

FANTASTICAL WORLDS AND FUTURES AT THE WORLD'S EDGE: A HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

by
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CHAPTER 7: ARTISTS, COMICS, CRASH COURSES AND THE FUTURE

There is a lot more to science fiction, fantasy and horror than novels, stories, films and television series. Comics, artists, musicians, podcasts, audio works, live plays, radio plays, games, re-enactment societies and non-fiction books all contribute to the overall picture, and all of the foregoing are produced in New Zealand. Each of these topics could fill a separate chapter, but deadlines have forced us to provide just a few examples of artists, comics and non-fiction books here.

NEW ZEALAND ARTISTS

Readers really do, more often than not, judge books by their covers, and New Zealand's artists have produced some very fine work, contributing to the success of many books. This artwork has been honoured in the Sir Julius Vogel Awards in the category of Best Professional Artwork. A selection of winners and their covers follow:



Emma Weakley has won the Sir Julius Vogel Award award three times, for *Newton's Sleep* (Random Static, 2008) in 2009, *Regeneration: Best New Zealand Speculative Fiction* (Random Static, 2013) in 2014, and *At the Edge* (Paper Road Press, 2016) in 2017.



Frank Victoria's cover for Mary Victoria's *Tymon's Flight* (Harper Collins, 2010) won the award in 2011, and the following year won again with his cover for Mary Victoria's *Oracle's Fire* (Harper Collins, 2011).



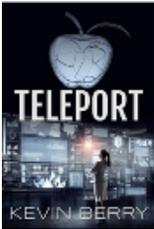
Les Petersen did the cover for an Australian anthology by New Zealander Simon Petrie, *Light Touch Paper, Stand Clear* (Peggy Bright Books, 2012), winning him a Vogel in 2013.



Geoff Popham won a Vogel in 2015 with his cover for the anthology *Lost in the Museum* (Phantom Feather Press, 2014) - which also won the award in the Best Collected Work category.



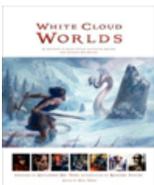
Casey Bailey won the award in 2016 with the cover for the anthology *Shortcuts - Track 1* (Paper Road Press, 2015).



Kate Strawbridge was the Vogel winner in 2018, with her cover for Kevin Berry's *Teleport* (Createspace, 2017).



Layla Rose is the latest to win The Sir Julius Vogel Award for Best Professional Artwork with the cover for the anthology *The Baker Thief* (Kraken Collective, 2018).



In addition, there have been three collections of original art by artists working at Weta: *White Cloud Worlds* edited by Paul Tobin,

COMICS

Comics are the introduction that a great many readers have to science fiction and fantasy. The New Zealand comic scene has been active since at least the 1980s, which is when

Dylan Horrocks became involved with it. Born in Auckland in 1966, he was young but very driven when he co-founded Razor with Cornelius Stone, then went on to have work published with Fox Comics in Australia and Fantagraphics Books in the US. In the 1990s *Pickle* appeared from Black Eye Comics, introducing Horrocks's signature *Hicksville* story. *Hicksville* (Black Eye, 1998). This led to French, Spanish and Italian editions, and Eisner Award for Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition in 2002, and a Harvey Award nomination for Best Single Issue or Story.



Horrocks has written and drawn for many productions, among them scripts for Vertigo's *Hunter: The Age of Magic*, *Batgirl* and *Atlas*. He currently publishes new work at the Hicksville Comics site. Outside the comics industry Horrocks has had his work displayed in both Wellington's City Gallery and the Auckland Art Gallery. In 2012 his *Steam Girl (Steampunk! An Anthology of Fantastically Rich and Strange Stories, 2011)* won Best Novella/Novelette in the Sir Julius Vogel Awards.



Greg Broadmore is a New Zealand born artist who works at Weta Digital. He created occasional comic series around the steampunk space adventurer Dr Grordbort, and a local brewery has taken this character to heart and has released several ales referencing Dr Grordbort and his misadventures.

NON-FICTION AND THE LORD OF THE RINGS FILMS



Given its huge involvement in the development of Wingnut Films, the art collective departments of Weta Workshops and Weta Digital have released several books illustrating the visualization and designs for several films. There have been at least five books accompanying *The Hobbit* trilogy of films (all Harper Collins, Daniel Falconer) and one for *District 9* (Harper Collins, Daniel Falconer). In 2015 the non-fiction *Weta: 20 Years of Imagination on Screen*, by Clare Burgess with Brian Stublely won the Publication/Production category of the Sir Julius Vogel Award, and provides an overview of Weta's contribution to New Zealand's science fiction and fantasy films since the early 1990s.



