



Steampunk Lady at Armageddon 2012
(Photo by Keith Smith.)

Issue XXXII - October 2012

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Musings from Under the Mountain

Whatever on Earth has happened to Science Fiction on TV? It's almost all on Earth—and there is the problem! What ever happened to the spaceships, to the last frontier, to other worlds...?

The death of Michael O'Hare, who played Commander Jeffrey Sinclair on "Babylon 5" has brought back to mind the happy days of the 1990's when "Babylon 5" competed with "Star Trek: DS9", "Star Trek: Voyager" and later, "Stargate SG-1" for our viewing pleasure. (The fact that TV2 buried B5 in the wasteland of Saturday afternoon wasn't relevant—they were so far behind that by the time episodes were screened, we'd already seen them all multiple times).

And what do we have now? We have "Doctor Who" which has its moments of outer space excellence, but even I have to admit that many of the most memorable episodes are historical—like the recent "A Town called Mercy". We have "Warehouse 13" which is really doesn't qualify as science fiction when you think about it. The idea that objects can acquire supernatural power through their historical importance is pure fantasy, let's admit it. The same sort of problem applies to pretty well the whole superhero genre which takes out "Alphas" and "Misfits". We have had "Eureka" which had occasional real SF moments—but is firmly set somewhere in the USA. Series like "True Blood", "Lost Girl", "Grimm", "Once Upon a Time" and "Being Human" whatever their merits (or lack thereof) are essentially urban fantasy. "Game of Thrones" is fantasy, pure and simple. Which doesn't leave much...

Now, after a bit of trawling the internet, I can tell you that there is perhaps some hope. There are a number of interesting possibilities in Syfy's 2013 maybe bucket. They've ordered a pilot for a series called "High Moon" based on John Christopher's "The Lotus Caves". They're working on a post-apocalyptic series called "Defiance" which looks promisingly different. They're also proposing two proper space operas, a militaristic one called "Defender", and another called "Clandestine" with more of a "Firefly" tone. Most remarkable of all, it appears that they've ordered a script for a proposed reboot of "Blake's 7". Yes, really. Now whether or not this is a good thing, only time will tell. Personally, I didn't like what they did to "Battlestar Galactica", but I'm well aware that a lot of you disagree with me there. I'm just wondering who they'll get to play Avon! Oh... and Vila!

Jacqui, Editor

The View from the Comfy Chair

It may sometimes seem that I'm always complaining about the weather – a rather futile exercise I know – but when a lot of activities that I do rely on good weather, and there hasn't been any – or not much, it can get a bit frustrating.

Case in point, the Astronomical Society's planned dark sky evening was cancelled again because of bad weather. Last time we were able to have one was January last year. Makes me wonder if human influence on the climate is causing all these wet and cloudy skies that seem to be the norm lately.

I've had a go at finishing the path between the two gardens but I'm now thinking I should get the actual patio done professionally as it's meant to be flat and level with flagstones on top. I'll dig it, but let the experts pour it. The reason it needs to be flat and level, especially in the far left corner, is that is where the telescope is going to be set up. Yes, I've now got a second hand 127mm Mak-Cass telescope with motor drive and GOTO capability. In order to be able to track an object for a long period of time, the telescope needs to be as level as possible. I've also had my el-cheapo scope collimated so all the optics line up. Now all I need is a decent mount for it. It'll be great for solar system and bright Deep Sky Objects (DSO) pictures.

It is only few days before we head over to Australia on order to catch the total Solar Eclipse on the 14th. Should be an interesting trip and I hope to come back with several memory cards worth.

We're not going to be here for the next Club meeting, so it's up to the rest of the club if you want to have a meeting at the usual place, or at someone's house or not at all. We have given the key to Alan, so see him if you want to go ahead. Please let us know if you have any ideas for Club events etc.

