



Harry Harrison at KiwiCon in 1990
(Photo by Keith Smith.)

Issue XXXI - September 2012

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Musings from Under the Mountain

For those of you who weren't at this month's SPACE, yes, I really am an occasionally bible-carrying born-again Christian, have been for years. I go to church most Sundays, and I teach Sunday School. But, I don't believe in that...

That being any number of end-of-the-world conspiracies in general, and in particular the theory that a planet named Nibiru is on a collision course with the Earth. For one thing, the whole planet Nibiru thing seems to be the delusion of a UFO cultist who believes herself to have been contacted by aliens from the Zeta Reticuli star system. From the system which is the home of the Chigs in "Space: Above and Beyond"; and where the derelict spacecraft was found in "Alien". Not a system with a great reputation, in SF at least. It's a distant binary with two sun-like stars, but the system is deficient in metals, which isn't great for extraterrestrial civilisations. The idea that aliens from there have visited Earth and left an implant in someone's brain so they can receive interstellar telegrams isn't even good science fiction. It's certainly not something I plan on believing.

Not that I'm not fairly certain that our civilisation is on the road to a downfall of epic proportions, but it will likely be an apocalypse of our own making. In the news the other night, tucked in among all the indoctrinated mobs rioting over a bad movie that very people actually saw, was a small note about how the Arctic is melting even faster than predicted. Now, that's something worth getting upset about, and not in a knee-jerk destructive "let's blow up everyone who isn't like us" kind of way, but in a constructive "isn't it time we stopped being stupid and DO something about this problem" fashion. There are solutions, they're technological, and they're not cheap. And like most such things the sooner they get implemented, the better the chances that they'll work.

Which brings me to an interesting thing I discovered the other day. The environmentalist Sir James Lovelock, who originated the Gaia Hypothesis, has managed to annoy a lot of Greenies by proclaiming that "only nuclear power can now halt global warming". Try telling that to the next anti-technological greenie you happen to meet. He goes on to claim that nuclear power is now the only viable alternative to fossil fuels, and is a keen supporter of an organisation called "Environmentalists for Nuclear Energy". Go figure... You can check out their website here: <http://www.ecolo.org/base/baseen.htm>

Jacqui, Editor

The View from the Comfy Chair

It looks like that spring is finally here, although the weather outside would tend to make one think otherwise. I've seen my daffodils come out (two) and even the tulips I put in a while back are starting to make an appearance.



I'm hoping to fire up the barbeque for SPACE. The patio isn't anywhere near finished but there's enough concrete down to make it usable. All of the raised gardens (bar one) are now complete and the concrete paths are in the process of going down. Pouring the concrete for the patio may need as much planning as a military exercise as it is going to take a lot of concrete and probably needs to be poured all at once. I'm wondering if I'm going to have to get the stuff ready mixed. I'll probably need willing helpers to get it all in as it may be too big a job for just one person. Just need enough fine days in a row to get it all done.

Speaking of gardens, looks like we have to get everything out of our Council allotment by the end of the month since we're being moved again. So it's another fresh start in a different place. On the deck, the winter flowers seem to be dying off so I may get in a new set of spring flowers for the deck pots. As for the back lawn, I'd like to dig the whole thing up and start again, as it's infested with weeds.

This doesn't sound like it's anything to do with science fiction but, maybe there's a story in there somewhere. "The Attack of the Weeds", or "The Plants Strike Back". Those sound more like titles for bad horror movies – "Little Shop of Horrors" and "The Day of the Triffids" spring to mind – as well as some Dr Who stories that involved plants. Hmm, maybe that could be a theme for a future meeting – "Plants in Science Fiction".

I guess that's enough rambling from me for now. It was really encouraging to see old friends at the last Stella Nova meeting, and good luck to B.J with her plans to restart the writer's group. Contact her if you're interested.

Keith, Stella Nova President

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Harry's Quiz:

1. What was Harry Harrison's birth name?
 - A. Hank Dempsey
 - B. Henry Maxwell Dempsey
 - C. Philip St. John
 - D. Wade Kaempfert
2. Which was Harry Harrison's first published novel?
 - A. Bill, the Galactic Hero
 - B. Deathworld
 - C. The Stainless Steel Rat
 - D. Vendetta for the Saint
3. Who was Harry's second wife, whom he married in 1954, and who accompanied him to KiwiCon in 1990?
 - A. Jane
 - B. Jean
 - C. Joan
 - D. June
4. At the time of Kiwicon in 1990, where in the world was Harry living?
 - A. Brighton, England.
 - B. St. Petersburg, Russia.
 - C. Stamford, Connecticut.
 - D. Vale of Avoca, Ireland.
5. Harry was Guest of Honour at the World Science Fiction Convention the same year as KiwiCon (1990). Which WorldCon was this?
 - A. Aussiecon Three in Melbourne, Australia
 - B. ConFiction in The Hague, Netherlands
 - C. LA Con IV in Los Angeles, USA
 - D. Loncon 3 in London, UK
6. In the 1966 novel "Make Room! Make Room!" what are "soylent steaks" actually made of?
 - A. Locusts and honey
 - B. People
 - C. Soya and lentils
 - D. Soya and locusts
7. Harry Harrison's most famous character is probably "Slippery" Jim DiGriz. What was his middle name (and the name of one of his sons)?
 - A. Boaz
 - B. Bogart
 - C. Bolivar
 - D. Boniface
8. Who was mentor to the Stainless Steel Rat?
 - A. The Bishop
 - B. The Cardinal
 - C. The Rector
 - D. The Vicar
9. Which is NOT an actual title by Harry Harrison?
 - A. Bill, the Galactic Hero on the Planet of Bottled Brains
 - B. Bill, the Galactic Hero on the Planet of No Return
 - C. Bill, the Galactic Hero on the Planet of Robot Slaves
 - D. Bill, the Galactic Hero on the Planet of Zombie Vampires
10. In the "Eden" trilogy, the Yilané are intelligent reptiles evolved from...
 - A. Ichthyosaurs
 - B. Mosasaurs
 - C. Plesiosaurs
 - D. Pterosaurs

