

WATT'S OUT

SF&F Book Releases

GOING TO MARS by Brian Muirhead, Judith & Garfield Reeves-Stevens. Pocket Books softcover, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2004. 243 pp. A\$34.95. On sale now. The subtitle of this coffee table volume is "The Stories of the People Behind NASA's Mars Missions Past, Present, and Future." The book consists of eight chapters: "Six Minutes of Terror" Entry, Descent, and Landing – January 2004; "You Don't Want to Get Too Close to These Guys" Assembling the Team; "The Overarching Objective" Why Go at All?; "All the Things Than Can Go Wrong" Martian Setbacks; "A Lot to Worry About" Pathfinder Tales; "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants" Mars Exploration Roving; "The Point of Going Back" The Next Ten Years; and "It Can't Happen Soon Enough for Me" Humans on Mars. The authors lead the reader through the past explorations of Mars and the men and women behind the designing, building and sending of the interplanetary spacecraft. The text is accompanied with mostly black-and-white illustrations and photos. There are several pages of full colour photos on glossy paper of photos of Mars and some artwork. This is the book for people who want to find out more about the upcoming exploration of the red planet. The dedication opens with the word: "The first person to set foot on Mars is alive today...." A well written and easily understood volume.

STAR WARS Episode I – THE PHANTOM MENACE. Adapted by Henry Gilroy from George Lucas's original story, Pencils Rodolfo Damaggio, Inks by Al Williamson. Dark Horse Comics softcover, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 1999. 101 pp. A\$22.95. On sale now. The first chapter of any epic has to be something of an eyecatcher. The movie of *The Phantom Menace* was eagerly awaited after the release of the first three episodes some years previously, and when it was finally released there was quite wide disappointment. Darkhorse Comics are well known for their creative comics, and this volume shows that in its condensation of the movie, which as far as I can see, it follows the plot very well, and the characters are true to the film. Very well presented.

STAR WARS Episode II – ATTACK OF THE CLONES. Script Henry Gilroy, Pencils Jan Duursema, Inks Ray Kryssing. Dark Horse Comics softcover, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2002. 136 pp.

A\$29.95. On sale now. The second episode of the first Star Wars trilogy is being released by Dark Horse Comics. These graphic novels are very well presented books with glossy covers and semi-gloss interior pages. The film plot is followed quite faithfully, but naturally there is some condensation to fit it into the graphic novel length. The artwork is well executed, as are the colouring, though the lines are not as fine as in Episode I. Still, the reader will be pleased, especially with the extra pages in this book, and they will find that they will be rereading this over the years to come.

STAR WARS Episode III – REVENGE OF THE SITH. Adaption by Miles Lane, Art by Doug Wheatley, Colouring by Christopher Chuckry. Dark Horse Books softcover, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2005. 90 pp. A\$22.95. On sale now. The final episode of the first Star Wars trilogy is being released much the same time as the movie. This is the episode of Star Wars that many people have been waiting for for years – when Anakin Skywalker was turned, and Darth Vader arose. Turning a two hour movie into a ninety page graphic novel. The artists have used well known scenes throughout – eg the Emperor in his hood. The theme throughout is mainly set with the use of dark tones, and the volume set the scene for the next book in the series, with the escape of the baby Luke Skywalker. A well presented end book of a well crafted first trilogy.

SHIMMER by Kathryn Deans. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Aust. © 2005. 292 pp. A\$14.95. On sale now. When you see a new novel with a price-tag under fifteen dollars it usually means the book is aimed at the children's market. SHIMMER is the first in a series about the adventures of a troll called Grieve, and his companions as they attempt to recover a stolen artefact, the Creation Stone, which those in authority believe that Grieve had something in the hand of stealing. Grieve's companions are Colin, a young boy from our world, Pod, a talking possum, Derry, a Tracker Gnome, and Friendly, Grieve's brother. Grieve had not stolen the Stone, but some nasty fairies had, as the companions found out later. In Grieve's world fairies are, though they look like fairies are depicted in our world, in actuality quite nasty. One of the nastier ones is Bluebell, who is the power behind the FFP (Fairies For Power). Young adults and teens will find this entertaining.

