

NOVEMBER

Issue XX - Sept 2011

Musings from Under the Mountain

Ouch!
Now I've got that off my chest (or rather my poor sore tummy) on with the rest of the article—and if you're wondering what that was about, this time last week your editor was trying to escape from Middlemore Hospital following surgery to correct an abdominal hernia that had been plaguing me for years.

Hospitals are strange places. The permanent denizens of the place—doctors, nurses, orderlies, even the cleaners—are generally very nice people who are doing their best to help others. The temporary visitors—patients like me—are all sorts. Most behave in a civilised fashion, but some just can't deal with it. There was a woman in a room across the hall from me who clearly couldn't cope, and was swearing her head off, until somebody sedated her. By contrast, the younger woman who shared my room was remarkably stoic in the face of extreme pain from her hip surgery. As for me... it was a painful, but peculiar three nights, filled with weird morphine dreams. Oh, and the food was truly awful, although feeling nauseous from the drugs hardly helped...

Speaking of weird dreams, we've just been watching a two-hour History Channel doco on comic book superheroes. Very, very American... until the British invade with Alan Moore's "Watchmen" and Neil Gaiman's "Sandman". But, of course, the concept of the Superhero IS essentially American, and born out of the Depression of the 1930's. What that says about the American psyche....

On the other hand, the scariest doco I've seen lately is something called "The Nuclear Game". People seem to believe that with the end of the cold war, the nuclear danger is over. Well, it isn't. Finding out how to build an atomic bomb is remarkably easy these days, given the internet. Technically, it's not hard, and most of the components are easily obtained. The only difficult bit is getting hold of the fissile material—and given that Russia is leaking surplus radioactives like a melt-down reactor, that isn't much of a problem to a well-heeled terrorist. Coming to a major city near you.... Though probably not this one, fortunately for you and me.

We can but hope that a terrorist nuke does not result in the planetary devastation that all-out nuclear war would bring about. The most such an act would probably provoke is an altercation between neighbouring enemies like India and Pakistan, Israel and Syria, or North and South Korea. Messy, but not something that's likely to explode into something that would destroy the planetary biosphere. After all, the human race is doing a pretty good job of that without tossing the nukes around...

Jacqui Smith

The View from the Comfy Chair

Maybe spring is finally catching up with us. For once, as I write this, I see blue sky and sunshine. Maybe this is the end of the cold. Attendances have been down a lot at meetings recently. Hopefully it's just the cold keeping people away but, if it's something else, and if it is something that can be fixed, then please let us know about it so that something can be done about it.

I'd also like to know about ideas for club meetings to make them more interesting and enticing for people to attend. Or maybe other events we can look at. Maybe I can finally get some decent weather to have the star party that I have been thinking of for some time now.

Not much else to say at the moment, besides don't forget to pay your subs and support your club in anyway you can. Thanks to those that have contributed to Novazine.

Keith Smith
President – Stella Nova



Contents

Issue 20—September 2011	
Editorial	2
Presidential Address	2
Book Reviews	3-4
Uncorked	5
Quiz	5
Persona non Grata by Simon	6
Sky at Night	8
Obits	9
Quiz Answers	9
Upcoming Events	10

Don't Look Behind You

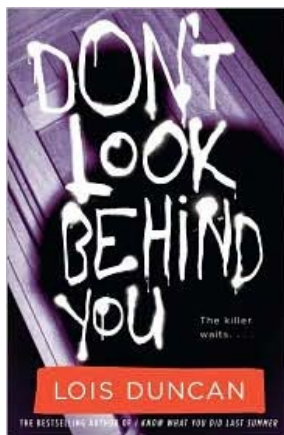
by Lois Duncan

Published by Atom

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

This is a reissue of a book I enjoyed as a teenager. I wanted to see if the story was still as gripping as I remembered. I'm happy to say it is. It's been updated with pop culture references, but ignores the social media prevalent in modern teenage life.



April is 17, a star tennis player and has a normal, happy life. Then her father testifies in a trial against a drug dealer and her world explodes. The family must temporarily hide while the trial is in progress. April's attempt to contact her boyfriend causes the death of the agent guarding them. The trial ends, the bad guy is behind bars, normal lives can ensue. Until the drug dealer appeals the court's decision. The family is in danger and relocates as part of the Witness Protection Program. Their names are changed; they must sever all ties to the past; April must stop playing tennis; her mother must give up a lucrative career as a children's author. They move far away and have no contact with their old life. Or try to. April's life turns upside down and the whole time she is being watched by a notorious hit man out to get her and her family. She goes on a high-speed cross-country chase with her grandmother when the hit man finds them, in a vain bid to hide her family.

This is an excellent book, it held my interest the whole time and the plot kept moving forward. There was never a dull moment and it has a very satisfying ending with all loose ends tied up. It is very realistic, all of the characters easily come to life, and it has ironic situations with an overall very interesting story. The author interview at the back is worth a read. It's sadly ironic how she wrote about character with her daughter's traits who is pursued by a hitman. A few months later life imitated art.

