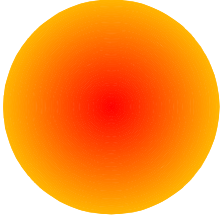




Battlecry at Large... and Small  
(Photo by Keith Smith.)

**Issue XXV - Mar 2012**

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## Musings from Under the Mountain

You know, we so need better people to front the Green movement, or we are so not going to save the one planet we've got. The latest performance by Greenpeace only served to convince me further of this. I refer, of course, to the sit-in on the oil-drilling ship "Noble Discoverer" in Port Taranaki, in a vain attempt to prevent it setting sail for Alaskan waters.

There were three things that concerned me deeply about the exercise. The first was the misuse of the actress Lucy Lawless (of Xena: Warrior Princess fame). Using her in activity which could be considered criminal is stupid, because should she be convicted her career as an actress will be ruined (through being refused entry to other countries—like the USA). Her value as a spokesperson is dependant on her public profile, which is contingent on her celebrity as an actress. So, not only are they hurting her personally, they're hurting themselves and their cause.

The second was the use of donated funds to hire a helicopter to film the exercise—pure grandstanding and a waste of money.

But what bugged me most was the total refusal of the Greenpeace leaders to even speak to the oil company's scientists. I seriously wanted to hear what those guys had to say, but clearly Greenpeace doesn't want to listen, and they don't want me to hear it either. A refusal to listen to arguments which might be valid is a sign of a weak position—and is most often seen in members of cults. Is that what Greenpeace has become? An eco-cult? Their founders would be disgusted.

The environmental problems we face are not going to be solved by knee-jerk reactions. Jumping up and down screaming, "Save the Whatever!" achieves little. It's probable that those very energy companies that the eco-maniacs hate, may actually be closer to the solutions everybody needs. After all, they know that the oil is running out, and they have to find alternatives or they go to the wall. It's good business sense for them to employ scientists to find the right answers.

The world needs people who are prepared to actually think through the ecological problems and propose workable strategies to solve them—the same kind of people who read and write science fiction. A lot of solutions have appeared in science fiction, many of them expensive and some of them totally unfeasible. But in there are ideas, strong ideas, and maybe, just maybe some of them might actually work—and save the human race. It won't be cheap, and we're so going to have to convince the Chinese, but is there any choice?

Jacqui

## The View from the Comfy Chair

This morning we were woken up by the alarm going off. Was it the burglars back again for a third round? Turned out not to be – thank goodness – but not sure what did it. Wind through a partially open window? Or did one of the cats actually managed to set it off? I guess we'll never know.

But yeah, security has been beefed up around here. New locks, deadbolts and we're turning the alarm on at night. Call me paranoid if you like but having your laptop (and Paul's Nintendo Wii) stolen twice in six months gives me due cause. It's not just the physical loss that gets to me, it's the loss of all the data files on it, many that I didn't know I needed until I go to look something up – and can't find it, which is really annoying. I will have to be more fastidious about backing stuff up after I've finished with it – even if it is just to the desktop downstairs. Sometimes it feels to me that the police can't keep up with the criminals – and I don't envy them their jobs – the police that is, having to deal with all sorts of stuff and the abuse they get from some people – and I bet they don't get thanked enough. So, be nice to the police, they deserve all the help and support we can give them.

As for the laptops, I guess I'll never see those again. We suspect that they were sold for easy money, probably money to buy drugs. Society definitely seems to be going to hell in a hand basket.

Still, life goes on, and hopefully things will get better. That was one of the reasons I read science fiction— for the dream of a better future. As Robert F Kennedy said (and he was actually paraphrasing from George Bernard Shaw's play 'Methuselah'): "Some people see things as they are and say why? I dream things that never were and say, why not?" Maybe we need more people who believe in the latter.

Keith  
President

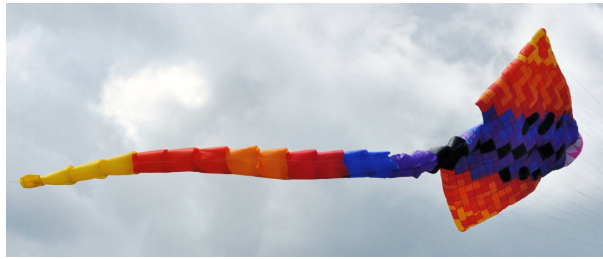
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The Smiths went to Battlecry and had a really excellent time.

