



**Aliens invade Paris!**

*(Photo by Teri Doyle)*

**Issue XLV - Jan/Feb 2015**

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# Musings from Under the Mountain

It's 2015... It's the Future!

Yes, really. This is the year that Marty McFly visits in *Back to the Future II*, to find a world akin to the one in which we live in a surprising number of ways. Here are just some of them:

**Wireless video games:** There is a scene where a young boy (played by a young Elijah Wood, in his very first role) informs Marty McFly that games that require you to use your hands are totally stupid. Maybe not, but wireless gaming is a thing.

**3D Movies:** In the 1980's when BttF2 was made, the 3D movie was dead—but it came back with new technology in *The Polar Express* in 2003, and is now almost unavoidable. However, in spite of strings of sequels, we can be thankful that *Jaws 13 in 3D* has not happened... yet.

**Tablet Computers:** A member of Hill Valley's Preservation Society holds out what is recognisably a tablet in order for Marty to sign a petition to save the clock tower. Such electronic gadgets are now very real, (and in fact somewhat thinner).

**Video Conferencing:** BttF2 is hardly the first movie to predict video phones, but it may be the first with the actual video conference (unless you count Star Trek's viewscreens).

**Wall-mounted widescreen televisions:** The TV future Marty has in his living room looks just like the ones that fill the shelves of your local JB, even down to the 16:9 aspect ratio.

**Wearable Tech:** Those glasses the kids are wearing in the dinner table scene look a bit like, and act a lot like Google Glass. Mind you, this is technology the world may yet decide is not wanted.

**Obsessing over Personal Electronics:** They're not just at the dinner table, they're everywhere. Although BttF2 does not predict people in restaurants using their phones to photograph their food—or museums having to ban selfie-sticks.

The most iconic technology seen in *Back to the Future II* is, of course, the hoverboard. Now, it's not a go-anywhere device as depicted in the movie, because it runs on magnetics, but the hoverboard does exist. See this article: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/hoverboards-turned-into-reality-by-u-s-startup-1.2832105>

Flying cars are another icon of BttF2, and in the movie they are probably a product of the same technology as the hoverboard. That is most likely some kind of anti-gravity, and if we had that, it really would change our world. Unfortunately, short

of an epic scientific breakthrough, it's not likely to happen any time soon. Something resembling a flying car, on the other hand, might be closer, though it would not look much like the flying cars of the movies. The latest concepts I've seen are more like human-carrying quadcopter drones. And there remains the question of safety. If people persist in having accidents in the more-or-less linear environment of the road, can you imagine what would happen if you let drunken morons loose in the three-dimensional space of the air? Where any accident could cause you to fall to the ground, splat? I think we'll see self-driving cars first, long before cars take to the air.

The other major game-changing innovation in *Back to the Future II* is "Mr Fusion", the "home energy reactor", which enables Doc to convert rubbish into power through nuclear fusion. Now, one of the most common elements in household rubbish would be hydrogen, and I guess the first step would be separating it out, but it would be simpler just to feed it water from the tap, and extract hydrogen by electrolysis. Nevertheless, the invention of a pocket fusion reactor really would change the world. It would make a major dent in the human-caused contribution to climate change for starters. Unfortunately, the whole nuclear fusion thing is proving to be a whole lot harder than we thought back in the 1980's.

However, there are some predictions in *Back to the Future II* which turned out to be plain wrong. The laser disc is a thing of the past, long since replaced by the DVD. The fax machine is going, gone for most purposes. Dehydrated food may be a boon for astronauts and submariners, but the idea of a dehydrated pizza is just a bit impractical—and not likely to be nearly as nice as one made fresh from scratch at home. And as for that double tie... What were they thinking?

Jacqui Smith, Editor

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# Science Fiction and Body Image

SF fandom all over the world has recently been in mourning in the wake of the passing of Leonard Nimoy. Much has been written in many other venues about his life and work; while reading up online about him, I was intrigued to discover that, amongst many other achievements, he was also a keen photographer. One of the books he published was a portfolio of body shots featuring larger sized women, entitled 'The Full Body Project'. Although others have also produced work on similar themes, it's still reassuring to see any work that

franchise to present an optimistic, life-affirming vision of the future, but nonetheless it's still a high-profile manifestation of the way society overall has changed since the end of the Second World War. The early pulp SF of the twenties and thirties was a product of its time, with echoes of the racial and gender biases that were endemic at the time, but the world in general, and fandom in particular, has moved forward from there.

SF fandom today can arguably make a claim to being more progressive than ever before in the specific field of gender relations. Although there is much that society at large still needs to do to end the status of women as second-class citizens (and, yes, fandom, like any other field in life, still has its share of misogynist attitudes), it's still heartening that many authors and fans – and particularly male authors and fans – in the SF field are supportive of the health, education, and welfare of women all around the world.

Although SF culture, like any other culture, is as much a reflection as a shaper of society at large, it's probably not overstating the case to say that imaginative fiction has been one of many different cultural movements that have



conveys the message that physical attractiveness isn't dependent on being a heroin-chic stick insect. (To quote the advertising tagline that Dove used to use for its products; "There are eight women in the world who look like supermodels, and three billion women who don't".)

Between Leonard Nimoy's work in this field, and his contribution to making Star Trek the cultural phenomenon it has become, this set me to thinking about the nature of SF fandom's social culture. Fans in general seem to be accepting of each other, without any prejudices about body appearance, race, gender or differing views of the world. Although the odd flame war crops up in fandom, it seems to be the exception rather than the rule; even when opinions differ, debating the issues usually remains reasonable.

Star Trek is by no means the only science fiction

helped move the world forward towards a more egalitarian society. Leonard Nimoy's life and work, both in the role he played in Star Trek and in the world at large, was an important instance of this steady progress forward. Perhaps the best way fandom all over the world can honour his memory is to continue to practice the many actions he helped to inspire, from real-world space exploration to social and gender equality and acceptance of each other, regardless of race, gender or appearance.

On a final note for this column; the club's AGM is due shortly, and by then I will have finished two terms as club president. It's time to start thinking about electing the next club president; please let your crew know if you're willing to run for the job, or if you're willing to nominate somebody else for it...

Alan Parker, President, Stella Nova



## Moscow Cosmonaut Museum

музей космонавт



And thus  
rewarded are  
our toils,  
That having  
vanquished  
lawlessness and  
dark,  
We have  
forged great  
flaming wings  
For our Nation  
And this age of  
ours!

