



ASFACTS 2020

JULY "HOT QUARANTINE" SUMMER ISSUE



2020 LOCUS AWARDS WINNERS

The Locus Science Fiction Foundation announced the winners in each category of the 2020 Locus Awards on June 27 at the virtual Locus Awards Weekend; Connie Willis MCed the awards ceremony, available online, with co-presenter Daryl Gregory. Additional weekend events included readings and panels with leading authors. Among the winners were Bubonicon 43's Artist Guest John Picacio. A list of winners follows:

SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL: *The City in the Middle of the Night* by Charlie Jane Anders (Other nominees included Margaret Atwood, Elizabeth Bear, Max Gladstone and Chuck Wendig). FANTASY NOVEL: *Middlegame* by Seanan McGuire (Ann Leckie, Rebecca Roanhorse and Leigh Bardugo also were nominated). HORROR NOVEL: *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* by Marlon James (T. Kingfisher and Cherie Priest also were nominated). YOUNG ADULT NOVEL: *Dragon Pearl* by Yoon Ha Lee. FIRST NOVEL: *Gideon the Ninth* by Tamsyn Muir (Santa Fe's Arkady Martine also was nominated).

NOVELLA: *This Is How You Lose the Time War* by Amal El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone, NOVELETTE: "Omphalos" by Ted Chiang, SHORT STORY: "The Bookstore at the End of America" by Charlie Jane Anders, ANTHOLOGY: *New Suns: Original Speculative Fiction by People of Color* edited by Nisi Shawl, COLLECTION: *Exhalation* by Ted Chiang.

MAGAZINE: *Tor.com*, PUBLISHER: Tor, EDITOR: Ellen Datlow, ARTIST: John Picacio, NON-FICTION: *Monster, She Wrote: The Women Who Pioneered Horror and Speculative Fiction* by Lisa Kröger & Melanie R. Anderson, ILLUSTRATED & ART BOOK: *Spectrum 26: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art* edited by John Fleskes, and SPECIAL AWARD 2020: INCLUSIVITY AND REPRESENTATION EDUCATION: *Writing the Other* by Nisi Shawl, Cynthia Ward, & K. Tempest Bradford.

For more information about this year's virtual Locus Awards ceremony and events, please visit locusmag.com/2020-locus-awards-weekend.

BUBONICON CANCELED FOR 2020

On May 26, the Board of Bubonicon Inc voted unanimously to cancel Bubonicon for August 2020 due to New Mexico pandemic restrictions on sizes of gatherings, and a desire to not be a source of another COVID-19 spike. One other factor was that the ABQ Marriott Uptown had stated there would be no cancellation fee if Bubonicon declared a decision before the end of May.

Instead, the Committee and Board will try Bubonicon 52 again next year – August 20-22, 2021, at the Marriott, and is in the process of reconfirming all four Special Guests (so far, Keith R.A. DeCandido and Chaz Kemp have confirmed their participation).

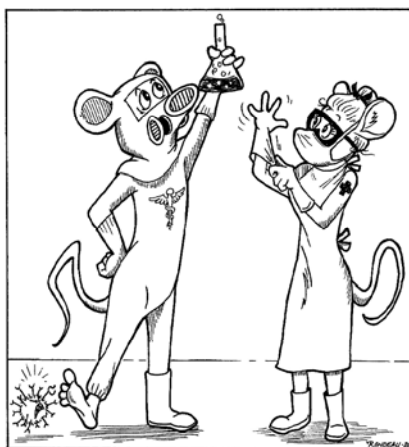
On May 27, Bubonicon Inc posted on the convention's website: "It is with a heavy heart that we officially announce that Bubonicon is canceled for August 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and state restrictions on gathering sizes and hotel occupancy. We will try Bubonicon 52 instead next year – August 20-22, 2021.

"For Bubonicon Inc, this was not an easy decision

UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS

- **Friday, July 10:** A Virtual visit from Darynda Jones on her new mystery series that starts with *A Bad Day for Sunshine...*
- **August 7:** Bubonicon Inc's annual financial meeting, which might go Virtual (or be delayed) if we still can't meet at the church.
- **August 14:** Summer movie night! What cheesy SF film will we watch this year? We might have to do comments via Facebook on a film on YouTube.
- **September 18 (A week late):** We hope to have a science or author presentation, in-person or by Virtual means. Most likely, no con reports this year.
- **October 9:** Benjamin Radford talks on "Tracking the Lizard Man" in-person or Virtually. Plus the Election of 3 club officers for 2021. And Halloween's *ASFACTS* (deadline Mon, October 5).

Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Darth Vader, guest editor each December. Please Send All Correspondence to — PO Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176-7257. Phone: (505) 266-8905. E-mail: cwraig@nmia.com. *ASFACTS* published February, April, July & October for the Albuquerque SF Society. *SITHFACTS* out each December. NEXT DEADLINE: Mon, October 5.
Club Officers: Craig Chrissinger & Jessica Coyle, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Harriet Engle, Moderator. Grant Kuck, Alternator. Coronavirus, stupid interloper. **B'con Con Chair:** Craig Chrissinger (505) 559-0931.



and it was put off as long as possible to acquire more information and forecasts for the pandemic. As with other late summer conventions, we were hopeful this pandemic would not affect the timing of our event. But sadly, the world will not re-

turn to 'normal' very quickly, and restrictions on the size of gatherings will most likely go into late Fall or even Winter 2020. Therefore, for the safety and health of our special guests, participants, attendees, vendors, gofers, hotel staff and convention committee, we regret to announce that Bubonicon 2020 is canceled."

Everyone who had purchased a pass and/or dealers space for Bubonicon 2020 was directly contacted by email in late May with the options to request a refund, transfer their payment to Bubonicon 2021, or help cover 2020 expenses to date. All feedback and refund requests were due by the end of July 2.

As sort of a replacement, the convention committee is trying to do a "Buboni-Virtual Con" presentation on Saturday, August 29. Details of panels, readings and maybe a science talk are being worked out. There will be 4-6 hours of programming presented online, free of charge!

One idea is to do the *GREEN SLIME AWARDS* as part of that virtual programming. So, if you've read a terrible book, seen a bad movie, or endured a stinky TV show that was released since last Bubonicon (August 2019), then please contact Slime Mistress Jessica Coyle through the link on our "Contact Us" page (under the "About" tab) by Friday, August 7. Your Green Slime opinions are needed to give Jessica and the Slime Time Puppets something to work with!

Weekend passes for "Bubonicon 52: Take Two" will go on sale late November 2020. Bubonicon 2021 will be held a week earlier than usual – the weekend after the 2nd New Mexico Comic Expo, and the weekend before the Washington DC Worldcon! For more information and updates, check out www.bubonicon.com.

2019 NEBULA AWARDS WINNERS

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) announced the winners of the 2019 Nebula Awards at the 55th Annual Nebula Banquet on Saturday, May 30, at a virtual ceremony. Winners are listed below:

NOVEL: *A Song for a New Day* by Sarah Pinsker, NOVELLA: *This Is How You Lose the Time War* by Amal

El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone, NOVELETTE: *Carpe Glitter* by Cat Rambo, SHORT STORY: "Give the Family My Love" by A.T. Greenblatt, GAME WRITING: *The Outer Worlds* by Leonard Boyarsky, Megan Starks, Kate Dollarhyde & Chris L'Etoile (Obsidian Entertainment), RAY BRADBURY AWARD: *Good Omens*: "Hard Times," and ANDRE NORTON AWARD: *Riverland* by Fran Wilde.

Also presented were the Kevin O'Donnell, Jr. Service to SFWA Award to Julia Rios, and the Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award to John Picacio and David Gaughran. Lois McMaster Bujold received the 36th Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award.

