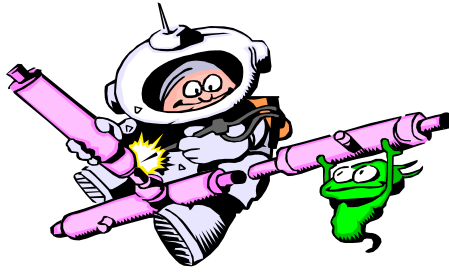




# **SITHFACTS 2015**

## **ANOTHER WARMER THAN USUAL DECEMBER ISSUE**



### **GOODREADS NAMES BEST OF 2015**

Winners of the 2015 Goodreads Choice awards for the “best books of 2015,” as chosen by users of the site, were announced November 30, 2015. There are several categories of genre interest:

Best Science Fiction: *Golden Son* by Pierce Brown, Best Fantasy: *Trigger Warning: Short Fictions and Disturbances* by Neil Gaiman, Best Horror: *Saint Odd* by Dean Koontz, Best Debut Goodreads Author: *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard, Best Young Adult Fantasy & Science Fiction: *Queen of Shadows* by Sarah J. Maas, Best Middle Grade & Children’s: *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard: The Sword of Summer* by Rick Riordan, and Best Graphic Novels & Comics: *Saga, Volume 4* by Brian K. Vaughan & Fiona Staples.

Goodreads reports 3,007,748 total votes cast.

### **WORLD FANTASY WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

The World Fantasy Awards winners for works published in 2014 were announced at a ceremony held on November 8. The awards were presented in Saratoga Springs, NY, during the World Fantasy Convention, November 5-8, reports Locus Online.

The Lifetime Achievement Awards, presented annually to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding service to the fantasy field, went to Ramsey Campbell and Sheri S. Tepper, and were announced earlier this month.

The World Fantasy Awards winners are:

Novel: *The Bone Clocks* by David Mitchell, Novella: *We Are All Completely Fine* by Daryl Gregory, Short Fiction: *Do You Like to Look at Monsters?* by Scott Nicolay, Anthology: *Monstrous Affections* edited by Kelly Link & Gavin J. Grant, Collection (TIE): *Gifts for the One Who Comes After* by Helen Marshall and *The Bitterwood Bible and Other Recountings* by Angela Slatter, Artist: Samuel

Araya, Special Award – Professional: Sandra Kasturi & Brett Alexander Savory for ChiZine Publications, and Special Award – Nonprofessional: Ray B. Russell & Rosalie Parker for Tartarus Press.

### **ATWOOD WINS CLARKE FOUNDATION AWARD**

Author Margaret Atwood won the Arthur C. Clarke Foundation’s Imagination in Service to Society Award, and she was recognized at a ceremony on October 28 at the Lockheed Martin Global Vision Center in Alexandria, VA, reported Locus Online in mid-October.

Prior Arthur C. Clarke award recipients include authors Larry Niven and Ursula K. Le Guin, as well as scientists and leaders of industry.

### **LAKE WINS 2015 ENDEAVOR AWARD**

*Last Plane to Heaven* (published by Tor) by the late Jay Lake won the 16th Endeavour Award, reports Locus Online. Lake, who died in June 2014, was honored at Orycon 37 in Portland, OR, on November 20.

Other finalists were: *Night Broken* by Patricia Briggs, *METAtropolis: The Wings We Dare Aspire* by Jay Lake & Ken Scholes, *Our Lady of the Islands* by Shannon Page & Jay Lake, and *The Shadow Throne* by Django Wexler.

The Endeavor Award is given to a novel or single-author collection by a Pacific Northwest writer, and comes with a \$1,000 honorarium. The 2015 judges were Russell Davis, Esther Friesner and Fran Wilde. The deadline for 2016 award submissions is February 15, 2016.

### **UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS**

- **Tonight:** Comedic holiday film shorts, plus the 11th ASFS Dessert Cook-Off. Prizes! Mirth! Apples!
- **January 8, 2016:** Group Book Discussion! What did you read in 2015 & would recommend?
- **February 12:** A visit from Jeff Berg on *New Mexico Filmmaking*. Plus *ASFacts* (Deadline Sun, Feb 7).
- **March 11:** The Annual Club Auction with Bob Vardeman as your auctioneer. Start looking for stuff to donate to the cause. And save up your pennies...
- **April 15:** Unknown program - meeting is a week late. It’s *ASFacts* for spring (deadline Sun, April 10).
- **May 13:** Again, unknown. Possibly film previews.

**Darth Vader, guest editor. Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Send Correspondence to —** PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176-7257. Darth Vader’s Phone: c/o (505) 266-8905. E-mail: cwraig@nmia.com. *SITHFACTS* printed each December. *ASFacts* published February, April, July & October for the Albuquerque SF Society. NEXT DEADLINE: Sun, Feb. 7. **Club Officers:** Kevin Hewett & Craig Chrissinger, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Geneva Schult, Moderator. Patricia Rogers, alternator. Kris Kringle & Rudolph the Red, Holiday Hosts. **Bubonicon Co-Chairs:** Caci Cooper & Craig Chrissinger.

## SF BOOK GROUP READS ON

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, December 21, at Pacific Paradise (northeast corner of San Pedro & Candelaria NE) to discuss *Indexing* by Seanan McGuire. The group then meets January 18, 2016, to talk about *Finches of Mars* by Brian W. Aldiss (probably at Pacific Paradise again).

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested readers on the 3rd Monday each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on them. For more info: Leah at [skycaptain1883@yahoo.com](mailto:skycaptain1883@yahoo.com) or Craig at 266-8905.