*Approximate translation of the verse near the entrance to the Cosmonaut Museum. The museum is at the base of the 110m titanium monument which was "Constructed to celebrate the outstanding achievement of the Soviet people in space exploration" (1964)*

The Cosmonaut Museum experience starts before you set foot in the museum proper. Cosmonauts Alley connects the nearby metro station to the museum and features a walk of stars and busts of important people in the soviet space program. According to the tourist guide, "Cosmonauts Alley is a wide, park-like pedestrian avenue" but several inches of snow make it difficult to see anything as a park (although the Ferris wheel was probably a good clue) and we couldn't tell where the street ended and the alley began. The museum was well worth the visit and we spent several hours there. The admission charge was a bargain 300 roubles (approx. \$6.00) each. Extra if you wanted to take photos. Guided tours were only available in Russian. In response to years of complaints on trip advisor etc, the curators are starting to add information in English. It looks like they started by subtitled the impressive audio-visual presentation about the International Space Station and translating some of the notes on the early moments of soviet space technology. There was plenty to see and plenty to appreciate, but being able to appreciate more of it in your own language would be even better.



Photos  
and text  
by  
Teri  
Doyle

English and Russian. They were a grim reminder of what the crew may have to deal with, far from specialist trauma centres. And I'll take my normal household loo over the ISS style one any day! (For obvious reasons, astronauts have to fasten themselves to the seat and brace their nether regions for the suction – I'll leave that to your imagination!) Edible toothpaste and no-rinse shampoo, I can cope with though.



The museum was arranged to allow visitors to immerse themselves in the glories of the soviet space race from its inception to the modern day. There were replicas of early communications satellites and of Sputnik 1 and 2 (complete with poor Laika). Then we have the Vostok and Soyuz spacecraft, the first photos of the dark side of the moon and the expected propaganda posters before moving ahead to the more recent spacecraft.

Looking at the exhibits, I gained a whole new level of respect for the early astronauts: "That was all the protection they had? And it weighed how much?" And until I saw the spacesuits and their fastenings at the back, I had always thought they were a two-piece suit clamped together at the waist.

One of the highlights for me would have to be walking through a full-size replica of the International Space Station. The crew have their own sleeping spaces, separated into American and Russian, but visitors have to tether their sleeping bags to any available wall space. The display of astronaut food showed just how creative the earth-based chefs were. You name it and it could be made astronaut-style. The museum made it very obvious that the Americans and the Russians had their own food. The US packaged their edibles in blue boxes and the Russians (naturally!) in red. Both nations have their own emergency med kits but for safety reasons, the contents are labelled in

Something else I won't forget was the chance to stand right next to a huge chunk of the ill-fated Mir, which was de-orbited in 2001.

A small Russian flag made us smile. Why? It was attached to a plaque stating "This Russian flag was taken to the moon by US astronauts, July 1969." Good old one-upmanship or was it a conciliatory gesture by NASA?

And in another cute touch: the 'littlest cosmonaut's rooms' were identified like this! (*photos from tripadvisor*)



Photos and text by Teri Doyle

I presented this quiz at the February meeting, and thought I might as well share it here. I will admit that some of the answers are found in my editorial!

**And, now it's... 2015 in SF!**

1. Which movie predicts hoverboards, flying cars and automated clothes in the year 2015?

- A. Back to the Future II
- B. Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure
- C. Bladerunner
- D. Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home

1a. Bonus:

Complete the quote:

"We're descending toward Hill Valley, California, at 4:29 PM, on Wednesday, \_\_\_\_\_, 2015," Doc Brown in the opening scenes of *Back to the Future II*.

2. Which 1942 story by Isaac Asimov is set in the year 2015 on the planet Mercury?

- A. Liar!
- B. Nightfall
- C. Reason
- D. Runaround

2a. Bonus:

What was the name of the robot in Runaround?

- A. Al
- B. Herbie
- C. Robbie
- D. Speedy

3. What career does Rick Deckard take up in the year 2015?

- A. Bladerunner
- B. Highlander
- C. Terminator
- D. Vampire Hunter

4. Which anime TV series is set in Toyko-3 in the year 2015 following a global cataclysm known as the Second Impact?

- A. Megazone 23
- B. Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind
- C. Neon Genesis Evangelion
- D. Vampire Hunter D

5. What apocalyptic event will occur in 2015 according to the TV series "Fringe"?

- A. The Collapse
- B. The Impact
- C. The Plague
- D. The Purge

6. In which movie is the first permanent colony on the Moon said to be established in 2015?

- A. Black Hole
- B. Event Horizon
- C. Interstellar
- D. Treasure Planet

7. Which 1995 computer game based in the Terminator franchise is set in the year 2015?

- A. Dawn of Fate
- B. Future Shock
- C. Rampage
- D. Skynet

8. Which actor ends up fighting his own clone in 2015 in the movie "The 6th Day"?

- A. Arnold Schwarzenegger
- B. Hugh Jackman
- C. Sylvester Stallone
- D. Tom Cruise

9. In 2015, according to "Dawn of the Planet of the Apes", 90% of the human population will die in a outbreak of which disease?

- A. Bird Flu
- B. Bovine Flu
- C. Simian Flu
- D. Swine Flu

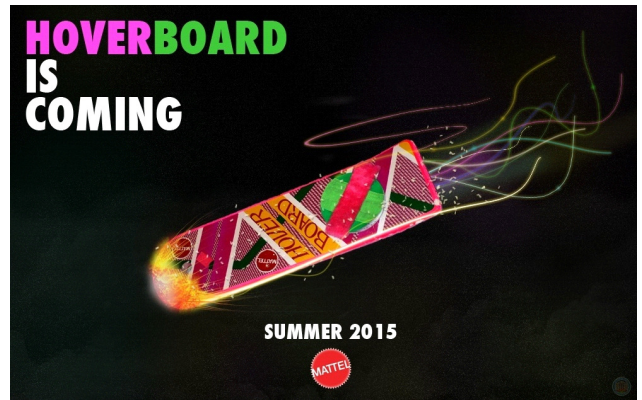
9a. Bonus:

Where will the outbreak begin?

- A. Dubai
- B. Heathrow
- C. Hong Kong
- D. LAX

10. In which classic 1990 video game does a "Small War" occur in 2015, wherein many of humanity's nuclear weapons are used?

