



SPOOKY "STILL SOME COVID DELTA VARIANT" OCTOBER EDITION

ASFACTS 2021



GREEN SLIME AWARDS ANNOUNCED

In a ceremony streamed August 21 during virtual Bubonicon 52: Take Two, Green Slime Mistress Jessica L. Coyle (with assistance from the Slime Time Puppets) presented the following with recognition of their wretchedness in the last 12 months:

TELEVISION: *Fate: The Winx Saga* on Netflix (Would-be CW drama with love triangles, teenage insecurity and predictable plot twists; main characters are walking stereotypes & tropes; uneven pacing that feels both slow and rushed.)

FOOD: *Minion Vanilla Cakebites* (Texture like playdoh, vanilla when minions should be banana, not much flavor, disappointing.)

BOOK: *Midnight Sun* by Stephenie Meyer (Pretentious and overwritten; high school Lindsey would have loved it, but high school Lindsey is a moron; Edward's POW adds nothing new to the story, and he goes on and on; a lot of the dialogue makes no sense from his POV.)

TEEN (OR SUPERHERO) MOVIE: *The New Mutants* (The mash-up of haunted-house movie and high-school soap seem half-baked; odd cross of *Flatliners* and *The Breakfast Club* that is uninspired and routine; pacing is sluggish, dialogue often is clunky, and characters often are stick figures; a lot of build-up with very little climax; the worst of the *X-Men* franchise.)

SCI-FI MOVIE: *Breach* (Storyline borrowed from *Alien* with blue-collar truckers in space; effects are bad, dialogue is terrible and story is shoddy; people will scratch their heads as to how Bruce Willis has topped his other low-grade stinkers; the film gets worse as it goes along, and it all feels banal, rote, and empty of enjoyment.)

KINGFISHER WINS WSFA AWARD

"Metal Like Blood in the Dark" by T. Kingfisher is the winner of the 2021 Washington Science Fiction Association (WSFA) Small Press Award for Short Fiction. Kingfisher is a pen name for Ursula Vernon, reports Locumag.com.

The award, recognizing "the best original short fiction published by small presses in the previous year," was presented at Capclave, held October 1-3 at the Rockville Hilton in Maryland. The winner was chosen by members of

WSFA. For more, see the WSFA Small Press Award site at wsfa.org/site/?p=754.

2021 BRITISH FANTASY WINNERS

The British Fantasy Society announced the winners in late September for the 2021 British Fantasy Awards:

FANTASY NOVEL (the Robert Holdstock Award): *The Once and Future Witches* by Alix E. Harrow, **HORROR NOVEL** (the August Derleth Award): *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, **NOVELLA**: *Ring Shout* by P. Djèlí Clark, **SHORT STORY**: "Infinite Tea in the Demara Café" by Ida Keogh, **COLLECTION**: *The Watcher in the Woods* by Charlotte Bond, **ANTHOLOGY**: *Dominion: An Anthology of Speculative Fiction from Africa and the African Diaspora* edited by Zelda Knight & Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki,

INDEPENDENT PRESS: *Luna*, **NON-FICTION**: *Women Make Horror: Filmmaking, Feminism, Genre* edited by Alison Peirse, **MAGAZINE / PERIODICAL**: *Strange Horizons*, **ARTIST**: Daniele Serra, **COMIC/GRAPHIC NOVEL**: *Die Vol. 2: Split the Party* by Kieron Gillen & Stephanie Hans, **AUDIO**: *The Magnus Archives*, **FILM / TELEVISION PRODUCTION**: *The Boys*: "What I Know," **NEWCOMER** (the Sydney J Bounds Award): Kathleen Jennings, and **KARL EDWARD WAGNER AWARD**: Alasdair Stuart.

The awards were presented September 26 during Fan-

UPCOMING ASFS MEETINGS

- **October 9 (Tonight):** Investigator Benjamin Radford talks on "The Psychic & the Serial Killer: Examining the Best Case for Psychic Detectives." Plus club officer elections & Holiday Cook-Off discussion...
- **November 12:** Space Historian Loretta Hall talks on "Area 51: Mythology & Reality."
- **December 10:** Our Holiday Social, with food treats & video amusements. How we want to handle food in COVID times will be discussed at the October meeting. Plus, the annual issue of *SITHFACTS* (deadline 6 pm Mon, Dec 6).
- **January 14, 2022:** Club reports/discussion on what members read in 2021...
- **February 11, 2022:** Maybe the club auction? Maybe a visit from a NM author? At least the Valentine's *ASFACTS* will be published (deadline Feb 7)

Craig Chrissinger, normal editor. Darth Vader, guest editor each December. Please Send All Correspondence to — 2018 Cardenas Dr NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110. Phone: (505) 266-8905. E-mail: cwcraig@nmia.com. *ASFACTS* published February, April, July & October for the Albuquerque SF Society. *SITHFACTS* out each December. **NEXT DEADLINE: Mon, Dec 6.** **Club Officers:** Jessica Coyle & Craig Chrissinger, co-Zec Secs (505) 266-8905. Harriet Engle, Moderator. Grant Kuck, Alternator. HAL 9000, Advisor. Jack Skellington, Pumpkin King. **Bubonicon Chair:** Craig Chrissinger, google voice (505) 559-0931. www.bubonicon.com

tasyCon in Birmingham, England, reports Locusmag.com. Winners were chosen by jury, except for the special award (the Karl Edward Wagner Award), chosen by the BFS committee. The Legends of FantasyCon award (presented by the con, rather than the British Fantasy Society) went to Katherine Fowler, British Fantasy Awards administrator.

SF BOOK GROUP READS ON

The Droids & Dragons SF Book Group meets 7:30 pm Monday, October 18, inside Jason's Deli (northwest corner of Louisiana & America's Parkway NE) for the first time since early 2020 ("the before times") to discuss *Some Kind of Fairy Tale* by Graham Joyce. The group then meets November 15 to talk about *The Last Smile in Sunder City* by Luke Arnold.

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 at Page One Books. For more info: Leah at mrsransom@hotmail.com or Craig at 266-8905.

