



Elder Scrolls IV: Skyrim  
(Screenshots by Brett Peacock.)

Issue XXIX - July 2012

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## Musings from Under the Mountain

We celebrated my fifty-fifth birthday with a very nice chocolate cake made by Keith. He's getting quite good at baking—better than he ever was at woodwork, which was what they insisted on teaching boys back when we were at school. On the other hand, the cooking classes inflicted on our son focused mainly on pasta—which Paul dislikes. So, not much of an improvement, really.

The other thing acquired—the actual birthday present—was a Kindle, the breed of e-book reader spawned by the great SA river. Not that that's a huge advantage since a lot of the content available there isn't available to download here. Not that it matters. I've been happily loading my Kindle with free SF from the internet, much of it the good stuff from way back and now out of print and hard to get. Some of it has dated quite badly, but there's a lot that still works. Clifford Simak for example... a favourite from my high school days: *"Much of what we see in the universe," said Hugo, "starts out as imaginary. Often you must imagine something before you can come to terms with it."* - from *Highway of Eternity*. Could have been written yesterday, not decades ago.

So where am I finding this abundance of excellence in free stuff to read? First, there's Project Gutenberg at [http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Science\\_Fiction\\_%28Bookshelf%29](http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Science_Fiction_%28Bookshelf%29) Here you can find the classics. Verne and Wells, Conan Doyle and ER Burroughs, they're all here. And a lot of others, some not nearly as ancient—ever read Alan E. Nourse's "Star Surgeon"? There's EE "Doc" Smith and H. Beam Piper, Randall Garratt, and lots of others. For more recent works there's the Baen Free Library <http://www.baenebooks.com/c-1-free-library.aspx> which features work from David Weber, Eric Flint and Mercedes Lackey among others. You can find more Baen books on their CDs—I have a couple from AussieCon IV and they can be found lurking in the backs of hard-backs borrowed from the library. Somewhat more dubious, because I know these works are still in copyright, if not actually in print, is <http://arthursbookshelf.com/sci-fi/index.html> Here are Marion Zimmer Bradley's "Darkover" novels, Andre Norton's "Witch World" and many others, including Clifford Simak's "Time is the Simplest Thing" which I have been trying to find for a while. Now I just need to figure out how to feed my cookbook habit to my Kindle—not so easy, especially since amazon.uk won't let me at their Kindle files!

Jacqui

## The View from the Comfy Chair

Not much news on the SF, Space, Photography or Astronomy scenes lately so this month's Presidential column is going to be rather a bit of a ramble.

There's been rather a lack of good SF on TV these days, but channels such as History and Food are enough to keep us entertained – and educated. It is said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it and, looking at the news, which seems to be more and more depressing these days, that history is being repeated. Asset sales didn't work last time and yet... here we go again. Mind you... I've got no better ideas on how to fix the problems either so I guess I should shut up and let the so-called 'experts' get on with it. Trouble is, a lot of the world seems to be stepping back into irrationality if some of the Facebook posts I've seen lately are correct. That's also rather depressing.

Would you believe it, just as I was typing the previous paragraphs, the kitten just jumped on me and started purring in my ear. Now she's on my chest preening herself. Hard to see my laptop screen but I just don't have the heart to put her down. So I type with one hand and pet the cat with the other. Please excuse any spelling errors. Maybe it proves that cats can be susceptible to moods. Maybe she thought I needed cheering up.

Hopefully it's going to be fun and games at the next meeting – literally. Games are the upcoming theme so let's hope we have a good turnout. With a bit of luck, the weather is going to be a bit better as I suspect the bad weather has been keeping people away previously. I'd also like other people's opinions on this question. Are people now getting all their SF material from the Internet? Is that enough? I remember what it was to be an isolated SF fan and I'm not sure I'd want to go back to not seeing other fen except maybe once a year at a convention. No matter what happens with club meetings, I'd rather not lose the social aspect. Anyway, it's getting more difficult to type around the cat so I'll leave it here.

