



**Issue XVIII - July 2011**

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## Musings from Under the Mountain

At last, it's stopped raining. It's cool and clear, and Keith is happy because he can see and photograph the winter stars (and planets) at last.

Meanwhile, I've been working on stories for the new Doctor Who role-playing game, "Adventures in Time and Space", and it's harder than you might think. We've decided to avoid the whole "who's going to be the Doctor" argument by playing in a rather smaller sandbox, that of the "Sarah Jane Adventures". For those of you who haven't encountered it, this is the Doctor Who spin-off starring the late Elizabeth Sladen as former companion Sarah Jane Smith. Made by the CBBC, it's aimed at a younger audience, and features a trio of teenage "companions"—which works for my young players (Paul and his friends). Except none of them wanted to play the girl...

The problem with writing stories for this group is the constraints. These adventures have to be set largely in the present time, and not too far geographically removed from Ealing, London. It becomes something like "Midsomer Murders" with alien incursions substituting for homicides—occurring in improbable numbers in a small area. Mind you, that's typical of popular sci-fi (and urban fantasy for that matter). Everything concentrates on either the US or Britain (depending on who's making it) irregardless of how unlikely that is. This stretches to breaking point with those urban fantasies which insist on importing all the creatures of European myth to the Americas... What's wrong with Native American legends? And, of course, all the weird stuff from history must somehow find its way to the US, too.

And every Christmas, strange things happen to London. At least, Doctor Who has the wit to realise that this might be an issue. By the time we get to "Voyage of the Damned" (the one with the Spaceship Titanic) we find London deserted, and this quote explains why: "This year, Lord knows what. So everybody scarpared. Gone to the country. All except me. And Her Majesty."

It has to be said that this year's Doctor Who Christmas Special broke that mould, in more than one way. No London setting for "A Christmas Carol", and quite possibly the best story yet from the new Doctor, Matt Smith. I have to say that I have at times found the fifth (and sixth) series less than satisfactory ("Victory of the Multi-coloured Dalek Fridges" anyone?), and I'm somewhat confused as to its current direction. It's not Matt Smith's performance... he's cool. Maybe it's the changes in the production team, and the loss of Russell T. Davies and Julie Gardner at the helm. Steven Moffat is one heck of a writer, giving us some of the best stories in the revived series, including "Blink", but I'm not sure that he's doing so well as producer. Ah well, time will tell—especially where Doctor Who is concerned.

Jacqui Smith

## The View from the Comfy Chair

By the time you read this, the latest club meeting has just been. I know this because I am writing it the day after. The experiment of getting in a guest appears to have worked well so if anyone has any other suggestions of subjects that could be addressed in that way, please let me know. I'm considering Steampunk at the moment as that seems to be the upcoming thing.

The view itself is cloudy again today, although there have been a few clear days when I was able to see stars. I'm still sorting through the last set of pictures, which should be up on Facebook soon. At the last AAS meeting, I was lucky to be there when a few of the guys were experimenting with attaching cameras to the Zeiss telescope. So mine went on and I got some fine shots of Saturn and its moons. That took two different exposures, but some fiddling in Photoshop merged the two together to make one (in my opinion) brilliant picture.

The weather was also good for the garden and we have managed to harvest some of the fruits, well vegetables, of our labours. The peas gave their all to the dinner plate, and we had home grown cauliflower last night with a cheese sauce. Now that we've had the woolly nightshade trees down, the next thing to do is to plant fruit trees in their place – as soon as we can get rid of the stumps.

The days of clear nights also coincided with some rather bright passes of the ISS, with Atlantis still attached. This is definitely the end of an era. STS-135 is the last flight if the space shuttle program and Atlantis's landing will mark the end of America's involvement in manned space flight. It is unknown when the next American manned spaceflight will occur, if ever. I guess we can only wait and see what happens.

As I've said before, any suggestions for Club activities, including things to do at Club nights, please let me know. It's your Club, so let's have fun with it.

Keith  
President – Stella Nova

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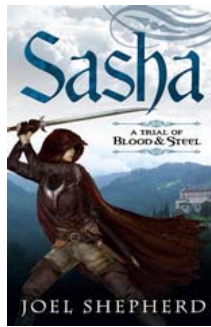
**Sasha: Trial Of Blood And Steel Book I**

by Joel Shepherd

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



Lenayin is a land divided by two religions. The Goeren-yai faith is animist, guided by spirits and focused on strength and honour. Followed by most of the common people, it is the original Lenayin religion. The Verenthane faith is a more organized religion that has the majority of Lenayin's nobility amongst its followers. When the sole remaining Goeren-yai High Lord kills a neighbouring province's Verenthane leader, a complex conflict begins that threatens to tear apart the fragile balance keeping Lenayin together.