2021 DRAGON AWARDS WINNERS

Dragon Con has announced the winners of the 2021 Dragon Awards from Labor Day weekend:

SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL: *Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir, FANTASY NOVEL (Including Paranormal): *Battle Ground: Dresden Files 17* by Jim Butcher, YOUNG ADULT / MIDDLE GRADE NOVEL: *A Wizard's Guide to Defensive Baking* by T. Kingfisher, MILITARY SCIENCE FICTION OR FANTASY NOVEL: *Gun Runner* by Larry Correia & John D. Brown, ALTERNATE HISTORY NOVEL: *1637: No Peace Beyond the Line* by Eric Flint & Charles E. Gannon, MEDIA TIE-IN NOVEL: *Firefly: Generations* by Tim Lebbon, HORROR NOVEL: *The Hollow Places* by T. Kingfisher,

COMIC BOOK: *X-Men* by Jonathan Hickman & Mahmud Asrar, GRAPHIC NOVEL: *The Magicians: New Class* by Lev Grossman, Lilah Sturges & Pius Bak, SCIENCE FICTION OR FANTASY TV SERIES: *The Expanse*, and SCIENCE FICTION OR FANTASY MOVIE: *The Old Guard*.

Winners in various gaming-related categories were also announced, reports Locusmag.com. Winners were announced on September 5 at Dragon Con in Atlanta, GA.

L. NEIL SMITH DIES

Author L. Neil Smith died on August 27 in Fort Collins, CO. He was 75 years old, reports Locusmag.com.

Lester Neil Smith III was born May 12, 1946, in Denver, CO. He was a former state candidate for the US Libertarian Party, ex-police reserve officer, and a gunsmith. Smith created the Prometheus Awards in 1979 to honor libertarian science fiction.

Smith began publishing science fiction with "Grimm's Law" for *Stellar 5* in 1980. He wrote 31 books, including 29 novels, and a number of essays and short stories. Titles include *The Probability Broach* (1980), which won him his first Prometheus Award in 1984. He won twice more, in 1994 for *Pallas* and in 2001 for *Forge of the Elders*.



He has been nominated 17 times for the Prometheus Award for Best Novel. Nominations include *Their Majesties' Bucketeers* and *The Venus Belt* in 1981, *The Nagasaki Vector*, *The Gallatin Divergence*, *The Crystal Empire*, *Brightsuit MacBear*, *Bretta Martyn*, *The American Zone*, *Roswell, Texas*, *Ceres*, and *Blade of P'Na* in 2016. He also wrote a trilogy of *Lando Calrissian: Star Wars* novels, all published in 1983. In 2016, Smith received the Special Prometheus Award for Lifetime Achievement for his contributions to libertarian science fiction.

Smith is survived by daughter Rylla Smith, and wife Cathy Smith.

THIS IS HORROR AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Winners for the This Is Horror Awards 2020 were announced in early September:

NOVEL OF THE YEAR: *The Only Good Indians* by Stephen Graham Jones (Runner-up: *Mexican Gothic* by Silvia Moreno-Garcia), NOVELLA OF THE YEAR: *Crossroads* by Laurel Hightower (Runner-up: *Ring Shout* by P. Djèlí Clark), SHORT STORY COLLECTION OF THE YEAR: *Children of the Fang and Other Genealogies* by John Langan, ANTHOLOGY OF THE YEAR: *Miscreations: Gods, Monstrosities & Other Horrors* edited by Doug Murano & Michael Bailey, FICTION MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR: *Nightmare*, PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR: Undertow, FICTION PODCAST OF THE YEAR: *The Other Stories*, NONFICTION PODCAST OF THE YEAR: *Ink Heist*, and COVER ART OF THE YEAR: Todd Keisling for *Arterial Bloom* edited by Mercedes M. Yardley.

Winners were selected by open vote based on the nominees list, reports Locusmag.com. For more information, see thisishorror.co.uk.

The British-based This Is Horror specializes in horror fiction and the craft of writing, including a website, podcast, publishing and book reviews.

2020 ASIMOV'S WINNERS

Results of the 2020 *Asimov's* Readers' Awards – the 35th annual recognitions from the magazine's readers – were announced on August 23, and include two Bubonicon friends.

NOVELLA: "Take a Look at the Five and Ten" by

Connie Willis (11-12/20), NOVELETTE: “The Hind” by Kevin J. Anderson & Rick Wilber (11-12/20), SHORT STORY: “GO. NOW. FIX” by Timons Esaias (1-2/20), POEM: “Ode to Cassini” by Jane Yolen (5-6/20), and COVER ARTIST: John Picacio (3-4/20).

There will be a future awards event to celebrate the 2020 and 2019 winners, “to be held when it’s safe to do so,” reports Locusmag.com. For more, see the Asimov’s website: www.asimovs.com.

ELIZABETH ANNE HULL DIES

Author, editor, scholar, and frequent *Locus* contributor Elizabeth Anne Hull died in the early hours of August 3. She was 84 years old.

Elizabeth Ann Hull was born January 10, 1937, in Upper Darby, PA. She attended Illinois State University, Northwestern University, and Loyola University, where she earned her MA in 1970 and PhD in 1975. She taught English for over 30 years at William Rainey Harper College in Illinois before retiring and becoming professor emerita.

Hull served as president of the Science Fiction Research Association, and edited their newsletter; she received the Thomas D. Clareson Award from the organization for her service in 1997. She wrote many critical essays, convention reports, and other non-fiction, with work appearing in *Extrapolation*, *Fantasy Review*, *Locus*, and other publications. She served as a member of the jury for the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for Best SF Novel starting in 1986. She lectured on SF, ran workshops, and helped run conventions.

Hull was married to SF writer Frederik Pohl from 1984 until his death in 2013. An occasional fiction writer, her first story was “Author Plus” (1981) in *Asimov’s*, co-written with Pohl. The couple also co-edited anthology *Tales from the Planet Earth* in 1986. Hull edited tribute anthology *Gateways: Original New Stories Inspired by Frederik Pohl* in 2010. She mostly published as Elizabeth Anne Hull, with some works as Elizabeth Ann Hull and Elizabeth A. Hull.

