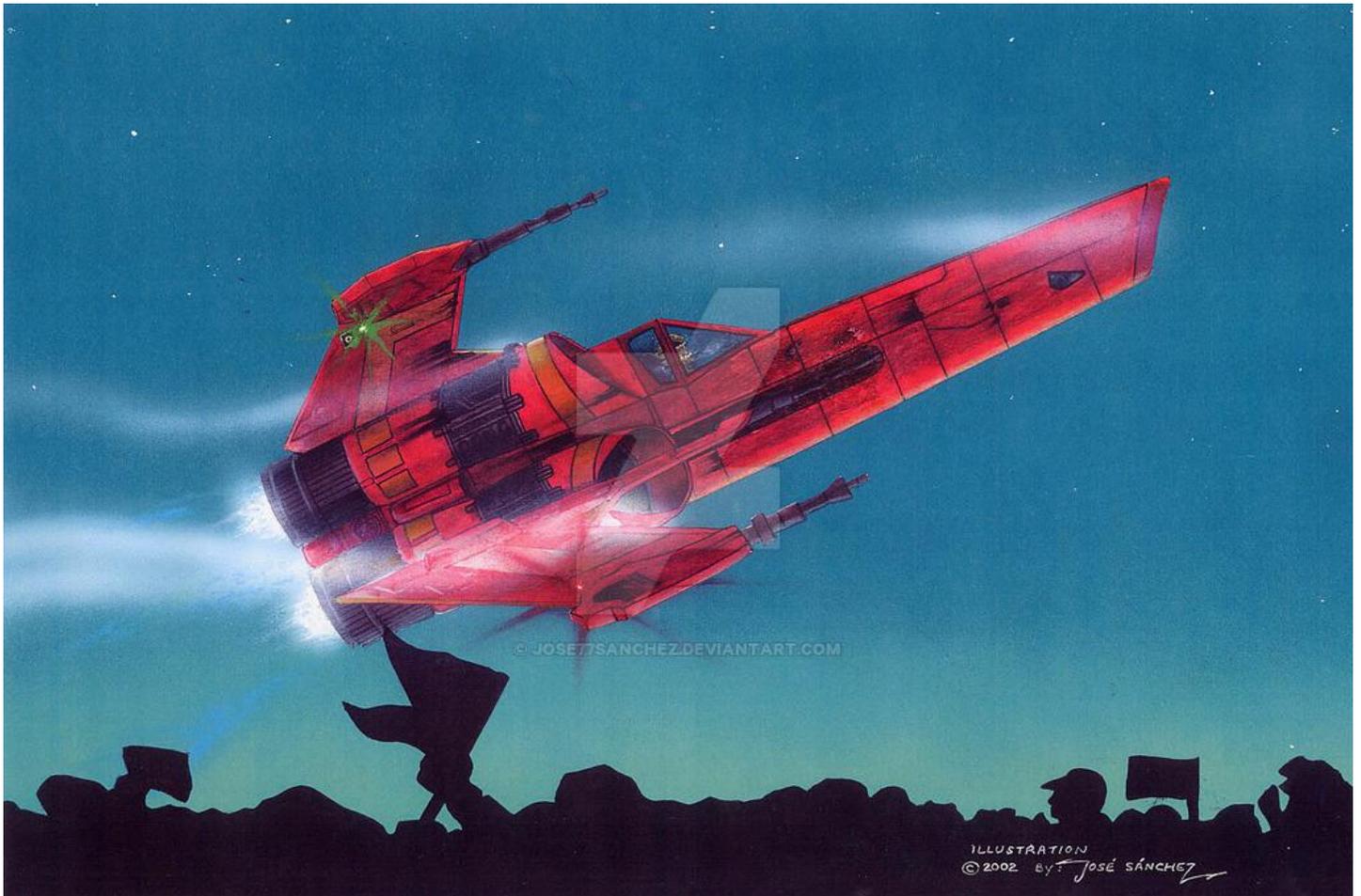


Tightbeam 326



Battlestar Galactica Low and Slow
by Jose Sanchez
November 2021

Tightbeam 326

November 2021

The Editors are:

George Phillies phillies@4liberty.net 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester, MA 01609.

Jon Swartz jon_swartz@hotmail.com

Art Editors are Angela K. Scott, Jose Sanchez, and Cedar Sanderson.

Art Contributors are Angela K. Scott, Jose Sanchez, David Russell, and Cedar Sanderson.

Anime Reviews are courtesy Jessi Silver and her site www.s1e1.com. Ms. Silver writes of her site “S1E1 is primarily an outlet for views and reviews on Japanese animated media, and occasionally video games and other entertainment.”

Regular contributors include Justin E. A. Busch, Tom Feller, Declan Finn, Greg Hullender, Jim McCoy, Chris Nuttall, Pat Patterson, Heath Row, Cedar Sanderson, and Alan White. Declan Finn’s web page declanfinn.com covers his books, reviews, writing, and more. Jim McCoy’s reviews and more appear at jimboss-ffreviews.blogspot.com. Chris Nuttall’s essays and writings are seen at chrishanger.wordpress.com and at superversivesf.com. Pat Patterson’s reviews appear on his blog habakkuk21.blogspot.com and also on Good Reads and Amazon.com. Cedar Sanderson’s reviews and other interesting articles appear on her site www.cedarwrites.wordpress.com/ and its culinary extension. Samuel Lubell originally published his reviews in The WSFA Journal. Anita Barrios is a former middle school ELA and Social Studies teacher.

Some contributors have Amazon links for books they review, to be found with the review on the web; use them and they get a reward from Amazon.

Tightbeam is published approximately monthly by the National Fantasy Fan Federation and distributed electronically to the membership.

The N3F offers four different memberships. To join as a public (free) member, send phillies@4liberty.net your email address.

