



(Photo by Keith Smith)

Issue Fifty-one - Winter 2016

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Musings from Under the Mountain

It was that time Hugo of year again,...

We left it rather late to sign up as supporting members of the 2016 WorldCon, leaving only a couple of weeks to vote on the Hugos. Never mind, most years I only get to finish reading the shorter fiction categories. For the longer fiction, it's a matter of taking a core sample and deciding on the simple basis of which stories do I really want to read more of. You see, I'm choosy, but not fussy. I really don't care what species the author is, if they can write a good story. And that is a matter of three things. Does it have interesting ideas? Does it make sense in terms of the world in which it is set? Is it well-written? Oh, and can I stand the characters? (Which makes four things, I know).

The novels weren't a problem. There were works by Jim Butcher (*The Aeronaut's Windlass*) and Neal Stephenson (*Seveneves*). It was hard to choose, but I picked the Stephenson simply for having an interesting concept. Much the same in novellas, where *Slow Bullets* by Alastair Reynolds really pulled me in and threatened to de-rail my day! (I've was sent his latest novel for review, and it deserves a nomination for next year).

The novelettes were a problem. I really didn't like any of them. But vote one shall; none of this Noah Ward business in this house, so I picked *What Price Humanity?* by David VanDyke for at least being recognisably science fiction. Then I succumbed to the felinity and choose *Cat Pictures Please* by Naomi Kritzer in the short stories, although in hindsight, *Asymmetrical Warfare* by S. R. Algernon was probably the better story. We will not go into "How the heck did something called *Space Raptor Butt Invasion* ever get nominated?"

A worse problem was lurking in the related works category. Now, as far as I'm concerned a "related work" is a non-fiction book about some facet of the science fiction and fantasy genres. The works nominated in the SJVs in the corresponding category generally fit the bill quite nicely. Works like the wonderful collection of New Zealand genre art called "White Cloud Worlds Anthology 3" which won this year. But all these rants about fandom... I really don't know. I must admit that I was shocked to read the harrowing *Story of Moira Greyland*. I had heard that Marion Zimmer Bradley and her husband had done horrible things, though I had no idea how truly vile they had been. But is this work about the genre, really? In the end, I voted for a scholarly piece about the work of Gene Wolfe which in my opinion had the virtue of at least qualifying as a related work.

The graphic novel and dramatic presentation categories were easy choices, especially with *The Martian* up for the movie category. And the art categories, were as always, a matter of taste.

And the results.? It seems that the segment of fandom represented by the Hugos disagreed with me in most categories, and were clearly not voting on the same basis. Suffice it to say that I suspect that there wasn't actually a whole lot of actual reading of nominated works going on. Which calls into question the validity of the whole process.

And then, there was something I hadn't anticipated. There came the announcement that DragonCon, a massive convention (we're talking 77,000 attendees) held yearly in Atlanta, was celebrating its thirty anniversary with the inaugural Dragon Awards. They made these awards open to anyone, anywhere, who signed up to vote, without payment of any kind. The categories were quite different, dividing the fiction awards by sub-genre rather than length, so there were awards for best SF, best fantasy, best alternative history, best military SF and so on. Were the results similar to the Hugos? Well, no, they weren't. This was a popular vote, and the prizes went to the popular. Thus, while *The Martian* appears in both lists, in the Dragon Awards we see such works as *The Shepherd's Crown* by Terry Pratchett which won the Young Adult category. Which pleased me a great deal.

So, which award really represents the best of our genre? Does either? Does it matter? Or does it ultimately come down to a matter of personal taste? I shall leave these questions for the reader to think on, and meanwhile here are the links to the winners:

Hugo Awards: <http://www.thehugoawards.org/hugo-history/2016-hugo-awards/>

Dragon Awards: <http://awards.dragoncon.org/winners/>

Jacqui Smith,

Editor and President,

Stella Nova.

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Gary opens the convention...



The Cosplay Winners!



Maree Pavletich and Norman Cates star in "Death Star Noir".



An unexpected highlight... Rocket scientist Mark English on "How to plan and build an interplanetary mission."



Martin Hunt with the BB-8 from the Star Wars Origami Workshop!



Game Designer GOH Martin Wallace at the Closing Ceremony.

Photos by Keith Smith



Sir Julius Vogel Award winners...
(Yes, that is me... I was collecting the Services to Fandom Award on behalf of Glenn Young).

Sir Julius Vogel Award Results 2016

Professional Awards

Best Novel:

Ardus by Jean Gilbert

Best Youth Novel:

Dragons Realm (You Say Which Way)
by Eileen Mueller

Best Novella/Novelette:

The Ghost of Matter by Octavia Cade

Best Short Story:

The Thief's Tale by Lee Murray

Best Collected Work:

Write Off Line 2015: The Earth We Knew
Jean Gilbert (ed)/Chad Dick (ed)

Best Professional Artwork:

Cover for *Shortcuts – Track 1* by Casey Bailey

Best Professional Production/Publication:

White Cloud Worlds Anthology 3
Paul Tobin (ed), published by Weta Workshop

Fan Awards

Fan Publication:

Phoenixine

Fan Writing:

John Toon

Fan Artwork:

Keith Smith

Special Awards

Best New Talent:

Jean Gilbert

Services To Science Fiction, Fantasy And Horror:

Marie Hodgkinson

Services To Fandom:

Glenn Young

Further details may be found here:
www.sffanz.org.nz/sjv/sjvResults-2014.html

The Sky at Night Winter 2016

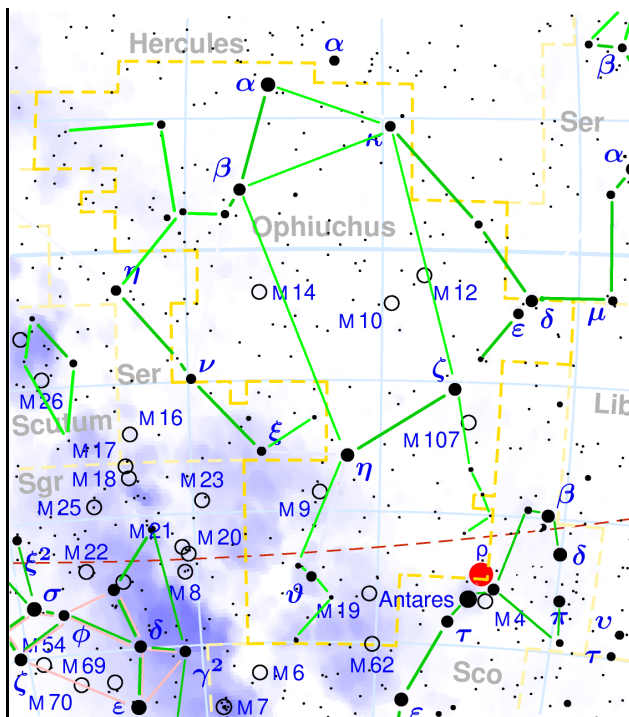
Ophiuchus – The Thirteenth Constellation in the Zodiac

It is generally accepted that there are twelve constellations that make up the zodiacal signs, and that the sun appears to pass through every year. However, between Scorpius and Sagittarius, Ophiuchus, otherwise known as the Serpent Holder, dips his foot into the Zodiac. Thus, between November 29th and December 18th, which are considered part of the zodiacal sign of Sagittarius, the Sun actually lies in Ophiuchus. It's worth noting that, even though the zodiacal signs and constellations have the same names, they are actually different things. Astrologically, the twelve signs encompass thirty degrees each across the zodiac, and are attached to the current location of the spring equinox. But the constellations take up differing amounts of the ecliptic depending on their IAU defined boundaries and do not move, unlike the signs, as the earth precesses. This is one reason why the signs no longer equate with the constellations.

I remember, when I was young a TV programme called *Catweazle*, involving an 11th century magician who was suddenly transported into modern times. One of the episodes had the rhyme: *“Twelve are they, the circle round, if power you seek, they must be found. Look for where the thirteenth lies, mount aloft, the one who flies.”* The characters in the show assumed that it referred to the zodiac and I immediately thought of Ophiuchus as the thirteenth. (It turned out to be a village clock with a 13 instead of a 12 and the treasure was under the weathervane on top of it.)

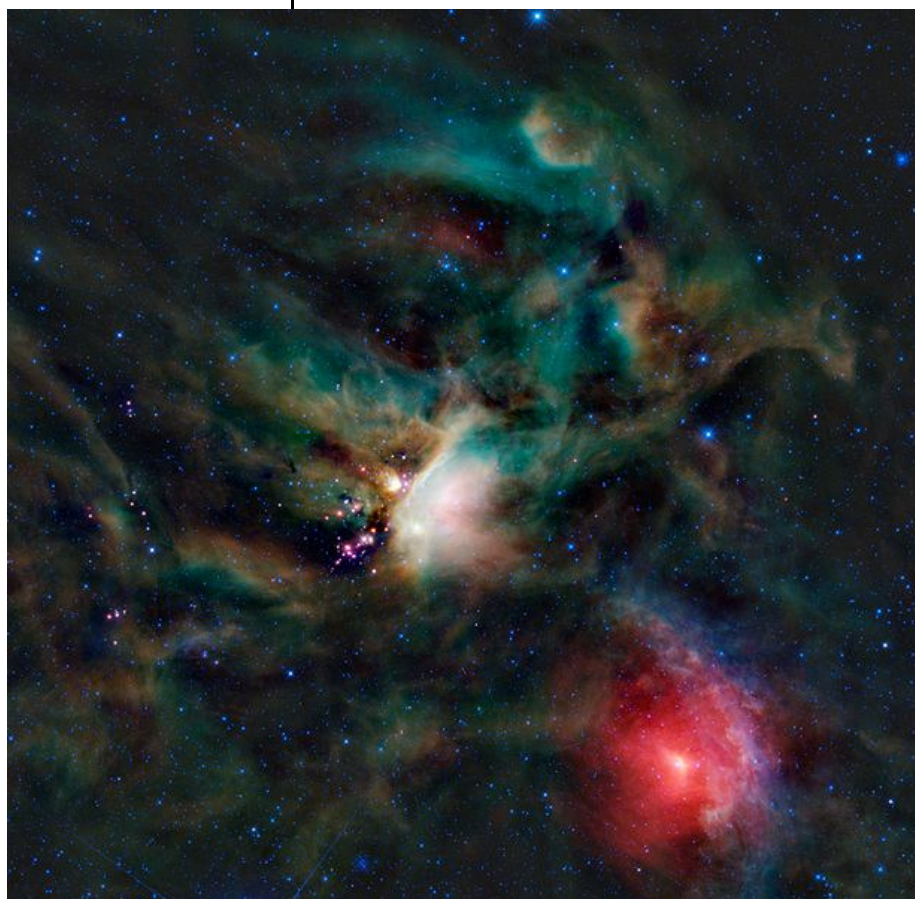
There have actually been attempts to add Ophiuchus to the zodiacal list, but most astrologers prefer to stick to the traditional twelve. Why Ophiuchus was left out in the first place, even though it was one of the original constellations identified by Ptolemy, I'm not sure. It could be because of superstitions about the number thirteen. Or it might be because Ophiuchus only dips a foot into the zodiac and is sometimes hard to identify in the sky. That is no excuse to ignore it though, as there are a lot of interesting objects that can be found when one takes the time to look.