She is survived by two daughters from a previous marriage, as well as grandchildren.

SHIRLEY JACKSON AWARDS WINNERS

The Shirley Jackson Awards winners for works in 2020 were announced August 15, reports Locusmag.com. The awards are presented for outstanding achievement in horror, psychological suspense, and dark fantasy fiction.

NOVEL: *The Only Good Indians* by Stephen Graham Jones, NOVELLA: *Night of the Mannequins* by Stephen Graham Jones, NOVELETTE: *The Attic Tragedy* by J. Ashley-Smith, SHORT FICTION: “Not the Man I Married” by R.A. Busby, COLLECTION: *Velocities* by Kathe Koja, and ANTHOLOGY: *Black Cranes: Tales of Unquiet Women* edited by Lee Murray & Geneve Flynn.

Winners were announced during a pre-recorded ceremony at Readercon 31 from Boston, MA. For more information, see www.shirleyjacksonawards.org.

The Shirley Jackson Awards are voted upon by a jury of professional writers, editors, critics, and academics. The awards are given for the best work published in the preceding calendar year in the following categories: Novel, Novella, Novelette, Short Fiction, Single-Author Collection, and Edited Anthology.

ARTIST STEPHEN HICKMAN DIES

Artist and author Stephen Hickman died of natural causes July 16 at home in Red Hook, NY. He was 72 years old, reports Locusmag.com.

Stephen Forrest Hickman was born April 9, 1949, in Washington, DC. His father was in the Foreign Service, and as a child he spent time in the Philippines and Pakistan. Stateside they lived in Texas and Arizona before settling in Alexandria, VA.

He studied art at the Richmond Professional Institute of Virginia Commonwealth University, where his classmates included artists Michael W. Kaluta and Charles Vess. He attended the New York Comics Convention in 1967, and subsequently became involved in fandom, doing illustrations in fanzines. A piece of his stock art was purchased for use as an Ace cover in 1974, and his first commissioned cover was for a reprint of *The Brain Stealers* by Murray Leinster around 1976.

Hickman painted over 300 book covers, notably for Stephen Brust’s *Dragaera* books and Larry Niven’s *Man-Kzin Wars* series. Some of his J.R.R. Tolkien-inspired works were included in anthology *Realms of Tolkien: Images of Middle-Earth* (1996), and have appeared as prints and calendars. He also designed a chess set based on Tolkien characters, and did other sculptural work, including some inspired by the writings of H.P. Lovecraft.

Hickman published one novel, *The Lemurian Stone* in 1988. His art books include *The Fantasy Art of Stephen Hickman* (1989) and *The Art of Stephen Hickman: Empyrean* (2015).

Hickman won the inaugural Jack Gaughan Award for Best Emerging Artist in 1986, and won a Hugo Award in 1994 in the original artwork category for the Space Fantasy series of postage stamps from the US Postal Service. He also won numerous Chesley Awards, including a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2000, along with two Spectrum Gold awards.

He is survived by wife Vicki, and daughters Aurora and Zara.



2021 VIVIAN AWARDS ANNOUNCED

The Romance Writers of America (RWA) announced the winners of the 2021 Vivian Awards on July 31, reports Locusmag.com. The Vivian Award, named after RWA founder Vivian Stephens, “recognizes excellence in romance writing and showcases author talent and creativity.” The Vivian replaces the RWA’s retired RITA Awards.

Winners of genre interest include *A Stitch in Time* by Kelley Armstrong in the Speculative Romance - Long category, and *Betwixt* by Darynda Jones in the Speculative Romance - Mid category.

For more information, including a complete list of winners, see the RWA website at www.rwa.org.

TREK'S SHATNER BLASTING OFF

by Josh Weiss, syfy.com 10-4-21

William Shatner's tenure as a fictional starship captain on the small screen has been leading up to this very moment. Blue Origin – the commercial space travel company founded by Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos – confirmed October 4 that the 90-year-old *Star Trek* veteran will become the oldest person in history to blast off into the atmosphere.

Famous for playing Captain James T. Kirk of the USS Enterprise, Shatner is poised to dethrone Wally Funk as the oldest human space traveler less than three months after the 82-year-old Funk (a trailblazing female pilot) set the record in Blue Origin's first human spaceflight that took place over the summer.

“I’ve heard about space for a long time now,” Shatner said in a statement. “I’m taking the opportunity to see it for myself. What a miracle.”

The New Shepard NS-18 launch is scheduled for Tuesday, October 12, and will also include Audrey Powers (Blue Origin’s VP of Mission & Flight Operations) and a pair of crew-mates: Chris Boshuizen and Glen de Vries.

“I’m so proud and humbled to fly on behalf of Team Blue, and I’m excited to continue writing Blue’s human spaceflight history,” Powers added. “I was part of the amazing effort we assembled for New Shepard’s Human Flight Certification Review, a years-long initiative completed in July 2021. As an engineer and lawyer with more than two decades of experience in the aerospace industry, I have great confidence in our New Shepard team and the vehicle we’ve developed.”

A livestream of the launch is set to begin on the Blue Origin website 90 minutes prior to liftoff (7:30 am MT).

“William Shatner is going to space? My man! I guess this means I have to become a marine biologist,” tweeted Jason Alexander in a reference to his fan favorite Seinfeld character, George Costanza.

Shatner quoted the tweet, writing: “It’s never too late to experience new things, my friend.”



WILLIAM F. NOLAN DIES

Author William F. Nolan died July 15 in the hospital of complications from an infection. He was 93 years old, reports Locusmag.com. Nolan was best known for the *Logan’s Run* series of science fiction novels, the first of which was adapted into a film and TV series.

William Francis Nolan was born March 6, 1928, in Kansas City, MO, and moved with his family to California when he was 19. He trained as a visual artist, and attended the Kansas City Art Institute 1946-47, San Diego State College 1947-48, and Los Angeles City College in 1953. He was married once, to Marilyn Seal (aka Cameron Nolan).

