

SIGMA

The Newsletter of Parsec March 2018 Issue 384

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President's Column

Living in 24/7 Time

Time. Sometimes it comes at you like a blur. Leaves you short of breath. "How, in the face of a wink of change, could I come this far? How could I ever anticipate, let alone approve, let alone live in the short shadow of this instantaneous flux?"

Sometimes it is so god awful slow. Leaves you snoring out of your open mouth and unsatisfied. Puts you off your feed and makes you fat. There is no helping the brooding boring bloat of the hiss of white noise stretching to the end of eternity. Mostly we do a job of work, write a story, watch TV, fix a toilet, eat a meal, awake in the middle of the dark, manage a cowardly thought, compose a symphony, move to Cleveland, have a kid, maybe two, maybe more, read a book, make love to an alien, cut the grass, and pay little heed to a circling second hand on a seeming solid stable mount.

So, Time, although the treachery of our bodies leaves us with little doubt, is it real? Would it make any difference if we lived across a thousand centuries or a hundred years? If the flow of things was over geological eras or the dizzying span of the existence of the fruit fly?

Or if we could shuffle events, like the pulse of a promising narrative, shunning all cause, ridiculing all effect? Live from the middle out? Live from the outside in? Live from this time to before that time.

"If no one asks me what is time, then I know," said St Augustine the pope who gave us original sin, "if I have to explain, then I don't know." It is a subject that has been slippery across all those years we sometimes yearn to have lived. Kudos, Gus, on

the time thinking, but there would be less gnashing, flailing and blaming with a doctrine of original blessing.

We sit, jammed against what has been and crammed against what is to come. Alive in an instant which soon will have been, and soon will be what follows.

Comes, timeless, a bite of synesthesia, where everything just opens up. Feel the scent of city stink, sniff nature stumble, and taste a lowly bee bumble, see all the colors of a major thirteenth flat ninth, listen to the spin of the whole world fluttering within. We can write it, compose it, sketch it, orchestrate it, act it, dance it, and live it. Explain, and we can't know it.

Says a marvelous mystical poet. "...see the world in a grain of sand...and eternity in an hour," It certainly is where I like to be. And not to be. You come, too.

Announcement about Sigma

The hard copy mailed edition of Sigma will no longer be produced or mailed after the April 2018 issue. The cost of reproduction and postage has not been covered by the Parsec budget for many years. To keep costs manageable it is necessary to keep the mailing edition size to five pages double-sided. The amount of ink required for the print Sigma requires that images must be desaturated and reduced, or in many cases eliminated entirely. Further, the workload to collate and send the monthly mailing falls to the same small group of people which is a monthly scheduling and financial burden. We thank them so much for their dedication and work for all these years.

If you do not receive a copy of the Digital Edition of Sigma and wish to receive one, please send your email address and name to Sigma@parsec-sff.org. Thanks for your understanding and we are working to make Sigma a great publication to represent the ongoing mission of Parsec.

- Eds

February 2018 Parsec Meeting Minutes



The pre-meeting chaos began as Eric Davin handed me volume three of a hardbound edition of the original Sheena comics. He also wrote down great SF authors and with no explanation threw in one Jane Rice – evidently she wrote acclaimed short stories like “The Refugee” about a werewolf and “The Idol of the Flies” about a notoriously evil boy named Pruitt. Someone mentioned enjoying President Joe’s OSHR class on science fiction and film at the University of Pittsburgh’s Oakland campus. I paid enduring treasurer Greg Armstrong my dues – the new card is a red dragon (or so it is explained to me) on an azure background. Perhaps owing to the new year-round deadlines, they have no number.

Mary Soon Lee announced her (most recent) success with two stories and ten poems, her work appearing in Asimov’s and F&SF. Paul Reilly notified us that he was getting rid of books at 1753 Beechwood Blvd. – by this writing, who knows, there may still be some to give away. As our librarian, Greg apprised us of books we own written by Poul Anderson, Fred Pohl, Jo Clayton, Jack Williamson, and “our” P. Schuyler Miller. Greg also informed us that after 17 years working on the printed Sigma newsletter that he’s hanging that up, at which point Mary led us in giving Greg a round of applause. Interestingly, the raffle was for the anthology “Three by Finney” and Greg won that.

In honor of the passing of Ursula K. LeGuin, Mary read us a poem about the experience of reading an Earthsea story to a child long after you read it as a child yourself. She also read a poem about rejections. Eric followed up by talking about John W. Campbell, Jr.’s lesser-known magazine, “Unknown,” published 1939-1943 for all of 39 issues. This featured more openly fantastical work and featured writers like Jack Williamson, whose “Darker Than You Think” brought an evolutionary angle to lycanthropy, and L. Sprague de Camp.