In an earlier column, I wrote about Orion and, as it happens, Ophiuchus is directly opposite Orion on the Celestial Sphere.



It lies on the Celestial Equator and is near the Milky Way, same as Orion. It even has its own complex of nebulosity called the Rho Ophiuchi Cloud Complex. It is located roughly 130 parsecs away (compared with 412 parsecs for the Orion Nebula) and is one of the closest star forming regions. The cloud is lit by the blue supergiants in the Rho Ophiuchi system, the nearby red Antares, as well as the protostars inside it. This results in a very colourful complex. To find it, aim for IC4603 which marks the heart of the complex.

Rho Ophiuchi Cloud Complex



by
Keith
Smith

by
Keith
Smith

Nearly in the line of sight of this complex is the globular cluster M4. But, since part of the complex extends into Scorpius, M4 is located within the boundaries of Scorpius as defined by the IAU. Ophiuchus has several globular clusters in its own boundaries, such as M9, M10, M12, M14, M19, M62, M107 as well as the open clusters NGC 6633 and IC 4665.

It's not just clusters either. The dark nebula B (for Barnard) 68 also lies in Ophiuchus as well as the starburst galaxy NGC 6240. Barnard's Star is also located in Ophiuchus. Known as a 'runaway' star, it is a very dim red star, only six light years away, that has the largest proper motion relative to the solar system. It was identified by the American astronomer E.E. Barnard, in 1916, the same Barnard that catalogued the dark nebulae including B68 mentioned above. His initial list in 1919 had 182 objects in it, but now the Barnard Catalogue of Dark Nebulae contains 370 objects. The Horsehead nebular in Orion is B33.

Barnard's Star is also the second-closest star to our Solar system, and not surprisingly appears frequently in science fiction. Back in the 1960's, it was believed to have planets, although the evidence for this proved to be an artefact of maintenance work on the telescope used. Partly as a result, Barnard's Star was studied as part of Project Daedalus. Undertaken in the 1970's, this study proposed that rapid unmanned travel to another star system might be possible with near-future technology.

In the meanwhile, science fiction writers ran with the idea that Barnard's Star had planets. In Douglas Adam's *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* it is "a sort of hyperspace juncture", and acts as an interstellar roundabout. In Arthur C. Clarke's *The Garden of Rama* there is a way station for world-ships at Barnard's Star. Barnard's Star appears in C.J. Cherryh's work as the site of Alpha Station, in Dan Simmons' *Hyperion*, and in two books by Robert Forward, as well as numerous others.

So, next winter, try turning your telescope to the thirteenth constellation in the Zodiac and you might discover the treasures within.

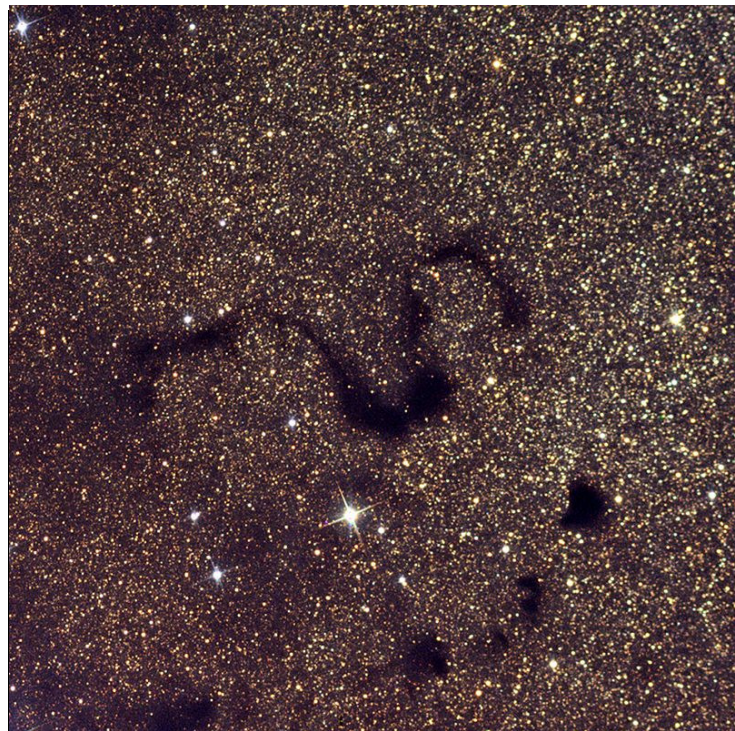
The Moon in November 2016:

- First Quarter—8th November
- Full Moon—15th November
- Last Quarter—21st November
- New Moon—30th November

The Moon in December 2016:

- First Quarter—7th December
- Full Moon—14th December
- Last Quarter—21st December
- New Moon—29th December

The full moon on November 14, 2016 is what is known as a "supermoon" and is the closest full moon at 356,509 kilometres until November 25, 2034 (356,448 kilometres). Try to catch a look (if the weather lets us). Otherwise, we'll have to wait for December 14, when the last supermoon of the year will be accompanied by the Geminid meteor shower, which peaks between 13 and 14 December.

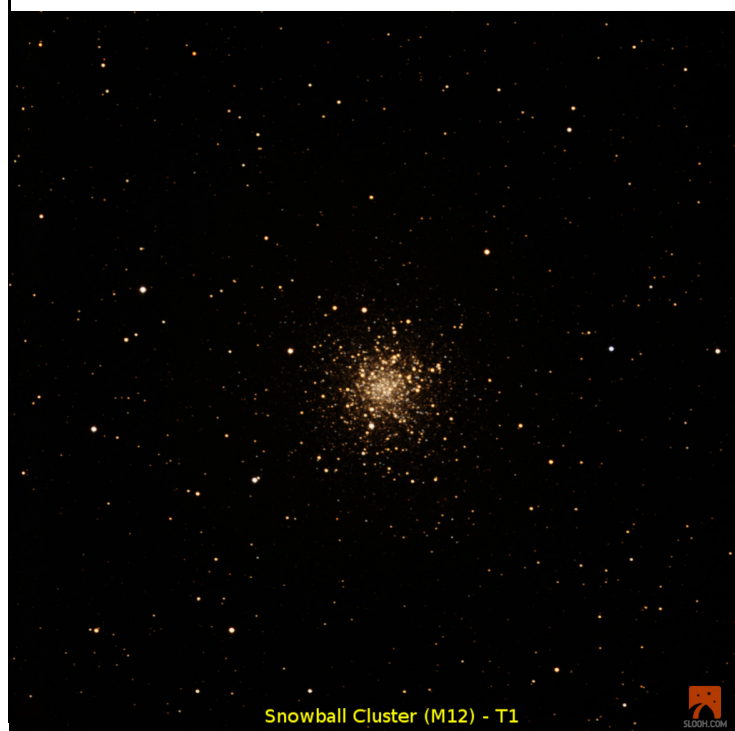


Barnard 72 and Barnard 68, The Snake and Ink Spot Nebulae



Messier 9

G1
HM
Slooh



Snowball Cluster (M12) - T1

SLOOH.COM

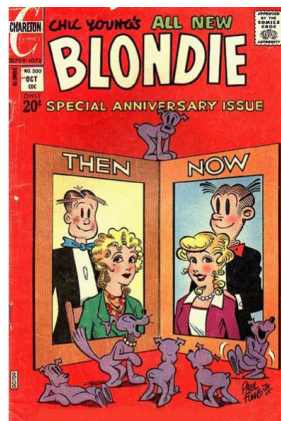
Obituaries

April 3

Erik Bauersfeld, (aged 93), American radio dramatist and voice actor whose most famous role was providing the voices of Admiral Ackbar and Bib Fortuna in the third film of the original Star Wars trilogy, *Return of the Jedi* (1983). He reprised his role as the voice of Admiral Ackbar in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015).

April 8

Paul Fung Jr., (aged 93), American cartoonist who drew the *Blondie* comic book for 40 years. In 1964 he received the National Cartoonists Society's Comic Book Award for his work; and 16 years later he won their Best Humorist Award.



Scooter, (aged 30) World's oldest known tomcat, who died at the age of 30. A Siamese, Scooter was entered into the Guinness World Records on April 8. The record for the world's oldest female cat is currently held by Creme Puff, at 38 years.

April 13

Gareth Thomas, (aged 71) Welsh actor, most familiar to fans in the role of Roj Blake in the BBC science fiction television series *Blake's 7*, but appeared in many other films and television programmes, including *Sherm* in the ITV sci-fi series *Star Maidens* and Adam Brake in the fantasy series *Children of the Stones*.



April 15

Frederick Mayer, (aged 94), German-born American spy who was an OSS agent for the United States during World War II, and one of the "Real Inglorious Bastards". He negotiated the surrender of the German Army in Innsbruck, Austria, in 1945 after he was captured in "Operation Greenup".

April 16

Rod Daniel, (aged 73), American television and film director, active from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. He is best known for his comedy films, including the 1985 Michael J. Fox comedy film *Teen Wolf*.

Kit West, (aged 79),

British special effects artist noted for his work in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Dragonheart* and *Return of the Jedi*, winning the 1982 special effects Oscar for *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

April 17

Doris Roberts, (aged 90), American actress, best known as Mildred Krebs in *Remington Steele*, a role she played from 1983 to 1987.