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## Jacqui's Steampunking Quiz:

1. Which writer coined the term "steampunk" in an letter to the SF magazine Locus, printed in April 1987?
  - A. James Blaylock
  - B. Paul di Filippo
  - C. William Gibson
  - D. K. W. Jeter
2. Which form of transportation is an archetype of the steampunk genre?
  - A. Airship
  - B. Flying boat
  - C. Gyrocopter
  - D. Ornithopter
3. In which historical period is the steampunk style?
  - A. Elizabethan
  - B. Georgian
  - C. Roman
  - D. Victorian
4. Which mythological element commonly powers steampunk devices?
  - A. Aether
  - B. Adamant
  - C. Alkahest
  - D. Axonite
5. Which of these novels does NOT fall into the steampunk genre?
  - A. *Lord Kelvin's Machine* by James P. Blaylock
  - B. *When Gravity Fails* by George Alec Effinger
  - C. *Anti-Ice* by Stephen Baxter
  - D. *Phoenix Rising* by Tee Morris & Philippa Ballantine
6. What was the device created by Charles Babbage which became the title of an early Steampunk novel by William Gibson?
  - A. The Analytical Engine
  - B. The Calculation Machine
  - C. The Difference Engine
  - D. The Tabulator
7. Which of these TV western series is notable for steampunk elements?
  - A. *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.*
  - B. *The Adventures of Champion*
  - C. *The Adventures of Kit Carson*
  - D. *The Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok*
8. Which 1999 movie was based on a TV series that was steampunk well before the term was invented?
  - A. Wild and Woolly
  - B. Wild Bill
  - C. Wild Rovers
  - D. Wild, Wild West
9. Which role-playing game, first published in 1988, has Thomas Edison inventing the ether flyer and travelling to Mars?
  - A. Castle Falkenstein
  - B. Etherscope
  - C. Iron Kingdoms
  - D. Space: 1889
10. "Girl Genius" is a Hugo award-winning steampunk comic series by Phil Foglio. What is the first name of the title character?
  - A. Agatha
  - B. Lucrezia
  - C. Zeetha
  - D. Zola

Answers on page 6



K.W. Jeter

Dear Locus:

Enclosed is a copy of my 1979 novel **Morlock Night**; I'd appreciate your being so good as to route it to Faren Miller, as it's a prime piece of evidence in the great debate as to who in "the Powers/Blaylock/Jeter fantasy triumvirate" was writing in the "gonzo-historical manner" first. Though of course, I did find her review in the March Locus to be quite flattering.

Personally, I think Victorian fantasies are going to be the next big thing, as long as we can come up with a fitting collective term for Powers, Blaylock and myself. Something based on the appropriate technology of that era; like "steampunks," perhaps....

--K.W. Jeter

[Thanks for the book! Capsule critique: **Morlock Night** combines H.G. Wells, Arthurian fantasy, and Victoriana in a strange, entertaining mixture -- less antic than **Infernal Devices**, perhaps, but a clear forerunner. "Steampunks"? I like it....

--F.C. Miller]

## What is Steampunk?

It began as a literary term, first applied to that sub-genre of science fiction which brings together Victoriana and Weird Science in 1987. It was popularised by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling in their 1990 novel "The Difference Engine". Since it has developed into a cultural phenomenon, crossing the arts from literature and film, into costuming, sculpture and even music (though the mind boggles at the thought of Victorian music hall crossed with modern punk rock).

As I see it, Steampunk is the future the way it used to be, as Jules Verne and HG Wells would have had it. It's most frequently depicted as an alternate history, where steam still rules and airships float across the skies, where brass and exposed rivets abound, and where goggles are an essential fashion accessory. Often, there are urban fantasy elements—vampires and werewolves to be embraced (or defeated, as the case may be) as well as the more generic mad scientists.

