

# Tightbeam 301

October 2019



Rainbow Griffin by Angela K. Scott

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Anime Reviews are courtesy Jessi Silver and her site [www.s1e1.com](http://www.s1e1.com). Ms. Silver writes of her site "S1E1 is primarily an outlet for views and reviews on Japanese animated media, and occasionally video games and other entertainment."

Reviews are courtesy Declan Finn, Jim McCoy, Pat Patterson, Tamara Wilhite, Tom Feller, and Heath Row. Declan Finn's web page [declanfinn.com](http://declanfinn.com) covers his books, reviews, writing, and more. Jim McCoy's reviews and more appear at [jimbossffreviews.blogspot.com](http://jimbossffreviews.blogspot.com). Pat Patterson's reviews appear on his blog [habakkuk21.blogspot.com](http://habakkuk21.blogspot.com) and also on Good Reads and Amazon.com.

Regular short fiction reviewers. Greg Hullender and Eric Wong publish at [RocketStackRank.com](http://RocketStackRank.com).

Cedar Sanderson's reviews and other interesting articles appear on her site [www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/](http://www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/) and its culinary extension [cedarwrites.com/eat-this-while-you-read-that/](http://cedarwrites.com/eat-this-while-you-read-that/)

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The N3F offers four different memberships. Memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18; memberships with TNFF via email are \$6. Zines other than TNFF are email only. Additional memberships at the address of a current member are \$4. Public memberships are free. Send payments to N3F, POB 1925, Mountain View CA 94042. Pay online at [N3F.org](http://N3F.org). Our PayPal contact is [treasurer@n3f.org](mailto:treasurer@n3f.org). If you join, please use the membership form, at least for your name and whichever address you use.

To join as a public (free) member, send [phillies@4liberty.net](mailto:phillies@4liberty.net) your email address.

# Table of Contents

## Art

- 1 ... Front cover by Angela K. Scott
- 6 ... Swans by Angela K. Scott
- 31 ... Lounging Around by Jose Sanchez
- 32 ... Back Cover by Jose Sanchez

## Editorial

- 4 ... George Phillies

## Letters

- 4 ... Heath Row
- 6 ... Bob Jennings
- 6 ... Lloyd Penney

## Anime

- 7 ... High School Prodigies ... Review by Jessi Silver
- 8 ... After School Dice Club ... Review by Jessi Silver
- 10 ... Ascendance of a Bookworm ... Review by Jessi Silver
- 11 ... Kemono Michi: Rise Up ... Review by Jessi Silver

## Novels

- 13 ... Sherlock Holmes and the Sussex Sea-Devils ... Review by Bob Jennings
- 15 ... The Far Shore by Glenn Damato ... Review by Tamara Wilhite
- 16 ... Nemo's World: The Substrate Wars 2 by Jeb Kinnison ... Review by Jim McCoy
- 17 ... Time Loop by Pam Uphoff ... Review by Pat Patterson
- 19 ... The Golden Horde, by Chris Kennedy ... Review by Pat Patterson

## Short Stories

- 21 ... All In by Rajan Khanna ... Review by Greg Hullender and Eric Wong
- 22 ... Molecular Rage by Marie Bilodeau ... Review by Greg Hullender and Eric Wong

## Video

- 22 ... World War Z ... Review by Chris Nuttall
- 23 ... Star Trek: Deep Space Nine ... Review by Jim McCoy

## Sercon

- 25 ... L. Sprague de Camp Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph. D.
- 28 ... Astounding by Alec Nevala-Lee ... Review by Kevin Trainor

## Gourmet Bureau

- 29 ... Chicken Korma by Pam Uphoff and Cedar Sanderson

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# Editorial

Welcome to the October issue of Tightbeam. Once again we have articles on a wide range of topics. Letters from Heath Row, Bob Jennings, and Lloyd Penney open the issue. Jessi Silver reviews new anime releases. We have book reviews: hard SF, time travel, military SF, and space opera. Video Reviews treat World War Z and Deep Space 9. SerCon treats L. Sprague De Camp and Astounding Magazine. We close with a recipe for chicken korma from Pam Uphoff and Cedar Sanderson. It would surely be good to have more reviews of short fiction or comics. Perhaps next issue.

The N3F currently has nine zines. *The National Fantasy Fan* (The Fan, TNFF) is our club business and news zine. *Tightbeam* covers all sorts of things that fen find interesting: anime, books, short stories, films and TV shows, fannish and stfnal history, and, of course, recipes. *N'APA* is our Amateur Press Association. *Films Fantastic* covers films, especially older ones. *Man-gaverse* (Jessi Silver reports she is a bit down, so we must wait for the next issue) treats anime and manga. *Ionisphere* specializes in interviews of current authors. *Origin* examines the history of fandom. *Eldritch Science*, published once or twice a year, publishes fiction. The *N3F Review of Books Incorporating Prose Bono* reviews SF Novels, literary-critical works on SF, and the art of writing. If you look carefully, you'll find that many of our zines have slightly different appearances. *The Fan* uses green as its color. *Tightbeam* emphasizes a light brown; thanks to Angela K Scott and Jose Sanchez, we have wonderful front and rear covers.. ~~The N3F Review of Books~~ uses Old English Text MT and scarlet for accents. *Eldritch Science* and *The Fan* print in two columns, not the single column seen here.

Mindful of Heath Row's comments, we are making the page limit 32 pages rather than 30 pages. I am not about to switch to center folded saddle-stapled, but someday a future editor might want to. We publish a lot of images, so don't expect that our word count is going to climb appreciably.

# Letters

Dear Neffers,

Hello from the quiet hour in the morning. Here are some comments on Tightbeam #299, congratulations on the approach to #300, a milestone also about to be celebrated by the comic book Spawn.

As a former editor of The Fan and as of former journalist and magazine editor, I have some belated input. When I edited The Fan, I tried to approach it the way I worked a magazine. There was a part of the look, mostly shorter, lighter pieces. Then there was the part that included longer features, author interviews, and whatnot. And then there was the heart of the look, primarily the review section, then called Re: Review Section, that grouped together book, movie, and TV show reviews.

I also tried to focus on including standing features. There was always original art, including fan art in the innards and a commissioned and paid for, though a token fee out of my own pocket,

cover. There was always a short story from a member or outside contributor. There was always a profile or other article by historian Jon Swartz. And there were the reviews.

Each issue had a similar, consistent design. The parts of the zine were always in the same sequence. When I took over the editorship, the Fan wasn't being published that consistently, so that consistency and the quarterly schedule were important to earn trust and readership of the club zine.

Now we have a ton of zines, *The Fan*, *Tightbeam*, *Ionisphere*, *The Review* and we don't have the same challenges. That's a good situation to be in. Given the electronic nature of PDF zines, no space constraints, it makes sense to apply some false constraints. I'm all for the limit to thirty pages for *Tightbeam*. My one word of advice would be to go to a page limit divisible by four so we can return to a print saddle-stapled format. We are already able to make the change.

Because print matters. If I didn't print out *Tightbeam*, I wouldn't read it, at least in the same way. And if I didn't write this letter by hand, I wouldn't say the same things. I'd write less, more shallow, perhaps not at all. PDFs and email just don't afford the same sense of concentration or depth of thought and comment.

Lloyd, I was unaware of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's Mycroft Holmes books! I'll have to check them out for the Holmes round-robin! I'm sure some others will be interested.

Your comments on the Dick Tracy comic strip reminded me that there is a new Dick Tracy comic book series. I recently picked up three of the first four issues and will try to review them for the membership soon. Your letter of comment made them a ready priority!

I enjoyed Jessi's anime reviews, though I don't think I need to check out either series. The program I remember most has been "Life after People", which aired on the History Channel in 2008-2009. There were about twenty episodes. The program considered what would happen to the planet if humanity instantly disappeared. My wife watched a few episodes, and the idea of nature reclaiming one bit of the environment, particularly the progression in time-lapse animation, was fascinating.

I am also unfamiliar with Jon Ringo's Council War books, which seem to be less about SCA in a foreign landscape and more the fantastic aftermath of a collapsed high-technology society. I'll have to check them out. The phrase "amateurs study tactics" struck a nerve. A quick web search picks up a variant: "Amateurs strategize. Professionals think logistics." attributed to General Omar Bradley. A better phrase that might be the amateurs plan and professionals act, though there's a case for both, to be sure.

While I am not sure that Kennedy's Four Horsemen Universe is for me, Patterson's review of Tales from the Lyon's Den is so hilarious that I might have to check it out on principle.

