

WATT'S OUT

SF&F Book Releases

THE WYRDEST LINK Terry Pratchett's Discworld Quizbook by David Langford. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2002. 120x160 mm. 289 pp. A\$22.95. On sale now. This is the second Discworld Quizbook, and by the same author. The reader needs to have read quite a lot of the Discworld novels to be able to answer most of the questions. After the success of the first quizbook (The Unseen University Challenge) fans of Pratchett's Discworld will love digging into this volume to test their knowledge. The themes of the questions this time are taken from the various guilds, organisations and societies that infest inhabit the city of Ankh-Morpork and the people who work for them. There are 75 quizzes, each with ten questions, which make up 750 questions, then there is a Bonus Answer for each of the quizzes, making up a total of 850 points that can be earned. For the avid fan of Discworld.

RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA by Arthur C. Clarke. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1973. 252 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. This is an SF Masterworks release, being number 65 in that series of the greatest SF ever written. After Project SPACEGUARD had been set up to monitor the orbits of asteroids, there had been a quiet period when nothing untoward had happened to alarm Earth. Then the SPACEGUARD radar had picked up echoes from a large object that was coming in from outside the solar system and was crossing the orbit of Jupiter. A little later it was decided to send a probe out to check it out further. That was when the whole planet's attention was fixed on the intruder. For the images of it showed a large cylinder. Amid consternation, a ship was diverted to catch up with the object and to explorer it as far as possible. The *Endeavour* approached the apparent ship – fifty kilometres long and weighing billions of tons – and proceeded to dock. What they found would join the tales of exploration that has expanded humanities horizons. Great SF and still creates a sense-of-wonder after over three decades.

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES by Ray Bradbury. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1962. 261 pp. A\$21.95. On sale now. This is the forty-ninth volume in the series Fantasy Masterworks. When the carnival train arrived in Green Town the townsfolk welcomed it as a distraction to the dismal work days. Two

boys, Jim Nightshade and Will Halloway, were determined to also enjoy the show and slipped away to see what they could. What they found was not what they were expecting, however – a world of freaks and sinister happenings that would shape their future lives. The show was called Cooger & Dark's Pandemonium Shadow Show, and it was really so – a dark reflection of life – that which turned the dark spaces in a person's soul to the light and marred it forever. Bradbury, in this novel, showed again how good a writer he is and in this, has created an enduring masterpiece. Excellent fantasy fiction.

WILDWOOD DANCING by Juliet Marillier. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2006. 370 pp. A\$16.95. On sale now. The author was born in New Zealand and now lives in Perth, W.A. The novel was written for young adults and is set in Transylvania. The plot concerns the adventures of five sisters, and a frog. It becomes apparent from early in the book that the five sisters, though confined mostly to their castle, have a way of escaping to another land through a portal. They usually do this at night so as to keep it a secret. It is when their father becomes sick and must leave the castle to spend the winter in a less harsh climate that the girls are left mostly to their own devices. However, when their cousin Cezar arrives events take a turn for the worse as their plans fall through when he finds out their secret. Marillier writes in a smooth manner and I am sure that her target audience will thoroughly enjoy this novel, as will others who like a bit of fantasy adventure.

MELISSA, QUEEN OF EVIL by Mardi McConnochie. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2006. 171 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. McConnochie is another Australian author who has a growing following for her fantasy novels. MELISSA is aimed at young adults, and the protagonist is an ordinary girl who is going to high-school. When her father returns from China with a gift for her he found in a stall – a bracelet shaped like a snake, Melissa is quite taken with it. She goes to her girlfriends place, and while there, discovers that she can not get it off – the lock has jammed. Staying there over night, her friend's brother's snake had found her and wound itself about her, giving her a fright. But it was more a "I've found you" coil rather than a hurting embrace. From then on, other strange things started to happen to her and her friends (and enemies) at school. A well-written and easy-to-read novel for those who like their fiction easily readable.

SPECIALS by Scott Westerfeld. Simon Pulse pb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2006. 372 pp. A\$12.95. On sale now. The world where Tally lived was segregated into three basic groups. At the bottom were the numerous Ugliers – basically ordinary people who have always underpinned society. The second group were the Pretties – those who had had the operation at sixteen that made them all beautiful. These lived in Pretty Town. What they didn't know was that the operation involved the creation of a change in their brains that made them docile.