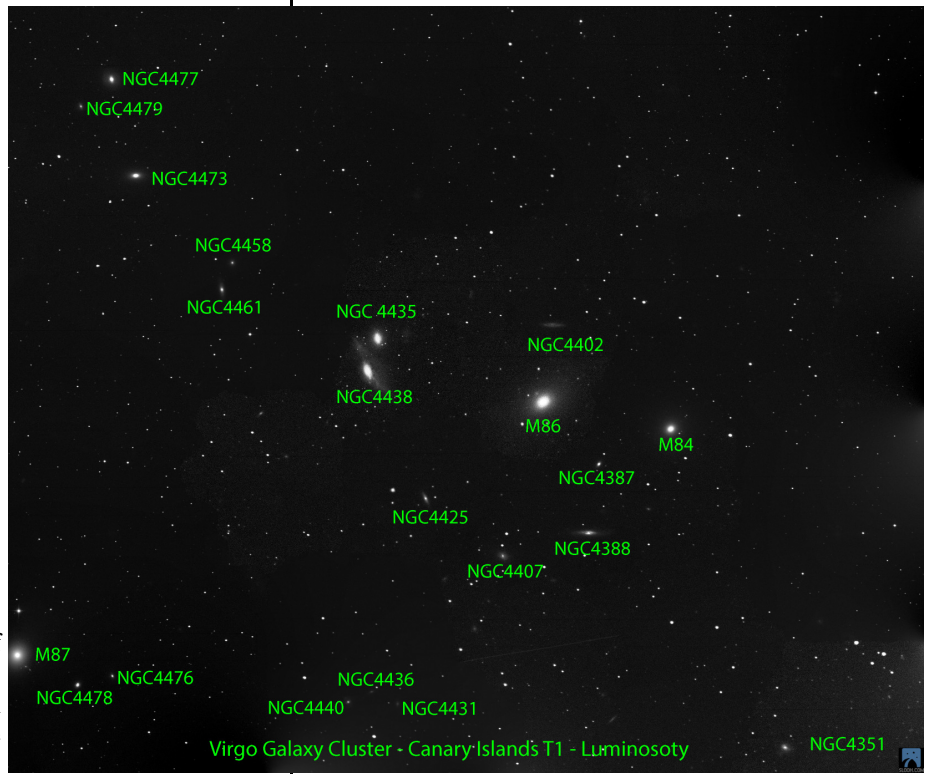
Steampunk has a lot of advantages for props-makers and costumers. Ray-guns and goggles are fun to make, and there are many ways to creatively apply that individualistic steampunk look to utilitarian modern gadgets. Then there's Victorian costume, so very much more stylish than modern. Furthermore, it's much easier to find suitable backdrops than it is for medieval fantasy—even in New Zealand we have numerous colonial houses and venues like MOTAT where Steampunkers can look positively at home. Much of the essential "look" of the genre is derived from film, in particular from Disney's 1954 version of "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea".

In terms of steampunk literature I'd recommend Cherie Priest's "Clockwork Century" series—the first novel *Boneshaker* was up for the Hugo in 2008. I also like Gail Carriger's "The Parasol Protectorate" series, opening with *Soulless* which earned Carriger a nomination for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer. And there are Philippa Ballantine & Tee Morris and their "A Ministry of Peculiar Occurrences" novels. Spiffing!

# The Sky at Night – August 2012

It is said that a picture tells a thousand words. If that is true then this column may be the longest ever in word count so far, as I intend to fill this month's column with pictures that haven't made it to previous columns.

Virgo Cluster—a cluster of spiral and elliptical galaxies whose centre is 53 million light years away in the constellation Virgo.



by  
Keith  
Smith



M6—Open cluster in Scorpius (Butterfly Cluster)  
M20—Trifid Nebula in Sagittarius



M7—Open cluster in Scorpius (Ptolemy Cluster)  
M16—Eagle Nebula in Serpens,



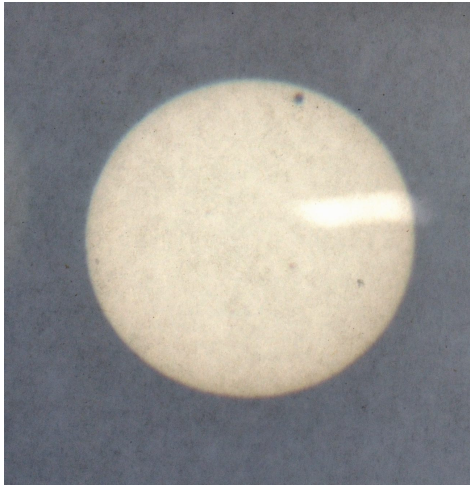


Events:

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

Jupiter and Venus are currently a stunning sight in the morning sky if you're up early enough—Venus will be at their highest in the morning sky during the middle of this month. Meanwhile Saturn and Mars continue to dominate the evening sky. On the 22nd, Mars and Saturn will form a partnership with the moon. They will appear to be closest together on the 15th.

Venus transiting the Sun (taken from our deck, using binoculars, and a cardboard box)!



Pleiades (M45) - Slooh T1 Composite  
Keith Smith

M45—the Pleiades, (aka Seven Sisters, Matariki, Subaru) an open cluster of young stars in Taurus.

