



**Sailor Neptune at Armageddon**

*(Photo by Keith Smith)*

**Issue XLVIII - Spring 2015**

**ENZYME**

# Musings from Under the Mountain

Fantasy is easy, reality is hard...

Which is probably why the science fiction section at the library is being crowded out with urban fantasy and paranormal romance. Writing realistic science fiction is a lot harder than fantasy, which has to be one reason why we aren't seeing so much of it.

Firstly, there's the science. You don't have to have a degree in the sciences to write solid science fiction, but it certainly helps. At least, you'll know when it's time to talk to someone who knows more about a given subject than you do. And you'll understand what they are talking about. (Hopefully—I do have a science degree, and there's stuff in quantum physics that is just too weird). But the fact remains that if you want to write hard science fiction you should be prepared to spend time researching the facts underpinning your story. (The same applies to alternate history—only then you ought to swot up on real history, before you start messing around with it.)

Then, there's the grit. The hard bits. Reading Kim Stanley Robinson's "Aurora" really brought this home to me. I didn't especially enjoy the book, because it was too depressing, but I have to admit that he didn't stint on the hard realities of space travel. You could say that he overdid it (I know I did), but the fact remains that space travel is not easy, nor is it ever likely to be. It might look dead easy for Han Solo or for Hikaru Sulu, but that's space opera, not hard science fiction. There are real issues we have to solve before we can even go to Mars, never mind explore other solar systems—not the least of which are the enormous distances involved. Space truly is very, very big.

Finally, the immediate future is looking bleak. The horsemen are lurking in the wings, and they might not be what we were expecting. There's climate change, guaranteed to bring floods and famine in its wake. There's population pressure. I heard that one of the perpetrators of the atrocities in Paris was a boy from a family with two mothers and seventeen kids... With that kind of breeding rate, and without a corresponding death rate, thanks to modern medicine, then there simply won't enough resources to go around. People will get desperate, and war will follow. With or without a sect of mad religious extremists to spur it on. Which brings me to the next horseman—resource depletion. The world is running out of all sorts of stuff. And it doesn't help that we persist in doing silly things with what we have left. Helium, for example, is a limited resource and darned useful. So why do we let people waste it in party balloons? One way or another, if we're not

very careful, we're headed for trouble, even without any number of disaster scenarios, from a Carrington event (it's inevitable, and there's not a lot we can do about a solar storm) through an eruption of the Yellowstone Supervolcano (it's overdue) to a meteor strike... The upshot of all this is that writing credible stories set in the immediate future becomes very difficult. Especially if you want to put an optimistic slant on things. (Oh, and it's also hard not to offend somebody or other, because you had the audacity to predict that their actions are liable to send us further down the slippery path).

Which is one of the reasons I found Andy Weir's "The Martian" so refreshing when I was sent a copy to review last year. I could not readily recall the last time I'd read such excellent hard science fiction, set in space in our own solar system. I'm having to think back all the way to Heinlein's "Red Planet", or perhaps some of Larry Niven's stories. In my review, I predicted they would make a movie, and that if they stuck to the book, it ought to be a good one. Well, they did, mostly, and it turned out to be one of the best movies I'd seen in a long time. It would be nice to say, "More, please," but I suspect I might be waiting a little while.

"The Martian" skirts around all the potentially nasty geo-political issues by essentially ignoring them. The story revolves around one man on Mars, with some time spent in space with a crew of astronauts, and somewhat less with NASA on Earth. It could be the day after tomorrow, although from the technological point of view, it must be set at least ten years in the future. Getting humans to Mars is still very much a project being worked on. There are a host of technical problems to be solved. Just landing on Mars is difficult. But, thanks to books and movies like "The Martian" there's a better chance that those things will be done. In reality. And that has to be a good thing, in the long term, for all of us on Earth.

*Jacqui Smith,  
Editor and President,  
Stella Nova.*

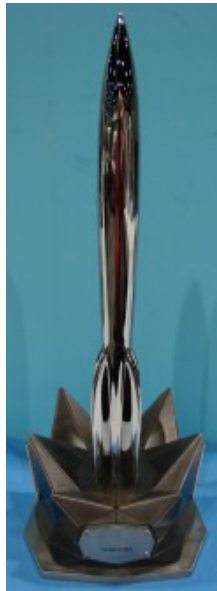
## Contents

Editorial	2
Saaquan	3
Armageddon 2015	4-5
Sky at Night	6-7
Obituaries	8-9
Reviews	10-11
Au Contraire 2016 Update	12
Upcoming Events	12



## Hugo Award Results

Best Novel: Three Body Problem by Cixin Liu, translation by Ken Liu  
Best Novella: No Award  
Best Novelette: "The Day The World Turned Upside Down" by Thomas Olde Heuvelt, translation by Lia Belt  
Best Short Story: No Award  
Best Related Work: No Award  
Best Graphic Story: Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal written by G. Willow Wilson, illustrated by Adrian Alphona and Jake Wyatt  
Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form: Guardians of the Galaxy written by James Gunn and Nicole Perlman, directed by James Gunn.  
Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form: Phan Black "By Means Which Have Never Been Tried" written by Graeme Manson, directed by John Fawcett  
Best Editor, Short Form: No Award  
Best Editor, Long Form: No Award  
Best Professional Artist: Julie Dillon  
Best Semiprozine: Lightspeed Magazine  
Best Fanzine: Journey Planet  
Best Fancast: Galactic Suburbia Podcast  
Best Fan Writer: Laura J. Mixon  
Best Fan Artist: Elizabeth Legget  
The John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: Wesley Chu