To join or renew, use the membership form at <http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/> to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines. Memberships with The National Fantasy Fan (TNFF) via paper mail are \$18; memberships with TNFF via email are \$6. Zines other than TNFF are email only. Additional memberships at the address of a current dues-paying member are \$4. **Public memberships are free.** Send payments to Kevin Trainor, PO Box 143, Tonopah NV 89049 . Pay online at N3F.org. PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org.

Editorial Note

Editor Jon Swartz has asked that we shorten Tightbeam. This change has now been made. To finish clarifying the difference between our zines, all book reviews will now appear in The N3F Review of Books Incorporating Prose Bono. Between moving some wonderful but very long articles to FanActivity Gazette, and the loss of a major contributor, we are now going to be running relatively thin issues. Your Letters of Comment are always appreciated.

Table of Contents

Art

- Front Cover ... Battlestar Galactica Low and Slow by Jose Sanchez
- 5 ... Feline Lullaby by Angela K Scott
- 12 ... Flower Drop by Angela K. Scott
- 13 ... Dark Unicorn by Angela K. Scott
- 17 ... Winged Cat by Angela K. Scott
- Back Cover ... The Mandalorian — Moff Gideon by Jose Sanchez

Letters of Comment

- 4 ... Will Mayo
- 4 ... Jose Sanchez

Anime

- 4 ... Autumn 2021 First Impressions – Platinum End by Jessi Silver
- 6 ... Banished from the Hero's Party by Jessi Silver

Comics

- 7 ... A (Probably) Final Word on the Current Iron Man Run by Stephanie Souders
- 10 ... The Legion of Serious But Seriously Unknown Superheroes — Tomboy
by George Phillies

Movies

- 11 ... Lucasfilm's SOLO: A Star Wars Story Review by Jim McCoy
- 13 ... Lucasfilm's The Rise of Skywalker Review by Jim McCoy

SerCon

- 16 ... Philip José Farmer Bio-Bibliography by Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D., N3F Historian

Gourmet Bureau

- 19 ... Eat This While You Read That: Lee and Miller by Cedar Sanderson

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: All material in this issue, unless expressly noted otherwise, is contributed for one-time use only in this publication in its various print and electronic forms including electronic archival libraries. All other copyrights are retained by the contributor. Other use of any other portion of this publication in any medium requires the express permission of the current (at time reproduction is to be made) President and Directorate of N3F and the original copyright holder.

Letters of Comment

Thanks, George,
It's nice to be included again. Also nice my reviews are drawing some interest. And you did Tamara Wilhite proud. Thank you again. More to come.
Will Mayo

Hi
Thanks again for using my art !
Looks awesome-!!!
Jose Sanchez

Anime

Autumn 2021 First Impressions – Platinum End by Jessi Silver

Streaming: Funimation
Episodes: 24
Source: Manga



Episode Summary: Ever since the death of his family and his adoption by an unloving aunt and uncle, Mirai hasn't felt happiness in his life. After his middle school graduation he walks to the roof of a tall building and leaps off its edge. However, before he hits the ground he's rescued by an angel, glowing and clad in white, who claims to be his guardian angel. Her goal is to grant him happiness, and she provides him with the tools to do so – a red arrow that causes its targets to fall in love with him, and angel wings that grant him flight and super speed. Mirai doesn't feel as though he'll ever be happy, but his first flight is exhilarating and he begins to believe that his angel might be telling the truth.

The red arrow has the added benefit of its target doing whatever the caster asks, so Mirai uses it on his aunt to confirm a horrible truth – the accident that killed his other family members was actually a murder committed by his uncle and aunt. The magic of the arrow causes his aunt to atone for her sin through death and Mirai escapes into the night. Mirai's guardian angel, called Nasse, fills him in on some other important details. There are 13 angel users around that are vying with one-another to become the next god – and now Mirai has become involved in this

deadly quest.



Impressions: Life is full of hardship, but it can also be filled with happiness... on its surface, this series seems to introduce this message via the protagonist, Mirai. It's a lesson that many of us need to hear from time-to-time, especially when the situation in our world has taken a down-turn. Yet, this doesn't appear to be a story of a

traumatized young man working toward some sort of inner peace; rather, it gives off the air of something much darker and misanthropic that seems to contradict a lot of the more inspirational messaging that occasionally pokes through the clouds.

I'm going to just reiterate once again that, while I can enjoy stories that focus on the darker parts of human nature, including really awful things like trauma and abuse, the caveat to that is that I can only really engage with it if there seems to be some semblance of reality at its core. Trauma is a complicated beast that manifests differently for every person, and its aftermath is often the sort of emotional struggle that's really difficult to portray in a meaningful way except over an extended period or story arc. I don't think it's wrong for this story to start out with Mirai's attempted suicide, because on paper his life experiences are really heavy and would have weighed on him to the point that suicide may have seemed like a better option. And yet... Mirai's reactions and emotions are portrayed extremely melodramatically and over-the-top, his aunt and uncle are cartoonish in their villainy, and the camera seems to relish in the gore and violence as it happens. Combined, these other factors make it seem as though the creators didn't have a good handle on how trauma actually looks; it seems more concerned with showing rivulets of blood dripping down a woman's ass and thighs as she bleeds out from a self-inflicted knife wound.



Feline Lullaby
By Angela K. Scott

I think that alone really sums up the grotesqueness of this episode. It takes a decent concept – a traumatized teen getting a second chance at happiness – and turns it into a death game dripping with misanthropy, melodrama, and weird ass shots. It's just not very compelling to me. It's hard not to be self-conscious.

Pros: I like that Mirai's family continues to serve as a positive touch-point in his life. His memories of his family and especially his mother are the parts of the episode that I enjoyed the most, primarily because they served as a nice reprieve from the violence and abuse that filled much of the remainder of the episode.

