

Tightbeam 328

January 2022



Damon Knight
Our Glorious Founder

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Some contributors have Amazon links for books they review, to be found with the review on the web; use them and they get a reward from Amazon.

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Editorial Note

Yes, it is January 2022, time for another issue of Tightbeam. Please write Letters of Comment.

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Letters of Comment

Editors:

I agree with Stephanie Souders' disesteem for the X-Men installments in her review this issue. I have often wondered if it is a healthy plotline for anything to have where wanton slaughter is portrayed, as is also so in EXTERMINATOR. Anti-heroes aren't a very good thing, and zombie assaults are, to me, unreadable. I prefer a morality in the stories I read, one which is above the rather feeble moralities that exist in Marvel's group. Nature Girl sounds psychopathic; why is this good or pardonable? Because she's up against other psychopaths? This negative or amoral literature is one I dislike, but I've been seeing few who agree with my appraisal of this sort of thing. The "avengers" of crime should not be criminals themselves, let alone what they actually are. I hope to add my approval to Ms. Souders' review.

Elsewhere in the issue, I see Lloyd Penney's statement that he's always wished he could meet Philip Jose Farmer. It's very understandable that he would want to; I've heard Farmer was a highly personable man. I have had the experience of doing an interview with him via telephone that brought across what a pleasant and interesting conversationalist he is.

... -John Thiel

Editors:

From Will Mayo's review "The Most Frightening Scene: The Tse-Tse Fly":

Perhaps the most frightening scene I ever saw in a movie was not in a horror story but was in some as-yet unknown film playing on my family's one black and white TV set in our little town of Montevallo, Alabama in the 1960s. In this film, a group of explorers is busy exploring the African jungle when one of them is taken sick by what came to be known as the mischievous tse-tse fly. And why does this tse-tse fly do but proceed to busily burrow its way through a man's brain from one ear to the other. I have no idea whether this insect ever existed in real life or was just one more mark off American imperialism (perhaps my African correspondents can fill me in on the truth of the matter), but that one scene in that one movie kept me lying awake for weeks on end in my bed that summer.

Mr. Mayo will be relieved to learn that real Tsetse Flies (*Glossina* spp.), though their bloodsucking bites do spread deadly trypanosomiasis/sleeping sickness in humans and domestic animals (keeping large parts of sub-Saharan Africa "wild" since the 1890s rinderpest apocalypse there), don't actually burrow into human flesh at any point of their life-cycle.

No, that would be the Screwworm Fly (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*), which lays its eggs in cuts or body cavities, and then the larvae tunnel through live flesh, including into the brain, including in humans (*hominivorax* literally means "man-eating").

Native to 1960s Alabama.

Though eradicated from there since--see also Raccoona Sheldon/Alice Sheldon/James Tiptree Jr.'s equally-disturbing (though Nebula-winning) "The Screwfly Solution," 1977.

Just like horsehair worms are the real-life "chestbursters" from *Alien*. Truth is grosser than fiction.

... GrayJay

Editors:

Though I've spent the past few years writing for science fiction fan magazines I've only been to one science fiction convention in my lifetime. This was a Star Trek convention late in the 1970s in Washington, DC in which a professor lectured on a future to be known by colonies in space hard at work mining asteroids. He laid out in detail how these colonies would be built, how their circular motion would simulate enough gravity to keep the colonists occupied and how these distant outposts could be filled with plants and animals to make them self sufficient. Given the way our species' spacefaring plans seem to be headed here in the 2020s, this speaker seems to have been right on the money. Damn, if I can remember that professor's name, however.

I think of the large assortment of so called "superheroes" in the media today. They're fine, but they seem hard and with no little meanness to them. Things were different for those of us who were children as late as the 1960s and 1970s. The times were a lot more innocent then. Back then, we could actually listen to a character say that he stood for "Truth, Justice And The American Way" without smirking. So

much has happened since then. So terribly much. Have we lost what it means to be a kid at all?

I am put in mind of Washington Irving's story "Rip Van Winkle" which I read as a boy some 50-odd years ago. As a child then, I thought how cool it would be to wake up one day, like Irving's man Van Winkle, and find the world utterly changed. It seemed so thrilling to me back in those heady days, to find a new time worth an adventure or two. But, as an older man, having been set apart from the world for a number of years now, I have a different view. I see news flashing across my fancy computer screen of strange plagues sweeping the earth, billionaires ferrying themselves into orbit for a look at the earth and the heavens and telescopes which may very well alter our place in the cosmos and I wonder, What kind of earth is this for me, a man, judged all his life by his fellows to be too weird to be accepted by any? Answers don't come easily. But this, I know, if this world should be as odd as all this, how boring beyond compare must be those of us judged by society to be the weird ones. I see another headline flash its way across my screen, adjust my browser and relax. Yes, Washington Irving and Rip Van Winkle would be equally unnerved by it all. I am in good company with my literary heroes. And words serve us best in the end.

...Will Mayo

Anime

2021 – An Anime Year in Review

By Jessi Silver

Happy New Year! Or, at least, I hope that this new year has the potential to be happier than the last couple have been. As many critiques as I may have about the world in general, at the very least I think I'm pretty safe in saying that the world of anime has been extremely bountiful throughout 2021.

While many writers and bloggers have been posting their ranked lists of the best (or least-best) anime from 2021, because I'm not and probably never will be particularly keen on trying to rank apples against oranges I thought I'd try to tackle this from a different angle. So instead of attempting to arbitrarily cram things into a numerical list I'd like to instead look back at some of my strongest anime memories from 2021 by general subject matter and/or category. Thus, I can continue to be wishy-washy while also managing to put together some kind of content. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

With that said, below the cut are some various memories I've put together from 2021, some related to seasonal anime in general, and others more closely related to my own experiences as an anime consumer within that time frame. If you'd like to share your own thoughts in the comments, I'd love to hear them!

In Memoriam

I think that many people would agree that 2021 was a year of loss – not only in general as we continued to try to manage the realities of the world around us, but also within this fandom we all call home. Many of these I experienced from an emotional distance, able to appreciate how those who were lost were able to contribute to and enrich the world of anime and manga. But there were others whose passing felt more personal.