And Swartz's profile of Richard Sale added to my reading and viewing list. I'll have to check out his Cobra series, his Black Mask pieces, and watch Mr. Belvedere Goes to College. It turns out that the 1980s TV sitcom Mr. Belvedere is loosely based on the very same character.

All in all, a good read with plenty to recommend. Now that we have *The Review*, we might think about what standing features make sense for all the zines. We might be at a point where

we need to better differentiate them and have a clear mission for each. It was easier when we had just the one zine. It could do everything.

Well, to work for me. This has been a good way to start the morning.

Heath Row

Editor:

I am concerned with what seems to be an ongoing process of splintering Tightbeam into tiny pieces which spin off into brand new publications. My original concept in relaunching Tightbeam a few years back was to provide the club with an all purpose genzine that would offer a wide variety of material covering a very wide range of subjects. But now we have all the movie reviews spun off into a separate club fanzine, manga commentary and reviews has spun off into Mangaverse, and now the book reviews are being spun off into their own separate fanzine title. Worthwhile fiction created by members goes into the Eldritch Science zine. What's going to be left of Tightbeam?

Bob Jennings

Dear George and Jon:

Thanks for issue 299 of Tightbeam. Here goes with a fast loc to help with my big catch-up.

Wish I was going to Corflu 37, my loc... It's now far enough in the year what we don't need the air conditioner, unfortunately. What we called issue 5 of Amazing Stories is now in print. It is actually Volume 77, No. 1, and it is a big double issue. I forgot to say in this letter that I use MailChimp when I send out our local SF newsletter to all our subscribers.

I have seen that trailer for Star Trek: Picard... Very soon, we will be absolutely spoiled for choice when it comes to new Trek properties. It truly has become its own SF subgenre. We have certainly enjoyed Discovery, and we look forward to the third season. So, with Picard, and possibly Section 31, and at least one animated project, plus... Trek fans are being catered to, but I can't help but think that we will have too much.

Now that it is September, and temperatures are already starting to drop, we have three shows to vend at in the month of October. Plus, two in November, and one in December. Wish us luck and good sales!

Time to go...getting close to dinner time. Take care. Congratulations the 300th issue, by the way. See you then!

Yours,

Lloyd Penney

Swans by Angela K. Scott



# Anime

## Autumn 2019 First Impressions – Part 1 Reviews by Jessi Silver

A new anime season is a great time for a fresh start. I mentioned previously that I was planning to switch things up here at the blog, and this is the first step in that project. My goal will still be to write a little bit about all the anime premiere episodes, but the format is going to be a little bit different. I plan to group batches of episodes together and to provide more succinct impressions. Series that I find more interesting, or that seem like they might prompt some interesting discussion, will then get stand alone feature posts where I might watch a few more episodes for a broader and more nuanced picture.

With all that out of the way, let's dig into some of the Autumn premieres!

### High School Prodigies Have it Easy Even in Another World

In Japan, there are seven superhuman high schoolers who are world-class geniuses in various fields ranging from governance to economics and beyond. On one fateful day, these seven wind up in a plane accident and wake up, only to find themselves in another world. Finding themselves in a foreign place where magic and beast-people are real, they immediately proceed to panic-or at least that's what would've happened if they were some run of the mill students. If anything, these seven are actually using their talents to do absolutely ludicrous things so they can go home. – ANN



Episode Summary: Seven students, seven superhuman talents – these very special high school kids have been lauded for their talent and genius in several different fields. One day the group is in a terrible plane accident, and when they awaken they find themselves in a world very different from modern Japan. This world is populated by various humanoid species and operates within the laws of magic.

The students want to learn more about their role in this strange situation, as well as find their way back home, but in the short term there are more pressing matters. When the lackeys of the local feudal lord start to harass the members of their adoptive village, the students choose to use their talents constructively to pay back the villagers' kindness.

Impressions: I had half an inclination to lump all of this season's isekai offerings into a post by themselves since it's not a genre I'm a huge fan of and I thought maybe proximity to one-another may be what was needed to tease out some of the pros and cons between them. Obviously I ultimately opted to take a different route, but having seen a lot of unimpressive isekai premieres over many years I'm beginning to feel as though I might be getting more of a handle on the genre. Case in point: this episode is pretty light on set-up and the cast of characters embody a laundry list of tropes. Yet when it comes to the full package it's honestly pretty entertaining.

I've often said that a healthy dose of self-awareness can elevate a story, and while some series take that to an extreme, used sparingly it can be a good tonal tactic. Modern isekai has primarily become a method of indulging in various power fantasies, and this story takes that to an extreme. Rather than one bumbling male hero whose mediocrity is somehow just what a particular fantasy world needs, the characters in this series (boys and girls!) are so cunning and over-powered that it becomes comical. It at once feels like a purposeful send-up and a reaction to a popular genre's market saturation.

The episode does have a few issues. While I like the fact of the mixed-gender main cast, it's pretty clear who the target audience is – there's a scene in which a busty elf feeds one of the characters mouth-to-mouth and the sexuality of the scene is played-up quite a bit. Again, there's a sense that this was purposeful as the trope of the isekai protagonist somehow attracting female attention in spite of himself is a well-worn one, but the scene feels out of place. One of the characters also suffers from some sort of anxiety since having been thrust into this unfamiliar world, yet when the situation calls for his talents that anxiety is conveniently under control in that moment. These are really just minor nit-picky criticisms, though.

It's difficult to say whether I'll watch more of this, but at the very least this episode was kind of a pleasant surprise.



Apparently being an illusionist puts one in the top-tier of talents.



Really, she's just feeding him lunch!



Anxiety conveniently dissipates when the situation calls for competence.

Pros: The first episode takes a lot of tropes and rolls with them to good result. The mixed-gender cast is a nice attribute.

Cons: The target audience is very apparent. Anxiety is apparently optional.

Content Warnings: Plane crash imagery. Sexual assault threatened against a female character.

Grade: B-

## After School Dice Club

Aya moves and starts to attend an all-girls high school in Kyoto. Her first friend is her reserved classmate Miki. After school one day, the committee chairwoman Midori takes them both to an analogue game specialty shop called "Saikoro Club" (Dice Club). There, they start playing a German board game without thinking. Thus begins Aya and Miki's search for fun through the world of analogue games. – ANN

Episode Summary: Miki has always been a bit of a loner. Not only is she shy, but she doesn't find a lot of commonality in the activities her classmates enjoy. That all changes when Miki

meets Aya, a transfer student with an outgoing and unorthodox outlook. They spend an afternoon together purposely getting “lost” and having fun. Their journey ends when they notice Midori, their class rep, going into an entertainment shop – seemingly breaking a school rule that she was very recently trying to enforce.

As it happens, Midori has a part-time job at a board game shop. Miki and Aya are roped into a game of Marrakech by the friendly shop manager, and it’s during this game that Miki finally gets a sense of what “having fun” feels like. While Midori can’t condone hanging out at the shop during the school week, she mentions that doing so on the weekend wouldn’t be against the school’s conduct rules. The newly-minted friends make plans for their next gaming session.



Impressions: Fanservice comes in many forms, and while most of us probably think of the word in terms of buxom beauties or bare-chested bishounen, sometimes it just points to the tendency of specialty entertainment to call out facts that its audience is already likely to know. This creates a (usually benign) in-group mentality and allows fans to bond over a shared piece of media. After School Dice Club is built around a shared enjoyment of what the show refers to as “analog games,” and what we in the English-speaking world (at least in the US) call board games.

Overall the episode is pretty typical and follows a lot of the standard “after school club” storytelling tropes. The characters don’t necessarily have much in common other than a latent desire to belong somewhere, and their formation into a fun-loving group happens mostly by chance. It’s not really the “plot” (which I use in its loosest sense) that’s the point here, though; the characters and story are really just a vehicle to have fun with, something that the author is clearly passionate about. Whether or not that inclination should be criticized or not is more likely than not going to be based on how much any viewer shares an enjoyment of the central hobby. Personally, as someone who’s mostly adjacent to board game culture through various geek organizations, as well as through my husband’s influence, I still had some fun and recognized enough of the content to be able to enjoy the episode.



Aside from the gaming geekery, this episode is mostly unremarkable and inoffensive. There’s an eye-rolling scene in which Aya rides her bike into a river and then strips down naked underneath a bridge to change out of her wet clothes, which I gather is supposed to be uncomfortably funny. Unfortunately it just reads as out-of-place instead. It’s really the games themselves that are meant to take center stage, and in that sense the episode does its job (I’m definitely interested in playing Marrakech now since the explanation of the rules during the characters’ game session was really easy to understand!). I think this show might be a fun diversion for someone like me, and possibly even more entertaining for fans who are “all-in” when it comes to board

games.