The heroine, Sasha (short for Sashandra), is a daughter of the Lenay king. She has abandoned her royal privileges to live among the Goeren-yai and study fighting techniques. Her tutor is Kessligh, former commander of Lenayin 's armies and hero of a past war with neighboring Cherrovan. Kessligh has adopted the Nasi-Keth, a third belief system that follows the teachings of the non-human serrinim. Sasha is a supremely talented sword fighter as well as being temperamental and stubborn. She is torn in different directions, her desire to lead a simple life studying swordwork battling with the call of history and duty. The Goeren-yai believe she is guided by the Synnich spirit that will liberate them from oppression. The book starts off slow, with the first half introducing the world of Lenayin. There is a lot of talking, with characters being introduced and giving a good grasp of who's who. The political manipulations of the court are introduced and the laying out of events sets the scene of complex family and clan interaction. The second half has more action, marching off to war, alliances built, battle scenes. Characters are introduced who will play a major role in future books.

This is the start of an exciting fantasy quartet. I've got the next three on my desk and can't wait to turn them. They show the heroine as someone tough who turns her back on privilege and can be the best in a man's world. She doesn't sit around waiting for rescue. Her sister also appears and shows her strength in a different way. I look forward to seeing more of Sofy. "Sasha" is an excellent epic fantasy novel that promises great things for the rest of the series. I highly recommend this for fantasy fans.

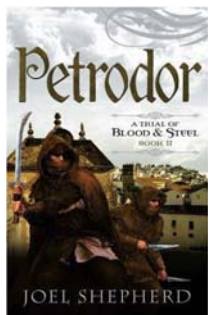
**Petrodor: Trial Of Blood And Steel Book II**

by Joel Shepherd

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



Sasha now lives in the Torrovan port city of Petrodor. This is a city with several political factions squaring off against each other. These are the powerful and rich merchant families, the nobility, the clergy, and the "talmaad" - Serrin agents living in Petrodor. The common folk are torn between the predominant Verenthane religion and the Serrin-influenced Nasi-Keth.

Sasha's sister Alythia is married off to the noble Halmady family. This political alliance marriage beings a power struggle among the other noble houses. This includes Steiner House, which Sasha and Alythia's sister Marya was married into. The politically minded archbishop sets in motion bloody events that turn allies into enemies. Sasha and Alythia, with their allies, struggle to survive. The sub-plot follows Jaryd, hell-bent on revenge for the murder of his little brother. He is now training with the Goeren-yai in Sasha's old village after abandoning his Verenthane faith at the end of Sasha. Sofy hears of a plot to murder his surviving brother and warns him. With some village men, they charge off to rescue him. The characters and factions also avoid being black-and-white stereotypes - not all Verenthanes are evil, not all nasi-keth are honourable, and the serrin aren't quite as unified and angelic as they seemed at the end of Sasha. Everyone tries to look out for their own interests as best as they can. The political set-up is once again very complex, with factions within factions depending on or plotting against each other.

"Petrodor" is an exciting fantasy in a complex world. It has an interesting focus on power, politics, and religion, with memorable characters. The story is action-packed and exciting.

**Tracato: Trial Of Blood And Steel Book III**

by Joel Shepherd

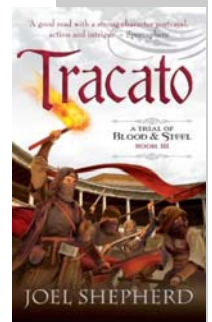
Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Rhodia has a divided population of feudalists, non-feudalists (Civid Sein), and the non-human serrin. Tensions finally overflow and Rhodia moves toward a full-scale war. The northern Verenthane countries and the war-like goeren-yai, are marching south to join the Torovan armies and reclaim the Saalshen Bacosh. The serrin have occupied them for two hundred years and made them prosperous. The fanatical religious Verenthanes have wanted to reclaim them for years and some humans there want to return to feudal times. In Tracato there is a politically and religiously complex situation. Sasha's Lenay countrymen are marching to wage war on the serrin. Her lover is a serrin; her uman is on the opposing side. Sasha's opposing loyalties and identity crisis build to an agonizing climax. Sofy is marching with the Lenay army to marry a prince of Larosa in the sub-plot to Sasha's life and battle for survival in Rhodia. With her are Jaryd, the former noble and now goeren-yai soldier, and Yasmyn, her fierce handmaiden.

Unlike the first two books in the "Trial of Blood and Steel", "Tracato" completely skipped the introductions and jumped straight into action, the Tracato civil war. Then it jumped to the series-wide conflict, the invasion of Enora. Joel Shepherd has built a highly complex political and religious world. In Tracato, the history of the various countries and religions is known, the characters are in place, and everything is inexorably converging. There is maximum tension and intensity and this is possibly the most exciting book in the series. I would urge people to start with "Sasha", as this is a fantastic series and deserves to be read in its entirety.