It's pretty obvious from that list that the big winner at this year's Hugo awards was Noah Ward. Which saddens me, because I have a lot of respect for some of the nominees like Toni Weiskopf, Editor at Baen Book who really deserved a Hugo for all the work she had done for the genre that year. It was disturbing how many people were cheering what was hardly a positive result for science fiction. I'm rather glad I wasn't there. And I doubt very much that we've seen the last of this sorry business. I can only hope that we've got it out of our solar system by 2020.

Which brings me to a more pleasant side of the story. The New Zealand in 2020 bid is evidently going very well, and I know that Norman and Maree did an excellent job of promoting both the convention and our country at Sasquan. I think they should be applauded for their efforts (although I know that some of you are convinced they must be crazy to be wanting to bring the WorldCon to New Zealand). They're working hard, and we're truly grateful. Here's hoping that they (and we) can manage to pull it off!

The NZ in 2020 bid table at Sasquan.



# ARMAGEDDON 2015

All three Smiths went to Armageddon this year—though not together. Paul went with his friends on the Saturday, Keith went Saturday and Sunday, and I went on the Monday. I wasn't terribly impressed with the choice of guests this year, there were too many actors I'd never heard of, and no literary guests (I'd enjoyed meeting Terry Brooks last year). However, I was thankful that the eating contests had apparently gone somewhere else; and that the wrestling had been moved out of sight, and more importantly, out of hearing.

I was mainly there to check out the goodies, though I didn't actually buy much; and to photograph costumed people, of whom there were many and various. I was relieved to find that the item before the cosplay contest in the main auditorium this year was a performance by a lady who does soundtracks for anime (she was very good, and her name was Aimee Blackschleger—had to look that up through wikipedia).

I was very impressed with the standard of make-up and costuming, and pleased with the resulting photos. Keith has been having fun playing with some of them in Photoshop, as you can see from this issue's cover.

Photos  
by  
Keith  
and  
Jacqui  
Smith





© Keith Smith



© Keith



© Keith Smith



# ARMAGEDDON

# 2015

Photos by Keith and Jacqui Smith



# The Sky at Night October 2015

Spring is here, although one might not think it from the weather we have been having as I write this, but the sky says it is, so it must be so. The winter constellations of Scorpio and Sagittarius, as well as Aquila and Cygnus are low in the west. Crux and Centaurus are low in the south, and we're looking up towards the constellations of Capricornus, Aquarius, Pisces and what one would call the 'Aviary' consisting of Grus, Pavo and Tucanae. The Milky Way also skirts the horizon at this point.

In my winter article, we finished with Sagittarius and Scorpio, so we'll start by moving along the ecliptic, taking in Capricornus, Aquarius and Pisces. This area of sky is known as the 'Sea' or the 'Water' as there are many water orientated constellations. As well as those three, there are also Pisces Australis, Delphinus (the Dolphin) and Cetus (the Whale). There's not a lot of bright stars in this area so finding one's way around can be difficult.

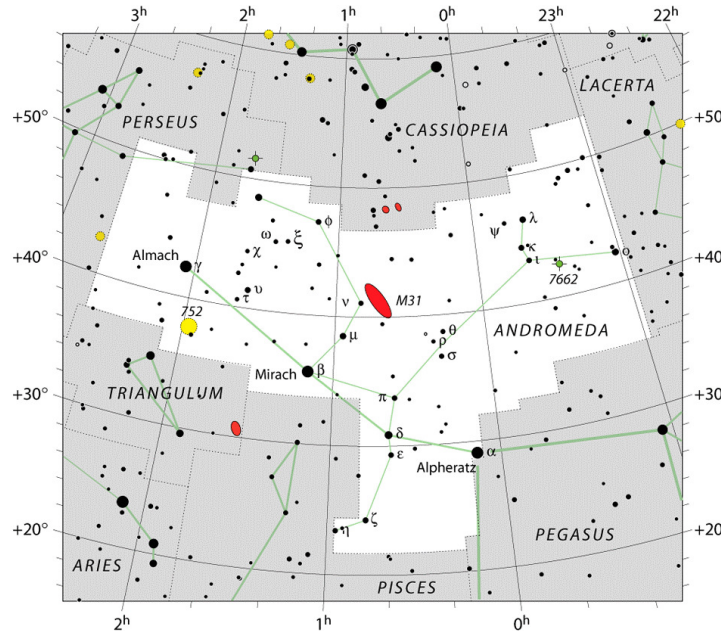
Capricorn looks like a triangle with a convex hypotenuse, and its brightest star just gets over magnitude 3. It also contains the globular cluster M30. To find it, take a line from Vega (in Lyra) through Deneb (in Cygnus) and carry on in that direction.

