



Costume Parade at Aether & Iron
(Photo by Keith Smith.)

Issue XXVII - May 2012

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Musings from Under the Mountain

Ah... peace. The kitten has gone to sleep on the other end of the couch and I get to type in uninterrupted fashion. As you can see from the photograph, our little Kit-Kat is doing an impressive job of converting cat food into cat, and is now considerably bigger. That said, she is still very much an indoors upstairs cat, in spite of her penchant for charging around the house madly, play-fighting with George, and attacking people, toys and scrap paper with enthusiasm.



Indoors, of course, is where the Hamilton City Council wants all cats, at least between dusk and dawn. Aside from the obvious impracticality of such a by-law and the impossibility of enforcing it (can you imagine trying to arrest a cat for being outside at night?), I really don't see how it can achieve the desired objective, to discourage cats from breeding. In my experience, cats don't care whether the sun's up when they mate. There really is only one way to control the feline population, and that's responsible owners neutering their pets—the cost of neutering was included in the suggested donation we were asked to give the vet when we adopted Kit-Kat, and that's no bad thing.

To some extent, the same thing applies to the human population, which I why I was astounded to see the Green Party speaking against the government's proposal to offer free reversal sterilisation to women on low incomes who don't want more children. Given that the growth in the human population is a major contributor to the increasing stress on the environment, any sensible greenie would surely consider this a fine plan. But no, the Green Party doesn't like the idea. What can one conclude, except that the Green Party isn't actually all that Green... And that maybe there's a few classic SF novels they really should read, perhaps starting with Silverberg's "The World Inside", Harrison's "Make Room! Make Room!", and of course, Brunner's "Stand on Zanzibar". Who knows, they might learn something.

Jacqui

The View from the President's Chair

A cat. Yep. There's a cat on the deck railing at the moment. Not the kitten at the moment, but George the ginger 'tom', being lord of all he surveys. Mind you, Kit-Kat, who is currently asleep on the couch, has been giving him a run for his money, trying to beat him up at any opportunity.

I just got off a Slooh Live Broadcast of the Annular Solar Eclipse that was over Japan, then California and down to New Mexico this morning. Really fascinating to watch and I suspect the next Sky at Night column will be talking about eclipses. We're hoping to see this year's total solar eclipse in Cairns, Australia in person and, who knows, plans may be afoot to go to the USA in time for the Solar Eclipse then. Wonder how close that is to the Worldcon, and who's going to be hosting.

Speaking of cons, unConventional is coming up in less than two weeks, so let's help Terri make it a success. Also that weekend is ModelX. The NZSA will be there so pop in, say hello, and give them your support. Should only take a few hours out of the con.

Those who braved the elements to get to the May meeting were treated to a brief talk on the Transit of Venus on the 6th June. If you are free, I'd suggest going to Stardome. You'll be able to see a live feed through the new solar telescope as well as courtyard viewing. Or, if it's cloudy, head over to our place. I'll be watching via the Internet in that case.

We also wandered down memory lane looking at old con photos, mainly seeing who could be recognised. I've been slowly working on putting the best of the old con photos on my Facebook page. Your crew has been working on trying to make meetings more interesting and attractive. Currently the list of meeting themes are:

June – Steampunk

July – Board Games

August - Star Wars

September – Romance in SF

October – Horror (and the upcoming solar eclipse).

Other suggestions for themes are welcome, as well as ideas for outings, events, etc. The list may change if opportunities present themselves.

See you at the Con,
Keith, President – Stella Nova

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It was a rather grey Saturday afternoon, and had been raining that morning, but we'd bought our tickets ahead of time at half price thanks to "GrabOne". That simplified things, as did our usual parking tactic—park at MOTAT 2 (the Aviation Hall up Motions Rd past the Zoo), and take the tram back to MOTAT 1. We walked into the Hall of Planes, and after exchanging vouchers for tickets and learning that the train was going, headed in that direction. It wasn't long before we ran into a group dressed in steampunk costume. How very right they looked in that environment!



© Keith Smith

A trainload of Steampunk enthusiasts...

After taking a train ride to nowhere and back, and admiring the planes in their refurbished pavilion, we boarded the tram for MOTAT 1. More persons in steampunk regalia were in evidence almost as soon as we arrived—in particular David Harrop and the Royal Dirigible Corps whom it seems were engaged in some sort of LARP, headquartered in the Antarctic exhibit which they'd taken over for the day.



© Keith Smith

Royal Dirigible Corps

We went inside, and watched the big beam engines turning at the pump house which forms MOTAT's core. Paul and I were next entertained by "Steampunking your Ray Gun". Plastic pistols, paints and instructions were provided, and the results were surprisingly good.

Steampunked "Ray-Guns" →

Meanwhile, Keith went off and found a costume parade to photograph. We joined him for a stroll around the steampunk stalls and exhibits.



© Keith Smith

Steampunk Photographer

Then we let Paul loose in the Challenge Zone for some hands-on science while we chatted to David. We finished with a couple of 4-D shows in Voyager 1 and took the tram back to MOTAT 2.

All in all, it had been a very fun afternoon, and I'd like to congratulate the steampunk community on bringing Aether and Iron to life so effectively. Though one has to admit that some of the MOTAT engineers seemed somewhat bemused by all these young people and their new enthusiasm for old stuff!



