



Ben and Paul cosplay at The Force Awakens

(Photo by Keith Smith)

Issue XLIX - Summer 2016

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Musings from Under the Mountain

There are said to be seven deadly sins and they might end up killing us all...

To begin with there's greed—the desire to accumulate more stuff than you could ever begin to use. It's a strange thing, but it seems to me that those who already have lots of money often seem to be the most interested in acquiring more. Often at the expense of the well-being of other people. And of the planet as a whole. The trouble is that the Earth's resources are finite, and human greed knows no bounds.

Neither does human lust—which may be defined as uncontrolled desire. Now this is not necessarily sexual, but that's the aspect our culture seems most obsessed by. With the inevitable results... suffering, disease, unwanted children, and a dangerously exploding human population.

Envy is much the same as jealousy; it's about being upset because somebody else has something you don't have. Which may not be so bad if it's something you actually need, but we have developed entire industries based on convincing people to be envious of others over things they don't need—it's what the entire advertising and marketing business is built on. They'll even try to make you envious over things that will actually cause you harm. Go figure.

Consuming stuff that will do you harm in excess quantities is what they call gluttony. Isn't that what those execrable American eating contests are all about? Yet obesity is killing us. Gluttony of all the deadly sins is the one which is most obviously fatal to the individual. If you allow gluttony to include the excessive consumption of alcohol, you can add drunkenness, and all its consequences. And there's more... There is an appalling amount of food literally wasted in the Western world because people are too fussy (or the supermarkets are being finicky on our behalf). Back in the Middle Ages, they argued that gluttony could extend to an obsessive anticipation of meals, and the constant eating of delicacies and excessively costly foods. Yes, well... food porn, say no more.

Envy can easily lead to the next sin: wrath. Anger in all its many forms; from road rage, through domestic violence, to acts of terrorism, all the way to all-out shooting wars. I sometimes wonder if the reason for the trouble coming out of the Middle East is as much envy of what is perceived to be the Western lifestyle as religious intolerance.

Then there's pride. They tell me the Greek is "hubris", and that isn't the kind of pride that translates as healthy self-respect. No, hubris is that

kind of unhealthy pride that elevates oneself and one's kind above all others. Dante called it "love of self perverted to hatred and contempt for one's neighbour". Easy to see where that leads. Racism, sexism, all sorts of -isms have their root in that kind of pride.

I've left sloth until last. Partly because sloth, simple laziness, is something I know that I struggle against on a regular basis. There are times when I really need to force myself to get up and do something useful! And also because another aspect of sloth, apathy, is one of the things that keeps people from doing something about all the other things that are troubling our world.

Which brings me to the new year and the promise of a bright future. Yes, really. Because all these things are things that as individuals we have the power to do something about. We can choose not to be greedy, or jealous. We can choose not to consume more than we need and not to be wasteful. We can choose not to be taken in by the tawdry claims of advertising. We can choose tolerance instead of pride. We can even choose old-fashioned romance over lust. It really is up to individual humans making good choices. And where does science fiction come into this? The best of our genre explores the consequences of humanity's choices, for better or for worse. And if we want that bright future we need to start making better choices. Science fiction is a tool both to find those right choices and to encourage people to make them. And that's a wonderful thing.

Jacqui Smith,

Editor and President,

Stella Nova.



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Last year, I did two unusual things. First, I looked up 2015 in the annals of science fiction, and found quite a lot of fictional events in that year, most notably *Back to the Future Day*. Not so much for 2016. Only a very few obscure movies are set in 2016 (*Atlas Shrugged: Part I* (2011), *Assignment: Outer Space* (1960) and *Stealth* (2005)). That said, some people argue that *The Dark Knight Rises* this year... And the fictional story line of *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* takes place in 2016. But easily the best SF quote about 2016 comes from *Ghostbusters II*:

Elaine: According to my source, the end of the world will be on February 14, in the year 2016.

Dr. Peter Venkman: Valentine's Day. Bummer. Where did you get your date, Elaine?

Elaine: I received this information from an alien.

By the time you read this, I don't doubt that Valentine's Day will have been and gone, and I will be very surprised if the world has ended. In any case, there's hardly enough material for a quiz like I gave you last year.

Secondly, I took time to research what movies, television series and books we had to look forward to in that year. By and large, this was a useful exercise, so let's see what 2016 has in store, beginning with the movies. Keep in mind that my biases are my own, and that my recommendations may or may not suit you.

In the popular superhero corner we begin with Marvel's *Deadpool*. It's already out, and a lot of people are enjoying it, but the reviews I've seen suggest it's not at all family-friendly, and I shall



probably be giving it a miss. Marvel also bring us *Captain America: Civil War* in late April, which pits Cap against Iron Man in an argument over the control of super-powered individuals. In May there's *X-Men: Apocalypse* featuring Oscar Isaac as the titular villain. Then, in October there's Channing Tatum as another X-Man in *Gambit*.

But the most promising offering from the house of Marvel doesn't arrive until November. Would you believe Benedict Cumberbatch as *Doctor Strange*?

In the opposite corner, DC only bring us one superhero movie, and it's *Batman v Superman* in May. Apparently Batboy is annoyed at the mess Superman made in the last movie... It'll be interesting to compare this offering with Marvel's *Civil War*. I'm anticipating win for Marvel.

In terms of actual science fiction, there are a number of big movies to consider. In late June, there's

Independence Day: Resurgence, which hopefully is a bit more plausible than the last one. Same goes for July's *Star Trek Beyond* with new director Justin Lin and a brand new villain. We can but hope. For our big pre-Christmas movie outing we have *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, a spin-off film set in the same universe as the main saga. This one is a prequel of sorts, telling the story of the theft of those technical readouts of the first Death Star.