**Changes:**

**The Dresden Files – Book 12**

by Jim Butcher

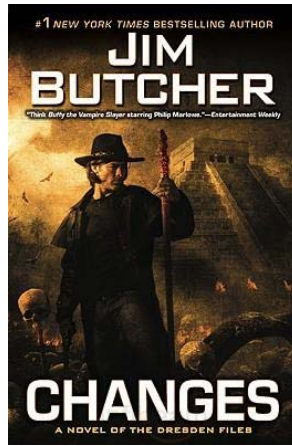
Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

“I answered the phone, and Susan Rodriguez said, ‘They’ve taken our daughter.’” Harry is shocked to discover he has a child with his ex-girlfriend Susan. Their daughter has been abducted by a vampire of the Red Court, Duchess Arianna Ortega, who blames Harry for her husband’s death. She is planning to use the girl as a human sacrifice to gain enough power for the Red Court to rule the world. Thanks to diplomatic wrangling, the White Council refuses to offer help. Harry must rely on his own skills and cunning to outwit the monsters and save his daughter. He has the help of many friends and familiar characters (cop Murphy; Harry’s half brother, vampire Thomas; Sanya the Knight; and Harry’s apprentice, Molly) as they risk everything to save Harry’s daughter. The book ends with a cliff hanger on the last few pages. I’m really anxious to read the next one now. This CAN’T be the end!!!

“Changes” is a great read, full of action and with a clever plot that keeps you guessing. The longest book in The Dresden Files series, there is never a dull moment in this book. For Harry Dresden fans, this is a must read. If you are a new reader, don’t start the series here, go back to Storm Front: Book 1.



zombie sex and the devouring of human flesh, making it a very dark but comic read. If you’ve read The zombie survival guide : complete protection from the living dead by Max Brooks, you’ll enjoy Browne’s Breathers.

**Fantasy Lover**

by Sherrilyn Kenyon

Published by Piatkus Books

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

Julian Macedon has spent far too many years – hundreds, thousands even – confined to life as a sex slave and doomed to spend his time stuck within the pages of an ancient book. The only time Julian leaves the pages is when he’s called forth to serve women in a purely physical sense. Needless to say, romance and love are overrated. Grace Alexander is a celibate sex therapist, a lifestyle decision made after the end of a rather awful relationship. She’s not into love, either. Her life is as far removed from Julian’s as it could possibly get, until Grace’s rather unusual friend, Selena, gives her Julian’s book as a birthday present. Imagine Grace’s surprise when the spell she assumes is a joke, really does work. What’s a girl to do when she has a real-life Greek demi-god at her beck and call determined to make her fall in love with him?

A fun-filled – slightly steamy - and addictive read. Fantasy Lover is the first book in Kenyon’s long running Dark-Hunter series. I’m an ardent fan of Kenyon’s Dark-Hunter books, so much so that I visited New Orleans in 2009 for three reasons: the music; Mardi Gras; Kenyon’s books and it was everything I had hoped it would be and more. If you like your paranormal romance with sizzle, you will not be disappointed.



**Breathers :**

**A Zombie's Lament**

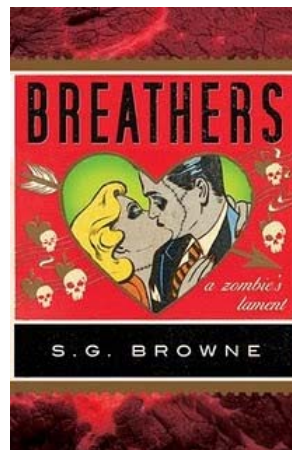
by Scott G. Browne

Published by Broadway Books

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

Sometimes, life is complicated. For Andy Warner, a thirty-something newly turned zombie who drinks shampoo to slow down his decomposition, who has only his undead support group for help and lives in a society that reviles his kind, 'complicated' is kind of an understatement. Actually, complicated would be an improvement. Andy lost his life, and his wife, in a fatal car crash. As a result, he lives in his parents' basement, decaying and depressed, until he starts attending Undead Anonymous, a support group for the undead. Unlife (living impaired?) takes a turn for the better when he meets, and falls for Rita, a recent-suicide (complete with stitches). But things really change when Andy, Rita and the Undead Anonymous group come upon Ray, who introduces them to his jars of 'venison'... Not my usual kind of book but I've been on a bit of a zombie-fest lately and Browne's Breathers was a random choice. One that, as it turns out, I actually enjoyed. What's not to like? After all, it has all the classic elements a good book needs: horror, comedy, love,