I don't really watch anime dubs; as I've stated in the past I'm a former student of the Japanese language so watching anime in Japanese just feels more natural to me. But as someone who staffs a mid-sized midwestern anime convention, I'm familiar with some of the people who work within the anime dubbing sphere since they're often invited as guests of the convention. Chris Ayres was a mainstay of Anime Detour for many years, until his health declined and he was unable to travel. While I never had direct interactions with him, he was friends with several of my own friends and the image of him carrying around his "big gulp" water cup is indelibly burned into my mind from many years of passing by him in hotel hallways. He was known to be kind and friendly – the type of person who not only builds wonderful working relationships, but also makes conventions fun and memorable events that they can be at their best. I know the Anime Detour community, as well as many other anime fandom communities, will miss him greatly.

On a more personal note, perhaps one of the more shocking losses to me this year was of Osamu Kobayashi, one of anime's most unique voices. Kobayashi was always one of those animators/directors who I felt passionate about, primarily because his style was so difficult to stomach for so many anime fans. I'm the type of person who seeks after very oddball auteur stuff, and Kobayashi's animation is nothing if not that very thing. Occasionally on the receiving end of some anime fandom hate – the two instances I remember the most being his Gurren Lagann episode 4 and Dororo episode 15 contributions – I always looked forward to his solo episode efforts when I knew they were coming. I may never be successful in convincing people of the artfulness in his limited animation style, but I'll always appreciate the weird sort of beauty he was able to lend to various series. I didn't realize until recently that he'd contributed to the anthology series Rinshi!! Ekoda-chan, so when I get some time I'd like to sit down with the series and meditate on his work some more.

But perhaps the loss I've come to feel most deeply over the past several months is that of Berserk author/artist Kentarou Miura. I was awake past midnight in mid-May, scrolling Twitter as I tend to do when I can't sleep, and happened to encounter a translation of publisher Hakusensha's press release regarding Miura's death earlier that month. I gasped, spent a few seconds in shock, and then just cried. Berserk is one of those media properties that have marked important moments in my life. My ex introduced me to the 1997 anime series in the early 2000's, just as I was beginning to explore anime outside of what was easily available to me. I struggled to reconcile the violence (and sexual violence) of the story with what I felt toward the humanity of the characters. The ill-received CG anime series was released just as I was going through some big upheavals and transformations in my own life. And Miura's death came at a time where I was once again trying to navigate my identity as a person and as a writer. Berserk is a story that is many things to many people; I not only personally marvel at the artistry of the manga, which I feel is truly unmatched, but also feel deeply connected to several of the character arcs. Now we're all left to imagine how the story could have ended, and there's both a beauty and a deep sadness in that fact.

Once and Again: Sequels

2021 was a year that presented us with several anime sequels. Sequel series, especially in cases where an initial season was especially well-regarded, can sometimes be a gamble. In some cases the content is even so different (and so mangled) that the sequel series almost serves to erase the regard and goodwill of its predecessor (hello, *The Promised Neverland* Season 2...). But rather than dwell on the bad stuff, I'd much rather talk about a few sequel series that really impressed me from 2021.

For all the controversy over some of its material (something I won't attempt to minimize, but will simply say that I recognize the issues that others have stated and have chosen to accept them as problematic and forge ahead) I simply can't deny that Season 4 of *Attack on Titan* has been a trip. Handed over from Wit Studio to the perennially-troubled Studio MAPPA, I was on pins and needles hoping that the production of the series wouldn't simply collapse under the weight of its short turnaround time and other technicalities of anime production. While the look, tone, and pacing of this season are all very different than the first three, I found season 4 to be successful at presenting the elements that make *Attack on Titan* such an intriguing story. While I won't delve into specifics – if you think you might enjoy *Attack on Titan* I encourage you start from the beginning and discover it all for yourself – I think its ability to present deception, governmental corruption – and specifically the sort of tragic personal corruption that comes from injecting power and influence into a situation containing untreated emotional issues – and the deep flaws of blind militarism are second to almost none. It's a very complicated story and I can't wait to watch the conclusion this Winter.

On the other side of the “bonkers” coin is the second season of *Beastars*. As a person with latent furry tendencies, I really enjoyed the first season of the show. Its combination of world-building, cultural extrapolation, and sexuality really spoke to me in a way that I found interesting. Though the second season was released much earlier in 2021, I didn't get the chance to sit down and watch it until this Autumn, and I'm kind of glad that I waited; the “WTF?” sort of reactions that the show brought with it as it was released had time to cool and it gave me the opportunity to watch it more on its own terms. The plot of season 2 takes a bit of a left turn and the story's relationship to real life begins to disintegrate – and that's what I appreciate about it. It freed me from trying to link its plot points 1:1 with big topics like real-life racism or sexual exploration, and helped me to see that, while its themes were similar, its specif-

ics were, well, quite specific to the world it had created. And that's intriguing in-and-of itself. I can't wait to see Studio Orange's third and final season of the series, whenever that happens to drop.

The Spring Season brought with it an overabundance of great anime this year (seriously – there are still series from Spring that I want to get around to watching before the 2022 convention season ramps up again) and among those were some other great sequels.

SSSS.Dynazenon may not be a direct sequel to its predecessor SSSS.Gridman, but thematically it managed to build on that very predecessor's penchant for excellent character study via retro-styled animated tokusatsu action. Its use of visual callbacks (seriously, check out some of the amazing side-by-sides to be found online, linked via the Sakuga Blog articles below) speak to its playful echoing of various elements of Gridman, while its ensemble cast's various personal and emotional struggles cut to the heart of what I believe are the true strengths of reimagined sequels and reboots – their ability to use familiar frameworks in service of new and more complex story elements. Textual analysis aside, Dynazenon is just a really fun, cool series that doesn't necessarily require familiarity with its predecessor, but which greatly benefits from it. I highly recommend both.

And finally, the last sequel I want to devote a lot of time toward is Nomad, the sequel to 2018's Megalobox. Megalobox told the story of Joe, a boxer and undocumented immigrant, who experienced a meteoric rise to fame as not only a sports star, but as an inspirational figure to the economically and legally downtrodden people living on the fringes of society. It was a seemingly self-contained story which drew from *Ashita no Joe*, the famous 1970's boxing anime whose 50th anniversary was being celebrated by this reimagining. When Nomad was announced, I was wary; while I knew that there were criticisms of Megalobox from other fans, I found it to be a near-perfect series on its own. Once I got the opportunity to sit down with Nomad, however, it truly blew me out of the water.

Picking the story back up after several years, we rejoin Joe whose life has reached rock-bottom. Not only is this Joe's story of working through drug addiction and the loss of his found family, it's also a story of immigrants struggling with systemic racism and with a powerful woman navigating a huge (and very topical) financial and ethical quandary. Saying much more would spoil the journey, one which I'd encourage everyone to take even if the subject matter of the series sounds ill-suited to your own tastes. As good as Megalobox was to me, however, Nomad is somehow leaps and bounds better.