Destiny Kills

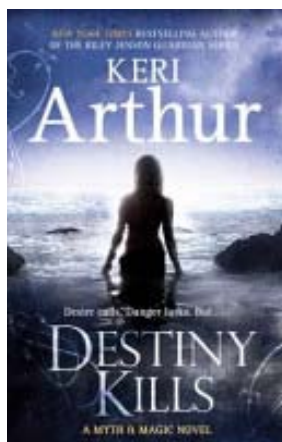
by Keri Arthur

Published by Piatkus

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by C A Hargreaves

What better way to run for your life than with your dead lover's good-looking brother. Both with powers far beyond those of human. They need to work together and use any means necessary to survive. I really liked this story because it was easy to read and it got me interested straight away. I



liked the development of the main characters Destiny and Trae. I also liked how their relationship developed. And even though it was heart-wrenching in places I would was happy with the progress throughout the story. I would want to read more from the series.

Dante Valentine – The Complete Series

by Lilith Saintcrow

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hatchette

Reviewed by C A Hargreaves

Dante Valentine started out as a necromancer then she became a bounty hunter for the Devil and that lead to her being a killer. It all started with a knock at the door, and 'come with me Dante someone wants to talk to you'. It turned out to be the Devil with an offer: her life in exchange for the capture and elimination of a renegade demon.



What I liked about this was that all of the books were in one handy binding. It made for enjoyable read that was gritty in places and took me out of the real world for the duration of the stories. They all followed on nicely from the other.

The Alchemist in the Shadows

by Pierre Pevel

Gollancz, 328pp

Supplied by Hatchette

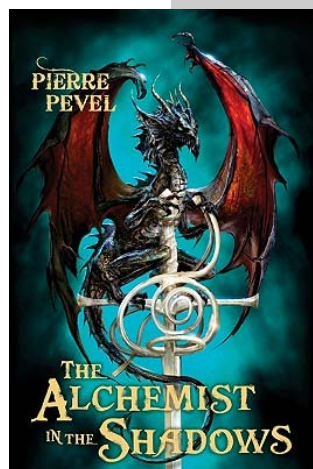
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Dumas with Dragons!!!

I'm not kidding. Pierre Pevel is French, so it's hardly surprising that when he writes historical fantasy, he turns not to the Arthurian or Elizabethan like English-speaking writers, but to the colourful court of Louis XIII, to Cardinal Richelieu and to the Musketeers. That said, our heroes are not the King's Musketeers beloved in Dumas, but the Cardinal's Blades. The villains are dragons, and one dragon in particular - L'Alchimiste des Ombres. We learn early in the book that there is a draconic plot against the throne of France, but the exact nature of the dastardly plan does not become clear right until the climax. After a cracking fight in the introduction, the first three quarters of the book is largely occupied with investigations and political manoeuvring, so much so that a list of dramatic personae would have been really useful.

Then, around page 280, the pace suddenly quickens, and everything comes to the suitably swash-buckling finale, with some brilliantly described swordplay.

There is more than a hint of Dumas in both the setting and in the writing style. I read Dumas in my teen years – including some of the less well-known novels like "Twenty Years After", and I recognise his style in Pevel's. But Pevel adds dragons to the mix, not just the large intelligent magic-using dragons, but tarrasques as heavy haulers, wyverns carrying messengers, and so on. How history managed to survive that major a change



and remain more-or-less intact is not explained, but that isn't the point. No, this is about fun alternate history with French flair.

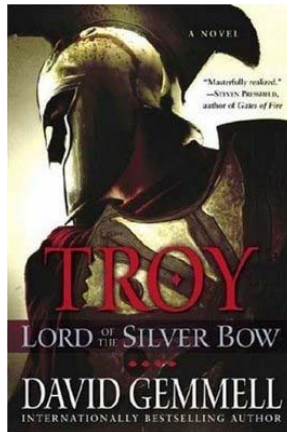
Oh, and two things I learned trawling Pevel's web pages... the French word for steampunk is "steampunk", and he writes that too.