© Keith Smith

Steampunk Camera



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by
Jacqui,
Keith,
& Paul
Smith

The Sky at Night – June 2012

The feature for this column is the Transit of Venus. This occurs on the 6th of June and if we miss it, there won't be another one until 2117. First Contact is at 10:15am and the transit ends at 4:33pm. First off, a warning. Do NOT under ANY circumstances try to look directly at the sun without adequate protection. You'll go blind – literally. The heat from the sun would get focused on the back of the eye and you'd fry your retina. A very dark filter is needed. However, the safest way to see the transit is by projecting the image of the sun onto a white screen.

Solar transits occur when one body moves across the face of the sun as seen from the earth. Technically, a solar eclipse is a special form of a transit. We had a transit of Mercury in 2006 and the next one is in 2016. On average, there's one every seven years. Transits of Venus are rarer but they come in pairs. The last one, in 2004, was not visible in New Zealand, so this one is our one and only chance. The reason that transits of Venus are quite rare is due to the inclination of Venus's orbit with respect to our own. Thus transits can only occur when both planets lie on the line formed when the planes of the orbit intersect – which only happens on June and December. This eclipse pair is occurring when Venus is passing through the descending node.

What you will see, during the transit, is a dark disk moving slowly across the face of the sun and will look very different than a sunspot which is more irregular shaped. I'd recommend seeing the transit at Stardome which is probably where I'm going to be that day. More information can be found at <http://www.rasnz.org.nz/2012Transit/Venus2012.html>

There is also a partial eclipse of the moon on the 4th where a third of the moon's disk will be in shadow. The dark park of the Earth's shadow will contact the moon at 10pm and leave at 12:06am. Mid eclipse is at 11:03pm.

Mars and Saturn are still visible in the evening sky whereas Jupiter is visible just before sunrise. It will be joined by Venus later on in the month.

As far as the rest of the sky is concerned, the Milky Way

is low on the horizon, apart from the bit going through Centaurus and Crux. This means, when looking to the northern sky around the Leo, Virgo, Libra, Bootes & Coma Berenices area, we're looking perpendicular to the plane of the galaxy and out into intergalactic space. A lot of galaxies can be seen in this area through telescopes especially in this direction where the Virgo Cluster is located.

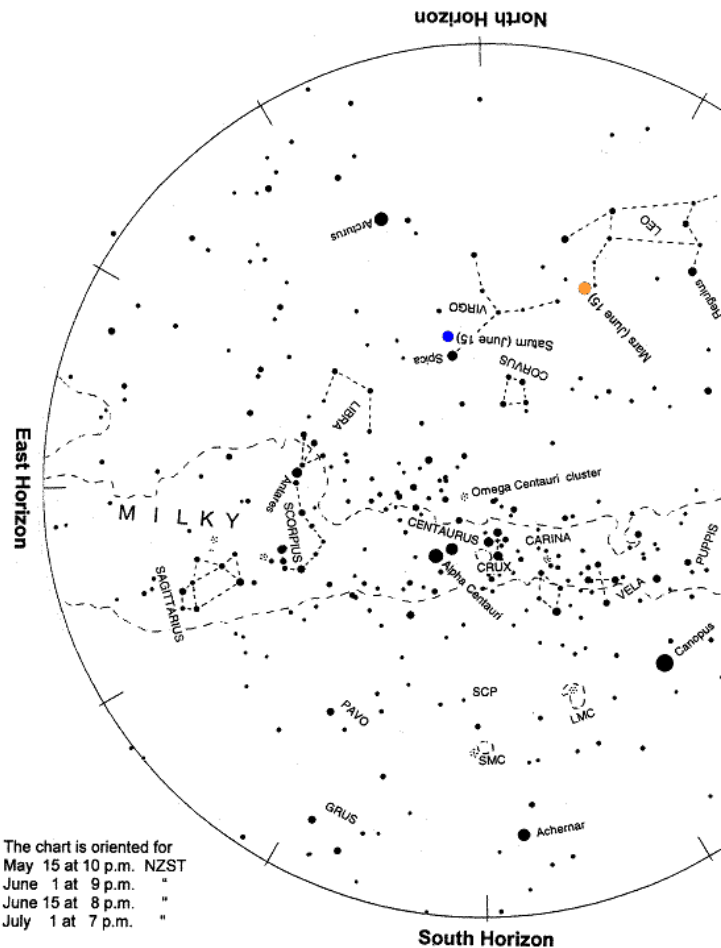
Events:

The 21st of June marks the beginning of the Maori New Year as Matariki (the Pleiades) becomes visible in the morning sky after the New Moon. The 21st also marks the Winter Solstice.

- Full Moon: 4th June
- Last Quarter Moon: 11th June
- New Moon: 20th June
- First Quarter: 27th June

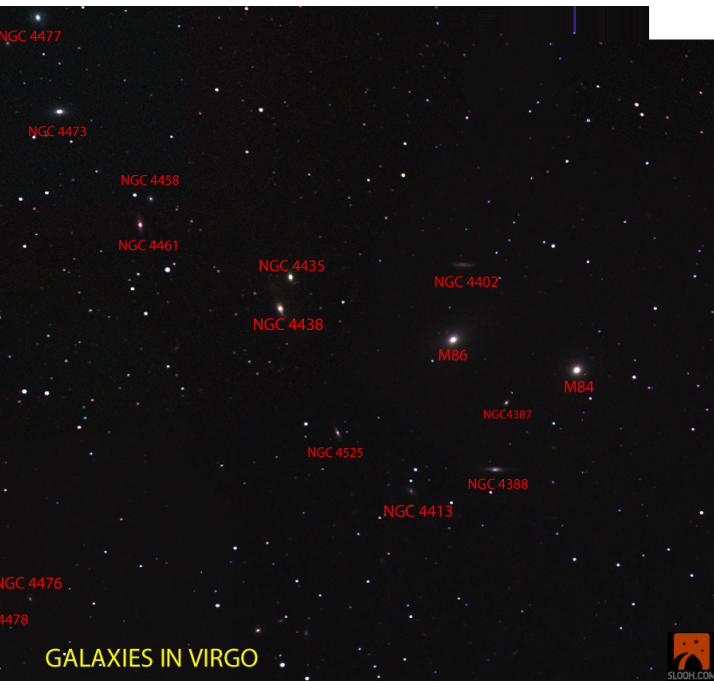


by
Keith
Smith



The chart is oriented for
 May 15 at 10 p.m. NZST
 June 1 at 9 p.m. "
 June 15 at 8 p.m. "
 July 1 at 7 p.m. "