Further on is Aquarius, again another faint constellation. It is located to the north of Pisces Australis and is usually drawn with the overflowing water splashing on to the bright star Formalhaut in that constellation. It contains three Messier objects, the globular clusters M2 and M72 and the open cluster M73. It also contains two well known planetary nebula, the Saturn Nebula (NGC 7009) and the Helix Nebula (NGC 7293). Also of interest is NGC 7727 (or Arp 222) which is the result of a collision of two spiral galaxies and NGC 7252 (Arp 226), again the product of a galactic merger. This one is also known as the 'Atoms for Peace' galaxy.

Pisces is depicted as two fishes connected by fishing lines joined by a knot. One fish, depicted by a circle of stars, is located just above the Square of Pegasus while the other is located east of it. From each fish a line of stars flow east and south east to meet at the knot, near the tail of Cetus. There are no stars in Pisces brighter than third magnitude but it does contain the spiral galaxy M74, the brightest member of the M74 group. We have also crossed the vernal equinox at this point where the ecliptic meets the Celestial Equator. This is where the zero Right Ascension line is (much like the Greenwich Meridian on Earth) and the NGC catalogue numbers also start here, as they are ordered in RA order. This is why M74 is also NGC 628.

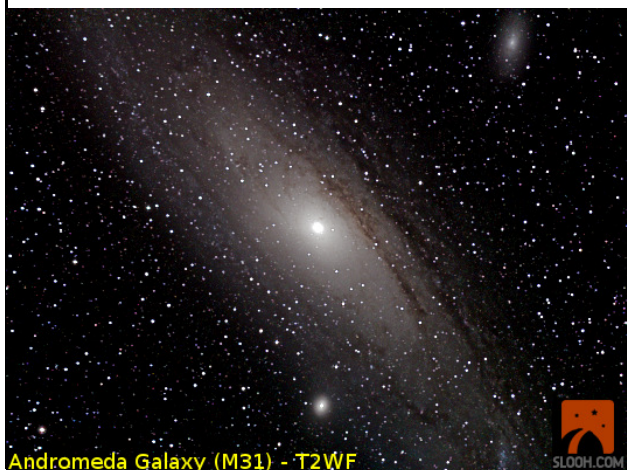
Looking north, the area is dominated by the constellations of Pegasus and Andromeda. To the north west would be Aquila and Cygnus. Just off the head of Aquila, between it and Pegasus is a tight grouping of faint stars known as the constellation of Delphinus the Dolphin.

Pegasus is easily found by finding the Square of Pegasus. Three of the stars represents the wing of the pegasus while the other one (the bottom right) marks the head of Andromeda. Pegasus lies to the north of Aquarius and its legs point westwards towards Cygnus. It contains the globular cluster M15 as well as a close grouping of galaxies called Stephan's Quintet (NGC 7318 or Arp 319). Four of these galaxies are in the process of colliding. The fifth (NGC 7320), is closer and just happens to be in line of sight.



How to find the Andromeda Galaxy

I am not sure we can see all of Andromeda from Auckland, but I know we can see its most well known member. Starting at the head star, which is part of the Great Square, move towards the horizon away from the Square, roughly in the direction of the diagonal until you encounter the second bright star in that line, then turn westwards following a line of two more stars. Just off the second one, if you're under a dark sky, you'll see a little fuzzy ellipse. That's the Andromeda Galaxy (M31) which is our nearest spiral galaxy and the one that the Milky Way Galaxy is destined to collide with, in about five billion years. It has its own set of companion galaxies, fifteen in all, with the two brightest being M32 and M110. One of those companion galaxies, the Pegasus Dwarf Irregular Galaxy, is the one depicted in Stargate Atlantis as the 'Pegasus Galaxy'.



by  
Keith  
Smith

Overhead can be seen a bright star, which stands out as there aren't many bright stars up there. That is Fomalhaut and marks the mouth of Pisces Australis – the Southern Fish. It lies above Aquarius and extends towards Capricorn. To the east of Aquarius and the north of Pisces is the constellation of Cetus the Whale. It contains a long period variable star, Mira (Omicron Ceti) which changes from magnitude 3 to magnitude 10 (when it is invisible to the naked eye) and back again over a period of 332 days. Cetus also contains many galaxies including the brightest known Seyfert galaxy, M77.

Finally, above the South Celestial Pole, we have the faint constellations of Pavo, Tucanae, Indus, Phoenix and Grus. Grus (the Crane) is located just south of Pisces Australis and is one of the 'Southern Birds', along with Pavo, Phoenix and Tucanae. Grus also contains the 'Grus Quartet' of galaxies. West of Grus is Indus (the Indian), a constellation that has no bright stars in it (Grus has three). South of Indus is Pavo the Peacock with one bright star marking its tail. It also contains the bright globular cluster NGC 6752, and the spiral galaxy NGC 6744. South of Pavo is Octans which is the southernmost constellation and mostly extends in this direction. Its brightest star is Nu Octantis at magnitude 3.73 and the southern pole star, Sigma Octantis, which shines at a near invisible 5.4 magnitude.