I'll mention the *Ghostbusters* reboot here, somewhere between SF and fantasy. Coming in July, it features a new all-female team. Will it work? Was it necessary? I guess we'll see.



There's a couple of video game tie-ins that are also very much in the "wait and see" category. There's *Warcraft* in June, a foray into the war-torn world of Azeroth. It's said that the visuals are looking quite spectacular. I have higher hopes for December's *Assassin's Creed* in terms of plot at least. It stars Michael Fassbender (Magneto) as a modern man who channels his assassin ancestors fighting the

Knights Templar in the present day. It had better be good because the boy is a huge fan and I might well have to spend money to go see it.

Also in that gap between SF and F, although very different, is another sequel due out very soon; *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon: Sword of Destiny*, which looks quite promising if you're into martial arts movies. (And *Kung Fu Panda 3* is already out, to generally positive reviews).

And that brings me to the animated, the fantastic, and this year's offerings from the House of Mouse. In March, there is *Zootopia*, a movie about a world of talking animals, co-directed and co-written by the creators of *Wreck-It Ralph*. If the trailer is anything to go by, it's heavy on satire. In June, we're *Finding Dory*, the sequel to *Finding Nemo*, in which the amnesiac Dory goes on a quest to find where she came from, As long as there are seagulls...



by
Jacqui
Smith

More promising is July's *The BFG*, with Steven Spielberg directing Roald Dahl's fantasy about a young girl who discovers a world of giants for Disney. Also in July comes *The Secret Life of Pets*, an animated film from the team behind *Despicable Me*, a story about what pets do when their owners go out. In November, Potter fans will get their fix with *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*, the first in a proposed trilogy of Harry Potter prequels written by J.K. Rowling herself, in her first attempt at screenwriting. Eddie Redmayne stars as Newt Scamander, a Magizoologist whose briefcase full of creatures busts open...

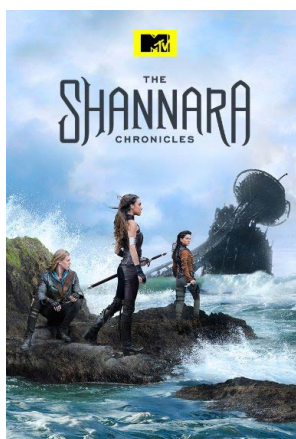


And that brings me to November's *Moana*, wherein Disney does Pacific mythology, and brings us a Polynesian Disney princess, setting sail with Maui to save her family... What could possibly go wrong? Well, the big guy is meant to be Maui...



The world of TV is not as simple as it used to be. Increasingly I find that what I watch is determined by what I feel like watching, rather than what's on. And all I can tell you is what new genre series are being made, not when or on what channel they will be shown in New Zealand—usually the Zone.

I'll begin with some shows that have been around a little while. *Shannara* has been playing on the Zone since January, and it is what it says on the tin, an adaptation of Terry Brooks' *Shannara* books for TV, beginning with *Elfstones*. Can't comment on how closely the series follows the books, it's been decades since I read them, but the visuals are lovely (yes, Wellington, we can make moving pictures here in Auckland, too). It's classic fantasy set in a deeply post-



apocalyptic version of our own world.

Also playing on the Zone is Syfy's miniseries adaptation of Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*. While I haven't seen it yet, I can safely say that the reviews are very mixed; people love it or hate it. Maybe it's one of those books which leaves a strongly individual impression that the TV interpretation doesn't always match.

Then there's *The Expanse*, which began screening on Syfy in late December 2015 (and is soon to appear on the Zone). This is solar system SF with a touch of detective noir—I have no idea how many episodes it will take for those two main threads to intersect. I will argue that it's some of the best-made SFTV we've seen in years, so watch out for *The Expanse*. Also worth looking out for are the SF series *Dark Matter* (also starting on the Zone) and *Killjoys*.

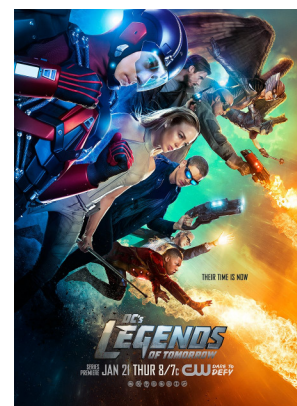


Superheroes remain big on TV. Marvel has *Agents of Shield*, *Agent Carter*, *Daredevil*, and since late 2015, *Jessica Jones*. The latter has reviewed excellent reviews, and I must get around to watching it. Especially since the *Luke Cage* character is to get his own spin-off series in 2016.

What we have been working our way through is the DC series *Gotham*. This is essentially the story of the young Bruce Wayne, and a young Detective Gordon, as they battle proto-villains in a *Gotham* which is a strangely noir version of modernity. I'm loving Sean Pertwee as Alfred. In fact, I'm enjoying the series a whole lot more than I expected. It now well into its second season, and has collected (or been nominated for) far more awards than you might expect for a comic-based series.



DC have another new series just out called *Legends of Tomorrow*. The premise is that Rip Hunter (Arthur Darvill aka Rory from *Dr. Who*) is a time traveller from the future assembling a team of modern-day superheroes, on a mission to prevent immortal warlord Vandal Savage from conquering the earth. Yes, Rory gets to be a time master and save the world...



by Jacqui Smith

In the urban fantasy front we have *The Magicians*, which is another series to debut on Syfy very late in 2015. It's Hogwarts for American teens... I've seen the premiere, and wasn't too impressed. But I'll watch some more before making up my mind.

