

Game of Thrones was just a book series before some executive at HBO stuck their neck out. Sword of Truth/Legend of the Seeker was just a book series before it was a show. Ditto The Expanse. I've not read or watched the Sookie Stackhouse stuff but I know a lot of people who are fans. (Uhh... I would imagine there's at least one Charlaine Harris fan here. What's the first book?) All have done well for their respective providers. So, my message to executives at Hollywood studios is as follows:

GROW A PAIR!

(And for the record, women have a pair two. It's just up a bit higher on the chest.)

Stop being scared of taking a risk on a new property. Yes, I know that you need security. I have kids of my own and I need a roof over my head too. There's an old saying though: Great risk equals great reward. It may not be cheap to license Honor Harrington, but I bet it would cost less than purchasing the rights to Star Wars. You'd probably piss less people off in the process, too, and angry people are potentially lost sources of revenue. Don't forget that.

Give us new stuff that is actually new. There's no need to rehash old crap for the forty-third time when we can introduce something new to the world. If it's done right, people will eat it up. I'll be first in line.

And if you go to [jimbofffreviews.blogspot.com](http://jimbofffreviews.blogspot.com) he provides links to things related to various properties mentioned in his reviews. If you click one of the links and buy literally anything from Amazon he gets a small percentage at no extra cost to you.

## Thunderbirds Are (Finally) Go Review by Chris Nuttall



Like most people who grew up with Thunderbirds, I went into the movie studio to watch the live-action movie with a great deal of anticipation ... and left, shortly afterwards, feeling that I would rather sit through a re-show of The Phantom Menace than the Thunderbirds movie. That should give you some idea of just how appallingly bad the live-action movie actually was. The handful of good moments were completely ruined by a set of child-stars and a plot that talked down to children and insulted adults.

Yes, folks; Jonathan Frakes would have gotten away with it if it wasn't for those meddling kids.

So I was both pleased and worried to hear that a new series of Thunderbirds, Thunderbirds are Go, was on the way. On one hand, it could hardly be worse than the movie; on the other, remakes of older TV shows have a history of either failing to grasp the underlying ethos of the show (V) or trying to rely more on special effects than good storytelling. (nBSG, also some Doctor Who and Star Trek: Enterprise.) The first handful of trailers looked promising enough for me to devote some time to watching the first six episodes of Thunderbirds Are Go.

Overall, it isn't actually a bad show.

For those of you who have never heard of Thunderbirds, the setting is quite simple. An incredibly-wealthy family, the Tracy Brothers, run International Rescue, a NGO that is dedicated to saving lives around the globe. The Thunderbirds themselves are five mighty machines – in some ways, they're the true stars of the show (par for the course with Gerry Anderson) – each of which has one of the Tracy Brothers to fly it. From their island base, the Tracy Brothers can fly around the globe and bring their array of smaller machines to bear to rescue people in trouble. They are assisted on this mission by Lady Penelope, their chief agent; Kayo (Tin-Tin in the original series), a covert operative; Brains, a genius responsible for most of the Thunderbirds and Grandma Tracy. Jeff Tracy, the head of IR, is apparently missing, having vanished some time before the show takes place. This may be the fault of the Hood, a master criminal with a talent for disguise and zany schemes.

This has merited some adaption. John Tracy, whose role in the original series was quite limited, is effectively mission coordinator from Thunderbird 5; Kayo, whose predecessor was often a literal china doll, is a kick-ass secret agent (and secretly the Hood's niece); Grandma Tracy, who rarely appeared in the original series, serves as the heart of the team (and apparently a ghastly cook.) All three adoptions work surprisingly well; in the case of the latter, she neatly avoids being both a butt monkey and a hackneyed cool old lady. I honestly wasn't sold on Grandma until the very end of the first episode, where she stops trying to feed the boys various repulsive dishes and offers genuinely good advice to Kayo.

The depiction of the Thunderbirds themselves is a mixed bag. On one hand, the CGI can do things that Anderson's models couldn't hope to do; on the other, the gritty realism of the first set of models is simply missing. Thunderbird Two, in particular, suffers badly from this. However, overall, I would be forced to rate it as a success, as just about everything is drawn from the original series.

(This does cause a problem; episodes have a habit of repeating the launch sequences time and time again, which eats up the minutes.)