Nolan worked as a writer and designer of greeting cards for Hallmark, a painter of murals, an aircraft assistant, and at various other jobs in the ’40s and ’50s. In 1956, he became a freelance writer. In addition to his fiction and TV writing, Nolan has been an editor for and contributor to auto & racing magazines, and a book reviewer.

Nolan became active in SF fandom in the ’50s, helping found the San Diego Science Fantasy Society, contributing substantially to the fanzine *Rhodomagnetic Digest*, publishing and editing *Ray Bradbury Review*, working with “The Group,” a coterie of up-and-coming young writers which included Bradbury, Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont, John Tomerlin, George Clayton Johnson and others, and later served as Managing Editor of the first three issues of *Gamma* (1963-1964).

His first SF story was “The Joy of Living” in 1954, and he published short fiction and criticism frequently throughout the following decades under his own name and multiple pseudonyms, including Frank Anmar, and F.E. Edwards. “Saturday’s Shadow” (1979) was a World Fantasy Award finalist. Some of Nolan’s stories were collected in his first book-length publication, *Impact-20* in 1966. Other collections include *Alien Horizons*, *Wonderworlds*, *Things beyond Midnight*, *Blood Sky*, World Fantasy Award and International Horror Guild Award finalist *Dark Universe*, *Nightworlds*, *Have You Seen the Wind?*, *Wild Galaxy*, *Ill Met by Moonlight*, *Nightshadows*, and *Like a Dead Man Walking* in 2014.

His first novel was *Logan’s Run* (1967, with George Clayton Johnson). The book became a Nebula Award-nominated film in 1976, and spawned a television series. There is a comic series set in that world (*Logan’s Run: Last Day*, with input from Nolan). Nolan has written several sequels, namely *Logan’s World* in 1977, *Logan’s Search*, and novella *Logan’s Return* in 2001.

His other major property was the *Sam Space* series, a SF/hard boiled homage to Dashiell Hammett’s Sam Spade. Books include Edgar Award winner *Space for Hire* in 1971, *Look Out for Space*, and the collection *Seven for Space* in 2008. He also wrote the 1991 horror novel *Helltracks*, three longer stories about paranormal investigator David Kincaid collected as *Kincaid: A Paranormal Casebook* in 2011, and numerous crime and mystery titles,

including what Nolan considered his best novel, 1996's *The Marble Orchard*.

Nolan was a prolific anthologist, editing numerous reprint volumes and some originals, notably 1970's *The Future is Now*, *The Bradbury Chronicles: Stories in Honor of Ray Bradbury* (1991, with Martin H. Greenberg), *The Bleeding Edge: Dark Barriers, Dark Frontiers* (2010, with writer/editor Jason V Brock), and *The Devil's Coat-tails: More Dispatches from the Dark Frontier* (2011, also with Brock).

Nolan has written many books of non-fiction about authors and writing, among them *The Ray Bradbury Companion* in 1975, *Hammett: A Life on the Edge*, *The Work of Charles Beaumont*, the IPA Silver Award winner *Let's Get Creative!*, Stoker Award winner *Nolan on Bradbury: Sixty Years of Writing about the Master of Science Fiction* in 2013, and books on other subjects, including car racing and film. He has also written for the movie industry, such as 1976's *Burnt Offerings* with director Dan Curtis, and, more extensively, for television, including *The Turn of the Screw* (1974) and *Trilogy of Terror* (1975) with friend Richard Matheson.

Nolan's many awards include a Living Legend Award from the International Horror Guild (2002), a SFWA Author Emeritus Award (2006), the HWA Bram Stoker Award for Lifetime Achievement (2010), and a Special Convention Award from the World Fantasy convention (2013). He was named a World Horror Grandmaster in 2015.

Nolan leaves no survivors, but considered close friends Jason & Sunni Brock to be his family.

GENRE SHOWS WIN HOLLYWOOD CRITICS ASSOCIATION AWARDS

by Matthew Jackson, syfy.com 8-30-21

The Hollywood Critics Association held a virtual ceremony for its first-ever HCA TV Awards August 29, and amid recent hits like *Ted Lasso* and *Mare of Easttown*, several of the year's most prominent genre series picked up honors, including Syfy's original series *Resident Alien*.

The sci-fi comedy series, which stars Alan Tudyk as an alien who tries to blend in with the human world by disguising himself as a doctor in a small mountain town, picked up the award for Best Cable Series, Comedy, one of several major genre series of the past year to earn honors. And, because the HCA opted to split its awards among various methods of distribution – broadcast, cable, and streaming – for TV series, shows and performers went home with more awards than they might get at the Emmys, where series from across the distribution spectrum compete for the same trophies.

On the streaming side of things, it was another big night for genre shows from Disney+, as *The Mandalorian* and *WandaVision* picked up nods for Best Streaming Series, Drama and Best Streaming Limited Series, Antholo-

gy Series, or Live-action TV Movie, respectively. On the animation side of things, the HBO Max original series *Harley Quinn* snagged the award for Best Animated Series or Animated TV Movie.

Individual performers on major genre series were also well-represented on the night, albeit largely in supporting categories. Michael K. Williams picked up Best Supporting Actor in a Broadcast or Cable Drama for his work in *Lovecraft Country*, while scene-stealing favorite Kathryn Hahn nabbed Best Supporting Actress in a Limited Series for her role as Agatha Harkness on *WandaVision*. Though Apple TV+'s wins were largely for the internet's favorite show, *Ted Lasso*, Rupert Grint also picked up an award for Best Supporting Actor in a Streaming Drama for his work on the horror series *Servant*.

Then there were the honorary awards, where the addictive Karate Kid sequel *Cobra Kai* picked up the HCA's "Legacy Award," and *Lucifer* star Tom Ellis was honored with the "Pop Culture Icon Award" after five seasons (and one to go) of playing that show's title character.