There were a few more honorable mentions that I don't necessarily feel compelled to write about at length, but which I also enjoyed. Laid-Back Camp season 2 was a definite light in the darkness last winter, providing some much-needed coziness content. Both sequels to Cells at Work!, its main series as well as Code Black were a lot of (educational) fun despite a few flaws. Zombie Land Saga: Revenge was also a ton of fun, with an absolutely bonkers final scene that truly fits with the ridiculous tone of the series overall. There are also some sequels I've yet to get around to; this year was truly a bountiful one!

Some Overlooked(?) Gems

There are plenty of series that I suspect will get all the press they deserve and more from other writers' end-of-year lists, so rather than dwell further on things that are already known by the fandom at large, I'd rather use my time to shine a light on some series from this year that didn't receive as much coverage. Hopefully I'll help you find some buried treasure to warm up your winter (or, to my friends in the Southern Hemisphere, something that will let you stay inside in the AC this Summer).

The first series I'd like to mention is Kiyoko in Kyoto: From the Maiko House, a cozy little slice-of-life series about two friends who travel to Kyoto to become Maiko (Geisha-in-training). Although one of them, Sumire, turns out to have a natural gift of the type of grace and ability required to shine in that line of work, Kiyoko does not. Instead, she becomes the live-in cook at the maiko house, where she and Sumire continue their friendship from within their parallel careers. The series is charming in a few different ways. It's educational in that it provides a glimpse into one of Japan's cultural art forms that's often very misunderstood outside of the country. It's also filled to the brim with delicious, seasonal foods (one of my many anime weak points), so there's a lot to learn. Finally, it's simply an approachable, chill (mostly) slice-of-life friendship story that warms the heart.

On a much more flamboyant note, who here watched and enjoyed Pretty Boy Detective Club? I feel like if it had aired in almost any other season than Spring 2021 it probably would have gotten some more coverage, but alas I feel as though it got a little bit lost in the shuffle. I truly enjoyed the show, both for its very luscious production style and dialog, as well as for its messages about the liminality of adoles-

cence and youth. Nisioisin's style of banter may be a lot to take in for some, but I enjoy its spritely, verbose playfulness. This series is just a really enjoyable, self-contained set of stories that I hope more people will take a chance on.

While I don't tend to seek out romantic anime specifically, when I find one that's unique and unusual it generally catches my interest. Despite having a bit of a large hurdle to overcome with its fairly constant onslaught of fanservice and its... idiosyncratic animation style, *The Duke of Death and His Maid* managed to charm me anyway. This story of a nobleman cursed to kill any living thing he touches and the maid who loves him becomes more and more skewed toward the supernatural as the story unfolds. It also occasionally manages to be a fairly effective musical at times, and has an entertaining holiday episode to boot. It's an odd duck, for sure, but I really enjoyed it and I'm now currently looking forward to the second season.

Favorites

"Let's talk about something/someone we like" has been a refrain among my friends and I for years, usually said during moments where we find ourselves becoming too angry or gossiping about something too fiercely. While I think it's important to speak critically about things, I also think it's useful (and results in more happiness) to spend some time talking about things we like. So in this final section I'd like to talk about a few of my favorite anime from the past year. These opinions may or may not align with collective critical consensus, but that's fine; I deeply enjoy reading these kinds of lists written by other people even if I don't entirely agree, so I hope the same is true for anyone reading my list now. I haven't had the chance to watch or finish most of the Autumn 2021 series at this point, so I'll mostly be talking about things from earlier in the year that haven't already been mentioned (one can assume that anything written about previously could just as easily be on this list as well).

If I had to choose an anime that made my heart sing this year, a good choice would be *Horimiya*. Its tale of two high school kids leading (very tame) double lives isn't unique in the slightest, but its ability to provide important glimpses into the characters' lives really set it apart from the crowd. I became quickly invested in the lives of the two leads, as well as the members of their friend group. But put most simply, I think what I fell in love with was the intense, funny, poignant relationship between the two lead characters.

If I were to name an anime that's managed to remain very front-and-center on my radar all year, it would definitely be *SK8: The Infinity*. Not only was I personally taken-in by the attractive characters, entertaining action, and emotional drama that the series presents, it's also managed to maintain a fairly healthy online fandom after-the-fact. I found Reki's personal journey to be particularly resonant, reminding me both of what I see as a personal struggle in my life as well as ways in which I can face those struggles head-on. Not even a recap episode could keep this series down, and I really, really enjoyed it.

It would be difficult to overlook the impact that *Odd Taxi* had on me this year. I just completed a 4th watch-through of the series recently, which for me is absolutely ridiculous; there are series out there that I'd love to watch at some point and yet I may never have or make the time to do so. Yet there's just something about this story of a walrus and the trouble he encounters that has absolutely fascinated me. It's a series that feels very little like most other anime, telling a story that feels more aligned with a live-action drama. And yet, I'm not sure all its elements would work in live-action, the most obvious being its use of animal characters. Yes, *Odd Taxi* truly is everything I could want in an anime – humor, uniqueness, a willingness to comment on modern culture – and now that there's a movie in the works, I kind of want to watch it all over again.

Once the second season of *Laid-Back Camp* ended, I was on the lookout for something to replace it in the warm fuzzies department. Enter *Super Cub*, a quiet tale of a girl and her motorbike that hits many of the same notes and yet stands out as its own unique entity. What sets *Super Cub* apart is its treatment of depression and loneliness, two things that might seem counterintuitive to its status as a soothing hobbyist anime. And yet, though main character Koguma has no family and begins the series with no friends, her world literally brightens when she sits astride her bike and we share in her joy at her new-found freedom.

Finally, I want to talk about one of the most confounding, poignant, obtuse, and emotionally moving series I've seen within recent memory, *Sonny Boy*. To attempt to summarize the plot of this series is folly, but at its most basic level it's the story of a high school class who's transported to an alternate di-

mension where circumstances dictate that they detach from their former lives and find a way to live in this strange new place. To try to explain much further than that would probably be futile; it's not exactly that the series itself is necessarily confusing, but more that it feels so completely personal as an expression of writer/director Shingo Natsume's philosophy and outlook that it would almost seem presumptuous and perhaps even rude to try to define that on his behalf. I'll simply say that the series moved me in ways that I still struggle to explain, and I hope that in saying so it will inspire others to follow after me.