M51 Whirlpool Galaxy—a spiral galaxy about 23 million light-years away in Canes Venatici



# Obituaries

June 16

**Susan Tyrrell**, (aged 67), American actress whose favourite role among many was in “Forbidden Zone” (1982) as Queen Doris of the Sixth Dimension.



June 19

**Jim Drake**, (aged 83), American aeronautical engineer, credited as the inventor of windsurfing—he perfected the concepts of board and rig layout, and the universal joint which have remained core to the activity.

June 24

**Lonesome George**, (aged c. 100), Ecuadorian Pinta Island tortoise, last known of its subspecies of Galápagos giant tortoise.



June 25

**Norman Felton**, (aged 99), British-born American television producer who developed “The Man from U.N.C.L.E.” TV series.

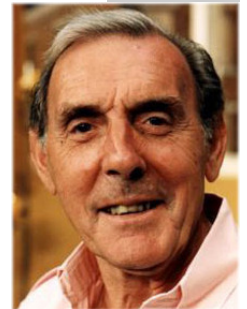


July 3

**Andy Griffith**, (aged 86), American actor best known for his television roles, playing the lead characters in the 1960–1968 situation comedy “The Andy Griffith Show” and in the 1986–1995 legal drama “Matlock”.

July 4

**Eric Sykes**, (aged 89), British comedy writer and actor, who collaborated on many of the Goon Show scripts, and later appeared in numerous comedy shows for British television. His most famous work is probably the wordless film “The Plank” (which you can find on YouTube).



July 8

**Ernest Borgnine**, (aged 95), American actor best known as Quinton McHale in the 1962–1966 series “McHale's Navy” and to younger audiences as the voice of Mermaid Man in “Spongebob Squarepants”.

July 13

**Richard D. Zanuck**, (aged 77), American film producer, who produced such box office hits as Cocoon (1985) and Driving Miss Daisy (1989). He worked with Tim Burton six times, producing Planet of the Apes (2001), Big Fish (2003), Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005), Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (2007), Alice in Wonderland (2010), and Dark Shadows (2012).

Compiled by Jacqui Smith

# Uncorked by Broderick Wells

A short while ago I had to make a trip to the Capital, Brodders' old stamping ground. Not for any specific purpose other than research, which in itself required a spot of research (I had to research the research). I had to delve into the National Archives – subject classified (where is that large red stamp that obliterates most of the screen/page?). But I can hint that it was war related. Naturally, I availed myself of Archway, the National Archives' portal (frightfully useful thing, the internet) and found out lots of really useful stuff, including the factoid that I had to register as a reader to use the reading room at National Archives. In person. You can't do it on-line.

The tickets were paid for by my credit card, both literally and courtesy of loyalty points. I redeemed a wodge of points and received \$150 of Air NZ travel. Which I had to then spend in an Air NZ shop. In person. Again. You can't redeem these vouchers on-line. Have I mentioned how useful the internet is? Air NZ gave me an e-ticket, and armed with this, I turned up at the airport to discover the revolution in air travel that is the new check-in procedure. None of this queuing at specific desks, waiting for some charming assistant to see you. You just waltz up to the auto-thingy, scan the ticket, verify the information, print the baggage label and get your boarding pass. Still have to give the bags to the nice people on baggage control. *Plus ca change, plus ca meme chose.* After that I proceeded to the departure lounge via the obligatory cavity search. I'm so glad I packed my rubber gloves.



The National Archives Reading Room

In Wellington I resided with Wells major (Broderick is Wells minor) in Lower Bougainville. He provided continental breakfast, laundry, transport and hot and cold running cats – all the amenities. We arrived in town the first morning at 7.15am. I devoted the remaining time to buying train tickets, a coffee and one and a half hours lamenting the closure of the Tramways Hotel, provider of eye openers to the Working Classes. National Archives opened at 9, and I duly registered and got a new plastic card for my wallet allowing me to use the Reading Room. I selected several files I wished to see and ordered them, only to discover after a long wait that nothing was there for me. It seems that I should have scrolled down the page after requesting, where upon I would have noticed the message “**These Records are unavailable**”. I had to order them in triplicate by paper. Another hour passed before I got my hands on History. Only to discover, in the words of Obi Wan, “These are not the

records you want”. I spent a goodly part of the day doing variations on this theme, with growing frustration, before finally hitting paydirt at about 3pm.