Harry Harrison and Me

The first time I met Harry Harrison was at Kiwicon in 1990. He was an energetic and highly entertaining guest of honour, who had us all laughing. The last time I met Harry was at LA Con IV in 2006. He was in a wheelchair, and looked both old and frail. I've since learned that Joan, his wife of almost fifty years, had died of cancer in 2002.

Of course, when it comes to writers, we get to know them better through their work. I first met Harry in this way at high school in the early 1970's, when I read the "Deathworld" novels (which I didn't like that much—too violent for my taste at the time), "The Technicolour Time Machine" (which I liked a lot), and I suspect, "Spaceship Medic" (the cover looks just so familiar).

Curiously, while Harry is best known for his humorous works with "The Stainless Steel Rat" series and the "Bill, the Galactic Hero" series, his Hugo award nominations were for the more serious works, "Deathworld" and "Planet of No Return". As far as I am aware, both of these are out of print, but they can both be freely downloaded from gutenberg.org (I have copied both onto my kindle). He was selected by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America as the recipient of its Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award in 2009.

So, when it comes a reading list, it's not hard to come up with some suggestions. "The Stainless Steel Rat" and its sequels are reliable entertainment, as is "Bill the Galactic Hero" which is a send-up of "Starship Troopers" (though some of the sequels start to get the feel of a worn-out joke). If you can find it, I'd definitely suggest "The Technicolour Time Machine" for taking the Mickey out of Hollywood and Vikings in equal proportions, and "A Transatlantic Tunnel, Hurrah!" which combines alternate history and steampunk long before they became popular. Then there's the Eden trilogy for something more serious. "Make Room! Make Room!" has dated somewhat, although its message hasn't (perhaps "Soylent Green" is one movie that could handle a remake).

We will miss Harry...
but the Stainless Steel Rat lives on!



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by
Jacqui
Smith

This is my homage to Harry Harrison and to his best known character, the Stainless Steel Rat. I hope you find it amusing (I know my husband did).

The Stainless Steel Rat Goes DownUnder

by Jacqui Smith

“You want me to steal what?” I glared at Inskipp.
 “I want you to steal a bridge,” he said it again, this time slowly, and with emphasis.
 “I have to ask. Why?”
 “You’ve heard of The Collector?” It was easy to hear the capital letters.
 “Hey, what successful thief hasn’t?”
 “Well, he’s taken to acquiring architecture. Specifically bridges.”
 “You’re kidding.”
 “Would I lie to you?”
 “In a word, yes sir, you would.” But I didn’t think it likely in this instance. Couldn’t see what was it for Harold Peters Inskipp, a.k.a. Inskipp the Uncatchable, director of the Special Corps.
 “As it happens, I’m not prevaricating.”

He waved a newsheet at me. “Brooklyn Bridge Burgled”, the headline bellowed. Now, I knew that the Brooklyn Bridge, icon of Old Earth’s Old New York, had been sitting in front of the New Guggenheim Museum on New New York for centuries. But someone had nicked it. What bothered me most was the fact that I couldn’t figure how the cagal he’d done it. I mean it’s a bridge, right? Several gazillion tonnes of stone, masonry and metal.

“And, before you ask, we don’t know how he did it either. But we know he has it. Or at least, a good replica.”
 “So what am I supposed to do about it?”
 “What do you think? Get in there and find out!”

Getting in there wasn’t as hard as it might seem. The Collector’s Planet, formally called Paraphernalia, and commonly referred to as “Stuff-world”, may have been a bit off the beaten track once, but since he opened the place as a museum, the tourists have been flocking.

When Angelina heard I was going there, she naturally insisted on coming, and bringing the boys. “It’ll be educational,” she insisted, and there was no arguing with that. And that meant the packing was not simply quadrupled, but increased exponentially, to the fourth power. We took a suite on a tourist liner, which at least provided ample distractions for young James and Bolivar. Even if some of them weren’t exactly scheduled.

We arrived at Planet Paraphernalia more or less intact

(except for some of the liner’s entertainment staff, but they’d recover after a few months in a nice quiet padded room). I let Angelina lead me to a hotel, and then let her get on with herding the boys on a few tours of some of the collections – the interactive late twentieth century motorcar exhibit promised plenty of testosterone-fuelled fun for boys as one example. Meanwhile, I set about making an appointment to see the Collector.

This proved easier than I expected. His secretary was so cooperative that I was beginning to smell a rat, and as soon as I entered his office it was evident that he’d been expecting me to call. The collection of stuffed, ceramic, porcelain, pewter, plastic, glass and sculpted rats adorning the display cases was a dead giveaway. On his stylish glass and metal desk sat a metallic *rattus norvegicus* that I swore was cast in stainless steel.