Paul played Munchkin and various other Steve Jackson Games.

Jacqui joined in the role-playing games—and played with nerf guns—really!



And Keith photographed people playing games of all sorts and dressing up in costumes. Sad to say, no prizes for the Smiths this year, but still we had a very enjoyable weekend.

There was LARPing, War-gaming, Role-playing games, Card games and Board games, Kite-flying and an appearance by Alf's Imperial Army.

It was fun for all!



# BATTLECRY 2012

Text by Jacqui Smith

Pictures by Keith Smith

by  
Keith  
Smith

# The Sky at Night – April 2012

If anyone was watching the sky in the last week, and managed to actually see through gaps in the seemingly ever present clouds, they would have seen two very bright stars next to each other in the western sky. However, neither were stars. They were instead the planets Venus and Jupiter which, for a few days, shone quite close to each other.

This month, Mars will dominate the northern sky in the evenings and is a few degrees away from the bright star Regulus. The reddish hue of Mars will contrast strongly with the blue of Regulus. Jupiter is still in the western sky at sunset but as the month passes it will get harder and harder to see as it gets lower in the sky each night. By the end of the month it will be setting not long after the sun. Saturn reaches opposition on the 16<sup>th</sup> and is located near Spica in Virgo. Spica shines more white than the yellowish hued Saturn, although Saturn is slightly brighter.

Someone asked at the Planetarium Show last month: Is there such a thing as the Pegasus Galaxy? Actually there are two. The Pegasus Dwarf Irregular Galaxy (Peg DIG) and the Pegasus Dwarf Spheroidal Galaxy (Pegasus II). Both are in the local group of galaxies and the latter one is a satellite of the Andromeda Galaxy. So, which one was the one used in Stargate Atlantis? Well, General Landry said that the distance to the Pegasus Galaxy is 3 million light years and when it was seen from the location of Midway Station, an irregular galaxy was shown. Thus it is generally accepted that Stargate Atlantis was set in Peg DIC.

Speaking of galaxies, there's a lot of them that can be found in the night sky with telescopes at this time of year. I don't mean the large scopes, but small telescopes and binoculars. The area around Leo, Virgo and Coma Berenices is full of them, the brighter ones being noted in Messier's famous catalogue. This doesn't mean that there aren't many galaxies in other areas of the sky but we are looking in the direction of the Virgo Cluster and at right angles to the plane of the Milky Way so we get a better view of what is outside. In some places, a single field of view can have quite a few galaxies in it. The Virgo Cluster is the heart of the Virgo Supercluster of which our Local Group of galaxies is an outlying part.

Believe it or not, when Leo is high in the sky, looking to the northern horizon, stars in Ursa Major can be seen. It is also possible, later on, to actually just see one of the stars of the Plough just peeking above the horizon, if the horizon is low enough. Above Leo snakes (pun intentional) the constellation of Hydra – the Water Snake bearing Crater (the Cup) on it's back. Near

Crater is the easily recognizable diamond shape of Corvus the Crow with it's beak pointing towards Spica in Virgo – another way to tell Saturn and Spica apart. To the northeast can be seen the bright star Arcturus.