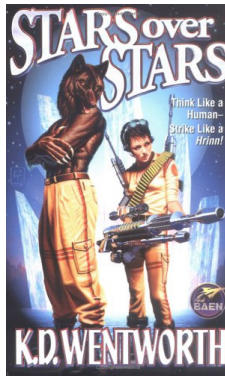




GALAXIES IN VIRGO

Obituaries

April 18
K. D. Wentworth, (aged 61), American science fiction author who served two terms as secretary of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America in the early 2000s. One of her novelettes, "Kaleidoscope" (2008), and three of her short stories, "Burning Bright" (1997), "Tall One" (1998), and "Born Again" (2005) have been Nebula award finalists.



April 20
Bert Weedon, (aged 91), English guitarist and composer who was the first British guitarist to have a hit record in the UK Singles Chart, in 1959, and his best-selling tutorial guides, *Play in a Day*, were a major influence on many leading British musicians, such as Eric Clapton, Brian May, and Paul McCartney.

April 29
Joel Goldsmith, (aged 54), American film and television composer, son of Jerry Goldsmith (who composed the Star Trek theme). He was the main composer for *Stargate: SG-1* and was nominated for two Emmys for music for *Stargate: Atlantis* including the main titles.



April 30
George Murdock, (aged 81), American actor who played many parts including genre roles as Dr Salik in the original *Battlestar Galactica*, Admiral J.P. Hanson in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episodes "Best of Both Worlds" I & II, and most recently the Preacher in *Torchwood: Miracle Day*.



May 4
Bob Stewart, (aged 91), American television game show producer who created some of the most popular game shows for Mark Goodson-Bill Todman Productions, including *To Tell the Truth*, *Password*, and *The Price Is Right*. His biggest success as an independent producer was the *Pyramid* series, starting with *The \$10,000 Pyramid* in 1973.



May 6
George Lindsey, (aged 83) American character actor, best known for his role as Goober Pyle on *The Andy Griffith Show*.

May 8
Maurice Sendak, (aged 83), American author and illustrator responsible for the fantasy children's book *Where the Wild Things Are* and illustrated numerous other works.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK



May 11
Tony DeZuniga, (aged 79), Filipino comic book artist best known for his works for DC Comics, and for co-creating the characters *Jonah Hex* and *Black Orchid*.

May 13
Don Ritchie, (aged 85), Australian volunteer said to have rescued nearly 400 people from suicide as over a 45-year period. Ritchie resided next to The Gap, a cliff in Sydney, Australia, known for suicide attempts. He received Local Hero Award for Australia in 2011, the National Australia Day Council saying: "His kind words and invitations into his home in times of trouble have made an enormous difference ... With such simple actions, Don has saved an extraordinary number of lives." (Ironically, he worked as a life insurance salesman... go figure).

Compiled by Jacqui Smith

YOUR CONVENTION NEEDS PUBLICITY!

unCONventional will be space dust in less than 3 weeks. In other words, we need to amp up the publicity. There are many good places out there to advertise and we can't do it without YOU!

Please download a copy of our poster and approach your local

- ❖ DVD store,
- ❖ Model shop
- ❖ Library,
- ❖ BNZ (community notice board),
- ❖ Book store,
- ❖ Game store (board games as well as computer games),
- ❖ Council office (contact details for local notice boards),
- ❖ Yellow Local (follow the link from the Yellow Pages),
- ❖ Tertiary Institute – lots of notice boards!

Any other ideas?

YOUR CONVENTION NEEDS YOUR HELP!

We need helpers – hereafter known as **Con Angels** – before and after the con as well as during it. In this convention update, you will find a list of the little (and not so little) things you can help with...

Thank you to those Con Angels who have already volunteered. Please would you confirm that you are still available. Remember, some of the Con Angel responsibilities can be shared. For shared responsibilities, please choose your shift:

- ❖ Morning (9am-noon),
- ❖ Afternoon (noon-3pm),
- ❖ Mid afternoon (3pm-6pm) and
- ❖ Evening (6pm onwards)



unCONventional will run much smoother with all these jobs taken care of. None of these Con Angel positions are too taxing and most of them can be shared. Please consider giving some of your time to YOUR convention: a day or even a few hours will be appreciated.

YOUR CONVENTION NEEDS YOUR MUSIC!

Calling all Filkers – we know you're out there! Show yourself! Bring your voice, your enthusiasm, your filks and your instruments. If you would be interested in filking at unCONventional, email us.

T-SHIRTS

The new batch of t-shirts will be on sale this week. Watch the website for more info!

<http://unconventional2012.wordpress.com/>

Progress reports will be emailed to all registered members - if you have not yet registered, please do so, and keep up to date with all our announcements.