See you all when we get back,

Keith, Stella Nova President

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I spent all of last Saturday at Armageddon. My main intention was to photograph the costumes and check the stands. Getting in was interesting, as there was a very long line that snaked around the parking area in several loops. Thank goodness it wasn't raining, or the sun beating down, otherwise it would have been really unbearable. Fortunately the line was moving quite fast so it was only about an hour later that I was inside. (This need not have happened—it's more efficient to get people to book on line, but you don't do that by making it MORE expensive to do so—Ed.).

It was hot and crowded inside, and I regretted that I had forgotten to bring a water bottle. But the costumes I saw made the whole thing worth it. There were also a lot of interesting things on sale, but I was trying to save money for Australia. (Used to be that one could get some bargains at Armageddon, but it seems that this is no longer the case. That, the absence of interesting guests, the lack of a proper timetable on the website, and the fact that I had a headache, meant that I choose to stay home this year—Ed.)



ARMAGEDDON 2012

Text and Photos by Keith Smith

The Sky at Night – November 2012

By the time you read this, we'll be on the way to Cairns in Australia to witness a total solar eclipse. So why do we have to travel? Because the shadow of the moon, as the earth rotates under it, makes a rather narrow track across the earth's surface. This time the path of totality passes north of New Zealand and reaches Australia over Cairns before continuing inland over the Northern Territories and across the Gulf of Carpentaria. A partial eclipse will be visible over most of New Zealand with maximum eclipse (80% in Auckland, less further south) at around 10:30 am on November 14th.



We're actually lucky on this planet that the apparent sizes of the sun and moon are roughly the same, an angular diameter of half a degree. This means that the disc of the moon just fits over the solar disk. So we should be able to easily see prominences and the solar corona during this eclipse. Sometimes, however, because of the elliptical nature of the moon's orbit, the moon's disk at its farthest, doesn't fit over the solar disk so what we get is an annular eclipse (annular being Latin for ring) as was the case with the earlier solar eclipse this year over Japan and the Western USA.

We're also lucky to be in the right time in the earth's history. Millions of years ago the moon was closer to the earth so would have looked much larger and, as it moves further away, in millions of years, all eclipses will be annular. As far as I'm aware, no other planet in the solar system has a moon at the right size and distance to have solar eclipses like ours. Solar eclipses can only occur when the sun, moon and earth line up. One would think this would happen at every new moon but, because the moon's orbit is tilted in respect to the earth's orbit, the moon will mostly pass over or under the sun. It is only when a new moon occurs very close to where the planes of the orbits intersect is when we get an eclipse. It is also because that the two bodies match in apparent size is why the path of totality is so narrow. So, if you want to see an eclipse then you have to go to it, otherwise you may have a very long wait for one to come to you.

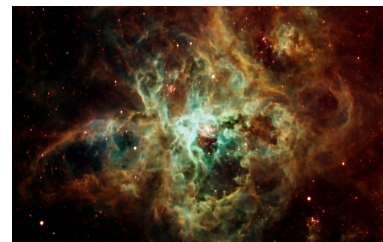
Fortunately the same is not true of lunar eclipses, as will occur on the night of the 29th. These can be seen from any point on the earth that faces the moon at the time.

Again, there needs to be a line up but, this time, the moon is traversing the earth's own shadow. The earth's shadow is larger than the moon's disk so lunar eclipses last longer, around an hour for a total lunar eclipse as compared to a few minutes for a total solar eclipse. The moon doesn't disappear but can turn an orange-red colour as the light of sunsets and sunrises are refracted by the earth's atmosphere onto the moon.



The other thing I wanted to talk about this month is the two Magellanic Clouds (as named by Magellan during his circumnavigation of the earth. They may look like clouds to the naked eye, but are actually irregular dwarf galaxies that are satellite galaxies to our own. The LMC is twice the size of the SMC (14,000 lightyears and 7,000 lightyears in diameter respectively) and is also closer, being 160,000 lightyears away, whereas the SMC is 200,000 lightyears away. They were actually known to the ancient Persians as they were visible from the southern points of Arabia but weren't known to the Europeans until the end of the 15th century.