Pros: A lighthearted look at some fun, and possibly familiar, games.

Cons: This type of “fanservice” may not hold much interest for those outside of gaming fandom.

Content Warnings: Teenage girl stripping naked by a riverside for comedic effect (no complete nudity shown).

Grade: C+

### Ascendance of a Bookworm



A certain college girl who’s loved books ever since she was a little girl dies in an accident and is reborn in another world she knows nothing about. She is now Myne, the sickly five-year-old daughter of a poor soldier. To make things worse, the world she’s been reborn in has a very low literacy rate and books mostly don’t exist. She’d have to pay an enormous amount of money to buy one. Myne resolves herself: If there aren’t any books, she’ll just have to make them. Her goal is to become a librarian. – ANN

Streaming: Crunchyroll

Episodes: 14

Source: Light Novel

Episode Summary: In her distant past life, Myne was a young woman with a love for books and reading. After dying in a tragic accident, she was reincarnated into her current juvenile body. As cruel fate would have it, her new reality is nearly devoid of books, as the printing press hasn’t yet been invented and only the richest nobles have access to the hand-copied tomes that do exist. Myne is also young and frail, without many resources. What’s a bookworm to do?

Though she may lack the means, Myne has the passion. If she can’t find books to read, then she’ll find a way to make some of her own!

Impressions: I’m an anxious person, and one thing I like to do in order to counteract that tendency is to remind myself just how lucky I am to have been born into a time period where disease is minimal and I can enjoy conveniences that would have been luxuries or even downright magical in earlier eras. I have plenty of food to eat, lots of things to do, and enjoy a lot of personal freedoms that my ancestors (especially my foremothers) would not have had. If I were reincarnated into some situation where I was aware of my lack of options, I can only imagine how horrifying that might be.

It’s honestly impressive that this episode doesn’t read like a horror story, because Myne’s situation is well beyond frustrating. This episode does a good job of capturing her passion for reading, and demonstrating just how that lack of a creative outlet might affect someone whose per-

sona is all but built around its expression. Whereas many of us might be prone to despair in this predicament, though, Myne's scrappiness and determination paints a very compelling picture of the type of character she is. One really believes that she might just be the person to overcome the overwhelming class differences and gender divide in her adoptive land to bring enlightenment to others.

Unlike many other isekai/rebirth/fantasy series of late, this episode at least seems less focused around sending its protagonist on some big adventure, and more intent on allowing her to analyze her situation and problem-solve her way into getting what she wants. To some I think this might make the show feel a little boring, since it eschews action in favor of scheming, but I find that angle to be pretty entertaining. I've said in the past that some of my favorite stories are those in which smart (and I mean genuinely smart, not just smart-ass) characters are allowed to utilize their mental talents for the good of the story, and I hope that this is what the series is aiming for. Kudos that the story features a young woman in a role that's typically been reserved for teenage boys.



The medieval life doesn't agree with Myne.



Only nobles are allowed the luxury of expensive books.

Pros: The protagonist relies on her smarts and passion toward her hobby. The episode briefly touches on things like class division.

Cons: Starts off slowly with a plot that's not particularly action-oriented.

Grade: B-

### Kemono Michi: Rise Up

Masked wrestler Genzō Shibata likes all kinds of animals and creatures. One day he is summoned to another world, where a princess asks him to help kill magical beasts, but he gets mad and puts her in a German suplex. Instead, he begins life as a pet shop owner in the other world. – ANN

Streaming: Funimation

Episodes: TBA

Source: Manga

Episode Summary: Genzo Shibata, otherwise known as the pro wrestler "Animal Mask," is nearly ready to retire with his winnings and live his real dream – to own a pet shop and share his love for animals. Unfortunately the fates have more in store for him, and he's whisked away to an alternate world during his final



wrestling match. The princess of this new land summoned Shibata to help exterminate the demon beasts threatening the populace, but harming animals isn't his style, so he goes rogue.

As he's making his way through the castle town, he comes upon a wolf-eared girl who appears to be in something of a pinch. He soon learns that that's not quite the case, but in exchange for his help she offers to get him set up with some funding. The guild master she brings him to doesn't quite know what to do with him, but as it turns out Shibata's unorthodox ways might be a blessing in disguise. Rather than harm a group of cerberus running amok, he uses his knowledge of animal behavior to soothe them into submission.

Impressions: It seems like this season may very well actually be the season of oddball isekai entertainment, as all examples I've watched so far have been quirky and better-than-anticipated. This episode is no different, transporting its animal-loving sports star into a world where his animal-loving ways might be more than just an affectionate character trait. As an animal-fan myself, I feel like Shibata is a kindred spirit in an anime world that can sometimes be hostile toward people of my age, gender, and temperament.

That is, I might feel that way if there weren't quite so many aspects of this episode that left me with reservations. Let's be clear, Shibata really loves animals. For the most part this passionate affection is played really humorously, as if the character were an otaku of any other fandom. Unfortunately there are a few missteps here and there that feel decidedly uncomfortable rather than good-natured. Shibata's animal affinity seems to know no bounds in terms of gender, species, or sentience, which is great and only adds to his character. However, in one case he tackles a wolf man to the ground and rubs his belly vigorously to quell him. The moment is framed both comedically and as an assault, leaving me feeling very ambivalent about it. It's clear the wolf man doesn't like Shibata's touching, until he suddenly does... not a great message. Ditto when Shibata dominates the cerberus pack leader and starts sniffing his butt. These particular moments are more cringe-worthy than anything else.



The princess needs a hero, but Shibata isn't quite what she expected.

The episode is at its best when it shows some self-awareness and goes against expectations. Shibata's reaction toward the princess who summoned him exemplifies how funny the episode can be – he treats her to a German suplex at the very suggestion that he be forced to attack the demon beasts. He has heart-to-

-heart conversations with his dog. And he brings to his guild work a fresh perspective that's entertaining to consider. I think that this could be a very fun outing if the series tones down the odd sexual tension of Shibata's reactions and finds a point of more consistency with its humor.

Pros: This episode can be very funny at times. The hero is definitely unique.

Cons: Frames some scenes as both comedy and sexual assault.

Content Warning: References to slavery. Framing assault as comedic.

Grade: C+



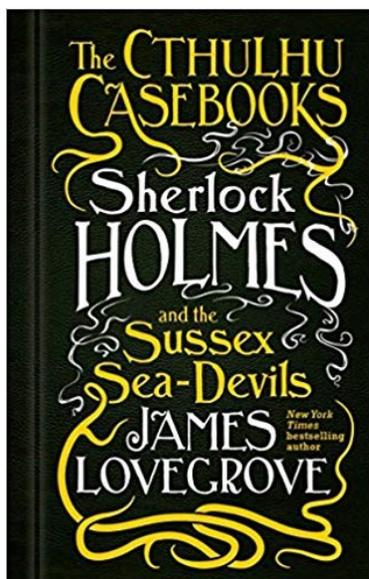
Dogs are man's best friend.

# Novels

Sherlock Holmes and the Sussex Sea-Devils by James Lovegrove

Titan Books

Review by Bob Jennings



Titan Books is a British company that produces a series of interesting comic books, many of them based on or spun off from popular television series and movies, and Titan is also the authorized publisher of a number of trade paperbacks taken from the pages of the British weekly comic 2000AD, plus they also publish trade paperback collections of popular British comic strips including Modesty Blaze and James Bond.

They also have a sub-division devoted exclusively to producing brand new stories starring Sherlock Holmes, mostly with fantasy or science fiction themes. Since the Holmes character has fallen into public domain, there has been a virtual avalanche of new material devoted to the character, some of it pretty good and a whole lot of it pretty awful.

This is the third and final novel dealing with Sherlock Holmes' battles with the Cthulhu Mythos universe created by H.P. Lovecraft. There have been recurring problems with this trilogy from the very beginning. For

openers, author Lovegrove decided to tell us that all the works of Sherlock Holmes written by Dr. John Watson are false, pure literary inventions devised to disguise the real story of Sherlock Holmes, which are encounters in which he and Watson were actually battling the minions of Cthulhu and the efforts of these Cthulhu followers to use supernatural methods to commit atrocities and crimes of unspeakable horror, which Holmes and Watson were (mostly) fortunate enuf to be able to defeat.