Writer Workshop with GOH Trudi Canavan

"That Got Your Attention!"

This is a 2 hour workshop on Friday afternoon. It is free to registered members, but spaces are limited.

How do you get the reader hooked from the first word and keep them reading until the last page without sacrificing the detail, grand scope and vision so loved in fantasy and science fiction? Trudi will show you ways to add tension to your writing, and work out the most relevant information to deliver about your characters and settings – and when – without slowing down the pace.

Trudi will also be hosting a kaffeeklatch on Friday. Again, this is free to registered members, but spaces are limited. Register for these events on our website by clicking 'drop us a line' from the NEWS tab.

Authors signing / promoting their recent books:

Russell Kirkpatrick

Beulah Pragg (*Silver Hawk - Book 1 of the Chronicles of Tyria Trilogy*)

Steve Wheeler (*Burnt Ice*) published this month
Edwina Harvey (*The Whale's Tale*) is one of the editors of *Andromeda Spaceways*

Darusha Wehm (*Andersson Dexter novels*)

Simon Petrie (*Rare Unsigned Copy*) is also involved with *Andromeda Spaceways*

Helen Lowe (*The Heir of Night*)

Mary Victoria (*Chronicles of the Tree series*)

In addition, Simon Petrie will be launching his latest book "Light Touchpaper"

60-Second Sound Bite Challenge

Calling all movie buffs! Your challenge is to create a 60 second conversation made up mostly by quoting from Sci-Fi and Fantasy movies / TV series. All quotes must be fully acknowledged.

We have been informed that copyright is not an issue, providing that:

1. *The sound bite is for non-commercial use*
2. *All quotes are fully acknowledged*
3. *Fair use policy applies*

Here's a couple of (partial) examples - you get the idea!

“Smoke me a kipper. I’ll be back for breakfast” (Red Dwarf)
 “Make it so.” (Star Trek: The Next Generation)
 “I’ve got a bad feeling about this.” (Star Wars: A New Hope)
 “How bad can it be..?”
 “He’s dead Jim.” (Star Trek)
 So, “Who ya gonna call?” (Ghost Busters)
 “Ghost Busters!” (Ghost Busters)
 “Despatch war rocket Ajax to bring back his body” (Flash Gordon)
 “I can’t let you do that Dave.” (2001)
 “Oh my God: it’s full of stars!” (2001)
 “The universe is big. Mind-bogglingly big.” (HH Guide to the Galaxy)
 “Is it for real, or just all in my mind?” (Buck Rodgers in the 25th Century: Theme)

Cut and paste the sentence snippets from the original sources if you can – we would like to hear your inspiration! In all cases, remember to include a printout of your 60-second Sound Bite Challenge.

Closing date:

Email your entries to contests@unconventional.sf.org.nz before 9pm Tuesday 29 May. You may even hear it played / read out at the Opening Ceremony!

Art / Photo Contest

Calling the many talented artists in fandom! We know you're out there, so how about letting others see your work? Get it to us early enough and you may see your artwork on the cover of the con book (with your permission of course).

Submit either:

1. An original photo or artwork (may be sculpted, sewn, sketched, painted, or computer generated), or
2. Take inspiration from an iconic image (please do not use the original image) and give it a sci-fi or fantasy makeover.

Criteria for all entries:

1. No unresolved copyright or privacy issues:
 - All images must be fully acknowledged
 - Photos must have model’s written consent (if applicable)
2. Should fit with the ‘unCONventional’ theme
3. Must be able to reproduce easily and clearly onto an A4 page
 1. No nudity (or partial nudity)
 2. No violence or gore
 3. No porn or offensive language/themes

Closing dates vary - depends on how you are sending your entries to us:

Post or email your entries so that they are received by 9pm Tuesday 29 May.

Or deliver your entries to unCONventional before 9pm on Friday 1 June.

Sending your entries:

You may enter more than once. Only entries meeting the above criteria will be considered.

Email - submit your entry as a .jpg file, but be prepared to resubmit it should our printer have another preferred format.

Email your entries to:
contests@unconventional.sf.org.nz

By post – mail your entry to: UnCONventional, PO Box 74-013 Greenlane Auckland

We recommend that you send your unfolded artwork between two sheets of heavy cardboard. Please enclose a large stamped, self-addressed envelope if you are not attending unconventional and would like your entry returned.

Uncorked by Broderick Wells

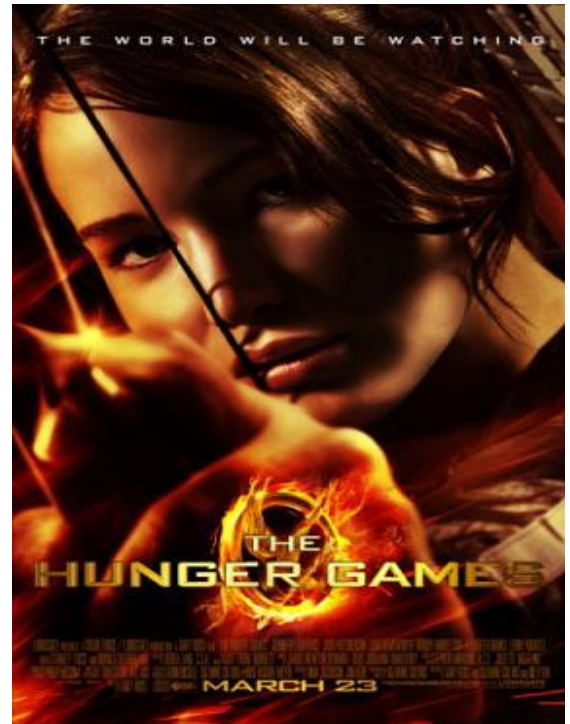
In the spirit of a more varied and multi-cultural experience... Wait, that's not quite right; in the spirit of a more varied and cultural experience, Broderick Wells has been visiting museums. Unfortunately, they don't have a wet bar, which means that a tour won't suddenly take unexpected and potentially illuminating new twists. But I have found if you ask the right questions of the right people, they will let you see more than is just on display. Take the Auckland Museum. Please. (Waits for laughter to subside from weak joke then progresses.) To give its full name, Auckland War Memorial Museum is full of surprises. On the front, carved into the stone, are the names of WWI battlefields where New Zealand soldiers fought. Most of you probably haven't paid any attention to that. They also have an interesting little library in the Armoury. Naturally there is quite a focus on war (it is the Auckland WAR Memorial Museum), but there is a fair amount on things New Zealand and other aspects of the museum's collections. And if you ask nicely, they'll let you have access to the library archives.

