



AUSSIECON 4

68TH World Science Fiction Convention

Melbourne, Australia

2 - 6 September 2010

This media pack contains background and reference information for use by the general and specialist press. It includes the following sections.

- What is the World Science Fiction Convention? (Background and history of the Worldcon)
- Guests of Honour for the 68th Worldcon
- The State of the Art: Science Fiction in 2010
- The Worldcon and Melbourne, Australia
- Contact and General Information for the 2010 Worldcon

All of this material and much more can be found on our website at:

<http://www.aussiecon4.org.au>

We will soon be adding high resolution photos and other resources to this website for use by the media. The direct link to our public relations centre is

<http://www.aussiecon4.org.au/index.php?page=32>

The 2010 World Science Fiction Convention, known as "Aussiecon 4", will take place in Melbourne, Australia from 2-6th September 2010. More information about Aussiecon 4, including current membership rates, is available from its web site <http://www.aussiecon4.org.au> or by writing to info@aussiecon4.org.au

"World Science Fiction Society", "WSFS", "World Science Fiction Convention", "Worldcon", "NASFiC", "Hugo Award", and the distinctive design of the Hugo Award Rocket are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society, an unincorporated literary society.

What is the Worldcon?

History

The Worldcon, or World Science Fiction Convention, is the annual convention of the World Science Fiction Society (WSFS). (The members of each Worldcon are the members of the WSFS). Worldcons have been held each year since 1939 with the exception of four years during World War II. Locations have included the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Japan, England, Scotland, Germany, and The Netherlands. Science fiction and fantasy fans travel from all over the world to attend.

The Worldcon is most often held in the USA and will return to Australia in 2010 after visiting Canada (2009). Each Worldcon has a unique name. Aussiecon 4 to be held in 2010 will be the Worldcon's fourth visit to Melbourne, and the 68th Worldcon in all.

Volunteer Run – by Fans, for Fans

The most striking fact about Worldcon is that it is run entirely on a volunteer basis. None of the organisers are paid for their work. They are all fans giving their time and enthusiasm freely. This makes Worldcon one of the largest all-volunteer-run events in the world. In addition to the fans who pitch in to make the event work, hundreds of professional authors, editors, scientists and publishers participate on panels and other events free of charge. All of these people buy memberships to the convention. Some of them have been participating in and running the Worldcon every year for decades.

One of the reasons that Worldcon needs so many volunteer staff is that it is a huge event. It runs over five days, with the entertainment and programming getting into gear on the first afternoon and not ramping down until the afternoon four days later.

Of course for the staff there are also days of work required to set up and close down the event. Before the actual site preparation, a vast amount of work is required to plan the convention, which is particularly difficult because it takes place in a different city (and often a different country) every year. In addition, but there is no continuing staff structure – each year's event is organized by a different group of fans, who may typically spend 6 or 7 years on the Worldcon from the beginning of their bid to host the event, through to the wrap-up of the final accounts.

Although Worldcon is run by volunteers, it's certainly not free to put on. The 2010 event will have a direct turnover in excess of \$750,000 – and that excludes the much larger amount that the attendees will spend on travel, accommodation and other personal expenditure. The largest part of the convention's expenditure goes toward the hire of the site and facilities, but it is also necessary to spend money on member publications, events, and hire of technical equipment and furnishings. The majority of the convention's income is raised through membership fees, which at around \$200 per adult member fall between those of a professional conference and a fair or exhibition. However, with up to 20 different activities per hour on offer across five full days, the cost per hour for attending the convention falls well below that for a concert or even a trip to the cinema!

What Happens at the Worldcon?

To the outside observer, the Worldcon has two distinct and complementary types of content: program and social. The program content includes:

- Extensive *Formal Programming*, comprising lectures, debates and panel discussions. Typically there will be in excess of 500 distinct items in this core program over the 5 days, with up to a 10 streams running in parallel at any time. The formal program ranges over topics from fiction and writing to politics and science, and participants have included Nobel Prize winners, astronauts, scientists, writers, editors, publishers, artists, film makers, and fans.
- An *Art Show*, featuring leading professionals from the field. The majority of the art is for sale, with prices on some pieces running into many thousands of dollars. The Art Show also features special exhibits, and the show as a whole usually includes several hundred original artwork pieces. At Aussiecon 4 there will be special exhibits for children and young adults.
- An extensive *Dealers Area*, where booksellers and other specialist dealers sell their goods directly to members. These may include books (new, used and collector's items), jewellery, toys, t-shirts, and other science fiction and fantasy related merchandise.
- Professional and amateur *Exhibits* – for instance film props and costumes, science exhibits and technology demonstrations.
- A *Masquerade*, in which professional and amateur costumers present a competitive live presentation of their best work.
- *Special Events*, including concerts, live theatrical presentations and artists' and writers' workshops.
- A *Film and Video Program*, usually including the works for the Hugo Awards that year for Best Dramatic Presentations. (For more information about the Hugo Awards, see below.) Major TV and film studios will often preview their new work at the Worldcon. For example, Worldcon attendees were the first to find out about Star Trek, Star Wars and many others.
- *Filk* – A unique combination of folk singing and science fiction, featuring folk-style songs with science fiction and fantasy themes.