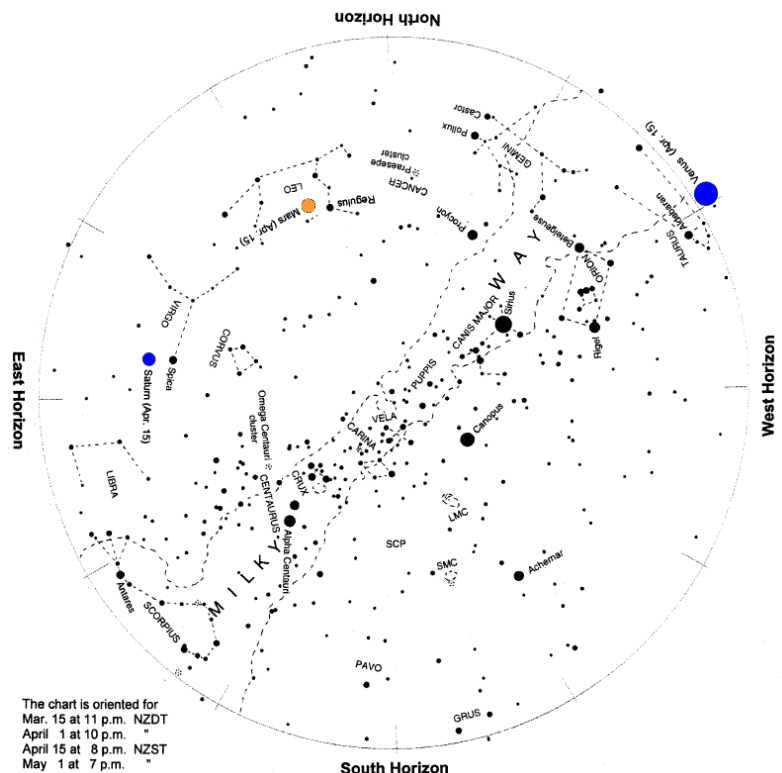
Hydra is the largest constellation in area and runs parallel to the zodiac from Libra to Cancer, with it's head near Canis Minor. On the other side of Hydra, we start at Lupus (the Wolf), Centaurus (the Centaur) and the large area that used to be known as Argo Navis. Argo Navis was the largest constellation until it was split into three parts: Carina, Puppis and Vela. Pyxis is commonly also said to be a part of Argo Navis but, according to Wikipedia, it is actually a separate constellation. All these constellations on the other side of Hydra are in the Milky Way.

It's easy to find Centaurus as it straddles the Southern Cross. The False Cross is nearly due overhead. It's top and right star belongs to Vela while the other two belong to Carina. Two 'knots' of brilliance can also be found in Carina, halfway between the False and Southern Cross. One is the Eta Carina Nebula (NGC3372) while the other, which is actually the top 'star' in the Diamond Cross, is the Theta Carina Cluster (IC 2602) also known as the Southern Pleiades.

### Events:

Full Moon:	7 <sup>th</sup> April
Last Quarter Moon:	13 <sup>th</sup> April
New Moon:	21 <sup>st</sup> April
First Quarter:	29 <sup>th</sup> April

Mercury is high in the morning sky and will be at its highest elongation from the Sun on the 20<sup>th</sup>. It will lie very close to Uranus on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Venus will still be shining in the evening sky.



# Obituaries

February 18

**Rose Cliver**, (aged 109),  
American centenarian, one of the last known survivors of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

February 19

**J. Paul Hogan**, (aged 92),  
American research chemist, who discovered methods of producing polypropylene and high-density polyethylene—the stuff they make milk bottles out of.

February 26

**Richard Carpenter**, (aged 82),  
English television screenwriter, creator of “Catweazle”, “The Ghosts of Motley Hall”, and “Robin of Sherwood” among other series.

February 29

**Sheldon Moldoff**, (aged 91),  
American comic book artist who was a major cover artist for DC in the Golden Age, but is best known for his work on Hawkman and Hawkgirl. He also worked on Batman, helping to create a number of major villains.



**Davy Jones**, (aged 66),  
British actor and musician, member of “The Monkees” .a pop-rock group formed expressly for a television show of the same name. Strangely enough, their music wasn’t bad... including songs like “I Wanna Be Free” and “Daydream Believer”.

March 3

**Ralph McQuarrie**, (aged 82),  
American conceptual designer and illustrator who designed the original “Star Wars” trilogy, the original “Battlestar Galactica” TV series, “E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial” and “Cocoon”, for which he won an Academy Award. This was the man who gave Darth Vader, Chewbacca, R2-D2 and C-3PO their looks—and designed many of the sets as well.



March 5

**Philip Madoc**, (aged 77),  
Welsh actor who was most famous for playing the title role in “The Life and Times of David Lloyd George”, but known to Doctor Who fans for being the villain in a number classic serials, including Solon in “The War

Games”. He also appeared in “UFO” and “Space: 1999”.

March 10

**Frank Sherwood Rowland**, (aged 84),  
American chemistry professor, Nobel laureate in Chemistry (1995), best known for the discovery that chlorofluorocarbons contribute to ozone depletion.

**Jean Giraud**, aka **Mœbius**, (aged 73)  
French comic book artist who created a wide range of science fiction and fantasy comics in a highly imaginative and surreal style, the most famous of which are “Arzach”, the “Airtight Garage of Jerry Cornelius”, and “The Incal”. He contributed storyboards and concept designs to numerous science fiction and fantasy films, including “Alien”, “Willow”, “Tron” (1982), and “The Fifth Element”.