- A. Battlefield 3
- B. Doom
- C. Star Control
- D. XCOM: Enemy Unknown



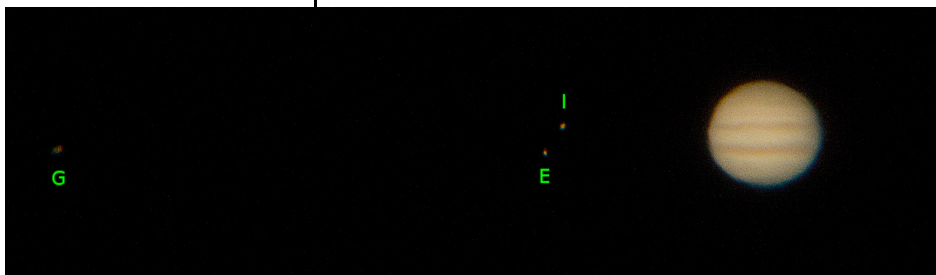
**Quiz Answers:**

1.	A Back to the Future II
1a.	October 21st
2.	D Runaround
3.	A Bladerunner
4.	C Neon Genesis Evangelion
5.	D The Purge
6.	B Event Horizon
7.	B Future Shock
8.	A Arnold Schwarzenegger
9.	C Simian Flu
9a.	B Heathrow
10.	C Star Control

# The Sky at Night

## April 2015

Jupiter (through the Zeiss telescope at Stardome)



Many of you may have noticed that rather bright 'star' to the north in the evenings. Well, it's not a star, but the planet Jupiter. It's in a prime position for viewing at the moment,

having passed opposition only recently (February 6<sup>th</sup>). Observers with small telescopes can see the four Galilean moons moving around the planet, much like Galileo himself did in 1610. Larger telescopes (or higher magnification) can also see the alternating light and dark bands that make up Jupiter's cloud tops as well as the Great Red Spot, a storm that has been seen on the planet for as long as it has been observed by telescopes (discovered in 1665). Recently, it has been shrinking, currently half the size it used to be.

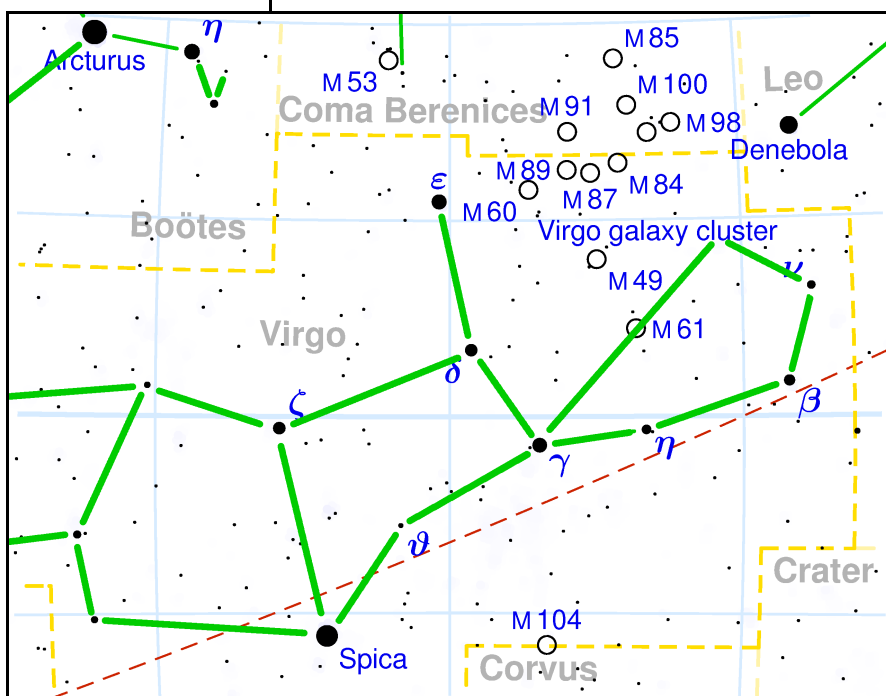
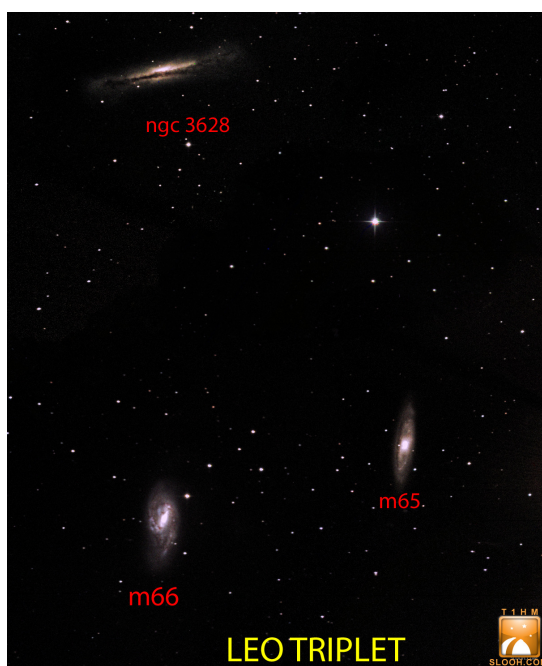
Jupiter is always worth looking at as its surface is dynamic. As well as the GRS changing colour, other spots have appeared and disappeared and even the belts have changed colour and 'disappeared' such as the South Equatorial Belt in 2010. In addition, the shadows of the moons can sometimes be seen crossing the face of the planet, usually one but sometimes two can be seen and, on rare occasions, three, as was seen for only a few minutes on January the 24<sup>th</sup>. The next triple shadow transit isn't due until 2032.

To make things even more interesting, the plane of the moon's orbits line up with the Earth at this time (occurs twice every twelve years) so, as well as the moons transiting Jupiter and disappearing in its shadow, the moons can also eclipse each other. From Earth, we would see one moon appear to merge with another or fade as the shadow of another moon falls on it. Certainly the skies as seen from above the surface of Jupiter or on one of the Jovian moons would be fascinating to see – assuming one could survive the deadly radiation around the planet.

So, Jupiter, with its changing cloud tops, and its four giant moons dancing around it in a celestial waltz, is an object that never ceases to amaze me, no matter how many times I've looked at it, either with my own telescope, the Zeiss, or the Slooh robotic telescopes.