Troy: Lord of the Silver Bow
Troy: Shield of Thunder
Troy: Fall of Kings

by David & Stella Gemmell
 Published by Ballantine
 Reviewed by Brett Peacock

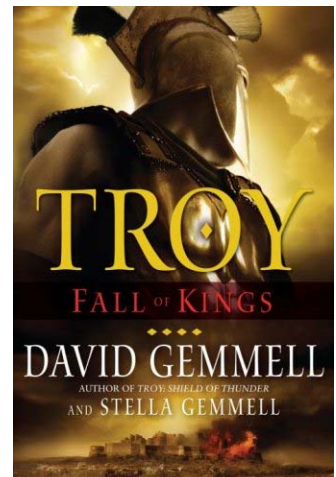
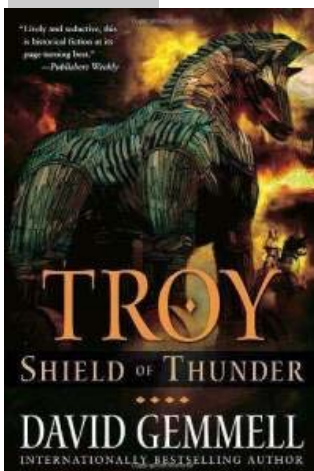
One trap that it is all too easy for writers to fall into when writing a novel based on classical literature is to, essentially, rewrite it and add a character or two of your own. It can be done, and done well, but it more often just begs the question, “Why bother?” David Gemmell’s “Troy” trilogy avoids this by doing several very difficult tricks. First and foremost, he is unafraid of “playing” around with the legend, the source materials and the characters. Second, he has clearly read Campbell, because the archetypes are there, subsumed into vibrant, attractive characters. And to top it all off, he grounds the whole thing in what we know about the Bronze Age Aegean Civilizations (and Egypt and the Levant). Oh, and did I mention that he is a superb storyteller, on top of all that?

The trilogy is based around half a dozen major players, with a large cast of secondary characters, mostly taken directly from Homeric or Classical literature. One or two, such as Banokles & Kalliades, are fictional. The major characters are: (Trojans) Helikaon, Andromache & Hektor; (Greeks) Odysseus, and Agamemnon; and the Gypitian, Gershom. Minor Characters include Cassandra, King Priam, Arguiros, Paris, Helen, Penelope, Achilles and Antiphones. Fictional Characters would include Xander, Banokles, Kalliades and Piria (Kalliope). With such a large cast it would be easy to get a little lost, and it’s a tribute to Gemmell’s abilities as a writer, that he maintains both your interest and your understanding while keeping each character distinctly separate in your mind. A nice point is that he usually foregoes the Anglicized version of the Greek names – Hektor instead of the usual Hector, the Myceneans are the “Mykene” & so on. He is not 100% perfect in this - it is still Achilles, instead of the more correct Akilleos. Against these myriad characters he weaves a huge tapestry with echoes that reverberate around the known world of the time – for example Gershom, the Gyptean exile, is member of the royal family, half brother to Rameses the Great, and his name is Ahmose. I hope that may ring a bell for some of my readers. Helikaon and Odysseus found a small Greek colony called “Seven Hills” on a peninsula to the west of Greece and North of the Isle of Sikulia. One thing that really impressed me, reading the trilogy was the profound and very intelligent way that the author has used the Homeric sources as a starting point for the story, but is not afraid to “overrule” Homer where his version does not match up to the historical and archaeological events of the time. Until



quite recently it was accepted that Homer lived during the pre-classical Early Iron Age of Greece. Homer was thought to have died around 850BCE. Recently, those dates have been moved forwards by about 100 years to 750BCE. The events of the Trojan War, as best estimate lie around 1350BCE, roughly coinciding with the decline of Minoan Civilization on Krete and the first major upheavals in Mycenae. About 600 years before Homer, which is a lot of time for legends to be... changed. One way this shows is the way Homer talks about Odysseus. According to Homer, Odysseus spent ten years at Troy and ten years on his Odyssey. That is almost half his life, given the short lives of many in those times. So where did Odysseus get the epithet “Sacker of Cities”? Gemmell handles it this way – Odysseus was a well-travelled man in early middle age at the START of the War, already a warrior of renown and King of Ithaka. He had besieged cities while a young man, war being a younger mans occupation. Now he is older and wiser, and tired of war. Now he trades and travels, telling wild stories, being a friend to all, and neutral. And his stories, all featuring himself, of course, bear some resemblance to the stories of his “Odyssey” in Homer! He is pushed into the war by Priam, who places him in an impossible position, largely from spite. Odysseus fears and despises Agamemnon but ends up allied to him out of self-defence. Which is awkward for him, because he regards Helikaon as a surrogate son, his own son, Laertes, having died young.

The Siege of Troy is not a thousand ships parked on a beach for ten years, rather it starts as an economic war, with the Greeks raiding Troy’s outposts, allies and colonies, depriving Troy of income and allies, this taking place over several years, until Troy is sufficiently worn down and weakened to the point where an invasion force can land and lay siege to Troy, Directly. Once this happens, the end is fairly swift, taking less than two years. I have to admit it makes a hell of a lot of sense, more so than Homer’s version of the Siege. Gemmell touches on a lot of history and Archaeology, wraps it up in great storytelling, but then, atop that he can easily slip in a few mystical elements, and you accept these with all the others, largely because it is done so easily. Here I’m talking about Cassandra. Like “The Sixth Sense”, she “talks with dead people”, the creepy bit is that she does it in the middle of a normal conversation. And it IS creepy! And then she turns around and predicts the future. But she is only six when the Trilogy opens and about sixteen at the end, so no one believes her – except for Andomache, at the very end. I cannot express how well this works in context. Just brilliant! I guess that you will have realised that I really, really liked these books. What’s more, I think you will too. I have only touched on a few events of the three books, and left a lot for you, the reader to discover for yourself, which is always the best way to find anything. Frankly, the “Troy” trilogy is among the best books I have read in the last 25 years. And that’s saying something.