March 11

**Sid Couchey**, (aged 92),  
American comic book artist best known for his illustration work on the Harvey Comics characters Richie Rich, Little Lotta and Little Dot. His style was known for big, friendly faces and a sharp sense of visual humour.

March 16

**Muhammad Abd-al-Rahman Barker**, (aged 83),  
American professor, fantasy novelist and role playing game creator. His lifetime work was the magnificently detailed world setting of Tékumel as published in the “Empire of the Petal Throne”. Yes, that wonderful game we used to play years ago, with Paul James as gamemaster. Professor Barker’s work will be his legacy—and hopefully not forgotten.



Compiled  
by  
Jacqui  
Smith



Directed by Andrew Stanton  
 Produced by Jim Morris, Colin Wilson, Lindsey Collins  
 Screenplay by Andrew Stanton, Mark Andrews  
 Michael Chabon  
 Based on "A Princess of Mars" by Edgar Rice Burroughs  
 Starring Taylor Kitsch, Lynn Collins  
 Samantha Morton, Mark Strong

*Reviewed by Brett Peacock*

I had heard a lot about this film over the past 18 months, and little of it seemed positive. Disney were spending in excess of \$200 Million on this and the production was rumoured to be "behind schedule & over budget". Andrew Stanton was a Pixar animation alumnus and this was a live action film, his first. Pundits were predicting a colossal turkey. Hollywood had been trying since 1936 to make a John Carter movie – the first was Bob Clampett (of the original Looney Tunes) and he wanted to animate it (no choice back then). Harryhausen looked at it in the late fifties then did Sinbad & Jason instead. In the seventies, in the wake of Star Wars, studios ran around buying up properties, John Carter among them. After CGI happened, there were at least five attempts begun and abandoned, with names like Kerry Conran (Sky Captain), but all had foundered. So this sniping looked a bit like industry-wide sour grapes when Disney re-purchased the rights (they let them lapse when they instead made "Tarzan") and put John Carter of Mars into production with a targeted release date of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of first publication of the original novel. But I started to see little snippets on the web, and a number of sources close to the production were going on record about the film being "better than good" and some of the snippets showed a very nice line in design and artistry. So I thought, wait and see. Which brings me to the actual film, which I saw in 3D on opening night. It's not perfect. And it's not exactly what you expect either. That's the bad news. Let me explain...

First off, I shall speak heresy. The original "Star Wars" was not perfect either. We tend now to look back at the original movie and heap praise on it. But I can clearly recall, sitting in the Cinerama theatre in 1977, watching the first public session of "Star Wars" and noting that despite all the things it did "right", it did a number of things rather poorly. So, applying this to "John Carter" you can be assured that the things done right (and they are many) are done not just right, but are done "Better than Right"! And the few things done poorly are not really deal breakers for the film overall. The pace of the movie is mostly right, with the odd down beat or sudden lurch, but there you may have to blame the serial nature of the original novel. It lingers in the story, or the story would not work as well. Stanton already deviates significantly from the novel, but like borrows most of their needs from other books in the Mars series (there are eleven of them). It shows respect and affection for the source, something that we should applaud. Some of the dialogue is modern, but some remains, if not exactly Burroughs, then a close approximation of it. It may sound archaic and 19<sup>th</sup> century, but that is because it IS 19<sup>th</sup> century! The end result is a curious mix of the story being a bit "all over the show" yet engrossing and entertaining all the same. In fact I feel that the best description for it is an archaic one. It's a "ripping yarn"!! Second point is the casting. A number of reviewers have panned Taylor Kitsch as being not up to the job. He is not another Harrison Ford, or Bruce Willis, or "Arnold". But then again, all three of them would have been dead wrong for this role. Kitsch can act, and carries the role more than adequately. I do not have any issue with him except he looks more like a scraggly hippie in the old west than a 19th century 'Virginia gentleman in straightened circumstances'. Once he arrives on Barsoom however, the situation improves and my issue vanishes. Others have panned Lynn Collins as the Princess Dejah Thoris. But this movie is a star-making turn for her. She nails the part to the mast and hoists the mainbrace afterwards! She carries a significant chunk of the movie with what seems little effort. After establishing early how smart and proactive she is, Collins ups the ante significantly by then making the tough, smart warrior princess/scientist reveal her vulnerable side, when she is placed in a situation where none of those skills can aid her. Probably for the first time she is paralysed by uncertainty and real fear, unable to find any solution, and that is when she learns to trust John Carter. So that was all the bad news. The good news? Well, I already want to see it again on the big screen. I had to think long and hard to the last film I wanted to see again, immediately. I think it was "The Incredibles". Things I really liked; first the production design. The west was very well realised and it only got better from there. The Barsoom designs were astounding. The ships had a beautiful rococo lines, crossed the steampunk –like technology. The cities (Helium & Zodanga) were distinctively different and yet related to each other. Costume design however.. well. It was Disney. The armour and weapons were nice, but...there was simply too much costume for it to be the Barsoom Burroughs wrote of. Another score for the Disney style. Many costumes were skimpy or somewhat revealing. But they were still... too much. But that's me being a purist for the words of ERB.