The last group were the Specials, who had been created fast, super-beautiful and dangerous, whose job was to protect the Pretties and cull the Ugliers - because there was a resistance, centred in the New Smoke, that was determined to bring down the rulers. Tally had been an Ugly, then had tried out a cure for the destruction caused by the operation. Now she had been turned into a Special, and her job was: to hunt down those in the New Smoke. Fast action young adult adventure fiction. A good read.

PHANTOM by Terry Goodkind. Voyager tpb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2006. 587 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now. The second-to-last book in the Sword of Truth series. The novel opens with Kahlan Amnell arriving at an inn with three of the four Sisters who had been holding her in thrall since she had awakened with no memory other than that of knowing her name. As usual, the three Sisters create havoc in the inn, killing the innkeeper, his wife and daughter in their quest to meet up with the fourth Sister. Kahlan's husband, Richard, is looking for his wife, the only one to do so, as he is the only one who remembers her. He believes that she must discover her past or help unleash the forces of destruction. Kahlan, however, believes that if she *does* discover her past, the evil that has entered the world will possess her. As with Goodkind's other novels in this series, it is powerfully written and engrossing – an excellent read and almost impossible to put down after starting to read it.

DAUGHTER OF INDEPENDENCE by Simon Brown. TOR tpb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2006. 424 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now. The conclusion to The Chronicles of Kydan trilogy. The confrontation that had been growing between the Hamilayan empire, ruled by Empress Lerena Kevleren and the colonists who had settled the new land of Kydan, is developing to a climax. The settlers had had some time to themselves to develop their city and settlement, but now the eyes of the Empress were turned towards their growing State. Galys Valera of Kydan was desperately trying to devise a plan to keep the Hamilayan's at bay, and she thought that the documents of her lover, now dead, Kltara might harbour such a hope. First she had to find them, and she based her country's future on this faint hope. Whether this would be enough to turn the magic of Sefid back was another thing altogether. Brown has, with this volume, finished another series that will continue to satisfy his readers and expand his reputation as a writer of very readable fantasy.

DIVINE INVASIONS: A Life Of Philip K. Dick by Lawrence Sutin. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1989/2006. 352 pp incl. index. On sale now. For an author who died with most of his works out of print, and who now, twenty-four years later, has nearly all of his books in print and selling well, with quite a few of them made into movies, Dick is in a class of his own. And for an writer who had gained a reputation for taking drugs and being "off the top of his head", Dick has

created a readership who loves his novels for their insight into the reality of the human psych. The novels I consider his best – THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH; MARTIAN TIME SLIP and THE MEN IN THE HIGH CASTLE – are timeless in the way they throw light onto the human condition, shown the thoughts, often sardonic, that go through the characters heads as strange and bizarre things happen to them. This is the biography that any fans of Dick should get, to read, savour and then put into their permanent library.

WorldWar: HOMEWARD BOUND by Harry Turtledove. Hodder pb, dist in Aust by Hachette Livre. © 2005. 597 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. The continuing story of the alternate time-line where Earth was invaded in the midst of World War II by lizard-like aliens with superior technology. Unfortunately for them the human's technology borrowed a lot of theirs in the ensuing years and the aliens were fought to a standstill, though they had taken over areas of Earth. In the late 20th Century the US launched a starship to journey to the alien's homeworld, Home. On board the armed ship were three Yeagers, as well as other supporting personnel. As expected, the aliens, who called themselves the Race, were very surprised when it was discovered what the humans were attempting, but the aliens then had recalled others of the Race (plus one human who had been raised by themselves) from Earth before the slower human starship arrived. When the human ship sent down the ambassador from Earth, events started to slowly escalate, though the generations of the Race that had enjoyed superiority over other conquered races would take some time to accept that the humans might have a point wanting to be treated as equals. Excellent alternative history.

American Empire: THE VICTORIOUS OPPOSITION by Harry Turtledove. Hodder pb, dist in Aust by Hachette Livre. © 2003. 675 pp. A\$21.95. On sale now. The continuing story about the war between the North and South in North America, when the North did not win the Civil War. The other two book in this series, BLOOD AND IRON and THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD, told the story, now it is 1934, Canada is still occupied by the USA and there is an uneasy truce between it and the Confederate States of America. Jake Featherstone had just been elected President, and his supporters, many of them reminiscent of the Brownshirts of Hitler's era, were celebrating. Clarence Potter had known Featherstone when they were both in the army and did not like to think of what would soon be happening now that Featherstone had real power. The USA, and the world, would soon find out themselves what Potter had feared – that the new President loved his new found power and the conflict he could wage on those he thought had mistreated him in the past. Convincing alternate-world SF.