**Hell's Belles**

by Jackie Kessler

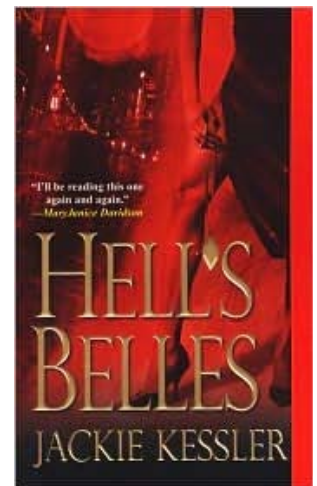
Published by Piatkus Books

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by C A

Hargreaves

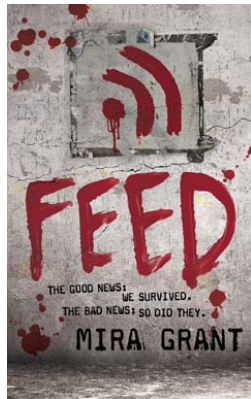
Jezebel is an ex-succubus who has run away from hell. She is on Lucifer’s wanted list and she is being hunted. She disguises herself in a human body in a ... gentleman’s club. The only thing that let “Hell’s Belles” down was the switching form present to past. I prefer a story to go in order from past to present. I found that “Hell’s Belles” was easy to get into and read. For the most part I was able to escape into the story and it kept me interested. I liked that it left you guessing what side everyone was on.



**Feed: Newsflesh, Book 1**

by Mira Grant  
 Published by Orbit  
 Supplied by Hatchette  
 Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

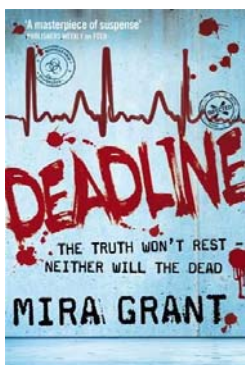
In the not-too-distant future man has cured cancer and the common cold. Unfortunately, in his quest to do so, he also created a genetically engineered virus that caused the dead to come to life again with the need to feed. Some twenty years after the Rising, Georgia, Shaun (brother and sister) and Buffy are bloggers. Not blogging like we have today, though, because traditional news does not exist. In a time when people are too scared to be outside, afraid to be around each other for fear of spreading the virus, blogging is how they receive their news, and the more prestige you have as a blogger, the better the content you can post. When they're invited to join Senator Ryman on his presidential campaign trail it seems like they've finally made it. Instead, what they find is that maybe the true monsters are humans and not zombies, after all. But is the truth worth your life...? You could be forgiven for thinking Grant's book is just another zombie novel in a long line of zombie novels but you'd be doing it a major disservice. It's a scientific thriller because, let's face it, "Feed" \*is\* more science fiction than horror. But it also does this very clever thing where it manages to tie in politics and a person's basic right to information – who decides what we have access to and how - and the freedom of speech. This definitely isn't a short read and, at times, can seem a little heavy in politics but it is well worth it. I haven't ever read a zombie-political thriller ever, and certainly not one that is an edge-of-your-seat read.



**Deadline: Newsflesh Book 2**

by Mira Grant  
 Published by Orbit  
 Supplied by Hatchette  
 Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

It's hard to write a synopsis for this book without giving away any spoilers but I'm going to do the best I can. It's been a year since Shaun and Georgia Mason investigated the truth behind the Kellis-AmberLee virus outbreak – a strain that gave rise to reanimated dead people (zombies, for want of a better word) in Grant's post-apocalyptic "Newsflesh" series. Now, a year after those shocking events, Shaun Mason and his news crew are getting on with getting on but life just isn't the same and probably never will be again. When Kelly Connolly, a CDC researcher who faked her own death, turns up on his doorstep with a conspiracy story, Shaun finds himself on the trail of the truth once again. I'm always a bit apprehensive about reading sequels because so many of them don't do justice to the first book. Happily, "Deadline", book 2 in Mira Grant's "Newsflesh" trilogy, doesn't suffer from that problem. If you're lucky for wall to wall gore and body parts then you're in for a disappointment. "Deadline" is not that kind

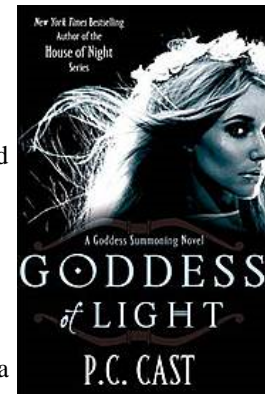


of story. If "Feed" was a political thriller with zombies then "Deadline" is a medical thriller with zombies. It's full of action, twists, suspense, cover-ups and, surprisingly, emotion. And oh! That ending! This series is a must-read.

**Goddess of Light**

by P.C. Cast  
 Published by Piatkus  
 Supplied by Hatchette  
 Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

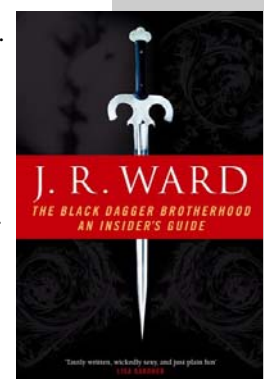
Zeus has decided that the gods and goddesses have grown spoiled and arrogant and could benefit from learning how not to take things for granted...and so sends them to Las Vegas. This edict doesn't sit well with Bacchus. After all, he's made this city his eternal playground. When Pamela Smythe, interior designer, makes a wish for a god-like man, Artemis finds herself somehow bound to fulfilling it, and convinces her twin brother Apollo to be what Pamela needs. I found the story somewhat slow to start and a large part of that is probably due to the fact that I was confused about which characters belonged where and with whom. The book does hit its groove after that, though. If you're into paranormal romances with Greek gods and bright lights then you'll probably enjoy Cast's novel. Personally, I think this was an average read and I have to admit that I won't be looking for more in this series.