Now, some of you might be glazing over a bit at this, with thoughts of records detailing which book had been lent how often and to whom, but think again. The AWMM is home to a number of collections that are generally available by request only. Letters from early settlers, missionaries, soldiers and so on. Diaries, postcards from foreign parts (nudge nudge) and other ephemera can be examined, provided you ask for the right files.

But this extended library experience isn't limited to just the AWMM. I recently had the pleasure of a week's stay in Waiouru. And what is there to do in Waiouru apart from visit the Army Museum? Rhetorical question! After perusing their displays for minutes at an end, I found myself in their library, and armed with my silver tongue, had wangled access to their archives. Okay, the Waiouru Army Museum's holdings are definitely slanted toward the military, but they're not exclusively so. And if I could download the pictures on my mobile to the PC I'd show you some of the more unusual mementos from France that New Zealand soldiers sent home.



Something brought home at Waiouru Army Museum...



Directed by Gary Ross
 Produced by Nina Jacobson, Jon Kilik
 Screenplay by Gary Ross, Suzanne Collins, Billy Ray
 Based on "The Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins
 Starring Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson
 Liam Hemsworth, Woody Harrelson
 Reviewed by Nicolette

First of all, before seeing this film I hadn't read the book it was based on. I only knew a few things about the plot, so I won't be saying how the film is better/worse than the written word.

In the future, the USA is divided into 12 districts, each of whom must provide a teenage girl and boy (whose names are drawn by lottery) for the Hunger Games. These Games are a regular televised event where the 24 teenagers must fight each other until there is only one left... with the victor bringing riches and fame home to their district. Katniss is a no-nonsense teenager who lives in the poorest 12th district, where people look like extras from Little House in the Prairie. Her archery skills provide food for herself, her widowed mother and timid younger sister. When her sister's name is drawn for the Games lottery, Katniss volunteers to go in her place instead. Now she has to fight 23 others to the death if she wants to come home again to her family...

It was good to see a strong female lead that has the skills to defend herself when her life really depends on it. The high-tech Capitol is a complete contrast to the 12th district and we see this through Katniss' eyes. I can see a bit of the films budget went into the clothing, as the people from the Capitol were dressed liked the '80's meeting the 18th century... loud colours ahoy! I think the Hunger Games event itself, though violent at times, showed realistically how people would react if put into a Lord-of-the-Flies environment. Some people would seek to make alliances, others would run and look for safety... while some would enjoy the opportunity to attack.

Developed by Almost Human

Published by Almost Human

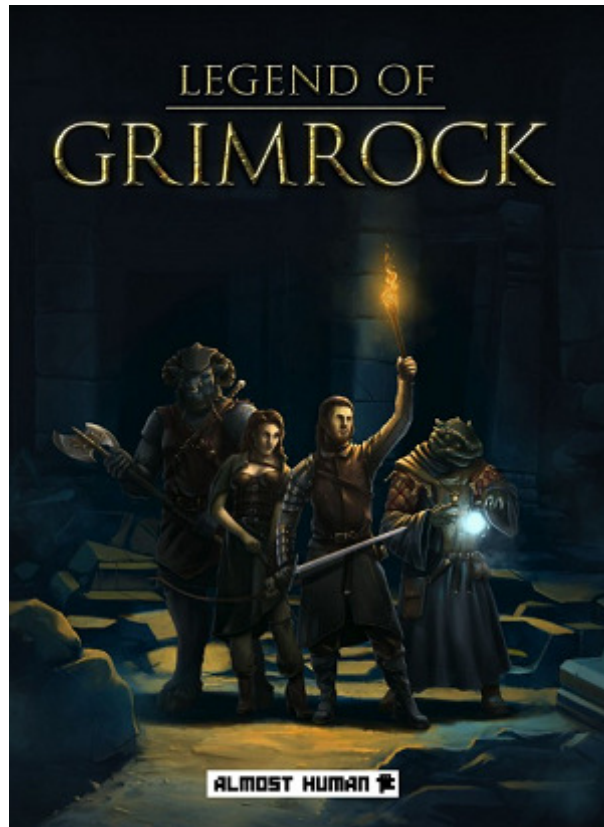
Reviewed by Brett Peacock

I often wonder how many of us remember the great days of the x86 PC and the Commodore Amiga. Back then (between 1986 & 1996) games were smallish (usually under 5 MB!) in size and the graphics were...well, simple, usually. But, by golly, they were often fun! Much more fun than many of the fancy games we have inflicted upon us today. (Dross like 'Avernum' and 'Hack, Slash, Loot', and the endless litany of 3rd rate Movie/TV tie in games). On the Amiga one of my favourite games was a little (under 1 MB!) game called 'Dungeon Master' and its sequel DM2 'Chaos Strikes Back'. It was a genre called the Dungeon Hack. You took a party of (usually) four adventurers and killed everything in a dungeon until you found the sole exit. Everything was mapped out on a grid and there was no map function. This meant that, among other problems, you could get VERY lost, VERY fast. I found one way around this was to do the 'Hansel and Gretel' thing – leave a trail of discards from entry to exit – on each level as you solved it. Or you could buy a pad of graph paper and manually map the place yourself. (That was FUN! Hint: Map the level AFTER you kill everything on it, not before!! That before method leads to sudden, heart-stopping DEATH!)