To the east of Indus, the south of Grus and Phoenix and near the bright star Achernar is Tucana the Toucan. All of its stars are third magnitude or fainter but, within its borders is most of the Small Magellanic Cloud. It also contains the bright globular cluster 47 Tucanae NGC 104, the fainter NGC 362, and the much fainter NGC 121, all of which lie near the Cloud. NGC 121 is associated with the SMC. Phoenix is located north of Tucanae and east of Grus. It contains several galaxies, including Robert's Quartet (NGCs 87, 88, 89 and 92) which are in the process of merging, as well as NGC 37 and NGC 625. Its brightest star shines with a magnitude of 2.4, and is the only bright star in the constellation. Finally, between Phoenix and Cetus, is the faint constellation of Sculptor, containing the galaxies NGC 253 and NGC 55.

As for the planets, most of them are either low in the morning sky or hidden by the sun. Only Saturn is visible, low in the evening, near the head of Scorpius but is getting lower and lower each evening, finally getting lost in the twilight late October, early November.

Venus, Jupiter and Mars are making an appearance in the morning and a few interesting conjunctions will be happening this month. Some of them will also involve the moon. On the 6<sup>th</sup> October, the crescent moon, Venus and Jupiter will form a straight line towards the rising sun. The 18<sup>th</sup> will see Mars and Jupiter less than one moon width apart, the 25<sup>th</sup> will see Jupiter and Venus only 1 degree apart (two full moon widths) and, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, Mars and Venus will be shining very close together. Meanwhile Mercury will remain too close to the sun to observe, although you may catch a glimpse of it on the 15<sup>th</sup> when it reaches its greatest elongation from the sun in the morning sky on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October. It will still be very low. We need to wait until its reappearance in the evening sky in December to get a good look at it.



M77  
Canary Islands 2 High Mag  
Aug 3rd, 2013 04:05:25 UTC  
Taken by Keith Smith

**The Moon in October 2015:**

Last Quarter—5<sup>th</sup> October  
New Moon—13<sup>th</sup> October  
First Quarter—21<sup>st</sup> October  
Full Moon—28<sup>th</sup> October

**The Moon in November 2015:**

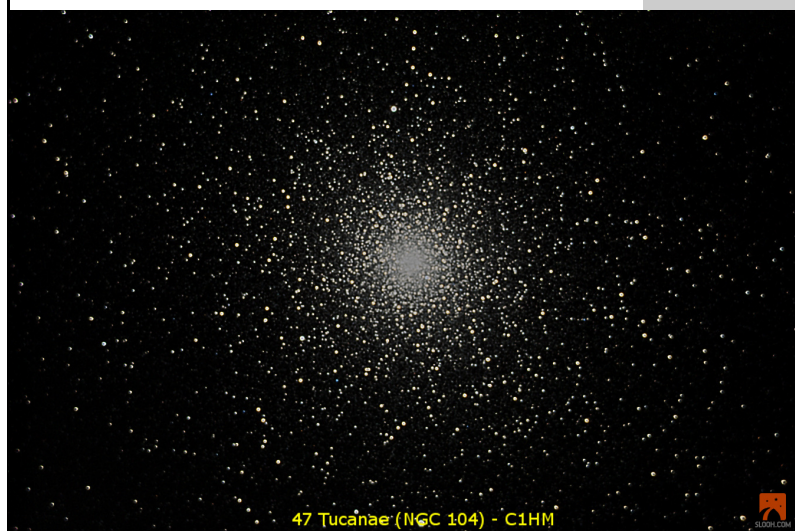
Last Quarter—4<sup>th</sup> November  
New Moon—12<sup>th</sup> November  
First Quarter—19<sup>th</sup> November  
Full Moon—26<sup>th</sup> November

**The Moon in December 2015:**

Last Quarter—3<sup>rd</sup> December  
New Moon—11<sup>th</sup> December  
First Quarter—19<sup>th</sup> December  
Full Moon—26<sup>th</sup> December

Pictures and maps to go with this article can be found at:  
[https://photos.google.com/album/AF1QipMSWQIcjcpx0vh\\_1tonQzlwK\\_vXV2ZZPFX9YkQj](https://photos.google.com/album/AF1QipMSWQIcjcpx0vh_1tonQzlwK_vXV2ZZPFX9YkQj)

Winter sky pics (if you missed them) are at:  
<https://photos.google.com/album/AF1QipORLrqYq6Kqn3NILpXGH069aTKtmbtUoP8QeDX4>



47 Tucanae (NGC 104) - C1HM



# O B I T S

# Obituaries

July 1

**Val Doonican**, (aged 88), Irish singer of traditional pop, easy listening, and novelty songs, who was noted for his warm and relaxed style. He found popular success especially in the United Kingdom



where he had five successive Top 10 albums in the 1960s as well as several hits on the UK Singles Chart, including "Walk Tall" and "Elusive Butterfly".

**Sir Nicholas Winton**, (aged 106),

British humanitarian who organized the rescue of 669 children, most of them Jewish, from Czechoslovakia on the eve of the Second World War in an operation later known as the Czech Kindertransport.