Both clouds contain many interesting objects. The LMC also hosted the 1987 supernova (1987a) which has been the brightest observed in four centuries. It was visible to the naked eye and I remember pointing it out to my relations one night in our backyard. The Tarantula Nebula is also in the LMC and both clouds contain several clusters and other patches of nebulosity.



Jupiter becomes visible in the evening sky at about mid evening. Mars is very low in the west at sunset while Venus is visible low in the east at sunrise. The other three visible planets are too close to the sun to be seen. Venus and Mars have disappeared from view by December, but Saturn starts to appear in the morning sky. Mercury starts to appear in the evening sky in late November while Jupiter is in opposition on December 3rd.

Next month: The Birds of the Southern Sky.

Phases of the Moon:

Last Quarter—7th November
New Moon—14th November
First Quarter—21st October
Full Moon—29th October.

Obituaries

September 14

Winston Rekert, 63, Canadian character actor known to fans as the Tok'ra Cordesh in "Stargate SG-1", as Priest in "Battlestar Galactica", and Obal Ferris "Caprica". He was based in Vancouver, apparently...



September 22

Irving Adler, (aged 99), American author, mathematician, and scientist who wrote a book in 1958, called "The New Mathematics", which was important in the "New Maths" curriculum reform movement (that finally reached New Zealand in 1966-67 where I was on the receiving end—number bases and set theory in primary school, excellent fun!).



September 25

Andy Williams, (aged 84), American singer and entertainer, hosted The Andy Williams Show, a TV variety show, from 1962 to 1971, as well as numerous television specials. He is closely identified with Henry Mancini song "Moon River".

September 27

Herbert Lom, 95,

Czech-born British character actor, who played many parts, but was best known for his portrayal of Chief Inspector Charles Dreyfus, Inspector Clouseau's long-suffering superior in several of Blake Edwards's Pink Panther films.



September 28

Michael O'Hare (aged 60) American actor, famous for playing Commander Jeffrey Sinclair in the science fiction television series "Babylon 5". "Life's full of mysteries. Consider this one of them..." (Episode 1.2 "Soul-Hunter")



October 3

Robert F. Christy, (aged 96), American theoretical physicist and astrophysicist, one of the last surviving people to have worked first-hand on the Manhattan Project. He is generally credited with the insight that a solid sub-critical mass of plutonium could be explosively compressed into supercriticality.

October 8

Ken Sansom, (aged 85), American voice actor best known as the voice of Rabbit

in multiple Disney "Winnie the Pooh" movies.

October 14

Marc Swayze, (aged 99), American comic book artist from 1941 to 1953 for Fawcett Comics of New York City. He is best known for his work on Captain Marvel and the Marvel Family during the Golden Age of comic books for Fawcett Comics. He was the co-creator of Mary Marvel.

October 17

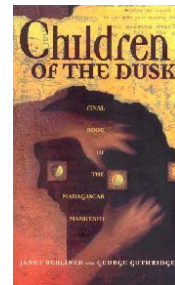
Stanford R. Ovshinsky, (aged 89), American inventor and scientist, granted well over 400 patents over fifty years, mostly in the areas of energy and information. Among the most prominent are: an environmentally friendly nickel-metal hydride battery, continuous web multi-junction flexible thin-film solar energy laminates and panels; flat screen liquid crystal displays; re-writable CD and DVD discs; hydrogen fuel cells; and non-volatile phase-change memory. He was big on finding alternatives to fossil fuels, and has been described as a "modern-day Edison".

October 22

Russell Means, (aged 72), American Native rights activist and actor - he was the voice of the title character's father, Chief Powhatan in Disney's "Pocahontas".

October 24

Janet Berliner, (aged 73), South African-born American science fiction author. She won the Bram Stoker Award in 1997 for "Children of the Dusk", and served as president of the Horror Writers Association from 1997 to 1998.



