

Tightbeam

October 2022



A Girl Needs a Pony by Tiffanie Gray

Tightbeam 337

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Letters of Comment

Editors:

Reading Lloyd Penney's letter of comment in the last issue brought up the memory of seeing Bob Tucker on stage at the Windycon 2, when he gave the same performance. He and three others took a ceremonial drink of Beam and all said "Smooth", causing some quiet wonderment in the audience.

After this was over myself and two acquaintances went to the exit door from the stage, escorted by a security man who gave us directions there, and we got the chance to ask him where he got a bottle of Beam which could be called "smooth". It was not our experience that it was that way. It gave him the opportunity to say that we were not much into things, but instead he told us that a bottle of an earlier Beam at its finest had been preserved. I told him I'd had a drink of whiskey in Bloomington when a teenager and it was considered "tough" to drink whiskey.

Speaking also of Tuckerization, I was "Tuckerized" by Rajnar Vajra in one of his stories in Analog. There were no consequences from it.

It's nice to see Tucker recalled in fanzines. He was a very convivial person.

-John Thiel

Dear George and Jon:

Getting further caught up...I have issue 336 of Tightbeam, and as soon as I get this done, it's lunch time, and then off to the doctor's. Busy day. Here goes...

Ah, my previous loc...I did finish a third book for D.J. Holmes, and Cents of Wonder by Steve Davidson and Kermit Woodall is now available through Amazon in Kindle download format and paperback, with hardcovers coming very soon. Not sweating in the heat any more, but shivering in the cold. As soon as the calendars changed from August to September, someone turned the heat way down.

Yvonne's a hard core Harry Potter fan, but she did not go to see the third Wizarding World/Fantastic Beasts movie. She enjoyed the first two, but she's never said she loved them. I might have to see if it is available for rent somewhere, or just buy the DVD, if it's available in that format.

Patricia McKillip got me reading fantasy after many years of reading almost nothing but SF. I'd never met her, but I very much enjoyed her Riddle-Master series. I was surprised to learn of her passing earlier this year, and as always, such deaths remind me of my own years.

I wish I had more for you, but my thoughts are consumed by a laser procedure I must undergo later today. It's for my right eye, so I am worried. Fingers crossed, I will be back with another loc for an N3F zine. See you then.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Anime

Ajin

Review by Jessi Silver

“For high schooler Kei -and for at least forty-six others- immortality comes as the nastiest surprise ever. Sadly for Kei, but refreshingly for the reader, such a feat doesn’t make him a superhero. In the eyes of both the general public and governments, he’s a rare specimen who needs to be hunted down and handed over to scientists to be experimented on for life-a demi-human who must die a thousand deaths for the benefit of humanity.” – Vertical Inc.



Ajin (Polygon Pictures, 2014)

Summary of Episode 1: Kei is like many high school kids; he has a steady group of friends, cares about his family, and spends a lot of time worrying about passing his entrance exams. Unfortunately, his current life has come as the result of some sacrifices, namely his close childhood friendship with a boy named Kai. Kei’s mother disapproved of the friendship since Kai was carefree and significantly less studious; in her eyes, the road to maturity is paved in part by the cultivation of one’s relationships, and only those who exhibit positive traits are worthy of association. Kei and Kai still see each-other around town, but their interactions are strictly limited to wordless acknowledgement.

Kei realizes with horror that he is one of the reviled Ajin. Copyright Polygon Pictures.

In school, Kei and his classmates are learning about Ajin, a new species of intelligent life that appeared during a war in Africa seventeen years ago. Ajin are unique in that they can be mortally injured but cannot die. This makes them of great interest to several world governments, and once they’re discovered (generally when they are injured by chance and are able to quickly recover), they’re captured and experiments are performed on them in captivity. Kei seems disturbed by the concept, and as he crosses the street deep and thought, he’s hit by a truck. And then, his mangled body rises up from the bloody pavement and Kei realizes – he’s been revealed as one of the most hated beings on the planet. It isn’t long before the police begin searching the town’s outskirts for him, and Kei calls the only person he can think of who might possibly not try to turn him in to the police – Kai. Kai has already begun setting things in motion, and rushes to save his friend, no questions asked. The two ride away in the dark of night, fugitives for the crime of being other than human.

