



Volume 24 Number 7 Issue 289

December 2011

## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

As always it was a very interesting year.

Last month, *The Prophets of Science Fiction* debut on the Science channel. Each episode explores the work of a writer, and explains how their work influenced real science. Writers that will be profiled are Mary Shelley, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, and Philip K. Dick.

Anne McCaffrey died last month. I feel bad that I never got around to reading the Pern series. I did see her at Conadian, the 1994 Worldcon where she was guest of honor. She did several panels there. She also did a local signing at a central Florida bookstore in October 2002. At that time, McCaffrey was invited to watch a shuttle launch from the VIP section at Kennedy Space Center. She was great representative of the field.

Joanna Russ died earlier this year. We lost two of the women who helped science fiction not be a boys only club. I have recently caught up on Russ works, and now I have to the same with McCaffrey's.

Next month issue will have some end of the year lists. We will find out what was big in science fiction and fantasy books and films. There might be some reviews.

Happy Holidays.



## In Time

In *Gattaca*, writer-director Andrew Niccol examines the conflict between the haves and have-nots. In that film, the lead character had to overcome obstacles set up by the prevailing culture in order to attain his goal of going into space. Niccol revisits this conflict in his new film *In Time*. Here the hero is being prevented from living a long life.

In this world, no one ages past 25. After that, people's clocks start ticking. Time is now currency. Minutes, hours, days, months, and years can get you goods that you need and want. Everyone has a clock on their arms which counts down to the time of their death. People can get time through labor, loans, gifts or other financial transactions. Once the clock goes to zero, that is the end. The world is organized into Time Zones. The lower Time Zones are ghettos where people are literally living from minute to minute, and the cost of living keeps going up, while wages are going down. Criminal gangs prey on the weak and steal their time. The police officers are called Timekeepers, and maintain order in this society.

Will Salas (Justine Timberlake) is a factory worker in one of the lower Time Zones. He works hard to support himself and his 50-year-old mother, Rachel (Olivia Wilde). Both of them are barely making enough to stay alive. One night at a bar, Will saves a man from the Minutemen, one of the local gangs. The man is Henry Hamilton (Matt Bomer), a 105-year-old man who has over a century of time on his clock. Hamilton tells Will the inequities of the world, and asks what he would do with his time. Will says he would not waste it. During the night Hamilton gives Will most of his time, and lets his clock run out at dawn. Hamilton's death is investigated by veteran Timekeeper, Raymond Leon (Cillian Murphy). Rachel's clock runs out before she can see Will. Will then goes to the upper time zones and wins even more time from gambling. He meets Philippe Weis (Vincent Kartheiser), a very powerful time broker, and his 27-year-old daughter Sylvia (Amanda Seyfried). At a party at Weis' mansion, Will is confronted by Leon, and most of his time is taken away. Will escapes with Sylvia as a hostage. They go back to his Time Zone to figure out what to do. Sylvia's time is taken by the

(Continued on page 2)

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## December OASFiS Calendar

### Holiday Party and Elections

Sunday December 12, 2011 2:30PM at Patricia Wheeler's House, 8029 Citron Court Orlando, FL 32819 (more detailed directions in this issue).

### Sci Fi Light

#### Taking Break for the Holidays!!!

To contact for more info:

OASFiS Business Meeting 407-823-8715

Minutemen on the way. She experiences the lower Time Zoners' day-to-day existence. With both the Minutemen and the Timekeepers after them, Will and Sylvia decide to take action against the system. They steal time, and redistribute it to the lower Time Zones.

There are a few things which are not clear. One is the amount of time someone gets when they turn 25. One also wonders if disease has been conquered in this world. The only things which apparently kill people are their clocks running out and severe trauma like a gunshot wound. It is implied that if one has enough time they can live forever. Hamilton explains for immortality to work other people have to die in order not to tax the world's resources. Those with a lot of time do not seem to take any type of physical risk.

Will is always thinking of others. He risks his own life to save Hamilton. When Will gets Hamilton's time, the first thing he wants to do is to give some to his mother and his friend Borel. Will is even able to show mercy to Leon. When Leon is injured while attempting to arrest Will, Will gives Leon enough time to get help from his fellow officers. He follows his own advice and does not waste the gift given to him. Will enjoys what time can get him. When things go south, rather than focusing on survival, Will wants to help other people and bring down the system which brutally killed his mother.