The first episode (Ring of Fire) is hampered somewhat by the need to introduce all of the Thunderbirds and their pilots. There's a surprising amount of exposition – balanced by a handful of moments of humour – and each of the main characters gets to do something to move the plot along. However, it also introduces the Hood ... and while he comes across as an effective villain, he also comes across as a lunatic. His grand plan to trigger earthquakes will cause an economic crash that will render the ransom money he wants to be paid worthless. But, overall, it's a good introduction.

Space Race manages to do something I would have considered to be impossible and completely reverse my opinion of Alan Tracy. His debut made him out to be a teenager (he's certainly the youngest of the brothers) and while he played a major role in saving the day, I didn't like him. This episode, however, shows why he's actually a great character; thrust into making a choice between risking his life and letting innocents die, he risks his life without hesitation. Lady Penelope and Parker serve as the B-Plot, hunting for information Alan needs to save his life and that of countless others.

Crosscut is hampered by an anti-nuclear message that is considerably out of place (unless something replaced nuclear power in the years between now and then.) Scott Tracy is sent to an

abandoned uranium mine, where someone is stuck in the mine shaft ... and runs into a considerable amount of trouble trying to escape. He also slips up quite badly; it takes him far longer than it should to realise that there actually was someone in the mine and it could have ended badly. Sadly, the teaser at the end has the Hood pretending to be Darth Vader and letting out a big NOOOOO ...

Thankfully, Fireflash returns the Hood to his status as a major villain. This time, the focus is largely on Kayo, who is travelling on the titular aircraft when it is hijacked by the Hood. He does get a handful of banal lines, hamming it up in no uncertain manner – “someone is trying to sabotage my sabotage” – but he’s also legitimately dangerous. Most of the episode, however, has the Tracy Brothers trying to land the aircraft without crashing and killing all the passengers. The only weak moment comes from an irritating passenger who spends all his lines hitting on Kayo.

Unplugged is easily the most ambitious episode and, in some ways, it doesn’t live up to its potential. Travelling to London on Thunderbird Two, Virgil and Grandma Tracy run into a field that deactivates electric power ... including Thunderbird Two. Surviving a crash that should have killed them, they start trying to track down the people responsible for the disaster, a group of idiots who call themselves the Luddites (and the Hood, who is secretly backing them.) Virgil points out that cutting the power will cause all sorts of disasters (planes crashing, hospitals losing power, etc) but we don’t really see them. On the other hand, it would be a more depressing episode if, no matter what they do, they couldn’t save the thousands of innocent victims.

It does centre, to some extent, on a question that bedevilled the original series. Are the Thunderbirds the true stars of the show, or is it the Tracy Brothers themselves? The original series tended towards the former, but this episode suggests – very much so – that it is the latter. Virgil feels useless, stripped of his technology, yet his inner heroism shines through and he actually manages to be an effective hero, without Thunderbird Two. Grandma smugly points out that older technology isn’t actually bad ...

... and the Luddites themselves are idiots. That much is clear. A world without technology would be a nightmare. (Read *Dies the Fire*, if you want a realistic portrayal of such a world.)

Overall, for a show meant to appeal to both children and adults, Thunderbirds are Go manages to bridge the gap fairly neatly.

Some of the changes are good, others are poor. Kayo has a great deal in common with the Black Widow of Avengers; she also has hints of a romantic entanglement with Alan, teasing him at one moment and showing physical affection the next. I thought it was odd until I saw *Space Race*; Alan can be childish and he can put his foot in his mouth, but he’s a true hero. There was something appealing about the gentle Tin-Tin; however, I suspect that modern audiences prefer a more action-orientated heroine. The Hood, on the other hand, vacillates between serving as a legitimate threat and a hammy villain for a show dedicated to children.

The missing Jeff Tracy, on the other hand, is a poor change; the series is poorer for his absence, along with Kayo’s father. There’s a great deal of back-story, I assume, that is never filled in; all we really know about his disappearance is that the Hood had something to do with it. Hopefully, these issues will be filled in, sooner or later. Thunderbirds are Go has its problems, living up to the older series. But, in many ways, I’d say it was a worthy successor.

# SerCon

## Theodore Sturgeon Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph. D. N3F Historian



Theodore Sturgeon (February 26, 1918 – May 8, 1985), born Edward Hamilton Waldo, was an American writer, primarily of science fiction (SF), fantasy (F), and horror (H). He was adopted by his step-father, whose surname was Sturgeon; and Theodore took his step-father's surname as his own.