The green martian (Tharks and Warhoons) design was absolutely spot on to Burroughs except for the height difference. Burroughs saw them as being between 14 and 16 feet high. Stanton and co have made them between 8 and 10 feet high. The reason is simple – any taller and they loom over the humans so much they are “drowned out” in the frame and look odd otherwise. It’s now a good and logical height difference and it works in spades. Kudos here to Willem Dafoe and Samantha Morton—they are both superb, never asking the audience for their sympathy, but getting it anyhow. You may have noticed by now I’m not giving too much away about the plot. It’s been sprayed around a lot on the web and in papers, so many will be familiar with it, especially those who have actually read ERB. I don’t need to recap it, and it would only serve to spoil some of the surprise you will get watching it. As an aside, I am astounded by some reviewers suggesting that the plot is “too complex” for the audience to readily assimilate. Perhaps they were expecting a tale like Care Bears! Maybe they simply did not expect to have to pay attention and were resentful that they had to. I had NO PROBLEMS WHATSOEVER following the story. The movie does pass out a lot of plot for free. The first sequence is little more than “An Introduction to Barsoom, pt 1” and suggests the Disney execs were worried that Americans and kids might not get it. It is not needed and you get the same information in the plot, spread over four or five other scenes. Great job, House of Mouse! There is so much to like in the film that I don’t want to go any further into it, except to say, loudly: “I wanna WOOLA!” Damn if he isn’t the UGLIEST cutie you will EVER SEE. And he was written that way by Burroughs! Stanton and his team do him absolute justice. Woola will be the next Artoo!

John Carter was in 3D and if the 3D was post-processed, as a number of reviews state, then they did a very good job of it, (unlike Clash of the Titans) and it accentuates rather than dominates the film. But I cannot say that it is a game changer - it will look very, very nice in straight 2D. In Summary: John Carter is not the “greatest Film ever made”. And the source novel, despite its influence on 20<sup>th</sup> Century SF and Fantasy, is not great Literature either. It was ER Burroughs’ first novel and it shows in the rather clunky plotting and laboured dialogue and heavy reliance on coincidence, most of which Stanton has wisely ejected from the movie. But what the movie is, that is up to what you see in it. It’s a great adventure, a fun movie par excellence and it will, like Star Wars & Lord of the Rings be a Big Influence on young minds who see it. I went to it with heavily dampened expectations, but willing to give it a shot, trusting in Andrew Stanton, after all, I loved Wall-E and while I was less entranced by Finding Nemo, I also liked his work in Toy Story and A Bug’s life. I’m glad to state that “John Carter” managed to well and truly exceed my expectations by being that most wondrous of things, a great, big, Ripping Yarn. I more than liked it, it reminded me most of that day in 1977 when first I saw Star Wars. There have been a lot of recent movies I have liked (for example: Captain America, Iron Man, Wall-E, Despicable Me, True Grit, Hugo, Conan) but none of them made me want to spend another \$20 to see them again. John Carter did. I’m writing this on a Friday. I’ll be seeing it again Saturday night. You should too. \*\*\*\* (4/5)