BRASS MAN by Neal Asher. TOR tpb, dist in Aust by Pan Aust. © 2005. 485 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now. BRASS MAN is the sequel to GRIDLINKED. The plot continues pretty much straight after the events in the latter novel. Mr Crane has been disassembled, and his parts buried, and Skellor is planning to acquire his parts for some plan of his. Cormac is helping the government put a rein on people trying to steal the alien Jain nanotech technology that had invaded Skellor and which he had been subsequently using quite successfully. In a separate plot development on a far off technologically underdeveloped world a knight

called Anderson was hunting for dragons. Interwoven with the main plot of this novel are numerous flashbacks in time, so the reader has to be a little careful in his or her reading so as not to miss something – these flashbacks are to show by explanation the reason for events happening in the novel's present. This is successful for Asher, and helps the plot along. Good space opera.

WOKEN FURIES by Richard Morgan. Gollancz tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2005. 436 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now. Morgan has created some very readable space opera with novels such as ALTERED CARBON and MARKET FORCES. With this latest novel he again shows his style as he weaves the plot around the existence of two Takeshi Kovacs. The scene is the planet Harlan's World, and the time is after the Quellist revolution has been over for some period. The First Families are still embattled with the companies and the Yakuza, and they decide to bring a younger Kovacs out of storage to fight on their side – against an older self. The action is convoluted and fierce, and the reader will find engrossing the twists and turns as the young Kovacs tries to make sense of the world in which he has awakened. It takes some time, but eventually things start to turn his way... The problem is that there are millions of people who will be harmed if any of the big institutions have their way. Entertaining future fiction.

RIVER OF GODS by Ian McDonald. Pocket Books pb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2004. 583 pp incl Glossary. A\$21.95. On sale now. Set the year 2147, which is the celebration of India's 100th anniversary, the novel follows the careers of nine people out of India's one and a half billion as they go their way through their daily lives. The world of that India is different to that of today, of course, but the crowded conditions of today are basically doubled and the people who pass through the novel's pages are drawn fully with McDonald's pen – the scientist, journalist, designer, politician, comic, policeman and his wife, a criminal and a social misfit. The world of that age is filled in with depth by the author, and the reader can lose themselves in the oft-times offputting world where religions have mutated and politics has some strange bedfellows. An engrossing read which really needs to be savoured when you have time to finish it in one sitting.

CHANGING PLANES by Ursula Le Guin. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2003. 214 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now. A collection of stories by Le Guin that tells what happens when one is between planes at airports. The person, if they know how, can "slip away" and go elsewhere in the indeterminable wait while sitting awaiting the delayed flight. There are sixteen short stories including those published elsewhere between 1998-2002. The stories are: SITA DULIP'S METHOD; PORRIDGE ON ISLAC; THE SILENCE OF ASONU; FEELING AT HOME WITH THE HENNEBET; THE IRE OF THE VEKSI; SEASONS OF THE ANSARAC; SOCIAL DREAMING OF THE FRIN; THE ROYALS OF HEGN;

WOEFUL TALES FORMN MAHIGUL; GREAT JOY; WAKE ISLAND; THE NNA MMOY LANGUAGE; THE BUILDING; THE FLIERS OF GY; THE ISLAND OF THE IMMORTALS and CONFUSIONS OF UNI. Most of the stories are subtle satires on events and people from our own time and world, but are told with the author's customary verve. A good book to take with you travelling.

THE PRESTIGE by Christopher Priest. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2004. 360 pp. A\$24.95. On sale now. Those who read THE SEPARATION when it came out will have been looking forward to Priest's next novel. It has now been released, and the promise that the author showed in the latter novel is consummated in THE PRESTIGE. Set in both Victorian England and the present day, part of the novel is told by Andrew Westley. He is sent a how-to-do magic book by someone name Borden – which was Westley's pre-adoption name. He had always assumed that he had an identical twin, because he had always had a sense of being watched over by someone else, and once had actually sobered up when drunk when such a feeling struck when he was drunk. When Westley followed up the history behind his relative, a mystery would unfold him that would change his life forever. Priest has created another atmospheric piece that will have the reader really thinking about what the author had to say. A book I recommend for a good, deep read.