At last, it was time for novelist Larry Ivkovich to talk to us about the intersection of science fiction with rock music. As he touched upon a wide variety of artists, I will try to focus on just a few here. (I was personally pleased with his mentioning

the “one-hit wonder” Zager and Evans, who came out with “In the Year 2525,” a sad meditation on a dehumanizing future -- I bought that album as a kid and there are actually a few decent non-SF songs on it too.) Perhaps most pleasantly surprising was the news that Jimi Hendrix was an SF fan. Nowadays there is a tendency to assume that his “Purple Haze” is about drugs, but in fact, Hendrix was inspired by the Philip Jose Farmer novel “Night of Light” which speaks of a “purplish haze” affecting a planet and its inhabitants’ sense of reality.

David Bowie’s own SF experience was even more deeply immersing, not just with songs like “Space Oddities” but his film roles in Labyrinth (fantasy), The Hunger (vampires), and The Man Who Fell to Earth (an alien), not to mention The Prestige, in which he played Nikola Tesla. For their part, Pink Floyd, those “Wall” people, explored what they called “space rock.”

Come the Sixties and Seventies, so-called concept albums came out. Jefferson Starship got nominated for a Hugo with their “Blows Against the Empire” concerning the hijacking of a starship. I was very pleased when Larry brought up the Alan Parsons Project and their “I Robot” album, which I find to be packed with good songs. (Trivia note: they originally intended it to be named “I, Robot” as a deliberate tribute to Isaac Asimov, but legalistic touchiness over copyright came up and they had to leave out the comma.)

Beyond Hendrix, SF continued to speak to black artists. The group clipping (deliberately small “c”) came out with “Splendor and Misery,” a dystopian Afrocentric work about a slave revolt on a spaceship. It is not too surprising to learn that George Clinton was a fan of “Star Trek” and the original “Outer Limits.” I was heartened to learn that Janelle Monae, who first crossed my own radar with her role in the movie Hidden Figures, came out with “Archandroid,” its art inspired by the famous robot from the movie Metropolis.

Larry went on to note deliberate collaboration between SF authors and musicians. Our 2018 musical guest of honor S.J. Tucker has tied her music in with the work of Catherine Valente. I would like to personally add the Mike and the Mechanics song “Silent Running,” which not only borrows an SF movie title but toys with First Contact via signal..

Our headcount reached 23.

Secretary Bill Hall



A Common Interest

Last September I began taking Tai Chi classes. I've never been an exercise guy (except for walking) but for some reason, Tai Chi appealed to me, even though I basically knew nothing about it. Of course, I'd seen the pictures and watched videos of groups of mainly older people in parks or on the beach practicing complicated-looking movements.

It turns out Tai Chi is a lot more than that. A lot of community colleges offer Tai Chi courses (In fact, Dragon Con offers a Tai Chi workshop during its annual event). But I never followed up on any of those. They were all for 6 or 8 weeks or so and, quite

honestly, I thought I'd probably let any practice or interest lapse after the class ended. It's happened before.

Then I discovered the website of the Taoist Tai Chi Arts, which is an international non-profit organization dedicated to the health and well-being effects of Tai Chi as opposed to a form of strict martial arts. The cost for 4 months of weekly classes at the Pittsburgh course site in McCandless was very reasonable so I decided to take the plunge.

It's been great, both physically and mentally. I'm remembering and performing intricate movements which I never imagined I could do. This year I also started going to the Continuing Education classes, which stress flexibility, balance, and strength exercises.

Unlike what I assume the college courses teach, the Taoist Tai Chi group, besides its specific philosophy of Tai Chi, cultivates a sense of community, a tribe if you will. It sponsors events throughout the year and encourages a relaxed, stress-free source of fellowship.

Like Parsec. And speculative fiction.

Groups like Parsec, which celebrate common interests for its members, are more than just a "club." They're a way for people to connect, to form friendships, and escape from the mundane world, at least for a little while.

You also meet people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, sexual orientation, and races, with varied life experiences. All brought together by a love of SF. A better learning experience like that is hard to top.

So, come to the next Parsec meeting on March 18 and become part of the tribe! Submit an article to Sigma. Let's see and hear from you!

Join the celebration.