What else is going on? Well, if galaxies are your thing, you're in for a treat. Rising in the east is Virgo and if you use a moderate sized instrument in the area between Virgo and Coma Berenices, you will be looking in

the direction of the Virgo cluster, which contains several galaxies, including at least six Messier objects. One prominent grouping in there is called the Markarian Chain. Another galaxy, known as the Sombrero Galaxy (M104), also in Virgo, while three more (M65, M66 and NGC3628) in Leo are known as the Leo Triplet.



by  
Keith  
Smith

# SKY AT NIGHT

by  
Keith  
Smith

Star Clusters also abound, many of which can be seen in binoculars. A few can even be seen with the naked eye on a clear, dark, night. The best known one (apart from the Pleiades) in this area is the Beehive Cluster (M44), in Cancer. There is also M41 in Canis Major, M35 in Gemini as well as several others. Go find them.

Speaking of Gemini, that's lying roughly due north and can be found by identifying the two stars, Castor and Pollux. Remember that the twins appear to be standing on their heads so the rest of the constellation stretches upwards. Cancer (with Jupiter in it) is to its right with Leo and Virgo rising in the east.

Up overhead, we're looking towards Carina, where several objects such as the Eta Carina Nebula (NGC3372), and several clusters including IC2602 (The Southern Pleiades), NGC 2516, NGC 3114, NGC 3532 and the globular NGC 2808. Sweeping the area with binoculars can be fruitful.

Following down the Milky Way, our final stop for this article is Centaurus and our own Southern Cross which are on the rise. The naked eye can see two more interesting objects here: the Jewel Box cluster (NGC 4755) and the Omega Centaurus globular cluster (NGC5139).

As for planets – we've already mentioned Jupiter, and Saturn rises around the time Jupiter sets. Venus is very low in the evening sky at dusk, but you may get a glimpse. It will however get higher and higher in the evening sky as the month progresses. Mars is doing the opposite in the evening, being low in the evening sky and getting lower. Mercury is a prominent morning object but also getting lower as it starts to line up with the sun.

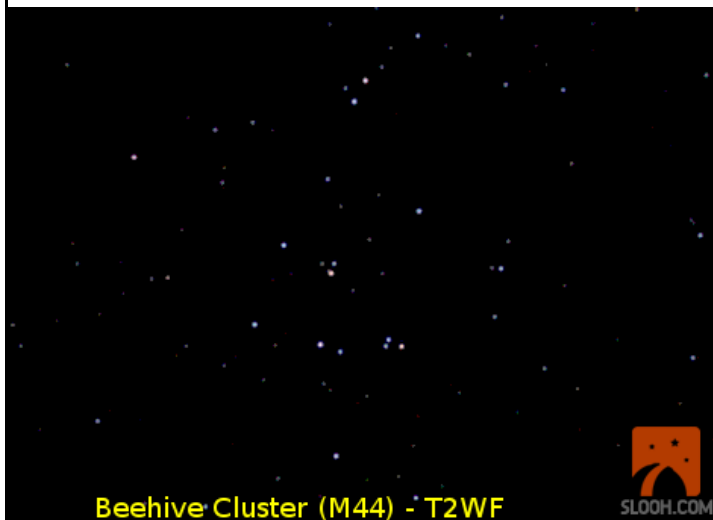
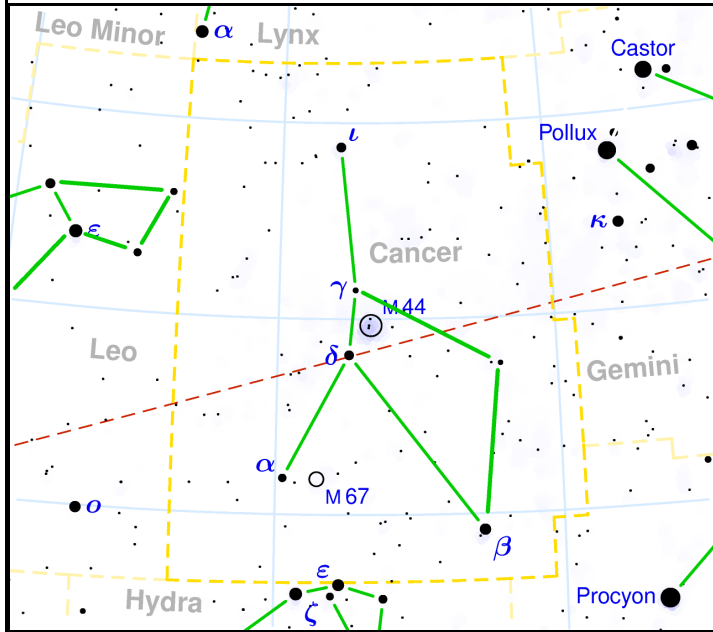
**The Moon in March 2015:**

- Full Moon—6<sup>th</sup> March
- Last Quarter—14<sup>th</sup> March
- New Moon—20<sup>th</sup> March
- First Quarter—27<sup>th</sup> March

**The Moon in April 2015:**

- Full Moon—5<sup>th</sup> April
- Last Quarter—12<sup>th</sup> April
- New Moon—19<sup>th</sup> April
- First Quarter—26<sup>th</sup> April

Good luck finding these objects, happy hunting, and always remember to look up.

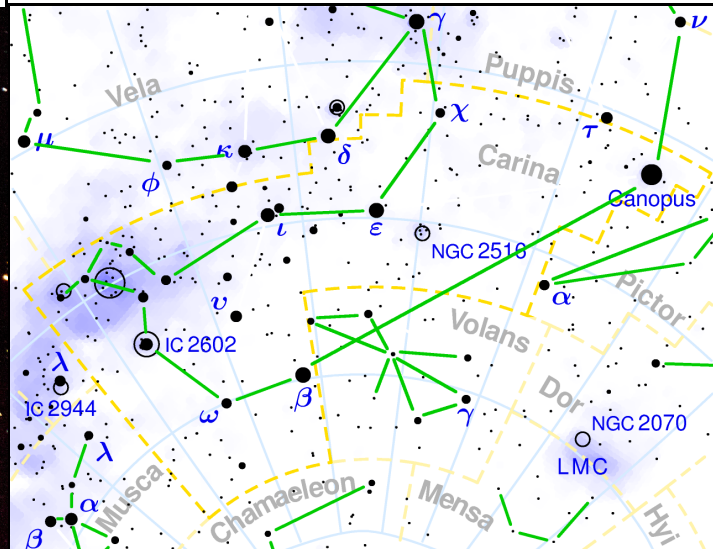


Beehive Cluster (M44) - T2WF



Eta Carinae Nebula (NGC 3372)

© Keith Smith

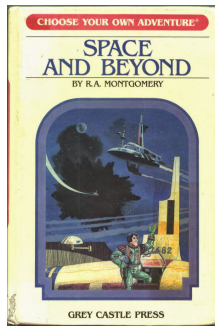




# Obituaries

November 9

**R. A. Montgomery**, (aged 78), American author who contributed many books to the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series, created in the late 1970s. Working from a book manuscript written by Edward Packard, he and his former wife, Constance Cappel, published four books at Vermont Crossroads Press that would later be included in the Bantam "Choose" series (*The Cave of Time*, *Journey Under the Sea*, *By Balloon to the Sahara*, and *Space and Beyond*). Montgomery wrote more than 50 books for this series and its various offspring.