Then there's *Colony*, also just started. It's one of those dystopian occupation scenarios, set in a Los Angeles surrounded by towering walls, and under a military regime called the Colony Transitional Authority. Behind the military are the "Hosts" who may be presumed to extraterrestrial in origin. Like most such scenarios, this one does not bear up under the scrutiny of logic... or logistics, but I haven't watched any yet, so I'll reserve judgement.

Fans will be happy to see the *X-Files*, back for a short six-part tenth season with the original cast. Reviews so far are mixed.

Alternate history with Nazis seems to be in fashion. Amazon have renewed *Man in the High Castle* for a second season, and not to be outdone, the BBC adapting Len Deighton's 1978 alternate history novel *SS-GB* into a four-part miniseries.

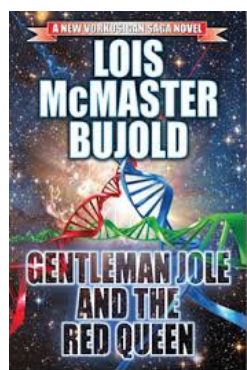
Later in the year, we may get to see a couple more unusual offerings. NBC is making *Emerald City*, a grittier take on the *Wizard of Oz*. And HBO are adapting the 1978 movie *Westworld* about a western-themed amusement park populated by androids into a TV series. It's been tried before, but hopefully this time they'll be more successful.

However, there is doubt that we'll be seeing much of Doctor Who this year... Last I heard, we can anticipate a Christmas special, but that's about it...

Finally, we come to the world of books, printed and otherwise. Now, there is no way anyone can predict the appearance of another self-published masterpiece like "*The Martian*". All I can do is tell you some of what is on the publishers' slate for 2016 (I won't just consider the big boys, but there are a lot of books on the editors' lists so I'll try to pick what I think people might like).

January: Not one book, but two from Brandon Sanderson: *Bands of Mourning* in the *Mistborn* series and *Calamity* in the *Reckoners*. He's also got *Alcatraz Versus the Dark Talent* coming out in June. He really is one prolific writer...

February: Lois McMaster Bujold brings us *Gentleman Jole and the Red Queen*, the



latest in the Vorkosigan Saga. This story focuses on Cordelia Naismith and is, according to the author, "not a war story. It is about grownups." March: *The Road to Hell*, by David Weber and Joelle Presby brings back the Hell's Gate series where magic and high-tech collide.

April: Dave Freer brings us a very Aussie fantasy called *Changeling's Island* (and it has a mermaid on the cover so I know at least one person who will want a copy).

May: Canadian author Guy Gabriél Kay gives us *Children of Earth and Sky*, a fantasy set in a world inspired by the conflicts and dramas of Renaissance Europe.

June: *Babylon's Ashes* from James S.A. Corey, which is book six in "The Expanse". I'm not sure what to do about this series because I'm enjoying the TV series and... spoilers. Also due out is *The Long Cosmos* from Terry Pratchett & Stephen Baxter, which will be the fifth and last book of the *Long Earth*. *Rivers of London* fans should look out for *The Hanging Tree* by Ben Aaronovitch. Harry Turtledove has *Fallout*, the second volume in the Hot War series. And in the "I didn't know he was still writing" category is Larry Niven with a fantasy called *The Seascape Tattoo* in collaboration with Stephen Barnes.

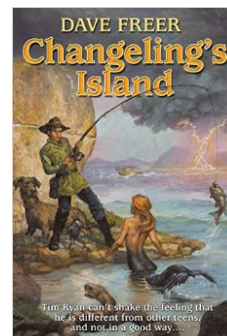
July: Gail Carringer brings us *Imprudence*, book two of the Custard Protocol. *Drowned Worlds, Wild Shores: Tales of Inundated Futures* is the intriguing title of an anthology edited by Jonathan Strahan. And one can guess where Charles Stross is going with *The Nightmare Stacks*, except I wasn't thinking Leeds, goths and vampires.

August: *Death's End*, is the third part of Cixin Liu's trilogy which won the 2015 Hugo for *The Three-Body Problem*. Meanwhile, Larry Correia and John Ringo give us *Monster Hunter Memoir: Grunge* (and in December, *Monster Hunter Memoirs: Sinners*).

September: Julie Czerneda opens *The Gate to Futures Past*, which is book #2 of *Reunification*. Peter F. Hamilton has *The Night Without Stars*, book #2 of *The Chronicle of the Fallers*.

October: Connie Willis brings us *Crosstalk*, described as a futuristic Hollywood romantic comedy.

And we are assured that *The Winds of Winter* is coming... When George R.R. Martin finishes the thing, and then it's edited and printed? He's already months behind, so those who are actually reading the books may have to wait until 2017.



2016 PREVIEW

by Jacqui Smith

The Sky at Night

February 2015

This is the fourth in the series of articles on the seasonal night sky. Using the zodiac as a guide, I started with the sky around the Leo and Virgo area (although I did wander back towards Cancer and Gemini during the Autumn article which also included the LMC). With Spring, I ended around Andromeda and Pisces, as well as the avian area of the Southern Sky. So, now that it's summer, this article concentrates on the wedge of sky between Ares and Gemini, which includes the most well known constellation of the Summer Sky—Orion.

Orion is easily recognised by four relatively bright stars framing a line of three bright stars. The line is the belt of Orion and two of those framing stars are the brilliant blue/white Rigel and the reddish Betelgeuse, which most people pronounce the same as the movie title *Beetlejuice*. Rigel marks the right foot of Orion while Betelgeuse is the left shoulder. Saiph marks the left foot and Bellatrix is the right shoulder. You can conclude that, from our vantage point, Orion is upside-down.