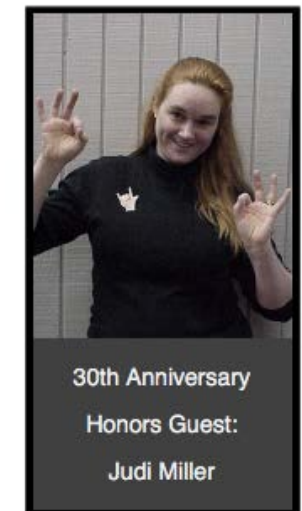
—Larry



Guest of Honor:
Catherynne M.
Valente



Music Guest:
S.J. "Sooj" Tucker



30th Anniversary
Honors Guest:
Judi Miller

Writing Workshop at Confluence

The workshop will be held Saturday morning, during Confluence weekend. Award winning author, David D. Levine will be our workshop coordinator this year.

"If you are a science fiction or fantasy writer, published or unpublished, who wants feedback on your work, Hugo-winning SF writer David D. Levine will conduct a Writers' Workshop at Confluence for up to six writers. You'll have the chance to have a professional writer critique your work, along with several of your peers. Critiques will be done in a round-robin Clarion West style. This workshop style allows all the participants to read and critique everyone's work.

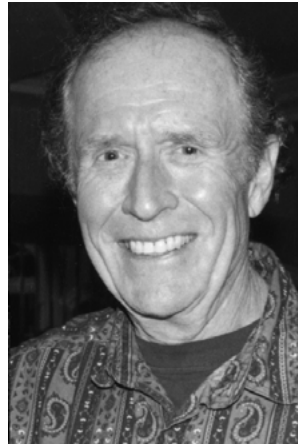
The cosplay/costume contest will return for another round in 2018!

We have the following judges willing to face the challenge of choosing the best costume and costumer at Confluence in 2018: Karen Schnaubelt, Lisa Ashton and Tom Higgs. **Please say you'll join us!**

For Registration and further information please visit:

<http://parsec-sff.org/confluence>

Fantastic Artist Of The Month

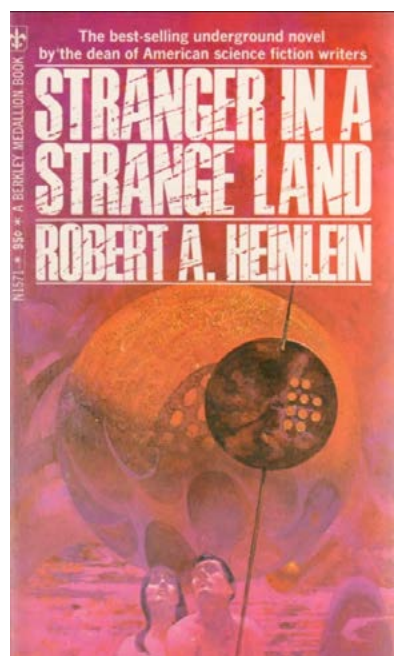


Paul Lehr

Before SF publishers' preference for realistically rendered book covers, a more abstract, surrealistic style predominated, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. One of that style's best *practitioners* was fantastic artist Paul Lehr (1930 - 1998).

Lehr studied at the Pratt Institute and created cover and interior artwork for hundreds of books and magazines, including Analog, Omni, Tomorrow, Weird Tales, Playboy, and Time. He painted covers for the works of Robert Heinlein, John Brunner, Brian Aldiss, Gordon R. Dickson, H. G. Wells, Frank Herbert, and many, many more

He was nominated for numerous awards, including twice for the Hugo Award for Best Artist in 1980 and 1981.



The Roar And The Shimmer

Black Panther, Annihilation

We live in polarized times, which can be dispiriting politically but intriguing artistically. This February 2018 we have been gifted with two polar opposites in science fiction cinema, each with their weaknesses but also their inspiring surprises. One is wildly popular, the other seemingly committed to skulking about in obscurity. One is breathlessly zippy, the other deathly deliberate in its pacing. One is linear and hopeful in its fantastical way, the other is ambiguous, open-ended, not particularly encouraging. I don't claim that the truth always lies somewhere in the middle, because I find the truth to be usually quite radical in its first appearance, but I do hope that somewhere between these two extremes of moviemaking lies a hope for our most satisfying works of all to be found in our future.



What can I add to Black Panther? I can say that it and That Other Movie, Annihilation, are weirdly connected by a kind of alien magic descending upon our Earth. (Idly I hope that someone was inspired by 1936's The Invisible Ray and its Central African coordinates for the fabulous

Radium X deposited there via meteorite, but I suspect that is futile.) A land named Wakanda gets a vast deposit of the super-metal vibranium (and I will say it just this once: that's a dumb name), and this along with such features as a special heart-shaped herb (which all too conspicuously never gets its own special name) forms the basis for five tribes more or less agreeing to one united kingdom, establishing Wakanda as a great but secret civilization. Is it right to indulge in such a blatant, shameless, absurd modern myth? My own answer is, I read science fiction, so when is it ever wrong? As a fan of 1981's Excalibur I take Wakanda as a kind of African Camelot, albeit one that never fell. Andy Serkis, for once getting to wear his own face, is a villain who knows full well what Wakanda is capable of, and wrestling with those capabilities takes up pretty much the entire movie.