First Impressions: First of all, it bears mentioning that this series was another of Netflix’s late-casts, similar to Knights of Sidonia and The Seven Deadly Sins, so it was to be appearing in an official capacity at a later date (they said “Summer 2016” but not given a more accurate time frame). Normally it would be my practice to watch an official version of an anime series since I

really believe that anime streaming has virtually removed most of the need to watch fansubs (and now most of the sub groups are either ripping official subs and adding stuff like -san and -chan, or their translations don't demonstrate a clear understanding of English spelling or grammar – I think all the good translators have probably gone legit). In this case, though, I was personally interested in the show from reading the manga, didn't see a lot of other impressions of it (since it's not easily available), and wanted to see ahead of time if it was worth checking out in full at a later time (I have a Netflix account but for some reason it's like pulling teeth getting me to actually use the service that I pay for every month.) I think this is why I never checked out *Knights of Sidonia* (though I did buy the DVD and will watch it... eventually). I didn't want a repeat self performance.

As for the first episode of *Ajin*, I was pleasantly surprised. I'm familiar with the general story from what I've read of the manga (I'm not far in but have at least read what's covered in this first episode), and this is a good adaptation. One of the fears I had going in stems from the fact that this is both 1. the story of a teenage boy who (unwillingly) gets some special (and very violent) powers and 2. the general concept puts the series in the "edgy" category. I've had su-



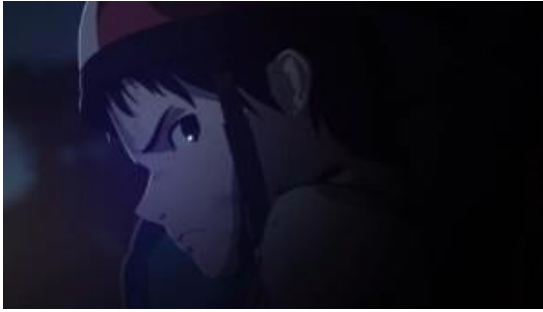
Kei finds himself cornered by the police. Copyright Polygon Pictures

premely bad luck with this sort of thing in the past – *Deadman Wonderland* is a good example of something that was really popular and people on the internet swore up and down was really intelligent and edgy, but turned out to be so, so violent and mean-spirited without much of a coherent message. I was worried that this would end up being another "sad teen fights violently with a bunch of people" anime.

I think what quelled that fear for me, in both the manga and this episode of the anime, is that the friendship between Kei and Kai seems to play such an important role in establishing

the plot. Their relationship seems to represent a microcosm of what is happening out in the world – Kai is misunderstood and assumptions are made about his character because of how he looks and the way in which he disregards school, just as the entire world has made assumptions about *Ajin* and how "othering" them has given society at large an excuse to mistreat them and remove their rights as human beings. In a way it's a sort of clunky allegory for race relations and the way we have treated almost anyone who is "different" – disabled folks, people on the autism spectrum, trans individuals... the list is extensive. In any case, one thing I really appreciated was that Kai was ready, no questions asked, to help his friend despite the fact that their relationship hadn't been close for several years. It's a level of kindness and emotional maturity that surprised me, especially since teen boys in anime tend to be given short shrift when it comes to being given any sort of sensitivity or basic humanity.

I'm betting many of you are wondering about the animation in this series, and it's definitely worth mentioning. We seem to be entering an age when 3DCG animated anime is becoming an actual thing. I have a lot of mixed feelings about that. Anyone who's watched the anime series *Shirobako* (and for those who haven't, you really should because it's downright excellent) will probably have a greater appreciation for the role that CG plays in anime and the work that goes into making convincing 3D elements, and I really try to keep that in mind. Unfortunately, I don't think that CG is yet up to the task of convincingly recreating the look of typical 2D anime, and in many chases the movement of the characters just seems... off. I've spent a lot of time trying to figure out why this is and why it's so difficult to accept that 3DCG anime is probably an inevitability, and I think what it comes down to is consistency. One of the hallmarks of



Kei makes his escape.
Copyright Polygon Pictures.

Japanese anime is just how inconsistent it is. When you see characters' faces from different angles, the mouth positions and how they appear don't actually make sense a lot of the time, but it's a type of stylization that we've come to expect and accept as consumers of the medium. There are also often vastly different animation styles and frame-rates even within one episode of anime. Important scenes are given more attention and often certain animators are given free reign to go off-model and demonstrate their particular command of movement, and I find that these special scenes really give me a thrill and are one of the reasons

why I enjoy watching anime. The use of computer animation removes that unexpected attribute.