Games like this were some of the renowned classics of the era: Eye of the Beholder 1 (and 2&3), Dungeon Master, Ultima (1 thru X), Black Crypt. But after about 1993 the genre faded away as "real time" RPG's began to appear. The square by square movement of these older games was suddenly seen as "terribly old hat and out of fashion". Not that that stopped me playing EOB right through until 2004/2005 when I finally could no longer get it to work on my modern PC.

At the beginning of April I paid my usual visit to GOG. Com and saw a sale notice on a "Yet to be Released" game, reduced to \$US 11.99 from the standard price of \$US 13.99. HANG ON! \$13.99 for an NEW GAME? Needless to say it piqued my curiosity so I clicked on the link to find out more about "Legend of Grimrock". The first sentence hooked me... do I remember Dungeon Master, indeed! A few short moments later I had paid for the game with my Debit Visa. Total cost in \$NZ – 14.90. On April 11th (release day!) I downloaded the game... all 500 odd MB of it. Less than 1 CD's worth of download! (It is also available from the developer's website and on Steam) I can safely assure you it's about the best \$NZ14.90 you will spend on any game this year. This game ROCKS! They have taken everything that made the old games great, and enhanced them, and they made the graphics Soar! This dungeon is genuinely creepy and scary... and big... and fraught with evil puzzles, not to mention a healthily scary array of monsters and enemies. You will do a lot less of the hacking and a great deal more of the grey matter thinking in this game. The puzzles are both tricky and very tricky. And some are downright Evil! But that's not to say there is not enough hacking... there is plenty of both!

The newest version of "L.o.G.(1.4) now includes the ability to import 128x128 pixel Targa format bitmaps so you can customize your characters beyond the portraits given. If you already own the game a new D/L is gratis. Coming soon is a Level/Content Editor and it looks as if the game is designed for Aftermarket add-ins. All of



which is a huge plus in the value column.

From all this you will gather that I like this game. Which is true. I admit I had a predisposition to liking the game BUT I have been disappointed by promising games in the past, games I should have liked, but did not. I am glad to report that I was rather happy to see just what a good job they have made of this, they have a deep and clear understanding of WHY these games were so popular and what they needed to change and why, and most importantly, HOW to change it for the better.

Which is why this game "Legend of Grimrock" has turned out so fantastic! Almost Human is a Finnish Software company and a very small one. They have crafted a stunning debut release and one that will certainly put their next game under a microscope. But for now, you can buy with confidence. After all, in two weeks they made back over twenty times the 'around 300,000 Euros development cost' which has set some kind of a record in the Gaming industry. People would not buy it if it wasn't good, especially if it's not trading off name recognition or a media tie-in.

There are a few quibbles about some things in the game, but that is all they are, minor, very minor quibbles. The good parts outweigh them heavily. For example you won't starve to death, but managing your food is VERY important. If your character is starving he will NOT HEAL when sleeping and he does 50% less damage in a fight! Watch the hunger bar on your character screens, when it goes red, Feed the fella!

Best moment: Discovering the very first Monster you encounter is.... A Giant Snail!

Worst moment: Discovering that the odd clicking sound is claws on stone (which belong to Very Large, Tough, Poisonous Spiders. And they tend to hunt in Packs!)

Rating: 9 /10 Not perfection , but a close shave of it.

(That said, I gave up on the second level when one of the puzzles simply refused to solve on my laptop. So, sorry Brett, I won't be buying it—Ed.)

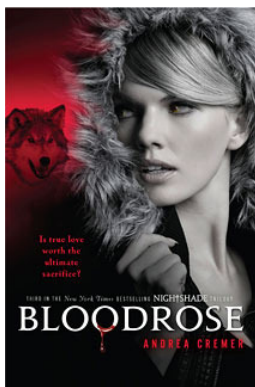
R E V I E W S

PC Game
Review by
Brett
Peacock

**Bloodrose –
Nightshade Book 3**

by Andrea Cremer
Published by Atom
Supplied by Hachette
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth
The Seekers and the Nightshades have to find the rest of the holy weapons, hidden at various sites and guarded by Guardians, bears, bats, and firewolves, and hidden traps. Then there was an epic battle between the two sides, with some new fighters recruited for the good guys.

Calla was still annoying, too indecisive and she strung her two love interests along. I felt Cremer killed off a major character so Calla didn't have to choose. I liked this book a lot more than the previous book in the trilogy. There was a lot of action and the plot moved quickly. I really enjoyed the unexpected final ending. It was a new concept for werewolf books.



