



Continuum X

Carnival of Lost Souls

53rd Australian National Science Fiction Convention

To get to know our Guests of Honour we asked them 5 essential questions:



An interview with

Ambelin Kwaymullina

1. For those who haven't come across your work before, how would you describe your stories?

You know what, it's super difficult to describe your own work, or at least, it's difficult to do it without sounding like an idiot. Before too long you find yourself using melded words like 'genre-defying' and realise that you sound - well, stupid, obviously; also pretentious. Besides which, only half the story is on the page; the other half is in how it's read. Some people are firmly of the view that *The Tribe* series is fantasy while others say sci-fi; some think it's an adventure, others a thriller, others still a political narrative on human rights - or refugees - or race ... take your pick. All views are equally valid. I think readers have a right to find in a book what they will, and each of those elements are definitely there to be found. *The Tribe* series is dystopian, and as is the case with

most dystopian books, the imperfections of the future are drawn from the imperfections of the past and the present. So too are the solutions - one of the things I've always loved about speculative fiction is the way it deals with the best and worst of humanity.

2. Characters in *The Tribe* series are bonded with an animal, and on your new website visitors can find out what kind of animal they relate to. What animal do you think you'd be bonded to?

A wolf, because Ashala is, and Ash is the character who I am most like. Plus I write from her perspective which means I live as Ash when I am writing. That's not easy ... especially not for my family ... basically I'm awful to live with when I'm working on one of the books. Ashala's fears and worries are mine (as are her triumphs, but I don't usually get to those to very end). There is a moment in the first book, when Ashala is gazing into the eyes of the man trying to destroy her and realises for the first time the extent of his corruption - yeah, that was hard to write. I felt physically cold when I was writing it, chilled all the way to the bone. In fact, I had to go away and have a cup of tea and give myself a reassuring talking to before I could go on with the scene.

3. You've written and illustrated several picture books and are in the middle of a series of YA novels, what are the different challenges of writing a 4 book story compared to telling a story with pictures and limited text?

There's a degree to which writing is writing. Words are hard, it's just that there's less of them in picture books, although that can make things more difficult too. There's no 'explaining things later' in a picture book, every word has to earn its place in the narrative. And I suspect being an illustrator has helped me with the novels. Most people talk about my writing as being visual, I think that comes from working in two mediums; as an author/illustrator I'm used to immediately thinking about how every scene will look in picture form.

4. As an Aboriginal speculative fiction author, what influence has Palyku storytellers had on the way you craft stories?

You know, I'm going to be talking a bit about this in my Continuum Guest of Honour speech, so I don't want to say too much here for fear of being left with no material that people haven't heard (or read) before. But one of the interesting things I've discovered since the books have been released is that some of the elements that people identify as fantasy (eg, the ancestral serpent) are part of my reality as an Indigenous person ... and it never even occurred to me to think of them as fantasy. So I can identify some of the ways in which my culture has shaped the story but there's probably a lot of others that I'm not even consciously aware of.

5. If you had a TARDIS where and when would you go and who would be your companion?

One hundred years into the future, to see if our species does survive, and if we manage to do it without compromising the ability of every other species to exist or further widening the existing inequities among human beings.

And companion? David Tennant. (got a bit of a crush...)



An interview with

Jim C. Hines

1. For those who haven't come across your work before, how would you describe your stories?

THEY'RE THE VERY BESTEST STORIES IN THE WORLD AND YOU SHOULD RUN OUT AND BUY THEM ALL!

Ahem. Sorry. I should never let my id answer interview questions.

The second goblin book opens with a nose-picking injury, which probably tells you everything you need to know about that series. As a general rule, I want my stories to be fun. I like a fair amount of action, and I'll almost always try to work some humor into them. I like clever characters who can outthink the bad guys. My second series was all about the kick-ass fairy tale heroines. I wrote those books for my daughter when she was going through her princess phase, because I wanted her to know heroes didn't always have to be big, strapping, straight white dudes.

I do try to work with more serious issues and struggles in the stories-- and humor can be a great tool for that--but one of my main priorities is that I want people to have fun reading them.