November 11

**Carol Ann Susi**, (aged 62), American actress, best known for providing the voice of recurring unseen character Mrs. Wolowitz on the television series *The Big Bang Theory*. The series has since memorialised her loss in the season 8 episode, *The Comic Book Store Regeneration*.

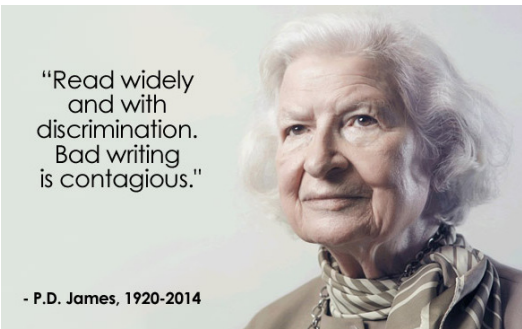
November 14

**Glen A. Larson**, (aged 77), American television producer and writer best known as the creator of the television series *Battlestar Galactica*, *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, *Quincy, M.E.*, *The Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew Mysteries*, *B. J. and the Bear*, *Magnum, P.I.* and *Knight Rider*. He was often accused of a lack of originality; Harlan Ellison once referred to him as "Glen Larceny", but in the case of *Battlestar Galactica* Larson had been working on the concept since 1968, and was stealing more from Mormon mythology than from *Star Wars*!



November 19

**Pete Harman**, (aged 95), American businessman, who struck a deal with Colonel Harland Sanders to open the first KFC franchise in Salt Lake City, Utah on August 1952.



"Read widely and with discrimination. Bad writing is contagious."

- P.D. James, 1920-2014

also wrote SF—the novel *The Children of Men* (1992) became the basis for the 2006 movie.

November 27  
**P. D. James**, (aged 94), English novelist, who rose to fame for her series of detective novels starring police commander and poet Adam Dalgliesh. She

November 28

**Danny Lee**, (aged 95), American special effects artist famous for his work on *Bonnie and Clyde*, and a number of Disney movies including *Mary Poppins*, *The Black Hole* and *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* for which he won an Academy Award.



December 9

**Robert Kinoshita**, (aged 100), American production designer, best known as the designer of three of the most famous robots in science fiction: Tobor from the 1954 film *Tobor the Great*; Robby the Robot from the 1956 film *Forbidden Planet*; and "B9 Environmental Control" robot from the 1960s TV series *Lost in Space*, who was called "Robot".

December 10

Donald Moffitt, (aged 83), American science fiction author, who wrote a number of novels mostly in the 1980's. Most well known among these are *The Genesis Quest* and *Second Genesis*.

December 11

**Tom Adams**, (aged 76), English actor best known for his role as Daniel Fogarty in several series of *The Onedin Line*. He also appeared in *Doctor Who* as Vorshak in *Warriors of the Deep* (1984).



December 12

**Norman Bridwell**, (aged 86), American author and cartoonist who inflicted *Clifford the Big Red Dog* on the parents of the world.

December 17

**Dieter Grau**, (aged 101), German-born rocket scientist and member of the "von Braun rocket group", at Peenemünde (1939–1945) working on the V-2 rockets in World War II. He was among the scientists who surrendered to the United States and travelled there, providing rocketry expertise via Operation Paperclip. Along with von Braun's team, Grau moved from the Army to NASA to develop the first rockets designed expressly for exploration, where he oversaw quality assurance for the development of the Saturn I and Saturn V rockets.

December 18

**Robert Simpson**, (aged 102), American meteorologist and hurricane specialist, first director of the National Hurricane Research Project (NHRP) from 1955–1959. He was the co-developer of the Saffir–Simpson Hurricane Scale with Herbert Saffir.

December 19

**Robert D. San Souci**, (aged 68), American children's author and screenwriter who wrote the story for Disney's *Mulan*.

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Compiled  
by  
Jacqui  
Smith

December 22

**Christine Cavanaugh**, (aged 51), American voice actress best known as the voice of the title character in the 1995 film *Babe*, Gosalyn Mallard in *Darkwing Duck*, and as the original voices of Chuckie Finster in Nickelodeon's *Rugrats* and Dexter in Cartoon Network's *Dexter's Laboratory*.

December 25

**Bernard Kay**, (aged 86), British actor who appeared in hundreds of TV productions, including four times in the *Doctor Who* series in various roles, most notably as Saladin in the classic *Doctor Who* story *The Crusade* in 1965.



December 30, 2014

**Terry Becker**, (aged 93), American film and television actor, Emmy-winning director and producer. He is best known for his role as Chief Francis Ethelbert Sharkey in seasons 2 through 4 of the television series *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*.

**Robert Conroy**, (aged 76), American science fiction author, winner of the Sidewise Award for Alternate History for his 2009 novel *1942*.

**Milton Rosen**, (aged 99), American rocket scientist, and project manager in the US space program between the end of World War II and the early days of the Apollo Program. He led development of the Viking and Vanguard rockets, and was influential in the critical decisions early in NASA's history that led to the definition of the Saturn rockets.

December 31

**Arthur Wellesley**, 8th Duke of Wellington, (aged 99), British aristocrat and Army officer.

January 1, 2015

**Fiona Cumming**, (aged 77), British television director noted for her work on *Doctor Who* during the show's Fifth Doctor era. Her credits include *Castrovalva*, *Snakedance*, *Enlightenment*, and *Planet of Fire*. She also directed two episodes of *Blake's 7* during the show's third season, *Sarcophagus* and *Rumours of Death*, and episodes of several other BBC dramatic series including the *Omega Factor*.