My own response to Black Panther was mixed. Far too much of all the CGI action washed right over me, failing to engage me. I don't mind a car chase, but I miss the harrowing solidity of chases found in pretty much any movie with

"Bourne" in its title. That said, there's a thread of a decent story here. Michael B. Jordan's Erik Killmonger is not simply a villain but a genuinely tragic figure, he has the right grievance but the wrong spirit. Chadwick Boseman, who I admired just four months ago in the title role in Marshall, continues to coolly dominate. However, this movie's real thief is not Serkis's Klaue but Letitia Wright as T'Challa's (Boseman's) brainy kid sister Shuri, who serves T'Challa and Wakanda roughly as Desmond Llewelyn's Q served James Bond. Funny, inventive, and irresistible, Shuri needs to have her own movie. Please?

I also appreciated T'Challa having what I call a "Wonder Woman moment," that whole "Why do we keep all this power to ourselves in a suffering world?" revelation. I do worry that comic book movies will cynically settle into a rut: introduce a new hero with an evocative origin and background, then forget all about that so as to mix the hero in with other heroes so as to go fight bigger, blander, far more nonsensical villains. (Steppenwolf? Really? Steppenwolf?)

So in one story the universe gives Earth vibranium. Yet what if the universe sends us something not so obligingly useful, something truly alien, far more a threat than a convenience? That way lies Annihilation.

I would not even have bothered with Annihilation were it not for an A grade from online reviewer Chris Stuckmann, my respect for Ex Machina, and the impossibly constant beauty of Natalie Portman. (Seriously, Cold Mountain was 14 years ago.) Between this and Ex Machina, writer-director Alex Garland seems intent on warning us that a Supreme Other, be it an AI or some sort of alien life, may simply not care about us. We fantasize that First Contact can be a floodgate of friendship and love when it may only be a next phase of that same old loneliness. (Also, seeing that Garland wrote 2007's Sunshine, he seems deeply committed to horror.)



We begin with biologist Portman and special forces soldier Oscar Isaac (that's right, Padme and Poe) as a couple having some nicely sexy moments before the Earth gets hit, at a lighthouse of all places, by an Alien Something. It is demarcated by a zone appropriately named the Shimmer and it encompasses Area X, which is

slowly growing and may one day consume our world. Area X knocks out or plays havoc with electronics, so soldiers are sent in on foot and only Isaac's Kane returns but needs to be hospitalized. New tactic: send in women scientists, see if that fares better. Luckily, they're also handy with guns. Portman is sent in, along with Jennifer Jason Leigh, Tessa Thompson, and others. Stuckmann defends this movie by suggesting that I just want Portman to shoot monsters, but damned if Portman doesn't shoot monsters.

Even as I found myself rating this ODD for Oppressive Disorienting Downer, I had to wonder how anyone ever decided to get behind an ODD so exquisitely made, because that it is. Inside Area X we get to imagine a matrix of alien life, a matrix not so much evil or even monstrous, but blindly colonizing. At one point we see what looks to me like a lot of ivy taking its aesthetic cues from human bones. Monsters are only the beginning, as we encounter stately human-shaped shrubbery and achieve full trippiness when we finally reach the lighthouse. You may want an Advil or two on hand. Technically, this is a heroic tale, with Portman demonstrating amazing resilience and courage while seeing her mission through and presumably triggering the collapse of Area X, and yet we are denied so simple an answer. Given that this movie is related as flashbacks during a debriefing, I am unnerved by one notion: what if she is simply lying about one supremely pivotal event?

I say, give Portman credit, she can sell many a rough concept, like V For Vendetta and Black Swan, and her commitment to SF extends to a forthcoming project called Pale Blue Dot. I find Annihilation, evidently based rather loosely on a trilogy by Jeff VanderMeer, to be unforgettable and curiously strong. However, my linear mind found the ambiguity more staged than earned. As much as I appreciated Portman's heroics, I would have liked some illumination far better. Perhaps someone should call in Shuri to help sort this all out.