## T.M. WRIGHT PASSES AWAY

Author T.M. Wright died October 31 in Corning, NY. He was 68 years old, reports Locus Online.

Terrance Michael Wright was born September 9, 1947 in Syracuse NY. His first book was non-fiction, *The Intelligent Man's Guide to Flying Saucers* in 1968. Debut novel *Strange Seed* was released in 1978, followed by sequels *Nursery Tale*, *The Children of the Island*, *The People of the Dark*, and *Erthmun* (1995; as *Laughing Man*, 2003). *A Manhattan Ghost Story* appeared in 1984, with sequels *The Waiting Room* and *A Spider on My Tongue* following. As F.W. Armstrong, he wrote the first two Ryerson Biergarten books: *The Changing* and *The Devouring*. Sequels under his own name are *Goodlow's Ghosts* and *The Ascending*, plus connected novel *Sleepeasy*.

Standalone novels include *The Woman Next Door*, *The Playground*, *Carlisle Street*, *The Island*, *The Place*, *Boundaries*, *The School*, *The Last Vampire*, *Little Boy Lost*, *Cold House*, *The House on Orchid Street*, and *Blue Canoe: A Memoir of the Newly Non-Corporeal*. Notable short work includes novellas *The Eyes of the Carp* and *I Am the Bird*, and some of his stories were collected in 2008's *Bone Soup*. He was also an artist, and produced several book and magazine covers.

Wright spent his final years in a nursing home with Parkinson's disease. He is survived by his wife, Roxane A. White-Wright.

## RT REVIEWERS' CHOICE NOMINEES ANNOUNCED

On September 12, the 2015 RT Reviewers' Choice Award Nominees were announced, and there are several Bubonicon friends on the list! Congratulations on being nominated to regular Bubonicon participants Darynda Jones, Jeffe Kennedy and Carrie Vaughn; participant Robin D. Owens of Colorado; and former special guests Diana Rowland (TM 2013) and Catherynne M. Valente (GoH 2015).

"It's the most wonderful time of the year — awards

season! We are thrilled and honored to present RT's Reviewers' Choice Awards Nominees for the best books genre fiction had to offer in 2015," stated a blog entry at [rtbookreviews.com](http://rtbookreviews.com).

Best Science Fiction and Fantasy nominees are *Golden Son* by Pierce Brown, *Time Salvager* by Wesley Chu, *Our Lady of the Ice* by Cassandra Rose Clarke, *The Fire Sermon* by Francesca Haig, and *RADIANCE* BY CATHERYNNE M. VALENTE.

Fantasy Novel nominees are *Wake of Vultures* by Lila Bowen, *Sorcerer to the Crown* by Zen Cho, *The Fifth Season* by N.K. Jemisin, *Signal To Noise* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *Uprooted* by Naomi Novik, and *Menagerie* by Rachel Vincent.

Epic Fantasy Novel nominees are *Black Wolves* by Kate Elliott, *Dragon Heart* by Cecelia Holland, *The Bloodforged* by Erin Lindsey, and *Tower of Thorns* by Juliet Mariller.

Fantasy Adventure nominees are *Karen Memory* by Elizabeth Bear, *The Aeronaut's Windlass* by Jim Butcher, *The Conquering Dark* by Clay & Susan Griffith, and *Cast in Honor* by Michelle Sagara.

Steampunk nominees are *The Diamond Conspiracy* by Pip Ballantine and Tee Morris, *The Golden Scarab* by Anna Butler, *A Clockwork Crown* by Beth Cato, *Wicked Ever After* by Delilah S. Dawson, and *Of Silk and Steam* by Bec McMaster.

Fantasy Romance nominees are *Radiance* by Grace Draven, *THE TALON OF THE HAWK* BY JEFFE KENNEDY, *HEART LEGACY* BY ROBIN D. OWENS, *Captive Prince* by C.S. Pacat, and *Jeweled Fire* by Sharon Shinn.

Urban Fantasy novel nominees are *Magic Shifts* by Ilona Andrews, *Dead Heat* by Patricia Briggs, *Alien in Chief* by Gini Koch, *Crucible Zero* by Devon Monk, *Jinn and Juice* by Nicole Peeler, and *The Dragon Conspiracy* by Lisa Shearin.

Urban Fantasy Worldbuilding nominees are *Foxglove Summer* by Ben Aaronovitch, *Vision in Silver* by Anne Bishop, *EIGHTH GRAVE AFTER DARK* BY DARYNDA JONES, *VENGEANCE OF THE DEMON* BY DIANA ROWLAND, and *KITTY SAVES THE WORLD* BY CARRIE VAUGHN.

RT Reviewers' Choice Award winners will be announced Friday, April 15, 2016, as part of the RT Book-lovers Convention April 12-17 at the Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino. A complete list of all nominees in all categories is available at [rtbookreviews.com](http://rtbookreviews.com).

## HI-C GHOSTBUSTERS ECTO-COOLER BACK?

Any child of the 1990s almost certainly sucked down an Ecto Cooler at least once or twice. After several years off the shelves, the *Ghostbusters* tie-in drink is reportedly coming back to life, reported [Blastr.com](http://Blastr.com) in December.



CNBC reports Coca-Cola has filed a new trademark for the orange-tangerine-flavored green drink, which is leading many fans to think the product could get getting a re-release. The trademark was approved in November. Hey, if the movie series can get a reboot, why not Ecto Cooler?

The drink was first released in 1987 as a tie-in for the *Ghostbusters* cartoon series, and it kept on rolling well beyond the show's cancellation in 1991. The drink continued to be sold until 2001, when it was renamed "Shoutin' Orange Green." We probably can all agree that's a way less cool name for a drink. It was eventually axed completely in 2007 as interest waned.