It Doesn't Seem Unhappy to be 30 (-;

The 30th birthday of the emoticon :-;) came and went with little fanfare. The icon was suggested by a computer scientist, Carnegie Mellon University Prof. Scott Fahlman, to denote a joke in online posts. He made the suggestion, along with :-(for serious items, to a group of students on 19 September 1982.

"Sometimes someone would say something meant to be sarcastic and others wouldn't get the joke," Fahlman says of his inspiration, "and somebody would respond angrily and there would be a long argument [which] went on for weeks and weeks sometimes."

The emoticon, he thought, would avoid such miscommunication. "I noticed within a few days that people around Carnegie Mellon were using it in their own emails. I noticed within a couple of weeks it had made it across the very primitive network we had in those days to other schools."

And then, to the world: those first two, and their many variants, are now part of the online vernacular. But Fahlman doesn't want to be remembered for inventing the emoticon. He says he would rather be remembered for his computer science research.

Uncorked

by Broderick Wells

Well, the essay marking proved to be less stressful than I thought. Having been given a bunch of sample essays by the course co-ordinator to assess, I turned out to have a similar marking schedule to him. This was a considerable relief. I also discovered a nice, simple technique for assessing the quality of the offerings – read it, grade it, then justify the grade. So much easier than being absolutely meticulous over every point developed, works cited, blah blah blah. And a couple of students got an A+ from me, though one of them got degraded to an A for forgetting the bibliography.

However, my work never seems to end, as the poor dears will have to sit an exam, which I, with the other tutors, and the course co-ordinators, have to mark. However, I've had some advanced training in cryptography and shouldn't be fazed by their rushed handwriting. I mean, they're not composing the essays in a poorly lit trench during an artillery bombardment. Neither are they using blunt pencils, or at least, I hope not. But the dear wee things will be without their digital umbilicals for two hours. That's right; mobile phones must be switched off during the exam. How will they cope?

Meanwhile, work on the thesis has been on a bit of a go-slow. I'm crawling through the documents at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, and all the books and articles I can find useful at the University library (there are only so many books on the horrors of war that can be read before the idea goes stale). I now have to give my supervisor 3000 words on what the Kiwi soldiers did on their holidays by next Monday. Mercifully, I have a bit more licence than Michelangelo did in the famous Monty Python sketch. I might be able to sneak in the kangaroo. Or a tin band.

On the SF/Fantasy front, nothing too exciting has been happening. Because of the ridiculous hours I work, and the pathetic programming on TV, I've not been following too much on the idiot box. Never mind MySky – there's beggar all too watch. I've not followed the latest incarnation of **Dr Who**, but I do hope someone starts screening the latest series of **Red Dwarf**. It's about time we found out what really happened to Rimmer, Lister, the Cat, Kryton and Kochanski. I mean, all those nanobots should've been able to reconstruct Red Dwarf again, shouldn't they?

Quiz: Babylon 5

This month's quiz is dedicated to the memory of the late Michael O'Hare who played Jeffrey Sinclair in the TV series **Babylon 5**.



- Where was Sinclair born?
 - Arisia Mining Colony
 - Earth
 - Mars Colony
 - Vega Colony

