

WATT'S OUT

SF&F Book Releases

DESIGNATED TARGETS by John Birmingham. Macmillan tpb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2005. 480 pp. A\$30. On sale now.

The second in the series about a Second World War that diverged drastically when a peacekeeping fleet of 21st Century ships materialised in the Pacific in the midst of World War II. That entrance was described in WEAPONS OF CHOICE, the first volume. With the second book the world is changing more rapidly, with the Axis powers research in the new weapons accelerating and the Allies facing new threats. As with the first book, the author concentrates on the impact on people, with the social and moral aspects of the people from the future slowly changing the society they found themselves in. One of the changes not anticipated is that Japan invades Australia, and the Brisbane Line is reinforced with the forces and weapons of the Multi-National force. Some of the figures portrayed are Curtin and MacArthur in Australia, and J Edgar Hoover and Roosevelt in the USA. Then things went from bad to worse with Hitler's invasion of England and Japan taking Hawaii.

Excellent alternate history science fiction. *Highly Recommended*.

LEONARDO'S NOTEBOOKS edited by H. Anna Suh. Black Dog & Leventhal h/c, dist in Aust by Bookwise Intl. © 2004. 352 pp. A\$59.95. On sale now. It has been some time since a portfolio of Leonardo da Vinci's Notebook figures has been published. This book is divided into three sections: Beauty, Reason and Art; Observation and Order and Practical Matters. There is an Introduction to each section. Leonardo's text is illustrated by his art chosen by Suh. His handwritten Notes and scribbles are translated and appear with the artwork they were appended to. There are more than a thousand sketches and line drawings here and the reader interested in what Leonardo produced – his explorations into anatomy, painting, drawing, mechanical inventions, botany, plants and architecture – are sure to satisfy any cravings that the reader might have. A well produced and printed book, this will be an addition to any artlover's library, as well. An excellent publication.

THE WELL OF TEARS by Cecilia Dart-Thornton. TOR tpb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2005. 509 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now. This is the second book in The Crowthistle Chronicles, and includes an interactive CD of the world of Tir, showing Marshtown and Rowan Green.

The story continues from the first novel in the series, THE IRON TREE, with the orphaned Jewel together with her rescuer Eoin leaving the land of her birth and travelling to the plateau of High Darioneth. There they hope to gain some respite, but there are various complications, including the wights who lived there. It was also there that Jewel heard that the stronghold the Dome of Strang was no longer guarded. This fortress was where her father's father was reputed to have lived and worked. Jewel was determined to journey there and find out what her father's destiny had in line for her. The book is beautifully written, and the accompanying Cdrom's images add much to the mystique of the book. Well worth a reading.

STRAKEN by Terry Brooks. Simon & Schuster tpb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2005. 368 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now. SHRAKEN is Book Three of the High Druid of Shannara. Young Pen is still working his way through various adventures in his attempt to enter the Forbidding and rescuing his aunt, Grianne, from that dark place. He has gained the Darkwand, which would enable him to enter the Forbidding, but had lost his dwarfish companions. He must let himself be captured and taken by the Druids to their leader in an attempt to rescue them and continue his quest. Brooks is still writing good fantasy and this latest volume will add to his reputation. The writing in his latest offering is smooth and compelling and he still weaves his magic in ensnaring the reader. The plot is well-thought-out and I found the book very readable. Well-told fantasy fiction.

IN THE RUINS by Kate Elliott. Orbit tpb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books. © 2005. 528 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now. This is Book Six and next-to-last volume of the Crown of Stars series. In this latest release the plot begins to quicken and the path to the end is straightening. The three who are to be the key to the future – Sangland, Liath and Alain – are still journeying in their quests, but the lands around them are in a state of siege. The kingdom of King Henry is slowly sliding out of balance and tipping toward anarchy and destruction. With such a long series, the plot lines tend to become tangled, and Elliott needed a long concluding novel to tie them all up. Because of the length she split that novel, so the Sixth volume turned into two. Her readers will be eagerly awaiting the final volume, after reading IN THE RUINS, which will whet their appetite for the long-awaited conclusion. A gripping and what promises to be a well-told conclusion is coming.