Mary Steenburgen, no stranger to SF films, won best supporting actress in a Broadcast Network or Cable Series, Comedy for her work on NBC's *Zoey's Extraordinary Playlist*. Jane Levy was honored as Best Actress in the same category for *Zoey's*, and the show itself won the Spotlight Award in the honorary awards.

For a complete list of winners, check out *Variety's* report at www.variety.com.

NEW APOCALYPSE DROPPED: ROBOT PROBABLY CAN OUTRUN YOU

by Kate Nicholson, Huffingtonpost.com, 8-18-21

A new robot was just launched by Boston Dynamics – and it's more nimble than you could imagine.

The US-based robotics company promoted the new robot design on Twitter and showed the humanoid machine completing an obstacle course similar to Parkour.

Although this particular robot design, known as the Atlas, has been around for a few years, this footage was released to mark the first time “both Atlas robots have completed the complex obstacle course” almost flawlessly.

The Atlas team leader Scott Kuindersma said: “We hadn't run that behavior after the backflip before today, so that was really an experiment.”

But, the team aren't completely happy as the video “looks a little awkward” and so are still looking for ways to improve their humanoids.

The team also explained why it chose this routine on Twitter, writing: “Parkour is the perfect sandbox for the Atlas team to experiment with new behaviors. Through jumps, balance beams and vaults, we push Atlas to its limits to discover the next generation of mobility, perception and athletic intelligence.”

Well, it certainly caused a stir on the internet.

BuzzFeed News' David Mack tweeted: "New apocalypse just dropped. Who will be the first person killed by the backflipped robots [?]"

The journalist was not the only one who sounded slightly concerned in his tweets.

The video, watched more than six million times, had thrown some Twitter accounts into panic.

One wrote: "Drones were created to gather visual intel, then they were weaponized."

"We know where this is headed. Robocops and Terminator super soldiers. And removing all moral and ethical responsibility when it comes to killing people. It's a pessimistic view but it will inevitably happen."

Not everyone was as pessimistic though, and one account listed the advantages such robots could bring to human lives, including "replacing soldiers", and acting in "certain caretaker aspects which would allow the elderly or disabled to live more independently and be safer".

Another wrote: "What you're doing with these robots is really amazing."

"Thank you for being innovative and daring with these projects."

Others were strangely skeptical towards the real footage, writing: "How people can't see that this is clearly CGI is beyond me."

Yet, plenty of other Twitter users also saw the funny side, with one account adding menacing music to the clip.

MORE STARMAN FOR *STARGIRL* IN SEASON 3 NEXT FALL

by Matthew Jackson, syfy.com 10-4-21

One of the Golden Age heroes of *Stargirl* is about to get quite a bit more screentime. During a recent appearance on *The Ellen Show*, *Stargirl* guest star Joel McHale confirmed to guest host Arsenio Hall that his character Sylvester Pemberton, aka Starman, will be a series regular when the show's third season launches next fall.

"In the first episode of the first season, my character dies," McHale said, "but now I'm back, so hold on to your hat, or your Cosmic Staff."

Stargirl was given an early renewal for its third season back in May, ahead of its second season premiere – subtitled *Summer School* – back in August. McHale's promotion to series regular, confirmed by TVLine, points to the show's future featuring quite a bit more Justice Society reunion action, particularly once Sylvester finally makes contact with his old sidekick, Pat Dugan (Luke Wilson).

Though in the comics his hero name was originally The Star-Spangled Kid, and *Stargirl*'s heroic legacy is a hybrid of Pemberton's costume and history and the Cosmic Staff supplied by modern age Starman, Jack Knight, the continuity of the TV series simplified things a bit to make Pemberton the Golden Age Starman. As McHale mentioned, a flashback in the *Stargirl* pilot reveals him dying in Pat's arms, and leaving his Cosmic Staff behind

to one day be reclaimed by a new hero. That hero turns out to be Pat's new stepdaughter Courtney (Brec Bassinger), who adopts the *Stargirl* moniker and begins fighting the Injustice Society, while Pat resumes his old super-identity of S.T.R.I.P.E.

For a while, it seemed McHale's role in the show would be relegated to flashbacks, and he'd make a guest appearance whenever Pat happened to look back on his days in the Justice Society. Then, at the end of Season 1, the show revealed that Sylvester had somehow come back from the dead. As of this writing, he's still making his way toward Pat and Courtney's home in Blue Valley, and his motives remain rather mysterious. Now, we know that whatever Sylvester is up to and however he managed to come back from the dead will likely be a major part of Season 3's story. *Stargirl* airs Tuesdays on The CW.



DID *MANDALORIAN* FAN CASTING COST LAWLESS *STAR WARS* GIG?

by Josh Weiss, syfy.com 9-29-21

Lucy Lawless was apparently in the running for a *Star Wars* role when her chances suddenly exploded like the Death Star. Chatting with *Metro*, the *Xena: Warrior Princess* actress revealed that fan support for her to replace Gina Carano as shock trooper-turned-New Republic Marshal Cara Dune on *The Mandalorian* may have done more harm than good.

"Well to be honest with you, I was already in discussions about something on — it wasn't *The Mandalorian* — something *Star Wars*-affiliated," she said. "It might have hurt me in some way, because then they couldn't hire me because it would seem to be pandering to...I'm just guessing here, I don't know anything, but in some ways, it can be unhelpful, because if they pander to this fan group, then how are you going to pander to every other fan group, do you know what I mean?"

Lawless went on to claim that she "became political" despite having "nothing to do with the discussion." She doesn't blame the fans, though. "That's the way the world is and they meant it out of love, and I thank the fans for their fealty to me," she added. "I haven't thought about that since, so it hasn't given me any pain, but that was my thought at the time, like, 'Ooh, this makes me look like a political appointment, and not an actress.'"

Carano was fired from the hit Disney+ series this past winter after the actress drew comparisons between American political views and the policies of Nazi Germany on social media. "Gina Carano is not currently employed by

Lucasfilm and there are no plans for her to be in the future," Lucasfilm said at the time. "Nevertheless, her social media posts denigrating people based on their cultural and religious identities are abhorrent and unacceptable."