- Jeffrey Sinclair was educated by members of which religious group?
 - Buddhists.
 - Foundationists.
 - Jesuits.
 - Orthodox Jews.
- When Sinclair fought on the Battle of the Line, what was the name of the squadron he led?
 - Alpha
 - Beta
 - Black Omega
 - Zeta
- What rank did Jeffrey Sinclair hold during the first season of "Babylon 5"?
 - Captain
 - Commander
 - Commodore
 - Colonel
- In 'The Gathering', what does the Minbari assassin say to Sinclair before killing himself?
 - "There is a hole in your head".
 - "There is a hole in your heart".
 - "There is a hole in your mind".
 - "There is a hole in your security".
- In 'Signs and Portents', what does the Centauri prophetess Lady Ladira show Sinclair before she leaves?
 - Babylon 5 exploding.
 - The Eye of Morden.
 - Londo cheating at cards.
 - The Shadow ship on Mars.
- Sinclair sometimes was given orders which conflicted with his personal ethics. Which of these courses of action did Sinclair NOT take to deal with orders he did not like?
 - Leading a squadron of Starfuries on a mission to avoid an Advisory Council meeting
 - Negotiating a deal with a rogue telepath to allow him off the station
 - Interpreting a Senate resolution literally to allow him to redistribute money from the station's military budget
 - Running a level 6 maintenance check on all Babylon 5 communications channels.
- In the episode "Chrysalis", Sinclair proposes marriage to a woman he first met when she was a cadet and he was a flight instructor at Earthforce Academy. Who was she?
 - Catherine Sakai
 - Lyta Alexander
 - Susan Ivanova
 - Talia Winters
- After leaving Babylon 5, Sinclair became leader of the Rangers. What title did he take?
 - Denn'Bok
 - Entil'Zha
 - Satai
 - Z'ha'dum
- What is the ultimate fate of Jeffrey Sinclair?
 - He becomes Earth ambassador to the Centauri
 - He becomes president of the Earth Alliance
 - He destroys Babylon 5
 - He goes back in time and becomes the Minbari prophet Valen

Directed by Eric Darnell, Tom McGrath,
Conrad Vernon
Produced by Mireille Soria, Mark Swift
Written by Eric Darnell & Noah Baumbach
Based on Characters created by
Eric Darnell & Tom McGrath
Starring Ben Stiller, Chris Rock
David Schwimmer
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

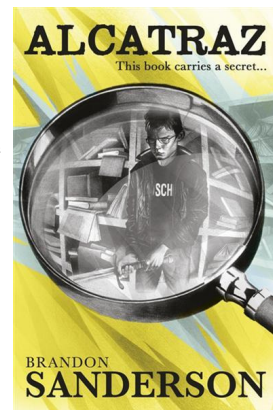
Normally we'd be avoiding the third movie in a series, but we were scraping the bottom of the barrel this holidays—it was "Madagascar 3" or "Hotel Transylvania" and the latter had very iffy reviews. Whereas the critics were saying that this is the best Madagascar movie yet. I'm not entirely sure about that, but it certainly does have one of the most memorable villains of any cartoon movie I can remember, in the totally manic, totally obsessed Monaco Animal Control officer Captain Chantel DuBois—who wants Alex's head for her collection and is determined to get it. But I get ahead of myself. The movie begins with Alex and company in Africa, realising that they really are home sick for New York. They decide to get the penguins to fly them home—but they're in Monte Carlo. So they go to the casino, and chaos ensues. Enter Captain DuBois and a big chase scene, leading to a narrow escape on the penguins' airplane—which crashes in a railway yard. The animals blag their way aboard a circus train, and that's when I really should stop giving away the plot. The trick with this sort of movie is to combine plenty of colour and slapstick action to amuse the smallest of children with clever wit and hidden humour for the adults, which "Madagascar 3" does in spades. Though I have to say that it's embarrassing when I laugh out loud at a pun that nobody else in the cinema gets.... (look out for the name of the cargo ship that delivers the animals to New York).



There are some of the most extreme examples of cartoon physics I've ever seen in this movie, at least one of which (Vitaly's ability to jump through ever smaller rings) is integral to the story. The new characters are well-realised and add both pathos (Vitaly the tiger) and humour (Sonya the bear). There's even a love interest for Alex (and at least she's in the same genus). There are multiple morals—that the past is rarely as glorious you remember it; that once you have tasted freedom, you can't go back to captivity; that overcoming your fears leads to success. It's all good fun, if a bit overdone, especially in the colour palette

The Complete Alcatraz

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



I can pretty well guarantee three kinds of reaction to Alcatraz Smedry. There will be those who find him incredibly irritating to the point of throwing the book across the room; those who find him uproariously funny, and will be totally unable to put the book down; and those who find him alternately hilarious and infuriating. I was one of the latter. Some passages, even taken out of context, were so funny that they just had to be shared with the nearest person (generally my husband, since I do much of my reading in bed). And sometimes it got just plain annoying. The problem is that Alcatraz insists on frequent asides, at the beginning of almost every chapter and frequently throughout. While this is in keeping with the pseudo-autobiographical style the novels are written in, they do interrupt the narrative. Intentionally. Now, these asides are often humorous, and sometimes remarkably apt, but I can understand if some readers find the constant interjections intolerable.