July 5

**Yoichiro Nambu**, (aged 94),

Japanese-born American physicist, a professor at the University of Chicago. Known for his contributions to the field of theoretical physics, he was awarded half of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2008 for the discovery in 1960 of the mechanism of spontaneous broken symmetry in subatomic physics.

July 10

**Omar Sharif**, (aged 83),

Egyptian actor, whose films included *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), and *Funny Girl* (1968). He was nominated for an Academy Award. He won three Golden Globe Awards (two for *Lawrence of Arabia*, and for *Doctor Zhivago*) and a César Award for his leading role in the French film *Monsieur Ibrahim*.



July 11

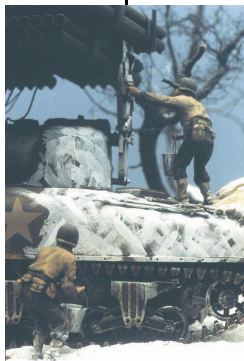
**Claudia Alexander**, (aged 56),

American research scientist specializing in geophysics and planetary science. She worked for the United States Geological

Survey and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. She was the last project manager of NASA's Galileo mission to Jupiter, and until the time of her death had served as project manager and scientist of NASA's role in the European-led Rosetta mission to study Comet Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

**Satoru Iwata**, (aged 55),

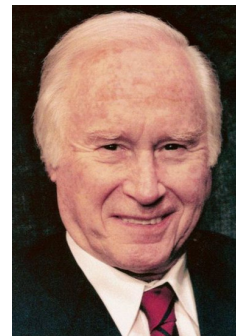
Japanese game programmer and businessman who served as the fourth president and chief executive officer of Nintendo. He was a major contributor in broadening the appeal of video games to a wider audience by focusing on novel and entertaining games rather than top-of-the-line hardware, and helped develop the *Pokémon* and *Super Smash Bros.* series.



July 14

**Olaf Pooley**, (aged 101),

English actor who made guest appearances in numerous shows including Professor Stahlman and his parallel Earth counterpart Director Stahlmann in the Doctor Who serial *Inferno* (1970). He also guest starred in *Star Trek: Voyager*, and was one of 28 actors to appear in both the *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* franchises



July 18

**George Coe**, (aged 86),

American film, stage and television actor, who portrayed Ben Cheviot, the eventual head of Network 23, on the series *Max Headroom*, and guest starred in numerous other series. He may be best known as Senator Howard Stackhouse in the TV series *The West Wing*.

**Brock Winkless**, (aged 56),

American puppeteer and visual effects technician, was best known as the puppeteer of Chucky in the 1988 horror film, *Child's Play*, and its sequels.

July 28

**Shawn Robinson**, (aged 41),

American stunt performer who performed stunts in over the span of 20 years, including films such as *Guardians of the Galaxy*, the *Transformers* film series, *Hook*, *Behind Enemy Lines*, *War of the Worlds* and more recently *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*.

August 1

**Cilla Black**, (aged 72),

English singer, television presenter and actress, who rose to fame in 1964 with the singles "Anyone Who Had a Heart" and "You're My World". Alongside a successful recording career, she hosted her own variety show, *Cilla*, between 1968 and 1976. She became a prominent television presenter in the 1980s and 1990s, hosting hit entertainment shows such as *Blind Date* (1985–2003).



**Sheperd Paine**, (aged 69),

American military historian and collector of militaria who probably is best known for the more than three decades he spent as a modeller, sculptor, miniature figure painter, and champion of the diorama. Paine arguably did more than anyone else to forward the unique hobby of military miniatures around the world, through his own pieces, his numerous "how-to" hobby books, and his championing of the "open system" of judging in use today.

Compiled  
by  
Jacqui  
Smith





August 5  
**George Cole**, (aged 90), English actor, best known for playing Arthur Daley in the long-running ITV comedy-drama show *Minder* and Flash Harry in the early *St Trinian's* films. But he played many other roles over his 60-year acting career, even .



September 1  
**Dean Jones**, (aged 84), American actor known for his light-hearted leading roles in several Walt Disney films between 1965 and 1977, including race car driver Jim Douglas in *The Love Bug*..

August 9  
**Susan Sheridan**, (aged 68), British voice actress, whose roles included Noddy in *Noddy's Toyland Adventures*, Princess Sylvia in *Muzzy in Gondoland*, Trillian in the BBC radio series *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and Princess Eilonwy in the animated film *The Black Cauldron*.

September 3  
**Daniel Thompson**, (aged 94), Canadian-born American inventor, creator of the automatic bagel maker and the folding ping pong table.

August 12  
**Stephen Lewis**, (aged 88), British comedy actor, best known for his roles as Inspector Cyril "Blakey" Blake in the LWT sitcom and film versions of *On the Buses*, as Clem "Smiler" Hemmingway in *Last of the Summer Wine*, and as Harry Lambert in BBC Television's *Oh, Doctor Beeching!*.