EXULTANT by Stephen Baxter. Gollancz pb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2004. 520 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. This is Destiny's Children Book Two. I don't know how the trade paperback slipped past me, but here is the paperback release. The first book in the series, COALESCENT, was set on Earth, in both the present day and ancient Rome. This, the second volume, is set near the Galaxy's Core some

twenty five thousand years in the future. Humans have embraced change in that they have been breeding for ages for the perfect soldier to use against the alien Xeelee. The main character is Pirius, a nineteen year old soldier who is deep in the midst of the fighting. The whole book is hard science space opera, and has plenty of breadth of scope. Baxter is well known for his hard science and his other science fiction series show this. Again with this book the reader will have their sense of wonder stretched to the limit. A good SF read.

LOOKING FOR JAKE AND OTHER STORIES by China Mieville. Macmillan tpb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2005. 304 pp. A\$32.95. On sale now. China Mieville has had some great success with his novels – PERDIDO STREET STATION and THE SCAR. This is his first collection of short stories. The stories included herein are: LOOKING FOR JAKE; FOUNDATION; THE BALL ROOM (co-written with Emma Bircham and Max Schaefer); REPORTS OF CERTAIN EVENTS IN LONDON; FAMILIAR; ENTRY TAKEN FROM A MEDICAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA; DETAILS; GO BETWEEN; DIFFERENT SKIES; AND END TO HUNGER; 'TIS THE SEASON; JACK; ON THE WAY TO THE FRONT; and THE TAIN. They are a mixture of fantasy and sf – and include one strip – ON THE WAY TO THE FRONT – illustrated by Liam Sharp. The stories are a very different bunch – and they illustrate his skills as an author. They also show that he can handle the short story form well. A good collection, and the reader can savour them on the train, bus or plane, or at work or home. Excellent writing.

SUNSTORM by Arthur C. Clarke & Stephen Baxter. Victor Gollancz tpb, dist in Aust by Allen & Unwin. © 2005. Book Two of A Time Odyssey, and the sequel to TIME'S EYE. The book opens with Bisesa Dutt returning home to London after her journey to Mir to find a brooding sun shining through the window. Later that sun sends out a flare, and when it hits Earth the planet's ecology is wounded, killing many. There are conferences of desperate people, and extrapolations are made. They are not good. Especially the calculations of a mathematician which showed that the sun would, in a relatively short time – give out a burst of energy that would fry most of the life in the orbits of the inner planets. How humanity takes the news of this happening, and the project that is planned and put into force, makes engrossing reading. This novel, from two of the world's best hard sf writers, has expended the ideas in the first novel and built on them. This book is a read-in-one go novel, and leaves the reader waiting eagerly for the next book in the series.

The Ellie Chronicles - INCURABLE by John Marsden. Macmillan h/c, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2005. 242 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now. This is the second book in the series, and continues the story of Ellie Linton and her friends as the stalemated war that had brought destruction to her country continues as an undercurrent, even though it is

supposed to have ended. With the Australian continent invaded and the invaders now ensconced in their land they had won through war, the border clashes are becoming more and more open. Ellie finds herself in the thick of the fighting again, and the power of Marsden's writing again draws the reader into the conflict. The character of Ellie has made herself known to thousands of readers all over the world with the first series, *Tomorrow When The War Began*, and those readers are now eagerly awaiting the continuance of the story. Some of the best writing for young adults is again offered to the reader, and again, this book gets a *Recommended*.

ROSE OF THE WORLD by Jude Fisher. Simon & Schuster tpb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2005. 676 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now. Book Three of *Fool's Gold*. Though this book looks slim, when you see the page count, it is quite a heft volume – the print is not small, and the paper is of a fine quality – thin but opaque. The plot continues, with three main threads – one follows the adventures of the Goddess of Elda as she continues her life with her husband the King of the Northern Isles. There is the beginning of chaos that will strike her new country down if the invading Lord Tycho Issian is not stopped. The second thread follows Katla Aransen, who is made a member of Rui Finco's harem, She must find a way to both endure the hardships there, and plan an escape if she can. Lastly there is Saro Vingo, who is held in the dungeon of Tanto, one of Tycho Issian's top men. He too must endure and find a way to escape – if he can. Well-put-together fantasy fiction.