RUDOLFO ANAYA DIES

Writer Rudolfo Anaya died June 28 at home in Albuquerque after a long illness. He was 82 years old. Anaya was a major Chicano writer, best known for his debut *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), adapted as a film in 2013. His work occasionally had genre elements, notably in his Sonny Baca mystery series: *Zia Summer* (1995), *Rio Grande Fall*, *Shaman Winter*, and *Jemez Spring*. *Mystery Curse of the ChupaCabra* (2006) and sequel *ChupaCabra and the Roswell UFO* also have speculative elements. Other works of interest include *The Legend of La Llorona* (1984) and *Lord of the Dawn: The Legend of Quetzalcóatl*. He also edited anthologies, wrote books for children, and was a playwright.

Anaya was born October 30, 1937, in Pastura, NM, and grew up in Santa Rosa and Albuquerque. He attended the University of New Mexico, earning a BA in 1963, a masters degree in English in 1968, and another masters in guidance and counseling in 1972; he later taught creative writing there. From 1963-68 he taught English in a public high school. He and his wife Patricia Lawless (married 1966) ran a retreat for beginning writers in Jemez Spring. Anaya received a National Humanities medal in 2016. He was predeceased by his wife in 2010, and is survived by their children and grandchildren.

FANTASY MAGAZINE RELAUNCH

John Joseph Adams has announced the relaunch of *Fantasy Magazine*, with issue #61 scheduled for November 2020, reported Locus Online at the end of June. *Fantasy* will be joining "sister-magazines *Lightspeed* and *Nightmare* under the same publishing umbrella." Adams has named Christie Yant and Arley Sorg as co-editors-in-chief of *Fantasy*. From this point forward, all three magazines will be co-published by Adams and Yant under the name Adamant Press.

"*Fantasy Magazine's* format will differ slightly from its sister-magazines with its inclusion of flash fiction and poetry," said Adams. "Like *Nightmare* and *Lightspeed*, *Fantasy* will be publishing in both ebook format and making the contents of the magazine online for free. Yant

and Sorg's creative vision includes opening as a welcoming market for new voices in fiction."

Submissions for *Fantasy* opened July 1, and "going forward will be open the first week of every month (1st-7th)." Pay rates will be 8 cents per word for original short fiction, including flash fiction, and \$40 per poem. For submission guidelines, visit the *Fantasy* website.

Fantasy officially went on hiatus in January 2012, when Adams took over as publisher and merged it with *Lightspeed*, though it released "single special issues in 2014, 2015, and 2016."

GRR MARTIN BUYS RAILROAD

SANTA FE (Associated Press & ABQ Journal) - George RR Martin, the famed author of the *Game of Thrones* fantasy series, has joined a group to buy the historic Santa Fe Southern Railroad.

Violet Crown cinema owner Bill Banowsky, National Dance Institute of New Mexico co-founder Catherine Oppenheimer and Martin recently purchased the decades-old railway and trains along the 18-mile (29-kilometer) spur line from Santa Fe to the community of Lamy, the *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported on May 26.

Passenger excursion trains to Lamy ended in 2012 and some residents have been seeking ways to get them started again.

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway reached Lamy in 1879. Though it had been initially planned to roll into Santa Fe, railroad executives and engineers said it would be too difficult to build a main track to the capital city because of the steep grade in the mountainous environment, so they settled for a spur line.

The first Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe train to reach Santa Fe arrived in February 1880. The train served the city for well over a century.

In 1991, the successor to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway closed the spur. The Santa Fe Southern Railway formed to buy the right of way, buildings, and equipment for the short-line operation.

One evening about a year-and-a-half ago, the three partners were having dinner at Banowsky's house and, after the pitcher of margaritas, the host broached the idea of buying the Santa Fe Southern Railway. His guests agreed to the plan.

Martin said, "It was like we were in an old Mickey Rooney movie. Hey, kids, let's put on a show."

He said his real motivation for being part of the acquisition group is so he can stand in the engine car and blow the whistle. "Even though I'm an old guy, I'm a 13-year-old inside," said the screenwriter and author.

Oppenheimer said the trio did not want to see the financially challenged railway fall into further disrepair or fade away. "There's something about train travel that brings you back to a time that we assume was a simpler, more community-based time, long before the internet,

before air travel, even before television," she said.

Oppenheimer added the trio plan to ultimately provide "a super-fun train experience that builds in the history and culture and natural beauty of New Mexico."

Plans not only include repairing the track and bridges between Santa Fe and Lamy, where a small depot still awaits passengers on the Amtrak line that travels from Chicago to Los Angeles and back, but provide an array of entertaining arts and cultural events on train excursions and at nearby stops.

If all goes well, they hope to renew a deal with Amtrak to keep the Southwest Chief line stopping at Lamy and perhaps restore a now-vacant position for a ticket agent at the site.

No one involved with the purchase was willing to say how much the three investors paid, but Oppenheimer said it would cost "in the millions" to repair the track and bridges between Santa Fe and Lamy and restore some of the roughly 20 train cars, which date to the 1920s.

Martin, whose nonprofit Stagecoach Foundation is dedicated to expanding film and TV production in New Mexico, sees the possibility of building a Wild West sound stage and backlot in Lamy, and using the train in film productions. "It was already featured in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*," he said.

"There are a lot of opportunities for a new tourist attraction. COVID has thrown a monkey wrench into our plan. We had hoped to get things up and running in 2021, but now it won't be until 2022," Martin said.

In terms of tourist experiences, Oppenheimer sees excursions at Halloween ("George's favorite holiday") and Christmas (think taking *The Polar Express* to a twinkling holiday village in Lamy), as well as stargazing expeditions featuring astronomers and astrologers.

For his part, Martin's thinking about trips where actors dressed as bandits hold up the train, escape rooms on the rails and even a murder mystery event called "Murder on the Lamy Express."

"We don't want this to be a shabby railroad on its last legs," Martin said. "We want this to be a real jewel."

The Bayonne, New Jersey-born Martin is best known for the book series that begins with *A Game of Thrones*. In recent years, the Santa Fe resident has helped with projects around New Mexico.

BOOK GROUP STILL READING

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets in a Virtual Session via Zoom at 7:30 pm Monday, July 20, to discuss *Hammers on Bone* by Cassandra Khaw. The group then focuses on *The Library of the Unwritten* by A.J. Hackwith on Monday, August 17 – hopefully at Jason's Deli, northwest corner of Louisiana & America's Parkway NE (across from Bubonicon's hotel). If a physical meeting is not possible in August, the group will do another Zoom session. The final meeting for this quarter

takes place Monday, September 21, with discussion on *Just One Damned Thing After Another* by Jodi Taylor. Maybe Jason's Deli, maybe Zoom – time will tell.

Meetings of D&D are open to all interested readers on the third Monday of each month. Books for discussion are chosen two months in advance, and group members receive a 20% discount on selected novels at Page One Books in the Mountain Run Shopping Center. For more info, contact Leah at msransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 266-8905.

WESTOVER WINS INAUGURAL US SELFIES AWARD

The Winter Sisters by Tim Westover is the winner of the Selfies Book Awards U.S., awarded by *Publishers Weekly* and BookBrunch “to discover promising talent and recognize the very best indie-published titles each year.” The announcement came on June 25, reports Locus Online.

Westover will receive \$1,000 and a \$5,000 advertising package with *Publishers Weekly*. *The Winter Sisters* “will also be featured at trade shows and promoted to 30,000 librarians....”

Shortlisted titles of genre interest include *Athena's Choice* by Adam Boostrom and *Murder of Ravens* by Paty Jager.

The winner was announced on June 24 at the American Library Association online conference. For more information, including the complete shortlist, see www.publishersweekly.com.