Uncorked

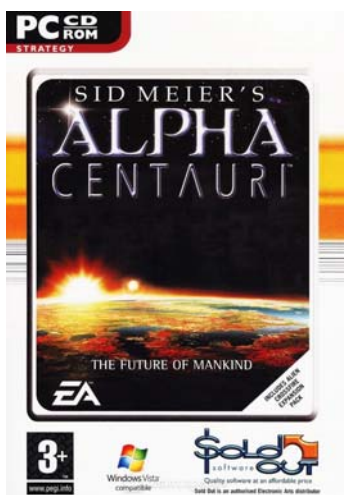
by Broderick Wells

It seems that everything is conspiring to keep me away from the booze cabinet. As we all know, sobriety and Broderick Wells are two concepts not normally congruent. But nevertheless I have been labouring under the load of a lack of spirituous liquor. But computer games are best played “straight”, and I’ll keep it that way for the time being.

www.mightyape.co.nz/ had a sale of a few ancient titles, and being a fan of turn based strategy games (or igo-ugo as they are sometimes called), naturally I succumbed. First up was the omnibus edition of *Heroes of Might and Magic*. This is one of those explore, capture control resources and generally defeat the enemy type games. I first got hooked on it about 10 years ago and have wasted several evenings advancing my “hero” to the point where I was death on a stick. Of course, you can’t play many of the scenarios with just one hero, as the AI will be trying to do to you what you are trying to do to it. The games, and there are five versions of the series in the omnibus edition, all feature a storyline and the object is to complete the story before the opposition nails you. Along with the main adventures, there are stand-alone quests and the game can be played on a variety of difficulty levels. A nice little set for only \$39.99.



Next up was *Sid Meier’s Alpha Centauri* complete with the *Alien Crossfire* expansion. As I haven’t finished playing *Heroes* yet, it hasn’t come out of the box, but it should prove an interesting expenditure of \$19.99 for a classic game that is still considered one of the better exploration and development games. There are enemies to beat up, technologies to develop and money to spend. It was supposed to be the logical follow-up to *Civilisation* (remember, you got to send a colony ship to Alpha Centauri as part of the victory conditions), and all the reviews are positive, provided you don’t have an AMD processor (seems to some sort of compatibility error there).



One game I would like to get my grubby hands on is *Panzer Corps* from Slytherine. Here’s their blurb:

The game is absolutely huge:

- 400 unit types, divided into 19 unit classes with 20 detailed parameters to identify unit’s abilities, 17 terrain types affecting gameplay in various way.
- Campaign: all 26 scenarios are combined into a large campaign tree with several entry points at various stages of the war. Depending on the outcome of each battle (decisive victory, marginal victory or defeat), the player will be faced with different challenges and a progress along different parts of the campaign tree;
- Nations: all major and many minor nations are represented: Germany, Italy, Poland, France, Great Britain, USA, USSR, Norway, Belgium, Netherlands, Albania, Romania, Greece and more.
- Core units that travel with you throughout the campaign gaining experience and that can be upgraded as new weapon technologies become available. Units gain awards and heroes as they distinguish themselves.

I used to play *Panzer General*, the game this is based on, regularly and am seriously considering throwing \$US39.99 at them for this one. There are not enough hours available I tell you...



Quiz—Xenobiology

How much do you know about Aliens in SF?

1. The term “Xenobiology” was coined by Robert Heinlein in “The Star Beast”. What was the name of the Star Beast?
2. In “Ender’s Game” humanity is at war with an insectoid alien hive mind species formally known as the “Formics”. What are they more commonly called?
3. What was name of the silicon-based lifeform encountered in the original series Star Trek episode “Devil in the Dark”?
4. Which domestic animal did ALF frequently threaten to eat?
5. In Futurama, what is the true source of the beverage Slurm?
6. In “The Legacy of Heorot”, the two hundred human colonists on the planet Avalon are almost wiped out when the innocuous aquatic “samlon” metamorphose into vicious predatory beasts and go on the attack. What name do the colonists give to these creatures?
7. In “Star Trek: Enterprise”, what type of animal is the first new alien creature found?
8. What manner of creatures were the *Yilané*, in Harry Harrison’s 1984 novel *West of Eden*?
9. According to “Mork and Mindy” what did Orkans evolve from?
10. In “Doctor Who” the planet Metebelis Three is inhabited by large, intelligent versions of which earthly creature?

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by
Jacqui
Smith

Why Would a Convention Declare a Fan Persona Non Grata?