Digging through archives is much like mining for gold. You know what you're looking for, but much of the time you don't really know where you're going to find it. What looked like a promising vein from a distance turned out to be pure dross on closer inspection. You also have to move a lot of dirt before you find the nuggets. But I found a few. I used the camera to take notes: it is so much quicker to photograph a page rather than transcribe half a page of info, especially if the writing is halfway legible (and I've really improved my cryptography since starting this).

Besides, all archives insist you use pencil if you're writing anything down, Pencil, not pen, pencil.

Of course, I caught up with old friends while I was down there. Monday night, BIG SIG was resurrected at D4, a free house on Featherstone St. As it

was winter, I stuck to porters and stouts, and very nice they were too. Tuesday, Wells minor and major caught up with an old friend and had more beers at his place. Wednesday, before the Phoenix meeting, the Wellses went to dinner at Hashigo Zake, cult beer bar and purveyor of rendang pies. Thursday, Wells minor had dinner at Leuven Belgian Beer Café where the manager shouted him a particularly delicious *Westmalle Dubbel*, before proceeding to D4 again for a Phoenix book meet. And Friday Brodders braved the excitement of more air travel. And the University paid for it all.



What did my research uncover? I have not the slightest idea. I mean, I've got the photos, but the details have disappeared in an alcoholic haze. And I didn't even get to all the craft beer/free houses in Wellington. This calls for more research.

### Quiz Answers:

1. D. K W. Jeter
2. A. Airship
3. D. Victorian
4. A. Aether
5. B. *When Gravity Fails* by George Alec Effinger (which is cyberpunk).
6. C. The Difference Engine
7. A. *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.*
8. D. Wild, Wild West
9. D. Space: 1889
10. A. Agatha





Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld  
 Produced by Walter F. Parkes, Laurie MacDonald  
 Written by Etan Cohen  
 Based on The Men in Black by Lowell Cunningham  
 Starring Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones  
 Josh Brolin, Jemaine Clement

*Reviewed by Jacqui Smith*

It was nearing the end of its run by the time the school holidays rolled around, but MIB<sup>3</sup> was definitely on the menu for the Smiths—Paul had seen both the earlier movies, and was as keen as we were to see the third one. Now, I have to admit a certain amount of caution when considering a second sequel—especially when the first sequel was a bit under-whelming.

I shouldn't have worried. MIB<sup>3</sup> is an entirely suitable addition to the franchise. Paul said that "It was better than the second one", and he was quite right. What's more, the critics agree with him. Josh Brolin does a remarkable job of portraying a younger Tommy Lee Jones as the 1969 version of Agent K, and New Zealander Jemaine Clement does a good job of arguing with himself and playing as the villain. And Will Smith is... Agent J. I did miss Frank the Pug, who only puts in an appearance as an artwork. Yes, this is primarily a time travel story, and time travel stories make my teeth ache, but it also takes the mickey out of time machines. I mean, temporal flux causing chocolate milk cravings...

The climax takes us to Cape Kennedy (not Cape Canaveral—that's just one of the movie's goofs and anachronisms) just in time for the launch of Apollo 11 and a suitably spectacular time-jumping finish. Sure, the premise is a bit implausible, but then that's probably true of the entire franchise. The special effects are truly excellent, and it certainly held my attention. I can't comment on the 3-D, because we saw the 2-D version, but I doubt that we missed much.

Directed by Mark Andrews, Brenda Chapman  
 Produced by Katherine Sarafian  
 Screenplay by Mark Andrews, Steve Purcell  
 Story by Brenda Chapman  
 Starring Kelly Macdonald, Julie Walters  
 Billy Connolly

*Reviewed by Jon*

Brave follows the trials of a young royal tomboy, Merida, faced with losing her freedom. Frustrated with this turn of events, Merida runs away and meets a mysterious old lady who can help resolve her situation. Whether this works out for the princess is another thing. The movie has some pretty scenery with good use of colour and has some lovely touches like floating red hair. With a strong female lead, Brave evokes the ancient Scottish highlands with a nod to Braveheart. Brave has a great feeling to it and makes full use of the Scottish brogue with a couplet of accent in-jokes. Additional highlights are a Pixar short film called La Luna, and an end of credits bonus clip.