MORE COVID EVENT CANCELLATIONS

Numerous upcoming conventions and literary events have been postponed or canceled as part of efforts to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus that causes respiratory illness COVID-19, reports Locus Online. The situation remains in flux as the full extent of the pandemic remains to be seen. *Locus Magazine* will update this story and convention listing with further information about cancellations and postponements as it becomes available.

Westercon 73, planned for July 2-5, in SeaTac, WA, has been postponed to July 1-4, 2021. Westercon 74 will be postponed a year as well, and will run July 1-4, 2022, in Tonopah NV.

NEFilk 2020, planned for July 3-5, 2020, has been rescheduled to June 18-20, 2021 in Danbury, CT. An online filk music event is being planned for the original weekend.

Readercon 31, scheduled for July 9-12, 2020, has been postponed to July 8-11, 2021 in Quincy, MA. Jeffrey Ford and Ursula Vernon will remain our Guests of Honor, with Vonda N. McIntyre as our Memorial Guest

of Honor.

San Diego Comic-Con International, scheduled for July 23-26 has been canceled. It will be replaced by Comic-Con@Home, an online event offering “the best of the Comic-Con experience and a sense of its community to anyone,” scheduled for the same dates. The next in-person event will be held July 22-25, 2021.

The Romance Writers of America Annual Conference, scheduled for July 29-August 1 in San Francisco, CA, has been canceled. RWA has planned a virtual conference, scheduled for August 28-30, featuring “three days of inspiring speakers, enlightening workshops, and energizing networking.”

ConZealand, the 78th World Science Fiction Convention in Wellington, New Zealand, scheduled for July 29-August 2 is becoming the first ever “virtual Worldcon.”

PulpFest, scheduled for August 6-9, 2020 in Pittsburgh, PA, has been postponed to August 5-8, 2021.

StokerCon UK in Scarborough, UK, which was postponed to August 6-9, 2020, has been postponed again to January 28-31, 2021. According to their latest statement, “all existing memberships and hotel bookings will be carried forward to the new dates.”

The Columbus 2020 NASFiC, planned for August 20-23 in Columbus, OH, has been canceled. “We will not be offering any refunds but, that being said, we still plan on publishing a souvenir book for all attending and supporting members. We may have a virtual event on the weekend of August 20-23. We'll update everyone on that later once we have some plans.”

Bubonicon 52, scheduled for August 28-30, 2020 in Albuquerque has been canceled. The next in-person Bubonicon will be held August 20-22, 2021.

ArmadilloCon 42, scheduled for August 28-30 in Austin, TX, is going entirely virtual this year, free of charge. Special Guests remain artist Priscilla Kim, and fans Clif & Margaret Davis.

Dragon Con 2020, scheduled for September 3-7 in Atlanta, GA, is going virtual, too. Memberships can be rolled over to 2021 or refunded. In a statement, Dragon Con said they wanted to give “our fans the *free* opportunity to enjoy new content, as well as reminisce while catching up on some of the old favorites.”

Albacon, scheduled for September 11-13, 2020, has postponed its annual convention to 2021, with Sharon Lee and Steve Miller agreeing to remain as guests of honor. “Memberships will roll over but anyone wishing a refund may request one from treasurer@albacon.org.”

FantasyCon 2020, scheduled for September 25-27 in London, has been canceled. “The FantasyCon 2020 committee will, instead, be



running FantasyCon 2022.” Memberships can be transferred or refunded.

MileHiCon 52, planned for October 23-25 in Denver, CO, is instead holding a virtual convention on those same dates. Special Guests are Mur Lafferty, Cory Doctorow, Rebecca Roanhorse, toastmaster Steve Rasnic Tem, and artist Alan Pollack.

The World Fantasy Convention, planned for October 29-November 1 in Salt Lake City, UT, is becoming an online conference (because the convention hotel has canceled all in-person gatherings for the remainder of 2020). The organizers hope to have “a variety of online offerings,” including readings, panels, art demonstrations, interviews, small group meetings, a virtual exhibit hall, and more.

COSine 2021, scheduled for January 29-31, 2021, in Colorado Springs, CO, is postponed until January 14-16, 2022. Special Guests will be C.J. Cherryh, Connie & Courtney Willis, and artist Jane Fancher.

2020 SF&F HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

On July 2, The Museum of Pop Culture (MoPOP) announced the 2020 inductees to the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame: short story writer Ted Chiang, *Star Trek* writer D.C. Fontana, the *Star Wars* movie series, and the Hugo Award-winning graphic novel *Watchmen* by Alan Moore, illustrated by Dave Gibbons. The inductees will be included in the SF&F Hall of Fame display later this year, reported Locus Online via File 770.

The Science Fiction Hall of Fame was founded in 1996 and then relocated from the Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction and Fantasy at the University of Kansas to its permanent home at MoPOP (formerly EMP) in 2004.

For more information, including a complete list of Hall of Fame members, see the MoPOP website: www.mopop.org/sffhof.

SFWA MAKES STATEMENT ON BLACK LIVES MATTER

On June 4, The Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) board unanimously signed a statement about the Black Lives Matter movement and the recent protests against police violence, reported Locus Online. The statement reads, in part: “It is not enough to have an anti-harassment policy and call that good. We must work for equity and diversity to make sure that underrepresented voices are heard, to increase inclusion in the genre of science fiction and fantasy, in the larger ecosystem of publishing, in our writing community, and in life.

“We support Black Lives Matter and the protesters who are seeking justice for centuries of white supremacy and police brutality.

“We acknowledge that SFWA has historically ignored and, in too many instances, reinforced the injustices, systemic barriers, and unaddressed racism, particularly toward Black people, that have contributed to this moment. We have allowed those who spoke for change in SFWA to be drowned out by those who clung to the status quo. We have a responsibility to admit our failings and to continually commit to dismantling these oppressive and harmful systems, both within this organization and ourselves.”

The board listed a series of concrete steps they plan to take, including making donations to the Carl Brandon Society and the Black Speculative Fiction Society, waiving membership and event registration fees for Black writers, creating a travel fund for Black writers, and more. For details, see their official statement at www.sfw.org/2020/06/04.

UNCLE HUGO'S BOOKSTORE BURNED DOWN IN RIOTS

Uncle Hugo's, the oldest independent science fiction and fantasy bookstore in the US founded in 1974, burned down during the recent riots protesting police brutality and racism in the wake of the shocking death of George Floyd during a police arrest in Minneapolis, MN. As of May 30, at least 250 businesses across the Twin Cities had been damaged or destroyed. Some, including Uncle Hugo's, were destroyed completely by fire or suffered extensive water damage. Uncle Edgar's bookstore, a specialty mystery, suspense, and thrillers shop, which was housed within Uncle Hugo's, also is gone.

Dreamhaven Books down the road “was trashed” according to owner Greg Ketter, but did not burn down. Ketter confirmed they are all safe, and many volunteers have shown up to help with cleaning up the damage.

As of June 4, Uncle Hugo's has officially claimed a Go Fund Me page started to help rebuild and reopen the business. To donate: www.gofundme.com/f/let-us-help-save-uncle-hugo039s. So far, \$157,815 has been raised toward a \$500,000 goal.

CARLOS RUIZ ZAFÓN DIES

Spanish author Carlos Ruiz Zafón died June 19 of cancer in Los Angeles, CA, Locus Online reported. He was 55 years old.

Zafón wrote literary novels that often included speculative elements. His debut, YA *The Prince of Mist*, appeared in Spanish in 1993 and in English in 2010. He wrote three other novels for young adults, but his breakout book was adult debut *The Shadow of the Wind* (2001), an international bestseller that appeared in English in 2004. That title launched the Cemetery of Forgotten Books series, which also includes *The Angel's Game*

(2008) and sequels *The Prisoner of Heaven* and *The Labyrinth of Spirits* (2016).