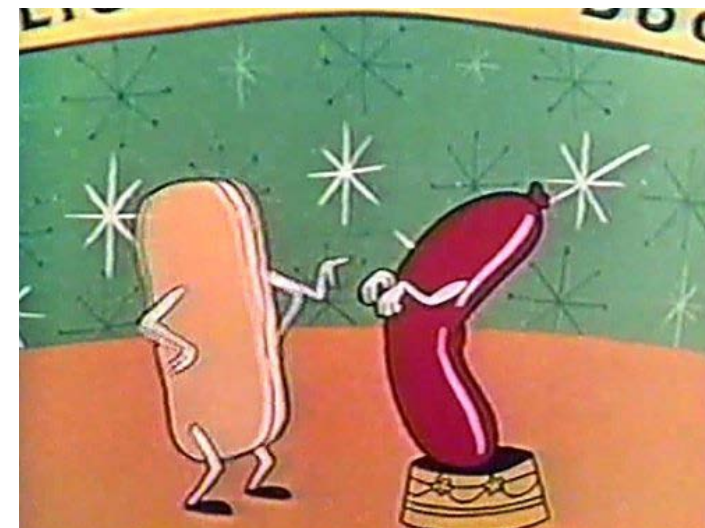
Bill Hall

Parsec Picnic



Funny and fannish musician Steve Goodie, who performed (quite successfully!) as the Special Music Guest at Confluence in 2016, will be performing at the **Parsec Picnic on August 26, 2018, at the Dormont Park large pavilion.**

Come enjoy the music.
Come enjoy the hot dogs and cool cats.
Come enjoy the conversation.
Come enjoy the games.
Oh, what the heck, just come.



Brief Bios

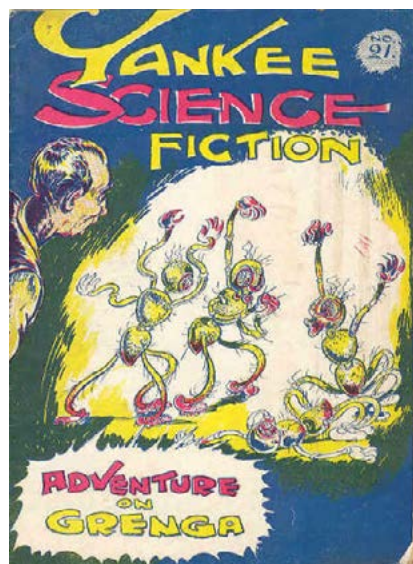
Eric Leif Davin

Pauline Ashwell" (Pauline Whitby) (1928-2015)



As far as America is concerned, John W. Campbell discovered British writer "Pauline Ashwell". He published her first American story ("Unwillingly to School," Astounding, January, 1958), which was later Hugo-nominated for best short story of the year. Because of it, she was nominated for "Best New Author," a promising debut for any writer. Campbell also published her second and third stories, the latter ("The Lost Kafoozalum," Astounding/Analog, October, 1960) also being Hugo-nominated for best short story.

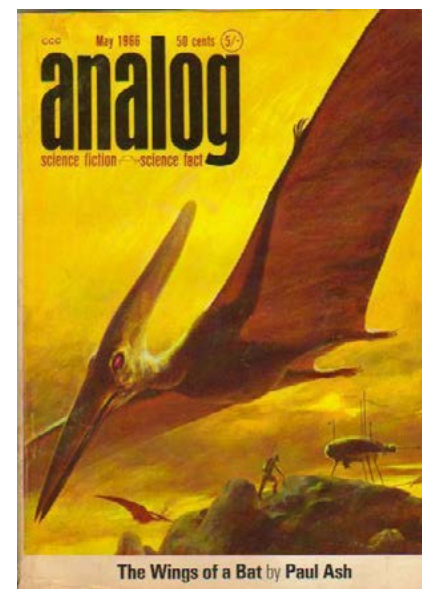
However, she actually made her debut as "Paul Ashwell" with "Invasion from Venus" in an obscure wartime British SF magazine, Yankee Science Fiction (No. 21, July, 1942), which, despite "No. 21," only published three issues. At the time, she was only 14 years old.