2. Some people might know you from your cover poses which raised a fantastic amount of money for Aicardi Syndrome Foundation and awareness about sexism in book covers, what did you learn from the experience that surprised you most?

The first thing I learned was that I'm not as flexible as I used to be. Some of those cover poses were physically impossible, while others were completely possible ... but would leave you with tight or cramped muscles for hours afterward. The fact that women are often sexualized and objectified in cover art in ways that men generally aren't wasn't a surprise, nor was some of the backlash, and the insistence that showing a shirtless man in a comfortable, dominant pose was exactly as bad as showing women in helpless, fetishized, powerless poses.

I did learn that I needed to be more precise in how I talked about this sort of thing, and to make it more clear that I wasn't trying to say that sexism in book covers (and elsewhere) is all the fault of the artists, but was instead a problem with countless layers, including editorial, marketing, sales, buyers, and yes, even writers.

3. You wrote a series of books about goblins, and often tweet about them when travelling, what do you love about them?

I think my favorite thing about Jig and his fellow goblins is that they're

so unapologetic about who and what they are. They're crude, rude, ugly, and uncivilized, and they're completely okay with that. Life makes sense to them. Life may be brutish and way-too-short, but they've got a kind of Zen-like awareness and acceptance of themselves as goblins. They fight, they die, they eat random adventurers, they stab each other in the back, and it's all completely out in the open.

Plus Jig has a pet spider named Smudge who sets things on fire, and that's just plain fun.

4. You are a tireless campaigner for more diversity in genre writing and a more inclusive fandom. What makes you so passionate about these issues and what do you feel fandom does right?

Fandom has been very welcoming to me, both as an author and as a fan. Like a lot of us, I didn't exactly fit in with the cool kids growing up. Apparently sewing a Star Trek patch onto your jean jacket doesn't make you popular in junior high school. Who knew? So when I found conventions and fandom and people I could just geek out with, it was a wonderful experience. In some ways, it was like coming home.

The problem is, fandom isn't as welcoming and inclusive as we think we are. I started listening and seeing that, while I felt wanted and welcomed here, others didn't, for very real and valid reasons. And I want people to feel welcome. I want a larger, broader, more diverse fandom, both because I want people to have that same feeling of coming home that I've got, and because-- selfishly--I think it makes fandom far more interesting and exciting.

I think there's a lot fandom is doing right, starting with the fact that we're having the conversation. We're struggling with these problems instead of ignoring them. There will always be people who assume these problems are made up, and don't want to deal with them, but I think we've got a critical mass of folks who aren't going to be silenced, and those voices are having an effect. More conventions are taking sexual harassment seriously, for example. More authors and fans are pushing back against whitewashed cover art. More people are pointing out those groups that have traditionally been

excluded from our stories, and are taking steps to change that.

5. If you had a TARDIS where and when would you go and who would be your companion?

I'd want to check out the future, probably jumping ahead about a hundred years at a time in the beginning, just to watch how we grow as a species. (And to take advantage of some of that future medical tech. They should be able to cure diabetes by 2114, right? As soon as I get a working pancreas, I'm taking everyone out for ice cream sundaes!)

I'd love to see humanity growing up and spreading out, to visit us on the moon, Mars, and wherever else we end up. Assuming we don't all wipe ourselves out, of course. In which case I'd go a bit further into the future to see how the superevolved cockroaches are doing in our place.

I'd have to take my wife and kids as my companions, because otherwise they'd never forgive me :-). Besides, the TARDIS has a pool, and the kids would love that.

Continuum is an annual Melbourne speculative fiction and pop culture fan convention celebrating creativity across genre and media. From hard-edge science fiction to high-flown fantasy, comic books to film noir, high culture to sub-culture... we sink our teeth into it all! Continuum is run on a not-for-profit basis and all revenue goes towards venue and equipment hire, transport and accommodation for our guests, and other convention specific expenses. The Continuum Foundation supports Continuum conventions and we are grateful for their support.

Continuum 10 will take place on the Queen's Birthday Weekend, June 6 - 9, 2014. Our guests of honour this year are Jim C. Hines and Ambelin Kwaymullina. Supporting them will be a wide range of other speakers and panellists in a fabulous line up of panels, presentations and special events

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