Lovegrove has opening framing chapters in the classical tradition, in which he relates that he, Lovegrove, is a distant relative of H.P. Lovecraft, and that a special sealed box containing some manuscripts of John Watson was forwarded to Lovecraft in the early 1930s. Those manuscripts have now come into his own hands.

I am a firm believer that when reading any book you have to Buy The Bit; that is, accept whatever set-up the author is trying to establish, and then judge the story by how well he handles it within the story framework he has established. However I had a lot of problems Buying The Bit here. We are supposed to believe this contrived story that both the Cthulhu Mythos and Sherlock Holmes were both genuine real-life things, and that the "true adventures" were about to be related thru a series of three new books based exclusively on inside info provided by Watson, handed off to H.P. Lovecraft, and now in the hands of Lovegrove.

This kind of cutsey-poo interaction with fictional characters, pretending they are real life individuals has always irked me, even when handled carefully, but in this case it is insulting and pretentious, since it automatically relegates all the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to the trash-bin as literary junk. This from an author who purports to admire the stories of Sherlock

Holmes. He wants to sweep away all the work of creating the world's most memorable and important literary detective and arrogantly places himself at the helm of the property by now vowing that his words are correct and true, while the stories by Doyle are worthless lies.

OK, personal rant over. Buying *The Bit*, in the two previous volumes Lovegrove managed to tell some pretty good stories, and the fact that he has also written four other new Sherlock Holmes adventures with science fiction or fantasy themes indicates he is dedicated to the character. I just wish that instead of the framing device he used, he could have simply had Holmes and Watson engage in a series of adventures in which they battle the supernatural Cthulhu mythos baddies without having to trash the established Holmes canon of tales in the process.

As you might expect there is a lot more action and adventure here than you might find in a pure Holmes story, but then, the writer has a whole book to fill out, while Doyle primarily dealt with short stories. However this third book is an interlocking series of what might be actually considered four individual stories linked into one common whole.

By this time, 1910, Holmes' arch enemy Professor James Moriarty has managed to master the magic of the Ancient Ones and turned himself into a living god in the Mythos universe, *The Hidden Mind R'Iluhloig*. In an effort to revenge himself on Holmes and cut off any attempt to thwart his ultimate goal, which is the domination of the entire universe including and especially the planet Earth and its human inhabitants, he murders Holmes' brother Mycroft and all the members of the Dagon Club, a hidden society that was devoted to thwarting the efforts of the Cthulhu gods and creatures to interact with human life.

This mass murder leads to a series of clues that unfold logically, but at a rapid pace, as Holmes and Watson soon find that they may be facing supernatural forces that have subverted leading political dignitaries of the German Empire. What's more, these other forces, whether directed by human beings or using human beings as mere pawns in their gigantic unseen game, want no undue publicity, especially not from a meddling private detective, or the police. Efforts to kill off the investigators lead to other clues that blaze a trail to a fantastic scheme of greed and supernatural manipulation by the newest agent of the Elder Gods.

Unfortunately in an effort to wrap up all the loose ends created by this volume's set-up and to wrap up the entire plot as established in the previous two books, Lovegrove has sacrificed good story telling for long dissertations and conversations that do not necessarily connect well with the overall story. In too many instances the interconnection with the events is flimsy.

Holmes' deductions are often trite, and Lovegrove is also careless in his own story telling. For example, in a final segment of the adventure, Holmes and Watson are captives of R'Iluhloig and his human pawns. In the ancient mythical city of R'yleh charges of dynamite are set off. The author has Watson covering his ears with his hands, despite still being trussed up with his arms tied securely behind his back, and then, a few pages on, he has Watson pick up an object and soothe a dying human while giving him some minimal medical attention, again, despite the fact that his arms are still supposed to be tied behind him.

Unfortunately the whole book is full of these kinds of slips that a more careful writer, or an editor, would have caught immediately. The action thruout the novel seems forced and tired to me. In the end we are supposed to believe that Holmes and Watson and the Hidden Mind actually encounter the Great God Cthulhu and see him awaken. Right. No sanity points are lost during

this entire segment, altho the other humans accompanying the mission manage to get killed pretty easily.

This is a very unsatisfactory end of the series. It appeared to have been rushed in its writing, and not well thot out in its plotting. I read the book because I had read the previous two volumes and I was hoping to get a solid adventure that would reach a solid climax concluding the epic. This novel didn't deliver one. This book is a letdown, and a disappointment. I don't recommend this book to anybody, even to those who might have read the previous two novels in the series.

**The Far Shore by Glenn Damato**  
**Review by Tamara Wilhite**  
Book will be released on October 23

"We have an opportunity to begin the world over again, and to be free. We're going to Mars." – a quote from "The Far Shore".

If history is our guide, those who colonize space are more likely to be the desperate in search of resources and those fleeing oppression and death than bold, officially sanctioned explorers. This means the stories of a resource hungry world exploiting space to supply Earth are one realistic path to human colonies in space. The Mormon generation ship of "The Expanse" and the Howard Families in Heinlein's "Methuselah's Children" are the other likely route. They are willing to make the trip because it is considered worse to remain on Earth, or they are choosing likely death in the unknown over dying on Earth.

China's Sesame Credit system is a realistic tool of dystopia. The mix of incentives and punishments make it especially effective. Say the right words, live the right way, and your score goes up. Life becomes easier. Commit minor offenses, and you suffer minor privations. In the world of "The Far Shore", it has come to America along with a communistic regime implemented after the "rich" were torn down and everything is made "fair".

The words mother and father are banned, and children are considered property of the state. Parents routinely disappear, and their children might be tortured to force compliance or gain information. Don't worry – the children are reprogrammed to be OK with it.

Pregnancy without a permit is illegal, and suicide is not only encouraged but the means must be available to everyone over 14. It is a very maternal dystopia. For example, the suicide pills are in pink lamps everyone must have in their homes. The officers can't hit you, but their droids can stun you. You aren't sent for a lobotomy and/or torture but for re-education. Sterilization is routine and nearly mandatory for non-believers in the sacred state, but it is treated as a medical procedure that makes everything better.

The reader spends a third of the book in this world, learning why so many would be willing to flee it. More importantly, we learn how the resistance is carefully working within the system and seeking to escape it instead of trying to overthrow it.

Our main character, Cristina, is the daughter of a dead physicist and NASA supporter. From him, she learned the true history of the space program. She's always suffered for telling the

truth and valuing the echoes of her father's faith. Telling the truth at a critical moment in a public event, she's un-personed. She's saved by the resistance that likely saved her at risk to themselves because of her father, though she doesn't learn this until much later.

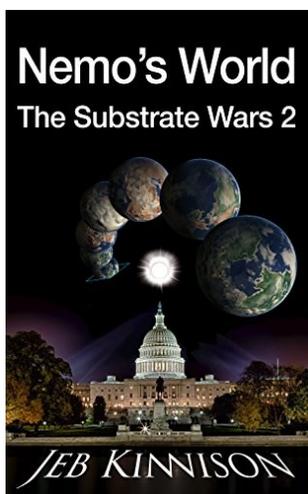
The secret space program and the third of the book involving the space flight are so detailed that I suspect one or two more books could be written based on the research involved. Or it makes the book ideal for "Analog Science Fiction and Fact" readers.

"Everyone needs to understand this now. Once you're in flight, you're on your own." – "The Far Shore"

The final third of the book is set on Mars itself. They don't just land, celebrate and start their new lives on the Far Shore of Free Mars. Things go wrong as you'd expect given decades old salvaged tech and 16 to 20 year olds who are bright and well-educated but lack experience and expert advice. I like some of the little details such as the idiot-proof nuclear reactors that are attributed to generations of improvements in the design and 3D printers made to do nearly everything being key to their survival. There is drama, but it is realistic human drama, not the trope love triangle because that's what is expected. Note: "The Far Shore" is PG-13 due to violence and death, not sex.

I give "The Far Shore" five stars. It rivals "The Martian" in accuracy, ambition and attitude. It offers hope for humanity at all levels. I hope to see more books in what could be a series as well as further work by Damato.

### Nemo's World: The Substrate Wars 2 by Jeb Kinnison Review by Jim McCoy



Justin Smith, Steve Duong and friends are back again and this time it's WAR... err... peace. Sort of. The crew is up to no good (lots of good?) for the second time and this time they're facing off against the whole world. This one is not for the faint hearted. Kidnappings, theft (granted, of nuclear warheads and for the good of mankind) and gunfights abound, as we're brought into the world of a bunch of idealistic kids who want nothing but peace and freedom from government constraint. Nemo's World: The Substrate Wars 2 discusses some great ideas while still putting story first.