April 20

Guy Hamilton, (aged 93), French-born British film director, who directed 22 films from the 1950s to the 1980s, including four James Bond films among them *Goldfinger* and *The Man with the Golden Gun*.

Victoria Wood, (aged 62),

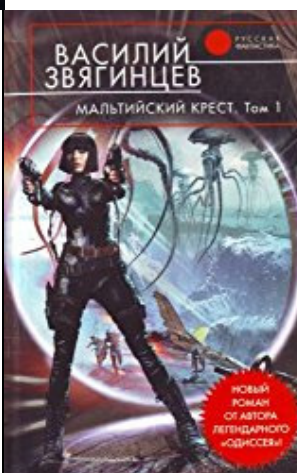
English comedienne, actress, singer and songwriter, screenwriter and director. Wood wrote and starred in sketches, plays, musicals, films and sitcoms, and her live comedy act was interspersed with her own compositions, which she performed on piano. She won four BAFTA awards.

April 21

Prince, (aged 57), American singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and record producer. He was a musical innovator and known for his eclectic work, flamboyant stage presence, extravagant dress and makeup, and wide vocal range. He won seven Grammy Awards, a Golden Globe Award, and an Academy Award for the film *Purple Rain*.

April 23

Madeleine Sherwood, (aged 93), Canadian actress of stage, film and television. She became famous for her roles in the Broadway and film versions of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*. But she is better remembered as Reverend Mother Placido to Sally Field's Sister Bertrille in *The Flying Nun*...

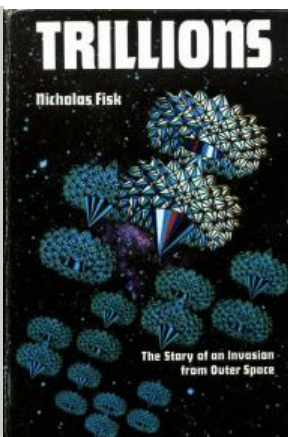


April 30

Vasily Zvyagintsev, (aged 71), Russian science fiction author, best known for the epic alternate history series *Odysseus leaves Ithaca*, set during World War II.

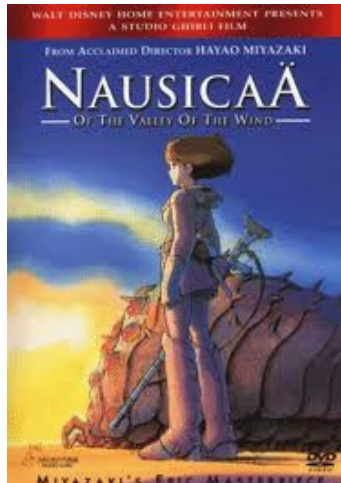
Compiled by
Jacqui
Smith

O B I T S



May 10
Nicholas Fisk, (aged 92), British writer of science fiction books, mainly for children. His works include *Grinny*, *You Remember Me*, *Space Hostages*, and *Trillions*, and the *Starstormers* series of novels. I remember enjoying reading *Trillions* when I was young.

May 13
Makiko Futaki, (aged 57), Japanese animator best known for her work at Studio Ghibli for more than thirty years. She worked on all of Hayao Miyazaki's animated feature films, beginning with *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* in 1984. Her best known Studio Ghibli's productions include *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001), which won an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004).



TV Guide called "The Charlie Chaplin of Television". He was best known for his role as the naive Wilbur Post in the television comedy series *Mister Ed* and as the voice of Scrooge McDuck.

May 21
Jane Fawcett, (aged 95), British codebreaker, singer, and heritage preservationist, who recently became known for her wartime role at Bletchley Park, where she decoded a message that led to the sinking of the German battleship *Bismarck*. After the war, she had a 15-year career as an opera singer. In the 1960s she became well known as the secretary of *The Victorian Society*. Jane wrote and edited works including *The Future of the Past*; *Seven Victorian Architects*; *The Village in History*, and *Save the City*.

Arthur Provis, (aged 91), English cinematographer and producer, best known for co-founding AP Films ("Anderson-Provis" Films) with Gerry Anderson. He met Anderson filming a series called *You've Never Seen This* about unusual circus acts. Finding a shared interest in film-making, Provis teamed with Anderson creating AP Films with the original intention to make commercials. As a result of an advert featuring a puppet, the company was approached in 1957 by Roberta Leigh to create a children's series *The Adventures of Twizzle* for Associated Rediffusion. This led to AP Films' early puppet shows including *Twizzle*, *Torchy the Battery Boy* and *Four Feather Falls*, and although Provis left the company in 1959, that resulted in "Supermarionation", and the Thunderbirds.

May 24
Burt Kwouk, (aged 85), British actor, known for his role as Cato in the *Pink Panther* films. He made appearances in many television programmes, including a portrayal of Imperial Japanese Army Major Yamauchi in the British drama series *Tenko* and as Entwistle in *Last of the Summer Wine*.



May 15
André Brahic, (aged 73), French astrophysicist, noted for his discovery of the rings of Neptune. The rings of Neptune consist primarily of five principal rings and were first discovered (as "arcs") in 1984 in Chile by Patrice Bouchet, Reinhold Häfner and Jean Manfroid at La Silla Observatory (ESO) during an observing program proposed by André Brahic and Bruno Sicardy from Paris Observatory.