## TOY STORY 4 RELEASE DATE LEAKED

*Toy Story 4* voice actor Tom Hanks has leaked the premiere date for the fourth installment of the "Toy Story" movie franchise, CP Entertainment announced in early December.

While fans first thought that the story of Woody and Buzz ended during *Toy Story 3*, Tom Hanks revealed that *Toy Story 4* is underway and will be released in 2018. The actor, who is the voice behind the cowboy character, announced that they have been busy recording for the fourth film, according to MNR Daily.

In a time-lapse video uploaded earlier this week on WhoSay, Hanks said he was on his way to the Pixar studio in Oakland to work on *Toy Story 4*. The caption of the clip bears the hashtag #ToyStory4, the International Business Times reports.

While some Disney executives may have preferred to keep the movie under wraps, Hank appeared on *The Graham Norton Show* and revealed that recording will begin in December and *Toy Story 4* will premiere in 2018, the report relays.

"We're now recording *Toy Story 4*. It will be out in 2018, so it takes a long time," MNR quotes Hanks' statement during the show. "I have a recording session on the second of December."

Aside from that, Hanks shared how difficult the recording sessions were for the previous *Toy Story* movies. To get his diaphragm to relax after an intense recording, he had to put ice packs on his chest on his way home, the report details.

Prior to Hanks' revelations, rumors have already surfaced about a fourth *Toy Story* installment. John Lasseter, who directed the first two films, confirmed that he will return for the fourth one. He explained that they had no plans of doing the fourth film after Woody and Buzz's story ended. However, they came up with a brilliant idea that they could not resist.

The exact release date of *Toy Story 4* has not yet been confirmed, but HelloGiggles says the movie will come out on June 15, 2018. More details on the upcoming movie are expected to surface next year.

## TREGILLIS LETTER ON MST3K TURKEY DAY

Santa Fe author Ian Tregillis had his fan letter read by host Joel Hodgson on this year's online Turkey Day Marathon of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. It's reported that Sara Gmitter and he were surprised and excited by their note being read aloud as part of the day's festivities.

In part, the letter read: "We are deeply thankful for *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, because without it we might not be married today! *MST3K* was just 2 years old, barely out of its nest at KTMA (good old channel 23) and we were a pair of shy, awkward high school seniors when we met in 1990. So shy, in fact, that despite how much we obviously liked each other, two years passed before we went on our first REAL DATE in 1992: a live showing of *MST3K* at the Uptown Theater in Minneapolis, MN. Our shared love of *MST3K* overcame all obstacles.

"Twenty-two years later, we were married. It wasn't exactly a straight line, but we think the causal relationship is irrefutable. So, Tom, when you describe yourself as a 'finder of lost loves,' you're more right than you know!

"Thank you, *MST3K*, for teaching us to laugh at love. And thank you for all of the wonderful memories. We look forward to many new *MST3K* memories for years to come."

## JOHANSSON TALKS CAPT AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

As *Entertainment Weekly's* coverage of *Captain America: Civil War* continues, a new interview with Scarlett Johansson, who plays Natasha Romanoff, aka Black Widow, on the Marvel movies, has been released, according to Blastr.com in early December.

While our superheroes will be choosing sides in our particular Marvel Cinematic Universe, it looks like Black Widow may be stuck between Team Captain America and Team Iron Man.

In the movie, Natasha – who's had a long history with both Cap and Tony Stark – aligns herself (at least at first) with Tony in trying to get Steve to honor the global Sokovia Accords, forcing "enhanced individuals" to operate under government control.

Speaking to EW, Scarlett Johansson explains where the character's at in *Civil War*: "I think when you find her in *Civil War*, she's looking to strategize her position, putting herself in a place where she is able to let the powers that be fight it out or whatever amongst themselves. She's always a little bit on the perimeter so she can have a better perspective of what's really going on."

And when she was asked if it was all about divide and conquer, Johansson had this to say: "She's never been one to divide and conquer. I don't think that's her. She's seen that and it never works. She would see this as a kind of, it's



more complicated than picking sides, you know?"

While it would appear former Russian government spy and assassin Black Widow will be leaning toward Tony's side of things, Johansson explains it may not be as simple as that.

"I think she understands where everyone is coming from," Johansson said. "And none of it really matters to her, you know? There's a bigger problem at hand and she's, I think, strangely, kind of the mediator. Which is not exactly how you would imagine her to be. But I think she really does see both sides of the coin and I think her strength is that she's not personally involved."

*Captain America: Civil War* will arrive in movie theaters on May 6, 2016.

## **MAD MAX: FURY ROAD HONORED**

Awards Season is pretty much here, and if you're a fan of genre films you know that we're not used to seeing sci-fi and fantasy movies at the top of most lists. Sure, there was that year when *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* tied an Oscars record, and that year *Avatar* took home so much acclaim. But for the most part, effects-heavy blockbusters are pushed to the side when it comes to the "Best Movie of the Year" talk, Blastr.com reported in early December.

So far, that has not been the case with *Mad Max: Fury Road*. George Miller's return to the franchise that put him on the map has been met with nearly universal acclaim, and as we approach that time of year when critics pick the best films of 2015, it's getting even more love.

On December 1, the National Board of Review – a collective of film critics, historians and more – announced their annual list of awards, and though smaller films like *Room* and *Beasts of No Nation* definitely received some love, genre films took the top spots. The board named *Fury Road* the best film of 2015, and then honored *The Martian* with both Best Director (Ridley Scott) and Best Actor (Matt Damon) honors, putting genre movies front and center.

It's obviously huge news for anyone who considers *Fury Road* a contender for Best Picture at the Oscars, and serves to further cement this film's reputation as a science fiction story that digs deep into the minds of its viewers. *Fury Road* is still a force to be reckoned with, months after its release.