The three Belt stars, from left to right (as we see them) are Mintaka, Alnilam and Alnitak. Looking up from Alnitak there is another slightly curving row of three stars. On a more closer look, you will notice that the central 'star' is fuzzy.



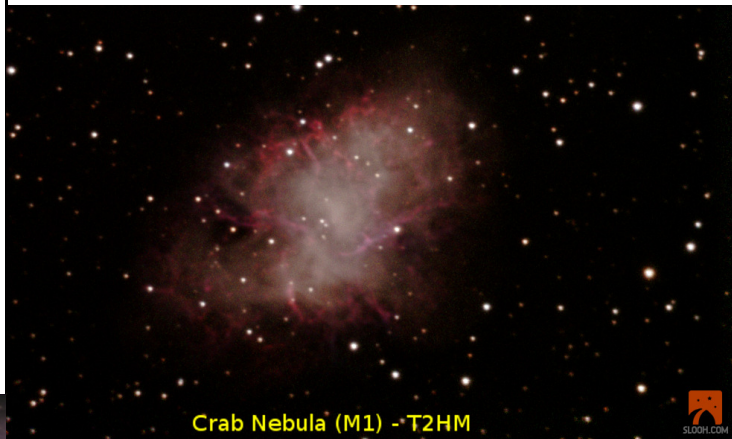
Orion Nebula (M42) - T1

Looking at it with a pair of binoculars, or a small telescope, you will see it's not a star, but a nebula, the famous Orion Nebula (M42 in Messier's catalogue). Larger instruments reveal a complex of glowing gas and dust which is lit by four bright stars known as the Trapezium. A lump of nebulosity right next to it is catalogued as M43. Sweep using your binoculars from M42, back through Alnitak, and on for roughly the same distance should bring you to another patch of nebulosity, catalogued as M78. Unlike M42, where the gas is glowing because it is being excited by the stars inside, M78 is reflecting the light of a nearby star, so it is known as a reflective nebula.

There are lots of other interesting objects in Orion, so many that Orion deserves its own article. That'll be the next one. For now, follow the line of the belt stars to the west and you'll reach a reddish/orange star. This is Aldebaran, the brightest star in Taurus, behind which is a 'V' shape of stars known as the Hyades. All these stars, except for Aldebaran, are members of the Hyades open

cluster, which is the nearest open cluster to our solar system. Aldebaran is much closer than the cluster.

Further on, but along the same line, is a tiny cluster of stars. We call it Matariki, the Japanese call it Subaru, but it is more commonly known as the Pleiades, or M45. There are seven naked eye stars in this group, but there are over a thousand confirmed members, most of whom are young hot blue stars. Some of the stars are surrounded by a blue haze. This was first thought to be left over from the formation of the cluster, but is now known to be nebulosity that the cluster is currently passing through.



Crab Nebula (M1) - T2HM

Taurus was also the location of a supernova that was observed by Chinese astronomers in 1054. The nebula caused by this explosion, was first observed by the English astronomer John Bevis in 1731. Charles Messier rediscovered it in 1758 while he was examining a bright comet. After concluding that the nebula wasn't a comet, he decided that making a catalogue of comet-like objects that was fixed in the sky, was a really good idea. So this nebula became object M1. It became called the Crab Nebula in 1844. The gas is still moving outwards from the source of the explosion and the remains of the exploded star, the Crab Pulsar, was discovered in 1968. To find it, start from the intersection of the 'V', go through Aldebaran and onwards to another bright star. M1 is located nearby.

We can't see all of the constellation of Auriga the Charioteer from Auckland, but we can see enough of it to identify the bright star of Capella. Between that and Taurus are three other Messier objects: M36, M38 and M37. All three are open clusters.

Below the Pleiades, and to the west of Aurigae is Perseus, depicting the hero who rescued Andromeda (the next constellation over) from her fate. Like Aurigae, Perseus lies too far north for us to see all of it but it should be possible to observe M34, yet another open cluster. At this point, you may be wondering where M35 is. It is in Gemini and we'll get there eventually.

Since Andromeda was discussed in the Autumn column, we look upwards from Perseus to find Aries the Ram, nestled in between Pisces and Taurus. Between Aries and Andromeda lies the faint constellation of Triangulum, where M33, the Triangulum Galaxy can be found). At its low altitude it may be difficult to find,

by
Keith
Smith

Let us now return to Taurus to continue exploring the sky around Orion. Next to Taurus as we dip below Orion is Gemini. Gemini was mentioned in the Spring article, but it's more part of the Summer sky so it should really be included here. The two bright stars in Gemini, can be easily found by a line running from Rigel, through Betelgeuse and continuing on. As we see them, Castor is on the left and Pollux on the right. The rest of the constellation extends upwards from there towards Orion. As mentioned, the open cluster M35 is located near the right foot of the left most twin. Gemini also contains a well-known planetary nebula called the Eskimo Nebula (NGC 2392). A large telescope is required to truly appreciate this object. A line from Bellatrix through Betelgeuse and onwards passes close by another bright star; Procyon in Canis Minor. Canis Minor is usually depicted as a single line joining Procyon (Alpha CMi) to its not so bright neighbour, Beta CMi, which has led some people to describe it as a 'sausage dog'.