“You knew I was coming?” I asked.
 “The greatest thief in the galaxy? Of course.”
 “And I suppose you have a job for me.”
 “Indeed so. There’s this item I wish to acquire for my collection, and unfortunately my usual operative is currently otherwise detained. The New Yorkers are rather unhappy about my latest acquisition. But, you know, if they don’t want me to collect their stuff, they shouldn’t leave it standing around.” He chuckled, in a not entirely sane way.
 “It’s simple enough. The next bridge I wish to acquire looks like this.” He showed me an ancient photograph encased in a clear plastic block. “This is called a postcard, by the way. They used them before they invented electronic mail.”

I picked up the block and examined the picture. It showed an arched bridge soaring across a blue-green harbour. “The bridge in question is the Sydney Harbour Bridge, colloquially known as the “coathanger”. It was once quite the most famous bridge in the southern hemisphere of Old Earth. Now it’s on display on a planet called Downunder. It’s a highly collectible item, as you might imagine.”
 “Not the sort of thing that is easy to acquire, though.”
 “No, and that’s where you come in. All you have to do is to attach this device to the centre of the structure. It will shift the bulk of the matter into other dimensions, leaving a miniature. The device has a remote control, so that you can ensure that yourself and all other entities are removed from the vicinity. Of course the miniature will be constrained to the location of the device, so I’ve made both it shockproof and waterproof.”

He handed me a box-like object. It was currently coloured a bright fluorescent orange, and had a remote clipped to one side. “You seem to have thought of everything,” I said.
 “And you’ll think of everything I haven’t, because that’s your job,” he chuckled again, and now I was quite sure he was quite insane.

“By the way, I have something of yours,” he added. Holograms rose from the desk, and I realised that it had been less than clever of me to bring the family. “My staff will keep the boys entertained. I assume you’ll need your lady wife to assist you.”

I knew the boys, they wouldn't stay captive for long, but I also knew that Inskipp was expecting me to play along with the maniacal acquisitionist. So I did.
"I've tickets here for you. Enjoy your trip."

I took the folder he handed me. Inside were vouchers that would get Angelina and I to a planet called DownUnder, on the Galaxy's outskirts, in comfort if not in style.

Some weeks later we were in orbit above a blue-green earth-like planet. There was one large continent with a deep red centre that had to be an extensive desert, and dark green fringes; and an ocean sprinkled with islands, some small, some rather larger. Spearing into the sky, its base on one of the larger islands was a Sky Hook, a tower that reached all the way to a space station in planet-stationary orbit. Here we docked and descended in an elevator, along with a gaggle of tourists, returning natives, and a few immigrants. It has to be said – the views were spectacular.

Next came Customs. I'd concealed the device inside an old-fashioned paper book. An old trick, but a good one, especially when you added a new-fangled hologram to conceal the insides. Anything else we needed we'd have to find locally.

"Kia Ora, mate," said the Customs official, in what I assumed was a strange local dialect. "Welcome to Downunder. Anything to declare?"

"No, nothing," I said.

"No foodstuffs or agricultural products?"

I had to admit I thought that was an odd question. Strange customs they had here...

"Not at all."

"Okay, have a good time, mate."

I was fairly sure that I wasn't his mate, and neither was Angelina, but we carried on. Our erstwhile employer had booked us in at a hostelry that called itself "The Kiwi House" though there was no sign of furry green fruit. There was however, effigy of an odd-looking flightless bird with an inordinately long beak, above the entrance.

We settled in and then had a word with our host. It seems there was a bridge fitting our description crossing a harbour at a place called Orkland.

"Brought it all the way from Old Middle Earth, we did," he added. "In pieces."

"Impressive," I replied, wondering if everyone I was going to meet on this mission was crazy.

Orkland turned out to be on one of the other islands making up New Zealand. The continent was called Oz, or the West Island, and I was told quite firmly that I didn't want to go there. Which I really didn't, if the "coathanger" was here in New Zealand. And they assured me that it was.

Next day we made our way to Orkland, and admired their bridge. It did look a lot like the one in the ancient picture, so I went ahead and made plans. The tourist bureau made it very easy for us, booking us onto a bridge tour, where we would be able to view a bizarre local custom called "bungie". Apparently this involved tying elastic cords to one's ankles and jumping off bridges and suchlike

structures. I was amazed that anyone would voluntarily subject themselves to such treatment, but even some of the tourists were paying for the privilege. Some had actually come here for the purpose, which struck me as even more insane.

The bungie (and Angelina, who demanded that she would have a go, and did so in spectacular fashion) provided ample distraction for me to attach the device to the bridge. Then, in the dead of night, we stole a boat, placed ourselves where we hoped was directly under the centre span of the bridge, triggered the device, and that's how we stole a bridge. Of course, we weren't in quite the right spot. I was glad that the kindly former owner of the boat had included underwater breathing gear, because the damn thing sunk like a solid lump of concrete and metal. Which, of course it was, complete with its extrusions into multiple dimensions.