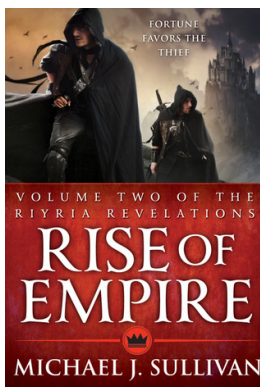
**Rise of empire -
Riyria Revelations Book 2**

by Michael J Sullivan
Published by Orbit
Supplied by Hachette
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth
Royce and Hadrian are back! Riyria perform a last job before Hadrian decides to retire and take a new path. Hadrian sets out to find the Heir of Novron and takes Royce with him, having thrilling adventures along the way. We met new characters, get reacquainted with old ones, see where they each grew up, and undertake a wild ride. The author isn't afraid to kill characters off either.

There are two stories in this book. Nyphron Rising shows the rising power of the church and the ordinary people fighting against the New Empire. Princess Arista hires Riyria to escort her to meet with the rebel leader and along the way we find out how Hadrian learnt his amazing fighting skills and see where Royce grew up. The Emerald Storm takes place in the jungle (with cannibals everywhere), on the ocean in a sailing ship (lots of pirates), and in the Imperial Palace (intrigue, magic, hidden rooms).

The stories are action packed and full of lots of action, as Riyria battle everything from religious zealots to goblins. There is also complexity with castle intrigue, court politics, secrets, threats and traitors. You never know who to trust or can anticipate what's happening next. The relationship between Hadrian and Royce is constant and enjoyable and fun, after some of the backbiting and betrayals of others.

This book can be read as a standalone; a brief explanation of previous events is given and there is a helpful glossary. I recommend you read Thief of Swords first though, mainly because it's such a fun read. The last few pages had a 'didn't see THAT coming' revelation. The Riyria Revelations series is a must read. You won't be disappointed.



Elves: Rise of the TaiGethen

by James Barclay
Published by Gollancz
Supplied by Hachette New Zealand
Reviewed by Cassie Craig

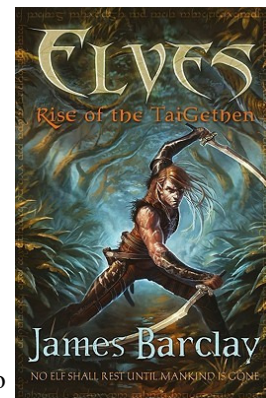
Elves: Rise of the TaiGethen is book two of the series *Elves*. It is an action-packed novel that grabs the reader's attention from beginning to end. The story follows two elves, Auum and Takaar, who both have two very different ideas about how to free the enslaved elf population of Calaius from man.

This story has mankind in ownership of powerful magic and the elves seem powerless against it. Quite different from how we normally perceive the elven kind. Auum is determined to fight for elven freedom with those of his TaiGethen cell. He and sets off to the old Elven capital to gather his people to war. Meanwhile Takaar seems to be a traitor and in cahoots with mankind.

Elves have been enslaved for 150 years and according to man they are ready to be slaughtered and exterminated from the land. Here we see the enemy typically underestimate their opponent. Man marches to finally conquer all elves with flying mages and sheer force of numbers, elves are viewed in their eyes as nothing more than animals.

Auum races to beat man to the last bastion of hope where elves are still free. A new breed of elves emerges from the forest called ClawBound. These ClawBound elves have changed since their brethren have been enslaved and now they have developed special powers with panthers that their predecessors never had. The ClawBound and Auum's TaiGethen make lightning attacks on man's army. Meanwhile Takaar gathers devotees to be part of his new magical arts

James Barclay is able to plunge the reader into a new universe and the story gallops fast paced the entire novel. This novel is exciting to read and not boring at all.

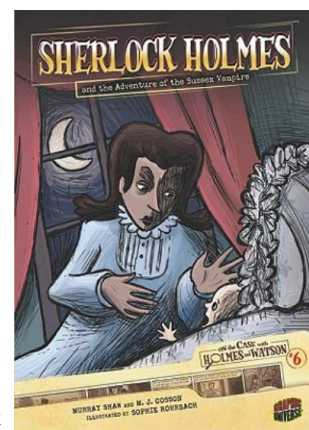


**Sherlock Holmes and
the Adventure of the
Sussex Vampire**
(On the Case with Holmes
and Watson)

by Sophie Rohrbach
(Illustrated by) and Sir Arthur
Conan Doyle
Reviewed by Maree Sole

When my students spotted this graphic novel, they assumed it was a retelling of the stories, ala the fantastic Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss series,

Sherlock, and set in modern day. However they were just as happy to read this graphic novelisation of one of the most famous and creepy cases Sherlock Holmes tackled. Has a vampire attacked a baby in the wilds of Sussex? What is the importance of the sick dog and the collection of South American Indian weapons? Read on, all will be revealed by Sherlock Holmes in his inimitable style. Sadly no Benedict Cumberbatch or Martin Freeman.



Paranormalacy

by Kiersten White

Reviewed by Maree Sole

Evie is a one of a kind teen who would love to be, you guessed it, normal. But she doesn't quibble too much, she has a job that only she can do. Star of the IPCA (International Paranormal Containment Agency) her job is to hunt and contain paranormals as she is the only one who can see through any glamour. But then paranormals start dying, something is very wrong, she starts to be aware of the cracks behind the agency's benevolent façade. Her faerie would-be boyfriend, Reth, has a dark agenda and darker prophecy and nothing is as it seems, not even Evie. So much for normal.

Her world view changes radically and old friends are now suspect. Evie is funny, sassy and out of her depth; thankfully there is still her favourite soap opera and new, smoking hot, shape-changing boyfriend, Lend, to help. Part one of a series with a smart, strong, teenage protagonist.