Sylvia has always known there was something wrong with the world. Despite the fact she and her friends have everything, they do so little with it. It takes Will to show her how to enjoy life. Before she meets Will, it never occurs to her to swim in the beach outside her home. Sylvia decides to stay with Will after he gives her the option to leave. Being with Will gives her life meaning, which she did not have in her own Time Zone.

Leon is determined to protect the system and maintain the status quo. He does this despite the fact the system does not benefit him. Timekeepers are barely paid enough to keep living. He refuses Weiss' bribe to show leniency to Sylvia. The fact that Will gave him life-saving time does not affect Leon in any way. Leon is willing to risk his life to capture Will and Sylvia. He fights for the system because it is all he knows, and he cannot see any alternative way of life.

There was some great use of Los Angeles-area locations in the film. The buildings in the upper Time Zones look very sleek and futuristic and the lower Time Zones have the right look of decay and neglect. None of the locations indicates where they

## OASFiS People

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Any of these people can give readers information about the club and its functions. To be included in the list call Juan.

are. The story can be taking place anywhere.

The action sequences in this film are well executed. They are easy to follow and they are not drawn out. Still there is a car crash which looks like a model shot. Though the scene is needed since it allows the Minutemen to steal Sylvia's time, Niccol should have done something simpler, because it is distracting.

Life changes when you know how much time you left. The people of the lower classes of this world are living day-to-day. They are constantly living in fear of running out of time. They cannot accomplish much because they are consumed with staying alive. The inhabitants of the upper classes have all the time in the world, but do not seem to do anything with it. The film seems to be saying that the human race needs an element of mortality to be innovative.

Hamilton and Sylvia tell Will that there is enough time in the world for everyone to have a reasonable lifetime. Weiss and others want to hoard the time. Is immortality worth the price of others having short lives? The way time is being given is reflects the inequalities of the distribution of wealth, which seems to be the question of the day, in our own world.

Niccol again presents a film which makes one think rather than distracts one with spectacle. It is worth your time to check it out.



## OASFiS 2011 Ballot

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- ☐ Patricia Wheeler
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### Vice President

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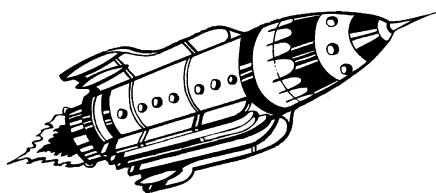
### Secretary

- ☐ Susan Cole
- ☐ Patty Russell
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ (write in)

### OASIS 26 Con Chair

- ☐ Juan Sanmiguel
- ☐ No Convention for 2013
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ (write in)

Ballots can be brought to the Holiday party or mailed to address in the back. Fold the ballot appropriately and place a stamp if you wish to mail it.



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*Thorns*

by

Robert Silverberg

WARNING SPOILERS

Jo Walton did a recent survey of the Hugo Winners between 1952 and 2000 at Tor.com. When she covered the winners of 1968, she described the plot of *Thorns*, a nominee for best novel. It sounded like Silverberg had predicted reality television about 20 years before it came about. I had to find and read this book. I loathe reality television. Most of it seems to be bent on the humiliation of human beings. I wanted to see Silverberg's take on it and see how it measured up to the real thing.

Duncan Chalk controls a media empire. His current project is getting together Lona Kelvin and Minner Burris and showing their relationship to the rest of the world. Minner is a starman. On the planet Manipool, he and his crew were captured and experimented on. He was the only one who survived, but with disfiguring modifications on his body. Lona was the subject of an experiment on Earth. Scientists took 100 ova out of her body to have them fertilized by the same father, and then carried to term in surrogate mothers or artificial wombs. She is the biological mother of centuplets. She was not allowed to carry any of the children, or get custody of any of them. Lona's name was leaked out to the press and she got caught in a media circus. Now she feels depressed and suicidal. Chalk and his minions Auodad and Nikolaides offer both of them what they want if they will get together in a possible romantic relationship: Minner is promised a new body, and Lona custody of two of her children. Minner and Lona embark on a trip which takes them to Antarctica, the Moon, and Titan. Things do not go well between them. They quarrel, and these arguments slowly escalate. After the arguments, they feel strangely drained.

Chalk is a villain from the first page. He knows from the beginning that Minner and Lona are not suited to each other. Chalk and his team set them up anyway, because it is more useful to him that they do not get along. Not only will it satisfy his business needs, but his personal ones as well.