Zafón was born September 25, 1964, in Barcelona, Spain. He worked in advertising before relocating to Los Angeles, where he worked briefly as a screenwriter. He was diagnosed with cancer more than two years ago. Zafón's work was translated into more than 40 languages and published in 45 countries, and he is often touted as the most-read Spanish author since Cervantes.

2020 CLARKE SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED

The shortlist for the 34th Arthur C. Clarke Award was announced June 18, reports Locus Online:

The City in the Middle of the Night by Charlie Jane Anders, *The Light Brigade* by Kameron Hurley, *A Memory Called Empire* by Arkady Martine (of Santa Fe), *The Old Drift* by Namwali Serpell, *Cage of Souls* by Adrian Tchaikovsky, and *The Last Astronaut* by David Wellington.

The 2020 judges are Rhian Drinkwater, Stewart Hotston, Farah Mendlesohn, Chris Pak, and Alasdair Stuart, with Andrew M. Butler serving as the non-voting Chair of the Judges. The shortlist was selected from 121 titles submitted by 46 individual UK publishing imprints and independent authors.

The winner will receive a check for £2,020 and an engraved bookend in an award ceremony in September, with more details to be announced soon.

2020 SCRIBE AWARD NOMINEES

On June 16, the International Association of Media Tie-in Writers (IAMTW) announced the nominees for the 2020 Scribe Awards, honoring excellence in licensed tie-in writing, reported Locus Online. Nominees of genre interest follow.

ORIGINAL NOVEL - SPECULATIVE: *Batman: The Court of Owls* by Greg Cox, *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge: Black Spire* by Delilah S. Dawson, *Firefly: The Magnificent Nine* by James Lovegrove, *Star Trek: The Next Generation: Collateral Damage* by David Mack, *Star Trek: Discovery: The Enterprise War* by John Jackson Miller, and *Warhammer: Age of Sigmar: The Red Feast* by Gav Thorpe.

ADAPTED NOVEL - GENERAL & SPECULATIVE: *Doctor Who: Scratch Man* by Tom Baker, *Alita: Battle Angel* by Pat Cadigan, *Batman: The Killing Joke* by Christa Faust & Gary Phillips, and *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* by Greg Keyes.

AUDIO DRAMA: *Torchwood: Sargasso* by Christopher Cooper, *Doctor Who: "10 Doctor Adventures: The Creeping Death"* by Roy Gill, *Diary of River Song: "Concealed Weapon"* by Scott Handcock, *Doctor Who: "Companion Chronicles: Daybreak"* by John Pritchard, and *Warhammer: Watcher in the Rain* by Alex Worley.

YOUNG ADULT/MIDDLE GRADE: *Battletech: Rogue Academy: Iron Dawn* by Jennifer Brozek, *Halo: Battle Born* by Cassandra Rose Clarke, *Warhammer Adventures: City of Lifestone* by Tom Huddleston, *The Lucy Wilson Mysteries: The Midnight People* by John Peel, and *Warhammer Adventures: Attack of the Necron* by Cavan Scott.

SHORT STORY: "Cookie" (*Straight Outta Deadwood*) by Shance Lacy Hensley, "Pure History" (*Lethbridge-Stewart: The Laughing Gnome*) by George Ivanoff, "Cutter & Razz" (*Fresh Hells: Tales of Basil & Moebius*) by Chris A. Jackson, "The Girl's Best Friend Matter" (*Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*) by Bobby Nash, and "The Queen Slayer" (*Women of the Crystal Coast*) by Jean Rabe.

Winners will be announced July 16. For more information, including a full list of nominees, see the IAMTW website - iamtw.org/2020-scribe-award-nominees.

CARL REINER DIES AT 98

Multitalented creator Carl Reiner died on June 29 of natural causes at his home in Beverly Hills, CA. He was 98 years old. The news was confirmed by Reiner's assistant. Reiner was a jack-of-all-trades who dabbled in practically every element of Hollywood, from publishing to comedy, showrunning, and screenwriting.

Carl Reiner was born in the Bronx on March 20, 1922. His parents were Jewish immigrants. In 1943, Carl Reiner was drafted into the Army Air Force; he'd serve throughout the war but maintained close ties to the world of acting by performing in shows around the Pacific theater and entertaining the troops.

After the war, Reiner started to appear on the Broadway stage, but his big break would come through the medium of television, when he started on Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows* in 1950. He joined an already talented writing troupe that would include Mel Brooks and Neil Simon. Brooks and Reiner would continue to collaborate, debuting their legendary *2,000 Year Old Man* routine in 1960 on the *Steve Allen Show*. They would expand the routine into a series of comedy albums and an animated special, winning a Grammy in the process.

In 1959, Reiner pitched his first series, a pilot entitled *Head of the Family* about a loveable patriarch with many of the situations inspired by Reiner's own life. Unfortunately, the studio didn't want him in the lead, instead casting Dick Van Dyke and retitling the series *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. Reiner made several appearances on the series as Alan Brady.

He made his directorial debut in 1967 adapting his own 1958 novel *Enter Laughing*. He later directed the classic Steve Martin feature *The Jerk* in 1979 and the cinematic throwbacks *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* in 1982 and sci-fi comedy *The Man With Two Brains* in 1983. Reiner and Steve Martin would pair up three times,

in the previously two mentioned films, as well as in 1984's fantasy-comedy *All of Me* with Lily Tomlin.

Over the last decade Reiner performed numerous voice roles, voicing Santa in the Nickelodeon's *Penguins of Madagascar* series and appearing on *The Cleveland Show*. He also played Carl Rhinoceros in an episode of the Disney+ series *Forky Asks a Question* in 2019, playing opposite Carol Burnett, Betty White, and close friend Mel Brooks. Reiner also knew how to stay relevant, becoming one of the oldest celebrities active on Twitter.

In 2000, Reiner was honored with the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor at the Kennedy Center. He authored or co-authored 18 books, with his autobiography *Too Busy to Die* debuting in 2017. He was the recipient of nine Primetime Emmy Awards, and in 2019 he was honored by the Paley Center for Media as part of a special tribute to comedy legends.

Reiner was married for 64 years to Estelle Lebost until her death in 2008. Lebost is best remembered as the woman who said "I'll have what she's having" in *When Harry Met Sally*. He is survived by his three children: director, comedian and actor Rob Reiner; playwright, poet, and author Annie Reiner; and painter Lucas Reiner, as well as six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

CLUB'S KEVIN ZANDER DIES

ASFS member Kevin Zander passed away on April 29 after a long battle with cancer. He was 61 years old.

Zander had been having treatments for several years and had hoped for a liver transplant. He had spent some time out-of-state getting treatments a couple of years ago. Early this year, his doctors moved him to hospice because there was no more they could do.

He served as ABQ SF Society moderator in 2017 and 2018, and was a Bubonicon gofer for many years. He first found Albuquerque fandom at a meeting of Alpha Centura in the mid-1980s. He was a fan of *Star Trek* and had many *Trek* collectibles. He often said he didn't really read, but he did listen to audiobooks and kept up with many SF TV shows and movies. He also was a gamer, and enjoyed game nights.

Club member Patricia Rogers visited with him mid-March "right before they closed the rehab/hospice facility where he was staying to visitors. We hung out, had lunch with his friends there, and talked for a long time. We had a really nice time. When I asked him what sort of remembrance/life celebration he wanted, he said he wanted friends to remember and celebrate the good times."

Kevin Lloyd Zander was born March 30, 1959, in Baltimore, MD, and graduated from Northern Senior High School (Baltimore) in 1977. He had worked as a computer technician, and was active in Calvary Chapel. He also was a member of the Christian Motorcyclists Association, and served as the secretary for Son Crest Riders #77 for a time.