At the 2011 national science fiction and fantasy convention the truly unexpected happened: a fan got banned. That's right, someone was declared persona non grata and had one's membership refunded before the convention even began. This declaration caused considerable furore; with expressions ranging from "this is untenable" to "about time".

So what would, or even should, cause a convention committee to ban a fan?

Should conventions have the right or power to do this?

Who should enforce that ban?

And, if someone is banned at one convention is there any enduring effect?

Because I find the arguments easier to expound I am going to answer my self-posed questions in my own preferred order. I will also ask an indulgence of the reader: and that is to be aware that I may need to degenerate into [legal] jargon, which users of any jargon know has specialist meaning not always concordant with general usage. In short: technical terms with specific meaning may appear, but I will try to point these out.

Will a ban have enduring effect?

Currently, conventions are run as one-off events, which means that once a convention finishes the purpose of the ban vanishes and the ban no longer applies. So on the face of it a ban won't have an enduring effect.

However, there is firstly the phenomenon of organising committees re-appearing to run a successive convention and secondly the moral hazard of fan gossip. A replicating organising committee will have the knowledge as to why Simon Litten (using my name because I like seeing it in print) was banned at the previous convention and that new organising committee may determine that I was such a disruptive element that a second ban is warranted. As a matter of courtesy I would hope that the committee did at least to check to see if I was a reformed character and didn't just apply outdated information.

Gossip is much harder to deal with and should not be relied on – in legal parlance gossip is mere hearsay and is considered unworthy as evidence, which is why courts make such a big deal out of whether someone was actually there as a witness – so we as fans should not use gossip to make decisions that can tarnish a person's reputation (on the theory I have a reputation to tarnish). However, as individuals we may forget this important point so we should be really clear to ourselves as to why I, as the recidivist fan, am being banned and not take that action as a given. In other words do the research and be prepared to justify the action, or be prepared to be labelled a closed minded bigot who thinks and acts just like the non-fan community.

Should conventions have the right or power to ban someone?

For those who may have forgotten or not noticed conventions are private events. Because incorporation

(legal jargon: meaning become a registered incorporated society like SFFANZ or Phoenix SF Society Inc.) is a non-trivial exercise with a price tag, to date all SF conventions in NZ have been run by unincorporated bodies (committees). Being unincorporated the committee is (legal term here) jointly and severally liable for the costs and actions of the convention, which includes a lot of the things the attendees may do. This really important point was heavily reinforced when the organisers of a push-cycle race in Christchurch were held liable for the injuries of a cyclist who was knocked off his bike by an errant motorist (the organisers failed to get properly arrange the appropriate road closures). The court decision for that liability came with a big price tag. That jointly and severally bit means that the committee is liable for the debts of the convention (all of the committee together or enough of them with big enough wallets) and the safety of the convention attendees, including (and this must be stressed) reasonably foreseeable actions of other attendees. So if I am known to get violent after a strong shandy then the committee needs to either enforce an abstinence pledge on me or ensure I'm kept in an alcohol free environment. If neither of these alternatives are realistic then the committee, to protect the other attendees is well within its rights, and in the interests of the other attendees, to decline my membership. Alternatively, I may have a propensity for drawing baths and leaving the tap running, per concert pianist Michael Helfgoft: image this (over flowing baths) happening several times during a convention – the hotel would be most displeased and at least one room would be a sodden mess. As this example suggests, not every action that may get someone banned is likely to be criminal or dangerous. The action may simply be ruinously expensive.

At a more prosaic level, conventions are private functions and may be run as such. I am unaware of any convention being run as if it were a by-invitation-only party (even Phoenix SF 21st birthday function was open to all) but if a committee were to go down that route then it is perfectly entitled to do so. I will make no comment as to how successful such an event would be, nor what would be the longer-term result of such a convention but I could easily imagine a large section of fandom would harbour ill feeling towards that committee for many years.

Who should enforce a ban?

In the first instance the convention committee should enforce its own ban. The committee has decided that I am not wanted so it should see that I am excluded from the convention. If it needs help enforcing the ban it should seek it from the hotel or the police.

Most conventions are held in hotels. The hotel will have its own policy as to who is and isn't an acceptable guest. The hotel will enforce its own rules. When it comes to removing an unwanted guest at a private function the hotel may assist if it has the resources and inclination, or it may simply escalate the matter to the constabulary. After all an unwanted guest is a matter of (jargon alert) trespass – and the enforcement of trespass at a private function is the function organiser's responsibility not the hotel's (see what happens if you gate crash a wedding reception if you don't believe me).

This is analogous to unticketed attendees; that is those fans that try to free ride by attending without paying. Conventions have a longstanding practice of removing those found to be there who haven't paid and often have a designated attendee floor walking to find and remove said reprobates.

However, should an attendee be behaving dangerously, however one defines dangerously, then the hotel may very well initiate action and eject and ban the perpetrator without reference to the committee.

This now leads me to the first question I posed: What would, or even should, cause a convention committee to ban a fan?