May 19
Alan Young, (aged 96), English-born Canadian-American actor, voice actor, comedian, radio and television host, and personality, whom



May 31
Carla Lane, (aged 87), English television writer responsible for several successful sitcoms, including *The Liver Birds* (co-creator, 1969–78), *Butterflies* (1978–83) and *Bread* (1986–91). Described as "the television writer who dared to make women funny", much of her work focused on strong women characters, including "frustrated housewives and working class matriarchs".

Compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith

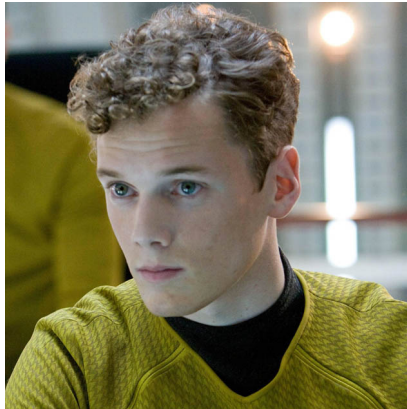
June 2
Willis Pyle, (aged 101), American animator known for his work with Walt Disney Animation Studios, including *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), and *Bambi* (1942). Later, working for UPA, he helped create one of UPA's best known characters, Mr. Magoo.



June 12
Janet Waldo, (aged 96), American actress and voice artist, best known in animation for voicing Judy Jetson in *The Jetsons*, Nancy in *Shazzan*, Penelope Pitstop, and Josie in *Josie and the Pussycats*.

June 15
David Hall, (aged 88), New Zealand chemistry professor at the University of Auckland, best known as an X-ray crystallographer, and as Head of the Chemistry Department. (Yes, he's included here because I remember him from my university days).

June 19
Anton Yelchin, (aged 27), Soviet-born American actor, known for portraying Pavel Chekov in the *Star Trek* reboot series, Jacob Helm in *Like Crazy* and for several other prominent roles.



June 22
Harry Rabinowitz, (aged 100), British conductor and composer of film and television music. He conducted the film scores for numerous films including *Hanover Street* (1979), *Chariots of Fire* (1981), *The Bostonians* (1984), *Return to Oz* (1985), *The Remains of the Day* (1993), *The English Patient* (1996), *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999), and *Cold Mountain* (2003). He also composed music for television including *The Frost Report* (1966), *I, Claudius* (1976), *The Agatha Christie Hour* (1982), and *Reilly, Ace of Spies* (1983).

June 25
Maurice G. Dantec, (aged 57), French-born Canadian science fiction writer and musician, best known for cyberpunk novels including *Babylon Babies* (on which the 2008 movie *Babylon A.D.* was based).



Trevor Steedman, (aged 62), British actor and stuntman best known for playing Private Wierzbowski in 1986's *Aliens*, but also for stunt work in numerous genre movies.

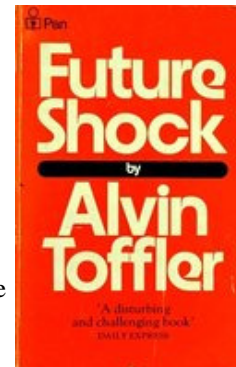


June 27
Aharon Ipale, (aged 74) Moroccan-born Israeli-American actor, known for his roles in American and British film and television productions, including his recurring role as Pharaoh Seti I in *The Mummy* and its sequel, *The Mummy Returns*.



Bud Spencer, (aged 86), Italian actor famous for action-comedy roles with his long-time film partner Terence Hill.

Alvin Toffler, (aged 87) American writer and futurist, known for his works discussing modern technologies, including the digital revolution and the communication revolution, with emphasis on their effects on cultures worldwide. In his early works he focused on technology and its impact, which he termed "information overload." In 1970 his first major book about the future, *Future Shock*, became a worldwide best-seller and has sold over 6 million copies.



June 30
Gordon Murray, (aged 95), British puppeteer and television producer, who created and wrote some of the most popular children's television programmes ever seen in Britain. *Camberwick Green*, *Trumpton*, and *Chigley*, collectively known as the *Trumptonshire Trilogy*, were all made by the company he set up.



Compiled by Jacqui Smith

Blake's Quiz

In memory of the late Gareth Thomas (who Blake in *Blake's 7*), here is a quiz all about Blake.