He is survived by his wife, Bobbee Frances Yager Zander; two brothers, Sande and James; and at least two nieces, Jenna and Kelle.

Zander was cremated. Nothing has been planned for a memorial yet because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

FORMER ASFS/BUBONICON MEMBER DIES

Former ASFS member David Pudelwitts St Albans, who also worked on Bubonicon, died May 17 of a massive and sudden heart attack in Scottsdale, AZ. He was 65 years old.

St Albans was co-manager of the Bubonicon 20 Art Show in 1988, and member of the ABQ Art Guerillas, an artist collective that published some art-oriented fanzines in the 1980s.

He moved from New Mexico with his wife years ago, first to Las Vegas, NV, and then to Scottsdale, AZ. He always continued his many wonderful art and writing projects. Along with being active in a plethora of interests and study projects. He was both a writer and a book editor.

His interests were wide and fascinating, from vampires and history, to cryptozoology. Costuming and acting were also among his talents. He also was a member of the Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix, and consistently attended Thursday coffee talk meetups in the past year.

Patricia Rogers, ASFS member, commented, "David was always a good and caring friend to me and many others. We have been friends since 1983 and shared so many interests. We never lacked for things to chat about."

On Facebook, Helene Quintal Neville posted: "David was a special person. Everything about him was genuine, from his full-face grin to his endless compliments. And because of that genuine kindness and positivity, he managed to make everyone around him feel special. It didn't matter if you knew him for years or only ten minutes — he knew how to make people feel great. Essentially, he was a bright light. I was his very best friend and he was my favorite guy friend. Over the past ten years we developed a close relationship."

St Albans was born September 9, 1954, and was cremated. He is survived by his wife, Rosanne Allen-Hewlett, whom he met at an ABQ SF Society meeting or Bubonicon; and many friends.

140 ABQ SMALL BUSINESSES RECEIVE RELIEF FUNDING

On April 17, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller and the City of Albuquerque Economic Development Department announced 140 local small businesses will be awarded \$5,000 in Coronavirus relief funding to help fill

the gaps in federal and state programs and keep them afloat through the coronavirus pandemic.

More than 1,300 businesses applied to the program, announced just two weeks ago, clearly indicating the dire need created by the coronavirus. The small business relief program intends to provide vital economic support to Albuquerque businesses in overcoming the temporary loss of revenue due to COVID-19.

“We’re doing everything we can to support small businesses as they struggle through this difficult time,” said Keller. “Albuquerque small businesses have felt significant impacts, and while this isn’t a panacea, our aim is to relieve some of the financial stress so they can stay afloat. Small businesses create a sense of place in our neighborhoods and bring the community together. We’re asking all of Albuquerque to step up to support each other in these times—and that includes the businesses and workers who are the foundation of our economy.”

Grants have been awarded after detailed review, based on the program criteria, the impact of the public health emergency on the business or industry, need, location, industry, eligibility, and availability of funds. Grants may only be used for business operating expenses such as payroll and rent.

Among the grantees are some which have worked with Bubonicon over the years: Don’s Paperback Book Exchange, the Guild Cinema, Astro-Zombies, Rude Boy Cookies, Charley’s 33’s & CD’s, Organic Books, Hip Stitch, and Twin Suns Comics & Games.

THE MADS ARE BACK!

Mystery Science Theater 3000’s Frank Conniff and Trace Beaulieu are “taking movie riffing back onstage” in their new show to be livestreamed 6:00 pm MDT Tuesday, July 21.

The two, who starred as Dr. Clayton Forrester and TV’s Frank on *MST3K* (aka, The Mad Scientists), are riffing Ed Wood’s *Glen or Glenda* (1953). This show will mark their first time performing together this year,

after The Mads’ 2020 tour dates were cancelled due to COVID-19.

This new live-riffing “quarantine” show will be in the same vein as the *Mystery Science Theater 3000 Live Riff-Along*, a special streaming event featuring the movie *Moon Zero Two* that took place May 3.

Tickets for the



Mads’ July 21 livestreamed event are \$10.00 plus a service fee. More information is available at: www.themadsareback.com/event/glen-or-glenda-livestream-screening.

TREK: LOWER DECKS SET FOR AUGUST RELEASE DATE

CBS All Access, CBS’ digital subscription video on-demand and live streaming service, announced July 1 that its new half-hour animated comedy series *Star Trek: Lower Decks* will premiere on Thursday, August 6, reported startrek.com. Following the premiere, new episodes of the series’ 10-episode first season will be available to stream weekly on Thursdays, exclusively for CBS All Access subscribers in the U.S.

Developed by Emmy Award winner Mike McMahan (*Rick and Morty*, *Solar Opposites*), *Star Trek: Lower Decks* focuses on the support crew serving on one of Starfleet’s least important ships, the U.S.S. Cerritos, in 2380. Ensigns Mariner, Boimler, Rutherford and Tendi have to keep up with their duties and their social lives, often while the ship is being rocked by a multitude of sci-fi anomalies.

The Starfleet crew residing in the “lower decks” of the U.S.S. Cerritos, includes Ensign Beckett Mariner, voiced by Tawny Newsome, Ensign Brad Boimler, voiced by Jack Quaid, Ensign Tendi, voiced by Noël Wells and Ensign Rutherford, voiced by Eugene Cordero. The Starfleet characters that comprise the ship’s bridge crew include Captain Carol Freeman, voiced by Dawnn Lewis, Commander Jack Ransom, voiced by Jerry O’Connell, Lieutenant Shaxs, voiced by Fred Tatasciore and Doctor T’Pol, voiced by Gillian Vigman.

The series is produced by CBS’ Eye Animation Productions, CBS Television Studios’ new animation arm; Secret Hideout; and Roddenberry Entertainment. Secret Hideout’s Alex Kurtzman and Heather Kadin and Roddenberry Entertainment’s Rod Roddenberry and Trevor Roth, and Katie Krentz (219 Productions) serve as executive producers alongside creator and showrunner Mike McMahan.

Star Trek: Lower Decks will air exclusively on CBS All Access in the United States and is distributed worldwide by ViacomCBS Global Distribution Group.

Star Trek: Lower Decks is the first animated series to join the expanding *Star Trek* franchise on CBS All Access, which includes hit original series *Star Trek: Picard* and *Star Trek: Discovery*, returning with season three later this year; the recently announced USS Enterprise-set series *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*, featuring Anson Mount, Rebecca Romijn and Ethan Peck; and the development of a Section 31-based series with Michelle Yeoh. A CG-animated *Star Trek* series aimed at younger audiences is also in the works for Nickelodeon.

CW GETS NEW *BATWOMAN*

Just as suddenly as Ruby Rose exited the CW's *Batwoman*, the network has announced that it's found a new actor to don the cowl and keep Gotham's streets safe reported io9.com on July 8.

Per the *Hollywood Reporter*, Javicia Leslie is set to become the CW's next Batwoman in the series' upcoming second season. One of the big questions following Rose's abrupt exit from *Batwoman* was whether the CW would simply cast someone else to play Kate Kane or if the show might pivot in a different direction. The answer, of course, should be obvious.

According to the *Hollywood Reporter*, Leslie's character Ryan Wilder is anything but a duplicate of her crimefighting predecessor. Unlike Kate, Ryan spent her life doing what it took to survive in Gotham, including pushing drugs and clashing with the city's police officers, all the while sticking true to her own personal code of ethics that's likely to factor largely into her character.