I've always dreamed about flying; whenever someone poses the question about what super power I'd like to have, being able to fly is always the first one that comes to mind. I think this episode gives a sense of how amazing being able to fly freely might be.

Cons: Nasse is just such a strange character. She's sort of divorced from certain concepts of human morality – she suggests that, in order to get money, Mirai should kill his uncle and cousins so that he could inherit back the ill-gotten inheritance they stole from Mirai. I'm having a difficult time figuring out whether this is meant to be funny or whether they're truly trying to lend a sense of foreignness and unreality to her character (I suspect the latter) but it just feels kind of gross and creepy to me.



The tone of this episode is mostly serious and fairly dark, and yet many of the shots go out of their way to show women's butts. Nasse is the character who most often falls victim to this

weird leering camera, but Mirai's aunt's death scene becomes weirdly sexualized by the camera angles showing her from the back. It's tacky and tasteless.

Content Warnings: Child abuse, partner abuse, murder, suicide (attempted), self-harm resulting in death, hypnotic manipulation, PTSD.

Would I Watch More? – This show feels like this season's edgy pick and I'm just not really feeling that at the moment.

Banished from the Hero's Party...

By Jessi Silver

Streaming: Funimation

Episodes: 13

Source: Light Novel

Episode Summary: Red is a quiet man, well-liked among the citizens of Zoltan, but with a personality that leads many to believe he might be obscuring parts of his past. And in truth, he is; he was once among the hero's party that was set to confront the demon lord, but though Red's wide range of skills and blessings as a "guide" provided him with many valuable abilities as an adventurer, he was eventually convinced that his services were no longer needed. As his sister Ruti became well-known as a heroic leader, Red allowed himself to fade into the background.

Now Red lives a slow life in Zoltan, holding onto the modest dream of building an apothecary shop and putting his survivalist skills to good use. When he rescues a village child using his knowledge of medicine (despite the actions of some careless heroes who set fire to the forest), Red works out a deal to get his shop built. When Rit, a well-known loner adventurer stops into town, she seems curious about Red and about the life he's chosen to lead.

Life in a quiet border town still has its charms.

Impressions: Note: I've gone back to a different method of screen-capping that's more tedious, but with better results (including the nicer-looking web version of the subs).

Fantasy worlds and the stories they encompass provide almost endless potential. While traditionally our entrance point as the audience is alongside the hero and their quest to accomplish something great, just as with history sometimes it's the smaller, more intimate stories that are the more interesting ones. Similar to last season's Drug Store in Another World, our protagonist Red's goal is about living a satisfying slow life running a pharmaceutical shop. Whereas that series' atmosphere seemed more focused on the softer, low-stakes drama of its well-established isekai hero, in this case we're getting some more focus on Red's previous life and skills and what he left behind.

Red's status as a fantasy party retiree isn't necessarily by choice, and I think that adds an interesting angle to the story. In this world, people's abilities are defined by certain God-given traits that they have from birth. This outlines how some folks become mages while others take up the sword. As a "guide," Red has access to a broad swath of skills meant to help support the hero's party and aid them on their journey – to a point. But as they say, a jack of all trades is a master of none and his abilities top out in their usefulness eventually. Though he may feel some injustice in this (flashbacks seem to suggest he was unwillingly let go from his post and that he as-

pired to things that were perhaps outside of his skill set), it's simply the way of the world.

As we meet Red, he's making vain attempts at leaving it all in the past, using the skills that he's developed to make a new career and being coy about his actual skill class. One thing I think this episode does a good job of making clear, though, is that it's extremely difficult to pretend you're unable to help with a situation if lives are at stake; Red breaks some rules to slip into adventurer territory to obtain a rare medicinal herb, and there we're treated to the sort of situation that arises when inexperienced (or outright uncaring) guides are utilized – a forest on fire due to irresponsibly discharged fire magic. It's so easy to discount the necessity of those whose skills don't provide them with the same flash and celebrity potential of a sword-slinging hero. Yet, their value truly comes into focus during those times of crisis where their specialized knowledge proves necessary.

The last few minutes of the episode mark the arrival of Rit, another well-known adventurer whose face appears all over the key art and the OP. Her part in the story is still a mystery at this point, but she seems quite intrigued by Red and his position of regard within the village. Perhaps she's someone else in search of a slower-paced way of living?

Pros: This is a “slow life” story the actually seems to have a little bit of meat on its bones. Neither a comedy nor a straightforward slice-of-life thus far, it provides some interesting narrative detail fleshing out the world and the protagonist's situation. While I wouldn't say that Red is a particularly interesting guy on his own, his story, which draws from feelings of inadequacy and wanting more for himself than what he's been given by default does a lot to fill in those blanks.

Cons: The system under which the heroes operate is very video-game-y. Like a lot of fantasy anime it seems to want to fall back on those tropes – leveling up, class systems, magic weapons, etc. – rather than develop its own elements more organically. On one hand it's a good time-saving shorthand. On the other, it feels very simplistic and isn't very interesting on its own. I'm just not typically a fan of it.

Content Warnings: Fantasy violence.

Would I Watch More? – I could see myself watching more of this. This episode did enough work to establish an intriguing situation for our character and there are clues that perhaps some of his former associates might make appearances later on. I'd also like to know more about Rit, since she's apparently important enough to be plastered all over the official series artwork.

Comics

A (Probably) Final Word on the Current Iron Man Run by Stephanie Souders

In prior columns, I've expressed frustration with Christopher Cantwell's new(ish) Iron Man ongoing. As of now, my initial opinion still stands.