## **SUPERGIRL GETS ADDITIONAL EPISODES**

Fans had been waiting with bated breath for news about a potential pickup for freshman DC series *Supergirl*, and on November 30 the network finally released good news, reports Blastr.com.

CBS announced *Supergirl* will receive a back-seven episode order (which is two short of the traditional "back-nine" order), pulling the first season's total up to 20 epi-

sodes. So, two episodes shy of a traditional season, but a nice vote of confidence for the network's foray into the small-screen DC universe.

Why did it take so long for the network to make a decision? As *TV Line* notes, *Supergirl* debuted in October with an eye-popping 13 million viewers and a 3.1 rating, tying NBC's *Blindspot* as this fall's biggest freshman premiere. But in the weeks since then, the show has dropped considerably – with the latest episode pulling a series-low 7.2 million/1.5 rating. Those are not terrible numbers, but they're far from a sure-fire hit (especially considering a superhero show isn't cheap to produce).

What makes this pickup even more interesting is recent buzz indicating that the back half of the season could provide time to develop an ambitious crossover with The CW's hit *Flash* series (they share creative teams, not to mention they're both DC properties). The worlds seem like they could fit together well enough, so it could be interesting to see if any word on that angle breaks in the coming weeks.

On the practical side, these additional episodes will also give the network some more time to develop a ratings baseline for the series, before making a decision to renew or cancel it for next year. But, if viewership keeps ticking down much further, it won't be much of a decision at all.

## **MST3K REBOOT NAMES NEW HOST & MORE**

by Mike Cecchini, [denofgeek.us](http://denofgeek.us)

The *MST3K* reboot crowdfunding campaign is chugging along, and unofficially announced a new host in late November. As of this moment, there are two websites redirecting to a Kickstarter page with the name "Bring Back *MST3K*."

As of December 8, the BringBackMST3K crowdfunding campaign has raised slightly more than \$4 million. That initial four million has guaranteed six new feature-length episodes. Twelve new episodes of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* would cost more than \$5 million. Some think that at the rate they're raising money, the goal might be reached by December 11 (ASFS Friday).

The regular updates from Joel Hodgson have also revealed who the new *MST3K* host will be. Hodgson is grooming Jonah Ray (you may have heard some of his Nerdist podcasts) to put on a jumpsuit as "Jonah Heston."

Felicia Day will play "Kinga Forrester." As you might expect, she's the daughter of currently departed mad scientist Dr. Clayton Forrester. Hampton Yount and Baron Vaughn will be the new voices of Crow T. Robot and Tom Servo. There's still another new henchman to be announced, as well.

Thanks to an interesting piece at Flavorwire, which deals with some of the larger questions surrounding the campaign we also know who isn't coming back. As of now, Mike Nelson, J. Elvis Weinstein, Trace Beaulieu, and May Jo Pehl aren't involved. Hopefully they'll recon-

sider as things move forward.

Back in April of 2014, Wired posted an oral history of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* which was, without question, essential reading for any *MST3K* fan. But buried – really, really buried – in the depths of the piece was some information that planted the seeds:

“But this year *Mystery Science Theater* may finally get a long-rumored, heavily anticipated reboot. This spring Hodgson is hoping to start a new online incarnation of the show, one that will feature a fresh (and as-yet-unannounced) host and cameos from many *MST3K* alumni.”

Joel Hodgson went on to elaborate, “Even avid viewers sometimes don’t realize that every major role in the show had been swapped out over time. So in my mind, the show is built to be refreshed with new people and new ideas. It’s like Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle as it applies to *MST3K*: If it doesn’t change, it’s not the same show. And fortunately for us, as long as there are movies, there are always going to be cheesy movies.”

A few months later, during a Reddit AMA, Joel teased the idea of an *MST3K* return even further. After brushing off one question about the reboot with “we’re working on it. I’ll tell ya later,” he actually dropped a clue about some new robots. “I think, for the reboot, obviously people would really want to see the original robots back. So I intend to do that. But hopefully we’ll bring some new ones too.”

There have been signs of life in the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* universe over the last year or two. There was the recent announcement that you can watch episodes on *RiffTrax*, large chunks of the library turning up on Vimeo and Amazon Prime, the return of *MST3K* tradition, Turkey Day, to a *RiffTrax* show on, of all places, the National Geographic Channel.

But actual, new content bearing the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* brand is something else entirely. Welcome back the snark!

## **BUBONICON 48 PLANS BEGIN**

Co-chairs Caci Cooper and Craig Chrissinger can confirm that Bubonicon 48 once again will be at the Albuquerque Marriott Uptown - with rooms at \$99.00 per night, single-quad. And just like in 2015, WiFi access is complimentary in these private sleeping rooms!

Bubonicon 48 is August 26-28, 2016 – the normal weekend – the weekend after the Kansas City Worldcon. Hotel room reservations are needed by Monday, August 15.

Rachel Caine (*Morganville Vampires*, *Weather Warden*, *Ink & Bone*, etc) and David Gerrold (*The Martian Child*, *The Trouble with Troubles*, *Star Wolf*, etc) are our co-Guests of Honor. Guest Artist is Lee Moyer, poster & comics artist, painter, illustrator and graphic designer. And Joe R. Lansdale (*Bubba Ho-Tep*, *Cold in July*, *Flam-*

*ing Zeppelins*, *The Drive-In*, etc) serves as Toastmaster.

Weekend Passes for Bubonicon 48 are \$35 through February 13. They go to \$38 Feb. 14-May 14, and then to \$40. They may be purchased from “Bubonicon Inc” at club meetings or at PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176 (a registration form is available on the Bubonicon website. A shopping cart for credit card payments will be up in January).