Understandably, books specifically about the background of *The Lord of the Rings* films and its creators have an enthusiastic market. These include Ian Nathan's *Anything You Can Imagine: Peter Jackson and the Making of Middle Earth* (Harper Collins, 2018); Doug Adams's *The Music of The Lord of the Rings Films* (Carpentier, 2016); Ian Brodie's *The Lord of the Rings: Location Guidebook* (Harper Collins, 2003); Andy Serkis's *Gollum: How We Made Movie Magic* (HarperCollins, 2003), Brian Sibley's *Peter Jackson: A Film Maker's Journey* (Harper Collins, 2003); *Peter Jackson: From Gore to Mordor*, edited by Paul Woods (Plexus Publishing, 2005)

CRASH COURSES IN NEW ZEALAND'S FICTION, FILMS AND TELEVISION

Anthologies and collections are a great way to get across New Zealand's best science fiction, fantasy and horror of the past two decades. Paper Road Press have recently released a collection *Year's Best Aotearoa New Zealand Science Fiction and Fantasy Volume 1* edited by Marie Hodgkinson. The following list presents the winning collections and anthologies in the Collected Works and Production/Publication categories of the Sir Julius Vogel Awards:

- ◆ *The Invisible Road* (Harper Collins, 2008) by Elizabeth Knox
- ◆ *Voyagers: Science Fiction Poetry from New Zealand* (Interactive Press, 2009) edited by Mark Pirie and Tim Jones
- ◆ *A Foreign Country - New Zealand Speculative Fiction* (Random Static, 2010) edited by Anna Caro and Juliet Buchanan
- ◆ *Tales for Canterbury* (Random Static, 2011) edited by Cassie Hart and Anna Caro
- ◆ *Mansfield with Monsters* (Steam Press, 2012) by Katherine Mansfield, Matt and Debbie Cowens
- ◆ *Baby Teeth* (Paper Road Press, 2013) edited by Lee Murray and Dan Rabarts
- ◆ *Lost in the Museum* (Phantom Feather Press, 2014), Phoenix Writers Group
- ◆ *Write Off Line 2015: The Earth We Knew* (Jean Gilbert, 2015) edited by Jean Gilbert and Chad Dick
- ◆ *At the Edge* (Paper Road Press, 2016) edited by Dan Rabarts and Lee Murray
- ◆ *Mariah's Prologues* (Splashdown Books, 2017) by Grace Bridges
- ◆ *Te Korero Ahi Kā* (SpecFicNZ, 2018) edited by Grace Bridges, Lee Murray and Aaron Compton.
- ◆ *White Cloud Worlds Anthology* (Harper Collins, 2010) edited by Paul Tobin
- ◆ *White Cloud Worlds Anthology 3* (Ignite Inc, 2015) edited by Paul Tobin

Film and Television

It takes a lot less time to watch films and television shows than to read novels - unless they are particularly long running series like *Xena: Warrior Princess*. The internet has quite a large selection of New Zealand's science fiction and fantasy shows available online, including some of the very early shows. Really famous early films such as *The Quiet Earth* and *The Navigator* are still available as DVDs, while *The Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* films are available on everything from DVD boxed sets to free to air television.

INTO THE FUTURE

This history of New Zealand's science fiction and fantasy is quite definitely incomplete, and this history does no more than display some of the highlights and draw attention to gaps in the record. There are still huge areas that are either unknown or without high profile histories. What has the theatrical scene done with science fiction themes, and how far back does it go? What are the names behind the board games and computer games? We have touched on podcasts and comics only briefly, yet they are large and healthy markets. Precisely how big are they, and what awards have they won? What is the early history of

New Zealand fandom? Precisely how long ago did local fans cease to be isolated readers and viewers, and organise into groups? The first National Science Fiction Convention was held in 1979, but was it the country's first convention of all? The locally written science fiction of the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s is an almost entirely unknown frontier. Will anyone ever take on the truly awesome task of compiling a comprehensive bibliography of New Zealand science fiction and fantasy?