Is it the worst Iron Man story that's ever been written? Eh, I'm not sure. But I think it's definitely competing in a tight horse race to the bottom with *The Crossing*, *Superior Iron Man*, and Gillen's dumb adoption retcon (that no one asked for). Oh, and *Iron Man 2020* too.



Tony's treating his own brain hemorrhage as an afterthought here and that's -- pretty quintessential.



(Unfortunately for me, there have been *a lot* of bad Iron Man stories -- which is deeply depressing.) So this is what I'm going to do: I'm going to use this column to present my definitive list of gripes in re: the current run and let that be my final word on Cantwell.

Until, that is, something drastically changes.

In the interest of fairness, I *do* have to give Cantwell credit on a few things. For one, he generally gets Tony's response to catastrophic injury exactly right. Yes, Tony *is* cavalier when it comes to his own health and safety. Yes, Tony *will* ignore all warnings regarding the same if he's in the middle of an important mission. Panels like this (from issue #13) are panels that actually work:

Secondly, as I've remarked in commentary elsewhere, Cantwell's original mid-life crisis angle wasn't a bad premise. Tony's been through *a lot* of trauma in recent years; for heaven's sake, one of his best friends basically murdered him! It's very, *very* natural that he would wish to reassess his life and make some radical changes.

But that -- actually brings me to my first gripe: this entire story is a bait and switch.

Marvel originally sold it as Tony going "back to basics" -- but Cantwell doesn't allow Tony's new, more pared-down life to stick. Just as soon as he can, he launches Tony back into space to battle an aspiring god and, as of the last issue, gifts him with the power cosmic.

Now maybe this is just me, but *I* wanted to see barefoot, grease-covered Tony using his more primitive armor to, perhaps, defend a struggling neighborhood from a gang of street-level villains (which he absolutely *would* do; see also his half-way houses, his philanthropic foundations, his orphan snuggling, etc.) -- while also assisting stranded motorists, rescuing treed cats, and - of course - working on his capital-I Issues. Granted, this sort of story doesn't have *quite* the same flash as a fight over Galactus' left-over toys, but that doesn't mean it can't be profound and compelling in the hands of



Patsy Walker, essentially, has become Tony's "mommy wife," to use a term one YouTuber has coined.

ly dependent upon a "strong woman" who will always set him straight (see above):

It's not healthy, in my view, for Tony to be paired up with a woman who sees him as her next project. I get chiding Tony for his flaws every once in a while (indeed, every truly loving relationship sometimes requires that sort of gentle correction), but Patsy never seems to have *anything* to say that's not an implicit criticism of everything Tony does. And yet Tony clings to her like a loyal puppy dog -- which honestly inspires nausea and vicarious embarrassment rather than admiration.

Gripe #3: Tony's not allowed to be a genius. Not once have we seen Tony use his fertile brain to *intelligently* tackle a conflict in which he's potentially over-matched. Instead, he consistently tries to punch his way through his problems -- and consistently gets his butt beat for his trouble. True: Tony, canonically, is not always the *wisest* decision maker. Sometimes, he *does* let his heart rule his head. But more frequently, Tony relies on strategy and sheer cleverness to get himself out of difficult jams. That Cantwell has entirely ignored this facet of Tony's character seems, to me, to be yet another calculated decision to diminish him as a hero. (One illustration of this problem: Tony *has* fought Ultimo before and won. His naivete and apparent helplessness a few issues ago, therefore, flatly contradicts his established history.)

Gripe #4: Cantwell can't tell the difference between "ego" and pride and, on the whole, has zero clue what really motivates Tony. Or: Like other modern writers, Cantwell opts to write a *very* surface-level *movie* Tony (which is not accurate to the *true* movie Tony, just FYI, but that's a whole other essay of its own) instead of a 616 Tony whose apparent pride is the fruit of an emotionally abusive upbringing (in the comics, Howard berates Tony for showing any sensitivity or weakness, declaring that Stark men must be "made of iron"), a whole heaping load of survivor's guilt, and an all-consuming terror that he will be responsible for some great evil if he doesn't have perfect control over events.

Tony's infamous bouts of monomania (like the Armor Wars or Civil War) are driven primarily by a desire to *protect* -- not by a desire to elevate his own reputation or position. Bear in mind: in the Civil War era, he must be *blackmailed* into taking the position as Director of SHIELD and spends a good chunk of his time in that role near tears and/or on the edge of literal madness. So -- yeah. He doesn't take the government's side in Civil War because he wants power. Similarly, the Armor Wars almost destroy his friendships, his status as an Avenger, and public confidence in his company. There's no profit there (aside from the assurance that his tech will now be

a genuinely talented writer. I hate to keep belaboring the point, but the very best issue of Iron Man has no universal stakes; all it features is a life-threatening blizzard and a homeless alcoholic (i.e., Tony) struggling to find a reason to continue living.

Gripe #2: Cantwell has Tom King syndrome. Tony has always had his issues with self-worth, depression, and substance abuse; he's *not* a hap-hap-happy guy. But in Cantwell's run, we're not just seeing the occasional morose moment; instead, Cantwell seems determined to render Tony complete-

kept out of villainous hands) – only nightmares.

In Cantwell's comic, meanwhile, Tony spends an inordinate amount of time seeking external validation. Especially in the early issues, he whines that no one respects him -- and he doesn't contradict Patsy when she supposes that he's seeking a statue in Central Park for his good deeds. But this is not Tony; this is some virtue-signaling tech billionaire who's stolen his name. This is Bill Gates in a Tony skinsuit.