There are probably many other things I could write about here, and I'm a little bit disappointed in myself that I haven't finished more of the Autumn 2021 series so that I'd be able to feature them here. All the same, I think this was a truly excellent year for anime and I hope that this post was able to express that sentiment properly.

What were some of your most prominent memories from anime fandom this year? Be sure to let me know in the comments!

Art

A Note Now On Mr. Bosch by Will Mayo

And there's something downright diabolical about the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. Dismissed as mere cartoons in Bosch's time, his art, featuring tortured naked humans and bird men emerging from the bowels of monsters, would go on to inspire visions through the centuries, from paintings by other masters to the sculptures of HR Giger to the horror films of today. You might say Hieronymus Bosch invented horror imagery as we know it.

Films

The Best Zombie Movies by Will Mayo

The best zombie movies I ever saw were not those that came out in the 1960s and 1970s but were those of the late 1980s and early 1990s that featured punk rock couples making out in the graveyards of another city in my country, naked and sweet, while music blared in the background as they were slowly overtaken by the living dead. I'm not sure whether these were the "Return Of The Living Dead" movies though they might've been. They made trips to the local cinema a good experience in those days

Will Mayo Reviews The Boys From Brazil

One movie that thrilled me years back was "The Boys From Brazil," starring Gregory Peck, in one of his rare roles as the bad guy, who portrays the Nazi doctor Joseph Mengele, who is revealed not to have drowned off the coast of South America after all but to be alive and well and active in developing clones of Adolf Hitler to reconquer the world. After a violent fight on the floor of his laboratory, Mengele is at last defeated by the concentration camp survivor determined to right the wrongs. Except for one unnerving matter left at film's end. All those little boy-clones scattered about the world, well, they'd be grown now, wouldn't they?

Will Mayo Reviews Flash Gordon

I think of that film, Flash Gordon, derived from the old Depression- era comic strip, that I saw around forty years ago. It depicted a football hero out to save Earth from that alien invader, Ming The Merciless. True. With its birdmen, its stilted dialogue and its racist stereotypes, it was pure camp. But those of us in the audience loved every minute of it. Notably, the soundtrack was by that old band Queen and provided my first introduction to the long gone singer Freddie Mercury. The movie, long a cult favorite, is a now a classic. I suggest you book yourself a viewing right away.

Dune (2000)

by Richard Paolinelli

Richard writes in UpstreamReviews.com

Over the past two weeks we've looked at the recent Dune adaptation as well as the original 1984 film. So, this week we'll take a look at the three-part mini-series that aired on the SYFY channel back in 2000.

When it was announced and finally released, I was excited. We'd finally get to see the full book get its due on the screen – albeit on the smaller television screen at home as opposed to the big screen at the theater – but this version would have much better graphics and would be able to cover the areas that the 1984 film just didn't have time to deal with. But, did the advantage of longer running time and superior special effects make this the best Dune adaptation? Let's see shall we.

The story

The mini-series does what the 2021 film doesn't. It introduces us to the Emperor Shaddam IV and his daughter, Princess Irulan. They are key players in Frank Herbert's original book and they get to show us why in this adaptation. Also, unlike the 2021 film, the word "jihad" is used. The mini-series stays true to the story. The Atredies are being uprooted from Caladan to Arrakis as part of the Emperor's plan to use the Harkonnens to remove a threat to his throne. Paul, the son of Duke Leto, finds himself caught up not only in the ages-old battle between the Houses, as well as the machinations of the Emperor, but also in the even-older plotting of the Bene Gessirit as he struggles to survive on Arrakis after the fall of House Atredies.

The characters

Paul is the main character of the book and the film and finds himself in the middle of much intrigue. He is dealing with the impending move of his entire House from Caladan, a water world, to Arrakis, which is about as bone dry as a world can get and still have life on its surface.

His mother and a Bene Gessirit, the Lady Jessica, has been training him in the ways of her order. His father is Duke Leto, knows he is stepping into a trap by taking control of Arrakis, but has plans of his own to thwart the schemes of both the Emperor and Leto's enemy, the Baron Harkonnen. The Duke, and Paul, lean heavily upon their Lieutenants, Gurney Halleck, Duncan Idaho and Thufir Hawat, as they take up residency on Arrakis.

The people who lived on Arrakis long before the Spice was discovered, are the Fremen. A band of desert people and fierce fighters that Leto hopes to recruit to his side in his battle against his foes. The leader is Stilgar, who allows Idaho to join his band. (My one complaint is they seem to have forgotten about Liet Kynes in the mini-series.) Chani, the girl Paul has seen in his dreams, is there when Paul and Jessica flee into the desert. Feyd Rautha and Rabban, the Baron's nephews, aid their Uncle's plans, while Feyd seems to have his own ideas on what will happen on a post-Atredies Arrakis.

The world

As with the other two adaptations, the majority of the action takes place on Arrakis, with some scenes on Caladan at the beginning, and brief scenes on Giedi Prime (the Harkonnen's homeworld), the

Imperial Palace on Kaitain, and a few scenes in space sprinkled in because this is supposed to be a space opera after all. But the sands of Arrakis, the capital city of Arrakeen and the rocky caves where the Fremmen live is where the action is and it is on full display. Sand waves working across the surface, giant sandworms slithering below. A climate so arid that special suits must be worn to remain alive out in the open. But the most important aspect of the world is the life-extending Spice Melange, the only thing that makes the planet worth fighting, and dying for.

The politics

Again, the mini-series stays in alignment with the other two adaptations. There are politics to spare in this film. The Emperor fears the rise of House Atreides that could topple him from his throne. House Harkonnen has had a centuries-long feud with the Atreides and is more than willing to play along with the Emperor's schemes, even if it means releasing their grip on the wealthiest planet in the known universe if but temporarily, in order to do in their old enemy.

As for the Atreides, they have their own code of honor, but know how to play the political game in order to advance their position and power within the Lansraad – the collection of Houses within the Empire (think of it as an unelected Senate) – and CHOAM – The Combine Honnete Ober Advancer Mercantiles – that controls economic affairs across the known universe. Toss in the long-term schemes of the Bene Gesserit – trying to create a superbeing called the Kwisatz Haderach that they can control – and the machinations of the Spacing Guild – who controls all space travel – and you wind up with everyone having their knives out for everyone else.

Content warning

There's violence, you have large-scale and small scale battles so yeah, there's violence. But aside from that, it's your basic made for TV sci-fi mini-series.

Who is it for?