EXILES RETURN by Raymond E. Feist. Voyager tpb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2004. 356 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now. Book Three of Conclave of Shadows. The series had started out with Kaspar finding himself on the other side of the planet Midkemia after he had been deposed as the ruler of the nation of Olasko. When he had first found out where he was, he thought that it would be a difficult but not impossible task to make his way back to Olasko. It was when he tried to make arrangements to get back that he found himself in dire straits even living from day to day. He had to find companions to help him get back, something that he had shunned when he was Duke of Olasko. Kaspar was actually a member of the Conclave of Shadows, and against the Conclave was arraigned the agents of the Dark Empire, a fact he would have to accept before his plans could progress. Feist's writing style is as smooth as is usual and his fans will continue to enjoy this book as they have enjoyed the previous ones. Well-told fantasy.

THE COMPANIONS by Sheri S. Tepper. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2003. 452 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now. Tepper has written of many planets in her novels, that have given the visiting humans, whether colonists or explorers, a hard time. The planet being explored is Moss, a verdant world that seemed to be just what humans needed so as to expand. A team had been sent to do more research on the natives – named Mossen – part of whom were Paul and his sister Jewel. Paul's task was to try to decipher the Mossen's language, with

Jewel as helper. Jewel also had her own agenda. Back on Earth the extinction of animals had been proceeding with verve, and at last it had been decided that the last of the animals should be destroyed. Jewel had the hope that Moss would prove to be a haven for these animals before the cull could be carried out. What no-one knew was that Moss itself was aware, and it was deciding whether it would accept what it was beginning to think as an invasion. The print of the novel is quite small, so there is a lot packed into its 452 pages. Excellent social science fiction.

TO SAY NOTHING OF THE DOG by Connie Willis. Allen & Unwin pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1998. 575 pp. A\$22.95. On sale now. This is the Australian edition, and was released in 2005. This novel also won the 1999 Hugo Award for Best Novel. Connie Willis has been writing SF since 1971. TO SAY NOTHING OF THE DOG is the second novel in the Oxford Trilogy, what will be three stories about time travel. The first novel was DOOMSDAY BOOK, which was a serious tale of a woman who time-travelled back to do some research in the Middle Ages, at a time the Black Death would be prevalent. It won a Hugo Award – and deservedly so. In this novel the protagonist is Ned, also a time-travel researcher. As with some organisations, there is so much to do, and not that much time to do it in (pardon the pun). Ned comes back from World War 2, and is sent straight away to Victorian England. It is there that he finds himself in the midst of a mystery that he must untangle before he can return to his present. A mystery that is entangled in the fabric of time itself. Another excellent SF mystery novel that is a fitting companion to DOOMSDAY BOOK.

TANEQUIL by Terry Brooks. Simon & Schuster pb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2004. 469 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now. Book Two of The High Druid of Shannara. The story of Grianne Ohmsford continues with this second volume. She has lost contact with Penderrin, who had helped her in the past, and finds herself in the alternate world of the Forbidding. She has to wait, however, as Penderrin is on the run from a Druid who is determined to destroy them both. There are other threats to Grianne, and the combination could be enough to kill her. Terry Brooks has legions of fans who are eagerly awaiting the release of each new book. They will not be disappointed with this latest offering. Excellent fantasy.

WARLORD by Jennifer Fallon. Voyager pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2005. 631 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now. Book three of The Hythrun Chronicles. How do you pack a large trade paperback into paperback format? Make the typeface small. Apart from this, Fallon's WARLORD is an easy book to read. Being Book three, much has gone before, but the reader is given ample opportunity to catch up without losing too much concentration. The Wolfblade family is quite tightly knit, and when Maria Wolfblade's husband and court'esa are

believed killed, she is determined to avenge them and puts in place a plan to destroy Alija Eaglespike, the woman who she determines is the cause of her tragedy. Meanwhile Hythria is about to be invaded by Fardohnya, and her son, Damin Wolfblade is arranged against them, vastly outnumbered. There are other plot twists, and I am sure that Fallon's numerous readers will thoroughly enjoy this latest novel. Engrossing reading.