## Movie First Lines

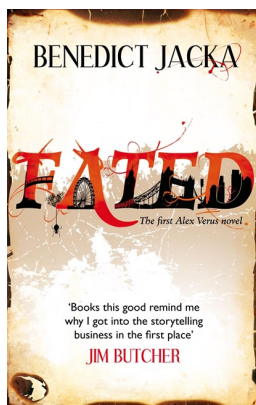
1. **“And that completes my final report until we reach touchdown.”**
  - A. Barbarella (1968)
  - B. Planet of The Apes (1968)
  - C. Robinson Crusoe on Mars (1964)
  - D. Marooned (1969)
2. **“From the dawn of time we came, moving silently down through the centuries.”**
  - A. Highlander (1986)
  - B. Bladerunner (1982)
  - C. The Thing (1982)
  - D. Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)
3. **“This is Media Break. You give us three minutes and we’ll give you the World.”**
  - A. Network (1976)
  - B. Silent Running (1972)
  - C. The Thing (1982)
  - D. Robocop (1987)
4. **“Everybody, heads up! Heads up! Keep it clear! Okay, down!”**
  - A. Starship Troopers (1997)
  - B. Aliens (1986)
  - C. Altered States (1980)
  - D. Jurassic Park (1993)
5. **“Earth that was could no longer sustain our numbers, we were so many.”**
  - A. Battlefield Earth: A Saga of the Year 3000 (2000)
  - B. Avatar (2009)
  - C. Serenity (2005)
  - D. Ice Pirates (1984)
6. **“Professor! Eeya ha’al salaam alaykum!”**
  - A. The Mummy (1999)
  - B. The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb (1964)
  - C. Stargate (1991)
  - D. The Scorpion King (2002)
7. **“There’s never a cop around when you need one.”**
  - A. Last Man on Earth (1964)
  - B. The Omega Man (1971)
  - C. I am Legend (2007)
  - D. The Quiet Earth (1985)
8. **“What the hell? Goddamn son of a bitch...”**
  - A. The Terminator (1984)
  - B. Terminator 2 - Judgement Day (1989)
  - C. RoboCop 2 (1990)
  - D. Jurassic Park 2 (1997)
9. **“We’re exiting the time knot now, sir!”**
  - A. Star Trek – The Motion Picture (1979)
  - B. Star Trek X – Nemesis (2002)
  - C. Serenity (2005)
  - D. Galaxy Quest (1999)
10. **“Your move: Bishop to knight four.”**
  - A. The Wrath of Khan (1982)
  - B. The Undiscovered Country (1991)
  - C. The Fly (1986)
  - D. The Thing (1982)
11. **“Between the time when the oceans drank Atlantis, and the rise of the sons of Aryas, there was an age undreamed of.”**
  - A. Conan the Barbarian (2011)
  - B. Conan the Barbarian (1982)
  - C. Conan the Destroyer (1984)
  - D. Red Sonya (1985)
12. Tie-breaker : **“Here you are, sir. Main level, please.”**

Questions  
by Brett  
Peacock

Answers  
on page 9

**Fated:**  
**the first Alex Verus novel**

by *Benedict Jacka*  
Published by *Orbit*  
Supplied by *Hatchette*  
Reviewed by *Jacqui Smith*



How shall I describe this novel?

The “Dresden Files” meets “Warehouse 13” and “Dune” with a dash of “Night at the Museum” and “Doctor Who”? Okay, so it’s a cool urban fantasy with a welcome absence of vampires and werewolves, and a copious amount of wit and insider humour. Alex Verus is a mage, certainly, but he’s essentially a one-trick pony, a diviner. That means he can sift through possible futures and choose the actions which will bring about the most desirable result. Sound familiar? I assume you’ve read “Dune”... It’s the same basic idea, only without the spice, and set in the present day.

The location is present day London, and the tale begins in a shop—Alex Verus runs the Arcana Emporium where he sells things which may or may not be actually magical. He is interrupted by a visitor who wants him to do a job for the Council—a Council who Alex Verus believes to have sold out to Dark Mages in order to keep the peace. This job turns out to involve a powerful artefact which is in a new exhibition at the British Museum. Of course, everybody wants it... but nobody knows how to get at it. Alex has to solve the problem, while fending off various factions of mages, with only his collection of magic items, a flighty air elemental and his unlucky apprentice to help. Even so, things are not what they seem...

This is a bright new take on urban fantasy, with a strong sense of character and setting—London is an old city and that so fits this genre. The story cracked on at a great pace, and it was a whole lot of fun. Bring on the sequel!

**Warbreaker**

by *Brandon Sanderson*  
Published by *Gollancz*  
Supplied by *Hatchette*  
Reviewed by *Jacqui Smith*



Another reviewer recently asked if it was even possible to come up with something new in fantasy...