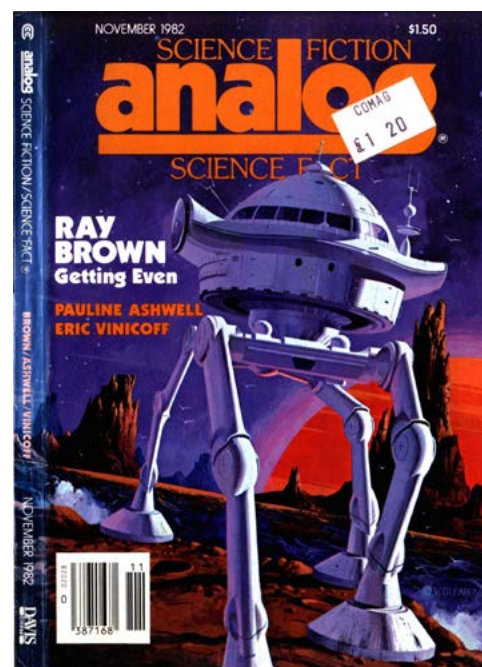
After her American debuts, she published nothing more until two stories appeared in 1966 under the pseudonym "Paul Ash." One of these, "The Wings of a Bat," was a Nebula nominee that year, the first year the Nebulas were awarded. Thereafter she dropped from sight again, not reappearing until 1982 when her story, "Rats in the Moon" appeared, also as by "Paul Ash."

There was nothing more until 1988, when she published a spurt of stories, including "Fatal Statistics," "Interference," "Make Your Own Universe," "Shortage in

Time," and "Thingummy Hall." In 1990 she published "The Hornless Ones" and in 1991 "Man Opening a Door," which was a Nebula nominee for that year. In 1993 her novel, "The Man Who Stayed Behind," was serialized in Analog, but it never appeared outside that magazine. Her first novel to appear in book form was Unwillingly to Earth, published by Tor in 1992. This was followed by Tor's 1995 publication of Project Farcry. That same year she published the short stories "Hunted Head" and "Time's Revenge." In 1996 came "Bonehead."



Having twice been nominated for the Hugo and twice for the Nebula, and having been hailed in the Fifties as one of the "Best New Authors," no doubt her talent would have won her a larger reputation had her output not been so sporadic over the decades.



RATS IN THE MOON

Pauline Ashwell

That remarkable scholar Lizzie Lee is back, for a lesson in Practical Politics—which is much more complicated than what she thought she was studying.

So this is a Rat. It reminds me of a man back home on Excensus 23 tried to sell my Father a Mine once. The Mine turned out a good one I believe, which maybe shows you should not Judge by Appearances, but anyway Dad had all the money he knew what to do with already.

It is just about Par for today that earlier this afternoon I spent nearly an hour watching for Rats, and now this one comes sliding out of a tunnel when I have to catch up with Clarence and do not have time to look.

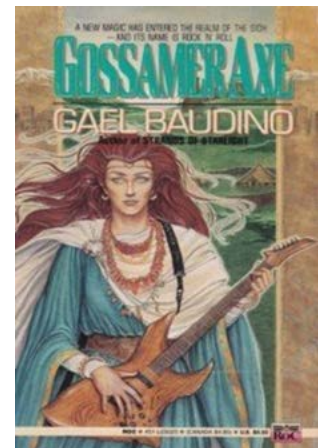
Oh, well, I can spare ten seconds I suppose. It sits up and is looking down its teeth as much as to say It spent half the afternoon waiting for a Person and all it gets is Lizzie Lee. (Actually it is on the



SF and Rock (Literature)

At last month's Parsec meeting, I presented a short overview of speculative fiction and rock and roll, an expansion of my Sigma articles, "SF and Rock." Thanks to all who attended and to those (Joe Coluccio, Chris Hutson, and Wendelin Gray, in particular) who gave me suggestions for future presentations. And if any of you are still wondering why I couldn't get my imbedded videos to run, it was because I hadn't signed into the internet beforehand! Sheesh.

However, an aspect of this subject I hadn't considered are novels and short stories written with a rock and roll theme. You'd think that would be no-brainer to include at least a mention of in my presentation but, alas, that didn't happen. Go figure.

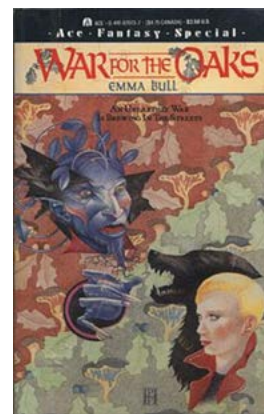


My thanks also to Kevin Hayes who lent me his copy of the 1990 book *Gossamer Axe*. A fantasy by Gael Baudino, intricately combining Celtic music and magic with heavy metal music, this exceptionally well-written novel reminded me of my lapse. In the meantime, check out this book. Baudino's writing style is, at times, poetically beautiful and rich, and, man, does she know her music!

Here are a few other novels and stories that have used rock and roll as an element in their telling.