Settling Accounts: RETURN ENGAGEMENT by Harry Turtledove. Hodder pb, dist in Aust by Hachette Livre. © 2004. 623 pp.

A\$19.95. On sale now. The first book in the new series that continues on from American Empire: THE VICTORIOUS OPPOSITION. This book is 623 pages of small text, so the reader is getting quite a lot for their money. In the first page of this novel, Flora Blackman awoke to the sound of air-raid sirens and the thud of anti-aircraft guns. It was 1941 and it appeared that the war that had been brewing for some time between the USA and the CSA had started. Jake Featherstone had been inciting violence for some time, and his plans were about to come to fruition. For occupied Canada and the rebels in Utah the preoccupation of the USA with the invaders down south along the long front between the two nations brought renewed hope they would at last find some way to become free again... Turtledove is one of the best alternate-world authors writing, and if you have missed any of these, get them while they are still in print. Engrossing SF.

QUARK SOUP by Magdalena Ball. Picaro Press pb, avail in Aust from the publisher: PO Box 853, Warners Bay, NSW 2282. © 2006. 31 pp. A\$6. On sale now. Now this is something that you don't see very often – good hard science fiction poetry from an Australian. The thirty-one page chapbook consists of twenty-eight poems – the titles give the reader some idea of the contents: WHORL; COIL OF LIFE; QUANTUM QUIRK; MOON FOUNTAINS; VENUS RETURNS; CRACKLING PLANETS; GREEN; THE RIFT; SUNSPOT; CRUEL SUMMER; STELLAR CORPSES; GALACTIC COLLISION; EXILE; ANTIDOTE; BETELGEUSE; RED TIDE; THE RADICAL CONVERSION; THE SINGULARITY; PERSONALITY; CHILL OF TITAN; DARK MATTER; QUARK SOUP; THE GENETIC CODE; THE FADING; AURORA; SLEEP and PLANET X. This is Magdalena's first published collection of poetry, and I can confidently say that if she continues to write with this quality, it won't be her last. She mixes the ideas of science with the images and emotions of life. *Recommended*. Magdalena mentioned that there is a hardcover coming out shortly. A limited, autographed first edition is available for A\$7 postpaid anywhere in the world, while stocks last.

SCATTERED SUNS by Kevin J. Anderson. Pocket Books pb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2005. 712 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. This is Book Four of The Saga of Seven Suns. Anderson has woven quite a web of complicated plots in this series, with branches reaching from Earth to the worldforest of Theroc, to the Roamers and other alien races, and to the attacking bands of hydrogues, the force that had started the conflict and wrought havoc on the budding alliances that had been forming. With this volume, matters get worse and the author has to keep a tight rein on the complications, lest the reader lose track of what is going on. This is a problem when a series of complex novels are published a year or so apart – how to remember back twelve months to what had happened previously and who was who. Still, Anderson has written a series that involves that reader and keep them interested. At

712 pages this book makes a fulfilling meal for a reading repast.
Enthralling space opera.

OTHER CURRENT + FUTURE RELEASES:

Pan Macmillan: *POETIC RETRIBUTION FROM MARS* by Sylvester Abanteriba

HarperCollins: *DARKWITCH RISING* by Sarah Douglass
DRUID'S SWORD by Sarah Douglass
THE DROWNED WORLD by J. G. Ballard
ANCESTORS OF AVALON by Marion Zimmer Bradley
FLIGHT OF THE NIGHTHAWKS by Raymond F. Feist

Allen & Unwin: *TAU ZERO* by Poul Anderson
GRADISIL by Adam Roberts
A SCANNER DARKLY by Philip K. Dick
SUNSTORM by Arthur C. Clarke & Stephen Baxter
OLYMPUS by Dan Simmons

Bookwise: *ALIENS/PREDATOR PANEL TO PANEL* (darkhorse)
STARWARS: CLONE WARS Vol.5

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