. It's also not for the fainthearted - the longest I've managed to go without fatal injuries is a tense 18 minutes. There are a number of notable differences between this and other shooters. Firstly, the aim is realism. It's very easy to get your head shot off. But equally, if you aim well, you can take out any enemy equally as easily. If they're not in a tank! There are no "Bosses", but there are strongpoints, and lots of enemy soldiers to deal with.

Red Orchestra 2 has a large online component, but it does not dominate the game, and solo players can complete every stage... theoretically. But it does shine in multiplayer - in a large game there will be two teams of human players, all trying to kill each other by any means necessary. Mere computer AI cannot compete with the human mind and cunning, no matter that the AI is better in this game than many others. The AI of the game (for BOTH sides) is good, making any encounter a dangerous one. When you give an order to flank a house they do NOT need to know which house (it will be the one with the bad guys in it) it's done without further input from you. But, enemies are harder to find and kill because they actively work against you (which is good, they are NOT just there for you to shoot at!) The visuals are even more realistic, approaching "Skyrim" on sheer looks and its especially gratifying to note that the environments are HUGE, and have a distinctive "Russian Steppes" atmosphere to them, architecture etc is spot on to period photos and colour photos at that...

Many FPS fans will be put off by two things. First it's very easy to die, much easier than many FPS games. (One headshot WILL kill you - keep your head down if you hear someone say SNIPER!) And second the tactical element means you cannot just think about yourself, you have a squad (of up to 8) to take care of.. You begin the game as a Private and are soon promoted to a Gefreiter.



One thing that "jumps" people some out of the game is that when you die, you immediately take over as another squad member. (At least until you run out of them!) I'm still trying to decide if I think this is a 'good' or 'bad' thing. On the downside, it means your weapons fit changes, and you may end up struck with something you hate using! But, on the upside, it also means that you can resume (without pause) the battle you are in, instead of reloading or stepping backwards.

For solo play, the first battle takes place out on the steppe, in a small village, which you are tasked to clear, in order to secure the flank of the main advance. This fight is only the tutorial, but can

last up to two hours.

And don't think that you can find any safe, predictable paths. The game's AI changes with every battle fought. This means that if you attack a building full of Russians they WILL react differently to each attack. Sometimes they all fight to the death, sometimes its a token fight and sometimes they fight very well, and sometimes (not often) they run away quickly, almost without a shot being fired. And the fields have no "no-go" areas. If you can see it and walk or run on it, or climb it, you can go there. If you try to exit the field, it WILL be seen as "desertion" and the punishment (after two warnings) is that the nearest NCO will shoot you dead.



There is no "helpful" HUD, just an aiming point, so friendly fire is ... very easy. You cannot tell of that figure in the smoke is Russian or German until you see him clearly, and that might be too late! Reinforcements are handled according to your rank. A Private (Mann) cannot order up help, so the game will provide some but ONLY if really required. A Gefreiter can ask but only twice per battle, so use them wisely. A



Feldwebel may ask up to 4 times per battle and an officer can call on reinforcements as many times as required but they then become subject to availability. (He may have to wait for x minutes or only get 1/2 to 3/4 the number of troops he needs. Very good and lifelike...)

There are a LOT of other features about this game that I haven't touched on at all, mostly because I have not gone that far. But one of them is gore. It's gory. Not constantly, but seeing a figure hit by artillery and bits of it decorating the landscape after is still keeping it real and not "over the top". When a soldier is shot he goes down, and the amount of blood varies. If he's shot once there is not a lot. If he runs into a stream of MG fire, he can get cut in half! And that is not a pretty sight.

One thing I have not mentioned is the historical accuracy - it extends down to individual fights, and places. One early battle within Stalingrad is for the railway station, and the ingame building is closely based on the original building and all damage is modelled after contemporary accounts and photos of the fight. The tutorial battle is also a real village and is laid out as it was in 1942. This care and attention to details really lifts this game well above the competition (it won IGN's "Multiplayer Game of the Year" award in 2011).

I really like this game. It's almost the WW2 shooter I've always dreamed of. There are a few small issues- almost bad enough to be called a niggle, but not quite. Like Skyrim, what's good drowns them out comprehensively. Not least because you can turn the audio dialogue to German & Russian only! It makes it a lot harder if you don't understand either!

There is also a Construction kit for making your own battles and battlefields for online play. So those wanting a non-historical fight can play to their heart's content as well. And others can spend time building Kursk!