Kinnison spends quite a bit of time on the politics and diplomacy of his new world in his volume. Smith is doing a lot of work toward setting up a new interstellar government. Relationships are set up between the new planet and the existing governments of Earth. New planets are being applied for and assigned. There is a lot here. There has to be though, because this is a very political story.

The goals of the students (and that's what most of the good guys are) are laudable and they're very aware of the potential downside of the computers they have built. They can detect and destroy just about everything. They seize all of the world's nuclear weapons and hide them in space. They can destroy just about everything and Steve Duong knows all the tricks to do so. So far they haven't succumbed to the evil possibilities of their technology, at least by their standards. They're well aware of some of the potential damage that can be done with a technolo-

gy that can detect, transport and create just about everything. Even punishment of criminals is performed with an eye toward mercy. In the end, not everything works the way it was intended to, but that in and of itself makes sense.

Nuclear weapons are stolen back by the United States government. A fight breaks out on the penal planet. It's made possible by the use of replicator technology (very similar to that used in Star Trek) that wasn't meant to produce weapons. Kinnison is very well aware of what can go wrong here and he is making the point. Sometimes I wonder if he takes it far enough though.

One of the factions that is on the "Good guy" side is the Grey Tribe. They're a group of cyber-rebels who have been sought by various governments. A lot of them are also programmers. So far Steve Duong has managed to keep them from getting loose and doing something - seeking revenge against the government on a personal level? - that he doesn't want. No one seems to have gotten hold of a joystick and taken something they shouldn't have for their own enrichment. Kinnison is obviously aware of the terrible potential of a computer that can move/create just about anything but he seems to be unwilling to take the logical next step. I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. It hasn't happened yet. Equally as strange is that nothing has gone hideously wrong. With technology this new and radical I would expect more accidents.

There could be a bit less talk in this book and a bit more action as well. Granted, there are fights, assassination attempts and a potential nuking so the story is not all talk, but there are large chunks of people talking instead of doing. Even a few minutes in the computer lab with Steve Duong while he is attempting his newest innovation and worrying about a potential failure might spice things up.

For all of that though, this is a really solid story. I read through it in about two days and I really did enjoy it. I'm waiting for the next book in the series (err, well... I hope I am. I haven't heard anything from Kinnison about whether it's going to happen or not) with bated breath.

Bottom line: 4.25 out of 5 Stolen Nukes.

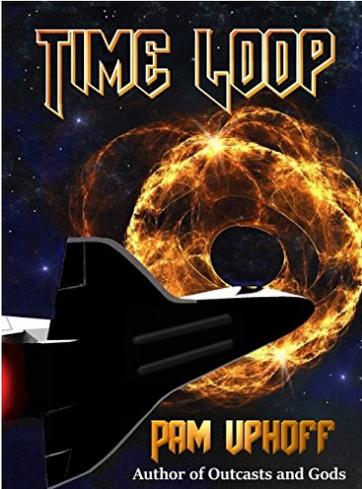
**Time Loop by Pam Uphoff**  
**Review by Pat Patterson**

For a guy who reads as much as I do, I often astound myself with my profound ignorance of certain aspects of modern culture. I haven't watched television in years, ditto with following sports teams. I don't listen to popular music, which I sometimes regret, as it means that I miss the nuances when Post-Modern Jukebox brings out a new song.

And, I haven't purchased a comic book since around 1964.

I do know that there were some plots developed, and I saw the original Superman and Spiderman and Batman movies, as well as a very few of slightly more recent films. I am utterly without a clue as to current plots, and I just don't want to watch any more Batman vs Superman, or Captain America vs Iron Man, or any of the other stuff. It's a deliberate choice; no one is advising me to do this.

HOWEVER!!!!



When I started to read "Time Loop," by Pam Uphoff, I was at first convinced that I had missed a delightful adventure series, which was being re-invented on my Kindle app. I even Googled the name of the main character (Dr. Sturm/Storm), only to find there wasn't much of a match-up with any of the characters in an existing story arc. Hating to show my ignorance, I even contacted the author, and asked if this was, in fact, a re-telling of a comic book series.

It isn't!

She just made it up, which makes it all that much better. Perhaps someone will read the book and make a series of graphic novels and movies and action figures; they certainly lend themselves to such treatment.

"No," she said, "these are really mine. I had fun coming up with different ways to destroy the Earth."

I suggested that I was tempted to do a riff on "Fifty Ways to Leave Your Lover;" her response was to point out that it wouldn't scan.

Challenge accepted.

"The problem is making it all scan," she said to me  
 "It's too hard to make a rhyme for killing off humanity."  
 "I accept the challenge," I responded to her with glee,  
 "There must be fifty ways to kill your planet."

You just SMOD attack, Jack  
 Make the sun go crazy, Maizie  
 Just uplift a cat, Matt  
 And set off a spree.

Use a great big laser, Frazier  
 Just drop a big KEW, Lou,  
 Kill 'em off with a virus, Cyrus  
 And let grey goo free.

Now, Rhymin' Simon does it much better than that, but I'm taller. And I believe it just might put a smile on the face of one or two of you who share a love of good music and good books.

Despite the plot and the super-hero names, "Time Loop" has nothing to do with a comic book series.

Semi-Mad Scientist Dr. Sturm shows up in a time machine, nestled into the airframe of a space shuttle, and attempts to stop the Earth from being destroyed. However, no matter how many times he kills off the people who appear to have the most to do with the destruction, when the clock rolls around to 2200 AD, everybody dies.

More or less by accident, he accumulates a crew. They replace the originals, who were also Semi-Mad Scientists who started the program of destruction deferral with him.

Interesting concept: Since the purpose of the travel is to have an effect on Earth, It is convenient to have the Earth be in roughly the same place, every time the ship makes a jump. This means it's a lot easier, and presumably more energy efficient, to catch up with the Earth at the same point in its orbit around the sun. (The movement of the sun through the galaxy and the galaxy through the universe are mentioned as well, but they aren't really plot points.) That means that it's relatively easy to go from January 1, 2010, to January 1, 1950, for example, but not so easy to go from January 1 to July 1.

Different positions in the orbit, right?

Here's how to deal with the Grandfather Paradox: HA HA HA HA HA! NOT TELLING!

Get this one, you won't regret it!

### The Golden Horde by Chris Kennedy Review by Pat Patterson



It's extremely rare for me to review multiple works out of the same series in a short period of time.

I can only think of one other time I've done that, and that was when I read David Pascoe's Volumes 2 - 6 of "Tales of the Unquiet Gods" from July 2 - July 4, 2015, but those were short stories/ chapters issued later as a single book. It's well worth your time, by the way.

The reason is that there are a LOT of great authors out there, writing a LOT of great books, and it's aggravating to me that they get lost in the crowd. So, I rarely review more than two in a row from the same series or author. Except with this series: With this review, I will have done seven works in the past month. It's been GREAT! And I'm given to understand that more is on the way.

The "Golden Horde" features another great mecha battle scene (taken from the book, by the way) by Brenda Mihalko and Ricky Ryan. I was not familiar with their work prior to starting the series, but the art and lettering has been great, and the consistent approach means you can recognize a book from the series without question.

The basic storyline is that the aliens landed on Earth, once Voyager 1 left the solar system, since that qualified us as an interstellar species. They had huge technological advances to sell us; unfortunately, apart from some raw materials, we had nothing they were interested in. However, through an unfortunate series of events, they discovered we could fight, and that turned out to be a rare trait in the Galactic Union.

The fix was in at the start, though. In addition to dumping their rubbish on Earth buyers, the initiation into the Mercenary Guild turned out to be particularly brutal. Of the 100 mercenary and

military groups who went out first (known as the Alpha Contracts), only four came back. Each one of these happened to feature the image of a horse on their battle regalia, so they collectively became known as the Four Horsemen: Cartwright's Cavaliers, Asbaran Solutions, the Winged Hussars, and the Golden Horde.

Recently, each one has faced some pretty tough luck. But, as the saying goes: once is happenstance, twice is coincidence, the third time is enemy action. Since the Golden Horde is the FOURTH occurrence, there can be no doubt about the malevolence.

All of the Four Horsemen have some unusual ways of accomplishing missions, but the Golden Horde is just downright...weird. Their tradition demands that they be lead by a matriarch, who receives a vision on her deathbed, which she passes on to her successor. These visions are treated with utmost sincerity by the leadership, and their fervor communicates itself to the cadre and the troops.

The transmission of believe is facilitated by two things: the troops are recruited from orphanages, so the Horde becomes their new family, even giving them new names; and each troop is given cybernetic upgrades, so they can link with each other and their equipment through electronic telepathy.