"Today Ryan lives in her van with her plant," a press release describing the character explained. "A girl who would steal milk for an alley cat and could also kill you with her bare hands, Ryan is the most dangerous type of fighter: highly skilled and wildly undisciplined. An out lesbian. Athletic. Raw. Passionate. Fallible. And very much not your stereotypical All-American hero."

Back on May 19, Rose said in a statement, "I have made the very difficult decision to not return to *Batwoman* next season. This was not a decision I made lightly as I have the utmost respect for the cast, crew and everyone involved with the show in both Vancouver and in Los Angeles. I am beyond appreciative to Greg Berlanti, Sarah Schechter, and Caroline Dries for not only giving me this incredible opportunity, but for welcoming me into the DC universe they have so beautifully created. Thank you Peter Roth and Mark Pedowitz and the teams at Warner Bros. and the CW who put so much into the show and always believed in me. Thank you to everyone who made season one a success – I am truly grateful."

There's no word on how, or if, the show will explain the change or, frankly, why it happened. (One theory is it could be related to injuries Rose received on set and how/if she healed from them.) But it's sure to set off a firestorm of speculation.

Leslie taking over as Batwoman is particularly notable given that she'll be the first Black, openly queer woman to lead one of the CW's Arrowverse shows that have featured predominantly white heroes – aside from *Black Lightning*, which only just recently started being included in the network's annual crossover events.

"I am extremely proud to be the first Black actress to play the iconic role of Batwoman on television, and as a bisexual woman, I am honored to join this groundbreaking show which has been such a trailblazer for the LGBTQ+ community," the actor told *THR*.

Given that Leslie's character doesn't have a one to one counterpart in DC's comics, it's not clear just what sort of energy she's going to bring to *Batwoman* in the show's future seasons. But her presence is almost certain to shake up *Batwoman*'s status quo in some interesting ways when the series returns to TV.



MILLER SHARES DETAILS ON NEXT *MAD MAX* FILM

by Johnny Brayson, Comettv.com (05-22-2020)

If you're like most people and thought that the best thing about *Mad Max: Fury Road* was Charlize Theron's Furiosa, then you're in luck, because a Furiosa prequel is officially slated to be the next installment in the franchise. Director George Miller recently shared some new details about the upcoming film, and it sounds like the movie will be even crazier and more shocking than its predecessor.

The film will star a new actor as a younger version of Furiosa, and she'll have some big shoes to fill as Theron's performance in the 2015 film is already considered iconic. But as Miller explained in a new interview with the *New York Times*, he had a good reason for replacing his star. "For the longest time, I thought we could just use CG de-aging on Charlize, but I don't think we're nearly there yet," Miller said. "Despite the valiant attempts on *The Irishman*, I think there's still an uncanny valley. Everyone is on the verge of solving it, particularly Japanese video-game designers, but there's still a pretty wide valley, I believe." Some names that have been floated for the role include Anya Taylor-Joy and Jodie Comer, but no one has been cast as of yet.

Another new tidbit we gleaned about the film from the interview came from production designer Colin Gibson. Gibson also worked on *Fury Road* and was responsible for producing the film's insane collection of vehicles that helped make it one of the most impressive action movies ever made. According to Gibson, the Furiosa movie's vehicle collection is going to be even bigger and more ridiculous than the one in *Fury Road*. "The next possible iteration, which is on the table, has even more [vehicles]," Gibson said.

There's obviously still a lot that's unknown about the Furiosa movie — like who will be playing the titular

character — but it definitely sounds like the film won't be skimping on the action or the spectacle when compared to *Fury Road*. And considering that *Fury Road* is one of the biggest action-spectaculars ever made, that's really saying something.

HOLLAND SAYS *SPIDER-MAN 3* "INSANE"

by Sean Wilson, Cineworld – 03/16/2020

Actor Tom Holland's chirpy tones can currently be heard gracing Disney-Pixar movie *Onward*. But away from the realm of animation, Holland has been teasing us about his return to Spider-Man.

The actor is contracted to two more movies: *Spider-Man 3*, due for release on the 6th of July 2021, and an "untitled Marvel Studios movie". This is part of the contractual agreement laid down by distributors Sony (who own the rights to the character) and Disney (who distribute the Marvel Cinematic Universe movies).

Next year's *Spider-Man 3* follows hot on the heels of 2017's *Homecoming*, which marked Holland's triumphant solo Spidey debut, and 2019's *Far From Home*. The latter movie ended on an almighty cliffhanger, with Spider-Man's identity maliciously leaked to the wider world. At the same time, he was framed for the death of nefarious villain Quentin Beck, aka Mysterio (Jake Gyllenhaal).

So, what can possibly be in store for Peter in the third movie? In an interview with the *Philippine Daily Enquirer*, he describes the story as "absolutely insane."

"I'm super happy about it," he enthuses. "We will be shooting *Spider-Man 3* in July in Atlanta." Yet when pressed about Zendaya's return as M.J., Holland says: "I'm not too sure what [the relationship between Peter and MJ] will be."

And what about that other pressing question: Will his Spider-Man feature in upcoming movies *Morbius* and *Venom*? Both films are part of the burgeoning Sony Universe of Marvel Characters, which is separate from the MCU. The former film stars Jared Leto as a scientist turned bloodsucker, and Spidey's presence is felt in the trailer when the title character walks past an image graffitied with the word 'murderer'. Meanwhile, the latter movie reunites us with Tom Hardy's journalist/symbiote character Eddie Brock.

"I'm not sure as to what they want me to do," is Holland's atypically cagey response to that one. Turns out we'll have to just wait and see.

BILL & TED FACE THE MUSIC IN AUGUST

From www.cinemark.com – (updated 07/30/2020)

William "Bill" S. Preston Esq. and Theodore "Ted" Logan have traveled through history playing music and pulling notable figures forward in time. The characters originated by Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter in the 1989 movie *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* have saved

their own high school careers, battled Death and evil robots, and created a utopia on Earth.

Or did they? Now in their 40s, Bill and Ted haven't yet written the music that will create a harmonious paradise. In *Bill & Ted Face the Music* — you can call it *Bill & Ted 3* if you like — the alter-egos of Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter will embark upon a new music adventure across time and space. Here's everything we know about the movie:

Bill & Ted Face the Music comes to theatres on August 28 — almost 30 years after the release of *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*. A trailer for *Bill & Ted Face the Music* was released in early June, and Alex Winter appeared in character alongside a digital young version of Bill in a Super Bowl commercial for WalMart.

What's the *Bill & Ted 3* Story? Time is catching up to our fun-loving heroes. Here's how Orion Pictures describes the story of the new sequel: The stakes are higher than ever for the time-traveling exploits of William "Bill" S. Preston Esq. and Theodore "Ted" Logan. Yet to fulfill their rock and roll destiny, the now middle aged best friends set out on a new adventure when a visitor from the future warns them that only their song can save life as we know it. Along the way, they will be helped by their daughters, a new batch of historical figures, and a few music legends - to seek the song that will set their world right and bring harmony in the universe.

Bill & Ted Face the Music is written by Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon, who created the characters and wrote both of the previous movies in the series.

Dean Parisot (*Galaxy Quest*) directs and Kevin Yagher, the makeup and effects wizard who worked on the first two *Bill & Ted* movies, is also on hand to create extensive prosthetic and makeup effects. In other words, despite the time between sequels, this should feel just like the two movies we know and love.

You know that Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter return to play the title characters. The medieval princesses, Joanna and Elizabeth, are now played by Jayma Mays (*Glee*, *Heroes*) and Erinn Hayes (*Children's Hospital*); Brigitte Lundy-Paine (*Bombshell*) plays Billie Logan, Ted and Elizabeth's daughter, while Samara Weaving (*Ready or Not*) plays Thea Preston, Bill and Joanna's daughter. (And, yep, Bill named his daughter after Ted, and vice versa.)