(Operation Zitadelle in July 1943, the Greatest Battle in History with over 2.4 MILLION soldiers in one really Big battle, over 200 Km of frontline.) With this game, it could be done! The developers have already produced a Pacific war expansion for this, and I'm considering buying it. 4.5/5 stars for this.

Dead Island

(Steam version)
Deep Silver Software
GMBH

Zombies are all the rage at the moment, aren't they? Deep Silver (of Sacred 2 fame) have entered the fray with Dead Island. And they have - with one reservation - made a pretty good Zombie game.

The reservation?

Well, You get to play one of five clichés trapped on a Phuket-like resort Island, somewhere Tropical, by a Zombie outbreak. You can play a tough female aboriginal cop with bad Aussie accent, a Rap wannabe, a Drunk Tourist...

The Steam D/L was painless and the game is stable and plays smoothly on my system. The scenery is nice and they make the game deliberately more difficult by making guns and ammo (a) almost impossibly expensive to buy, and (b) really hard to find. So you have to resort



to the gory stand-bys - that's to say your common or garden implements and kitchen utensils, as well as clubs and tyre irons. I like this way of handicapping you, it makes you think hard about how to tackle each and every problem. Because not doing so WILL get you dead.

It's a game you can get through in single player, but it's really designed as a multiplayer, online version, for co-op play. Some areas literally swarm with the walkers, and a lone character will NOT be able to easily get through.

Which is kind of disappointing, as many people actually do like playing solo. Other than that, it's a good entry into the FPS Zombie killer genre, and has its entertainment value (it's violent and gory, just like a zombie movie.)

Yes, it has quests to complete, but at least most of the quests have some story-related point to them- e.g. if you are sent to find someone (or their body) it will have some information attached that affects you later on.

Inventory is Ok, but clumsily implemented and I HATED the idea that you had to go shopping (and selling) your loot and weapons. That alone jumped me right out of the Zombie Apocalypse!

Overall the game looks and plays very nicely, but there (to me, at least) is just something... not quite "there" about the game. It's almost like that cake that you baked once, you followed the recipe, you cook it perfectly and it just... doesn't turn out delicious. Just...well, nice. Not great, just nice. And that's how I see the game. It is not really very compelling. You don't get that urge to find out what lurks around the bend, because you just KNOW it'll be more of those Zombies! And that's the biggest problem. There's just Zombies, and they get destroyed. And they get tougher...unlike a "real" zombie. (I haven't bought the "Walking Dead" game yet, but I'm told it's far better than this.

The game has a lot of good stuff in it, but somehow they missed the point by letting multiplayer rule - it actually NEEDS compelling storytelling to keep your interest. It would still be worthy of a mark of 6/10. However, the really awful handling of the RPG elements (mostly the crappy opening and the inventory) subtract a full mark and I can only give it 5/10 overall. Not the best game I own, but I will play it now and then for the Zombie habit!



Au Contraire 2013 will be the 34th National Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention, and the second Au Contraire convention.

Where: Wellington

When : 12th to 14th of July 2013
(last weekend of university holidays)

Venue: Quality Hotel,
Upper Cuba Street

Guests of Honour:
Jennifer Fallon

Jennifer Fallon is the author of 15 full-length novels, and a number of published short stories. In addition to her own fantasy series - the Demon Child trilogy, the Hythrun Chronicles, the Second Sons trilogy, the Tide Lords quadrilogy, and the Rift Runners series - she has written both a tie-in novel and short fiction for the TV series Stargate SG-1, an official Zorro story for Disney, a novella for the Legends of Australian Fantasy anthology, and has her own superhero - the Violet Valet.



Fan Guest of Honour:
Anna Klein

The Fan Guest of Honour for 2013 has been instrumental in the development of both the Auckland and the wider national live action roleplaying community. She has been a driving force behind the New Zealand Live Action Roleplaying Society, a funding and advisory organisation for the hobby. Anna has also led the organisation of Chimera, the original Larp convention in New Zealand.



Charity:
Wellington Women's Refuge



WOMEN'S REFUGE®

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:

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

Editor:

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

This Month:

BOOK Monday August 27th
(at Chez Smith)

SPACE Friday September 7th at 7:30 pm
(at the Kremlin)

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 19 September, 2012, 7:30 pm
Auckland Horticultural Centre,
990 Great North Road,
Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

July 12-14th 2013 Au Contraire 2013
34th New Zealand National SF Convention
<http://www.aucontraire.org.nz/index.php>