In addition to the above, the *Hugo Awards* are presented at a highlighted ceremony. The awards themselves are nominated and voted upon by the members of the Worldcon, and are the leading awards in the field – the science fiction “Oscars”.

Special prestige is given to the Worldcon *Guests of Honour*. They often present Guest of Honour speeches, participate in interviews, and are treated with respect honouring their years in the science fiction community. Past Guests of Honour have included the majority of leading figures from the field, including such luminaries as Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, Robert A. Heinlein, Ursula K. Le Guin, Anne McCaffrey, Terry Pratchett, Neil Gaiman, and George R.R. Martin.

In addition to the above events, which are open to all attendees, the attendees at the Worldcon often host a number of related activities, particularly in relation to the professionals who attend. These activities include book launches, publishers' events, and so on.

Alongside the program content, the social aspect of the Worldcon is also extremely important to its members. Science Fiction fandom started in the 1930s, when the genre was a ghetto of pulp

fiction. Fans sought each other out to share their interest at a time when the general public saw the field as slightly tawdry and having little relevance. Although these days are long gone, and Science Fiction tropes and imagery are now ubiquitous in everyday life and in the general media, social interaction remains a key part of the Worldcon. Eating and drinking together, seeing old friends and making new ones, and generally interacting with the other people at the event, is a key part of the overall picture. The Worldcon is fundamentally a participatory activity – and not to be confused with the more recent phenomenon of “media events” at which actors and other staff from leading TV shows are presented to fans of the show with most opportunities for interaction coming at a cost. At Worldcon, fans connect with other fans directly – and some of those other fans are professionals in the field.

Links & Resources

World Science Fiction Society: <http://www.wsfs.org/>

List of all Worldcons from 1939: <http://www.nesfa.org/data/LL/TheLongList.html>

Hugo Awards: <http://www.thehugoawards.org/>

List of recent and upcoming Worldcons:

2005 – Glasgow, UK	http://www.worldcon.org.uk/interaction
2006 – Los Angeles, CA, USA	http://www.laconiv.org/
2007 – Yokohama, Japan	http://www.nippon2007.us/
2008 – Denver, CO, USA	http://pl745.pairlitesite.com/
2009 – Montreal, Canada	http://www.anticipationsf.ca/
2011 – Reno, Nevada, USA	http://www.renovationsf.org/

2010 Worldcon Guests of Honour

Kim Stanley Robinson



Kim Stanley Robinson (born March 23, 1952) is an American science fiction writer, probably best known for his award-winning Mars trilogy. He has been widely acclaimed by readers and critics since the beginning of his career, and is considered by many to be one of the finest living writers of science fiction. His work has garnered many awards including the Nebula Award (*The Blind Geometer* and *Red Mars*), the Asimov, John W. Campbell, Locus, and World Fantasy Awards (*Black Air*) and the Hugo Award (*Green Mars*). As well, he was nominated for both the Hugo Award and Nebula Award for his novel *The Wild Shore*

<http://www.sfsite.com/lists/ksr.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kim_Stanley_Robinson

Shaun Tan



Shaun Tan was born in Fremantle, WA, and after freelancing for some years moved to Melbourne, VIC.

In 2008 he was nominated for the Hugo as Professional Artist and in the Related Work category for *The Arrival*.

Other awards he has received include the 2007 World Fantasy Award for Artist, various Ditmar Awards (Australian Science Fiction Achievement Awards), and the Children's Book Council of Australia's Picture Book of the Year award in 2007 for *The Rabbits*.

www.shauntan.net

Robin Johnson



- **Chair: Aussiecon (Worldcon 33, Melbourne, 1975)**
- Co-Chair Australian National Science Fiction Convention, 1979, 1995, 1998.
- Committees: Various Australian national and local conventions.
- Guest of Honour: 10th Australian National Science Fiction Convention, 1971
- Fan Guest of Honour at two Australian regional conventions.
- Awards and Honours: Special Ditmars [Australian National SF award] for Contribution to Fandom in 1974 and 1983
- First Fandom International Big Heart Award 2007

Science Fiction in 2010

The Triumph of Science Fiction

Science fiction and fantasy has emerged from a ghetto to be the leading genre in mainstream fiction. This is an amazing transformation for a genre that was primarily populated by pulp magazines and B movies only 50 years ago. Today the genre is ubiquitous and influential.