**The Black Dagger Brotherhood – An Insiders Guide**

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

This book can be split into two parts. First is for BDB fans. The other is advice and tips on writing that can be applied generally. First, a short story about Z and Bella. Squee!!! Then questionnaires the brothers have filled out and interviews with each. JR Ward then gives an overview of each book - how she crafted it, people, places, character motivation. Deleted scenes are included, with an explanation of why they were taken out. JR Ward also shares her favourite bits from each book as well as all the Brothers interviewing her. JR Ward's site has forums - <http://jrwardbdb.com/forum/index.php>. Some message board threads from the Brothers are posted here and pretty hilarious. Some little scenes of life from the Brotherhood are also made available on the board and are in the book. In the Writer's section she lists her eight writing rules – #8: listen to your rice krispies! – and gives advice to those who want to get published. She gives advice about query letters – what to include, what to leave out – and reproduces the exact proposal she sent out for the first BDB book, Dark Lover. This is a must read for fans. It also has very wise advice on writing.



At the New Zealand national convention of 2010 Norman Cates's private musings on running a world SF convention got carjacked, given a dose of Stockholm syndrome and then set loose on local fandom. A week later at Aussiecon 4, or the 2010 world science fiction convention if you prefer, international fandom became aware of this idea and in a fit of collective whimsy threw money at the concept (in the form of pre-supporting memberships).

Return of scene to NZ and amongst local fandom there is mixed feelings, to say the least, on the advisability of hosting a worldcon here. Is there the necessary facilities? Are there people willing and able to do the organisational work? What would such an event do to local fandom?

Until just after Queen's Birthday weekend, there had been an assumption circulating in some fan circles that Wellington was the likely host city. After all Christchurch had been struck by successive acts of God in the form of earthquakes and was now absent suitable facilities, including hotels; Hamilton, Palmerston North and Lower Hutt were booby prizes in travel contests, although the taxi ride to Hamilton from Auckland airport would be cheaper and quicker at rush hour than to Queen Street; Rotorua stood a better chance than these three unknown convention venue notwithstanding; and Auckland's convention facilities were not attached to a suitable hotel. Besides Wellington has Weta and all that spiffy stuff fans are interested in doesn't it?

I had even heard Auckland fans boosting Wellington as the probable host city for 2020, what with Weta, Te Papa and all those central city facilities.

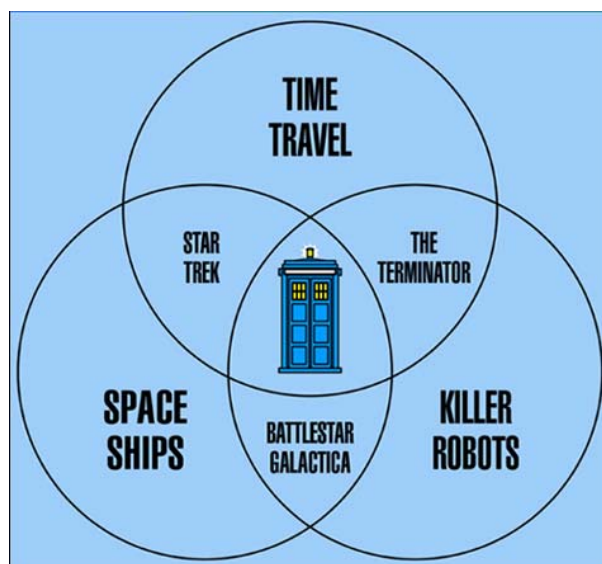
And then there was an announcement that caused my eyebrows to become very well acquainted with my hairline: SkyCity, hotelier and casino operator, had become the preferred provider of a new national convention centre (just a few law changes required (add water and stir)) that would be open and operating in time for the 2020 worldcon.

That announcement changes the hosting dynamics considerably. Auckland, while being a sprawling, commuting-travellers' nightmare of a city to live and work in has many advantages over elsewhere in NZ for hosting a worldcon. The principal one being that no further travel, by way of connecting flights, is required. Once the traveller has cleared Customs and Immigration control, he or she has the minor hurdle of getting to the hotel, bedding down and then enjoying the convention. Auckland is also the principal entry point to NZ for international flights ex-Asia and the only port servicing the Americas. European travellers must come through either or do a long dogleg through South Africa and on to Australia, which allows access to the smuggest little capital in the world.