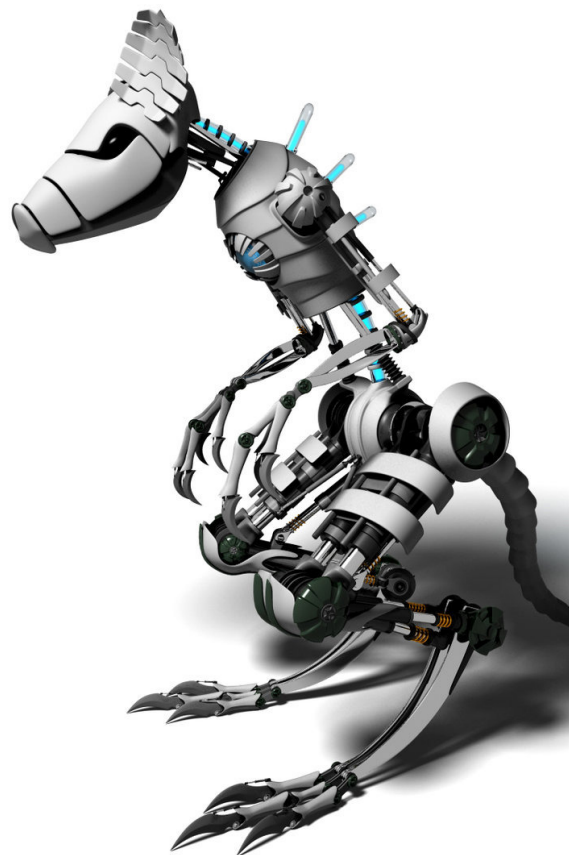
We fished it out and had us a beautifully detailed model bridge, just like you could buy in the best souvenir shops. Only not.... After we washed the saltwater off, and dried it thoroughly, it looked magnificent. The device remained attached, but now looked like a wooden base for the model. Nice touch, I thought. The Collector would be happy, and so would Inskipp, because we'd figured out exactly how those bridges had been nicked.

"You sure that's the right bridge?" whispered Angelina, as we headed back up the space elevator.

"Dunno, really."

"Would he be able to tell the difference?"

"Dunno. But if he complains, well, there's this bridge someone might be interested in..."



by
Jacqui
Smith

The Sky at Night – October 2012

Spring is here. You may have noticed that Scorpio is currently at the zenith after sunset, and if you're up early enough you'll see Orion also near the zenith just before dawn. So it's time to see what's coming up in the night sky in the following months.

Looking south, the Southern Cross is heading down to the horizon and Canopus is currently sitting on it. On the other side, Achernar is getting higher along with the two Magellanic Clouds. Looking at the SMC, through binoculars, you can also see the second brightest globular cluster (after Omega Centaurus), that is 47 Tucanae (NGC104). On the other side of the SMC is a second globular cluster which is NGC362. The LMC contains the Tarantula Nebula (NGC2070) as well as many other objects. It was the location of a rather bright supernova, SN1978a.

Not many bright stars in the Spring sky. In October, in the north, you'll see what appears to be a triangle of bright stars, two of which are low on the horizon. These are Altair, Vega and Deneb. To the north east are four brightest stars that form a square. This is commonly known as the Great Square of Pegasus, although one of the stars are in Andromeda. Near Altair, is a compact group of stars which is the constellation of Delphinus. Looking more overhead is a bright star which stands out more because of the lack of rivals. This is Formalhaut, the brightest star in Pisces Australis. Capricorn is also overhead and can be recognised by being basically triangular shaped. Looking towards the east after Capricorn is Aquarius followed by Pisces near the eastern horizon. As the night goes on, Aries will rise followed by Taurus.

Short this month. Next month will be the lead in to the total solar eclipse in November and concentrating a bit on the Magallenic Clouds and the area around the South Celestial Pole.

Events:

Jupiter rises around midnight, so the only planets visible in the evening sky are Mars, which is low in the west, Mercury, also low in the west, Uranus (very faint if you know where to look) and Neptune (need binoculars). Mars will be close to Antares on the 21st.

The Orionid meteor show is on the early morning between midnight and 4 am on the nights of the 20th to 23rd so you may see more meteors than normal around those times.

Phases of the Moon:

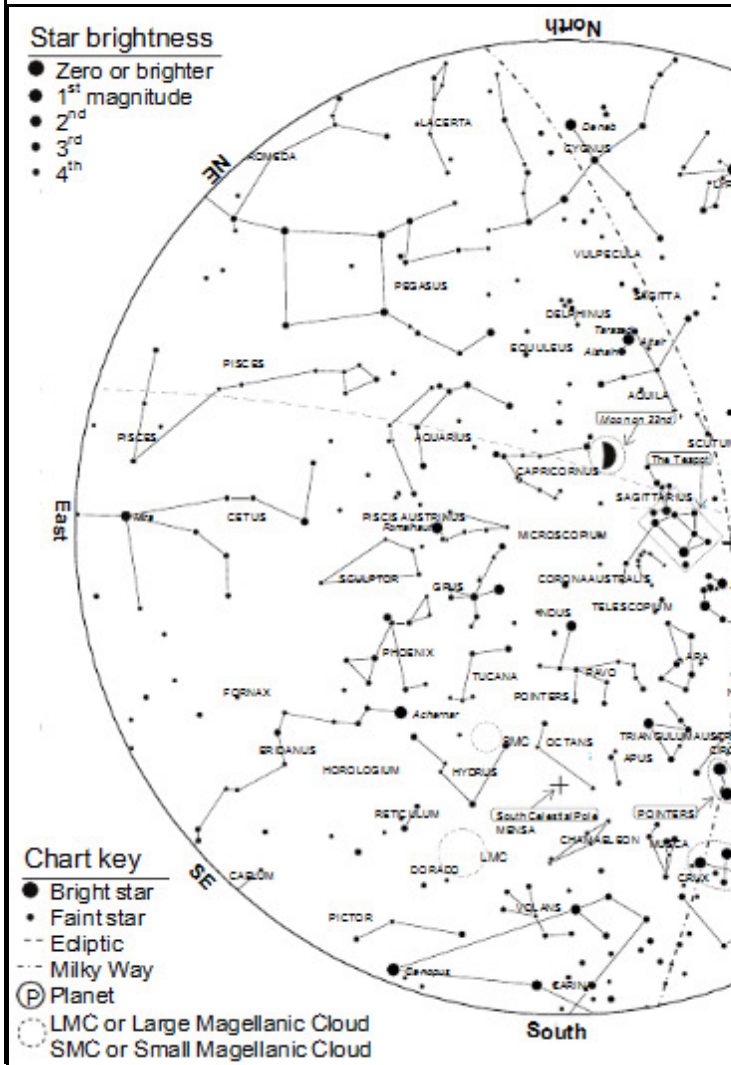
- Last Quarter—8th October
- New Moon—15th October
- First Quarter—22nd October
- Full Moon—30th October