- Gareth Thomas identified as Welsh, but where was he actually born?
 - Lancaster
 - Leeds
 - Liverpool
 - London
- Years before he was Blake, Gareth Thomas appeared as a workman in which science fiction drama?
 - Doctor Who
 - Quatermass and the Pit
 - Randall and Hopkirk
 - Torchwood
- Who created Blake's 7?
 - Douglas Adams
 - George Lucas
 - Terrence Dicks
 - Terry Nation
- Although the show is named for Blake, he actually appeared in only 28 episodes. Which character was the only one to appear in all 52 episodes?
 - Avon
 - Cally
 - Servalan
 - Vila
- What crime was Blake falsely convicted of, at the start of the series?
 - Child molestation
 - Murder
 - Rape
 - Terrorism
- Blake met up with Jenna, Vila and Avon aboard the prison ship London. Their destination was a prison colony, but where was it?
 - Cygnus Alpha
 - Horizon
 - Saurian Major
 - Zondar
- The iconic vessel crewed by the seven for the first three seasons is the Liberator. How did they acquire it?
 - It was a gift from mysterious aliens.
 - It was found abandoned, and salvaged.
 - They built it from secret plans.
 - They stole it.
- What was the name of the guidance computer aboard Liberator?
 - Master
 - Orac
 - Slave
 - Zen
- Which 20th century object does Blake break when trying to convince ex-President Sarkoff to return to his home planet and take back power?
 - Beer bottle
 - Mobile phone
 - Television set
 - Vinyl record
- What was the very last episode of Blake's 7 appropriately called?
 - Blake
 - End
 - Finale
 - Terminal



Directed by Scott Derrickson
Produced by Kevin Feige
Written by Jon Spaihts, Scott Derrickson and C. Robert Cargill
Based on Doctor Strange by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko
Starring Benedict Cumberbatch, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Rachel McAdams, Benedict Wong, Michael Stuhlbarg, Benjamin Bratt, Scott Adkins, Mads Mikkelsen, Tilda Swinton
Music by Michael Giacchino
Cinematography Ben Davis
Reviewed by Maree Pavletich

This is one film that definitely needs to be seen on the big screen, and in 3D. Finally the SFX suit the story.

The plot of the film was nothing we hadn't seen before; a brilliant but arrogant and narcissistic surgeon suffers nerve damage to his hands, thereby losing his career. He tries every avenue to get back what he has lost, then when western medicine fails him, learns of a healer in Nepal. There he learns there is way more to the world(s) and himself, than he could have imagined. Then he has to make the choice, heal completely and return to being a surgeon, or turn his back on that life and defend Earth from spiritual attacks.

So far so maybe a little predictable, but the cast brought it to life. Benedict Cumberbatch was amazing of course, but was ably supported by Chiwetel Ejiofor, Rachel McAdams, Benedict Wong, Mads Mikkelsen and Tilda Swinton. I do get the controversy surrounding Tilda Swinton's casting as Stephen Strange's mentor but to be fair to Marvel, casting yet another Asian actor in the role just to slavishly follow the comics would have been a bit same old, same old, and everyone would have been waiting for him to call Strange "grasshopper". Tilda Swinton was described as a Celtic woman, a supposedly immortal ancient, who was now the spiritual leader of a cosmopolitan group. I didn't have a problem with that. I really liked the touches of humour too. The SFX were mind boggling, I can't even guess how they could storyboard that lot. If it doesn't get the Oscar, there is no justice. Worth seeing, and stay for not one, but two after credits scenes.

Changeling's Island

by Dave Freer

Published by Baen

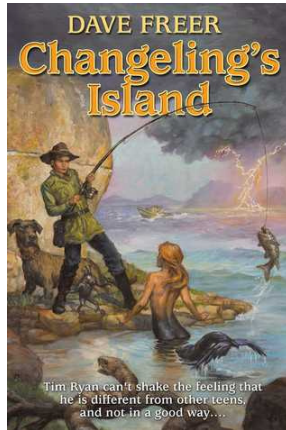
Purchased from Amazon

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

There is something special about this young adult novel. It took me right back to my own childhood and those Arthur Ransome novels from the library. This is young adult literature the way it used to be written, all about growing up and finding yourself, and not so much about sex and drugs. Only it's not exactly "Swallows and Amazons", because there is something different about Tim Ryan... he has the blood of the fae in him, and even has a little fae following him around, trying to be helpful. Stuff happens around Tim, not all of it good.

As a result of one such incident, Tim's mother sends him away from Melbourne, and off to Flinder's Island. Yes, that's the island where Dave lives, and that island is a big part of this story. Here, Tim will discover who he is, and where he belongs; and a selkie may or may not get what she wishes.

I did enjoy this book. It is real in a way that many young adult novels are not, and yet fantastical at the same time. And the nicest thing is that you can give this book to your young teenager without worrying that they'll get any unwelcome ideas... although they may want you to take them fishing.



realism rarely found in the pulps, not so much in the technology, but in the setting and in the ways people handle long voyages. Second, he has a fine talent for prose; the book reads very well. But most interesting are the insightful ideas slipped in here and there, sometimes well ahead of their time. Is it wise to sell technology to primitive cultures? What are the consequences? And then there is the rim ghost...

It's great, rip-roaring stuff, science fiction of a by-gone era perhaps, but it's still fun for a relaxing undemanding read, just what you need in that waiting room – just don't expect too much political correctness, okay?

Revenger

by Alastair Reynolds

Published by Gollancz

Supplied by Hachette NZ

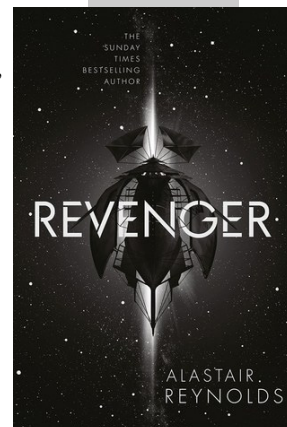
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

If piratepunk is a valid SF sub-genre, and I gather that it is, then Reynolds certainly puts a whole new spin on the concept in this rollicking far-future adventure. It has the feel and to some extent the language and social mores of the golden age of piracy, and yet is jolly hard SF at the same time. How so?