War of the Oaks by Emma Bull, 1987

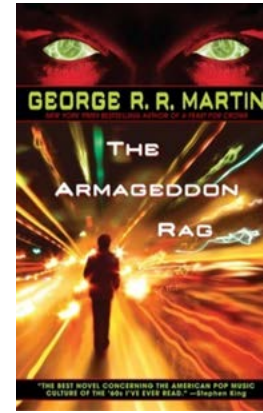
Taking place in contemporary Minneapolis, this YA novel is considered one of the first to be defined by the newly created subgenre of Urban Fantasy. A young rock musician becomes involved in the faerie realm's everlasting conflict between good and evil.



Rock on: The Greatest Hits of Science Fiction & Fantasy, 2012, is an anthology of rock and roll inspired stories featuring, among others, Pat Cadigan ("Rock On"), Howard Waldrop ("Flying Saucer Rock and Roll"), Alistair Reynolds ("At Budokan"), Elizabeth Bear ("Hobnoblin Blues"), and local author and frequent Parsec/Confluence guest Lawrence C. Connolly ("Mercenary"), who, besides being a great writer, is a terrific musician/guitarist in his own right.

The Armageddon Rag by George R.R. Martin, 1983

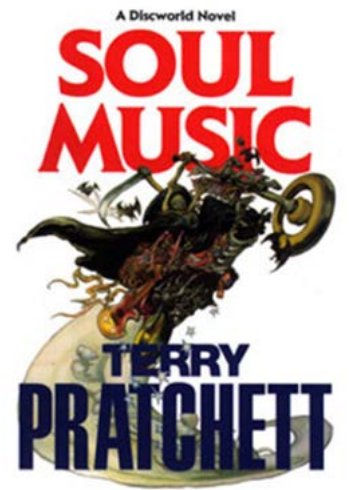
The brutal murder of a music promoter sets the stage for this mystery/fantasy which was nominated for the Locus Award and World Fantasy Award for best



novel. Despite the critical accolades, including high praise from Stephen King, the book was a commercial disaster and prompted Martin to temporarily abandon writing novels and short stories to concentrate on scripting for television. But, the book is still in print.

Soul Music by Terry Pratchett, 1994

Pratchett's 16th Discworld novel tells the story of The Band With Rocks In, a trio made up of a troll percussionist, a dwarf horn player, and bard guitarist. But the guitar, as it turns out, is much more than simply a musical instrument. The book also introduces Susan Sto Helit, Death's granddaughter.



Speaking of Stephen King, his short piece, "You Know They Got A Hell of a Band," 1992, is a horror story about a rock and roll heaven which is anything but. Characters include Janis Joplin, Duane Allman, Keith Moon, Marvin Gaye, Patsy Cline, and many more dead musical stars.

This was made into an episode of the TNT series, *Nightmares and Dreamscapes*, and can be viewed at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcDslZfLjsw>

And don't forget – this year's Triangulation anthology theme is Music. There's bound to be some rockers in there!

- Larry Ivkovich

Parsec Officers

Joe Coluccio (President)
Bonnie Funk (Vice President)
William Hall (Secretary)
Greg Armstrong (Treasurer)
Michelle Gonzalez (Commentator)
Joe Coluccio & Larry Ivkovich (SIGMA Editors)



Parsec Meeting Schedule

Sunday, March 18, 2018

THE PARSEC MEETING DATE FOR MARCH HAS CHANGED

We hope they got them libraries on the moon, because BOOM! ZIP! SWOOSH! someday we're gonna meet there. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Squirrel Hill Branch, has changed the Parsec meeting room to March 18, 2018 for an important service that helps folks with their income tax filings.

This month we will discuss topics for the upcoming Confluence - July 27-29, 2018 at the Sheraton Pittsburgh Airport Hotel

UPDATED MEETING NEWS

The Parsec Meeting Date has been permanently moved to the Third Sunday of the Month
The time remains from 12:00 Noon to 4:30 PM

Squirrel Hill Branch of the Carnegie Library
 Room B - Next to the Rear Entrance
 1:30 - 4:30 PM
 Come in and introduce yourself
 The room is open at noon.



SCI-FI & FANTASY AUTHOR LECTURE SERIES

Join us for a free author talk and writing workshop with two fantastic YA authors!

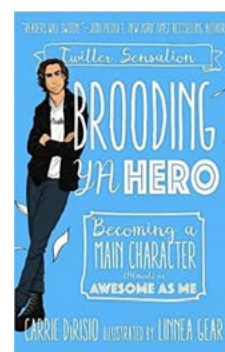
Jessica Cluess is the author of the **KINGDOM ON FIRE** series, which features magic, monsters, and mayhem in Victorian London
 Carrie DiRisio is the author of parody novel **BROODING YA HERO**.