**Chandra Bahadur Dangi**, (aged 75) Nepalese primordial dwarf, the shortest man in recorded history for whom there is irrefutable evidence, measuring just 54.6 cm tall. Chandra came to the attention of the world when a wood contractor saw him in his village in the Dang district of Nepal, and he was awarded the title of shortest adult human ever recorded after his height was measured in February 2012.



September 4  
**Warren Murphy**, (aged 81) American author, primarily known for crime novels, co-creator of *The Destroyer* series, the basis for the film *Remo Williams: The Adventure Begins*. He won multiple Edgar and Shamus awards for his work. As a screenwriter, he was one of the authors of the screenplay for *The Eiger Sanction* in 1975, and he also co-wrote (with series creator Shane Black) the original story for *Lethal Weapon 2*.



August 17  
**Yvonne Craig**, (aged 78), American ballet dancer and actress best known for her role as Batgirl in the 1960s television series *Batman*, and as the Orion slave girl Marta in the Star Trek episode "Whom Gods Destroy" (1969). The Huffington Post called her "a pioneer of female superheroes".



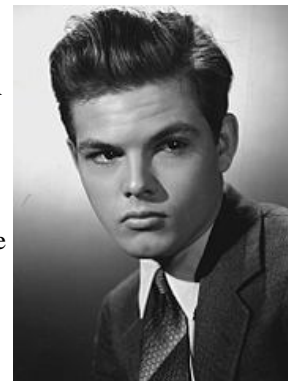
September 6  
**Martin Milner**, (aged 83), American film, stage, radio and television actor. Milner is best known for his performances in two popular television series: *Route 66*, (1960 to 1964), and *Adam-12*, (1968 to 1975). Later, he worked as a television guest star, most notably as James MacGyver, MacGyver's father.

August 30  
**Brad Anderson**, (aged 91), American cartoonist, best known for creating the comic strip *Marmaduke* in 1954, which he continued to draw to his death.



**Wes Craven**, (aged 76), American film director, writer, producer, and actor noted for his work on horror films, particularly slasher films. He was best known for creating the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise featuring the Freddy Krueger character, directing the first instalment and *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*, and co-writing *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* with Bruce Wagner. Craven also directed all four films in the *Scream* series, and co-created the Ghostface character.

September 7  
**Dickie Moore**, (aged 89) American actor, who was one of the last surviving actors to have appeared in silent film. A busy and popular actor during his childhood and youth, he appeared in over 100 films until the 1950s. Among his most notable appearances were the *Our Gang* series and other films such as *Oliver Twist*, *Blonde Venus*, *Sergeant York* and *Out of the Past*.



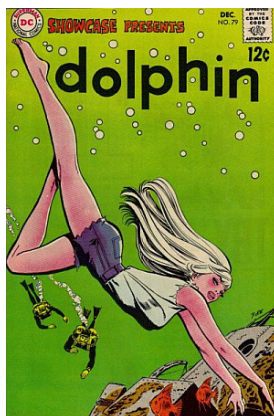
Compiled by  
Jacqui  
Smith

September 11

**Alan Purwin**, (aged 53), American helicopter pilot, aerial film operator, entrepreneur and philanthropist. Purwin founded and owned Helinet Aviation. Purwin contributed to the aerial cinematography industry and aided in the filming of hundreds of Hollywood movies such as *Pearl Harbor*, the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series and the *Transformers* film series

September 13

**Jay Scott Pike**, (aged 91), American comic book artist and commercial illustrator known for his 1950s and 1960s work for Marvel Comics and DC Comics, advertising art, and as a good girl artist. He created the DC character Dolphin and co-created the Marvel character Jann of the Jungle.



September 19

**Jackie Collins**, (aged 77), English romance novelist, who moved to Los Angeles in the 1960s, and spent most of her career in the US. She wrote 32 novels, which have sold over 500 million copies and have been translated into 40 languages. Eight of her novels have been adapted for the screen, either as films or television mini-series.

September 20

**Jack Larson**, (aged 87), American actor, librettist, screenwriter and producer. He is best known for his portrayal of reporter Jimmy Olsen on the television series *Adventures of Superman*.

**Dorothy Butler**, (aged 90),

New Zealand children's author, bookseller and reading advocate, who was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, for services to children's literature in 1993.

September 27

**Howard A. Anderson, Jr.**, (aged 95), American visual effects artist and cinematographer specializing in photographic effects, titles, and opticals. He was one of the primary effects artists on *Star Trek: The Original Series* and created the title sequences for hundreds of the most popular television series produced between the early 1950s and late 1980s, including *I Love Lucy*, *The Untouchables*, *The Brady Bunch*, *Happy Days*, *Kung Fu*, and *Cheers*.

September 30

**Caio César**, (aged 27), Brazilian actor, voice actor and police officer. César provided the Brazilian Portuguese voiceover of Harry Potter (as played by Daniel Radcliffe) in all eight of the *Harry Potter* films. He was shot in the neck while he and other police officers were conducting a routine patrol of Complexo do Alemão, one of the largest favelas, or shanty towns, in Rio de Janeiro. What a waste...