The close-knit nature of internal relationships is contrasted with the distance the Horde keeps from everyone else. Although they will ally with other mercenary groups, they take special care to make sure they have complete control over all modifications of their equipment. They employ the best hackers in the universe to refine and protect their operating systems, and that's been working well for them.

Until they get struck with their own version of the Summerkorn Blues. He has been trained in logistics, and initially just got off track because he couldn't see the forest for the trees; he's dither on submitting the most precise report possible, until it was too late for it to make a difference. Cashiered from each of the other Horsemen, he is, somewhat inexplicably, hired to fill a critical spot in the Horde's supply team. And here, his desire to make up for his previous errors results in the greatest threat to the human race being unleashed.

Those spunky Earthmen: will they manage to muddle through? Tune in next week!

Actually, it seems as if I heard somewhere that there IS something coming out on August 10, but don't quote me on that. However, DO quote me on this: it's a most excellent series, a most excellent book, and it has some of the most interesting characters and monsters I've seen all week.

It's been a month since the worlds of the Four Horsemen exploded into my reading sphere. It was the launch of "A Fistful of Credits" at LibertyCon (which I was able to not attend, for the nth year in a row) that got my attention, and I reviewed it here on July 7.

And I was in love.

I should say, rather, that the love I already had, for military sci-fi, had found an additional object of affection. I had some prior reviewing commitments, but I immediately added "The Revelations Cycle" (for such is the name of the Horsemen series) to the queue. It SEEMS as though

I've been entirely immersed in Horse product ever since, but actually, Dear Readers, that has not been the case. I just went back and counted, and discovered that since that review of FOC, I reviewed nine works by seven different authors. They were GOOD books too, although perhaps not in the transcendent sense that Theresa is a GOOD girl.

However, it's extremely rare for me to review multiple works out of the same series in a short period of time.

## Short Stories

All In by Rajan Khanna

Lightspeed Magazine issue 112

RocketStackRank Reviews by Greg Hullender and Eric Wong

Five Stars - (Old-West Fantasy) Two men seeking a better understanding of the decks of magic cards they carry find trouble instead.

Pro: These magic cards make for quite a plot element. Quentin and Hiram have come so far, it's sad to see them fall out, but given they've lost their purpose anyway, maybe that's not such a surprise.

As far as plot threads go, Quentin simply needs a new purpose. His idea of trying to do good with the cards isn't a bad one, although, as Hiram observes, he could have done that any time.

Hiram is simply in love. He's hurt that Quentin won't make time for him to court this girl, but, given their quest is over anyway, he's tired of travelling and not willing to walk away from her.

Legrand's motive is very obvious: he wants those cards, and he doesn't want to risk his own. His scheme is a little too complex, and it ends up costing him his daughter, his cards, and his life, but it almost works.

Quentin does learn how to take someone else's cards (he takes Legrand's), but he pays a very heavy price. He loses his friendship with Hiram, who's sure to hate him now. He gives up his relationship with Rachael. And, most of all, he's lost his belief in himself.

There's plenty of tension and plenty of action. I particularly liked the twist where Legrand laughs that Quentin is out of cards, so Quentin just shoots him.

This seems very much set up for a sequel, but it's complete as it stands.

Con: In context of the story, when Hiram had Quentin trussed up and then walked off leaving him with a few cards, it destroyed my suspension of disbelief because it made no sense for Hiram to do that. Later, when we learned that was really Betty, and that this was part of Legrand's plan to get hold of Quentin and Hiram's decks both, it made more sense, but it was still a rough read.

Molecular Rage by Marie Bilodeau  
September/October Analog  
RocketStackRank Reviews by Greg Hullender and Eric Wong

Five Stars - An unlikely hero in a unique setting

(Alien SF) When Stan is late to work too many times, his mate kicks him out of the nest, but he's determined to prove it's a bug in the teleportation system. (6,433 words; Time: 21m)

Pro: Stan has his problems, but he's right that something is seriously wrong. He may have trouble getting to work on time, but he's a brilliant teleportation scheduler, and his boss really should have listened to him.

One of the pleasures of the story is the way Stan's experiences in different parts of the colony dovetail with his discoveries about the mysterious priority beam. At each step, we learn new things about the colony and the technology even as he learns more about what's going on.

Even though Stan seems to have a lot of trouble getting along with people, he really does care about people. He loved his mate, and he still pines for her. He loved his daughter, Lorna, and he's crushed when the soldiers brutalize her—and he never sees her again. It's hard not to come to like Stan, and that makes his sacrifices poignant.

Ultimately, Stan cares enough about the others in the colony that he sacrifices himself to buy them a couple of centuries to figure out what to do about what must be some sort of frozen nuclear explosion that's trapped in the teleportation beams.

And he even lives long enough to know that he succeeded, that his sacrifice paid off. In the end, that has to be enough.

Con: Stan is the only developed character in the story.

## Video

### World War Z Review by Chris Nuttall

World War Z is the most innovative zombie book I have read (it's not my favourite genre) but I had grave doubts over its adaption to the big screen. Billed as an oral history of the Zombie War, the book is really a collection of interviews with various people over the world as they fought the war. It provides a global perspective that works surprisingly well, all things considered.

The movie is very loosely based on the book. I say loosely because while there are a few ideas that made the transition from book to movie, much of it seems to have been made out of whole cloth. While the book showed a long and brutal fight against the zombie hordes, the movie showed us a solution that, although imperfect, gave the human race a chance to win. There are

other issues; in the book, Israel survives, in the movie, Israel is overrun by the zombies. I didn't expect them to do a perfect adaption – it would have been impossible – but if you're a fan of the book, there are lots of niggling little details that annoy. Why not try to show the Battle of Yonkers?

Taken on its own merits, the film isn't that bad. It starts by a sudden outbreak of zombies in a major city, with the hero and his family forced to flee as society begins to break down. (Most of the tropes from disaster movies show up within the first fifteen minutes.) Eventually, they make it to an aircraft carrier ... and there the story really starts, as the hero is sent on a world tour to try to track down the source of the outbreak. Eventually, he discovers that the zombies have a very specific weakness ...

There are definite moments, I should admit. The zombies are fast-moving monsters, rather than shambling cripples, and there are some genuinely touching moments between the hero and his family. There are moments when they form human (undead?) chains to break into homes (and Israel) and moments when they actively avoid certain humans ...

However, when it comes to adapting a well-known book, this movie fails.

### Star Trek: Deep Space Nine Review by Jim McCoy

(Warning: Spoilers will abound. I'm trying to review a whole series here. It's not going to work if I don't. If you're one of the three people on the planet who a.) want to see this series unspoiled and b.) haven't done so yet it might be a good idea to find something else to do.)

Yes, I know that Star Trek: Deep Space Nine is a seven season series and that trying to cover all of it in one blog post is freaking nuts. Nobody ever said I was sane. That much being said, I just finished watching the series last week (and I haven't finished reading Trickster Noir yet) so I thought I'd share my thoughts. And what the hey? I'm declaring this a case of authorial fiat. As the author of the blog I decided I could do this.

ST:DS9 has always been treated as the unwanted stepchild of the Trek family and, in my humble opinion, for good reason. DS9 was a damn fine show. First and foremost it was a form of entertainment, but it went hard against social issues and didn't flinch. I may not always have agreed with the way a given problem was portrayed, but that was up to the producers of the show, with some help from the actors and directors. The cast was awesome, the plot-lines epic and the special effects amazing for a TV show. The heroes were heroes. The villains were scum. Wars were waged. Lives were lost. For only the second time in the history of Trek we lost one of our main characters. (Nooo!!! Bring back Jadzia!) With all of that being said, it still didn't fit with the rest of the series.

Gene Roddenberry specifically stated that he wanted his show to be optimistic in nature. There is a need for villains in this type of a show, and he recognized that, but he wanted the main focus to be on his characters and their struggles. The Klingons, for example, showed up more often than intended. They were supposed to be used in one episode of ST:TOS and then forgotten. The Klingons show up throughout the series as do the Romulans, the Jem'Hadar, etc. The other Trek series always managed to largely avoid the questions of religion and spirituality. DS9

featured Ben Sisko, the Emissary of the Prophets of Bajor. Overall though, this is the series that brought a true war to the forefront of the Star Trek universe. This was the show with a setting that was truly dystopic, with an abused planet full of damaged people front and center, the title space station that always broke down and corruption everywhere. No other Trek series could have followed the doings of Quark, the corrupt Ferengi businessman, and Security Officer Odo quite so closely. No other Trek show featured an enemy so insidious that they could look you in the face and you wouldn't know it was them. No other Captain could have taken the actions Sisko did in "In the Pale Moonlight" and dealt with it as well. This series stepped outside of everything that was Trek and it still carried the title. Yes, I loved it. No, it wasn't Trek the way I've always thought of it.