Jessica's talk begins at 10 am in the McConomy Auditorium, followed by Carrie's workshop at 1 pm in the Connan Room. The Cohon University Center is located between the Walking to the Sky statue and the Track. Both events are free, and attendees may come for either or both events!

Don't miss your chance to meet two popular Young Adult Fiction novelists!
Free pizza! Free parking!

(parking provided in East Campus Garage)



SATURDAY,
03.31.18

**Cohon University Center,
 CMU, Pittsburgh, PA**

Sponsored by CMU, CMU's Partners in Speculative Fiction, SFWA, and PARSEC



I'm Inclined To Knock Lists

Groan. Go ahead. But I know everyone likes a top ten best list. The kind that makes you bite down on the meaty inside of your cheek at the absolute foolishness of the author. How in the world can you put Alphaville at the top of the most important movies that portray Eddie Constantine as a private dick in a future dystopian Paris? That's like saying the Galaxie is the best Ford Motor Car ever.

I burrowed excitedly through the first four of my classes entitled "Departures and Arrival - The Science Fiction Film. However, when I got to the end of class four I realized I never made out of the 1950's with my analysis. Now, I have to wrap up the entire of Science Fiction Film History in one last fireworks display. The task is to relate the films from the middle decade of the twentieth century and put into perspective the derivative influences I claim are still in effect to the present day. Worse luck, this month's issue of Sigma is due.

There is one further problem. I find most of the present movies I manage to see in the theaters depressing. I go home and put on a DVD copy of Them! Or Klaatu Borada Nikto as an antidote. Oh, sure, movies, like the entire of the Marvel Universe are loud and full of spectacle with plots as crazy and Ruritanian as any of the comic books I read as a kid. Sure Star Wars and Star Trek manage to re-invent themselves but they don't do much to re-invent the genre. Sure there are the desperate dystopian doppelgängers with plots as predictable as the heat death of the universe. But just when I feel that Hollywood, eponymous for all filmmakers, should come to understand they know how to make movies, but don't know a damn thing about Science Fiction, some shining film appears to shut me up. Something new and different sparkles onto the screen.

My solution? Make a list of those films that have changed my ideas about Science Fiction. I admit this list is personal and idiosyncratic. I would be uncomfortable trying to make an objective justification for the selection. Instead, I just weighed in with my evolving impressions. The only thing solid about this list is these are the films that remain on the index. I find that in many cases the influence on me, which may not be immediately evident, may also dwindle to a big empty slot. I review SF movies on a continual basis and some of my picks here come from some very recent re-viewing and consideration.

I don't believe that innovation comes in a linear manner. This is not the presumption of a list that points from best to last. It is my vivid experience that the best SF film of all time is the one from the list I am watching at present. I place the list in chronological order only for my nitpicking sanity. In keeping with the spirit of what I believe is good and meaningful, the box office and money making feats of the film don't mean much to me. Take your \$300,000,000, I don't need it. In the same manner, because of my perverse ways, popularity is a negative pointer.

So here is my list. The movies that made me go home feeling whole and happy. Hold your fingers to your ears so when your head explodes the damage is contained locally and I'll take on this delicate yet audacious task of showing you what movies I feel have influenced me.

Destination Moon 1950
The Thing from Another World 1951
The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms 1953
Creature from the Black Lagoon 1954
Them! 1954
Forbidden Planet 1956
Invasion of the Body Snatchers 1956
Attack of the Crab Monsters 1958
Journey to the Center of the Earth 1959
The Time Machine 1960
Alphaville 1965
Not of this Earth 1957
2001: A Space Odyssey 1968
Dark Star 1974
Star Wars 1977
Alien 1979
Blade Runner 1982
The Brother from Another Planet 1984
Contact 1997
The Man from Earth 2007
Moon 2009
Gravity 2013
Jodorowsky's Dune 2013
Arrival 2016

The line-up was generated with a little dreaming, a little memory prod, a little viewing. After some in-tro/in-spection, a theme began to emerge. I discovered my thesis in the most spare and simple of the motion pictures. Alphaville, The Brother from Another Planet, The Man from Earth, Jodorowsky's Dune. The very plainness of them, the lack of special effects, created an insistence I become engaged, have a primary experience of the narrative. Demand that I merge my thought and imagination with the screen. While those that had full-on plenitude of special effects provided me with a starting point to a new world of image. I expect that your list will be quite different. But to me, these dimensions are where the intersecting brane of Science Fiction as Literature and Science Fiction as Film meet.