Again, a “youth” is defined as ages 14-17, and youth tickets are \$23 for the weekend. Children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult, and should not be running around the hotel without a parent/guardian nearby.

The con committee especially would like to hear your panel discussion ideas, fan program proposals and convention suggestions BY MONDAY, APRIL 18. This early in the game, not much is confirmed yet...

We also are looking for volunteers to help out with programming events, running the convention, and checking attendees’ badges. Our volunteer “gofers” receive swag before the con, and are in a drawing for prizes during the Bubonicon weekend.

Updates on the con will appear in *ASFacts* issues, on fliers, or at the official website: [www.bubonicon.com](http://www.bubonicon.com). Suggestions, questions and volunteers: 559-0931 or 266-8905, email [bubonicon@gmail.com](mailto:bubonicon@gmail.com), or write the PO Box.

## **WEIR AT THE JEAN COCTEAU, Q&A WITH GEORGE R.R. MARTIN**

### **Event Report by Caci Cooper**

Andy Weir, author of the wildly popular book *The Martian*, which was recently made into a blockbuster movie directed by Ridley Scott, visited the Jean Cocteau Cinema in Santa Fe on October 19, and the theater was sold out. Many hopeful attendees lined up outside hoping someone who previously purchased a ticket didn’t show up, or that the Cocteau managed to squeeze in a few more folding chairs.

George RR Martin spent much of the time asking rapid-fire questions regarding how Weir got started writing (he wanted to write since high school but couldn’t get published traditionally) and how he was published for the first time (for free on his website, serial style, for years. All previous attempts at publishing through other avenues never succeeded). Martin also discussed writing styles of various authors – equating them to “architects” who outline and set steps and places they want to go in the story, or “gardeners” who have a general idea but lets the writing take the story wherever it will. Weir quickly admitted he was a gardener and that at many points when posting chapters of *The Martian* on his website, he’d reserved the right to “fix” things as he would regularly write the main character into situations where he would die.

When writing the book, he essentially was trying to find the point where all the redundancies that are built in

by NASA fail and would overwhelm the astronaut, but were still survivable. He claims initially it was just a thought experiment that ended up being easier to flesh out with a main character to apply the ideas to, an abandoned astronaut that he could torture in every way he could dream up. Weir said that his work was fact-checked for the science portions of his books by a mailing list of 3000 nerds. Weir commented that one does not get much of the science wrong when one has 3000 nerds fact-checking every scenario. That being said, the Mars Rovers landed on Mars very shortly after Weir technically had finished *The Martian*, so some scientific aspects could be wrong purely due to the timing we started finding things out about Mars from the rovers.

In person, Weir is just as dry and humorous as his character, Mark Watney. Quickly placed jokes and pithy comments abounded throughout the talk. Weir said he'd tried for three years while between jobs at one point to become a published author and had no luck. He'd completely given up on becoming published in any fashion, which had led to the posting of serial-type stories on his website. And then slowly over time, *The Martian* became a huge hit being self-published through Amazon for \$.99 a copy, and an agent approached him. His new agent approached Random House, which gave him a book deal, and that quickly escalated to a movie deal. Weir commented on the surrealistic aspect of working a regular 9-5 computer coding job while taking quick calls about his movie deal while on break. The publishing contract for the print book and the movie deal were signed within four days of each other.

At the end of the evening, after Weir read the first chapter of his book and took some audience questions, the Coteau staff handed out potatoes to be signed by Weir along with the copies of the books. Weir recommended the potatoes be cooked and eaten with copious amounts of ketchup...never raw.

## BLAST FROM THE PAST

*An occasional column on Science Fiction authors and their works that have been overlooked by many 21<sup>st</sup> century readers*

by Kevin B. Hewett

ALAN E. NOURSE (1928-1992) was an American science fiction author and practicing physician. His writing career began in 1951 with the publication of a short story "High Threshold," which was published in that year's March edition of *Astounding Science Fiction*.

During his career he published a significant amount of science fiction, most written in the 1950s in order to pay for his medical education. Much of his work focuses on medicine and/or psionics rather than the technological oriented hard-SF of many of his contemporaries. His science fiction novels include: *Trouble on Titan* (1954), *A Man Obsessed* (1955), *Rocket to Limbo* (1957), *Scaven-*

*gers in Space* (1959), *The Invaders Are Coming!* with J. A. Meyer (1959), *Star Surgeon* (1960), *Raiders from the Rings* (1962), *The Mercy Men* (1968) – revised version of *A Man Obsessed*, *The Bladerunner* (1974), and *The Fourth Horseman* (1983)

Two recent collections have collected some of his shorter works. These collections are *Alan E. Nourse Resurrected: The Works of Alan E. Nourse* (Resurrected Press, 2011) and *12 Worlds of Alan E. Nourse: Tales from the Golden Age of Science Fiction!* (Wildside Press, 2010). The short fiction found in these collections includes:

"Derelict" (*If*, May 1953), novelette, "Infinite Intruder" (*Space Science Fiction*, July 1953), novelette, "The Dark Door" (*Galaxy Science Fiction*, December 1953), novelette, "Letter of the Law" (*If*, January 1954), short story, "The Link" (*If*, June 1954), short story, "My Friend Bobby" (*Orbit*, No. 3, July-August 1954), short story, "Image of the Gods" (*Orbit*, No. 4, September-October 1954), short story, "Meeting of the Board" (*If*, October 1955), short story, "An Ounce of Cure" (*Imaginative Tales*, November 1955), short story, "Second Sight" (*Fantastic Universe*, April 1956), short story, "Problem" (*Galaxy Science Fiction*, October 1956), short story, "Martyr" (*Fantastic Universe*, January 1957), novella, "The Coffin Cure" (*Galaxy Science Fiction*, April 1957), short story, "The Native Soil" (*Fantastic Universe*, July 1957), short story, "Bear Trap" (*Fantastic Universe*, December 1957), novella, "Contamination Crew" (*If*, February 1958), short story, and "Circus" (*The Counterfeit Man: More Science Fiction Stories*, 1963), short story.