- ***Lord of the Rings*** regularly wins awards such as “Book of the Century”.
- In the UK, a national survey in 2003 (“the BBC Big Read”) found that seven of the public’s top 10 all-time favourite books were science fiction and fantasy.

1. ***The Lord of the Rings*, JRR Tolkien**
2. *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen
3. ***His Dark Materials*, Philip Pullman**
4. ***The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, Douglas Adams**
5. ***Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, JK Rowling**
6. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee
7. ***Winnie the Pooh*, AA Milne**
8. ***Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell**
9. ***The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, CS Lewis**
10. *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte

- Science fiction and fantasy movies routinely dominate movie box office charts across the world – from Star Wars to Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter. Box Office Mojo’s list of All-time Box Office Leaders includes nine science fiction and fantasy films.

1. *Titanic*
2. ***The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King***
3. ***Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest***
4. ***The Dark Knight***
5. ***Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone***
6. ***Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End***
7. ***Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix***
8. ***The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers***
9. ***Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace***
10. ***Shrek 2***

- Science fiction has also produced many of television’s most successful and long-running series – from the many incarnations of Star Trek to contemporary cult hits such as *Lost* and *Heroes*.
- Many of the most successful computer games draw heavily on science fiction and fantasy imagery, from early text-based adventures to the latest blockbuster titles such as *Halo* and *Half-Life*.
- Science fiction and fantasy motifs are also regularly represented in advertising – including classics such as the 1984 Apple Macintosh TV commercial inspired by George Orwell’s novel.



- The casual use of science fiction and fantasy concepts, which takes for granted the public's familiarity with them, is the final proof of the triumph of science fiction. We are all in the ghetto now!

Useful Links

BBC Big Read: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread/vote/>

Box Office Charts: <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/>

The Worldcon and Melbourne

The Worldcon will bring both economic and other benefits to Melbourne as the host city.

Economic Impact

Melbourne will see direct and indirect economic impact from the 2,500+ expected convention attendees. The direct impact is significant, particularly in the current economic climate – when the Worldcon was held in San José, California in 2002, the San José Convention and Visitor's Bureau estimated the overall impact on the area at over **\$9 million**.

In 2008, the Major Projects Minister Theo Theophanous estimated that the 3,000 fans visiting Melbourne would generate about \$18 million in economic benefit for Victoria.



Non-Economic Impact

The convention will benefit the city of Melbourne through:

- Prestige resulting from the hosting of the convention. The convention attracts several hundred leading writers, editors, publishers, scientists, artists and related professionals.
- A raised profile of the city as a host for national and international events. Other recent Worldcon hosts have included such global cities as Los Angeles, Glasgow, Yokohama and Montreal.
- Cross-fertilization. The professionals who attend the convention will typically be willing and able to participate in related events in the city during their stay – most obviously book signings and other literary activities.

The convention is committed to creating strong local links with related organizations in and around Melbourne. The effort to bring the Worldcon to Melbourne has received especially strong support from:

- The Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau (MCVB) <http://www.mcvb.com.au>
- Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre (MCEC) <http://mcec.com.au>

Contact & General Information

Convention Web Site: <http://www.aussiecon4.org.au>

Email Contact Information: General information: info@aussiecon4.org.au

Media: communications@aussiecon4.org.au

Media Liaison: Rose Mitchell

Postal Contact Address: Aussiecon 4
The 68th World Science Fiction Convention
GPO Box 1212
Melbourne VIC 3001. Australia

Membership Information:

Attending membership costs \$275 for adults and \$50 for children under 16 until 31st August 2010. Children under 6 may alternatively attend free of charge as "Kids in Tow" (no childcare included). Ages are calculated as of 2 September 2010, the first day of the convention.

These rates cover full attendance at the convention and all of its events. Adult members also receive a range of publications and other items, plus voting rights in the Hugo awards and site selection for the 2012 Worldcon. Membership may be purchased online via the Aussiecon 4 website.

Accommodation Information

The convention will be based at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre. Member accommodation will be provided at the luxurious five star Hilton Melbourne South Wharf and a range of other accommodation at nearby hotels. Hilton Melbourne South Wharf is situated adjacent to the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre and has its own entrance to the convention centre.

Convention Centre Information: <http://www.mcec.com.au>

The Aussiecon 4 Media Kit compiled by the Communications Division. Original concept was developed by the Renovation Press Center and is used with permission.