Fans of sci-fi/fantasy will enjoy this adaptation. Fans of Herbert's original six books will also enjoy the series, especially as it has fewer changes from Herbert's original material than the 2021 adaptation did, and explores more of the characters than the 2021 film does.

Why watch it?

The depth of the story, thanks to the fact they stretched it out to four-and-a-half hours, makes this a must watch if only to get a fuller immersion into the Dune universe. And the CGI is much better than the 1984 film.

I give it an 8 out of 10.

Who did it better?

There's much to like and dislike with all three adaptations. I still wish we could have had the 1984 cast with 2021's director, special effects and budget (minus the blasted gender swapped Kynes).

My biggest complaint with the 2000 mini-series was, despite having some talented actors, the characters on the screen came across as 2D to me. Almost as if they were pale shades of the people they were supposed to be. Given the talent in the cast, I almost have to lay the blame for that on the director, John Harrison.

I still have to go with the 1984 film as the overall better adaptation (so far) and the 2023 sequel is going to have to really knock my socks off to change my opinion here.

Will Mayo Reviews Planet Of The Apes

I suppose the film that most haunted me in a lifetime of seeing motion pictures was the movie Planet Of The Apes that I saw in our country town in Alabama in 1967. This film concerned an astronaut (played well by Charlton Heston in his prime) that traveled to what appeared to be a faraway planet of intelligent apes and primitive, mute humans only to realize at film's end that he has instead voyaged to Earth's future. Pounding his fists in the sand as he gazes up at the partly submerged Statue of Liberty, he

shouts into the wilderness, "You blew it up. Goddamn it all, you maniacs. You finally blew it up!" This was the movie that introduced us youngsters to the Bomb, you see, and because of that our lives would be forever changed.

Will Mayo Reviews The Seventh Seal

Tonight, I think of that Ingmar Bergman movie *The Seventh Seal*. In this movie, amid great plagues and wars shaking the earth in its medieval era, a knight comes face to face with Death. He asks Death what he has come for. Death replies, "For your soul." After which, the knight tries to bargain away his Fate by way of a chess game. Death handily wins the game of chess. There follows a series of adventures including encounters with a merry band of pilgrims and a bout in jail before the knight comes to terms with his old friend Death and his compact with eternity. The journey, however, is everything. See it if you can. It is a study in the human condition.

Will Mayo Reviews Big

One movie that particularly captured my attention was the fantasy-comedy film, *Big*, that did probably more than anything to launch actor Tom Hanks's career. In this movie, no sooner does a little boy wish to be "big," in other words, a grownup, than grownup does he become, walking down the streets of his city and astounded by its wonders. And as a newfound grownup, one of the first things he does as an adult is to land a job in a toy store, manufacturing toys for little boys and girls everywhere. That and landing what would ordinarily be the girl of his dreams were it not for the fact that he remains just a little boy in a grownup man's body, full of a little boy's hopes and dreams. At some point in this tale, he misses his house with his Mom and Dad and house and dog and a little boy's life and decides to return. His girl from the toy factory follows and watches with a sad smile on her face as her man is magically transformed into a little boy in oversized clothes walking down the street. After all these years, this remains a film to see and realize the little boy and girl in all of us. Just right for all occasions.

Ghostbusters: Afterlife Review by Jason P. Hunt

<http://scifi4me.com>



I'm all at once 51 and 14 again.

Going into this, I was concerned that this attempt would be like oh so many remakes and reboots: a pale imitative parody loaded with identity politics and one-dimensional characters. It's not. And while it may be marinated in nostalgia, it's a fairly well-rendered attempt to both remind people about the originals and at the same time offer up a reset button that actually works to hand off the franchise to the next generation.

A third *Ghostbusters* movie — the 2016 edition notwithstanding or worth mentioning past this brief acknowledgement — has been something of a mythical beast for a number of years. We've known that Bill Murray was a long-standing holdout, and then with Rick Moranis' retirement and the death of Harold Ramis in 2014, the idea of another film with the original cast looked like it was gone for good.

And then...

Jason Reitman came forward with an idea to pick up the threads of the first two films and move forward with a story that bridged the gap between the original fans and current year fans. His script, co-written with Gil Kenan, expands the mythology despite dipping back into the Well of Gozer. Yes, there are story beats that are repeats from the 1984 film, but if you figure this as a trilogy, this is the Act Three Final Confrontation that gets set up in Act One. While an argument can be made that it's derivative with a repeat of several story beats in the last third of the film, it's done in a way that builds from the first



film organically, for the most part, and doesn't feel like a simple retread.

Trevor (Finn Wolfhard), Phoebe (Mckenna Grace) and Podcast (Logan Kim) in Columbia Pictures' GHOSTBUSTERS: AFTERLIFE.

I'm going to avoid spoilers as much as I can. First, this film belongs to McKenna Grace. Her turn as Phoebe, Egon's granddaughter, is a mix of both vulnerable awkward teenager and uber-smart child prodigy. You can definitely see the resemblance, even down to the frames of her glasses. It should also be noted that Phoebe is not a Mary Sue. She doesn't have magic genius powers. She makes mistakes, and some of her accomplishments come about only because she has help from ... well. Spoilers.

Finn Wolfhard delivers a passable big brother in Trevor. And he's doubtless featured so much in the marketing because of his connection to *Stranger Things*, but he's a supporting character in this story. I like that he's a gearhead, although if they've been living in New York, I'm not sure how often he'd get his hands on anything mechanical... Having said that, he also gets his turn as a socially awkward teenager when he first meets Lucky (Celeste O'Connor) at the local diner. They hit it off after a few opening missteps, but it's like that with teens.

Another breakout performer is Logan Kim as Podcast. And this is the character that brings the Ray Stantz energy, with his podcast about the paranormal and the occasional restaurant review (it really finds its voice at episode 46). For someone busting into film with only a couple of credits to his name, young Mr. Kim seems very comfortable in the role. He brings just the right amount of energy to the character without going over the top and turning it into a caricature of Ray.

As for the adults in the room... well, Paul Rudd is Paul Rudd. Finally starting to recover from Tom Cruise Perpetual Youth Syndrome™, Rudd is his usual charming self here as Gary Grooberson, the seismologist turned summer school teacher who's in the middle of nowhere to investigate the unusual earthquakes that have been occurring in Summerville, a place with no volcanic activity or proximity to a fault line. His connection with Phoebe (and why is she in summer school, anyway?) reminds me of certain teachers I had growing up. There's always one (or two) that really connect with you, that really "get it" when it comes to understanding the kids who don't quite fit in. Grooberson was probably that kid in school, and he was likely the class clown to compensate for it.