**Donna Douglas**, (aged 82), American actress and singer, known for her role as *Elly May Clampett* in *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962–1971).

**Boris Morukov**, (aged 64), Russian physician and cosmonaut, who was mission specialist on STS-106.

January 7

**Rod Taylor**, (aged 84), Australian actor, most famous for playing the traveller in *The Time Machine* (1960), George Pal's adaptation of the science-fiction classic by H. G. Wells. He also had major

roles in *The Birds*, *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, and many other movies. His last role was a cameo as Winston Churchill in *Inglourious Basterds*.



January 8

**Andraé Crouch**, 72, American gospel singer, songwriter, arranger, record producer and pastor. Referred to as "the father of modern gospel music" by contemporary Christian and gospel music professionals, Crouch was known for his compositions "*My Tribute (To God Be the Glory)*" and "*Soon and Very Soon*". He was also well known in secular music, creating original music arrangements for the films *The Color Purple* and Disney's *The Lion King* and conducting choirs for Michael Jackson and Madonna.

January 9

**Samuel Goldwyn, Jr.**, (aged 88), American film producer, whose long list of credits include *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, and *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*.

**Michel Jeury**, (aged 80),

French science fiction author, whose novel *La Machine du Pouvoir* which won the 1960 Jules Verne Award. He went on to write a series called the *Colmateurs*, starting in 1981 with *Cette Terre*, telling the story of a pan-dimensional corps of monitors set up by the mysterious "geoprogrammers" to "plug" holes between alternate Earths. Sadly, little of his work was published in English.

January 10

**Brian Clemens**, (aged 83), English screenwriter and television producer, best known for his work on *The Avengers* and *The Professionals*. He wrote the original pilot episode for *The Avengers* in 1961, and was the script editor, associate producer and main scriptwriter for *The Avengers* series.

January 27

**Suzette Haden Elgin**, (aged 78) American science fiction author and linguist, who founded the Science Fiction Poetry Association, and is considered an important figure in the field of science fiction constructed languages. She created the engineered language Láadan for her Native Tongue science fiction series. Here is one of her short stories: <http://www.sfw.org/members/elgin/Story-Panglish.html>

January 30

**Geraldine McEwan**, 82, British actress who played the evil Mortiana in the film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991). From 2004 to 2009 she appeared as Miss Marple, in the Agatha Christie series *Marple*. In 2005, she provided the voice of Miss Thrupp in the film *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* and again in *A Matter of Loaf and Death* in 2008.



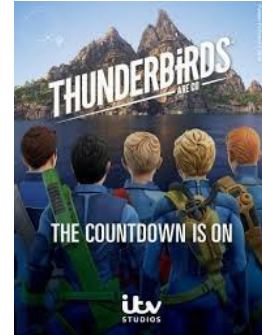


expense of good movie-making. Yet again.

*Star Wars: The Force Awakens* hits the cinemas on 18 December 2015. Will it be any good? Well, that depends on how you feel about JJ Abrams. But, we're all going to go and watch it anyway, right?

And so to the small screen. Doctor Who is celebrating its tenth anniversary two years after its fiftieth anniversary, which makes sense if you're a fan. The new season certainly looks promising.

Also promising is the new CGI remake of Thunderbirds, called *Thunderbirds Are Go* and made by ITV Studios and Pukeko Pictures, with effects by Weta Workshop. It may be CGI, but there were some terrific models shown in the news item. This is due to premiere on April 4, and will be one I'm looking forward to. With no strings attached even.



We've seen the premiere of Amazon's *The Man in the High Castle*, and were impressed. So were the critics and a full season will be produced. (Yes, Amazon.com are making their own programmes for their web streaming video service).

Syfy are currently screening a "re-imagining" of Terry Gilliam's *12 Monkeys*, which is getting good enough reviews that I think we'll have to have a look. It's essentially a timey-wimey action series with a doctor from the future trying to prevent a plague occurring that kills over ninety percent of the human race.

Next up from Syfy is *The Expanse*, based on the series of novels of the same name by James S. A. Corey. "Set in a future where humanity has colonized the Solar System, it follows police detective Josephus Miller, ship's officer Jim Holden and his crew as they unravel a conspiracy that threatens peace across the System and the survival of humanity." Proper science fiction, yes!

MTV are making a series based on Terry Brooks' *Shannara*, and they're making it here. In Auckland. How about that? No idea when it premieres, though.

Now, Syfy do promise a lot that they don't actually deliver, but among their possible offerings are:

A series called *Dark Matter*, based on the comic book. "The story follows a crew of derelict spaceship who wakes up with no memory of who they are or how they got there." Sounds like a good start!

A miniseries of Arthur C. Clarke's classic novel *Childhood's End*. Say no more...

A series called *The Magicians*, based on the 2009 urban fantasy novel by the American author Lev Grossman.

There are also rumours of a *Supergirl* TV series, a series called *Krypton*, set deep in Superman's past, and even a remake of the *Greatest American Hero*! And that's about that. Plenty to look forward to, methinks.

Now, I've never tried doing this before, so bear with me while I trawl the internet, and try to give you some idea of what to look forward to in science fiction and fantasy in film and TV during 2015. I'm going to be fussy and choose just the movies and programmes I'll be personally looking out for.

*Jupiter Ascending* has already hit the big screen, and by accounts is lacking in narrative, but not in spectacle, and may end up a cult classic among a subset of sci-fi fans. I'll probably leave it until it comes out on Sky movies.



*Mad Max: Fury Road* is out in May, and looks like it'll be fun if you like that kind of thing. I keep wondering why they don't go in for alternative fuels....

Also due out in May is *Avengers: Age of Ultron* which looks to be the pick of the year's superhero offerings. It's another episode in the continuing Marvel saga, but that's a good thing, at least compared with DC's reboots. And it's directed by Joss Whedon, which cannot be a bad thing.



On 12 June 2015, we see the arrival of *Jurassic World*, the new movie in the *Jurassic Park* franchise. "You just went and made a new dinosaur. Probably not a good idea," says Chris Pratt in the trailer, which probably tells us everything we need to know. Likely to be more of the same, but should be entertaining.



Arnie's back in July's *Terminator: Genisys*. This apparently has a timey-wimey plot that would give the Doctor a headache, but still fails to explain why the Terminator continues to age! I'm planning on giving this one a miss, but I know some of you will be keen.