William Sadler returns as Death, and while George Carlin's death in 2008 means we won't see Rufus, but the comedian's daughter, Kelly Carlin, appears. Also in the *Bill & Ted 3* cast are Scott Mescudi (aka Kid Cudi), Kristen Schaal, Anthony Carrigan, Jillian Bell, Holland Taylor, Beck Bennett, Hal Landon Jr. and Amy Stoch.



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TREK: STRANGE NEW WORLDS

COMING TO CBS ALL ACCESS

CBS All Access announced May 15 that a series order has been made for *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*, based on the years Captain Christopher Pike manned the helm of the USS Enterprise, reported startrek.com. The series will feature fan favorites from season two of *Star Trek: Discovery* – Anson Mount as Captain Christopher Pike, Rebecca Romijn as Number One and Ethan Peck as Science Officer Spock. The series will follow them in the decade before Captain Kirk boarded the USS Enterprise, as they explore new worlds around the galaxy.

The series premiere was written by Akiva Goldsman with the story by Akiva Goldsman, Alex Kurtzman and Jenny Lumet. Goldsman, Kurtzman and Lumet will serve as executive producers in addition to Henry Alonso Myers, Heather Kadin, Rod Roddenberry and Trevor Roth. Aaron Baiers, Akela Cooper and Davy Perez will serve as co-executive producers. Akiva Goldsman will remain an executive producer and a key part of the creative team on *Star Trek: Picard* as well. The series will be produced by CBS Television Studios, Secret Hideout and Roddenberry Entertainment.

“Fans fell in love with Anson Mount, Rebecca Romijn and Ethan Peck’s portrayals of these iconic characters when they were first introduced on *Star Trek: Discovery* last season,” said Julie McNamara, Executive Vice President and Head of Programming, CBS All Access. “This new series will be a perfect complement to the franchise, bringing a whole new perspective and series of adventures to *Star Trek*.”

Alex Kurtzman noted, “When we said we heard the fans’ outpouring of love for Pike, Number One and Spock when they boarded *Star Trek: Discovery* last season, we meant it. These iconic characters have a deep history in *Star Trek* canon, yet so much of their stories has yet to be told. With Akiva and Henry at the helm, the Enterprise, its crew and its fans are in for an extraordinary journey to new frontiers in the *Star Trek* universe.”

And Akiva Goldman stated, “This is a dream come true, literally. I have imagined myself on the bridge of the Enterprise since the early 1970s. I’m honored to be a part of this continuing journey along with Alex, Henry and the fine folks at CBS.”

Star Trek: Strange New Worlds is the latest addition to the expanding *Star Trek* franchise on CBS All Access.

FREE GUY MOVES TO DECEMBER

by Sarah Moran, screenrant.com

Ryan Reynolds’ video game action-comedy, *Free Guy*, announced in early April that its release date is moving from July to December 11, 2020, while also releasing its very first clip. The news of the film’s delay

comes as no surprise seeing as practically every upcoming movie is pushing back its release. These decisions are due to movie theaters all over the world being ordered to close their doors in an effort reduce large gatherings and slow the spread of COVID-19 infections.

Following the announcement that *Free Guy* is moving to a December release date, Ryan Reynolds shared the first clip from the movie. In *Free Guy*, Reynolds plays an NPC (non-player character) living in an open-world video game who soon comes to realize his life is all part of a game. Armed with this newfound knowledge, Guy (Reynolds), begins to act like the hero as he tries to save the video game, Free City, from being shut down by its developers. In this first clip (which still bears the evidence of *Free Guy*’s former life as Fox movie), Guy watches the morning news as the anchor goes through all the potential dangers awaiting Free City’s residents, highlighting everything from stray gunfire to streets awash in the blood of the innocents.

Along with Reynolds, *Free Guy* stars Jodie Comer, Joe Keery of *Stranger Things*, Lil Rel Howery, Utkarsh Ambudkar, and Taika Waititi. The film is directed by Shawn Levy (*Stranger Things*) from a script by Matt Lieberman. *Free Guy* isn’t an adaptation of any specific video game, but it does pull influence from popular open-world games like *Grand Theft Auto*.

What effect, if any, the new release date will have remains to be seen, but *Free Guy* does look more at home among the summer blockbusters than your typical December movie fare. Still, Reynolds can be a big enough draw no matter what time of year, and after the year so many are having, a good laugh is always welcome.

BOOK REVIEW ROUND-UP

***The Fiery Crown: Forgotten Empires Book 2* by Jeffe Kennedy, 2020 St. Martin’s Paperbacks, mmpb \$7.99, 400 pages.**

Review by Jessica L. Coyle

Jeffe Kennedy’s *The Fiery Crown* is the second book in the *Forgotten Empires* series. The series follows Queen Euthalia of Calanthe and her husband Conrí, the former Crown Prince of Oriel. Conrí, who spent most of his life enslaved by the Emperor Anure, is determined to bring down the Emperor and exact his revenge for the death of his parents, no matter what the cost. Euthalia, who broke her betrothal to Anure to marry Conrí, decides to work with him with the hope that she will stay out of the Emperor’s clutches.

As they begin to work together, Conrí and Euthalia unexpectedly start to care for one another. As the time to confront the Emperor and his forces draw near, those around the couple become concerned that their blossoming romance will distract them from the task at hand. Will the Emperor and his corrupt court finally be destroyed, or will Conrí and Euthalia’s plan fail?

I am quite enjoying Kennedy’s new *Forgotten Empires* series, which explores an entirely new world from

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her *Twelve Kingdoms* books. The worldbuilding is excellently done, with the lovely flower kingdom of Calanthe created in a way that makes the reader long to visit. The character of Euthalia is greatly expanded on in this second book, and the reader becomes more and more understanding of her lonely existence as the story goes on. The author also greatly expands on Conri's life before his time in slavery, which allows the reader to fully understand what he lost and why he is so desperate for revenge. I greatly enjoy Kennedy's work, and I recommend it to anyone who enjoys fantasy romance.

***Corporate Gunslinger* by Doug Engstrom, 2020 Harper-Collins, tp \$15.99, 320 pages.**

Review by Roberta Johnson

Corporate Gunslinger is a fast-paced look at a society where corporate greed has won out and the law protects the powerful, in a near future that looks all too possible.

In this scenario, the last stop in the legal system can be fought with duels between the desperate, ordinary citizens, and professional duelists who represent the law. Aspiring actress Kira is one of the desperate, with no way out of the catastrophic debt that has been building all her adult life, what with an expensive education and her parents' massive final medical bills. Her options now are debt slavery for life (remember Tennessee Ernie Ford's old song, "I Owe My Life to the Company Store"), or a career as a legal assassin, working for a giant and well-funded insurance company. Kira reasons that at least she'll make enough money during her training year to make the payments on her debts while she searches for work she can live with.

Along the way she is canny enough to acquire a mentor for herself and her roommate Chloe in the person of Diana, one of their instructors who helps them pass the rigorous training and embark on their highly-paid careers. Kira's a moral, ethical woman, but she's not capable of giving less than her all, and she's an extremely good actress – so she builds a persona she calls the Death Angel, cold, calculating and fearsome, hoping to frighten her opponents into forfeiting instead of dying. Sometimes it works. And sometimes she must kill or be killed. This story is structured around the ultimate duel Kira will fight/is now fighting, for a payoff big enough to buy her way out of the life, against a ruthless killer who is also her implacable enemy.

Characters Kira, Diana and Chloe are well-developed – tough, intelligent and loyal, and facing incredible odds, and likable enough that I was rooting for them all the way. The action is often edge-of-the-seat. I'd call Doug Engstrom's book fantastic, but the plot is too believable and too close to home (at least until this year, when we now have more immediate threats to face).