The "would" is anything could cause a convention committee to ban a fan – the world is the committee's oyster; sheer spite is enough for a ban to be given. If I don't like me enough (leaving aside issues of incipient mental illness that that phrasing suggests), then I as a convention committee am within my rights to ban me. But acting that vicariously is liable to cause a backlash out of proportion to the short-term satisfaction of banning me – unless I am one truly unpopular individual.

The "should" is much more problematic. Just because I am a socially inept, nay nigh on always offensive individual is not at first blush just cause to ban me. After all most fans are to a degree socially inept be it just incredibly introverted through full on Asberger's-like in our ability to communicate, incommunicate or over communicate. But let me get back to that jointly and severally point; conventions are a commercial activity, even if they are not run to make a profit. If my being barred, because I offend so many others, from attending is likely to increase attendees beyond my attending, then the committee has an incentive to bar me. Further, if I have been repeatedly coached on improving my behaviour so I am less of social pariah, so for example I don't wipe my nose on the clothes of others, and I manifestly don't change my behaviour despite the coaching then I should not be surprised when the committee takes umbrage at this behaviour and bars me for it. But if I have improved my personal interactions and no longer leave a trail of seething resentment then I can ask for the benefit of the doubt – but it will still be up to me to show that the committee was acting sensibly to accept my presence.

At this point I am aware of one fan who was on notice of banning due to unintended vandalism arising from the use of self-adhesive labels and there application over the walls, furnishings and artwork of a hotel, and another fan who was decked in a case of male on male sexual harassment but no further action arose from this latter incident.

But aren't we as fans all social misfits and thus banning one is akin to banning us all?

Now, I am aware that there is a countervailing opinion that as fans we are all damaged goods to a lesser or greater degree, and that because of that declaring one of us unwelcome at a convention is the same as declaring any of us unwelcome at any subsequent convention. I am not sure of the logic of this argument but it appears to work on the theory that our individual, and by extension collective, social skills are that detached from societal norms that we are unable to determine what is

appropriate social behaviour. To follow the legal argument I ran earlier, this is a roundabout way of saying we are all legally insane, i.e. we are unable to tell what is morally right from wrong. While there are social situations where I am a sandwich short of a picnic, there are others where I am verging on being long in the provision of said sandwiches (just don't ask me to adumbrate the point). And I have learnt to improve my social graces over time. As former girlfriends can attest I am not the socially crippled midget of yore and I have grown in stature and assurance into the game-legged, humpbacked dwarf you see today. They consider me safe to be let loose in public (as opposed to a private hunting preserve) so I must have improved.

But to try to run the argument of an injury to one of us is an injury to all is logically dangerous. Because if one of us is a convicted paedophile or has an aggravated assault conviction then by extension, don't all of us? To say that all of SF fandom is injured when one fan is banned is like saying all football supporters are soccer hooligans when one causes trouble at a sports fixture. The world is not a monochromatic binary function: this or that; it is a multi-dimensional colour chart of conflicting and confusing signals. Sometimes the innocent get hanged alongside the guilty – to encourage the others.

In the instance of the recent convention the banning of the fan would not have been done as a spur of the moment action. I know the convention chair and he weighs his actions, sometimes with pharmaceutical precision. While my experiences with the fan in question have not been unpleasant, mainly fannish conversations of no moment, others have been reduced to incoherent apoplexy so much so that I expect there was at least much smoke and heat if not visible proof of a fire to support the decision. Whether one considers that ban justified is probably a function of how frequently one voluntarily socialises with the said individual.

However, that banning does show that fandom in NZ has become more adult in its functioning. The bigger issue is how collective and individual fandom will react to the ban. By sulking in the sandpit? Or, remembering it's playtime again and going on with the big adventure cum wide game that is represented by organised conventions?



Simon at the
2010 NatCon
Au Contraire

The Sky at Night – October 2011

Looking to the north you should see two bright stars skirting the northern horizon, Deneb to the west and Vega to the east. These two stars, along with Altair, higher in the north, make what the northern hemisphere call the ‘Summer Triangle’. If you’re not sure which of Deneb and Vega is which, there are two stars either side of Altair and following the line of those three stars points towards Vega. Altair is also famous for being the star mentioned in the film ‘Forbidden Planet’.

Looking slightly up from Vega, you should see two stars close together. Between those are the famous Ring Nebula (M57), although you would need to moderately powered instrument to see it properly. The star on the right is Beta Lyrae, a very close binary that was featured in Larry Niven’s short story “The Soft Weapon”.

Over to the northeast, the Square of Pegasus is rising. Three of the stars do belong to Pegasus, marking Pegasus’s wing but the lower eastern star marks the head of the neighbouring constellation, Andromeda. Halfway between the Square and Altair is M15, a globular cluster.

Sagittarius and Scorpio dominate the western sky. Overhead is the next constellation in the Zodiac, Capricorn. It contains yet another globular cluster, M30. This area of the sky to the east is rather dim compared to the west, which makes the bright star, Fomalhaut really stand out. This star marks the mouth of Piscis Austrinus, the Southern Fish.