Alan Nourse also wrote non-fiction works including the novel *Intern* under the pseudonym Doctor X. He was a contributing editor for Good Housekeeping magazine for 16 years writing a medical advice column. He also found time to do a vocational series of "So You Want to be a..." books that dealt with professions like physicist, doctor, scientist, etc. He served as president of the Science Fiction Writers of America from 1968-1969.

Dr. Nourse summed up his place in the field in the early 1970's when he wrote:

"I do not believe that I have had any particularly significant impact on the development of the genre, although I feel that most of my best work, from the beginning, has been concerned with humanistic questions, human problems and exploration of human capabilities rather than with hard-science or technological problems. I think this has been well received because of the very acceptable medical-humanistic orientation of much of my SF work. I doubt that this has set any trends as such, but it has perhaps been in keeping with a general growing interest in humanistic SF." (Robert Reginald, *Contemporary Science Fiction Authors*, (New York: Arno Press, 1975), pp 205-206)

**Star Surgeon** (David McKay, 1960) — Probably the best known work of Alan Nourse is his novel *Star Surgeon* (originally published in 1960 by David McKay, free eBook is available from Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/18492>). This novel is set in a universe where a Galactic Confederation composed of multiple species rules the galaxy. Humans are newcomers and have been given a provisional seat in the ruling body. In this universe, each species has a niche where they are the acknowledged masters – whether that is trade, manufacturing, communications, or medicine. Earth, as the acknowledged master of medicine, has finally admitted a non-human to medical school and his first assignment to one of the medical patrol ships is a contentious issue, with some of Earth's leaders wanting to restrict the practice of medicine to humans while others are willing to spread medical knowledge more widely amongst the galaxy's citizens.

Thus the novel follows the probationary voyage of Dal Timgar and his crewmates as they try to win full status as physicians of Hospital Earth. The process of discovery and interpersonal relationships drives the novel and the climatic confrontation between the fears of the other and the hopes of the future are skillfully described in the novel. This novel is highly recommended for readers who are not familiar with Alan Nourse's work.

**Raiders from the Rings** (David McKay, 1962) — This novel by Alan Nourse follows the war between Earth and the Spacers – descendants of the crews of Russian and American space stations that refused to rain down nuclear destruction onto the earth during the war between the superpowers centuries ago. The current conflict is caused by the refusal of earth to allow the spacers to return to Earth – a return that is required since cosmic radiation renders Spacers unable to father female children. The consequence of the separation is that the Spacer culture periodically raids Earth for food, raw organic materials and women. This situation has been relatively static for centuries as the Spacers – experts in space navigation, have easily beaten back the periodic primitive reprisal space ships launched by Earth. The current crisis follows Spacer Ben Trefon as he participates in his first raid on Earth – a raid that triggers an apocalyptic response. Earth has been secretly building a massive fleet of hundreds of space ships and launches them during the raid. The ships bypass the Spacer fleet and decimate the Spacer homes on Mars before continuing to the asteroid belt – and asteroid Central, the capital of the Spacers.

Ben Trefon has captured a pair of Earthers during the raid – the woman Joyce and her brother Tom. As the three are confined together in a small raiding ship, they discover that much of what they know of the other is wrong. As Ben desperately tries to find a way to prevent the coming counter-offensive of the massing Spacer fleet against earth – an attack that if launched my very well force humans into extinction since the vengeance sought by many spacers would as one character states, “Mars is going to

look like paradise when we get through with the planet Earth. Every factory, every storage dump, every road junction... When we move against Earth, our friends out here aren't going to have any place to go home to.”

This juvenile novel has a simplistic resolution which many modern readers may find too convenient, yet the novel still works as a coming of age story set in a space opera universe. Highly recommended for all who enjoy Heinlein's juveniles.

**A Man Obsessed** (Ace Books, 1955) — Alan Nourse's second novel was *A Man Obsessed* (originally published as half of an Ace double in 1955, a free eBook version is available from Project Gutenberg, [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/49531](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/49531)). The novel is set in an alternate America recovering from nuclear and biological warfare. Giant medical complexes covering multiple city blocks have arisen as government funding has increased. The novel opens in the shadow of the Hoffman Medical Center, acknowledged to be the premiere research institution in the world. The protagonist, Jeffrey Meyer, is focused on capturing and killing the man he blames for murdering his father years before – Paul Conroe. He has been chasing Conroe for five years across the world and believes he has finally cornered him. However, Conroe escapes into the Hoffman Medical Center, and its rumored Mercy Men program. The Mercy Men are composed of the desperate and destitute who are willing to sell their bodies for illegal medical experimentation – experiments with poor odds of recovery or even survival. Jeffrey follows Conroe into the program – looking for a way to finally kill his nemesis while surviving the odds.

The medical researchers are currently focused on the human brain and the organic causes of mental illness – so the experiments involve brain surgery and the risks to otherwise healthy men and women. As Jeffery is informed, “Ten percent full recovery is a good risk. That means complete recovery from the work, no secondary infection, and complete recovery of faculties – in other words complete success in the work. Then a fairly good risk runs slightly lower – more casualty, maybe five percent recovery. And a high-risk job averages two percent...” The remainder of the novel takes place in the bowels of the medical complex as the antagonists battle each other. The novel suffers somewhat from its age and the presence of what modern readers would call antiquated technology (such as computers still using punch cards); however, the action is at times riveting as the plot still resonates with tension and unexpected twists and turns finally lead to an unexpected resolution of the conflict. This novel is recommended only for readers willing to learn more about Alan Nourse and his work.