*Reviewed by Jacqui Smith*

Brave was our second choice of school holiday movie, and I have to say that the movie is both entertaining and visually stunning. That gorgeous red hair—apparently its creation involved rendering 1500 strands of hair curls! And Billy Connolly does a splendid job of voicing the King. However, there were flaws—small things such as anachronisms like the Queen having a fork obsession in a mythical Scotland well before Catherine de' Medici, and the big things, most importantly a sense of the movie being somehow unfinished. In a fairy tale, the Princess always gets her Prince, but this didn't happen... While you could argue that the theme of the movie is freedom, there's a small matter of responsibility—and a major plot point left open for a sequel when if it had been sorted it would have made a more complete movie. Could perhaps the rift be closed and the handsome prince who became the Mor'du restored to life? Watch for Brave II...



## Elder Scrolls IV: "Skyrim"

Publisher by Bethesda Softworks

Director Todd Howard

Composer Jeremy Soule

Engine Creation Engine

Yes, I know it was released late 2011, but I have only owned the game for two weeks, so here's my review. Putting it into basics; it's the new "sequel" to Oblivion. It is NOT an ongoing story, just new RPG gaming in a new environment of the world of Tamriel. The nation of Cyrodiil (the heartland of the Empire) was the abode of the Imperial race, Skyrim is the home of the Nords (yes, they are "Nordic" types, big on axes and chainmail. Skyrim is set about 200 years after the Oblivion crisis and much has changed. The Septim throne is no more and there has been political turmoil in the heartlands, culminating in a "Great War" some thirty years ago when the Thalmer invaded Tamriel from the Somerset Isles. After a long and very bloody struggle the Thalmer imposed a peace and outlawed the worship of Talos. Now the Empire is facing a nasty guerrilla war in Skyrim and things have just gotten much, much worse. After two thousand years, dragons have returned to the skies of Skyrim. And they are not good neighbours, what with destroying houses, towns and livestock and all... Worse, they chose a particularly awkward moment to reappear, interrupting the Imperial Legion when it was about to execute the leader of the rebellion. Now everyone thinks he had something to do with their reappearance. But, in the shadows, the secret hands behind the scenes are moving. Someone hires the assassins' guild to eliminate the one person who can defeat the dragons...(the player character!) By some mysterious call you have discovered that you are a Dragonslayer and each dragon you slay makes you more powerful. But, who is the enemy? The Imperials? The Stormcloaks (rebels)? Or is it someone else altogether? No one seems to know, but if you can contact the Blades (the old Imperial Bodyguard, now suppressed and in hiding) you might begin to find out. So, that's the basic set up. What about the rest of the game? As always there's Good, and Bad, and Indifferent. The bad? The same old limited interactions and repetitious dialogue. I don't know about you, but having the same NPC give the same speech over and over really steams my biscuit! Some of the key controls in the PC version are a little bit awkward. Inventory could also be handled better. I'd like to see anything you wear placed into a separate window, instead of marked by an arrow in the main inventory... it's not obvious... and it's easy to sell what you are wearing without realising until someone asks you if you're cold!

Installing is BAD, very BAD. I bought Skyrim on DVD, and as soon as I pressed OK to install, it went to the Steam Website and DOWNLOADED the ENTIRE GAME from there (despite the disc having 100% of the required files on it) which means the install took the best part of six hours instead of less than twenty minutes from the disc. (And you CANNOT bypass it!!!) The SINGLE redeeming feature is that the Steam D/L is ALWAYS the latest patched version, so updating is not required.

The indifferent: Some of the textures are plain, bland and small. There are a lot of small niggles and bugs (Misplaced alignments on paths, walls etc, gaps; flat models of chains and triggers etc. that should be 3D). I

think it was rushed to be ready by a set release date, and it shows. Thankfully Skyrim is easily moddable with a free download from Steam. There are already over 2000 mods online for Skyrim, both from the Skyrim Nexus website and via Steam Workshop, including an "unofficial Skyrim Patch" which sets out to fix hundreds of bugs and errors found in the vanilla game.

The opening sequence is similar in form if not detail to Oblivion. You are a prisoner, on the way to the block, having been caught somewhere you should not have been. A bit of story unfolds, then you do some character creation, after more story-telling, more creation and so on. Really? Again? Oblivion did that, guys, and it was dull then too. It's STILL dull. Why not choose your character, modify to your taste and then kick off into the story, is that really too hard? Sheesh, it must be. (BTW you must make an EARLY choice - escape with the Imperial Soldier or escape with another escaping Stormcloak prisoner.