Just when you think you have it sorted something else gets thrown into the mix. There is another two books in the series so far and yes, they are talking movie.



generally low, magic items and creatures are rare and valuable. This is to be expected in a historical fantasy. What was not expected was the post-modern attitudes of some of the characters, to the extent that it sometimes felt very much like another contemporary urban fantasy with a Renaissance setting tacked on.

The plot (and the plotting) centres on Lady Giulietta, cousin to the addle-brained Marco, Duke of Venice, and Venice's most eligible widow. Tycho loves her, but the Regents, Duchess Alexa and Prince Alonzo want her to marry one or other of the imperial Princes – who come calling, along with one's army and the other's navy, in the latter third of the book. Here both the pace and the action accelerated, and it became a whole lot more fun to read. I really enjoyed the book's climatic scenes, and that made the process of getting there almost worthwhile. So, mixed feelings from me about this one, and an assurance that if you like dark renaissance fantasy with a possibility of vampires, you'll probably enjoy this series immensely.

The Outcast Blade

by Jon Courtenay Grimwood

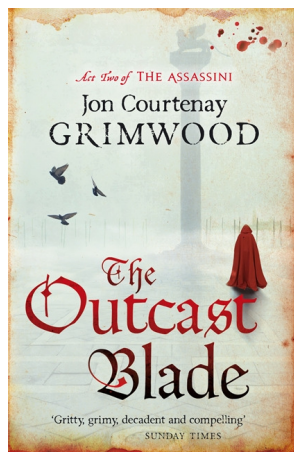
Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hachette

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

I have to say that I found this novel rather heavy going, especially near the beginning. Maybe it's that I hadn't read the preceding volume (I thought I had, but that was a different series with a similar setting). Or perhaps it was the complexity of the plotting, in both senses of the word. I was certainly having trouble keeping up with who was doing what to whom and why. Or it was simply that I really find it difficult to sympathise with vampiric monsters as heroes, and all the more so because it wasn't obvious in the blurb. Dare I say that I felt a bit suckered? Lastly, I think the editing needed a bit of help – some sentences simply didn't make sense.

So what do we have here? We have a dark and Machiavellian fantasy, set in Renaissance Venice, caught as it was in the real world between the opposing forces of the Holy Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire. That said, most of the characters are entirely fictitious, with the exception of the three Emperors and their progeny (and the real Byzantine Emperor in 1408 was John VII Palaiologos, not John V Palaiologos). The major deviation from reality is however, in the fantasy elements. This includes characters such as Tycho, who is Fallen and may or may not be a vampire; Rosalyn who almost certainly is; the *krieghund* who are essentially werewolves; and assorted magic users. Magic levels are



Bitterblue

by Kristin Cashore

Published by Orbit

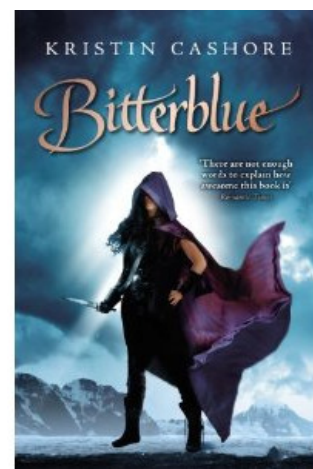
Supplied by Hachette

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Given the recommendations printed on the covers of this novel one might expect this to be the great YA fantasy of the decade... but somehow, it wasn't. Not that it was a bad book, it just failed to meet those excessively high expectations. "Bitterblue" is certainly an unusual take in

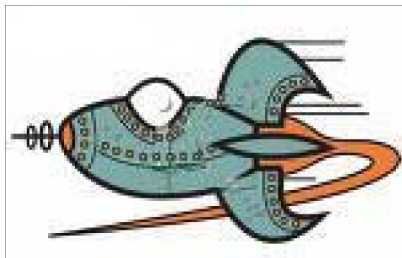
fantasy in that it takes place *after* the evil overlord has been defeated. The young queen Bitterblue comes to realise that there is still much wrong in her realm, that she is being lied to on many levels, that there is much that is broken and requires healing. So she sets about putting things right, beginning by making nightly forays into the city in disguise, so as to find out the truth about her people. And as it turns out, much of that truth is not pretty – that evil overlord was among other things, a psychopathic serial killer, with mind powers that allowed him to lie and be believed.

This is not high fantasy by any means. There is no magic here, and no monsters other than the human ones. No gods, either, or religion. Instead of magic, there are graces, psionic talents ranging from fighting prowess to mind reading. It's also full of modern sensibilities, but retaining an essentially medieval level of technology. And that's part of my problem with Cashore's world – the details aren't right. Yes, she's really good at interpersonal relationships, but she hasn't thought through the implications of low technology for her people. You can get away with it, if you have enough magic, but that isn't the case here. Her geography also needs work, and that's something you can't fix when you're on the third book. The book is too long for its plot, and the climax is too much of a "deus ex montis". So, engaging characters, and an interesting plot line, but flawed. Not bad, but hardly "awesome".



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



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This Month:

BOOK	June 25th (Venue to be announced)
SPACE	July 6th (Venue to be announced)
TRANSIT OF VENUS	June 6th Viewing at Chez Smith 1pm onwards.
DOS	Saturday June 9th at 7:30pm "Puss in Boots" at Chez Smith.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 20 June, 2012, 7:30pm
Auckland Horticultural Centre,
990 Great North Road,
Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

June 1-4th 2012 UnCONventional 2012
33rd New Zealand National SF Convention
www.unconventional.sf.org.nz