Tarantula Nebula



47 Tucanae Globular Cluster



by
Keith
Smith

Obituaries

August 15

Harry Harrison, (aged 87), American science fiction writer, creator of “The Stainless Steel Rat”, and “Bill, the Galactic Hero”, as well as more serious work such as “Make Room! Make Room!” which inspired the movie “Soylent Green”.



Biff Elliot, (aged 89), American actor, known to fans for his guest appearance in the Star Trek episode "The Devil in the Dark".



August 16

William Windom, (aged 88), Emmy Award-winning American actor, known to fans as Commodore Matt Decker, commander of the doomed U.S.S. Constellation in the Star Trek episode "The Doomsday Machine".

August 17

Victor Poor, (aged 79), American engineer whose designs of hardware and software led to many innovations, including the development of the Intel 8088 microchip.

August 19

Tony Scott, (aged 68), British film director and brother of Ridley Scott. He directed several popular action movies including “Top Gun”, “Enemy of the State” and “Unstoppable”; and co-produced the TV series “Numb3rs”. He is thought to have committed suicide by jumping off the Vincent Thomas Bridge in Los Angeles.

August 20

Phyllis Diller, (aged 95), American comedienne and actress, famous for her persona as a wild-haired and eccentrically dressed housewife, and for her distinctive laugh...



August 23

Josepha Sherman, (aged 65), American science fiction author, who won Compton Crook Award in 1990 for the novel “The Shining Falcon” and contributed to numerous anthologies.

Jerry Nelson, (aged 78), American puppeteer who worked on “The Muppets Show”, “Sesame Street”, and “Fraggle Rock”.

His most famous character was Count von Count.



August 25

Neil Armstrong, (aged 82), American astronaut, who became the first person to walk on the Moon on July 20, 1969.

August 31

Max Bygraves, (aged 89), English comedian, singer, actor and variety performer, who appeared on his own television shows, sometimes performing comedy sketches between songs. He made twenty Royal Variety Performance appearances, and recorded several albums, mostly titled “Singalongamax”.



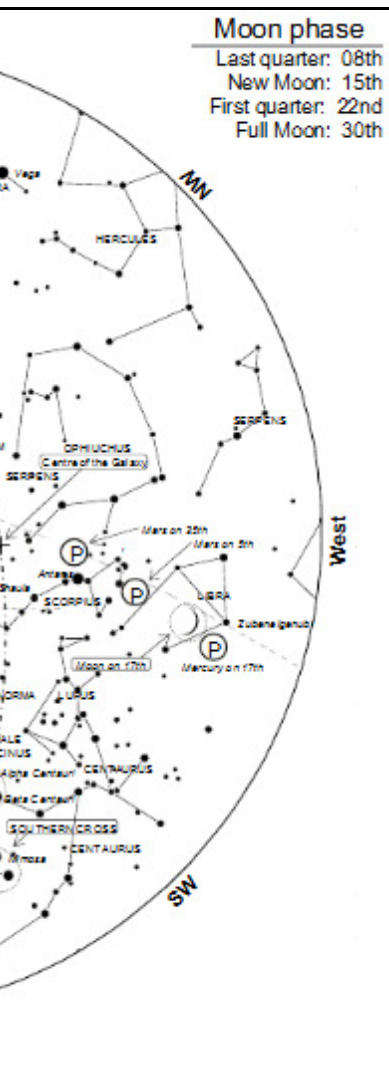
September 1

Hal David, (aged 91), American lyricist who was best known for his collaborations with composer Burt Bacharach, which included “Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head”, “I'll Never Fall in Love Again”, “Do You Know the Way to San Jose”, “Walk On By”, “What the World Needs Now Is Love”, “I Say a Little Prayer”, and “(There's) Always Something There to Remind Me”.



September 10

Lance LeGault, (aged 77), American film and television actor, who famously played Colonel Roderick Decker in the 1980s American television series The A-Team. He made many guest appearances on TV shows, including “Star Trek: The Next Generation”, and “Crusade”.