And finally, Gripe #5: Tony has been checking his privilege since 19-freakin'-63. But Cantwell demonstrates no awareness of Tony's storied record of kindness and humanitarian giving, does not seem to know that Tony was once homeless, and seems equally uninformed when it comes to Tony's long-standing psychiatric troubles and his repeated flirtations with suicidal ideation. On the contrary, his storytelling seems based on the assumption that Tony's some entitled "rich white man" who's lived an entirely blessed life free of struggle or any contact with the "the other half" and is fixated on teaching Tony "lessons" on hardship and charity that *Tony has already learned*. Chris: in addition to reading my first post critiquing your comic, I also invite you to read (among other essential issues) Iron Man, Volume 1, #176, in which Tony shares a soaked cardboard box with a fellow wino on a rainy night. Believe me: Tony knows *intimately* what it's like to have nothing but the ragged clothes on his back.

The above points basically cover the major reasons why Cantwell's Iron Man isn't working for me -- and why I probably won't be talking about it much from this point forward.

The Legion of Serious But Seriously Unknown Superheroes — Tomboy By George Phillies

The eleven-year-old Tomboy and her figuratively steel fists appeared in the obscure Sterling



Comics in 1954. She was the supplemental story in Captain Flash, which lasted all of four issues. She was not a sidekick; she had her own adventures. Readers can find the entire record of her existence, all four adventures, at junglefrolics.blogspot.com/2010/07/before-there-was-hit-girlthere-was.html

Supposedly she had no superpowers, but the crimeworld nevertheless cowered before her steel fists. She did perform a few amazing stunts. For example, many mortal heroes would hesitate before jumping away from an aircraft in midflight, without a parachute. She did this twice. From the same airplane in the same flight, so as to defeat The Grey Claw. Between jumps, while outside the aircraft hanging onto a wing, she induced the aircraft to crash. Officially she has no superpowers, but some readers may entertain modest doubts. Some people are just so cynical. She had no origin story.





Interest in her existence recently increased slightly, when some supreme master of trivia suggested that subconscious memories of her existence might have influenced the recent and far better-known series Hit-Girl. Tomboy has passed out of copyright, or so I am told.

Films

Lucasfilm's SOLO: A Star Wars Story Review by Jim McCoy

I kind of wish I had gone sooner. This was a good movie. I'm going to make a comparison here. Some of you are going to be turned off by it, but it's valid, I think. Think about the Star Wars prequels. Okay, I'll wait while you stop swearing. Ready?

Listen, we all hated *The Phantom Menace*. Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader is not supposed to be a little goofball. Jar Jar Binks was annoying. The plot meandered and in a lot of ways the movie was more about cool stunts by Industrial Light and Magic than the story. *Attack of the Clones* was a love story. Actually, it was a creepy love story. Padme was so much older than Anakin that it shouldn't have worked. Star Wars is about wars, not lovers. And again, special effects were more important than the plot. If you remember the beginning and the car chase through Coruscant, it was sweet looking. What it didn't do was a whole lot to move things forward. But let's stop for a second and talk about *Revenge of the Sith*. What were the complaints about that? I don't remember any. People weren't up in arms about that one.

Revenge of the Sith did what it set out to do. It was the true origin story of Darth Vader. The first two movies were pretty much fluff and filler, but *ROTS* was a good flick. Yes, it was a special effects extravaganza. Star Wars always has been. The thing was, it was a good story. We found out what happened to Luke and Leia's mother. We saw why Darth Vader ended up in a bionic body and couldn't breathe right. We watched the Jedi fall and Yoda exile himself to Dagobah. We found out why Obi Wan Kenobi lived near Luke. It wasn't perfect. Nothing made by a human ever is. It was pretty close, though.



Flower Drop

By Angela K. Scott

SOLO: A Star Wars Story is like that, only better. This movie harkens back to A New Hope. SOLO is probably the best SW movie since Return of the Jedi. There is so much in this movie. I don't want to spoil too much, but pretty much everything you wanted to know about Han Solo is in this movie. He meets Chewie. He meets Lando Calrissian and gets the Millennium Falcon. He becomes an outlaw. We even find out how it makes sense that the Falcon made the Kessel Run in twelve parsecs. I mean, it's a bit goofy, but it makes sense and it's Han Freaking Solo. This is Mr. "Never tell me the odds." In context it really does work. OH, and we get to see who shot first in another context. I like it.

For the record, I can't seem to think of a better word for Lando than pansexual. It makes sense. It moves the plot forward. I don't want to get into exactly why I say this, because it's too big of a spoiler, but it works. It also makes Lando even more interested in keeping his ship. In a way, it makes what happens in Cloud City make sense. Emotion often clouds human judgment. I can't think of a better way to hurt a man and make him angry.

Alden Ehrenreich makes a good Han Solo. Look, he's not Harrison Ford. No one **is** Harrison Ford, except Harrison Ford. But Harrison Ford isn't quite as young as he was in nineteen seventy-seven. They needed someone new and they found him. Ehrenreich did a damn good job of portraying the Solo character. He didn't have all of Ford's mannerisms but he's not Ford. It works.

Donald Glover actually plays a better Lando Calrissian than Billy Dee Williams did. He's just got this awesome vibe. He's so relaxed in his element and he's an awesome pilot/owner of the Falcon. His love affair is believable when it probably shouldn't be. I really got into his character. Let's be honest here. Lando was really a minor character in the original trilogy. In SOLO he takes second place only to Han himself. He gets a lot of screen time. He earns it. I'd hate to say that he steals the show at times, but well, he does. He is a hell of an actor. I want to see more of him. I know that SOLO is a standalone but maybe we could see him starring in something else. I'd pay to see it. I'm just sayin'. A quick look at IMDB shows Glover in a lot of movies, but I'd like to see him in a starring role.