Curving around Orion from Gemini, through Canis Minor is the faint constellation Monoceros, the Unicorn. All of its stars are faint, mostly around magnitude four so it can only be truly appreciated at a dark sky site. It contains yet another open cluster, M50, as well as some interesting astrophotography objects such as the Rosette Nebula (NGC 2244), the Christmas Tree Cluster (NGC 2264) and associated nebulosity including the Cone, and Hubble's Variable Nebula (NGC 2261).



Next stop on our journey around Orion is Canis Major, easily found because it contains the brightest star in the sky (excluding our sun). Sirius marks the neck of the dog with the head pointing towards Orion. The open cluster M41 can be found a third of the way down the dog's body while his tail points towards Puppis, originally part of Argo Navis.

Under Orion's feet lies the faint constellation of Lepus the Hare. Once you spot it, Lepus becomes immediately recognizable, but like Monoceros, it needs a dark sky to be properly enjoyed. M79 is located in Lepus, one of the few globular clusters in this region of the sky. It was one of Pierre Mechain's discoveries in 1780.

Between Lepus and Taurus winds Eridanus, the River. It starts near Rigel and winds its way south towards Achernar, the bright star on the other side of the South Celestial Pole from the Southern Cross. Eridanus contains NGC 1535, a similar planetary nebula to the Eskimo. As

Eridanus meanders its way southwards, it passes by quite a few rather obscure constellations, that were not part of the original 48 that were catalogued by Ptolemy. The river loops towards Cetus, then curves back towards Columba (the Dove), loops around Fornax (the Furnace) before passing Caelum (the Chisel) and Horologium (the Clock) before terminating. On the other bank from Caelum and Horologium is Phoenix. The West Bank was covered in the Autumn article so we'll concentrate on the East Bank.



Columbia is located just south of Canis Major and Lepus and is a small, faint, constellation that was created in the late sixteenth century. Fornax was named by French astronomer Nicolas Louis de Lacaille in 1756. He also created Caelum which caught me by surprise since it's not even marked in H. A. Rey's "The Stars: A New Way to See Them" (published in 1952, we were both given copies when we were kids, and it's still Keith's favourite astronomy book—Ed). It's very faint with its brightest star just above 5th magnitude. Horologium is another of the eighteen constellations that Lacaille created—its brightest star is magnitude 4.9, which is decidedly dim. On the other side of Horologium from Achernar is Reticulum (the Net). The double star Zeta Reticuli was claimed to be the home of alien abductors. (Not likely, because although both stars are G-class yellow stars like the Sun, they're somewhat deficient in metals, and apparently less than two billion years old. On the other hand, the fictional LV-426 is in this star system—Ed).

Finally, between the South Celestial Pole and Reticulum are two more constellations: Hydrus (the male water snake) and Mensa (the Table). These two are always visible from New Zealand hence they are known as 'Circumpolar'. A future article may go into more detail about the area around the South Celestial Pole. More pictures for this article (Summer) are at: <https://goo.gl/photos/Rmcy2G9LVtv5Wd9K6>

The Moon in March 2016:

- Last Quarter—2nd March
- New Moon—9th March
- First Quarter—16th March
- Full Moon—24th March

The Moon in April 2016:

- Last Quarter—1st April
- New Moon—7th April
- First Quarter—14th April
- Full Moon—22nd April
- First Quarter—30th April

Obituaries

October 5

Henning Mankell, (aged 67), Swedish crime writer, children's author, and dramatist, best known for a series of mystery novels starring his most noted creation, Inspector Kurt Wallander, which was made into an award-winning BBC TV series.

October 11

Bob Minkler, (aged 78). American sound engineer who won an Academy Award for Best Sound for *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977) and was nominated in the same category for *Tron* (1982).

October 12

George Mueller, (aged 97), American space engineer, Associate Administrator of the NASA Office of Manned Space Flight from September 1963 until December 1969. Hailed as one of NASA's "most brilliant and fearless managers", he was instrumental in introducing the all-up testing philosophy for the Saturn V launch vehicle, which ensured the success of the Apollo program. Mueller also played a key part in the design of Skylab, and championed the space shuttle's development, which earned him the nickname, "the father of the space shuttle."



October 13

Bruce Hyde, (aged 74), American academic and actor. He played Lt. Kevin Riley in the original Star Trek series, appearing in two episodes, "The Naked Time" and "The Conscience of the King".

October 20

Sir John Scott, (aged 84), New Zealand medical researcher, President of the Royal Society of New Zealand (1997–2000). He mainly worked on the metabolism of low-density lipoproteins and cholesterol, and arterial pathophysiology.

October 21

Gregory Robert Choppin, (aged 87), American nuclear chemist and co-discoverer of the element Mendelevium, atomic number 101.

Norman W. Moore, (aged 92),

British conservationist and author who worked extensively on studies of dragonflies and their habitats and was one of the first people to observe and warn of the adverse effects of DDT and other organochloride pesticides on wildlife.

Diana Pullein-Thompson, (aged 90), British writer, last surviving of the Pullein-Thompson sisters, known mainly for their pony books, mostly fictional, aimed at children and mostly popular with girls.

October 22

Murphy Anderson, (aged 89), American comic book artist, known as one of the premier inkers of his era, who worked for companies such as DC Comics for over fifty years, starting in the Golden Age of Comic Books in the 1940s. He worked on such characters as Hawkman, Batgirl, Zatanna, the Spectre, and Superman, as well as on the Buck Rogers daily syndicated newspaper comic strip.

October 24

Maureen O'Hara, (aged 95), Irish-American actress and singer. The famously red-headed O'Hara was known for playing fiercely passionate but sensible heroines, often in westerns and adventure films. She worked on numerous occasions with director John Ford and long-time friend John Wayne, and was one of the last surviving stars from the Golden Age of Hollywood.