Kira has opportunities to leave the business but the money is too good and her debts are huge. We watch her become the most deadly duelist in her field, but it's not without cost to her and those she loves. She's badly

wounded while doing her job, and though medical technology helps her recover this time, she has to face what she's become, continuing to compromise, survive and kill while her secret, debilitating fear and guilt build. In the end, she will fight a duel with her deadliest opponent, for a payout huge enough to pay off all her debts. Will she survive this one, though? The suspense might kill you.

***Automatic Reload* by Ferrett Steinmetz, 2020 Tor Books, tp \$17.99, 304 pages. [This book will be published on July 28.]**

Review by Craig W. Chrissinger

Automatic Reload is one weird book, and almost is the "cyberpunk romantic comedy" pushed in publicity and on the back cover blurb. Mat is a tortured mercenary who has willingly had his arms and legs removed so that he can plug in various armored limbs with different abilities and weapons. He's gotten so used to his artificial parts that he has named them, can anticipate their tiny imperfections and timing pauses, and has become the perfect shot.

After a mission in Nigeria to save a teen from kidnappers goes somewhat sideways, Mat is relaxing back at home back in the USA – watching old movies and cleaning/repairing two of his artificial arms. And then he gets a large offer from a former military teammate/frenemy, Donnie, to help out with Donnie's first mercenary mission for the International Access Consortium. Mat is desired on the team to make sure the mission is low-key and Donnie's other mercs don't get too trigger-happy.

All seems relatively simple until Mat finds himself in the middle of an ambush on Donnie's convoy. It is inside a truck container that he meets Silvia, more mechanical than organic. She was kidnapped and then genetically engineered to be a perfect murder machine. Together, they run from the shadiest corporation in the world – and slowly come to realize they understand and enjoy each other. And thus the cyberpunk rom com angle.

Ferrett Steinmetz's novel reads like a videogame come to life, with a 1980s action-movie romance subplot thrown in. It's fast-paced and certainly full of shoot-'em-up action. And told in first person by Mat, it has interesting insights into the kind of man who would want artificial limbs over flesh ones. It's fairly entertaining, and not that bad for a summer read. If nothing else, *Automatic Reload* is unique and different.

***The City in the Middle of the Night* by Charlie Jane Anders, 2020 (reprint) Tor Books, tp \$18.99, 368 pages.**

Review by Jessica L. Coyle

The City in the Middle of the Night is set on the planet of January, a non-rotating planet where humans have colonized the small strip of habitable land between the frozen darkness and the blazing wasteland. The story mostly focuses on the two largest cities in the habitable zone, Xiophant and Argelo. Xiophant is a heavily regimented city where its citizens every movements are regulated. When Sophie, a brilliant university student from the wrong side of town, is wrongly accused of stealing, she is

punished by being dragged out of town and abandoned in the darkness to die. Her life is saved by alien creatures that she names the Gelet.

Sophie's life is completely changed by her relationship with the Gelet, who lead her down a path that takes her from Xiophant to the lawless mafia town of Argelo. While in Argelo, she comes into her own and learns more about herself and how to live her own life. She has to decide whether to follow her best friend Bianca back to Xiophant to take over the town and free its citizens or to join the Gelet and explore an entirely unknown way of life.

Anders, who is best known for the national bestseller *All the Birds in the Sky*, is one of the hottest writers currently working in the sci-fi-fantasy genre. *The City in the Middle of the Night* is a complete departure from her previous book. Anders takes the interesting concept of a planet with only a small amount of inhabitable land that is slowly being eroded by unstable weather and the poor choices of its inhabitants, and explores it through the eyes of three very different societies.

Xiophant's total control of its citizens and their every movement does not fare particularly better or worse than the utterly chaotic and depraved Argelo. Sophie's relationship with the Gelet is clearly set up to give humans a third option to possibly save their world.

While the book is beautifully written and I enjoyed the main characters, especially Sophie and Mouth – a rough and experienced traveler who assists Sophie on her journeys – there are times that the relationship between the two cities and the mysterious Gelet seems stilted. Overall, I recommend the book to those who enjoyed Anders' other work.

ASFS MEETING REPORTS — MARCH 2020: NO MEETING

Due to our March 20 meeting right when things closed down for the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to meet - or to set up an alternative in time.

APRIL 2020: AGAIN, NO MEETING

Our April 17th planned meeting should have seen a visit from Darynda Jones, but that had to be postponed as NM pandemic restrictions meant we could not meet.

MAY 2020: EMAIL WITH FILM LINKS

The *Weekly Alibi*'s Devin O'Leary should have been making his eighth visit to show trailers of upcoming genre films, but that couldn't happen in person.

Instead, an email was sent out to 49 people with a quote from Guild Cinema owner Keif Henley and links to various film trailers and two online film presentations.

"It's hard to plan much of anything nowadays for obvious reasons but whenever the Guild Cinema can (and should) re-open, it'll be with some kind of limited seating

capacity with respect to social distancing, staff wearing masks and having hand sanitizers in the lobby plus habitual wipedowns of those frequently touched spots," said Henley. "The initial programming will probably be something humorous too - so far we're leaning towards *It's A Mad Mad Mad Mad World* and *The Producers*, or something of the like. We're also hoping to possibly reschedule sci-fi horror *Vivarium* and the Swedish horror *Koko-Di Koko-Da*. You can bet on the 'Virtual Cinema' still being a stay-at-home screening option for those understandably not feeling safe going out into public en masse."

There were links to 34 online film trailers, including *Wonder Woman 1984*, *The Vast of Night*, *Scoob!*, *Tenet*, *Mulan*, *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge on the Run*, *A Quiet Place: Part II*, *Bios*, *The Witches*, *Halloween Kills*, *Black Widow*, *Godzilla vs. Kong*, *Soul*, *No Time To Die*, and *Free Guy*. Also on the email were links for the free online screening of *John Wick*, and the *Mystery Science Theater 3000 LIVE Social Distancing Riff-Along* that premiered online the previous Sunday, April 3.

JUNE: VIRTUAL MUPPETS & MCCORMICK

Eighteen of us came together in a Zoom session (and there were 30-ish views on Facebook) to watch some videos on the Muppets and local puppeteer Michael McCormick, and then socialize. There were a few technical glitches, but Jessica Coyle got it figured out!

We started with a short video tour of the Jim Henson Exhibition at the ABQ Museum with guide Brian Jay Jones, and then showed an interview with Michael McCormick from the PBS show, *Colores*. Jessica answered a few questions about the Henson Exhibition, and then we showed three segments from Me-TV's *Collector's Call* about a super-Muppet collector. We finished the evening with socializing (and people's cats and dogs).

EDITOR NOTES THAT FIT THIS SPACE

- **WHO KNEW BACK IN APRIL** that we'd still be under pandemic restrictions in July and the first COVID-19 wave would be spiking again? The question is starting to be whether we'll have a pause between virus waves at all this year. Bubonicon, Armadillocon, Milehicon and Dragon Con already canceled in-person conventions for 2020, and we have no idea when we can have an ASFS meeting again. Cross your fingers, and wear a frickin' mask! They are not political statements. They merely show respect for other people, and help stop the Coronavirus spread.

- **BEEN READING** a lot of comics & graphic novels lately. Some good, some ready for trading in. And I started Darynda Jones' new mystery. Enjoying *Space Force*, *Stargirl* (refreshing, entertaining) and *Agents of SHIELD* (time traveling has been fun, plus Agent Sousa) on TV.

- **OUTTA ROOM.** Thanks to Roberta, Patricia, Melody & Jessica for their contributions. Next *ASFacts* in October- Submissions needed! Stay well, keep safe! - Craig C