DYING INSIDE by Robert Silverberg. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 1972. 199 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. Selected by the publisher as an SF Masterwork, this novel is one from Silverberg's most prolific period when he wrote some of the best SF of his career. The plot is seemingly simple: David Selig was getting towards middle-age, a time when most people are settled down and looking forward to retiring. Unfortunately David didn't have a job and also had no income. He really had nothing that he could call on to bring wealth or fame, except for being a telepath. Also unfortunately, telepathy faded soon after people gained middle-age, and Selig did not have much to look forward to. In a way he was dying inside and he would have to do something fast if he was to keep hanging on the life. A very well written novel about a talent that was due to fade and leave him destitute. One of the few novels that handles psi powers intelligently.

THE TREASURED ONE by David & Leigh Eddings. Voyager pb, dist in Aust by HarperCollins. © 2004. 519 pp. A\$18.95. On sale now. The world of the Elder Gods used to be quite understandable and controllable for them. After all, they had created it. Then things grew complicated when the God Dahlane created the Dreamers. They were something like the Fates, who dreamed of the future (or a future), and the Gods lost some of their omni-potency. Then a creature called the Vlagh, who had created creatures that lived to conquer, decided to invade the human-settled south of the world of Veltan. The novel then goes on, in Eddings' unmistakable style, to tell the tale of the activities of the Gods, humans, Dreamers, and others as they tried to either live their lives in quiet, or conquer them. Another smoothly told and easily read fantasy by a master team.

BORN OF EMPIRE by Simon Brown. TOR pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2004. 511 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. Book One of The Chronicles of Kydan. Simon Brown had written both science fiction and fantasy – BORN OF EMPIRE is one of the latter. The main characters are nobles. The Empress Lerena of the Hamilayan Empire and her sister Yunara are not the best of friends, especially when Yunara is spurned by Maddyn, who in turn picks a non-titled woman to have his child. Maddyn has been picked to head a mission to cross the Deepening Sea, and when news of a revolution in Rivald reaches the court, events take a turn for the worst. Simple sword and adventure fantasy that is an easy read for a relaxing afternoon.

RIVAL'S SON by **Simon Brown**. TOR tpb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2005. 333 pp. A\$30. On sale now. Book two of The Chronicles of Kydan, and sequel to BORN OF EMPIRE. There are two plot threads – one is centred about the people of Kydan, and the Strategus Galys Valera. The times are not going well for either – the country is dividing itself and a civil war seems in the offing. There are some external threats, however, that may unite them – or make destroying the country easier. One is a prince who is bent on taking over. The other thread is in the Hamilayan Empire, where Lerena has consolidated her power and is, as Wielder of the Sefid, confident of conquering her world. The power that the Sefid evokes underlies the universe itself and Lorena believed that no-one would be able to withstand her. Valera had her worries at home, but ultimately she would have to face Lerena in battle. Smoothly written fantasy.

OTHER CURRENT + FUTURE RELEASES:

- Pan Macmillan:* CRAWL by Neil Asher
VELLUM by Hal Duncan
POWERSAT by Ben Bova
ANGEL STATIONS by Gary Gibson
MACMILLAN ESSENTIAL WORLD ATLAS
THE HIDDEN REALM by Lyn Willmott
- HarperCollins:* ASCENT by Sean Williams & Shane Dix
EXILES RETURN by Raymond F. Feist
THE LOCUS AWARDS ed by Jonathan Strahan & Charles N Brown.
BETRAYAL by Fiona McIntosh
DESTINY by Fiona McIntosh
REVENGE by Fiona McIntosh
THE YEAR'S BEST SF 10 ed Hartwell & Cramer
- Allen & Unwin:* WAS by Geoff Ryman
MOTHERSHIP by John Brosnan
ANIMA by M John Harrison
ACROSS THE WALL by Garth Nix
OLYMPOS by Dan Simmons
SUNSTORM by A. C. Clarke & Stephen Baxter
- Simon & Schuser* GOING TO MARS by Muirhead, Brian/Reeves-Stevens, Garfield
- Walker Books:* ENCYCLOPEDIA PREHISTORICA – DONOSAURS by Robert Sabuda & Matthew Reinhart
- Bookwise:* KIDS DRAW MANGA SHOUJO by Christopher Hart
ALIEN VS PREDATOR: THRILL OF THE HUNT

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