Also in July, Marvel bring us *Ant-man* for which I've seen a trailer and it was pretty weird. It's up against DC's reboot of the *Fantastic Four*, but that isn't likely to be strong opposition.

In November *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part Two*, comes to a screen somewhere near you to the delight and sadness of teenagers everywhere. I've had to buy the DVDs and the books, and I keep wondering "Whatever happened to the rest of the world?". But the real problem is that by expanding the last book into two films, the makers may have filled their pockets at the

## Guardians of the Galaxy

*Directed by* James Gunn  
*Produced by* Kevin Feige  
*Written by* James Gunn & Nicole Perlman  
*Based on* Guardians of the Galaxy  
 by Dan Abnett & Andy Lanning  
*Starring* Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista  
 Vin Diesel, Bradley Cooper, Lee Pace  
 Michael Rooker, Karen Gillan  
 Djimon Hounsou, John C. Reilly  
 Glenn Close, Benicio del Toro

*Reviewed by* Jacqui Smith

The truth is that I don't go out to the movies so much any more—it's less wasteful to be patient, listen to the reviews, and order the DVD. Most often from the great South American river... So, when I heard "Guardians of the Galaxy" described as the "best Star Wars movie since Return of the Jedi", I knew it was likely to be right in my corner of the solar system. And then I ordered it.

Forget the Marvel labels, this is not yet another superhero movie. "Guardians of the Galaxy" is space opera, pure and simple, and a significant departure for the label. (Speaking of which, watching the movie again, I think the flashy Marvel logo really spoils the transition from the abduction of the crying child to the adult finding a weird orb on an alien planet. There are much better ways—Kubrick got it so very right in 2001.)



Of course, being space opera, it has an uncomplicated plot, wherein a misfit group of heroes are thrown in prison after brawling over said mysterious orb; get together and escape, and end up saving the Galaxy from an over-the-top villain. There are plot holes you could drive a small moon through, and a slew of really improbable coincidences. But plot would get in the way of the action, as would any attempt at scientific plausibility. Like the aforementioned superhero flicks this movie is all about the special effects, but it escapes the boredom of too many explosions with sheer humour. I mean, one hero is a genetically-enhanced raccoon, and another is a walking tree! His only line, "I am Groot", became an internet meme in no time at all.

The other thing that really anchors the movie is the music—pop songs from the 60's and 70's that the kid had on his walkman when he was abducted, that add a whimsical humanity to a space opera full of alien people and places.

Now, I don't think it was perfect, but I don't think I've seen an SF movie that was this much fun since "Galaxy Quest". This is in many ways the kind of movie I've been looking for—a glorious celebration of space fiction the way it used to be. More, please.

## The Hobbit: Battle of Five Armies

*Directed by* Peter Jackson  
*Produced by* Carolynne Cunningham, Zane Weiner  
 Fran Walsh, Peter Jackson  
*Screenplay by* Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens  
 Peter Jackson, Guillermo del Toro  
*Based on* The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien  
*Starring* Martin Freeman, Ian McKellen  
 Richard Armitage, Evangeline Lilly  
 Lee Pace, Luke Evans  
 Benedict Cumberbatch, Ken Stott  
 James Nesbitt, Cate Blanchett  
 Ian Holm, Christopher Lee  
 Hugo Weaving, Orlando Bloom

*Reviewed by* Jacqui Smith

This we did see on the big screen, and while I don't think it was a waste of money, I think we all agreed that it wasn't as great a movie as it could have been. Mainly, because sometimes people really don't know when to stop, put aside their toys, and think about what they are doing to the laws of physics... I refer, of course, to the infamous "Legolas running up the falling staircase" scene. This isn't the Matrix, guys, it's the Hobbit!

On discussion, there was something of a consensus that the story of the Hobbit was stretched too thin in making three movies, each 140 minutes or so in length. Two would have been about right. After all, the primary source material is one book, written originally for children, not the three volumes of the Lord of the Rings. No matter how much you pad it out with new characters and material from the Silmarillion; there's really not enough meat to make three decent sandwiches.



That said, there is a lot to like in this movie. Stephen Fry gives another excellent performance as the Mayor of Laketown, as does Sylvester McCoy as Radagast. I like Martin Freeman as Bilbo, but I continue to have my doubts about the casting of some of the dwarves, and of Richard Armitage as Thorin in particular. He's just too skinny, he doesn't have the sheer breadth of physique to put off the King of the Dwarves to my satisfaction. On the other hand, Billy Connolly made a fine Dain of the Iron Hills (as long as you subscribe to the theory that dwarves should sound Scottish—given that the names are straight out of the Norse Edda, I think they should be more Scandinavian or even Germanic).

And let's fact it, the movie does not lack for spectacle, from the death of Smaug to the climactic battle, there's plenty of action, all of it lovingly realised by Weta. It's a fun watch and we will all be interested to see what Sir Peter does next.

## The Hobbit Motion Picture Trilogy: Location Guidebook

by Ian Brodie

Published by HarperCollins

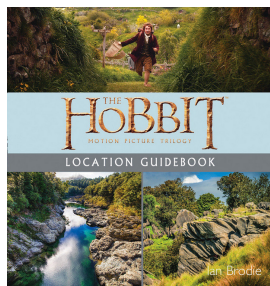
Supplied by HarperCollins NZ

Reviewed by Jan

Showcasing the landscapes which became the principle movie-set locations in The Hobbit movie trilogy, as well as other filming locations, this

book is a must have for any fan. The photos are magnificent, all by Ian Brodie – a renown landscape photographer, they are printed on glossy paper and are an incredible record of the unforgettable scenery of the land that has become Middle-earth. Each location shares background information and exclusive anecdotes about the filming of the trilogy, as well as sharing maps, location direction and GPS co-ordinates, useful websites, and current information on accommodation and restaurants handy to the sites. Quotes from the cast and crew are included at each location.

This book is a stunning reminder of the beautiful country we New Zealanders call home and a great souvenir for tourists. Get a copy.



## The Pirates and the Nightmaker

by James Norcliffe

Published by Longacre

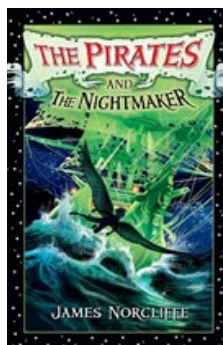
Supplied by Penguin Random House

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

I'm not sure whether Norcliffe is channelling Robert Louis Stevenson or J.M. Barrie (or both) in this rollicking fantasy for older children set primarily in the Caribbean in the Golden Age of Piracy – the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The historical background and geography are very well researched, and Norcliffe's prose is a delight to read, beautifully evoking the style of days gone by.