It's unclear if Disney plans to recast the role or simply let the character die offscreen. Cara Dune was expected to headline a *Mandalorian* spinoff entitled *Rangers of the New Republic*, though the project seems to be stuck in limbo at the moment.

The next live-action *Star Wars* project coming to Disney+ is *The Book of Boba Fett*, which will launch December 29 on the streaming service, a little more than a year after it was announced. The new adventure starring Temuera Morrison as the title character, will pick up sometime after *The Mandalorian*'s second season, and will give the legendary bounty hunter his first-ever live-action solo adventure. What are Boba and his new comrade-in-arms, Fennec Shand (Ming-Na Wen), up to at Jabba's Palace? It seems they will try to reclaim a key part of the *Star Wars* underworld and carve out their own power base.

MILEHICON 53 HAPPENED: **ATTENDANCE DOWN, MASKS UP**

From what we're hearing, this year's Milehicon in Denver had less attendance than in previous pre-pandemic years but is considered financially successful. Milehicon 53 took place October 1-3 at the Denver Marriott Tech Center with Author co-Guests of Honor G. Willow Wilson and Rachel Swirsky, Artist Guest Rebecca Hicks, Toastmaster Aaron Michael Ritchey, and Fan Guest Christopher Ambler.

Arlen Feldman and Rose Beetem, both of Colorado, report that about 750 people were in attendance – down from the "old normal" of 1,000-1,100 – but that the convention managed to hit and surpass its room nights quota with the Marriott (which is "great for the budget").

With COVID Delta variant numbers up, MHC 53 did have some health restrictions and guidelines. Everyone more than two years of age was required to wear a mask while inside, and the number of seats in programming rooms were reduced. To help stop the spread, the Marriott did not provide water stations in the common areas. There were a few limited events in the Con Suite, but the MHC committee decided not to have a standard hospitality suite this year.

Feldman reports, "I saw one person not wearing a mask (and making it clear that it was political) and heard about one other, but other than that most people were good! I think a lot of people were just happy to be there, even with restrictions. It felt surprisingly normal."

Beetem concurs. "I would pretty much agree with Arlen. I saw one or two people maskless (maybe the same people) but not in function rooms...mostly in the outside-the-function-rooms-but-still-MHC-territory. (There also were) a number of people oblivious to the fact that their mask had slipped below their nose. Sigh."

Even panelists wore masks, which Feldman says, made it a "little difficult for some panelists to be heard, but those of us who are naturally loud had no trouble."

Not surprising, the art show and dealer room were both pretty small. But Beetem was "delighted" to have 16 entries in the Masquerade, representing 21 entrants total.

"Arlen and Anna's 'Back in the Real World' presentation/costume was hysterical, and won Best Presentation," commented Beetem. "It's the first time Arlen has done the MHC masquerade in years! And I should give a tip of the beanie to Bubonicon since I appropriated your judge idea. I had lined up Carrie Vaughn and our Fan GoH Christopher Ambler ahead of time, planning to choose the third one on-site. One option I had been considering was asking a hotel person (like you folks have done) if one seemed good, and I kept seeing this one tall young black fellow with long dreads and great fashion sense and asked him. (His name was Keanu, which was a big plus for me.) He did it and seemed delighted to do it."

Beetem noted that she missed several program items, "several of which I heard were great, but I got to catch up with people, get two massages in the vendors room, and enjoy being with my fannish peeps."

Overall, Feldman says, "I think the con went well."

Beetem added, "We're hoping for an even more normal year in 2022."

Milehicon 54 should be held October 21-23, 2022, at the Marriott Tech Center with co-Guests of Honor Ken Liu and Charlie Jane Anders, and Toastmaster Kevin J. Anderson. An Artist Guest will be announced as soon as confirmed. www.milehicon.org.

REVIEWS ROUND-UP

***Project Hail Mary* by Andy Weir, 2021 Ballantine, hc \$28.99, 496 pages. Review by Stephen M. Henrichs**

High stakes (survival of the human species), unlikely hero (high school science teacher), inter-species bromance (human and highly evolved crab/rock) – Andy Weir's *Project Hail Mary* has all the ingredients for a great read. Add to this Weir's genius for character development and technical plausibility, and phrases like "epic story of redemption" (*The Washington Post*) start to become appropriate.

The story opens with the protagonist, Ryland Grace, awakening from a coma aboard a starship, inflicted with amnesia. As he gradually recovers his memory he pieces together the ship's mission. The starship, the *Hail Mary*, is humanity's last-ditch effort to develop a defense against a star-dimming microphage known as the Astrophage, which is slowly inducing an Ice Age. For some reason, the nearby star Tau Ceti is somehow resistant to the infection. The *Hail Mary*'s mission is to explore Tau Ceti, craft a solution, and send it back to Earth. With only enough fuel to last as far as Tau Ceti, this is a suicide mission, even if it succeeds.

Here's where it gets interesting. As Grace awakens,

the two primary crew members have long since died during the voyage. Most importantly, he remembers that he was only added to the mission because both the primary candidate for his role and his backup had died in a training accident. Grace had flatly refused the suicide mission, out of sheer cowardice. His supervisor, Stratt, had refused his resignation and ordered him frog-marched onto the ship moments before takeoff. He'd then been placed in medically-induced amnesia, for both his protection and crew morale. During their final conversation, Stratt had said that despite his cowardice she believed him to be a "fundamentally good person," and that when he remembered how he had gotten there and what were the stakes he would feel compelled to see it through.

This last revelation comes well into the storyline. Grace's memory recovery is conveyed in flashbacks as the plot moves forward, telegraphing his fragmentary inner state as he pursues the mission. Going further into the plot, including the alien-bromance angle (hint: Grace nicknames the alien Rocky), skirts on spoiler territory, so I'll leave that for you to discover. Weir is a world-class storyteller, but don't take my word for it.

MGM has bought the film rights, with Ryan Gosling as the lead. This writer will be putting it on his calendar.