Quiz Answers:

1. B. Henry Maxwell Dempsey
2. B. Deathworld
3. C. Joan
4. D. Vale of Avoca, Ireland.
5. B. ConFiction in The Hague, Netherlands
6. C. Soya and lentils
7. C. Bolivar
8. A. The Bishop
9. B. Bill, the Galactic Hero on the Planet of No Return
10. C. Mosasaurs

Compiled by Jacqui Smith

One Step for a Man - Some Reflections about Neil Armstrong

by Keith Smith

I was just a kid when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, but already my head was stuffed full of astronomy and the possibilities that the space program were going to give us. While other boys my age were going on about cars and motorbikes, I was reading up on Gemini and Apollo. I didn't see the moon landing on TV but remember hearing it on the radio at school. And yes, he did mean to say "One small step for a man," but he either flubbed the line, or it was rendered unintelligible.

I guess Gemini 8 really told us what sort of man he was. It was his first flight. While docked with the Agena, one of the control thrusters on the Gemini capsule got stuck on and the capsule started rolling. As per procedure, they undocked from the Agena but the roll got worse. Armstrong had to figure out how to stop the roll before both astronauts on board were spun into unconsciousness. He eventually used the re-entry control system to fix it but the rules said they had to reenter the atmosphere if it was used. So they did and they landed safely. Neil was calm and collected throughout the entire emergency.

That same calmness proved to be an asset during the landing when the computer was guiding the LEM down towards an area covered in boulders. Neil took control of the craft and manually flew it sideways until a safe landing site was found. They landed safely with only a few seconds of fuel remaining.

He was a quiet individual, not seeking the limelight and after the landing basically retired from public life. I guess I'll never look at the moon again without thinking of Neil and the others who made the trip. Hopefully they won't be the last.



by
Keith
Smith



Neil Armstrong on Gemini 8



The only photo of Neil Armstrong on the Moon



*Some footprints are more significant than others...
Neil Armstrong's footprint on the Moon*

*Neil Armstrong in
September 2011.*



Uncorked

by Broderick Wells

Those of you that read this column will be aware that I have been tutoring three streams of students at University of Auckland. Over the mid-semester break they had the unalloyed pleasure of writing a 1500 word essay on one of eleven topics relating to some aspect or other of Global History. This 99% of them have done. However, a depressingly large number of them seem to be unaware of how to fill out a cover sheet. Bluntly, this bunch left **my name** off the section labelled "tutor". Considering I wear a name badge for many of the tutorials (I can't be bothered removing all the work paraphernalia all the time), I'm beginning to wonder at their powers of observation.

But never mind. They won't be losing marks for that. I have to mark this impressive pile of offerings. No-one has seen fit to include a bribe. Not that it would matter but it's the thought that counts. I have three weeks to supply the Department, and the students, with a grade somewhere between E and A+. I expect very few of either. Most will be in the B range. Not because I'm a B marker, but that's just how it goes: writing essays is a skill that takes a while to develop, and most of them are first years. Of course, I'm ready to be amazed. Technically it is possible for them all to get A+: we give them marking guidelines just so they know what we expect. How many will have read them? I suspect a very small proportion.

On the personal front, life has been interesting. Along with the tutoring, which means extra money (yea) has come the added expenditure of a root canal operation for one of my teeth. Every time I get a chance of nobbling the credit card bill, my teeth seem to engage in a conspiracy to deprive me of the opportunity. The next extravagance has been a new pin for my watch strap, along with a new battery for the watch. However, I'd got so used to not wearing my watch that I thought I'd lost it this afternoon when I finished bashing up some wood for fire, mark III. After an eternity searching (how does one measure time if not with a watch?), I found it. It was on the dresser where I'd put it last night. What a plonker.

The final frippery I've indulged in is a new mobile phone. The old one was suffering badly in the screen display department. LCDs only last so long, and my poor old phone was degenerating to illegibility. I could no longer read it in full daylight on either the main or the mini display. So I splurged on new one. The first challenge was trying to open it to insert the battery and SIM cards. Yes, SIM cards – it takes two. As I had a spare from my sojourn in Russia and I was forever in fear of losing it, what better place to store it than in the phone? Naturally, with only that card in, I don't get any service. But if ever I'm back in Russia, then Vodaphone won't be charging me an arm and another body part to use my mobile. Of course, there was nothing in the manual about how to do this simple operation. Eventually, I managed to break into my phone and insert the relevant bits. I then had the annoying message, which took several minutes for me to kill, that there were two cards present and I had selected Vodaphone as the primary carrier. Bloody touch screen is

not quite discriminating enough to accept "near enough" when it comes to deleting these messages. And typing a text message is an exercise in fat finger syndrome. But it works and the display can be read even in the noonday sun. Welcome to modern technology.



Born of Silence

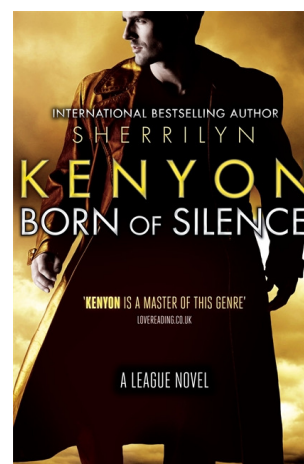
by Sherrilyn Kenyon
Published by Piatkus
Supplied by Hatchette
Reviewed by Cindy Hargreaves

Meet Kere a explosives engineer; he also happens to be the second most infamous member of the shadow organisation called Sentella. No one outside the Sentella knows his true identity – a big reason for this could be the astronomical bounty on his head.