Well, I can assure you that it didn’t take very long at all for “Warbreaker” to convince me that here was something very novel indeed. The way this world works is totally different from anything I’ve encountered before in fantasy—and I’ve read a LOT of fantasy over the years. It’s a world of colours, of Breath, of awakening, the Returned, and the Lifeless... If that sounds confusing, it’s not when you read it. Sanderson does a masterful job of introducing you to his world and making it all this strangeness make

sense.

Part of this is due to the characters, who are beautifully realised, and draw the reader into their world. Mostly we see this world through the eyes of the two princesses, Vivienna the elder, and Siri the younger, and also through Lightsong the Bold, one of the Returned. One of the sisters must marry the God-King of Hallandren, and Vivienna is prepared—but at the last minute, their father decides to send Siri. Vivienna follows Siri, planning to rescue her sister. But nothing is that simple, and it gets complicated when her father’s agent in Idris dies after giving her his hoard of Breath.

I have absolutely no idea where Sanderson is coming from with this fantasy—most high fantasy is based in one historic culture and mythology or another (or some mixture). Tolkien stole heavily from Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic myth. Others have drawn on Greco-Roman or Chinese... I suppose there are hints of Egyptian here, but it’s only hints. Sanderson proves that originality really is possible in fantasy, and with that breathes new life into the genre. This is surely going to be one of the best fantasy novels of the year.

**Silver-Tongued Devil:**  
**Sabina Kane Book 4**

by *Jaye Wells*  
Published by *Orbit*  
Supplied by *Hatchette*  
Reviewed by *Jan Butterworth*



Sabina’s evil grandmother is dead. Maisie has been rescued. The dark races are in talks to negotiate a peace treaty. Then people are being murdered in the dark races community. Maisie is travelling down a self destructive path. And Cain is back.

Tasked with solving the murders, Sabina and the gang start a murder investigation with a new face from LA - “Alexis looked like something out of vampire discipline porn”. As she tries to solve the murders that threaten the peace talks, Sabina discovers the plot goes deeper than she realizes and things she knows are not as they seem.

This book is slower in action than previous books but still moved along quickly with never a dull moment. It is face paced and attention grabbing with an unexpected ending.. There is lots of drama involving the characters (of course Gighul is there!) and Sabina and Adam are getting along well until.....

As heart breaking as some of the events were, things are set up well for the 5th (and sadly last) book in this series. Silver Tongued Devil is another fantastic book in the must read Sabina Kane urban fantasy series – action packed books with humour, conflict, a bit of romance, and a kick-butt heroine. I look forward to it. This series needs to be read in order so you get everything.



# Theft of Swords: Riyria Revelations Book 1

by Michael J Sullivan  
Published by Orbit  
Supplied by Hatchette  
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



Royce and Hadrian are known as the Riyria - successful and daring thieves who managed always to escape. Thieves for hire, they have been known to be assassins. Royce was once a member of a well known thieves' guild. But his successes made someone jealous and fearful so they set him up and got him banished. "Hey man, wanna go steal a magic sword?" "Awww, do we have to?" "Well, I already signed us up. So yeah." "Alright."

This book is two stories in one. The first story is titled "The Crown Conspiracy", where Royce and Hadrian have just returned from a successful job. They normally wouldn't undertake another assignment immediately but Hadrian gets talked into stealing a famous sword. Unfortunately, when they enter the chapel to get the sword they find the King murdered and are captured and sentenced to execution by the Prince. An unexpected person helps them escape if they kidnap the Prince, for his own protection. Hunted criminals, they go on a quest to find a powerful wizard incarcerated in a secret prison, before returning to unmask the King's murderers. Avempartha is the second story in the book, taking place two years after the first story. Royce and Hadrian are sought by Thrace, a young farm girl who hires them to save her father and village by slaying a beast no one has seen. This begins an adventure where many characters from the previous book return and they finally end up defeating the monster with their friends' help. The story is packed with action and has a clever plot with many twists, but without being too complicated. The characters are interesting without there being too many to comfortably remember. Elves, a wizard, princes, princesses, a gnome, stereotypical villains, loveable rogues as heroes, political intrigue and villainy as nobleman and church leaders battle for power. These books are addictive; once you start you don't want to stop. First self-published on e-book, Orbit has recognised what an enjoyable read they are and published them, beginning a series with magic, myth and legend.