*Directed by* Ridley Scott  
*Produced by* Simon Kinberg & Ridley Scott  
*Screenplay by* Drew Goddard  
*Based on* The Martian by Andy Weir  
*Starring* Matt Damon, Jessica Chastain, Kristen Wiig, Jeff Daniels, Michael Peña, Kate Mara, Sean Bean

*Review by* Jacqui Smith

Saving Matt Damon... It's become an internet meme; the actor having a distinct talent for landing roles that result in his character being retrieved from far-flung places. At considerable fictional expense. Somebody has calculated something like \$US900 billion in total, of which \$US200 billion can be attributed to *The Martian*.

We also expended a bit more than usual, because Keith and I decided that we wanted to see this movie in the theatre, rather than waiting for the DVD as we usually do. We'd both read the book and enjoyed it, and the reviews from various friends had been very positive. And it certainly did benefit from the big screen, especially in terms of the gorgeously rendered Martian landscapes. I was also impressed by the realism of the Hermes spacecraft, and of the Martian habitat (it is no surprise to learn that NASA gave the movie-makers a fair bit of technical advice, and that for once, they listened). NASA should have every reason to be pleased with the result (and with the positive publicity it gives them).

The novel follows the novel quite closely, which means that there isn't much of the non-stop action audiences have become accustomed to until the very end. I do think some dramatic license was applied to that climactic sequence, stretching physics a bit far for the sake of drama, but it is a movie, after all. The bulk of the movie is more about problem-solving, about overcoming the trials of being stranded on Mars, and the challenge of getting him home.

In this way, *The Martian* reminds me of *Apollo 13*, although that movie was based on real events. Oh, that's another thing—apparently a number of early attendees were asking if *The Martian* was based on a true story. Which does say something about the level of realism achieved by the film-makers. And Matt Damon has enough acting talent to pull off the challenge of a largely solo performance—there are other characters, of course, but they don't directly interact with him for most of the movie. What can I say... he's as good at talking to himself as he is to his potatoes.



## Aurora

by Kim Stanley Robinson  
Published by Puffin  
Supplied by Penguin Random House NZ

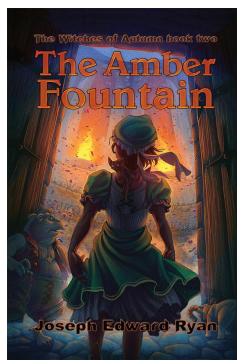
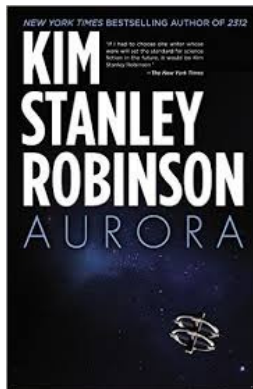
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith  
About a quarter of the way through this book, I came to the conclusion that this has to be about the most depressing novel about interstellar exploration ever written. I'm aware that it's hard; that there will be many problems and difficulties that must be faced by anyone who attempts to explore beyond our solar system, but Mr Robinson, do you really need to lay it on with such a large trowel? Consequently, I found the book to be really tough going, especially in the middle when everything is falling apart – literally. If there is one concept that dominates this novel it is entropy, to such an extent that I doubt if I'll ever read a generation ship story in quite the same light ever again. As the story begins, the ship is approaching Tau Ceti, where a world believed to be lifeless and yet having an oxygen atmosphere orbits a gas giant in the star's habitable zone. As you may have guessed, it doesn't turn out to be a simple matter of land and set up your colony. It's a whole lot harder than that, but to go into further detail would be to give away too much of the story... To tell the truth, I have every expectation of seeing this novel nominated for a Hugo next year. It may even win. Robinson has done a fine job of writing hard science fiction – his research is impeccable, and I don't doubt his numbers (there are an awful lot of them, by the way). But while I will remember this novel a lot longer than most, I have to confess that I didn't exactly enjoy reading it.

## The Amber Fountain

by Joseph Edward Ryan  
Published by Steam Press  
Supplied by Steam Press  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

I am really rather grateful that Stephen Minchin decided to publish this short novel before calling it a day for Steam Press. It is the sequel to *The Glass Projector*, which ended on a definite cliff-hanger, and to be frank, I really wanted to find out what happened next. And I was not disappointed. The story took off from where it had left, with little preamble (which does mean that you will need to have read *The Glass Projector* first), and rocketed on to a most satisfying climax.

As I explained when reviewing *The Glass Projector*, this is a fantasy steampunk adventure for young people, set against a background of war, and with an innovative twist to the nature of magic. I must say that I enjoyed the over-the-top writing style which perfectly matched the subject. The characters are fun and fascinating, they get to be suitably heroic, the young heroine saves the day, and the villain gets his just desserts. Yes, it's all very melodramatic, but that's not a flaw. Sometimes it's good to read something that's simply fun and engaging. Part way through I realised that I was engrossed, and had to tear myself away with difficulty. This is a great read for



young and old – and I challenge you to spot the kiwi!