Of course, it's not a perfect movie. Han seems to be a bit more naive than I thought he would be. Granted, he fell for Leia pretty quick in the original trilogy but the way it affects him in this movie is crazy. He follows her into a situation that quite frankly doesn't make any sense. This guy's name is Solo because he's a loner. This is the guy that rescued Leia for money to pay off his debts. Han Solo is not Mister Nice Guy. I don't know if I like that part of the plot. Also, we had never heard of fuel in Star Wars until The Last Jedi. This film centers around it. The Kessel Run turns out to be about getting unrefined fuel. The whole thing is centered on a substance that no one knew existed through the first four decades of the franchise. I find that to be a bit annoying, even if I didn't have a problem believing it. All in all though, the film was a good time. It's a popcorn flick and it delivers that feeling of fun.

Bottom Line: 4.5 out of 5 Blaster Bolts

Lucasfilm's The Rise of Skywalker Review by Jim McCoy

Look, I know my opinions on the first two installments of the latest Star Wars trilogy have not been all that well received in certain circles. I have been castigated by some simply for posting links to trailers. So be it. The rules listed in the very first post on this selfsame blog state flat out that it's okay to trash me. I'm a big boy and I'm putting myself out there. I'm perfectly okay with someone telling me I'm full of poo-poo. Seriously folks, bring it.

That much having been said...

I loved The Rise of Skywalker.

I mean, flat out loved it.

My most favoritest Star Wars flick will always be Return of the Jedi because that's the first one I ever saw, at the old Chesterfield Cinema I think it was called (it's been thirty-six years, I may be wrong) with my mama. I laughed through it mostly. My mom kept me laughing because she didn't want me to be scared by all the crazy looking aliens. I was young enough that she might have had a point.

After that, my next favorite is Empire, followed by Star Wars. After that, I'm going with Rogue One. After that though, it's The Rise of Skywalker. Seriously. Solo would come next, but whatever.

I'm struggling here because this is a tough one to review without spoiling it. Seriously. There is a lot of good stuff here, but I don't want to talk about any of it in specific. Wish me luck. I'm going to need it.

Let's start out with Kylo Ren. His character arc is amazing. At one point, he almost had me in tears. Adam Driver is pretty amazing this time around. I found myself enthralled with the way this worked out. Others have criticized the way things went, but honestly it turned out better than I expected it to.

Rey's character arc was pretty awesome as well. It was pretty apparent that she was afraid of the way she was going to turn out but it went the way I wanted it to for the most part. I have heard that Daisy Ridley has publicly refused to be involved with the Star Wars franchise in the future.



Dark Unicorn

By Angela K Scott

That sucks, because if I were the one writing it (Hey Lucasfilm! I'll work for half of whatever your current writers are getting. Wait. What? Whaddaya mean credentials? Resume? CV? Who needs those?) she'd get a whole trilogy in the future centered around herself especially considering the thing that happened at the one part. It would totally fit.

And if I couldn't get Rey, I'd go with one about Finn. Or

maybe I'd do both. Except I think I heard that he won't be back too. That puff peppies though, because there was enough of a development with Finn that it needs to be explored. I'm not going to say what it was, except that it was something I picked up on in *The Force Awakens* lo those many years ago. I was surprised though, because...

Yeah, not going to reveal that. Watch the movie.

And yes, Poe had his moment too. I'm wondering if the people who are running around claiming that there was no planning done for the trilogy have watched the first two though, because his was a fairly typical character arc but it was performed beautifully. Mix Finn and Poe and there is strong evidence that things were planned from the beginning. I mean, if you were paying attention instead of whining incessantly about forced political correctness.

Listen, I'm as anti-PC BS as anyone you know. I was once threatened with expulsion from a graduate program by a freaking Social Justice Bully because I said I wasn't ashamed to be white. That much being said, not EVERYTHING is SJB crap just like not EVERYTHING is race. Grow up, no matter what side you're on.

Having said that....

I was glad to see less of Rose this time. I kind of felt like she was always there just to show a female Asian face and not to accomplish anything as a character. This time she actually did more than deliver one cheesy line and be diverse. It's nothing against Kelly Marie Tran. She's a good actress.

It's not that I'm against diversity. I'm all for diversity if the character has a point in existence. Look back at *Star Trek: The Original Series*. Hikaru Sulu, played by George Takei was, to the best of my knowledge and belief, possibly the only Asian on TV in the US at the time. Nyota Uhura, played by Nichelle Nichols, was one of a very few black women on TV in the US at the time as well. There weren't very many shows with integrated casts earlier than that, either.

The difference is that Uhura was the Communications Officer. She had an important job keeping her captain informed of things going on outside the ship. Sulu flew the ship and took part in some away teams. Rose, well, uhh...

She delivered a cheesy line at the end of *The Last Jedi* and didn't do much else.

If you want an example of a couple of good “diverse” characters in the same trilogy, look at Finn and Poe. Oscar Isaac (Poe) is Latino. He was born in Guatemala. John Boyega (Finn) is, of course, black. That's how to do it right.

I am, of course, a fan of story uber alles. There is a reason for that. It's because that's what fiction, and some non-fiction if you're into popular history, is all about. That's always been my main focus. It always will be. As far as I'm concerned if you're reviewing fiction and story isn't your main focus you're doing it wrong. Sometimes though, other forces effect entertainment value, and this IS *Star Wars*, so...

The special effects for *The Rise of Skywalker* were completely amazing. I don't want to list them all. I can't list too many without giving up too much of the plot. I will say this though: OH

MY HOLY FREAKING WOW! This movie was gorgeous. Whether it was stormy seas or space battles, everything looked great.

And, being a band geek, I can't NOT mention John Williams. He has stated that this is his last Star Wars. That makes me sad. John Williams has been with us since the beginning. Even so, he's earned his retirement. His music has always been amazing and, if I got in trouble for whistling the Princess Leia theme at my daughter when her mother thought she was my princess, that's not his fault per se.