# REVIEW ROUND-UP

***Inherit the Stars* by Tony Peak, 2015 Roc, mm \$7.99, 464 pages.**

**Review by Leah Ransom**

For a first-time author, *Inherit the Stars* is not bad. It's a post coming-of-age story about two young people set in the distant future. A religious sect rules the entire galactic alarm. They worship this thing called the Vim. The purpose of worshipping them is to collect all sorts of space debris to reassemble it so that the humans can rejoin the Vim in the Galactic center.

The story revolves around two young salvagers called Kivita and her on-again/off-again boyfriend named Sar. And the dangers and adventures they encounter while out on salvage runs to obtain old space debris and data cores.

These past few sentences are basically the crust of the whole story. The one issue I take with the story is that Tony Peak showed very limited creativity in naming the characters. Most characters share common spellings and pronunciations of names thus making the complicated alien names difficult to pronounce. The story does move along but I don't find it overly interesting. But as I said, for an author's first attempt this is a pretty good story. If you had all the time in the world to read, I'd say give it a try. If you don't, I would say find something a little more stimulating. Using the roses and clothespins scale, where five roses is the best and five clothespins the worst, this book is two roses... Not the best book I've read in a long time, but definitely not the worst.

***An Ancient Peace* by Tanya Huff, 2015 DAW, hc \$24.95, 328 pages.**

**Review by Roberta Johnson**

Plenty of fantasy writers try their hand at SF, and vice versa. Few are as good at it as Tanya Huff... *An Ancient Peace* is the first in a new Peacekeeper series starring Torin Kerr, late of the Confederation Marines. Formerly a kick-ass Gunnery Sergeant, Torin now heads a polyglot mercenary crew largely consisting of survivors of her former battles, civilian or Marine. While this is billed as a new series, Torin and her worlds were introduced in Huff's *Valor* series, so readers will be a lot more satisfied if they don't try this first. On the other hand, space opera fans will still find plenty of action, snappy repartee and well-realized characters.

Torin's crew is diverse, to say the least. They represent several of the Younger Races – all considered “unevolved” by the Elder Races who hired them to fight a centuries-long war the Elders were too evolved to fight. Now they're a family, and they're learning how to be one, while individually and collectively battling major PTSD.

At the same time, they have a living to make. Their new mission is to find grave robbers who have located the H'San grave planet. H'San is an Elder Race that has abandoned war – but since they bury grave goods with their dead, somewhere there are graves containing the deadliest of weapons, and indications are that the thieves are close to finding them. Deadly consequences will ensue if these weapons are found. Huff's Marine background shows in this treasure hunt, not only in the action, but in her commentary and descriptions of the chasm between the people who will not fight, and the people they hire to fight – and die – in their place. The plot is

reminiscent of an Indiana Jones adventure, with a large part of the action happening in H'San catacombs rife with deadly traps.

Huff's plots, action and character development are all topnotch, with di'Taykans, Krai, Kratien, humans, H'San alive and dead (hello zombie H'san) and a few other races seen in passing. Dialogue is darkly funny and laced with the most creative and entertaining profanity uttered by Marines of any species or gender. There's plenty of action, whether taking place in battle or in a deadly race through underground tombs. The social commentary is understated but edgy. Read and enjoy. In fact, go back and read the *Valor* series. If you haven't already.

***A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* by George R.R. Martin, 2015 Bantam, hc \$30.00, 368 pages.**

**Review by Craig W. Chrissinger**

*(Editor's Note: A slight variation of this review appeared in the Albuquerque Journal on December 6, 2015.)*

By now, many people are familiar with Westeros, a medieval fantasy world of conflict, politics, death and dragons created by Santa Fe's George R.R. Martin for *A Game of Thrones*, the first book of his ongoing series, “A Song of Ice and Fire.” Readers have breathlessly waited for each new installment, and there are unconfirmed rumors a sixth book might be released in 2016.

In the meantime, for both those familiar with Westeros, and those who want a place to start Martin's epic tale, three official prequel novellas have been very nicely bundled into one volume, *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms*. These adventures of Dunk and Egg, set a century before *Game of Thrones* action, have been in various anthologies, but here they are presented together along with more than 160 gorgeous and welcome illustrations by Gary Gianni.

The first novella, “The Hedge Knight,” is the best known of these tales of Ser Duncan the Tall and his squire, a boy called Egg – whose true name is kept hidden from all they encounter since he is a member of the royal Targaryen family. Dunk has spent most of his young life as the squire to an aging hedge knight who often taunted him with “Dunk the Lunk, Thick as a Castle Wall.”

After his master's death, Dunk decides to make a name for himself and earn better armor at a jousting journey. The outspoken Egg follows and annoyingly argues to become his squire. When Dunk, a large man with a sense of chivalry, runs afoul of a cruel prince, he chooses trial by combat rather than losing his hand. The consequences of this decision will haunt Dunk throughout his stories.

In “The Sworn Sword,” Dunk and Egg find themselves in service to Ser Eustace Osgrey in the middle of a horrifying drought. A New Mexico influence can be seen in Martin's description of the dry land and in a water rights feud between Osgrey and his neighbor, Lady Rohanne, who is rumored to be a sorceress.

The final tale, “The Mystery Knight,” finds Dunk's earlier combat trial come back to haunt him at a wedding celebration melee. He becomes the center of a conspiracy of murder and the theft of a dragon egg, and Egg's true identity creates a brewing threat.