Any Trek fan with a functioning brain cell and five minutes to think about their hobby knows that Star Trek has always been about examining social issues. Roddenberry said it himself. This show was no exception and it managed to take on a lot of themes that the other Treks didn't. DS9 featured the Dominion War and the Marquis. It had the Bajoran Resistance and the Federation/Klingon War. This was a show that could consider questions about what was appropriate in war. This was a show that examined what it would take to stop a nuclear war (rephrased as a renegade Federation officer who used biogenic weapons) and whether or not lying was acceptable in diplomacy. Casualty reports became a regular part of the show in the sixth and seventh seasons. The cost was counted. The fight raged on. It added up to an epic background. The characters took center stage and rightfully so. Good stories are, after all, about people.

As always, technology played its role. A new class of weapon was deployed. The USS Defiant debuted a new type of starship armor. Self-replicating mines were sewn. Hologuites were featured. All of its job of providing the hook that the rest of the series hung on.

From beginning to end, the series kept up the pace. DS9 was the first Trek to feature multiple story arcs throughout individual seasons. The multiple appearances of the evil slimeball Gul Dukat never disappointed as he was always an equal opponent. There was a rebellion from within the Federation. A ship full of cadets took on the Dominion solo. Kai Winn was a member of the not-so-loyal opposition and an effective balance to Sisko's religious authority as the Emissary.

In any series this long, there are going to be disappointments but they were far outweighed by the good points. Other wrinkles added fun for some while being less entertaining for others. The Ferengi come to mind in the respect. Overall though, it doesn't get much better.

I am not going to try to go over all of the characters in seven series of DS9. I'll list a few favorites though:

Odo, the security officer. A shapeshifting police officer who would have been ruthless if Sisko had left him. He lived by a code though and he seldom deviated from it.

Major Kira Nerys was the second in command of the station, a highly religious individual and a hardcore asskicker.

Jadzia Dax was the science officer and a bit quirky, being a Trill with multiple lifetimes worth of memories. She was one of Sisko's best friends and Worf's wife. She died a warrior's death at the hand of Gul Dukat.

Quark: The Ferengi bartender. A no-holds-barred capitalist. He develops a heart by the end of the series, but he never forgot the Rules of Acquisition.

I could go on but I won't. It's been a long day already. Suffice it to say that for any SF fan with a philosophical and/or spiritual side this is a must see. DS9 has caught some crap from Trek fans as well as fans of Babylon 5. It doesn't deserve any. Watch this series. It will entertain you. It will make you think. It will make you want more. And then, when it's over, it will leave you satisfied even if you feel a bit melancholy. It's worth your time.

Bottom Line: 4.9 out of 5 Wormholes

Star Trek: Deep Space 9  
Paramount, 2004

## SerCon

### L. Sprague de Camp Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph. D.  
N3F Historian

Lyon Sprague de Camp (November 27, 1907 – November 6, 2000), better known as L. Sprague de Camp, was an American writer of science fiction (SF), fantasy, and non-fiction. In a career spanning 60+ years, he wrote over 100 books, including biographies of other authors. He was a major figure in SF in the 1930s and 1940s.

#### Science Fiction

De Camp's SF shows his interest in linguistics, history, and the philosophy of science. His first published story, "The Isolinguals," appeared in *Astounding* (September, 1937), the last issue edited by F. Orlin Tremaine -- before John W. Campbell, Jr. took over. Most of de Camp's early stories were unrelated to each other, the exceptions being his popular "Johnny Black" tales about a bear with human intelligence and his "Drinkwhiskey Institute" -- tall tales involving time travel. Campbell's prozine *Unknown* was more suited to de Camp's sense of humor; he had ten novel-length stories published there (half as collaborations). De Camp insisted that his stories were meant, not for instruction or improvement, but for the amusement of his readers.

His treatment of time travel and alternate history in stories such as *Lest Darkness Fall* (1939), "The Wheels of If" (1940), "A Gun for Dinosaur" (1956), "Aristotle and the Gun" (1958), and *The Glory That Was* (1960) challenged the popular notion that history consisted of an arbitrary series of accidents. Instead, de Camp, through sound background knowledge and logical thought, systematically demonstrated how technological advances could determine the pattern of history. His display of technological determinism in historical recreation is considered his tour de force. "Lest Darkness Fall", "The Wheels of If," and "Aristotle and the Gun" have been

recognized as important works in the field of alternate history.

His most extended work was his “Viagens Interplanetias” series, set in a future where Brazil is the dominant power, particularly a sub-series of sword and planet novels set on the planet Krishna, beginning with *The Queen of Zamba*. His most influential Viagens novel was the non-Krishna work *Rogue Queen*, a tale of a hive society undermined by interstellar contact, which was one of the earliest SF novels to deal with sexual themes.

He wrote a number of lesser-known, but nonetheless significant, works that explored such topics as racism, which he considered to be more accurately described as ethnocentrism. He pointed out that no scholar comparing the merits of various ethnicities has ever sought to prove that his own ethnicity was inferior to others.

### Fantasy

De Camp was best known for his light fantasy, particularly two series written in collaboration with Fletcher Pratt, the Harold Shea stories (from 1940) and *Gavagan's Bar* (from 1950). Genre critic Floyd C. Gale in 1961 said that they “were far and away the finest team of fantasy collaborators.” De Camp and Pratt also wrote some standalone novels similar in tone to the Harold Shea stories, of which the most highly regarded is *Land of Unreason* (1942); and de Camp wrote a few more in this genre on his own.

He was also known for his sword and sorcery, a fantasy genre revived partly by his editorial work on, and continuation of, Robert E. Howard's Conan series of stories. De Camp also edited a series of fantasy anthologies that were credited with helping to spark the renaissance of heroic fantasy in the late 1960s.

In addition, de Camp created three noteworthy sword and sorcery sequences. The Pusadian series (from 1951), composed of the novel *The Tritonian Ring* and several short stories, is set in an antediluvian era similar to Howard's.

### Non-Fiction Works

De Camp wrote several non-fiction works during his career, some of them in collaboration with his wife Catherine. *Science Fiction Handbook* (Hermitage, 1953) was one of De Camp's early non-fiction books (revised edition published in 1975). His *Lovecraft: A Biography* (1975) won a World Fantasy Award in 1976. His *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers: The Makers of Heroic Fantasy* (a collective biography on the formative authors of the heroic fantasy genre), was first published in 1976 by Arkham House. He later wrote a biography of Conan's creator, Robert E. Howard, titled *Dark Valley Destiny* that was published in 1983; he was assisted on this work by his wife.

### Awards/Honors

1946 -- FPWESFC  
 1953 -- International Fantasy Award  
 1954 -- Best Related Book Retro Hugo  
 1956 -- Best Feature Writer Hugo  
 1966 -- Tricon

1969 -- Balticon 3, 1969 Open ESFA  
 1972 -- Boskone 9  
 1973 -- Pat Terry Award for Humour in SF  
 1975 -- PgHLANGE 7  
 1976 -- Lifetime Achievement Gandalf Award  
 1977 -- Lunacon 20, Philcon 1976, Forry Award  
 1979 -- Just Imagicon, Fool-Con II, SFWA Grandmaster  
 1980 -- Marcon XV  
 1981 -- URCON III, X-Con 5  
 1983 -- Balticon 17, Rivercon VIII InConJunction III, RoVaCon 8  
 1984 -- World Fantasy Convention Award  
 1987 -- LibertyCon 1  
 1989 -- First Fandom Hall of Fame  
 1990 -- 16th World Fantasy Convention, InConJunction X  
 1991 -- LibertyCon 5  
 1993 -- Conversion 10, Raymond Z. Gallun Award  
 1995 -- Sidewise Award: Lifetime Achievement  
 1996 -- LibertyCon 10  
 1997 -- 1997 Best Non-Fiction Book Hugo  
 1998 -- Pilgrim Award

### Marriage/Children

De Camp married Catherine A. Crook in 1939, and they had two sons. He and Catherine collaborated on both fiction and non-fiction works during their marriage.

### Some Conclusions

De Camp was one of the principal contributors to SF's Golden Age, and is remembered as such by many SF enthusiasts today.