## Speaking in Bones

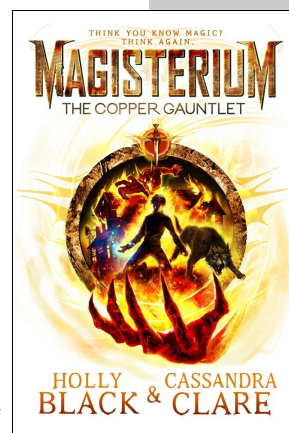
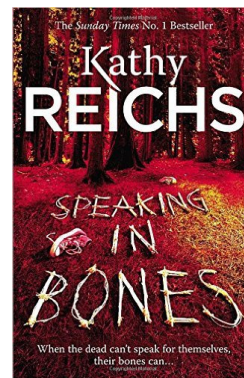
by Kathy Reichs  
Published by Heinemann  
Supplied by Penguin Random House NZ

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith  
There is Kathy Reichs, herself a distinguished forensic anthropologist; there is the Bones of the TV series; and somewhere in between those extremes is the Bones of the novels. *Speaking in Bones* is an incredibly realistic novel with a sense of authenticity that is rarely found in detective fiction. It's also very complex – there's a lot going on, and the plot twists and turns as Bones works to figure out who did it – if indeed, they did it at all! It begins with an amateur web sleuth connects a unreported missing person to an unidentified partial skeleton that Bones has previously examined, and finds a mysterious recording on a up in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Which are part of the Appalachians, notorious as the home of weirdos and whacked-out religious sects, which as you may safely determine from the title are deeply involved in the plot of this mystery. No doubt that will offend some people, but... I found this an intriguing and well-plotted mystery – Kathy Reichs writes about what she knows, and writes very well. It might not be science fiction, but it is very definitely fiction about real science.

## The Copper Gauntlet (Magisterium #2)

by Cassandra Clare and Holly Black  
Published by Doubleday  
Supplied by Random House NZ  
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

The second novel of the Magisterium reminded me, for some reason, of the second-to-last Harry Potter movie. Maybe it was the whole running-away-from-magic-school bit. It's meant to be Call's second year at the Magisterium. He runs away from home, because he thinks his father is planning to do something terrible. Then he runs away from the Magisterium to find his father – whom he now believes has stolen an artefact called the Copper Gauntlet, rumoured to do especially horrible things to chaos mages. Call continues on his self-absorbed path... Why do these teen heroes have to be so irritating? His one redeeming feature for me is his concentration on his how-not-to-be-an-evil-overlord list. We spend a lot of time inside his head, and perhaps not enough inside the other main characters, so they feel somewhat undeveloped. As for the plot, there are plenty of twists and turns, some of them a bit contrived – such as questing for a magic copper gauntlet, in Call's copper year? There's plenty of action too, some of it quite spectacular. But it somehow didn't quite work for me, and I find myself struggling to remember what happened when, and why. This series is polarising people; some love it, some hate it... Me, I'm somewhere in between.





Where: Wellington  
 When : Queens Birthday Weekend  
 3-5th June, 2016  
 Venue: CQ Hotel in Cuba Street

**Guests of Honour:  
 Stephanie Paul**

Twenty-six years experience in the entertainment industry has given Stephanie many strings to her bow. As an actor she has been seen in 4 Super Bowl commercials to date and over 200 more commercials world wide. She has a film and television career to boot and is most well known for her feature film role as "Madame President" in the scifi comedy international cult classic "Iron Sky", gearing up for its sequel with her in 2016. Behind the scenes in production Stephanie has worked in many departments and held positions such as Associate Agent, Producer, Director, and Writer. Stephanie's personal website is: [www.stephaniepaul.net](http://www.stephaniepaul.net).



**AJ Fitzwater**

AJ Fitzwater is a human-suit wearing dragon from Christchurch, New Zealand, who won the Sir Julius Vogel Awards 2015 for Best New Talent, and attended the six week Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Workshop at University of California San Diego in 2014.



**Charity:**

To be announced

**Website:**

<http://ac2016.cons.nz/index.php>

**Stella Nova Wiki:**

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

**Postal Address:**

Stella Nova  
 PO Box 74-013, Market Rd, Auckland 1543

**President:**

Jacqui Smith  
[president@stella-nova.sf.org.nz](mailto:president@stella-nova.sf.org.nz)

**Editor:**

Jacqui Smith  
[editor@stella-nova.sf.org.nz](mailto:editor@stella-nova.sf.org.nz)

**This Month:**

**BOOK/CREW MEETING**

Monday 25th January, 7:30 pm Chez Smith

**SPACE in the PARK**

Saturday 23rd January, 6-8 pm, Dingle Dell  
<http://www.musicinparks.co.nz/events/detail.asp?ID=1786>

**Next Quarterly Meeting:**

Wednesday 16th March 2016, 7:30 pm  
 Auckland Horticultural Centre,  
 990 Great North Road,  
 Western Springs



**Upcoming Events:**

**February 20-21st 2016**

**The BattleCry Tournament Convention**  
 Remuera Bridge Club, 273 Remuera Road  
<http://www.battlecry.co.nz/>

**June 3-5th 2016**

**AU CONTRAIRE 2016**  
 37th New Zealand National SF Convention  
<http://ac2016.cons.nz/index.php>