Maori legends, themes and culture have been made use of in many works such as Margaret Mahy's *Kaitangata Twitch* and Lee Murray's futuristic thrillers, and there are Maoris active in the literature, film and television, but what proportion of New Zealand's science fiction and fantasy draws upon the advanced seafaring civilization that established itself on the islands six hundred years before European colonisation? We have pointed out that the Maori myths and legends resemble the European Viking sagas, and much European fantasy - and even some science fiction - is based upon those. This history has been primarily concerned with the development of New Zealand's European literature and film of the speculative and fantastic, yet there is definite interest among readers worldwide in Maori legends or works based on them.

In 2019, New Zealand science fiction and fantasy was being produced in larger quantities than it had been in Australia in 1999 - just two decades earlier. Hard figures are not available, but comparative demographics indicate that at least ten times more New Zealand authors are active and being published than two decades ago, and thanks to word processing advances and online publishing they are publishing ever increasing works per person. The country has an excellent track record in all areas of science fiction and fantasy, the Internet submits New Zealand fiction in New York or London with the click of a mouse, and New Zealand is about to host its first World Science Fiction Convention. This is the Golden Age of New Zealand science fiction and fantasy, and it has been with us since the 1990s. In 1975, when Australia staged its first Worldcon, the overseas Guest of Honour was persuaded to run a live-in workshop to teach promising Australian writers how to write science fiction. As the 2020 New Zealand Worldcon approaches, nobody is suggesting that New Zealand's authors need to be taught anything about writing.

In 1999 *Strange Constellations: A History of Australian Science Fiction* (Greenwood Press, 1999) was published. Written by Van Ikin, Russell Blackford and Sean McMullen, this was the very first history of Australians' contributions and achievements in science fiction, even though they had been writing the genre for a century and a half. McMullen updated this book with the shorter history, *Outpost of Wonder* in his collection *Dreams of the Technarion* (Reanimus Press, 2017). These two works are important because they drew together the highly impressive stories and achievements of so many Australian authors and works that had been swamped and forgotten by the immense output from America, Britain and other countries. The same applies to New Zealand's science fiction and fantasy: put the authors, stories and shows together, and they amount to an astoundingly impressive chronicle that goes back a century and a half. This history will hopefully inspire people to supply some missing pieces of this tantalisingly incomplete jigsaw.

Why is it important to tell that story? Surely New Zealand fiction is culturally very similar to that of America, Britain and Australia, and only brilliant individual works need be remembered? Surely New Zealand's authors and producers of film and television have done pretty well without people writing histories about them? Whatever one's views on whether New Zealand brings something unique to science fiction, it remains true that aspiring authors in New Zealand need to be reminded that living in their geographically remote country is absolutely no barrier to getting great work published or produced, locally or overseas. That is what starts people writing down their dreams, and gives them the drive and hope to keep writing.

Science fiction and fantasy experienced massive change and disruption when the digital revolution transformed the publishing industry worldwide. Now, having come to terms with the new reality of electronic publication and digital streaming, 2020 has brought the COVID-19 virus to change the world in which the science fiction and fantasy industry exists. So far New Zealand science fiction has coped incredibly well, transforming the 2020 Wellington World Science Fiction Convention into a virtual event - the first virtual Worldcon in history. This innovation may be the way of the future. From now on Worldcons may offer virtual memberships, for attendees who want to minimise their impact on climate change by not flying internationally to attend.

In his 2019 tribute to the great Douglas Adams, Neil Gaiman said the author of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* had a talent for standing back from things that others took for granted and making very clever observations. In the same way New Zealand's science fiction fans, authors and industries have been able to stand back and watch the rest of the world, then given the world science fiction for the screen, transvestite mad scientists, paranormal police, suburban gods, refugee vampires, zombie sheep, a glorious visualisation of Middle Earth, and a virtual World Science Fiction Convention. The rest of the world would be wise to return the compliment and pay a lot more attention to New Zealand.

THE AUTHORS

Simon Litten lives in Wellington, and won a Sir Julius Vogel Award in 2011 for Services to Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror. He has also won three New Zealand Science Fiction Fan Awards, for Services to Fandom in 2008, and for Best Fan Writing in 2010 and 2012.

Sean McMullen lives in Melbourne with Zoya, Freya and Loki - the latter two are cats. He co-authored the award-winning *Strange Constellations: A History of Australian Science Fiction* with Van Ikin and Russell Blackford in 1999, and updated it with *Outpost of Wonder: Australian Science Fiction 1832 - 2017* in 2017. He is also the author of 25 science fiction and fantasy novels and collections, and a hundred published stories. He has won numerous awards, and been shortlisted for the BSFA and Hugo Awards. His daughter is the award winning screenwriter Catherine S. McMullen