My biggest quibble is with Carrie Coon's portrayal of Callie, Trevor and Phoebe's mother. If there's any weakness in this film, it's this character. Callie is one-dimensional, and she's only got one mode until the third act. She's broke, depressed, the world is working against her, and she's pretty much given up on everything, including her kids. There's no real nuance to this character. She's bitter about being abandoned by her father — and there's absolutely no mention of her mother — and she doesn't make any effort to hide this from her kids. It's irresponsible parenting, for one, and it doesn't make her character sympathetic enough for me to care a lot about the resolution of this story thread.



Mr. Gary Grooberson (Paul Rudd) and Callie (Carrie Coon) in Columbia Pictures' GHOSTBUSTERS: AFTERLIFE.

In fact, I don't even really feel like Callie has any kind of significant relationship with her kids at all. "Don't be yourself" feels like it's a running gag between Callie and Phoebe, but it falls flat because I'm not emotionally invested in Callie.

Even when she has her (predictable) a-ha moment, I don't buy it completely. Callie feels like a cynical satire of all the single mothers populating the Disney channel in the 90's and early aughts.

As far as the story goes, a lot of people are going into this expecting a comedy. It's not really that. Nor is it a fan-service nostalgia trip. Just as the original *Ghostbusters* was a mix of genres, so too is *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*. It's at times creepy, funny, and poignant.

Those of us who were around for the first one will have a few moments of blurry vision towards the end. Reitman has peppered the film with visual and audible callbacks to the 1984 movie, but they're organic to the story — the symmetrical stacking of books to indicate the presence of a spirit, even though no one will recognize it (except for us fans pointing at the screen saying “I understand that reference” or something). The “Who're you gonna call?” line is in a scene where it actually fits and doesn't feel shoe-horned in.

The appearance of the original team, while brief, has a very emotional payoff that satisfies not only the needs of the story as a third act in a trilogy, but also gives some closure for fans of Egon Spengler and Harold Ramis. Both are treated with respect in this picture, and if you can't have Harold actually there, they've managed the next best thing with the help of actor Bob Gunton (the warden from *The Shawshank Redemption*, among other projects) and some carefully crafted camera and CGI work. We also get the setup for additional films with the post-credits scene.

All in all, while it might not be 100% perfect in every way, it's a satisfying conclusion to the trilogy, and it effectively hands the baton to a new set of Ghostbusters. Not just the kids, but the door is open to build on one of the early ideas of Ghostbusters franchises across the country. Who knows? Maybe somewhere in this universe, Dr. Erin Gilbert is waiting to answer the call...

Will Mayo Reviews Ghost Story

One of the rare instances of a movie that is better than the book it is based on is the haunting (literally!) film "Ghost Story" that my brother and I saw some forty years ago. The book is merely the story of a shapeshifter gone bad but the movie, now, is the story of a woman seeking revenge for her murder across the decades. Starring a cast of old hands at the acting craft including Fred Astaire and John Houseman, this is a tale to stay with you long after you leave the theater. You can't go wrong here.

SerCon

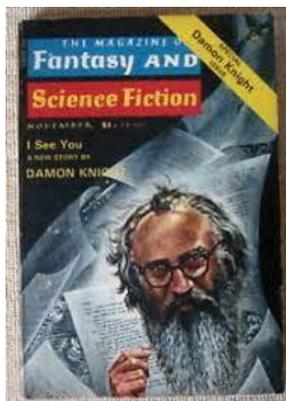
Damon Knight Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian

Damon Francis Knight (1922 - 2002) was born in Baker, Oregon; and he died in Eugene, Oregon. Both his parents were teachers, and he was their only child. He graduated from Hood River High School, Hood River, Oregon, in 1940; and attended the Salem WPA Art Center, Salem, Oregon, during 1940-1941. He was married three times, with his last marriage in 1963 to fellow science fiction (SF) writer Kate Wilhelm; and he fathered four children, including a son with Wilhelm.



Writers' Conferences

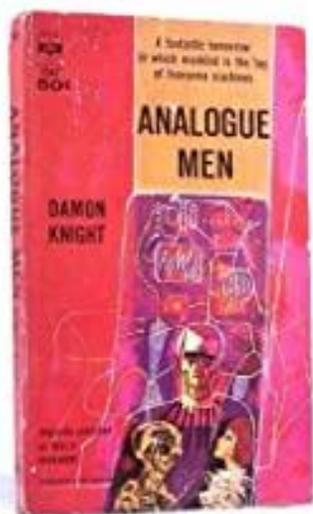
Knight was a free-lance writer and illustrator, editor, and critic for almost all of his life, and he was the founding president of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) and the founding editor of the Science Fiction Writers of America Bulletin (serving from July, 1965 until June, 1967). With fellow former Futurians, James Blish and Judith Merril, he founded the Milford Science Fiction Writers' Conference and also participated in founding the Clarion Science Fiction Writers' Workshop (1968).

Science Fiction Writing/Editing

Knight began reading SF when he was eleven, with the August-September 1933 issue of *Amazing Stories*. As a teenager he produced his own fanzine, *Snide*. This SF fanzine

led to his moving to New York in 1941 and joining the Futurians. He sold his first SF story at nineteen, began his editing career in 1943 with Popular Publication, worked for a time for a literary agency, and then returned to Popular Publications -- assisting editor Ejler Jakobsson with Super Science Stories. Knight left in 1950 to become editor of Hillman Publication's Worlds Beyond, after he had convinced the publisher to add a SF magazine to his chain. Unfortunately, the magazine lasted only three issues, despite the fact that Knight paid contributors three cents a word rather than the standard two cents being paid by others. The quality of the new stories he selected and published is attested to by the fact that two-thirds of them subsequently appeared in anthologies. Hillman was disappointed with the sales of the first issue, however, and canceled the magazine even though two other issues had been completed and were subsequently published. Knight's work on the magazine was later described as brilliant.

Knight then wrote for television, including Captain Video and His Video Rangers (in 1952). He returned to editing in 1958 on the SF prozine Worlds of If, which he left in 1959. Knight also published under the pseudonyms Donald Laverty (with James Blish), Ritter Conway, and Stuart Fleming.