Having Auckland as the host city for a New Zealand worldcon changes my fundamental attitude towards the proposition – until SkyCity so generously offered to build a national conventional centre, and the government agreed that a few law changes were better than forking out tens of millions to build said centre, I could see the

worldcon happening in Wellington with me expected to be neckdeep (and sinking fast without snorkelling equipment) in the administration of the convention helping turn a pipedream into reality. Not so now! Ooh, no. An Auckland convention means I can posit that such a venture is a brilliant idea. I can sit back and offer suggestions on how to make it a fantastic experience for local and visitor alike. But do any work to turn that pipedream into reality – no bloody chance! I may be mad, but I'm not stupid. There are plenty of fans in Auckland who can manage that.

By Simon Litten



## All I need to know, I learned by watching Doctor Who

- Don't be afraid to dress conspicuously.
- "There's no point in being grown up if you can't be childish sometimes." – The Doctor, "Robot"
- Be polite to strangers—offer them a jelly baby.
- Face bureaucracy with sarcasm.
- Bad guys always wear black – except when they're multi-coloured Dalek fridges.
- Almost any problem can be solved by reversing the polarity of the neutron flow.
- Never trust anyone with a sinister beard and a high collar.
- When in doubt, bang the console.
- Nearly anyone will fall for the really big lie at some point.
- If it glows, avoid it. Really.
- Gravel quarries are not what they seem.
- Bad guys will not see you if you stand really close to the wall, even if they walk right past you.
- All aliens speak with British accents.
- All alien planets have corridors somewhere.

- There's nothing a sonic screwdriver can't handle (apart from a voice activated lock).
- Every alien planet has open cast mining.
- “When I say run, RUN!” – The Doctor, several episodes
- “Everyone remotely interesting is mad in one way or another.” – The Doctor, "Greatest Show In The Galaxy"
- “Somewhere else the tea's getting cold.” – The Doctor, "Survival"
- The worst won't happen if you do something immensely clever.
- “Humans have an amazing capacity for self-deception.” – The Doctor, "Remembrance of The Daleks"
- If you're so clever, follow me up the stairs.
- Your best weapons are your mind, your scarf, and your broolly.
- Blowing up the Earth is no solution to your own incompetence.
- You never know what you're going to get.
- “I am the master, you will obey me.” – The Master, several episodes
- Life is hard, then you regenerate.
- However bad it may be, it'll all blow up in the last scene.
- Companions may come and go, but your K9 is forever.
- “I'm HAPPY!” – The Doctor, "Happiness Patrol"
- “First things first—but not necessarily in that order.” – The Doctor, "Megolos"



Disney



Directed by John Lasseter  
Brad Lewis (co-director)

Produced by Denise Ream

Screenplay by Ben Queen

Story by John Lasseter, Brad Lewis  
Dan Fogelman

Starring Owen Wilson, Larry the Cable Guy  
Michael Caine, Emily Mortimer  
Jason Isaacs, Thomas Kretschmann

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

School holiday time again, and the Smiths have been to the movies. Pickings were a bit slim this time—the hordes were heading for the final Potter movie, but I'm going to wait for it to come out on DVD so as to watch all of HP7 together. “Kung Fu Panda 2” has little appeal, so that left “Cars 2”, which was fine, because young sir has been looking forward to the “Cars” sequel ever since we heard it was being made. Now, I've seen the reviews on Wikipedia and it has to be said they're a bit mixed. This movie doesn't just feature “lemons” as villains... many of the critics seem to think that if Pixar ever made a lemon, this is it. Well, I can't say it's the best movie they've made—we could have a long discussion about that, but it's still a fun, if somewhat frenetic watch.

The movie opens with a fantastic action sequence featuring British spy Finn McMissile bouncing around a oil rig, gaining details of a new secret weapon, disguised as a TV camera. Meanwhile, Lightning McQueen, now four-times winner of the Piston Cup, taking a well-earned rest in Radiator Springs, when former oil tycoon, Miles Axlerod announces a "World Grand Prix", promoting Allinol biofuel. Mater puts his big tow hook in it, (not for the last time), and McQueen enters the race series.

The first race is in Japan, where Mater confuses wasabi with pistachio ice cream.... And is mistaken for an American spy, which gets him (and McQueen) unknowingly mixed up in the whole plot. Not that they're not in danger anyhow, with cars blowing up in the race, and the “green” fuel they're required to use coming under suspicion. And, so they continue on to Italy and finally to London, still blissfully unaware of what is really going on. However, when push comes to shove, it is Mater who identifies the real villain of the piece...