Which brings me to what's good. First up, the modelling of the humans and elves is miles better than Oblivion's potato people. Here they are good, but still not great. There is still room for improvement and there are mods to do just that, (the best is called CBBE). The landscapes are stunning. Think of Skyrim visually as a cross between Tibet, Switzerland and Viking Age Norway, with a lot of Lord of the Rings in there as well. Some mods are not about new weapons and armour, some mods can tweak your video card to give some astonishing visuals, and not hit your frame rate over much... But you will still need a modern multi-core PC and 4 gig of ram to play it vanilla, not to mention a minimum 512MB video card, preferably a 1 to 1.5 G Video card. If you meet that, then you can try out some of these ENB mods for a different look. The quests have improved a bit over Oblivion, they seem to have cut back on the 'Go Somewhere and Get Stuff' mode of quest, instead making many into multi stage quests, where you can choose how you resolve it, or who you bring the object to. Others involve robbery, trickery, Playing matchmaker, Locating someone, etc. or something as simple as doing a favour (gathering herbs) in return for a small reward. Some of those turn out to be a lot more than the surface suggests, and a few carry over into the main quests. All to the better as it means you really can't afford not to do them, if that's the case. (You aren't given much of a hint...) Dwarf fans may rejoice, there are Dwarves (called Dwemer) in Skyrim...sort of. They are considered extinct, but they left behind hidden caches of their technology that you can find. BUT be careful, the war machines they left to guard them can (and do!) still work.

Overall I like Skyrim at least as much as I liked Oblivion, perhaps more so. The gameplay and story is absorbing, the visuals are great, and with the hundreds of mods available it will be fresh and playable for a long time to come. I still play Oblivion, some five years after it's release - and modded up the wazoo! I can see myself still playing Skyrim in the same fashion in five years time.

Overall rating 4/5.

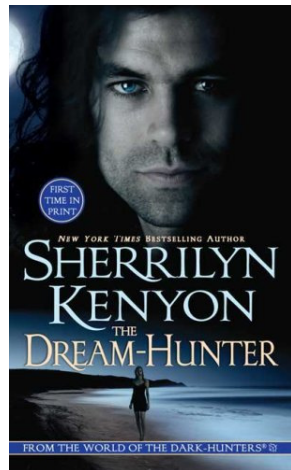
Probably a clear 'Game of the Year' winner. just like Oblivion & Morrowind were. The good stuff outweighs the bad by an order of magnitude. But you do need to be aware of the need for modding for best results.)



**Dream-Hunter:  
Dream-Hunters  
Book 1**

by Sherrilyn Kenyon  
Published by Piatkus  
Supplied by Hatchette  
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

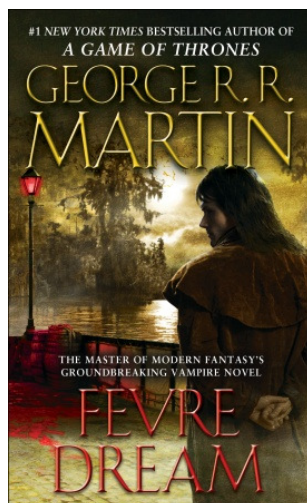
Arik is a Skotos, a god who travels through human dreams. Cursed by Zeus never to feel emotion, they visit the dreams of human to experience emotions through them. He meets a woman whose dreams are vivid and he feels her emotions as his own. So he can meet her, he strikes a bargain with Hades – a soul for a body. Only he doesn't realise it's her soul. Megara Kafieri's father was obsessed with finding the lost city of Atlantis despite being dismissed as a crank by everyone, including his daughter. Geary's father left her a few objects from Atlantis he discovered and she continued his quest to find Atlantis. But the gods don't want Atlantis to be found. It would lead to Apollymi being released, causing an apocalypse. It was a fun read, I enjoyed how they met – heroine saving the hero's life – and it's not a typical romance. There was an interesting plot, the search for Atlantis and Arikos discovering emotions and human life. There was also plenty of action, with a number of fight scenes. This is the first of the Dream-Hunter series and it predates the Dark-Hunter series, though many characters from that series were prominent in the book. Like all books in the Dark-Hunter series there are quite a few steamy scenes. As it's the first in a new series you don't need to have read the Dark-Hunter series, but it would help with background on some characters if you had. Another book by Sherrilyn Kenyon that is hard to put down.