The three stories of *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* are

entertaining, full of rich descriptions, and a good introduction to Westeros. They seem like lighter fare than *A Game of Thrones* (I call these tales *Game of Thrones-lite*, for lack of a better description), mostly because the politics are more around the edges and there are fewer deaths.

Still, there is plenty of gritty atmosphere, battles, and hints of magic. More important here is the relationship between a seemingly simple, young hedge knight and his smart-mouthed squire -- and insights into future Westeros politics and power struggles. This volume will leave both established Martin followers and new readers wanting to hear more of Dunk and Egg's adventures. I enjoyed these tales, and the accompanying illustrations are really nice.

***The Philosopher Kings* by Jo Walton, 2015 Tor, hc \$25.99, 352 pages.** **Review by Jessica Coyle**

*The Philosopher Kings* picks up 20 years after the end of Jo Walton's *The Just City*. The book mainly follows Arete, the daughter of Simmea (the main character from last book), and Pythias, who is the god Apollo in human form. The City has fractured into five different cities, which are occasionally at war over resources. Simmea is killed in one of these skirmishes, and Pythias falls apart. He becomes obsessed with seeking revenge for her death, and even goes as far as to suggest a voyage through the pre-antiquity Mediterranean to find one of the groups that has splintered from the City and disappeared. Arete joins the voyage for a chance to explore, and in an attempt to keep her father from going too far.

I greatly enjoyed Jo Walton's *The Just City*, but I found the sequel less satisfying. Once again, Walton takes the philosophy of the early Greeks and makes it understandable and engaging to those with no background in the subject, but I felt that this book also tried to bring in more focus on Christianity, which muddled the waters a bit. Also, Simmea, whom I felt was the most relatable character in the first novel, is killed in the first chapter. I missed her presence, and I didn't find Arete to be as relatable or interesting as her mother. On the whole, I think those who read and enjoyed *The Just City* will want to read *The Philosopher Kings* to see how Walton wraps up the story -- but I don't know that others will have any interest.

## ***ASFS MEETING REPORTS —*** **MAY 2015: ZACH GALLEGOS ON MARS**

Thirty-two people were on hand as UNM planetary science grad student and Mars One candidate Zachary Gallegos spoke about his interest in space, the Mars One project, and the challenges he will face if he gets to go to the Red Planet.

"I've always been interested in space, especially the Moon and Mars," he said. "I work at UNM on the Mars science laboratory, which is on the Mars Rover. I work specifically on the ChemCam, which basically is the first tri-corder but somewhat bulkier. I'm also doing microprobe analysis."

As a Mars One candidate for a manned colony mission, Gallegos noted, "Half of all missions to Mars have failed.

They lost communication, missed the planet, or crashed. Mars One is a Dutch-based non-profit that hopes to send humans to Mars in 2026 with a landing the next year. But any setbacks push the timeline back two years."

He said he started the application process to become a candidate in 2013. This year, it was announced that he was one of the final 100 Mars One candidates. His training will begin in 2016. It is hoped that modules will land on Mars in 2024, with rovers setting them up the following year. He also has applied to NASA to be a scientist astronaut.

"It's a one-way mission because that's cheaper than a return flight," he said. "I will do research on Mars on its geological history, mineralogy and astrobiology. In the free time we'll have, I play guitar and like to read and write."

Initially, 24 people will be chosen to go to Mars - four people every two years. The final 100 candidates are 50/50 male and female, 18 to 60 years old. "Mars One is telling us not to reproduce for now," he commented. "Childbirth is an issue, so there will be no Martians until later. Plus we have to look at solar and cosmic radiation, and the loss of muscle and bone density in the lower gravity."

Gallegos said he "really enjoyed" Andy Weir's *The Martian*. "I love it," he said. "It really helps people get back into the mood. I read it in less than 24 hours."

Asked if it was a difficult decision since the mission is one-way, Gallegos replied, "Not really. I always wanted to be an astronaut, so I went into geology. If I could go to the Moon or Mars, I'd be happy. Anyone who straps themselves to a big rocket knows that could be it and accepts that possibility. I know that, so it was one of my easier decisions. But if NASA contacted me, I'd go to NASA. I'd really like to go to the Moon first. I like having options, and it would be nice to come back to Earth for a while - and then go out again."

## **EDITOR NOTES TO FILL THIS SPACE**

Mixed emotions this week. It's hard to believe that December 8 marked the 35th anniversary of John Lennon's murder in NYC. As I noted last year, it always makes me a little sad since it was such a senseless death. "And so this is Christmas, and what have you done?"

But on the other hand, my review of George RR Martin's *Knight of the Seven* ran in the Sunday, December 6 *Albuquerque Journal*, which was a surprise and a delight. I admit it was a little intimidating to review a GRRM book, but I'm pleased with my end result. And now I've visited Westeros...

Meanwhile, Happy Holidays! We've had a pretty warm December so far. It was good to see Connie Willis & Melinda Snodgrass around Thanksgiving. I've enjoyed *The Good Dinosaur*, *Mockingjay Part 2* and *Santa and the Ice Cream Bunny* (horrible movie, great jokes from the RiffTrax team); and am looking very forward to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. It's starting to look really good from the trailers. I hope I don't have my expectations set too high! Crossing fingers...

I made a Kickstarter pledge this week to bring back *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. Also want to see crowd-sourced *Con Man* with Alan Tudyk & Nathan Fillian. Looks to be fun!

That's a (holiday) wrap. Thanks to Caci, Kevin, Jessica, Roberta and Leah for their contributions this time! See you all for February 2016's issue. Stay warm & take care - Craig C

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EDITOR: CRAIG CHRISSINGER  
cwcraig@nmia.com