Reynolds gives us a beautifully crafted system of many worldlets.... The planets have apparently been dismantled and rebuilt into habitats over many millions of years, and it is now the 1799th recorded year of the 13th Occupation. Travel between the worlds is by sailing ships propelled by the solar wind. And there is treasure out there, strange and mysterious, trapped inside baubles, protected by force-fields that mysteriously open on their own schedule. Truly, Reynolds does a masterful job of world-building. Among the cleverest aspects is his use of language. The reader does not need to be told what "lungstuff" is, or what a "swallower" is, but those terms fit the genre so much better than "oxygen" or "singularity".

The story begins when two teenage sisters run away to space in quest of fame and fortune, after discovering a mutual talent for an arcane form of communication called "bone-reading". But when their ship is attacked and destroyed by the villainous pirate queen Bosa Sennen, Adrana is captured, while Fura escapes and begins plotting to somehow rescue her. Which will be no simple task...

This is a superb piece of writing, one of the most enjoyable and memorable novels I've read in a long time. And there's a clever twist in the tail that may well change everything. And that means a sequel had better be in the offing, coves!



The Rim of Space

by A. Bertram Chandler

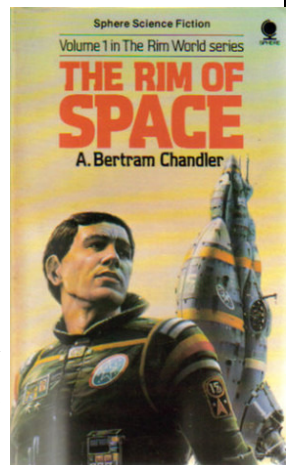
Published by Avalon Books

(1961)

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Among the better reasons for owning an e-book reader is that it allows you to access good old SF books which are long out of print. I've been meaning to read more of Chandler and thought I should start at the beginning, by re-reading his first novel. Now, while I do believe I do have a physical copy of *The Rim of Space* downstairs, itself quite elderly, I found the e-book more convenient, especially when stuck waiting for medical appointments.

Now, there is no doubt that *The Rim of Space* is quite old-fashioned in many ways. Chandler's spaceships are classic rocketships, lifting vertically from spaceports. One of the adventures in this novel even involves a struggle to keep the *Lorn Lady* upright on planet in a storm. The crew is predominately male, except for "Calamity Jane" Arlen the Purser and Cook, and predictably our hero, Derek Calver, is male. But, that said, Arlen is no wilting pansy, she can stand up for herself. As does the novel. It is very much a sequence of episodes in the life of Derek Calver following leaving the Interstellar Transport Commission and the bright stars of the galactic centre for the Rim Worlds and the *Lorn Lady*. It should be simple classic pulp SF, but it isn't. First, Chandler's background as a merchant seaman adds a



Answers for Blake's Quiz:

1. D London
2. B Quatermass and the Pit
3. D Terry Nation
4. D Vila
5. A Child molestation
6. A Cygnus Alpha.
7. B It was found abandoned, and salvaged.
8. D Zen
9. D Vinyl record
10. A Blake

LEXICON

The 38th New Zealand National

Science Fiction & Fantasy Convention

LEXICON UPDATE

Where: Taupo
When : Queens Birthday Weekend
2-4th June, 2017
Venue: Suncourt Hotel Taupo

Guest of Honour:

Seanan McGuire is a renowned Californian urban fantasy and SF horror writer, filk singer, and cartoonist. She is the author of the October Daye urban fantasies, the InCryptid urban fantasies, and several other works.

She writes science fiction horror novels, including the Newsflesh and Parisitology trilogies, under the pseudonym Mira Grant. She also records CDs of her original filk music and is creator of the autobiographical web comic "With Friends Like These...".

Winner of the 2010 John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, her novel Feed (as Mira Grant) was named as one of Publishers Weekly's Best Books of 2010. In 2013 she became the first person ever to appear five times on the same Hugo Ballot.

Fan GoH:

John Toon, a dedicated contributor to the New Zealand fan community and a familiar face at local conventions, is confirmed as the Fan Guest of Honour at LexiCon. President of the Wellington

Phoenix SF Society and winner of the 2013 and 2016 Sir Julius Vogel Awards for fan writing, John is also Treasurer of SFFANZ (Science Fiction and Fantasy Association of NZ Inc.)

Charity:

RainbowYOUTH - a national organisation based on providing support, information, and advocacy for young queer and gender diverse people.

Website:

<http://www.lexicon.cons.nz/>



CONTACTS CALENDAR

Stella Nova Wiki:

http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

Nova Zine Back Issues:

<http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/StellaNova:Novazine-new>

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This Month:

BOXING DAY DO:

Monday 26th December, Maree and Matt's

BOOK:

Monday 28th November, 7:30 pm, Chez Smith

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 21st January 2017, 7:30 pm
Chez Smith



Upcoming Events:

June 2-4th 2017

LEXICON 2017

38th New Zealand National SF Convention
<http://www.lexicon.cons.nz/>