October 29

Kenneth Gilbert, (aged 84), English actor who appeared in many television productions over a 50-year period including in Doctor Who as World Ecology Bureau official Richard Dunbar in *The Seeds of Doom* (1976).



November 4

Melissa Mathison, (aged 65), American film and television screenwriter, best known for writing the screenplays for the films *The Black Stallion* (1979) and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), for which she received a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. Spielberg attributed to her the line "E.T. phone home".

November 5

George Barris, (aged 89), American designer and builder of many famous Hollywood custom cars, most notably the Munster Koach and the 1966 Batmobile.



November 7

Gunnar Hansen, (aged 68), Icelandic-born American actor and author best known for playing the mentally impaired cannibal and central role of Leatherface in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974)

November 8

Rod Davies, (aged 85), Australian-born British Professor of Radio Astronomy at the University of Manchester. He was the President of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1987–1989, and the Director of Jodrell Bank Observatory in 1988–97. He was best known for his research on the Cosmic microwave background, as well as the 21 cm line.

November 9

Ernst Fuchs, (aged 85), Austrian painter, draftsman, printmaker, sculptor, architect, stage designer, composer, poet, singer and one of the founders of the Vienna School of Fantastic Realism. In 1972, he acquired the derelict Otto Wagner Villa in Hütteldorf, which he restored and transformed. The villa opened as the Ernst Fuchs Museum in 1988.

November 14

Warren Mitchell, (aged 89), British actor, who rose to prominence in the role of bigoted cockney Alf Garnett in the BBC television sitcom *Till Death Us Do Part* (1965–75), created by Johnny Speight, which won him a Best TV Actor BAFTA in 1967. He reprised the role in the TV sequels *Till Death...* and *In Sickness and in Health*, and in the films *Till Death Us Do Part* (1969) and *The Alf Garnett Saga* (1972). He also made numerous film appearances and received two Laurence Olivier Theatre Awards—for playing Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (National Theatre, 1979) and as best supporting actor in a 2003 performance of *The Price*, also by Miller.



November 16

Michael C. Gross, (aged 70), American graphic designer and producer, perhaps best remembered for designing the logo for the movie *Ghostbusters*, which was one of eleven films on which he served as producer or executive producer.



November 19
Rex Reason, (aged 86), German-born American actor, best known for his role as stalwart, heroic scientist Dr. Cal Meacham in the science fiction movie *This Island Earth* (1955). He also co-starred as sympathetic scientist Dr. Tom Morgan in *The Creature Walks Among Us* (1956).

November 21

Anthony Read, (aged 80), British screenwriter, script editor for Doctor Who from 1978. overseeing the "Key to Time" story arc and shaping

the character of the first Romana played by Mary Tamm. He wrote the stories, *The Invasion of Time* and *The Horns of Nimon*. He also wrote the story *Doctor McDee Must Die* for Sapphire and Steel, and stories for a number of other BBC dramas.



November 24

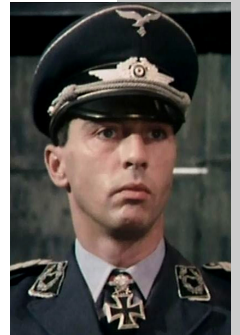
Al Markim, (aged 88), American actor best known for his role as Astro in the 1950s live action sci-fi television series, *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*. His character, Astro, was an engineer and scientist from Venus.

November 25

Elmo Williams, 102, American editor and producer whose work on the film *High Noon* (1952) received the Academy Award for Film Editing. He was nominated again for Walt Disney's 1954 *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

December 2

Anthony Valentine, 76, English actor known for his television roles: the ruthless Toby Meres in *Callan*, the sinister Major Mohn in *Colditz*, George Webster the extremely smooth crook in *The Knock* as well as the title character in *Raffles*.



December 4

Robert Loggia, (aged 85), American actor and director, who was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for *Jagged Edge* (1985). Other notable appearances include *An Officer and a Gentleman* (1982), *Big* (1988), *Independence Day* (1996), and *Lost Highway* (1997), as well as television series including *The Sopranos*.

December 6

Nicholas Smith, (aged 81), British actor, best known for his role in the BBC sitcom *Are You Being Served?*, in which he played Mr. Rumbold, the manager of the fictional Grace Brothers department store. However, he had his first speaking role as Wells in the BBC's Doctor Who serial *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* (1964). One of his last roles was in 2005, as vicar Clement Hedges in the Academy Award-winning film *Wallace and Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*.



Compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith

December 7

Martin E. Brooks, (aged 90), American character actor noted for playing scientist Dr. Rudy Wells in the television series *The Six Million Dollar Man* and its spin-off, *The Bionic Woman*, from 1975 onward.

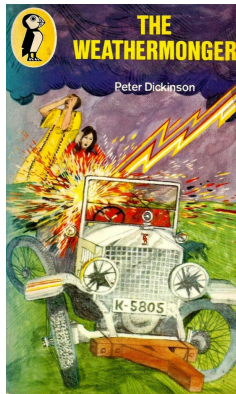


December 15

Harry Zvi Tabor, (aged 98), British-born Israeli physicist and engineer, known as "the father of Israeli solar energy". He was instrumental in developing the modern solar water heater, and received multiple awards for his work on solar energy.