Now meet Zarya Starska, she grew up on the back streets of hell. She dreams of a different life and a different world – she was labelled a traitor because of her father's beliefs. Her goal as a resistance leader is to topple the government that took her father's life, along with her right-hand man known only as Kere.

As normal, Sherrilyn Kenyon has delivered a action packed, emotion wrenching, tear jerking novel. My personal opinion was that this was not as good as a couple of the others in the series, but it was still good and I could not put it down. It dealt with some serious issues like what happens to a person who has been captured by the enemy.

Overall I did like this book because it did keep me engrossed from start to finish. As always she had well developed characters, plot and world. Look forward to reading more books in this world.



**Fair Game:
Alpha & Omega Book 3**

*by Patricia Briggs
Published by Orbit
Purchased from The Book
Depository
Reviewed by Jan
Butterworth*



Anna and Charles are asked to be consultants to the FBI task force set up to catch a serial killer. They discover that while some victims were werewolves, most were fae. While they are helping, a new victim goes missing, sparking a desperate race against time to find her and the killer before it's too late. The human daughter of a high-ranking fae is then kidnapped, and the taskforce has only hours to find her. Witches and extinct fae may be involved in the crime, and Anna is the next target.

Tightly plotted, the story moved at a fast pace, and had a lot of action. There were some tender moments but not too many. The characters were strong and interesting, with many of them newcomers. It was interesting to see how much Anna has changed from the scared, timid werewolf in "On The Prowl". She's now a confident Omega that doesn't need rescuing.

This is a must read for any Patricia Briggs fans. It gives important information in the outing of werewolves and this sets things up for the next in the Mercedes Thompson series. I did not see that ending coming! This book is set directly after River Marked and can be read alone though, as enough information is given to grasp the world its set in. The ending is both satisfying and realistic, altering the fragile dynamic of human/supernatural relations. Things won't be the same again.

**Songs Of The Earth:
The Wild Hunt Book 1**

*by Elspeth Cooper
Published by Orion
Supplied by Hatchette
Reviewed by Jan
Butterworth*



Caught practising using magic, Gair is condemned as a heretic by the church and tortured to make him repent. Unexpectedly released, he is guided out of the city by Alderan, a stranger who understands The Song, the source of Gair's magic. They make their way south, to an island Alderan knows of that has a school for others who can

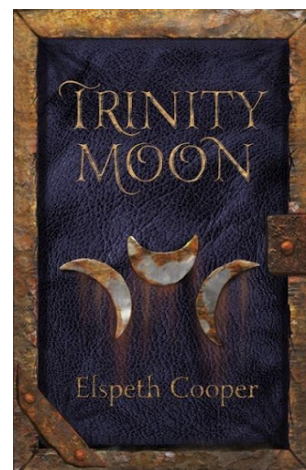
hear The Song. There is a bit of danger along the way as they are pursued by a witch finder.

The church turns out to have a number of factions, and the political manoeuvring among them is intense. One of them has employed the witch finder, who is curiously determined to find and kill Gair. Along the way, Alderan and Gair meet a character who will play a major role later. Gair learns more about The Song, and they narrowly escape death several times.

Told from the POV of several key characters, this book starts out slow, describing things and careful world building. A lot of information is given and it seems a bit boring. Please persevere though, things heat up in the last third of the book, nuggets of information make sense and you realise – aha! That's why that happened – as things fall into place. Well worth reading and you get a good idea of the various players. Off to read the next in The Wild Hunt series!

**Trinity Moon:
The Wild Hunt Book 2**

*by Elspeth Cooper
Published by Orion
Supplied by Hatchette
Reviewed by Jan
Butterworth*



Set party during the time of Songs of the Earth and partly after the battle, Savin and his manipulations are exposed, showing the why of the first book. Teia is introduced and her life as a member of the Clans is shown. She can scry - seeing the future, though she keeps this talent hidden, fearful she will be given to the Speaker, as all female talents are. Growing uneasy about the Speaker's desire for war, she embarks on a perilous journey.

Gair and Alderan depart on a quest to find the bitterseeds the Knights hid. Burning for revenge against Savin for Aysha's death, Gair is reluctant to go but promised Alderan to obey him. His Song is also failing and the Cultists are rising. The Church is manipulating away and Duncan is trying to save the Empire. The Wild Hunt is being set loose.....

Exciting and fast-paced, this story has a tightly woven plot, vivid descriptions, and strong characters. You feel as though you're there and seeing what the characters are seeing. It's easy to get caught up in the story and I'm waiting with bated breath for book 3 of The Wild Hunt. Requiring a lot of concentration to remember events, as the story shifts between different people and perspectives, this can be read as a standalone. I bet you'll be hooked and need the next in the series though, especially after the cliff-hanger ending.

Kitty Steals The Show

by Carrie Vaughn

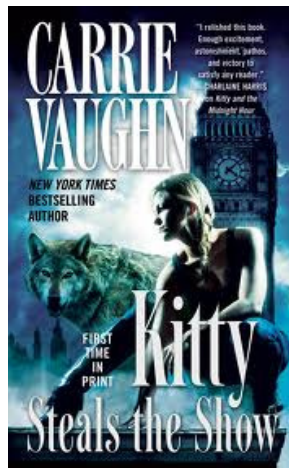
Published by Tor

Purchased from The Book

Depository

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Kitty has been invited to be the keynote speaker at the world's first paranatural convention, and she, Ben, and Cormac (with Amelia) travel to London. Amelia discovers her remaining relatives, while Kitty's keynote speech was explosive and exposed some unpleasant truths, setting things up for the next book.