Sanderson is writing in the persona of one Alcatraz Smedry, who a) wears glasses, b) is thirteen-years-old, c) has secret powers, and d) belongs to a social order which is independent of the rest of humanity, yet has been growing up among us. If this reminds anyone of Harry Potter then I suspect it's intentional. Alcatraz Smedry is actually a lord of the Free Kingdoms – who secretly share the Earth with those of us who live in the Hushlands, dominated and misled by multiple conspiracies of evil Librarians. But he's been fostered somewhere in the USA. Several somewheres, in fact, as his Smedry talent for breaking anything and everything makes him somewhat difficult to live with. The four novels collected in "The Complete Alcatraz" follow the adventures of Alcatraz Smedry as he battles various factions of Librarians – usually for all the wrong reasons. I suspect that the same sort of young people that enjoyed the Harry Potter novels would most likely enjoy (and benefit from as a sort of literary vaccine) the collected memoirs of Alcatraz Smedry – as will anyone with an appropriately warped sense of humour, especially those of the librarian persuasion. !

Bitter Seeds

by Ian Tregillis

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hachette New Zealand

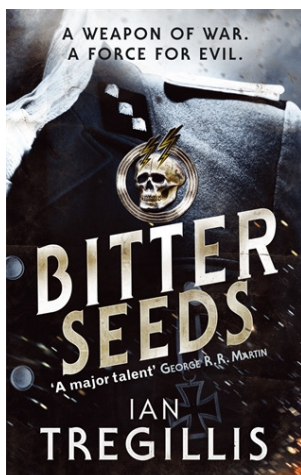
Reviewed by Stephen Litten

A remote farm in post-WWI Germany receives abandoned children. It is run by Doktor von Westarp, a man exploring new science. Three Gypsy children are brought in one autumn day, but only two survive the first day.

Meanwhile, in London, a convalescent war veteran spots some children pillaging his garden. One shows spirit when he confronts them. Enter heroes and villains. Fast forward to the Spanish Civil War, and the Nazis are road testing their latest experimental weapon: precursors of Nazi Supermen. But one of the Nazi advisors is having doubts. Our heroes and villains re-appear.

Tregillis has set up an interesting alternate history: Nazi Supermen. To balance the equation, the British have witches. The main protagonists are a motley bunch. Ray Marsh is an action hero, but he seems a little out of place. He is assisted by one of his few friends, Will Beauclerk, and both work for John Stephenson, the war veteran from scene two. Klaus and Gretel are the orphans from scene one, modified by von Westarp to pass through matter and be precognitive respectively, though Gretel's precognition is not always on. Technology is required to harness their talents, indeed to even manifest them.

Tregillis has written a good story and the inside of the book assures me that it is the first of a trilogy. Being an alternate history, Tregillis has felt free to play with certain aspects and actions of the early part of WWII. Some of this was a little jarring. But he was writing for dramatic effect, not truth. But all stories hang on the actions of the main characters, and some of Tregillis's characters just didn't seem to be right. I found it interesting that Marsh was invariably Marsh, never Ray, but Beauclerk was always Will and never Beauclerk. An important psychological difference and I felt greater connection to Will than Marsh. On the other side, Klaus and Gretel obviously have a surname, but I'm damned if I learnt it. Of all the characters, Gretel is the most



interesting perhaps because she is the most enigmatic. Certainly the scenes she was in were always the most interesting.

The book ends with the cliff-hanger for book two, "The Coldest War". I'm not giving anything away by saying the Red Army has captured Berlin. It promises to be an intriguing book, provided the politics isn't clumsy. "Bitter Seeds" is a good read, but not necessarily to everyone's taste. If you like Alistair MacLean and diesel punk, this may be the book for you.