We played a John Williams show for marching band my sophomore year of high school and I loved it. I wish you well Mr. Williams and you can always count on having me as a fan. And I'll be an even bigger fan (in more ways than one) if I never have to march to Liberty Fanfare again. That tempo was just too fast for us non-athletic types.

Oh, and by the way...

That's because he can put a score like this together. Seriously. Well done music can enhance a mood and make a story work better. John Williams gets that and his music does that. The Rise of Skywalker is one of his best. I probably should've (not should of) mentioned that first. Oops. Ah well, my blog my goofiness.

Overall, the only thing I found disappointing about The Rise of Skywalker was the Knights of Ren. Yep, we see them. I don't remember any of them speaking a single line. I mean, they look all intimidating and stuff and there was a pretty awesome fight scene with them in it but by and large, they've got a bad case of Rose Tico disease: Show up for looks and don't do much else.

They all wore armor and masks, so I have no clue if they were "diverse" or not. Overall, they should have just left them out of the trilogy completely. It would have changed basically nothing and there would have been no whining after the first two were released without them in it. Oh well, maybe Disney will make a bunch of loot selling the toys based on these guys.

Let's face it, too: A lot of us are getting a little long in the tooth. If you're going to a movie in your forties or fifties expecting to get the same feeling that you got from another movie when you were in your single digits or teens you're fooling yourself. You're not that person anymore. Watch the movie for what it is and who you are and not for what the originals were and who you were then. You'll like it much better that way.

Overall though, this was a damn good flick. I mean that. I had my eyes glued to the screen the whole time this thing was on. I plan on watching it again in the future, many times. One of my friends posted a meme on Facebook the other day, asking which movies you've seen twenty times or more. This is something I will be able to mention on that kind of a meme someday. It's that good.

Bottom Line: 4.75 out of 5 Lightsabers

SerCon

Philip José Farmer Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian



Philip José Farmer (January 26, 1918 - February 25, 2009) was an author known for his science fiction (SF) and fantasy (F) novels and short stories. He was educated at the University of Missouri, 1936-1937, 1941; Bradley University, BA (English literature), 1950; Arizona State University, graduate study, 1961-1962.

In a career spanning more than sixty years (1946 -- 2008), Farmer published more than 75 books, over 100 short stories and novellas, two “fictional biographies,” and numerous essays, articles, and contributions to fan publications. His books have been translated into 22 languages, and published in more than 40 countries.

First publication: “O’Brien and Obrenov” in *Adventure* (March, 1946); First SF publication: “The Lovers” in *Startling Stories* (August, 1952); First novel: *The Green Odyssey* (Ballantine, 1957); First collection: *Strange Relations* (Ballantine, 1960).

Pen Names

Farmer had a lot of fun publishing under a dozen or so fanciful pseudonyms, including Nick Adams, Martin Eden, Lord Greystoke, Jonathan Swift Somers, Leo Queequeq Tincrowder, John H. Watson, M.D., and Kilgore Trout (from the fictional character in works by Kurt Vonnegut).

Personal Life

A voracious reader as a boy, Farmer said he resolved to become a writer in the fourth grade. Then, he became an agnostic at age 14. At 23, in 1941, he married Elizabeth (Betty) Virginia Andre, and they had two children, a son and a daughter. After washing out of flight training during World War II, he went to work in a local steel mill.

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

1953/Hugo Award, Most Promising New Talent, *The Lovers*; 1968/Hugo Award for Best Novella, *Riders of the Purple Wage*; 1972/Hugo Award for Best Novel, *To Your Scattered Bodies Go*; 2000/Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master Award, lifetime achievement in F and SF; 2001/ World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement; 2003/First Fandom Hall of Fame; 2003/Forry Award for Lifetime Achievement, presented by the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS). In addition, he was nominated for 3 other Hugo Awards, 2 Nebula Awards, and 15 Locus Awards.

Farmer SF/F Works

Farmer is known principally for his popular series of SF/F stories, mainly Riverworld (1971 - 1983), Father John Carmody (1953 - 1981), The World of Tiers (1965 - 1983), and the Day-world trilogy (1985 - 1990).

Riverworld, perhaps his most popular series, consisted of the following books: To Your Scattered Bodies Go (1971), The Fabulous Riverboat (1971), The Dark Design (1977), The Magic Labyrinth (1980), Gods of Riverworld (1983), and River of Eternity (1983).

Non-Series Works

The Green Odyssey (1957)

Flesh (1960) [expanded 1967]

A Woman a Day (aka The Day of Timestop, 1960) [expanded from 1953 novella, Moth and Rust/connected to The Lovers]

The Lovers (1961) (expanded from 1952 novella) [revised 1977]

Cache from Outer Space (1962)

Fire and the Night (1962)

Inside Outside (1964)

Tongues of the Moon (1964) [expanded from 1961 novella]

Dare (1965)

The Gate of Time (1966) [revised/expanded as Two Hawks from Earth, 1979]

Lord Tyger (1970)

Love Song (1970)

The Stone God Awakens (1970)

The Wind Whales of Ishmael (1971)

The Other Log of Phileas Fogg (1973)

Venus on the Half-Shell (1975) [writing as Kilgore Trout]

Ironcastle (1976) [translation/expansion of work by J. H. Rosny]

Jesus on Mars (1979)

Dark Is the Sun (1979)

The Unreasoning Mask (1981)

Stations of the Nightmare (1982)

Greatheart Silver (1982)

A Barnstormer in Oz (1982)

Nothing Burns in Hell (1998)

Up From the Bottomless Pit [published in ten parts in Farmerphile:

The Magazine of Philip José Farmer (2005 – 2007)]

Television Series

Riverworld was a four-hour television miniseries released on April 18, 2010 on the Syfy Channel, based on Farmer's "Riverworld" books. The made-for-TV film was a reboot of the aborted Sci-Fi Channel TV series, of which only the pilot episode was produced.