### Quiz Answers:

1. B. Planet of The Apes (1968)
2. A. Highlander (1986)
3. D. Robocop (1987)
4. D. Jurassic Park (1993)
5. C. Serenity (2005)
6. C. Stargate (1991)
7. B. The Omega Man (1971)
8. A. The Terminator (1984)
9. D. Galaxy Quest (1999)
10. D. The Thing (1982)
11. B. Conan the Barbarian (1982)
12. 2001: A Space Odyssey

# Uncorked by Broderick Wells

March has been an interesting month in the Wells household. Not only have I enrolled in university (again), but we've received firewood, sent one member to the hospital, retrieved said member back and acquired more cats. So it's been more than a little busy. Let's start with the hospital. Normally going to hospital is an unplanned thing, and this adventure started off just like that. My involvement was almost nil, apart from visiting. The first visit was easily the most trying, mostly because when we went to leave, I'd lost the train station. This is explained as follows: entering Middlemore from the train side means following a series of corridors until you arrive at the front desk, whereby they point you in the correct direction. Leaving, one goes down to the front desk and out the front door, conveniently marked "Entrance" and out into a car park. The confusion began because it was night and all landmarks were lost in the rain and gloom. Needless to say, by the time I arrived back at the car, I was soaked. However, I now have a better internal map of Middlemore, as well as some idea of their outrageous parking fees (\$3.10/hour or part thereof, no change given). Anyhow, Madame Wells has arrived home in much better condition with only half a pharmacy to consume each night. Moral of the story: don't get sick.

The cat numbers have increased by at least one, and maybe two. Mike decided he liked the Ginger Ninja we were fostering for the SPCA and duly adopted him. The jury is still out on what we'll do with the semi-deaf blonde fur ball.

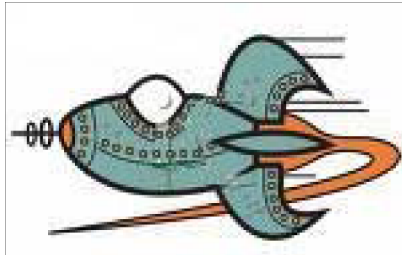
University is now my home away from work. I get to go in every second week, chat with my supervisor and give all manner of progress reports. There are lies, damn lies and progress reports. But she seems to be happy. WWI never looked so good. I also have to travel to far off and exciting places to further my research. I get to inspect the sunny climes of Wellington (ah, city of culture and my old stamping ground) and Waiouru (which is good for something, but God knows what, and He ain't saying). Waiouru is going to be the first port of call, sometime in May, or late April. In between visiting the archives, I'm going to be bored witless. Makes note - pack plenty of liquid comestibles. The upside is that the university has agreed to fund these excursions on proof of payment, Therefore I have to hang on to my receipts. Oh joy, expense claims, suddenly I'm back in middle management. The other big news is that the People's Car is no longer the *Exxon Valdez*. The oil leak has been fixed. Again. I wonder how long it will be before the mobile money pit will try to bankrupt me another time. On that note I think it is time for a bracer to soothe my nerves.



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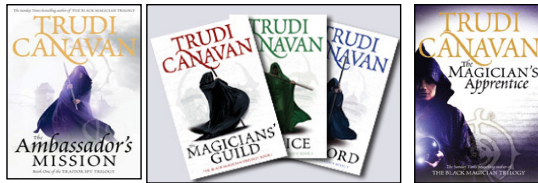
# UnCONventional 2012

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



UnCONventional will be held at the Surrey Hotel which is located at 465 Great North Rd, Grey Lynn.

Our GOH is Trudi Canavan: award-winning author & self-proclaimed 'chocoholic'.



Our Fan GOH is Lorain Clark.

Join us as we:

- Debate the merits of the latest film and TV offerings...
- Remember our old favourites...
- Discuss the latest news in the world of spaceflight and technology...
- Battle it out on the game boards and online...
- Learn how to polish our short stories and avoid copyright issues...

Email: [enquiries@unconventional.sf.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@unconventional.sf.org.nz)  
<http://unconventional2012.wordpress.com/>

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



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[http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main_Page)

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**This Month:**

SPACE Hot Cross Space!  
Spiced Pastries And Chocolate Eggs  
at Chez Smith  
7:30pm Good Friday 6th April

**Next Meeting:**

Annual General Meeting  
Wednesday 19 April, 2012, 7:30pm  
Auckland Horticultural Centre,  
990 Great North Road,  
Western Springs



**Upcoming Events:**

Saturday, April 28, 2012 at 10:00am  
**AETHER AND IRON** at MOTAT

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