It begins with in the aftermath of a mutiny, and our narrator, a young loblolly boy, servant of the inebriate ship's doctor, is adrift with the ship's officers and their passenger, a certain Mr Wicker, in a jolly boat. Mr Wicker is no ordinary individual, he transforms our young hero into something no longer exactly human, an invisible flying boy with gorgeous green wings. This saves his life from the hungry men trapped with him in the boat, and also enables him to save their lives. Because among those few people who can see him is Sophie Blade, daughter of the notorious pirate, Jenny Blade, and he is able to enlist her help to rescue them. But it's only just begun. Mr Wicker has a purpose, he means to find a certain astrolabe which has the power to bring night in the day. It's in the hands of the Spanish, and he has a plan to retrieve it. Needless to say, that plan involves a certain invisible flying boy.

It was all going very well, until I got to chapter 18. Here, Mr Wicker takes the loblolly boy on deck and asks him if he knows his stars, and gets him to point out those he knows, including Sirius. He then instructs him in the use of an astrolabe, showing him how to point it at Sirius. He



goes on explain that the astrolabe he seeks is designed to find Sirius even in sunlight and to say, "At this time of year, Sirius is directly behind the Sun". Now, I'm not an astronomer, but I do know two things. First, Sirius is not in one of the Zodiac constellations, and so is never directly behind the Sun. Second, if you can see a star at night, it cannot be on the other side of the Sun from the Earth. I wouldn't make an issue of it, if it wasn't critical to the story, but it is, and it wouldn't have been hard to fix. Personally I would have picked Antares in Scorpio – an easy constellation for a boy to know, and Mr Wicker could have had him pointing out Orion (which although not on the Zodiac, is also distinctive, and is almost opposite Scorpio). And Antares is a dying star, a red supergiant... which would have actually worked better in the story. When astronomy is critical to the plot, I'd advise the author to consult an astronomer.

Okay, so I got over it, rewrote that chapter in my head, changed all references to Sirius to Antares and carried on. The plot resolves itself neatly, people get (or don't get) what they deserve, and there is a delightful twist at the end that really impressed me. I'd like to see the errors fixed in later printings, but I'd still commend this novel to older children, especially those who are interested in pirates. Definitely a more solid read than much of the fantasy fiction for young people being published at the moment.

## Goodhouse

by Peyton Marshall

Published by Doubleday

Supplied by Random House NZ

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

It took me a while to figure out why I was finding this such an ugly read. It wasn't so much the violence, the bad language, or the dark dystopian future. It was that I really didn't like the viewpoint character. When I thought about it, I realised that given that James is a boy with "bad genes", suffering from PTSD after being nearly killed in a fire, and then used as an unsuspecting test subject for experimental drugs, he can be either a credible character or a likeable character, but not both. Other characters, such as his artistic roommate Owen, are easier on the nerves, although I failed to understand his sudden violent outbursts. As for Bethany, she's an intelligent girl with an interesting backstory; and what she sees in James is beyond my comprehension.

There are disagreeable underlying messages here, as well. The villain of the piece is a scientist, experimenting on the boys, and not in any fashion liable to help them – it's the whole "science is bad" syndrome again. Furthermore, the basic premise that society might attempt to "cure" young males with a genetic disposition to violence by subjecting them to strict discipline in a "Goodhouse" seems unlikely. So, the book is not much use as science fiction either – and let's not go into Marshall's lack of thought in his world-building. Essentially, Marshall isn't writing an SF novel, or a YA adventure, he's writing a polemic against reform schools. I can't really recommend this book... it left me with such a nasty taste. But I have no doubt that it will be highly praised in certain circles, and unsuspecting teenagers will be required to study it.





# RECONNAISSANCE

#NZNatCon2015

Where: Rotorua  
 When : April 3 – 6<sup>th</sup> 2015  
 (Easter weekend)  
 Venue: The Sudima Hotel  
 1000 Eruera St, Rotorua

## Guests of Honour:

### Gail Carriger

Author, blogger & well-dressed Lady about town... When re-assured that she would be flown to New Zealand, Gail's response was: "Oh, really? Wow! I just got chills. Fly me, really? I'm even more excited. I really hope you win the bid! I'm so sorry to be so confused and dunderheaded about it. I was convinced you guys wouldn't be able to afford to bring little old me all the way down there. \*bounce bounce\* I've actually been to Rotorua! Lovely place. I am a sucker for hot springs. Sucker. Love them so. Oh, best of luck!"

### Pip Ballantine and Tee Morris

"Tee and I are both very excited to be coming back to New Zealand, and bringing what we have learned in the jungle of American publishing with us. We've been to large cons like New York Comic Con and DragonCon, as well as too many steampunk conventions, but there is something special about New Zealand for both of us."

### Alan Parker

Alan is currently president of Stella Nova and from all accounts is guiding the club quite nicely. He's run a convention in Rotorua, so it's only fitting that he is one of our Fan Guests of Honour (but if he gets out the Fishnet stocking one more time...)

### Norman Cates

It's been many years since Norman held his Conquests, worked his way up to senior compositor at Weta Digital, but when was the last time you got to hear Norman talk about himself?

## Charity:

Cancer Society of NZ

<http://www.timelord2067.com/convention.html>



## 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>

## Postal Address:

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

## President:

Alan Parker  
[president@stella-nova.sf.org.nz](mailto:president@stella-nova.sf.org.nz)

## Editor:

Jacqui Smith  
[editor@stella-nova.sf.org.nz](mailto:editor@stella-nova.sf.org.nz)

## This Month:

### RED LETTER SPACE

Friday 1st May, 7:30pm at Chez Smith

(We're celebrating Star Wars Day... and it's the Smiths' Wedding Anniversary. Cake there will be).

**Meeting** Wednesday 15th April, 7:30pm  
 at Chez Smith

## Next Quarterly Meeting:

Wednesday 17th June 2015, 7:30 pm  
 Auckland Horticultural Centre,  
 990 Great North Road,  
 Western Springs



## Upcoming Events:

April 3-6th 2015  
**RECONNAISSANCE**  
 36th New Zealand National SF Convention  
<http://www.timelord2067.com/convention.html>