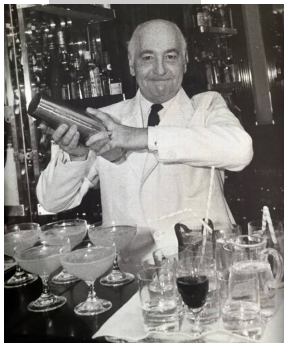
December 16

Peter Dickinson, (aged 88), English author and poet, best known for children's books exploring fantasy and alternate history themes, and adult detective stories. He won the annual Carnegie Medal from the Library Association for both *Tulku* (1979) and *City of Gold* (1980), each being recognised as the year's outstanding children's book by a British subject. I do remember enjoying his "Changes" trilogy, in particular *The Weathermonger*, when I was young.



December 18

Joe Gilmore, (aged 93), British barman, one of the longest running Head Barmen at The Savoy Hotel's American Bar. He invented many cocktails, including the Moonwalk, created in honour of the Apollo 11 moon landing and served to the astronauts on their return to Earth.



December 25

George Clayton Johnson, (aged 86), American science fiction writer, best known for co-writing the novel *Logan's Run* with William F. Nolan, the basis for the MGM 1976 film. He was also known for writing television scripts for *The Twilight Zone* (including "Nothing in the Dark", "Kick the Can", "A Game of Pool", and "A Penny for Your Thoughts"), and the first telecast episode of *Star Trek*, entitled "The Man Trap". He also wrote the story on which the 1960 and 2001 films *Ocean's Eleven* were based.



...there's just one catch.

DVD Reviews

We ordered a bunch of movies before Christmas, and now that we've watched them all, here's a couple of brief reviews.

Shaun the Sheep Movie

Directed by Mark Burton & Richard Starzak
Story by Mark Burton
Based on Shaun the Sheep by Nick Park
Starring Justin Fletcher, John Sparkes, Omid Djalili
Music by Ilan Eshkeri
Cinematography by Charles Copping, Dave Alex Riddett
Production company Aardman Animations



For a movie with no dialogue, aimed at children, this was amazingly witty, with some very adult satire and a lot of clever visual humour. It succeeds at the tricky business of amusing the grown-ups without alienating the littlies. It's a simple story. Shaun the sheep gets bored, and accidentally send the farmer to the city, where he gets hit on the head and forgets who he is. The sheep go to get him back and run into animal control... Definitely worth getting the DVD if you want to catch ALL the little sight gags (and an abundance of special features). My only criticism was the ill-defined species of the character Slip; I was quite distracted trying to figure out what manner of animal it was meant to be.

Tomorrowland

Directed by Brad Bird
Produced by Brad Bird
Screenplay by Damon Lindelof & Brad Bird
Story by Damon Lindelof & Brad Bird
Starring George Clooney, Hugh Laurie, Britt Robertson, Raffey Cassidy, Tim McGraw, Kathryn Hahn, Keegan-Michael Key
Production company Disney



I like what they're trying to do here, I'm just not sure that it worked. It did make more sense when I viewed it for the second time. The idea is that back in the nineteenth century, a group of scientists and future thinkers found a way into a parallel dimension where they founded a futuristic city called Tomorrowland. A child finds his way there in the 1950's and it's very much the positive future that everyone believed in back then. But the Tomorrowland of today is not so wonderful. It needs to be fixed and, of course, there is a misguided villain who must be stopped.

The visuals are very good, the message is one the world needs to hear, but the telling isn't as effective as it might be. Perhaps it's just trying a bit too hard. And I was disappointed to find no special features at all on the DVD, when there was plenty of scope for them.

Ranger's Apprentice: The Early Years: The Tournament at Gorlan

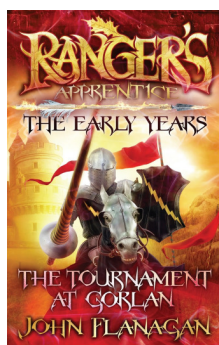
by John Flanagan

Published by Random House

Supplied by Penguin Random House

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Flanagan continues to mine his "Rangers" world; only now he's digging into prequel territory. The flaws in his world-building are still evident – coffee ought to be a rare luxury in any pseudo-medieval world unless the setting is very close to its point of origin (or there are improbable amounts of magic messing around with transport and economics). I keep wishing he'd chuck out this background and start again doing a proper job of it, because he's otherwise not a bad writer. "The Tournament at Gorlan" fairly rollicks along, and I have to say I quite enjoyed it. The story is that the young Prince has been taken captive, and an imposter is stirring up trouble in his name, while the old King is being slowly poisoned in mind as well as body. Our rangers make it their business to get together and put things to rights. Which they do, culminating in the events of the titular tournament (which I must admit felt more like a modern re-enactment than the real thing, but that's Flanagan). The reality is that the majority of his young readers will not even notice the mistakes that annoy me, and this is probably the best of his work that I've read so far. Which is as close to a recommendation that you're going to get.