Genre critic Darrell Schweitzer has written: "In de Camp's fiction human foibles and pretenses are prominently displayed, but rational, sensible types always prevail. If there is any message, it is that reason is the only effective way to solve problems. A de Camp hero never gets anywhere until he starts using his head. Then the results surprise everyone, particularly the reader."

My friends and I liked L. Sprague de Camp's work very much, especially his stories in *Astounding*. I had a first edition of *Lest Darkness Fall*, but later donated it to the library at Southwestern University where I taught during 1978 – 1990. Southwestern's library had very few SF holdings, and I felt it could use some help.

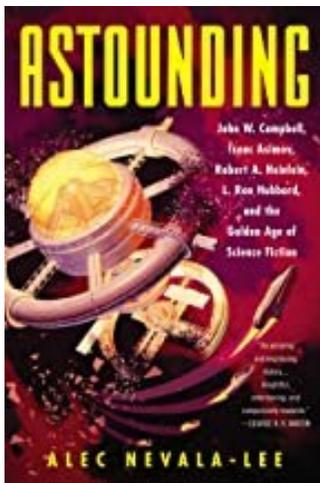
The only regret I have now is giving them a first edition of Bradbury's *Dark Carnival*. Later, when I was a dean and head of all of Southwestern's libraries (and museum and counseling center), I saw that *Dark Carnival* had been checked out so often it had to be rebound several times. So I guess I did my part in promoting Bradbury's early weird tales, at least among Southwestern's students.

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Note: In addition to the above works, various Internet sites were consulted.

**Astounding by Alec Nevala-Lee**  
Review by Kevin Trainor



In view of the recent, unfortunate team up of the #PulpRevolution crowd with the Pink Wave nudniks currently running SFWA and WSFA to take a massive dump on his legacy, this seems a good time to look back at John W. Campbell and his heavy influence on science fiction, especially during its "Golden Age" from 1940-1950, when Campbell's *Astounding Science Fiction* (ASF) was the dominant SF market. Nevala-Lee has done a marvelous job of writing a combined biography of Campbell and his three most outstanding writers, Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and L. Ron Hubbard, while setting them firmly in the context of their times and noting the contributions of other authors as varied as A.E. van Vogt and Harlan Ellison, the latter of whom could not be even remotely described as a Campbell author.

This is not always an easy book to read for someone who regarded two of these three authors as heroes; Nevala-Lee is unsparingly honest about the personal failings of all four men, and good Lord, among them they had plenty, especially Hubbard, who comes off as a liar, abusive husband, and complete mountebank at best. Still, it's important to understand how their personal flaws affected their work without succumbing to the temptation to condemn them for those flaws. In the same way, regarding Campbell himself, there's no question that some of his personality defects hurt him badly as an editor and as a husband, and it seems clear to me, at least, that his last eleven years at the helm of ASF (renamed *Analog* in 1961) were spent trolling his readers to the point where it became impossible to determine what he really thought about a particular issue.

All that aside, this is a wonderful history of science fiction, a worthy successor to Sam Moskowitz' *Seekers of Tomorrow*, which has unfortunately gone out of print. It touches to a certain

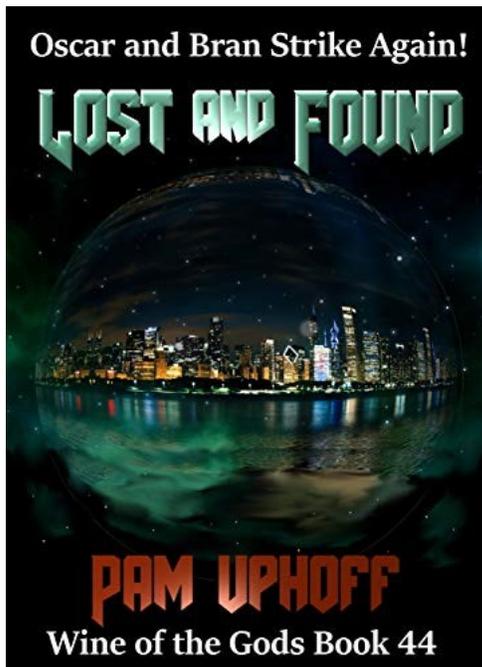
extent on SF fandom, more so in its early days than later, and on the interfaces between SF, politics, engineering, and actual science. Very much worth reading.

## Food of Famous Writers

Eat This While You Read That: Pam Uphoff

Chicken Korma

Cooking by Cedar Sanderson



When I asked Pam for a dish for the series, she came back and told me that she'd recently discovered really good Korma at a local restaurant, and she wanted to develop a recipe for it herself, but hadn't had time yet.

Sorry, Pam. I cheated.

Before I go on to explain the depths of my perfidy, I want to introduce Pam's work. The series she started with *Outcasts and Gods* is now 21 whoops, I missed some and now it's 44 volumes strong, and still growing. Granted, some of those are short stories and novellas, but it's addictive. I read them all. I love the characters, I love that she has them grow up and develop and... Yeah. It's fun. I highly recommend it. If you're looking for a little less commitment, then pick up *The Lawyers of Mars*, it's three connected novellas that are side-splittingly funny.

She asked me to develop a recipe, and instead I bought a box mix for the sauce. I do try to make everything from scratch for this blog, but... Well, take a look at this recipe. I would have to buy between 5-7 ingredients in order to make it, and they are mostly spices. While I would happily cook Indian food from scratch often, we have discovered that the First Reader is not a fan of the cuisine. So for me to stock up on the specialty spices (black cardamom, tamarind, etc.) seemed pointless. Instead, I went to the import market and looked for a packet of specific Korma spices. So it's a cheat, but not a big one, as the flavor is very close to what I've had in restaurants (the difference is that the mix was spicier. I order conservatively in the restaurant for heat level).

If your family loves Indian food, then take the time to make it according to the recipe I linked. If, like me, you will make it rarely or don't have the time to find all the ingredients and carefully toast, blend and create, then find a good simmer sauce or spice mix. If you're really in a hurry, you can buy jars of simmer sauce which only need meat and a veg added to them, then serve over rice. I preferred the packet which was the spices, and the rest of the sauce was assembled slowly to build flavors.

## Chicken Korma

### Ingredients

- Korma Spice packet
- 3-4 onions, halved and sliced
- 4 tbsp butter plus 4 tbsp butter
- 2-3 lbs chicken thighs
- 3-4 tsp minced garlic
- 2 tbsp ginger paste (I buy mine frozen now, but you can just use a food processor on fresh ginger, or use 1 tbsp dried ginger)
- 1 1/2 c plain yogurt (use Greek yogurt for a thicker sauce)

### Instructions

In the butter (use ghee if you have it) cook the onions over med-low heat until they are translucent and melty. Yes, onions will go melty if you cook them low and slow - they caramelize, and are amazingly sweet. When they get there, dump the spice packet in and mix, letting the spices awaken in the fats.



Caramelized onions covered with spices

Remove onions to a bowl. Add the second part of butter to the pan.

Turn the heat up to med-high, but keep an eye on it, you don't want the spices clinging to it to burn. Put the chicken thighs in the pan, skin-side down. Cook for a couple of minutes, then flip over and cook on the other side for a couple of minutes. Add in the garlic and ginger, moving the thighs around a bit to let the spices get into the fat.



Browning the skin first keeps it from going all limp and nasty in the sauce.

Dump the yogurt in, and the onions. Stir gently, moving the thighs to allow the sauce to mix together, then making sure the meat is mostly under the sauce. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes.



The sauce is pale, but packed with flavor.

While the sauce is cooking, put 1 cup basmati rice in the rice cooker with 1 1/2 c water. Cook on white rice setting.

If you want, add frozen peas to the sauce after 10 minutes of simmering. Don't put them in too early, they will mush.

When the sauce is done, serve over a thigh and rice in a shallow bowl. Very spicy, warm, rich, and delicious! Be aware that my spike packet, at least, had whole cloves and cardamom pods in it. They are not particularly good eats (although edible) and you will want to pick them out if you have them.

And there you have it, a dish of delectably spicy goodness, ready in almost no time, without having to trek out to the nearest Indian restaurant. The leftovers are even spicier the second day!



This dish did cement the First Reader's opinion of Indian food – it's not his cuppa tea. But like so many other things, he'll put up with it once in a while because I love it. And in return, I won't make it often since there are plenty of things we both like. But I will make it from time to time for the lush buttery onions and all the spices making a flavor explosion in my mouth.



Lounging Around by Jose Sanchez



Star Wars: Two-Headed Hungry Beastie  
by Jose Sanchez