Bronze Summer

by Stephen Baxter

Published by Gollancz

Supplied by Hatchett

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Now, I'll admit that I cheated. I borrowed a copy of "Stone Spring" from the library to read first and get some of the background before reading "Bronze Summer" as it is the second book of the trilogy. Now, while it did give some setting and context, it wasn't essential as the three books are set millennia apart, and have entirely separate casts of characters.

The "Northland" trilogy is an unusual take on alternate history in that the turning point is so far back that we are actually talking alternate pre-history. "Stone Spring" is set deep in the Mesolithic, when the ice caps are melting and the seas rising, threatening Etxelur, the drowned lands beneath the North Sea that archaeologists know as Doggerland. Baxter brings a character all the way from ancient Jericho to introduce new building techniques—featuring the humble brick—and those skills are used to construct a wall to hold back the sea.

Which brings us to "Bronze Summer". It's now the Bronze Age, around 1159 BC, and everything is about to go to custard with the eruption of one of the more notorious Icelandic volcanoes, Hekla a.k.a. the Hood. The Greeks have demolished Troy—and our primary villain is an obsessive Trojan who finds his way to Etxelur. Our heroine is Miliqa, daughter of the Annid of Annids, matriarch of Etxelur—who was thought to have died in a hunting accident. But she was assassinated, an iron arrowhead found in her chest. Miliqa must find out who did this, and why... and then she must save the Wall, or Etxelur will perish. The Year of the Fire Mountain is a year without a summer, which means famine, which that leads to war, across the known world. This is not a small-scale story!

Baxter has done his homework, and his altered world is almost perfectly believable. I just had the odd quibble about marching entire armies across Bronze Age Europe in time of famine. Mind you, Alexander the Great got to India...



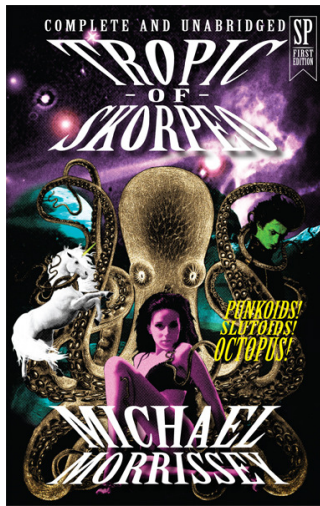
Quiz Answers:

1. C. Mars Colony
2. C. Jesuits
3. A. Alpha
4. B. Commander
5. C. "There is a hole in your mind".
6. A. Babylon 5 exploding.
7. D. Running a level 6 maintenance check on all Babylon 5 communications channels.
8. A. Catherine Sakai
9. B. Entil'Zha
10. D. He goes back in time and becomes the Minbari prophet Valen

Tropic of Skorpeo

by Michael Morrissey
Published by Steam Press
Supplied by Steam Press
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

I have to say that I don't know exactly what to make of this book. Alternately sexy, silly, surreal, sensuous, and satirical, it's like nothing else I've ever read. I'd call it z-grade trash if it wasn't surprisingly well-written, with a remarkable turn of phrase, a fine grasp of language, and a plentitude of puns. "Tropic of Skorpeo" somehow merges "Alice in Wonderland" with the kind of 1950's pulp SF that featured lurid covers adorned with half-naked women being ravished by multi-tentacled monsters, then adds erudite literary satire, and throws in a packet of Pythonesque comic capers.



The plot turns around the adventures of the quadruple-breasted Princess Juraletta of Qwerty and the green-skinned Prince Rhameo of Skorpeo, and their rocky path to romance, harried by Punkoids, Slutoids Sleazoids, not to mention the maleficent machinations of Lord Maledor. It doesn't help that in short order Juraletta is betrothed to the elderly Fissionable Duke, and Rhameo to the "ugliest life form he had yet seen", the Volgogthan princess Gloggwetafug.