Minner Burris is recovering to what was done to him. After Minner returns from space, he hides in his apartment from prying eyes. He is starting to go mad when Auodad lures him out with the promise of a cure for his condition.

Lona is seventeen. She was overwhelmed by the media attention. The experiment has left her shellshocked. She has also isolated herself from the outside world. While recovering from her second suicide attempt, Nikolaides convinces her to comfort Minner, who is in the same hospital for tests.

They are completely not suited for each other. They do not have anything in common. As their trip progresses they get on each other nerves. Chalk's people do not cause any of the tension; they simply observe and record Minner and Lona's trip, sending these tapes to Chalk. Chalk then broadcasts these recording. It does feel like reality television. People are placed in an awkward situation that is doomed to fail. No one can force a relationship to happen. Chalk sets it up because he knows there will be conflict. Both he and the public enjoy it, but as it turns out, for different reasons. Chalk is an emotional vampire. He feeds off the pain of others. He is able to do this over a great

distance, and his victims feel drained after he feeds.

The novel has aged well. There is little mention of technology except space travel and that is in general terms. Chalk owns vidstations and newstapes. These 60s ideas of future media does not distract one from the story. Silverberg lets the reader's imagination fill in the gaps. He does not describe Minner's appearance in detail. He says Minner's eyelids move left to right rather than up and down and that he has tentacle-like protrusions. We get the idea of Minner appearance by how people react to him. When Minner and Lona are on the Moon, Silverberg just says the carnival there is like all carnivals everywhere, with just new technology. He then mentions the traditional things at a carnival, and it is up to the reader to futurize it.

This does not have a traditional happy ending. Minner and Lona do not get over their differences and fall in love. They do not get what they want. They do get even with Chalk for exploiting them. Minner and Lona decide to escape to Manipool, far from the staring eyes of home. They go to find a new life, defined on their terms, rather to have defined for them.

Walton says the book is painful and it is. The arguments between Minner and Lona are uncomfortable. This is worse because it is being done for the enjoyment of a heartless businessman and his viewers. Chalk says, "Pain is instructive". At the end of the book, Minner and Lona learn how to deal with their pain and move on with their lives.





### On the End of *Batman: The Brave and Bold*

On November 25, 2011, the last episode of *Batman: The Brave and Bold* was broadcast. The show was on for three years and produced 65 episodes. The show featured Batman teaming up with a fellow DC superhero. Each show had a teaser which the end of an adventure with another hero, and then there would be the main story with another team-up. The main story would usually have not be related to the other story.

This show was different from the previous Batman series which have come out since 1992. It was lighter in tone, and was a throwback to the Silver Age DC Comic stories. Though Batman was serious most of the time, there was a good dose of humor. The humor would even occasionally draw from from the 1966 live-action television series. This was OK as a polite nod to that time period.

The one irritating thing about the show was the portrayal of Aquaman. He was shown as being overbearing and a braggart. Aquaman was always difficult for many writers in comic and animation. Peter David and Geoff Johns are the only big name writers to have ever expressed an interest in working with the character. Most writers did not know what to do with him. He was usually put in for comic relief. This should have been toned down a bit. The show's tone was light but it tended to respect the other characters more.

There were several good episodes; below are some of the best ones:

“Chill of the Night” - Paul Dini, writer and producer of *Batman: The Animated Series*, wrote a story dealing with the death of Bruce Wayne's parents. The Phantom Stranger and the Spectre wager on what will happen when Batman discovers his parents' killer. There is some great casting here: Adam West (Thomas Wayne), Julie Newmar (Martha Wayne), Kevin Conroy (the Phantom Stranger), and Mark Hamill (the Spectre).

“Requiem of a Scarlett Speedster” – Batman helps the Jay Garrick (the original Flash) and Wally West (Kid Flash) find Barry Allen (the Silver Age Flash). Also appearing is the Reverse Flash aka Professor Zoom, played by John Wesley Shipp, who played Barry Allen in the live-action Flash series in the 1990s.

“Bat Mite Presents: Batman's Strangest Cases” – Inter-dimensional pest and Batman fan shows different takes on his hero. This was also put together by Paul Dini. The episode features adaptations of a *Mad* magazine parody strip featuring Bat Boy and Rubin, and one of the Batman manga stories by Jiro Kuwata. The last segment is a team-up between Batman and Robin and Scooby Doo and Mystery Inc. All of these stories reflect the art style of their source material.