Back to the south, the Southern Cross is starting to skirt the horizon. Canopus is also close to the southwest horizon while Achernar is halfway up to the zenith. To the right of Achernar is the Lesser Magellanic Cloud near where the globular clusters 47 Tucanae and NGC362 can be found. Lower down is the Large Magellanic Cloud.

Mercuray and Venus are low in the west, setting soon after the sun. As the month progresses, they appear to get closer together and will make an interesting sight in the twilight. Mars is low in the morning sky. Saturn has disappeared from the eastern sky so the only easily visible planet is Jupiter which rises a few hours after sunset. I said easily visible because if you’re under a dark sky, and

you know where to look, Uranus can also be seen with the unaided eye, near the circlet in Pisces. Neptune is higher up in the sky, but you would need a good pair of binoculars or a small telescope to see that.

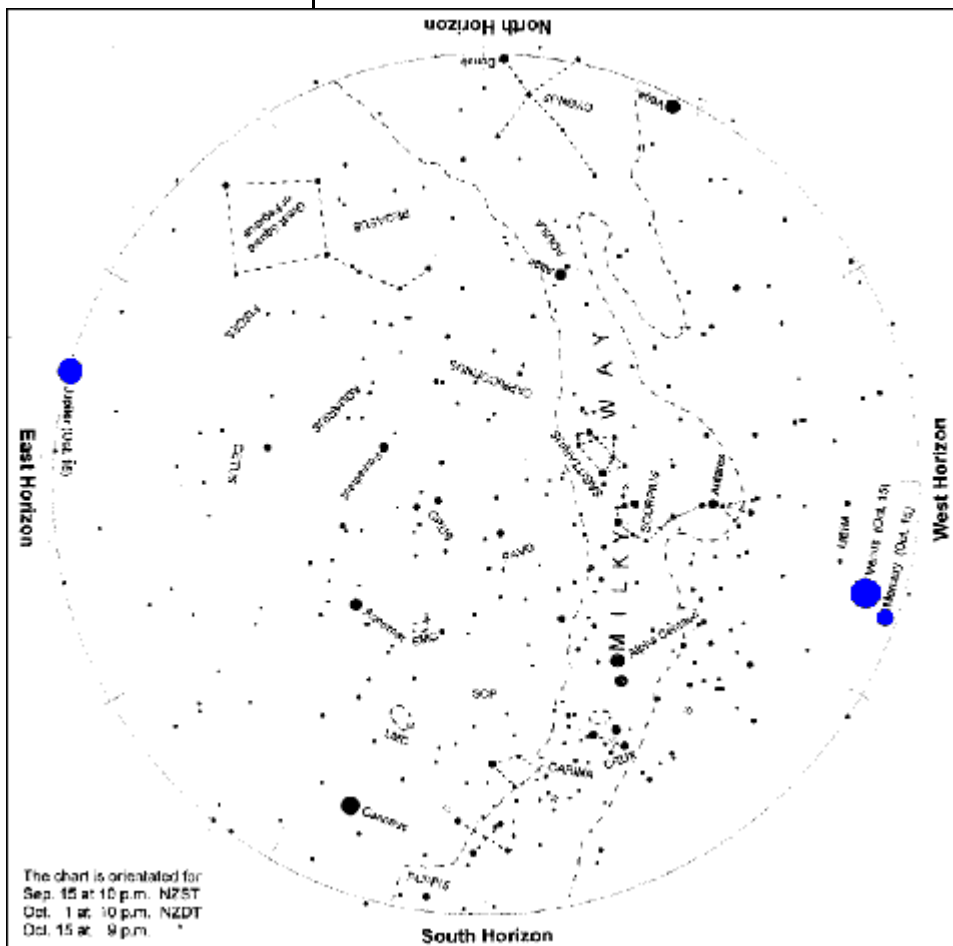
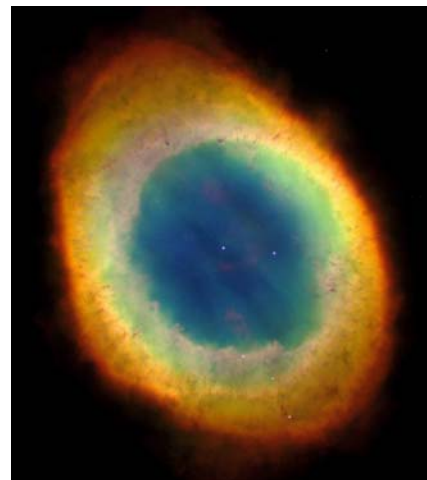
Events:

- 4th October – First Quarter Moon
- 12th October– Full Moon
- 20th October– Last Quarter Moon
- 27th October– New Moon

Mercury very close to the moon on the 28th
Jupiter is at opposition on the 29th

More information can be found at:
<http://www.astronomy.co.nz/pub/home.asp>
<http://www.astronomy.org.nz/>
<http://www.skyandtelescope.com/index.html>

Ring Nebula M57 in Lyra



by
Keith
Smith

Obits

August 15

Colin Harvey, (aged 50),
British science fiction writer and editor, nominated for both the British Fantasy Award and the Black Quill Award for editing the anthology “Killers”.