There is some exciting action and we meet many new faces, as well as catch up with established characters. More about the long game is revealed, while enemies are established and alliances are formed. The plot was tightly woven and there was a lot of action, though not as much as previous books. I can't wait to find out what happens next!

Mansfield with Monsters

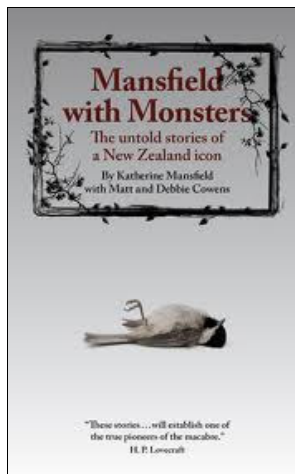
by Katherine Mansfield, Matt Cowens, Debbie Cowens

Published by Steam Press

Supplied by Steam Press

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

I was quite prepared not to like this book. I'd failed to get very far with "Pride and Prejudice with Zombies", and Mansfield was one of those writers I was forced to read in English class, not someone I ever read for fun. Not until now, that is. "Mansfield with Monsters" proved to be a remarkably entertaining read. The macabre twist added to each tale is always different, and always delightful. I found myself wondering with anticipation, as I began a new story, where the Cowens would take this one. The level of integration of new material into the stories is sufficiently seamless that I found myself trawling the Internet for the originals to make comparisons (<http://www.gutenberg.org/> has "The Garden Party and Other Stories" which contains many of the titles also in "Mansfield with Monsters").



I suspect that "Mansfield with Monsters" is a more successful mash-up than "Pride and Prejudice with Zombies" for three reasons. Firstly, the fact that it is a collection of short stories allows for a level of variety – I find that zombies can get very tedious, very quickly. Secondly, "Pride and Prejudice" dates to 1813, while Mansfield's stories are from the 1920's. This makes her a contemporary of Lovecraft and Wells, so the integration

of elements of their works can be done smoothly and without any sense of literary anachronism. Thirdly, Mansfield's stories often already have a sense of discomfort, of inner horror, which the Cowens have drawn out into the open and extemporised upon. This is not your cosy urban fantasy, but the truly scary stuff. Definitely no sparkly vampires in sight – and if there were, you'd be looking to stake them, not date them. It all works, surprisingly well. No doubt the Mansfield purists will be rolling their eyes in horror, but I'd certainly recommend this book for those English teachers who would appreciate a fresh take on Mansfield, bored students who need a break from the traditional short story, and anybody who likes properly scary horror fiction. Expect to see this book up for the Sir Julius Vogel awards next year.

The Prince of Soul and the Lighthouse

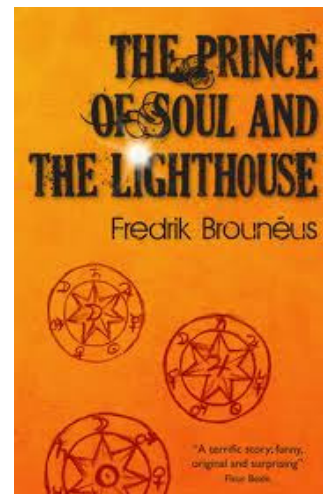
by Fredrik Brounéus

Published by Steam Press

Supplied by Steam Press

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

It's fantasy, and it's set in the modern day, but it's not urban fantasy. For one thing, there are no vampires, no werewolves, no wizards... just a teenager, his girlfriend, his sort-of zombie grandfather, a Tibetan monk, and assorted Men in Black. For another, it's set in Dunedin and rural Otago – not a whole lot of urban there.



The principle fantasy element is an unusual one – reincarnation is real, and someone has built a lighthouse to show the direction in which souls must go to be reincarnated as humans. Only it's working too well, there are now far too many humans, and somebody has to turn it off. That someone being our eighteen-year-old hero, George Larson, student and wannabe Prince of Soul (music, that is).

At times his plotting and characterisation stretched my credibility, but Brounéus has learned his craft well enough, and it hangs together. I also have my reservations about Brounéus' take on Isaac Newton – who may have had some unorthodox religious beliefs, but as far as I can ascertain, reincarnation was not one of them. The sense of humour that pervades the novel certainly helps, a whole lot more than the preachy tone sometimes associated with religious themes like reincarnation. The illustrations are helpful, both in setting the mood, and aiding the reader with maps and diagrams (I like a good map, and let's face it, for many of Brounéus' potential readers, Otago might as well be an alien planet).

The intended audience for this novel is quite plainly young adults, but there's plenty here to entertain the adult reader who is looking for something a bit different to brighten their day. Another one for the Sir Julius Vogel awards next year.

Au Contraire!

2013

science fiction + fantasy + geekery

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



WOMEN'S REFUGE®

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

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This Month:

BOOK Monday September 24th
(at Chez Smith)

SPACE Friday October 5th at 7:30 pm
(at Chez Smith)

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 17 October, 2012, 7:30 pm
Auckland Horticultural Centre,
990 Great North Road,
Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

October 19th to 22nd

Armageddon Expo 2012

ASB Showgrounds in Greenlane over Labour weekend. <http://armageddonexpo.com/nz/>

July 12-14th 2013

Au Contraire 2013

34th New Zealand National SF Convention
<http://www.aucontraire.org.nz/index.php>