“Joker: The Vile and the Villainous” – An

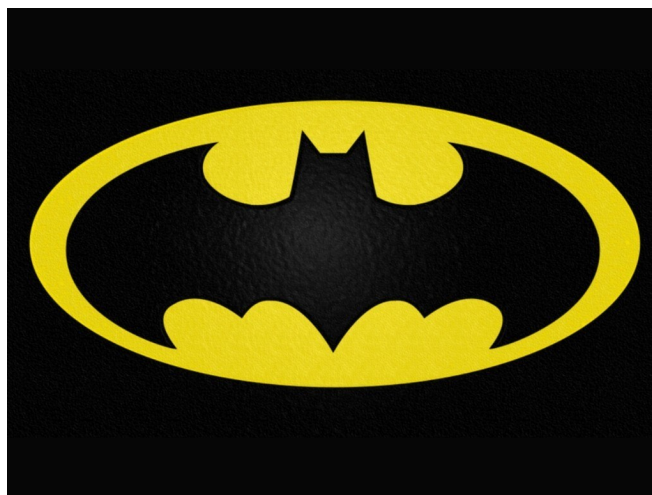
entire story from the Joker's point of view. He teams up with the Weeper, a Golden-Age villain, played by Tim Conway. Together they try and stop Batman from putting his crime computer into action. They even changed the title sequence to feature the Joker. The Weeper was a real comic book villain from the 1940s

“Battle of the Superheroes” – Superman is behaving strangely and causing all sorts of trouble. Batman has to figure what has happened to his old friend. This is a throwback to the classic Silver-Age Superman stories of 1950 and 60s.

“Mitefall” – This was the last episode. Bat Mite is growing tired of watching *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*. He wants a new serious version of Batman. He decides to cause the show to “jump the shark”, so it will get cancelled. The Ambush Bug is the only person who can help Batman stop Bat Mite. Paul Dini also wrote this episode.

A new Batman animated series is already in the works and is scheduled for a 2013 debut. It is titled *Beware the Batman*. They will be teaming Batman up with Katana, DC character who is usually a member of the Outsiders, and focus on some of the more obscure villains.

The show had a very good run. It showed that Batman and the other DC characters could have serious stories mixed with some humor. It also gave an opportunity to show off characters not shown in previous DC animated series like the Metal Men, the Marvel Family, and the Justice Society. The show took the fans on a great ride in the DC universe.





## Hurricane Who 2



Starting from the upper left and going clockwise.

Naoko Mori (Toshiko Sato, *Torchwood*),

Arthur Darvill (Rory Williams, *Doctor Who*),

Terry Molloy (Davros, *Doctor Who*),

Jeremy Bulloch (Boba Fett, *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*), a Weeping Angel from *Doctor Who* "Blink", "Flesh and Stone", "Time of the Angels",

Pirncess Astra from *Doctor Who* "The Armageddon Factor",

Madame Vestra and Jenny *Doctor Who* "A Good Man Goes to War",

a young Amelia Pond from *Doctor Who* "The Eleventh Hour"



SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION  
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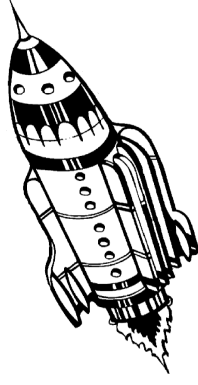
# OASIS 25

May 25-27, 2012

Writer Guests of Honor

L.E. Modesitt Jr.

David Weber



## Hotel Information

\$79/night, single-quad  
through 5/6/12  
Mention OASIS for rate

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400 West Livingston St.  
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1-800-574-3160

## Weekend Memberships:

\$30 until 1/1/12,  
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More info at  
[www.oasfis.org](http://www.oasfis.org)

Joe Fan  
123 Sesame Street  
Orlando, FL 32805

Artist Guest of Honor

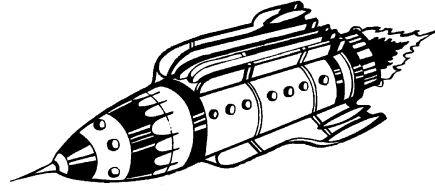
Janny Wurts

Fan Guests of Honor

Pat and Roger Sims

Author Signings,  
Costume Contest,  
Live Music and Comedy,  
Anime and Video

Programs,  
Art Show,  
Informative Panel Talks,  
Artist Demos, Books,  
Cool Stuff for Sale,  
Fun and Games  
Charity Auction



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