August 19

Gun Hägglund, (aged 79),
Swedish television personality, who became the world's first female television evening news presenter in 1958. (Only preceded by Barbara Mandell who presented the midday news for ITN in Britain in 1955).



Jimmy Sangster, (aged 83),
British director and screenwriter known for his work for Hammer Films, including scripts for “The Curse of Frankenstein” (the first British horror movie to be shot in colour) and “Dracula”.



August 20
Reza Badiyi, (aged 81),
Iranian-born American television director of many episodes of iconic TV series including “Mission: Impossible”, “The Six Million Dollar Man”, and five episodes of “ST: Deep

Space Nine”. He also created that memorable opening montage for “Get Smart”.

August 22

Jerry Leiber, (aged 78),
American songwriter who wrote the lyrics for a lot of songs, some of which even I recognise such as “Stand By Me”, “Hound Dog”, “Jailhouse Rock”, “Kansas City”.

John Howard Davies, (aged 72),

English television producer and director best known for comedy shows including “Fawlty Towers”, “The Good Life” early episodes of “Monty Python’s Flying Circus” and “The Goodies”.

August 23

Joey Vento, (aged 71),
American restaurateur, founder and owner of “Geno’s Steaks” in Philadelphia—interesting for successfully protesting the right to post signs in his restaurant saying “This is AMERICA: WHEN ORDERING Please ‘SPEAK ENGLISH’”.



August 29

Junpei Takiguchi, (aged 80),
Japanese voice actor and narrator, voicing several characters in Dragon Ball, Yatterman, & Mazinger Z.

August 31

Valery Rozhdestvensky, (aged 72),
Soviet cosmonaut who flew as Flight Engineer on Soyuz 23.



September 6

Michael S. Hart, (aged 64),
American author, inventor of the e-book and founder of Project Gutenberg. On July 4, 1971, he had been trying to think of what to do with his allocated space on the mainframe at University of Illinois computer center, part of what would become the Internet. He took a copy of the United States Declaration of Independence, which he had been given at a grocery store on his way home from watching fireworks that evening, and typed the text into the computer but was told that it would be unacceptable to transmit it to numerous people at once via e-mail. To avoid crashing the system, he made the text available for people to download instead. He then began typing in the text of classic texts like the Bible and Shakespeare. By 1987 he had typed in a total of 313 books. This became what know as Project Gutenberg.

Archduke Felix of Austria, (aged 95),
Austrian royal, last surviving child of Charles I of Austria, and a member of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine.

September 10

Cliff Robertson, (aged 88),
American actor who won the 1968 Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in the SF movie “Charly”. He is more familiar to modern audiences as Uncle Ben in the Spider-Man film trilogy. .



September 13

Paul Gallant, (aged 67),
Canadian entrepreneur, inventor of the Puzz-3D three-dimensional jigsaw puzzles.

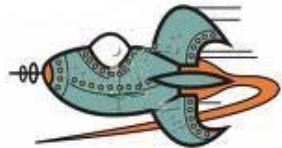
Quiz Answers

1. LummoX – who was a Hiroshii.
2. Buggers.
3. Horta.
4. The cat.
5. A giant worm.
6. Grendels.
7. A slug.
8. Intelligent reptiles evolved from mosasaurs – not dinosaurs.
9. Chickens.
10. Spiders.

compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith

UnCONventional 2012

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



UnCONventional will be held at
"The Spencer On Byron", located
in the North Shore suburb of
Takapuna.

We can announce that our Fan GOH is Lorain Clark. Lorain is a familiar face behind the registration desk of many a con, and she who works behind the scenes has not escaped notice either!

Our Guests of Honour have yet to be confirmed, but we are negotiating with a kiwi icon or two. We intend to use the convention to showcase the wealth of talent to be found in our own backyard.

www.unconventional.sf.org.nz

Look for us on Facebook.

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

Both will appreciate your support.



World Society for the Protection of Animals



THE NEW ZEALAND
BREAST CANCER
FOUNDATION

Stella Nova Wiki:

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

Nova Zine Back Issues:

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

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This Month:

DOS Saturday 24th Sept at Chez Smith.
(Disk-Oriented Surveyors)

BOOK Monday 26th Sept at Maree's place.

SPACE Saturday 8th October
at Parakai Springs starting at 3pm.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 19th October, 2011 at 7:30pm
Auckland Horticultural Centre,
990 Great North Road, Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

October 28th –31st Armageddon Expo 2011
ASB Showgrounds
<http://www.armageddonexpo.com/nz/>

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