THE IRON TREE by Celilia Dart-Thornton. TOR pb, dist in Aust by Pan Macmillan. © 2004. 606 pp. A\$19.95. On sale now. Book One of *The Crownthistle Chronicles*. A fantasy tale of two young people who are seeking what they think are two different things, but they find that they also have some things in common, and they team up to help each other. When Jarred leaves his desert village to seek adventure, he has companions he can trust. When they are attacked he escapes the ambush and sets out into the Marsh, an area of lush growth, very different to his desert home. While there he meets his future companion – Lilith – and they both set out, together, combining their strengths. Jarred hopes to find his father, and Lilith to find an antidote to the madness that had set upon her family. Well written and attention absorbing fantasy.

HAIR OF THE ALIEN by Bill Chalker. Pocket Books tpb, dist in Aust by Simon & Schuster. © 2005. 313 pp. A\$29.95. On sale now. The Author is an Australian who has a PO Box in West Pennant Hill, a suburb of Sydney. The book is mainly centred around a sample of hair that Chalker had obtained, and which he had analysed, and which turned out to have some strange properties. The volume has thirteen chapters, a list of which gives some indication of how the author progresses: *Shattered World*; *Hair of the Alien*; *Seeking Help*; *Alien Impact*; *Alien*

DNA?; The Novel Laureate; Tape of Lost Memory; More Hair; An Early Abduction Odyssey; Shaman Blues; Hidden Evidence; The Light Fantastic; and ends with Strange Speculations. There is an Epilogue; Appendix, Notes, Acknowledgements, a Bibliography and an Index. The method taken by the writer is calm and methodical, which lends credence to his conclusions. An interesting look into Alien Abduction attitudes in the 21st Century.

THE DA VINCI ENIGMA TAROT by Caitlin Matthews. Simon & Schuster. © 2005. A\$39.95. On sale now. This is a Tarot deck with a difference. The author has gone through da Vinci's notebooks, drawings and ideas to draw on authentic background to create this deck. It was her way of trying to gain some insight into the destiny of the soul. She has selected the images from da Vinci's artwork to adorn the front of the Tarot, and has created an Enigma Grid design for the card back. In the box there is everything the reader needs to cast and interpret this Tarot. Matthews' idea is to discover fresh ways of looking at personal experience and the codes and creations of life. The insights would help the reader discover and unlock the mysteries behind the paths in one's life and to gain both insight and impressions to help them plan and guide their lives. The set is also a work of art – and would be a treasured gift to someone this Christmas. It is bound to be something that anyone who believes in the Mysteries will keep and use in their future life.

OTHER CURRENT + FUTURE RELEASES:

- Pan Macmillan:* *THE VOYAGE OF THE SABLE KEECH* by Neal Asher
 PANDORA'S STAR by Peter F. Hamilton
 JUDAS UNCHAINED by Peter F. Hamilton
- HarperCollins:* *DARKWITCH RISING* by Sarah Douglass
 DRUID'S SWORD by Sarah Douglass
 THE DROWNED WORLD by J. G. Ballard
- Allen & Unwin:* *THE ART OF DISCWORLD* by Terry Pratchett
 PUSHING ICE by Alastair Reynolds
 CHARLES DARWIN'S VOYAGE OF THE BEAGLE by Michael Kerrigan.
 WAS by Geoff Ryman
 DIAMOND DOGS, TURQUOISE DAYS by Alastair Reynolds
 TRANSCENDENT by Stephen Baxter
- Bookwise:* *ALIENS/PREDATOR PANEL TO PANEL* (darkhorse)
 STARWARS: CLONE WARS Vol.5
- Penguin Books:* *VAMPIRES The Immortal Damned* (collection)
 SHADOWMARCH by Tad Williams
 IN THE RUINS by Kate Elliott
 DEVICES AND DESIRES by K. J Parker
 THE RISEN EMPIRE by Scott Westerfeld

**** NOTE – This issue is late. The next should be out later this month. ****

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