Winged Cat

By Angela K. Scott

Critical Comments

In the 1960s, genre historian Sam Moskowitz said that Farmer was underrated: “Farmer is much more than a taboo breaker. Sex is not his only topic. As much, if not more, of his writing centers around religion . . . he is a storyteller of high artistry, and at least a few of his works have an air of permanence about them.”

At one point in the 1970s Farmer had 11 different series in various stages of completion. Even some of his admirers said he wrote too much too fast. The noted critic Leslie Fielder said that his work was sometimes sloppily written, but added that “was a small price to pay for the breadth of Mr. Farmer’s imagination.” Fielder compared Farmer to Ray Bradbury as both being “provincial American eccentrics” but found Farmer distinctive in that he “manages to be at once naive and sophisticated in his odd blending of theology, pornography, and adventure.” Moreover, Fielder once said that Farmer was “The greatest science fiction writer ever.”

Today, Farmer is considered by many genre critics to be one of the most original and inventive SF writers of the last fifty years, especially in his several series of novels.

Concluding Comments

Farmer’s SF/F manuscripts and books are housed in the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming Library, Laramie, WY.

Farmer is remembered by many for his statement: “Imagination is like a muscle. I found out that the more I wrote, the bigger it got.” In 2009, his official Web site announced his death, saying he had “passed away peacefully in his sleep.”

Sources

Clute, John & Peter Nicholls (eds.). *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. London: Orbit, 1993.

Currey, L. W. *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors*. Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1979.

Greenberg, George (ed.). *The Classic Philip José Farmer, 1952 – 1964*. NY: Crown, 1984.

Hawk, Pat. *Hawk’s Authors’ Pseudonyms II*. Southlake, TX: Author, 1995.

Knapp, Lawrence. *The First Editions of Philip Jose Farmer*. Menlo Park, CA: David G. Turner, 1976.

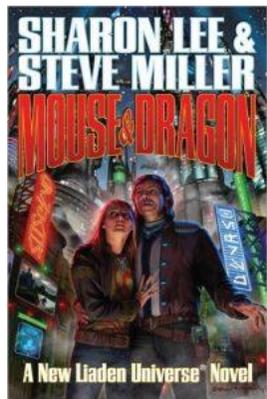
Lovisi, Gary. *Collecting Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Brooklyn, NY: Alliance, 1997.

Moskowitz, Sam. *Seekers of Tomorrow*. NY: Ballantine Books, 1967.

Tuck, Donald H. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy, Volume 1: Who’s Who, A-L*. Chicago, IL: Advent, 1974.

Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were also consulted.

Gourmet Bureau

Eat This While You Read That: Lee and Miller
Cedar Sanderson

Last issue I featured a lowly, plebian sandwich on ETWYRT. Today's recipe is pretty much the exact opposite of the zombie apocalypse grilled cheese.

I really enjoy the Liaden series, by Sharon Lee and Steve Miller. I came into it backwards, in a way, discovering Fledgling through the Baen webscriptions, and then realized that book was part of this vast universe of stories. One of these days I'll try to read all of them in order, but it was fun to try and find all of them, and then figure out who was related to who and so forth. For my readers who aren't familiar with them, I think the best way I can describe them is Regency Romance in Space, albeit with more action.

When I asked if they would like to take part in this series, Steve suggested I pair a grilled cheese with apple butter, a Leventi Cabernet Sauvignon, and their book Mouse and Dragon. Daav yos'Phelium, Delm Korval (a title I imagine to be roughly equivalent to a Duke), is a man of wealth and privilege who occasionally indulges in a grilled cheese sandwich with a smear of apple butter.



I put this meal off far too long, because I used to make apple butter every year, and I thought that I would do it for this... but it was not to be. Instead, I settled for a nice bought jar, a loaf of ciabatta bread I did make myself, and a small wheel of brie. You can find the recipe for the bread here, it's great for this recipe since it has lots of nooks and crannies for the apple butter to sink into.

So... this is a meal you could make in two days, or in five minutes, it's up to you! If you start a sponge for the ciabatta a day ahead you'll get a touch of the yeasty 'sourdough' flavor in the bread. And apple butter can be made overnight in the crock pot. Bread, butter, and cheese...

To make the brie easier to work with, allow it to come up to room temperature – on a warm day, it's almost spreadable. Slice your bread thinly, and start the broiler to warm the oven.

The First Reader, inspired by the idea of the Apple Butter, suggested we try it with honey, too. So we spread apple butter on some slices, and I drizzled a little honey on others.





Brie, with the crust off, on the open-face sandwiches ready to go in the oven.

I took the crust off the cheese because I'm not fond of it (I later used it, chopped, in biscuits. That was good). Besides that, I wanted a lovely gooey bubbly effect from broiling the cheese.

You only want these under the broiler for a minute. Keep an eye on them! They are done when the cheese has developed a little tan and is all bubbly.



Ooh, melted cheese!

They came out just as I was hoping, a really pretty dish, perfect for a light lunch (or a snack!). The sweetness of the apple butter paired beautifully with the delicate brie. The ones we did with honey had just a hint of honey flavor and were almost as good. And the bread was great for this, crunchy and chewy, just right for an open-face sandwich. As most of you know, I'm not a chef. I don't do haute cuisine. But for this? I think I did ok. A pretty, simple dish, and well worth the effort in making it. Maybe next time I can find the right apples to make apple butter with!

If you want to keep it simple and easy, buy the bread, the cheese, and the apple butter and it will take you five minutes to put this together. Then you can lounge with a copy of Mouse and Dragon while you enjoy your snack.



Jose Sanchez
The Mandalorian — Moff Gideon