Sturgeon was also a critic. During his writing career, he wrote approximately 400 reviews and more than 200 stories. He used the pseudonyms Frederik R. Ewing, E. Waldo Hunter, E. Hunter Waldo, and Billy Watson in his work.

Sturgeon's book, *More Than Human* (1953), won the 1954 International Fantasy Award (for SF and F) as the year's best novel and the Science Fiction Writers of America ranked his "Baby is Three" number five among the Greatest Science Fiction Novellas of All Time (up to the year 1964). Ranked by votes for all of their pre-1965 novellas, Sturgeon was second among all SF authors, behind only Robert Heinlein.

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame inducted Sturgeon in 2000, its fifth class consisting of two deceased and two living writers.

### Major Genre Novels

*The Dreaming Jewels* (1950) [aka *The Synthetic Man*]

*More Than Human* (1953) Fix-up novel of three linked novellas, the first and third written around *Baby Is Three* (*Galaxy Science Fiction*, October, 1952)

*The Cosmic Rape* (1958) Abridged version published as *To Marry Medusa*

*Venus Plus X* (1960)

*Some of Your Blood* (1961)

*Godbody* (1986) Published posthumously

### Collections

*Without Sorcery* (1948) [abridged as *Not Without Sorcery*]

*E. Pluribus Unicorn* (1953)

*A Way Home* (1955)

*Thunder and Roses* (1957)

Sturgeon is Alive and Well (1971)  
 Maturity (1979)  
 A Touch of Sturgeon (1988) Published posthumously

### Awards/Honors/Recognitions

#### Hugo Awards (8 nominations; 1 win)

1971: "Slow Sculpture" (Galaxy February 1970) — short story — winner  
 1968: Star Trek: "Amok Time" — dramatic presentation — nomination  
 1963: "When You Care, When You Love" (F&SF September 1962) — short fiction — nomination  
 1961: Venus Plus X (Pyramid) — novel — nomination  
 1961: "Need" (Beyond) — short fiction — nomination  
 1960: "The Man Who Lost the Sea" (F&SF October 1959) — short fiction — nomination  
 1956: "Who?" (Galaxy March 1955) — novelette — nomination  
 1956: "Twink" (Galaxy August 1955) — short story — nomination

#### Nebula Awards — (4 nominations; 1 win)

1974: "Case and the Dreamer" (Galaxy January 1973) — novelette — nomination  
 1971: "Slow Sculpture" (Galaxy Feb 1970) — novelette — winner  
 1970: "The Man Who Learned Loving" (F&SF October 1969) — short story — nomination  
 1968: "If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?" (Dangerous Visions) — novella — nomination

#### International Fantasy Awards — (1 nomination; 1 win)

1954: More Than Human — fiction — winner

Named for the author, The Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award is an annual award presented by the Center for the Study of Science Fiction at the University of Kansas to the author of the best short SF story published in English in the preceding calendar year. It is the short fiction counterpart of the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for Best Science Fiction Novel, awarded by the same organization.

The September, 1972, issue of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction was a Special Theodore Sturgeon issue and featured a new story by Sturgeon, critical essays about him by James Blish and Judith Merrill, a bibliography of the author by Sam Moskowitz, and even a short composition by Sturgeon's then 10-year-old son, Robin.

### Personal Life

Sturgeon was married three times, was in two other long term relationships, and fathered seven children. One of his daughters was in charge of his literary trust after his death.

The symbol of the letter Q with an arrow through it was used by Sturgeon in his signature after the mid-1970s. He also wore it as a necklace. The symbol also appears on the Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award, given by the Center for the Study of Science Fiction.



### Critical Comments

Author/critic Anthony Boucher once wrote: “Theodore Sturgeon [is] as distinctively talented a writer as any in the science fiction field today. . . .”

Thomas M. Disch: “Theodore Sturgeon’s *More Than Human* (...) is a book that even today I cannot praise highly enough.”

Sturgeon wrote about himself: “I think what I have been trying to do all these years is to investigate this matter of love, sexual and asexual.”

### Concluding Comments

In 1951, Sturgeon coined what is now known as Sturgeon's Law: “Ninety percent of [science fiction] is crud, but then, ninety percent of everything is crud.”

He claimed to have been in the room on the day that genre writer and dianetics/scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard said: “We're all wasting our time writing this hack science-fiction! You wanna make real money, you gotta start a religion!”