Damon Knight Writing "Firsts"

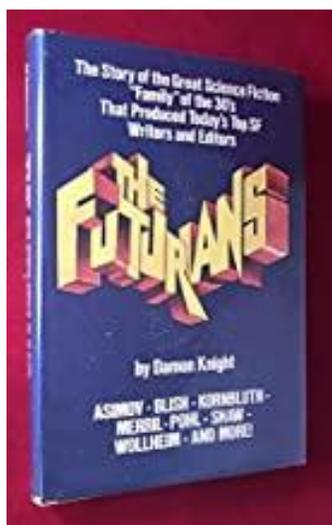
His first professional sale was the SF story "Resilience" in Stirling Science Stories (February, 1941); his first novel was Hell's Pavement (Lion, 1955) [later titled Analogue Men]; and his first collection of SF short fiction was Far Out (Simon & Schuster, 1961).

Honors/Awards

During his lifetime he received many honors and awards: Hugo (Critic), 1956; Pilgrim, 1975; Jupiter (Short Story) for "I See You" in 1977; Guest of Honor (GoH), World Science Fiction Convention, 1980 (Noreascon Two); SFWA Grand Master, 1994; Retro Hugo (Short Story) for "To Serve Man" in 2001 (story originally published in 1950/later telecast on "The Twilight Zone"; other awards, including posthumous induction into the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame in 2003 and having the SWFA Grand Master Award named after him.

Other Work

His autobiographical "Knight Piece" was published in 1975 in Hell's Cartographers, edited by Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison. In 1977 Knight provided more of his personal history when he wrote The Futurians, a tell-all book about his early days in New York with the club that had as its members many subsequent genre greats. Some members of the famous club were Isaac Asimov, Elsie Balter (Elsie Wollheim), Doris Baumgardt (Leslie Perri), James Blish, Harry Dockweiler (Dirk Wylie), David A. Kyle, Judith Grossman (Judith Merrill), Frederik Pohl, Robert W. Lowndes, Virginia Kidd, Richard Wilson, John B. Michel, Cyril Kornbluth, Larry T. Shaw, Donald A. Wollheim, and Jack Rubinson (Jack Robins).

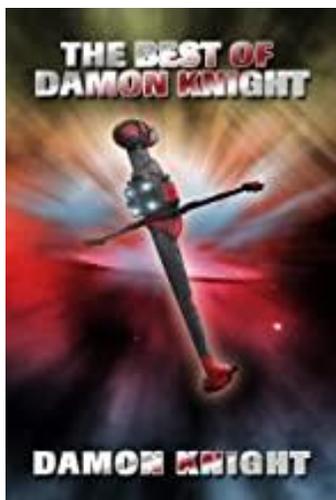


Anthologies

Some of Knight's anthologies are among the best ever produced, and include the Orbit series of original anthologies (beginning 1966) [credited with establishing the original publication of short SF in books rather than in magazines], the Nebula Award series (beginning 1965), A Century of Science Fiction (1962), First Flight (1963), Tomorrow X 4 (1964), A Century of Great Short Science Fiction Novels (1964), The Dark Side (1965), 13 French Science-Fiction Stories (1965) [Knight translated a number of French science fiction stories into English], Beyond Tomorrow (1965), The Shape of Things (1965), Worlds to Come (1967), One Hundred Years of Science Fiction (1968), Toward Infinity (1968), The Metal Smile (1968), The Golden Road (1974), and The Clarion Awards (1984).

Non-Fiction Works

His In Search of Wonder (1956; revised edition, 1967), an award-winning collection



of essays/book reviews, is a critical yet constructive study of the field. Some of his other genre-related non-fiction works include *Charles Fort, Prophet of the Unexplained* (1970) and *Creating Short Fiction* (1981/revised edition, 1997). Knight also edited *Turning Points: Essays on the Art of Science Fiction* (1977).

His early SF novels were *The People Maker* (1959) [later titled *A For Anything*], *Masters of Evolution* (1959), *Beyond the Barrier* (1964), *The Rithian Terror* (1965), and *Mind Switch* (1965) [later titled *The Other Foot*]. *The Best of Damon Knight*, a collection of his short fiction, with an introduction by Barry Malzberg, appeared in 1976.

Other Honors

The November 1976 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* (#306) was a special Damon Knight issue, with a story by Knight, a bibliography of his work up to that time by Vincent Miranda and “an appreciation” of Knight by Theodore Sturgeon. NESFA published *Better Than One* (1980), a book of stories and poems with Knight's wife, Kate Wilhelm -- honoring their appearance as GoHs at

the 1980 Worldcon -- and *Late Knight Edition* (NESFA Press, 1985), a book honoring his GoH appearance at Boskone 22.

Later Works

Other Knight books were the novels *CV* (1985), a sequel, *The Observers* (1989), *A Reasonable World* (1991), and *Why Do Birds?* (1992); and the short story collection *One Side Laughing* (1991). In 1995 he edited the all-fiction issue (#18) of the genre magazine *Pulphouse*. A more recent novel by Knight was *Humpty Dumpty: An Oval* (1996). A new edition of *Nebula Awards One*, edited by Knight and originally published in 1966, appeared in 2001 [dust jacket art by Frank R. Paul]. A small chapbook, *Faking Out the Reader*, was published in 1991 by *Pulphouse*; his final book, *Will the Real Hieronymus Bosch Please Stand Up?*, has been available for reading on the Internet.

Some Conclusions

The third issue of the fanzine *Fanhstory*, dated April 1956, was devoted to Knight and his work. “All in a Knight's Work” by Blish appeared in *Speculation* 29 (1971). Knight was interviewed in the March 1972 issue (#34) of the fanzine *Luna Monthly*, and in *Eternity Science Fiction* #4 (February 1975). Over the years he has been featured in several issues of *The National Fantasy Fan*. The Knight Manuscript Collection is held at the George Arents Research Library, Manuscript Division, Syracuse University.

A famous quote from Knight: “Have done or tried to do everything there is to be done in SF except publish. Illustration was the hardest and least paid, anthologies the easiest and pays best.”

Of course, in addition to all the accomplishments listed above, Knight is also credited with founding the National Fantasy Fan Federation (NFFF, N3F), whose 80th anniversary was celebrated last year. All SF/fantasy fans should be grateful to him for this particular accomplishment.