There is a strong moral here, perhaps overdone, that sometimes those who are dismissed as fools may figure out things that the rest don't, and show unsuspected bravery and brains. Pixar take a sly dig at “Big Oil”, and of course, the puns come thick and fast. On the way home, Paul said that he thought the movie was “good, but not great” and you know, I think I agree with him.

by  
Jacqui  
Smith

# The Sky at Night – August 2011

Not much planetary activity this month. Mars is low on the horizon at dawn, Venus and Mercury are too close to the sun to be seen. Only Saturn is in the evening sky and Jupiter doesn't make an appearance until after midnight, becoming high in the sky at dawn.

The Milky Way can be seen arcing overhead in the night sky this month with the distinctive shape of Scorpius high overhead with Sagittarius nearby. When we look in that direction we are looking toward the centre of our galaxy. This month, I intend to concentrate on that area as there are quite a few interesting objects there, many of which can be seen with binoculars and small telescopes.

The most striking object in Scorpius is the bright star Antares which means 'rival of Mars'. It marks the heart of the scorpion. Near Antares is a large, but dim, globular cluster, M4 (NGC6121) while just below the hook, or the tail, of the scorpion is the cluster pair of M6 and M7 (NGC6405 and NGC6475) which are apparently close enough to each other to appear in the same binocular field of view. M7 is the brighter of the two and can be seen with the naked eye. If you're now wondering where M5 (NGC5904) is, it's in Serpens, a neighbouring constellation. M5 is a faint globular cluster.

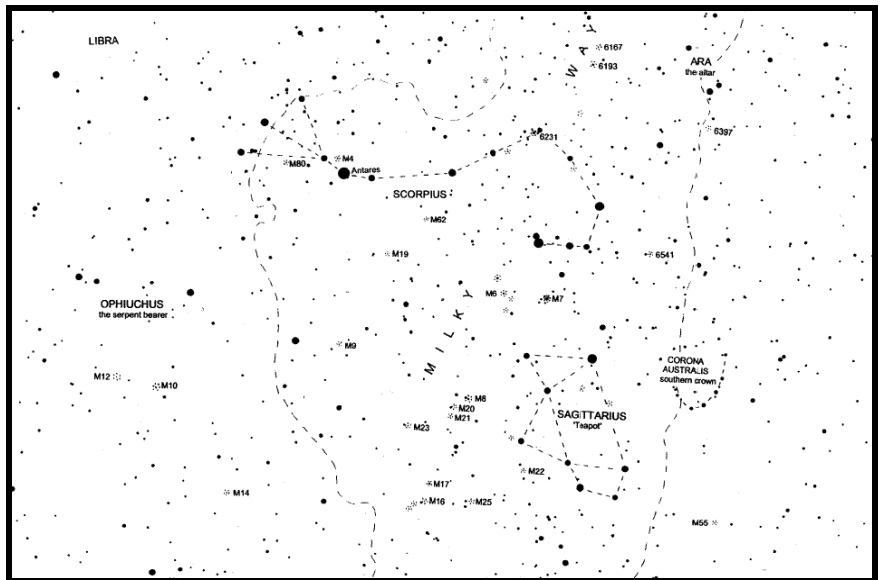
Working our way down towards Sagittarius we can find the Lagoon Nebula (M8 or NGC6523). Also in Sagittarius is M22 (NGC6656) a bright globular cluster, and M23 (NGC6494) an open cluster. Another well known object, the Trifid Nebula (M20 OR NGC 6514) is in Sagittarius but it is fainter and hence harder to find. Nearby is the brighter open cluster M21 (NGC6531) so find that and the Trifid should not be too far away.

Low on the northern horizon is the constellation of Hercules. This contains the bright globular cluster M13 (NGC6205) which should be an easy object in binoculars as long as there isn't too much light pollution. This is a good month to find this object because it is at its highest point in the arc in the evening.

Events:

- 6<sup>th</sup> July– First Quarter Moon
- 14<sup>th</sup> July– Full Moon
- 22<sup>nd</sup> July– Last Quarter Moon
- 29<sup>th</sup> July– New Moon

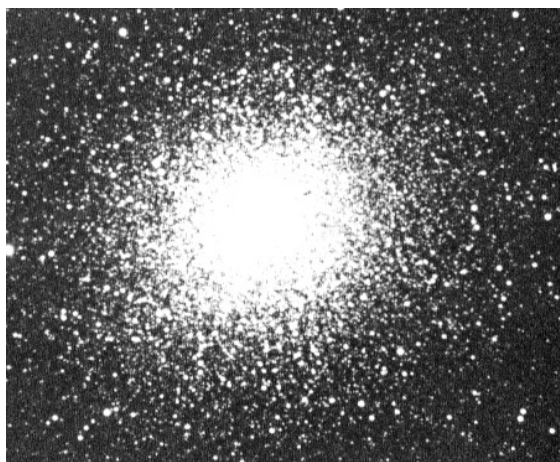
More information can be found at:  
<http://www.astronomy.co.nz/pub/home.asp>  
<http://www.astronomy.org.nz/>  
<http://www.skyandtelescope.com/index.html>



Lagoon Nebula



Trifid Nebula



M13 globular cluster



# Obits

June 12

**Laura Ziskin**, (aged 61),  
American film producer responsible for all for Spider-Man movies among several others.

**Geoffrey Fiskin**, DFC (aged 95),



New Zealand farmer and World War II fighter pilot—the most successful British Commonwealth flying ace in the Pacific theatre, credited with shooting down 11 Japanese aircraft.