***A Spindle Splintered* by Alix E. Harrow, 2021 Tordotcom, hc \$17.99, 119 pages. Review by Jessica Coyle**

Alix E. Harrow's, author of *The Ten Thousand Doors of January* and *The Once and Future Witches*, latest work is the first of two Fractured Fable novellas from Tor.com. *A Spindle Splintered* focuses on Zinnia Gray, a young folklorist who is obsessed with the tale of Sleeping Beauty. She connects with the story because she was born with a rare disorder which means she won't live past her 22nd birthday. Her best friend, Charm, tries to distract her for a night by throwing her a Sleeping Beauty-themed 21st birthday party.

During the party, Zinnia discovers a room with a spinning wheel in it and pricks her finger. She is magically transported to another dimension where she meets Primrose, a beautiful princess who is clearly that dimension's Sleeping Beauty. Zinnia is quickly sucked into a quest to save Primrose from her fate, and to maybe save herself as well.

Harrow's *A Spindle Splintered* is an interesting feminist take on what is probably one of the least enlightened fairytales. I personally enjoy fairytale retellings, and I thought this one was a new and interesting take, and I would recommend it to those who enjoy feminist retellings of traditional stories.

ASFS MEETING REPORTS — JULY 2021: BLACK HOLE TALK

A group of 21 people were on Zoom and Facebook to listen to Air Force Research Laboratory astronomer Tanya Taveneer talk on "Black Holes and What Would Really Kill You If You Approached One."

Taveneer is an astronomer at Starfire Optical Range, and wrote software for NASA and MIT while working at Los Alamos. She also was a Bubonicon 52 participant.

She started by asking what a Black Hole might look like. "Well, it's black, so you'd see nothing. Anything can go in, but nothing can come out. Artists often show an accretion disc with stuff getting sucked in, or a rubber-sheet universe with an event horizon and the black hole at the bottom of a funnel.

"In the rubber sheet analogy, the mass of the sun curves spacetime," she continued. "The rubber sheet has limitations because it can only show two dimensions. And it's hard to visualize time as a dimension."

Discussing curvature near a Black Hole, Taveneer noted, "Spacetime is so curved near a Black Hole that nothing can escape. The 'point of no return' for light is called the event horizon, and it is a 3-D sphere."

Black Holes must be created from intense mass. For example, she said that if our Sun "turned into a Black Hole, it still would only have the mass of one solar star. It would not suck in the Earth. But we'd know it had happened because in eight point three minutes, the Earth would go dark."

Searching for Black Holes, astronomers have noted that at the center of our galaxy stars appear to be orbiting something massive but invisible. "A Black Hole, perhaps," she said. "X-ray flares from the galactic center suggest that tidal forces are tearing apart matter."

There are four types of Black Holes: Stellar Mass Black Holes that have the mass of three to one hundred suns, Supermassive Black Holes like at the galactic center, Intermediate Black Holes, and Micro Black Holes that could have the mass of an atom or a mountain.

"It would be very difficult to fall into a Black Hole because of its size," she said. "It would be very hard for a spaceship to run into one. If you did manage to fall into one, you would be boiled by the heat of the accretion disc, or the radiation from x-rays and gamma rays would kill you. One millimeter of lead could protect you, but lead is poisonous and heavy. Without protection, you're worse than toast."

Even the tidal forces near an event horizon would kill a person as they were stretched and elongated until the person became just a stream of molecules.

Taveneer remarked, "And if nothing else, the sustained acceleration of approaching a Black Hole would kill someone as the human body is only good at dealing with impulse or short acceleration."

AUGUST 2021: BACK IN-PERSON!

Twenty people attended the first ASFS meeting held in-person at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church since February 2020. Tables and counters were wiped down before and after the meeting, and masks were required for everyone while inside the church.

There was lots of chatting and visiting, and two groups moved tables outside into the courtyard in order to

play Fluxx (original version) and Cards Against Humanity while feeling free to remove masks if comfortable.

SEPTEMBER 2021: ART VIDEOS

Just 16 people were at our second in-person meeting of the year, and everyone was masked. We showed two art-related videos from virtual Bubonicon 52 – “A Bubonicon Art Retrospective” (with lots of Perry Rodent images) and “Art Demonstration: Jon Sanchez Creates an *Aliens* Poster.” People seemed to enjoy both presentations.

We then broke into low-key socializing, mostly in a large circle of seats.

EDITOR NOTES THAT FIT THIS SPACE

▪ **THIS MONTH MARKS OUR THIRD IN-PERSON CLUB MEETING**, and things still are a bit odd. Everyone has been very good about wearing their masks inside. We’ve also been wiping down tables & counters. It just feels strange after months of Zoom virtual gatherings. And now we have guest speakers for the October & November meetings. We’ll see how it all goes. Thank goodness the Delta variant of COVID seems to be slowing way down. But we can only guess (and plan accordingly) for what might come next. So, please continue to keep safe and be well. And freakin’ get vaccinated if you haven’t already done so. No more horse deworming medicine or other crackpot cures. Believe in real science, right?

▪ **VIRTUAL BUBONICON 52 SEEMED** to go well, except for we co-managers not noticing our microphone was muted when we started the live closing ceremonies! Oh well. It was a good two days of programming that included former Guests of Honor Catherynne M. Valente and Sherwood Smith, and also folks like Susan R. Matthews, Carrie Vaughn, Jeanne Stein, Lee Moyer, Gordon Garb, and Kevin Sonney. Zoom allows people to “beam in” from anywhere, but it’s not the same experience as an in-person convention. Still, especially with Delta variant numbers rising at the time, we’re glad we went virtual, and it was worth doing. We even managed to have Discord socializing. Special thanks again to Mandy P. Self for video editing, tech savvy, and putting together the Space Engineers panel. Cross your fingers that we can be live and in-person come August 26-28, 2022, at the Marriott Uptown.

We also are happy to hear that Milehicon 53 went well in Denver the first weekend of October. Jessica and I weren’t quite ready to be with 850-1,100 people stuffed into a hotel (especially the elevators), but we congratulate our Denver pals for making their 2021 convention work...