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

Short Stories

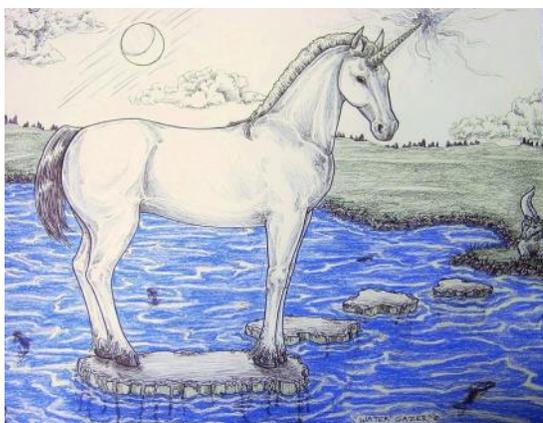
Will Mayo Reviews Stephen Vincent Benet's The Devil And Daniel Webster

Among the books I enjoyed in my boyhood around 50 years ago was nineteenth century author Stephen Vincent Benet's story, "The Devil And Daniel Webster," in which noted attorney Webster was so gifted in his oratory that he was able to talk the Devil out of the taking of a soul. After all these years, this brief account stays with me. After all, while the Devil may have a silver tongue there are some in my country who can surely best him in an ordeal of words. Daniel Webster is only one of many in these parts blessed with the gift of gab.

Television

Will Mayo Reviews The Addams Family

It's been years - well over fifty years - but I can remember how I first took delight in Charles Addams's comic strip and TV show, The Addams Family. Filled as it was with near-murder, mayhem and comedy - the kind of stuff a kid like myself could relate to - and starring the lovely Carolyn Jones as



Water Gazer by Angela K. Scott

Morticia Addams in her spooky black dress - "Normality is a relative thing," Morticia would say amid kisses from her husband Gomez, "what is normal to the spider is deadly to the fly" - and including her daughter Wednesday Addams and Uncle Fester and Cousin It, this gave me something to look forward to in my weekday afternoons. The show and comic strip were, as a whole, inspired by an equally spooky house with its spiked iron fences and Victorian architecture, that creator Charles Addams passed as a boy while growing up in his country town and would over 20 years later inspire a couple of movies starring Raoul Julia and Angelica Huston and featuring Christina Ricca as Wednesday Addams, but there's still nothing like the original comic strip and TV series. As for the house that inspired young Charles Addams, well, judge for yourself. It still stands. As for what goes on inside, no one can say. No, not yet.

And Tales Of A Mirror Earth Review by Will Mayo

And there was that movie I saw late one night on television around forty years ago - damn if I can remember the name of it - in which an astronaut travels to the far side of the sun and discovers a mirror Earth. And like all mirror images, everything on this earth is seemingly backwards from the so called real Earth, with the heart and other organs of each man and woman in the opposite places of where they would be on the astronaut's home planet. After familiarizing himself with life on this mirror Earth, the explorer hopes to return home again. But can he? Ah, there's the gist of it. Tune in, if you dare, and see the action for yourself.

Food of Famous Authors

Chicken Enchilada Casserole by Tedd Roberts

By Cedar Sanderson

In with the traditional novel-length writers, I've sprinkled a few folks who are more difficult to stuff into a pigeonhole. This man is certainly not a person you can define with a single role. Or sentence. Renowned scientist, science fiction fan, and author of short stories and numerous science articles related to science fiction topics, Tedd Roberts is also the man of many names.

You can find his fascinating science articles at Baen.com, in easily downloadable-to-ereader formats, perfect for contemplation while cooking and eating up his delicious dinner recipe. Food for thought and the body! For his short fiction, you may have to wait, as the latest story is coming in June inside the Black Tide Rising anthology (set in the very best zombie universe created by John Ringo). So what's your fancy? Putting the Science in Science Fiction? Growing organs outside the body? A Trans-lunar laboratory? Brain Implants? Are we wired differently? Once you have that, let's get cooking!

Speaker – I did mention he's the man of many names? The one I know best is Speaker to Lab Animals. Anyway, Speaker sent me a family recipe to cook up and tantalize the readers into trying it themselves.

Chicken Enchilada Casserole It's a colorful dish, and a delicious one.

1 whole chicken or 6 chicken breasts – boiled, de-boned and chopped into small (1/2 inch) cubes
 2 small tomatoes, chopped,
 1 pkg of flour tortillas
 1 small to medium onion, chopped
 1 clove of garlic, minced
 1/2 stick of margarine or butter
 1 jalapeno or green chile pepper, chopped
 1 cup of mushrooms, chopped
 1/2 bell pepper, chopped
 1 can Campbell's condensed Cream of Chicken soup
 1 cup chicken broth (from boiling) or 1 cup water with 1 cube chicken bouillon)
 8 oz Monterrey Jack cheese, grated
 4 oz Colby/Jack cheese, grated
 1 tsp cilantro
 1/2 tsp cumin
 1/8 tsp salt

Pre-heat oven to 300°.

Chicken should be fully cooked before preparing casserole – boil whole chicken or chicken breasts, or microwave boneless chicken breasts (save 1 cup or broth for the “salsa”).

Saute the vegetables until softened.

Salsa: Saute onions, garlic, bell peppers, and mushrooms in butter or margarine. Add tomatoes, chilies, spices, and chicken broth. Cook until well-blended, and liquid thickens, but do not boil off all of the

liquid..

All the sauce cooking down together – a great way to develop and fully blend flavors.

Grease 9" x 13" glass deep casserole dish, layer bottom with a double layer of tortillas (whole or cut into triangles). Layer with one-half of the chicken, condensed "Cream" soup(s) (but not the Pepper Jack soup), salsa, and 4 oz. Monterrey Jack or Mexican shredded cheese. Top with a single layer of tortillas, then layer with remaining chicken, condensed "Cream" soup(s), salsa, and 4 oz. Monterrey Jack or Mexican shredded cheese. Top with a double layer of tortillas.

The tortillas fit beautifully into my cast iron dutch oven.

Layer ingredients into the dutch oven before baking.

Leave the top dry. Bake for 30 minutes @ 300°, or until top is very lightly browned. Remove from oven, top with 4 oz. shredded Colby/Jack cheese and bake for 15 minutes or until cheese is bubbly.

Cheese! We love cheese *whisker twitch*

Cedar's notes: I wasn't at all sure about making this with flour tortillas, I have never had enchiladas using flour – always corn tortillas. If – the First Reader says when! – I make this again, we will use corn tortillas which soften up when cooked with liquids. The flour tortillas were very chewy. But the flavor was delicious, so it didn't matter.

I served this with chopped fresh tomato and the other half of the bell pepper. They added a nice bit of crunch and flavor to the rich, creamy casserole. The dish is spicy but not very spicy – slightly less than medium, rating by store-brand salsas.

Chicken enchilada

The First Reader's comment was that it's very good. Good enough he didn't even mind he was eating chicken.





UFO and Trees
Jose Sanchez