Yes, that is a weta in there. And that's far from the only New Zealand reference hiding in Morrissey's strange universe—I noted scarfies and pounamu, and I'm sure there are more. Is this the quintessential New Zealand science fiction novel? If it is, then we are a very strange people! Another one for next year's SJV nominations.

**Tangle Of Need
Psy/Changeling
Book 11**

by Nalini Singh
Published by Gollancz
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth.
Supplied by Hachette

Adria is a Snow Dancer soldier who has returned to the den after the messy end of a long relationship with a less dominant wolf. Riaz is a Snow Dancer lieutenant whose chosen mate, Lisette, is human and in love with her husband. The immediate attraction the two feel toward each other is red hot and sizzling. There are many very steamy scenes that are R18. Adria is not Riaz's mate though. There is some doubt they could ever have a future together.



Adria is afraid to fall in love with Riaz, as his heart belongs to another. The scars his uncomplete mating bond leave begin to heal though, and Riaz works hard to convince Adria he has no more interest in another woman and she is his choice. Then Lisette appears as the liaison for the Changelings with the Human Alliance. Hawk and Sienna have a big role in the book, with their relationship being explored more. Other familiar characters also return; Lucas and Sasha, Vaughn and Faith, Judd and Brenna.

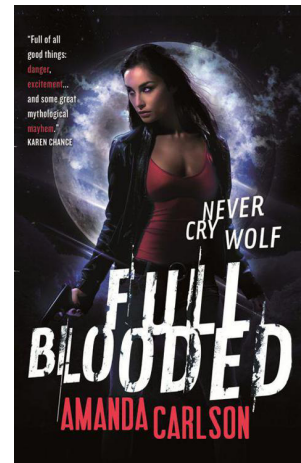
There's a tightly woven plot that raises a lot of questions to be answered later in the series (I hope). I'm really looking forward to finding out more about Kaleb and the breaking of Silence the Psy are experiencing. I also really want to read Vasic's story.

This is not a standalone story, you need to read the other ten Psy-Changeling stories to understand this world, or at least the preceding "Kiss Of Snow", to get a sense of what is happening.

**Full Blooded:
Jessica McClain
Book 1**

by Amanda Carlson
Published by Orbit
Supplied by Hachette
Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Jessica McClain is shouldn't exist, the only female ever born into a werewolf pack. When she was born a prophecy was whispered; she was an instrument of evil and would bring about the destruction of the race. Her life was a series of fight to defend herself growing up, until she escaped and built a new life using a new identity. Now she lives as a human, working as a PI and specializes in supernatural matters. Females can't shift into werewolves so she's relaxed, ignoring the Cain prophecy. Then her Wolf wakes.....



Returning to the pack after her first shift, Jessica has the protection of her father (the alpha) and his inner circle. Other wolves would see her as a threat so news of her shift and different powers are kept quiet. Word leaks out though, and the Cain prophecy rumours are resurrected. Now Jessica is a target and other weres, witches, a goddess, and vampires (scary ones, not the glittering type) are involved in the hunt.

The supporting character were strong and added a lot to the story. The love interest is - wow! - an ancient werecat. He's a mercenary who accepted a contract to gather information on Jessica. I loved this book and was hooked from the start! This book has a little romance, lots of action, and some very hot sex scenes. The first of the fantastic new Jessica McClain series, I can't wait to read the next. The cliff-hanger ending promises more excitement in the next book, "Hot Blooded".

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

Where: Wellington

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

Venue: Quality Hotel,
Upper Cuba Street

Guests of Honour:
Jennifer Fallon

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



Fan Guest of Honour:
Anna Klein

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



Charity:
Wellington Women's Refuge



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This Month:

- BOOK** Monday October 29th
(at Chez Smith)
- SPACE** Friday November 2nd at 7:30 pm
(at Maree's)
- Friday December 7th at Steve's
- Boxing Day at Maree's

Next Meeting:

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



Upcoming Events:

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