It’s difficult at this late date to remember just how Sturgeon was thought of by my friends and me when we were growing up and reading and collecting SF in the 1940s - 1950s. I do remember, however, that he was considered to be one of the best short story writers of the time; and I had a hardcover, first edition of his *Without Sorcery* that contained a baker’s dozen of his best short stories.

In addition, every reader of SF I knew had heard of Sturgeon’s Law; and most of them agreed with it.

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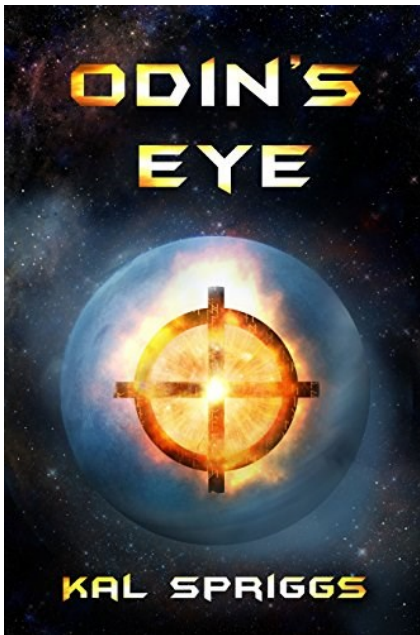
Note: In addition to the above works, various Internet sites were consulted.



**Lonely Night by Angela K. Scott**

# Food of Famous Authors

## Kal Spriggs' Spaghetti with Beers Cooking and Photography by Cedar Sanderson



For this blog series I have done lasagna, Alfredo sauce (twice) but not, previously, spaghetti. Today is that day.

Kal Spriggs writes fun space opera (I reviewed his first one here) and recently has begun to produce epic fantasy as well. I was delighted to meet him in person this last LibertyCon, even if it was a brief introduction!

The recipe is uncomplicated; his books are not. I described his writing in the first book as 'smooth as silk' but the characterizations are complex and enjoyable. I really like the cover on his latest, and the plot of this series is fascinating: an AI that rivals Big Brother in watching an entire planet, and the rogue spaceship captain bent on taking it out. So pick up a book, and let's get cooking!

The sauce bubble and fizzes when you pour the beer in, which amused me inordinately.

### Kal's Spaghetti Recipe

#### Ingredients:

Olive Oil,  
90% lean ground beef,  
tomato sauce,  
1/2 lb spaghetti noodles,  
garlic,  
basil,  
oregano,  
1 bottle newcastle brown ale (can be substituted with Guinness, Shiner, or other beer to preference)

#### Directions:

Squeeze ground beef into sphere-ish shapes, cook in pan on stove at moderate heat, using light amount of olive oil and beer to keep from sticking. When meatballs are cooked, add can of tomato sauce, season with garlic, oregano, basil, and beer as needed to thin the sauce to desired consistency and add flavor. Stir sauce until properly mixed and serve with pasta of choice.



Cook noodles at same time. Add sauce and enjoy. Best enjoyed with a good beer.

Cedar's cooking notes: Beer with spaghetti? Well, ok, why not? Although I will say that this was not the right beer for this recipe. Don't get me wrong, it's a very nice beer. Drinkable, even, and I don't like beer. Sweet, fruity without being floral, it's a light and not bitter (I loathe IPAs) beverage. You really want a darker, heavier beer to put in this dish. But I had picked this up on super sale so in it went, making me feel like a witch of Macbeth "Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and caldron bubble."

The other thing I did was skip making meatballs. I'd pulled the meat from the freezer the day before and put it in the fridge, and it was still mostly frozen (a lot like being mostly dead) when I pulled it out to cook with. So the meat was browned in a cast-iron skillet just as I would usually do.

Kal doesn't include how much tomato sauce, and because we aren't fond of a runny sauce, I put in a 14 oz can of sauce, a small can (6 oz I think) of tomato paste, and all but three sips (the First Reader and I trying it) of a 12 oz bottle of beer. I also added mushrooms because the First Reader is part hobbit and believes mushrooms have a place in any meal. We served it with Parmesan cheese on top and spaghetti noodles underneath and enjoyed.

I will also note that the cherry stout I drank with this meal was excellent. The cherry was a dark, sweet flavor in addition to the natural richness of the beer. Not at all overpowering, and with the hints of chocolate you get in a stout, one of the rare beers I'd actually drink if I drank often. The flavor of the spaghetti paled beside this. I'd go back, next time, and put a dark in the sauce, and drink the light with the meal. But that's me.







*Nobility by Angela K. Scott*