▪ **JUST GOT BACK FROM OUR COLORADO TRIP** (ironically). Jessica and I visited the Four Corners Monument on our way to Durango. We rented a cabin 26 miles outside Durango on a County Road, which was lovely. That drive each day was fairly long, but very pretty. We browsed the historic downtown area, and rode the Durango-Silverton steam train (which took up most of Saturday the 2nd). The leaves were changing color, so the scenery was beautiful. And on Sunday the 3rd, we drove 30 miles south on County Roads to have a fancy dinner at the Sky Ute Casino. It was our first meal inside a restaurant since early 2020, and we felt comfortable as they had reduced the number of tables and seated customers. Our waitress and the chef were very accommodating

with Jessica’s dietary needs. On Monday, we drove to Pagosa Springs (shopped at a bookstore & Lazy One pajamas) to go down US-84 and stop at Echo Amphitheater near Abiqui. So, now Jessica can say she’s been in Georgia O’Keefe country. It was really, really nice to travel outside Albuquerque for the first time since COSine in January 2020. Or course, we’re glad to be back to our own home and bed, and with our cat.

▪ **FOR THOSE WHO HAVEN’T HEARD**, I’m no longer with Page One Books as of mid-August. My departure after 11 1/2 years was sudden and unexpected, and that’s all I will say about that. I’ve been doing some piecemeal work (including painting), and I’ve also been going through boxes in our garage. Some of those have contained stuff from 1989-1997, which means they haven’t seen the light of day since I bought this house! Wow, some cool stuff among the things to recycle, donate or sell. Obviously I have come across things I’m not sure why I saved back then. I’ve been able to sell some old comic books, vinyl LPs, 45 singles and cassette tapes for cash. It helped that those things hadn’t been exposed to sunlight in 24 years, and are in pristine condition. Coming up, I have some hours at a bookstore, and possibly will help put down floor tile. I saved money when folks at non-essential businesses were getting an extra \$600 from the Feds at the beginning of the pandemic, so I’m okay. Just taking a little time for myself - and then will do a lot of applications in a few weeks.

▪ **WE’VE VENTURED OUT TO SEE** *Black Widow* and *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, plus *Jungle Cruise*, *Free Guy* and *Dear Evan Hansen* at chain theaters. All were good, and worth seeing with 4-28 people in 175-seat theaters. We especially were taken with Ryan Reynolds in *Free Guy*. It’s a lot of fun, and even has a rom-com element to it. *Shang-Chi* was very entertaining with Simu Liu, Awkwafina, and some beautiful Chinese dragons. *Black Widow* introduced a new Widow for the post-Thanos Marvel universe, and I enjoyed seeing Natasha’s background. And *Jungle Cruise* is just big campy adventure fun with Dwayne Johnson and Emily Blunt (channeling her inner Indiana Jones). At the Guild Cinema, we’ve seen throwback screenings of James Cameron’s *Aliens* (1986, with a wonderful Jon Sanchez poster), the offbeat French romance *Amelie*, David Cronenberg’s *Scanners* (1981), and Terry Gilliam’s *Time Bandits* (also 1981).

MOST OF MY READING lately seems to be for the Droids & Dragons book group, or comic books or magazine articles. We did get our copy of *Yours Cruelly, Elvira: Memoirs of the Mistress of the Dark* by Cassandra Peterson, so I’ve just started reading that. The big promo excerpt for her book was from a chapter where Peterson admits she is bi-sexual and has been in a serious relationship with a woman the last several years. While that seems to have created a mini-storm on social media, all I could think was, “Yeah, so what? She’s always been supportive of the LGBT community. Just not that big a deal.” Oh, I did read *I Want to Be Where the Normal People Are* by Rachel Bloom, which is a collection of touching, emotionally insightful and funny essays from the co-creator of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (and writer/star of that infamous Ray Bradbury musical video).

ON TV, WE’VE been keeping up with *Ted Lasso* (so optimistic and so funny), the 2nd season of *What We Do in the Shadows* (still very funny), the animated *Harley Quinn* (batsh*t crazy), *Only Murders in the Building*, *Schmigaddon*, *The Rookie*, the 2nd season of *Stargirl*, the 2nd season of *Evil* (thanks to a one-month trial of Paramount+), *Svengoolie*’s

Saturday movies, the final season of *Lucifer*, *Wellington Paranormal*, the 2nd season of *Dead Pixels*, and now *The Goldbergs*, *The Wonder Years*, *Big Sky*, and such. And Shannon and I are rewatching *Firefly* one episode every couple of weeks when Jessica is doing orchestra rehearsal or ABQ Museum's Third Thursday. All the actors were such babies, and I've forgotten what happens in many of the stories (which reminds me that I haven't yet read *Firefly: Life Signs* by James Lovegrove - the novels have been good so far).

▪ DIGGING IN THE GARAGE has made me fairly nostalgic. I've found news articles and movie reviews I barely remember writing for the *UNM Daily Lobo*, fanzines I don't remember contributing to, and APA zine sections that basically were personal narratives of what I was doing, reading, and watching. So weird to look at all of that again. It's hard to believe I graduated with a B.A. in journalism in 1984, and that my first article for *Starlog* was about Melinda Snodgrass' involvement with *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in 1989. I even got to visit the *Next Gen* sets that year, and I've met a lot of actors

and directors over the years through *Starlog*, *Fangoria* and *Comics Scene*. I am amazed at how much I wrote, and how quickly. Makes me want to motivate myself to get writing again. I need to check on doing book reviews for the *Albuquerque Journal* or maybe *ABQ: The Magazine*.

▪ AS ALWAYS, DURING THE PANDEMIC: Wear a mask, get vaccinated, wash your hands, maintain social distance, and keep safe! Be well, and let's wipe out the flu season for a 2nd year in a row!

▪ THANKS to Jessica C, Stephen H, Arlen F, Rose B, and George B for their contributions and input. More stuff is needed for the holiday issue in December (hint, hint, as always)! See you all for *SithFacts* in two months. Have a **Happy Halloween** and a nice Thanksgiving. Take care & stay strong! — Craig C.



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