Magnus Chase and the Sword of Summer

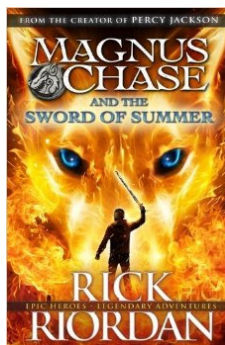
by Rick Riordan

Published by Puffin

Supplied by Penguin Random House

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

I must confess that I haven't actually read any of Riordan's work before, although I had seen the movie adaptation of *Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief*. Which hadn't really impressed me, so I wasn't expecting a lot from this novel. But I soon discovered otherwise. What didn't come through in the movie is the sheer exuberance of Riordan's prose, and his truly wicked sense of humour. This book was fun! There were a few things that didn't sit well with me – the convoluted logic it took to get a Muslim girl to become a Valkyrie for example (just because Muslim heroines are fashionable doesn't mean that every story has to have one). And I think that the choice of Boston as the centre of Yggdrasil and the connection to the other worlds was yet another case of "everything must happen in America even if it doesn't make much sense". Personally, I would have found Iceland a bit more interesting. Or even Norsewood. But Riordan is good enough that this reader can ignore such matters and enjoy the story. Which begins in Boston where Magnus encounters a bridge, a sword, and a fire giant. And dies. And the story continues in Hotel Valhalla. Much of the humour devolves from the collision between Norse myth and the modern world, and it worked for me. Much better than other takes on modernising Norse myth that I've encountered, and Riordan's version is much truer to the



actual mythology than, for example, the Marvel version. The main criticism others have made is that Magnus is too much like Percy and Jason. I didn't have that issue, because I hadn't read the other books. However, I would suggest that if Riordan is to silence his critics, he might be advised to try something totally different after finishing this series – something that doesn't involve mythology, and has a markedly dissimilar lead character. Maybe a science fiction series with a female protagonist. As for me, I got a lot of enjoyment from this book, and I'm sure many teens would enjoy it too.

The Hobbit Motion Picture Trilogy Location Guidebook

by Ian Brodie

Published by HarperCollins New Zealand

Supplied by HarperCollins New Zealand

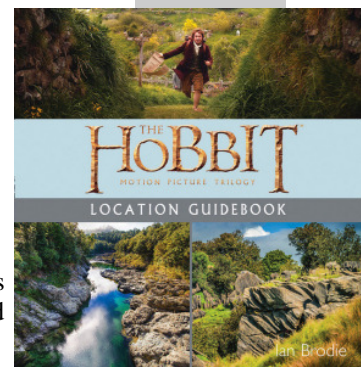
Reviewed by Steve Litten

The Hobbit film trilogy was a visually stunning series and along with its stablemate, The Lord of the Rings, was filmed on location entirely in New Zealand. The franchise has a considerable fan base and a number of these fans wish to experience the film more than just on the screen. Hence the continuation of the Hobbiton film set and this book, which offers the devotee of Peter Jackson's vision of The Hobbit the opportunity to see Middle Earth in the flesh as it were.

The book is divided into two main sections, North Island and South Island, along with the usual preambles, forewords, introductions, indices and recommended itineraries. More on the latter below, first on body. Locations for The Hobbit are not spread out evenly in New Zealand but tend to be clustered about a few key nodes. Thus Matamata, the location for Hobbiton, provides a handy base to access several sites sprinkled across the Waikato and King Country, such as the Waitomo Caves, Aratiatia Rapids. Similarly, there are strong clusters at the top end of the South Island near Nelson and in Central Otago. The section on Wellington features not only the external locations, but also Weta Workshop, a tourist attraction in its own right. Each cluster of locations is given a handy map with the relevant topography and traveller's information.

Each location shoot features pictures of the location in the raw, along with at least one accompanying screen image. Included in the text are quotes from cast and crew members describing their impressions of the area, as well as explanations of some of the special effects Weta carried out to transform the wilderness to the screen. The deconstruction of the Weta magic helps, because what appears on screen is not always the scenery with additions, but is sometimes a pastiche. Some sets, on the screen mere yards apart, are sometimes considerably further – Beorn's House being a prime example. You'll have read the book to find out more.

The suggested trip itineraries are included not only because accessing remote areas on any landscape takes time, but because the development of the book was assisted by the various regional tourism boards. So sometimes recommendations on where to eat or stay fall into the text. I'd recommend this book not only to those keen on visiting the locations, but anybody who appreciates location searches and good photography.





Where: Wellington
When : Queens Birthday Weekend
 3-5th June, 2016
Venue: CQ Hotel in Cuba Street

**Guests of Honour:
 Stephanie Paul**

Twenty-six years experience in the entertainment industry has given Stephanie many strings to her bow. She has a comprehensive film and television career and is most well known for her feature film role as "Madame President" in the sci-fi comedy international cult classic "Iron Sky", gearing up for its sequel in 2016. Behind the scenes, Stephanie has worked in many departments and held positions such as Associate Agent, Producer, Director, and Writer. Stephanie's website is: www.stephaniepaul.net.



Martin Wallace

Martin Wallace is one of a small number of people lucky enough to make a living from designing board games. He published his first game, Lords of Creation, in 1993. Today he has over sixty titles to his name, including Age of Steam, Brass, Discworld Ankh-Morpork, Doctor Who: the Card Game, Runebound, and Onward to Venus. Many of these titles have been released through Treefrogames, which Martin runs with his significant other, Julia. Martin and Julia emigrated to New Zealand in 2013.



AJ Fitzwater

AJ Fitzwater is a human-suit wearing dragon from Christchurch, who won the Sir Julius Vogel Awards 2015 for Best New Talent.

Charity:

Shine is New Zealand's largest specialist domestic abuse charity.
www.2shine.org.nz



Website:

<http://ac2016.cons.nz/index.php>

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This Month:

SPACE
 Friday 8th April, 7:30 pm Venue TBA

Next Quarterly Meeting (AGM):

Wednesday 30th March 2016, 7:30 pm
 Auckland Horticultural Centre,
 990 Great North Road,
 Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

April 16-17th 2016
Ink Forge Games
 Remuera Bridge Club, 273 Remuera Road
<http://www.battlecry.co.nz/>

June 3-5th 2016
AU CONTRAIRE 2016
 37th New Zealand National SF Convention
<http://ac2016.cons.nz/index.php>