June 23

**Peter Falk**, (aged 83),  
American actor best known for his role as Lieutenant Columbo in the TV series Columbo. He appeared in numerous films including “The Princess Bride” (he was the narrator).



**Fred Steiner**, (aged 88),

American television composer who wrote the theme for “Perry Mason”, along with incidental music and arrangements for many films and TV series including “Star Trek”. “Lost in Space”, and “The Twilight Zone”.

**Gene Colan**, (aged 84),

American comic book artist who drew “Daredevil”, “Howard the Duck”, “Captain America”, “Doctor Strange”. He also helped create “Falcon” and “Blade”.

June 27

**Thierry Martens**, (aged 69),

Belgian author of science fiction, Holmesian novels and superhero comics.

July 5

**Gordon Tootoosis**, (aged 69),

Native American Canadian actor, voiced Kekata in “Pocahontas”, and played the “Indian” in a great many Cowboy movies.



July 8

**Betty Ford**, (aged 93),

Former US First Lady (1974–1977) and co-founder of Betty Ford Center.

**Sam Denoff**, (aged 83),

American television writer and lyricist, won four Emmy Awards, two of them for “The Dick Van Dyke Show”.



July 12

**Sherwood Schwartz**, (aged 94),

American television producer and creator of “The Brady Bunch” and “Gilligan's Island”. He also wrote their theme songs—so now you know who to blame!

## Uncorked by Broderick Wells

Having liberated a reasonable sized bottle of whiskey from the cabinet (purely for heating purposes), I forgot what I was doing with the computer. This does not mean I was *non compis mentis* at the keyboard. Rather, the level of distraction provided by online chat-sites (where is the best place to get a mail-order bride from?) e-shopping and gaming meant that it was at least 5 minutes before I realised that I'd forgotten to write my column, or write on a column or hold a rite about a column, slap a writ on... you get the picture.

A number of new games have arrived on the scene: first up is **Dystopian Wars** from Spartan Games.

It's a miniatures game set in a steampunk version of the late Victorian age, and the main protagonists are Britannia, Prussia, the Empire of the Blazing Sun, the Federated States of America. The game map has hints that new players will be available soon, such as the Covenant of Antarctica. The bits and pieces are on sale via the big river e-shop (US and UK versions). The reviewer of my site of choice (<http://www.armchairgeneral.com/dystopian-wars-miniatures-game-first-impressions.htm>) was seduced by “Steampunk Prussian Zeppelin aircraft carriers.” If you like miniatures games, hide your wallet.



Another is **Battleship Galaxies** from Hasbro, which is also a miniatures game best played between two players. This one comes as a complete game and is similar to the old Battleship game of our youth but with more flavour and slightly harder rules.



It is possible to play this one solo, and the reviewer gave it “3 Vagon poets out of 5”, so that's not too bad. Anyhow, I'm in need of more thermal energy, so back to the whiskey barrel.

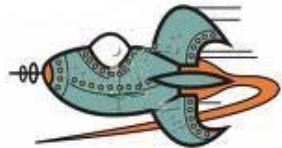
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# UnCONventional 2012

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



UnCONventional will be held at  
“The Spencer On Byron”, located  
in the North Shore suburb of  
Takapuna.

We can announce that our Fan GOH is Lorain Clark. Lorain is a familiar face behind the registration desk of many a con, and she who works behind the scenes has not escaped notice either!

Our Guests of Honour have yet to be confirmed, but we are negotiating with a kiwi icon or two. We intend to use the convention to showcase the wealth of talent to be found in our own backyard.

[www.unconventional.sf.org.nz](http://www.unconventional.sf.org.nz)

Look for us on Facebook.

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

Both will appreciate your support.



World Society for the Protection of Animals



## 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, Greenlane, Auckland 1543

## President:

Keith Smith  
[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:

BOG 23rd July at the Ex-pres Palace.

BOOK 27th July at Marie Williams  
5 Curlew Rd, Otahuhu.

SPACE 5th August at Grant's place

## Next Meeting:

Wednesday 17 August, 2011 at 7:30pm  
Auckland Horticultural Centre,  
990 Great North Road, Western Springs



## Upcoming Events:

**October 28th –31st Armageddon Expo 2011**  
ASB Showgrounds  
<http://www.armageddonexpo.com/nz/>

**June 1-4th 2012 UnCONventional 2012**  
33rd New Zealand National SF Convention  
[www.unconventional.sf.org.nz](http://www.unconventional.sf.org.nz)