**Fevre Dream**

by George RR Martin  
Published by Gollancz  
Supplied by Hatchette  
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

It is 1875 and Joshua York is a vampire – part of a race that existed long before humans existed and who need to drink fresh blood once a month. After discovering a harmless way to do this, Joshua wants to become bloodmaster (leader of this society), gather his people and lead them out of hiding to live peacefully with humans. His main obstacle in this is the current bloodmaster, Damon Julian, ancient, insane, and seriously depraved. Abner Marsh is a broke Mississippi steamboat owner. To turn his luck around and regain his business, he accepts an offer of partnership from Joshua York. He wants the



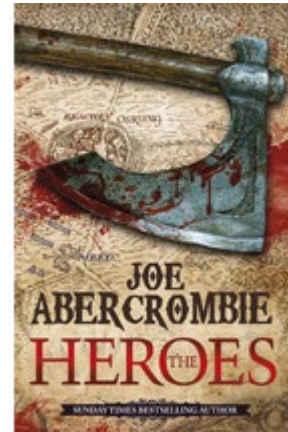
new steamboat, the Fevre Dream, to use as a cover when travelling in search of his kind. Abner knows Joshua is a bit 'off' but his love for the river helps suppress his misgivings.

There was a lot of boring (to me) detail about boats and I lost interest. The story seemed slow-paced and to drag with all the flashbacks. There wasn't enough romance for me and it was too much in the horror genre, which is not appealing to me. If you want light, fluffy, mindless entertainment, this is not the book for you. If you like historical horror boat vampire stories, try this.

**The Heroes**

by Joe Abercrombie  
Published by Gollancz  
Supplied by Hatchette  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

This was a bit of a departure for me, since I normally prefer my fantasy on the high side—where the magic comes thick and fast. "The Heroes" was more the fantasy equivalent of "All Quiet on the Western Front", gritty, realistic, and low in overt magic (though not entirely lacking). The titular "Heroes" are both a stone circle around which much of the action in the novel takes place, and a theme for the whole book. This focuses on the nature of heroism in a war that is essentially futile, fought between the Union who seem almost Napoleonic in their military structure and style of warfare (with the Captains and Colonels, but without the gunpowder) and the North, who are more your typical fantasy barbarian horde. The politics behind this particular action are complicated, but the reader becomes increasingly suspicious that it's all down to a feud between mages. So, lots of people get maimed and many get killed for no good reason... like in most wars.



The novel is essentially character-driven, with the plot retreating into background, just the battle progressing as battles do. The map is relatively small, and the time-frame just a matter of days, though there is a cast of thousands. There are three main and several minor view-point characters. There is Colonel Horst, whose genuine bravery is conflicted with a serious lack of self-esteem (he is a brawny man with squeaky falsetto voice). There is "Prince" Calder whose intelligence and military cunning are coupled with cowardice and a total ineptitude for personal combat—not good when you're son of the former King of the North. And lastly there's Camden Crow, a Named Man and leader of his dozen—who's really getting too old for this kind of thing. They're interesting characters to whom interesting things happen—but whether or not they are actually heroes is not so easy to decide.

It's a novel that is both simple and complex, with some important things to say. Said generally very cleverly and with wit, wisdom and good humour. Some of it said with considerable profanity, so for that and the violence level you'd have to call this an adults-only novel—a pity perhaps, because there are things said here that many a young man needs to hear.

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

Where: Wellington

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

Venue: Quality Hotel,  
Upper Cuba Street

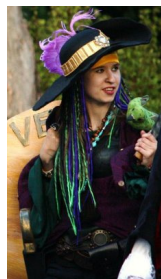
**Guests of Honour:  
Jennifer Fallon**

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



**Fan Guest of Honour:  
Anna Klein**

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



Charity:  
Wellington Women's Refuge

**Stella Nova Wiki:**  
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**This Month:**

**BOOK** Monday July 23rd  
(at Marie Williams)

**SPACE** August 3rd at 7:30 pm  
(WWI at Chez Smith)

**Next Meeting:**

Wednesday 15 August, 2012, 7:30 pm  
Auckland Horticultural Centre,  
990 Great North Road,  
Western Springs



**Upcoming Events:**

**July 12-14th 2012 Au Contraire 2013**  
34th New Zealand National SF Convention  
<http://www.aucontraire.org.nz/index.php>