That said, I think what Polygon has done in this series actually looks pretty good. It took me until a few minutes into the episode to stop being distracted by the 3D models and the cell-shading and such, but much like watching *Gankutsuou* (which you should also go watch as soon as you have the opportunity if you would like to see why people used to like *Gonzo*), once your eyes have adjusted the look kind of becomes a non-issue. It's not my favorite, but it's admittedly a lot better than watching a show that's consistently off-model for reasons that have nothing to do with artistic style (side note: people complaining about *Ping Pong* being off-model need to go educate themselves). I think people who are not married to anime's particular aesthetic will be even less distracted and will likely not be bothered at all (this is a series I would show my parents, for example – my mom isn't an anime fan, but she does like horror and thriller-type series so I bet it would be up her alley).

Pros: The show takes a concept that could easily be mishandled and injects it with enough humanity to keep it from becoming one-note. The friendship between the two male characters forms a believable core.

Cons: The 3D animation will definitely be an issue for some. Grade: B+

Dagashi Kashi

Review by Jessi Silver



“Kokonotsu Shikada is the son of a dagashi snack shop owner. Although he wants to become a manga artist, his father, Yo, wants him to take over the family business. One day, a girl named Hotaru Shidare shows up at the shop and challenges Kokonotsu.” – Funimation

Summary of Episode 1: It's difficult when your own aspirations conflict with your family's expectations. Kokonotsu “Coconuts” Shikada just wants to draw

manga, and his art skills are actually pretty good, but his father wants him to take over the family business – becoming the next in line to run the family sweets shop. It’s not just tradition informing this opinion; when an outgoing and snack-obsessed girl named Hotaru shows up at the shop one day, Kokonotsu learns the truth – Hotaru’s candy company wants Yo, Kokonotsu’s father, to join with them because of reasons. Kokonotsu will have to commit to running the shop before Yo is free to follow his own dreams. Kokonotsu isn’t keen to give up his own goals, but Hotaru is very insistent. She plans to insinuate herself into Kokonotsu’s life and use anything in her power to convince him to change his mind, including becoming friends with his sort-of girlfriend and spreading candy throughout town.

First Impressions: I wanted to check this show out because I have a certain interest in Japanese cuisine, and obscure Japanese snacks fall under that umbrella. While I can’t really eat most of these goodies anymore since sugar makes my brain feel like it’s about to burst out of my skull, I can still stand having them paraded around in front of me. As I feared going in, however, the snacks are probably the most interesting things about the episode and the characters who eat them are somewhat hard to tolerate.

I’ve seen several reviewers describe Hotaru as a “manic pixie dream girl,” and to some extent I think that’s accurate. Kokonotsu is faced with a life decision that’s likely to take the length of the series to resolve, and Hotaru shows up as he stands at a crossroads and promises to make big changes in his life. She’s a very weird human being, defined so far by her sweets expertise and weirdly regal bearing. She also looks almost exactly like a manga character that Kokonotsu was drawing as the episode opened, which helps contribute to an eye-rolling introductory scene. She’s a male fantasy, an unrealistic woman who is more plot device and catalyst than equal partner. It’s not the worst of sins that a piece of fiction can commit, but it makes things a lot less interesting.

Something else that turned me off was the constant over-acting and forced comedy that peppered the episode. There’s a lot of yelling, goofy behavior, and immaturity on the part of several of the characters, especially Hotaru and Yo. As far as I can tell, the majority of the characters are young adults, and at the very least Yo is, but the humor is incredibly juvenile and Yo especially is a complete goofball. One of my least favorite tropes is parents who act less like adults than their own children, and while I’ve probably seen this trope expressed more by some anime mothers or female authority figures it’s just as irritating when dads do it. The jealousy exhibited by Saya, Kokonotsu’s childhood friend and likely romantic interest, is extreme. To be perfectly blunt, Kokonotsu really hasn’t proven himself to be a man worth giving a crap about, so Saya’s reaction upon hearing that there was merely a weird city girl in his family’s shop just makes her look bad. It’s difficult to get invested in a story when all of the characters range from irritating and unrealistic to completely intolerable.



Yo is a grade-A doofus.

The show’s saving grace is the minimal amount of attention that it pays to the *dagashi* (traditional snacks) that are referenced by the show’s title. Like I’ve mentioned, I really like learning about food even if it’s technically food that I can’t eat anymore (sugar and simple carbohydrates make my brain feel like it’s about to leap out of my skull). Possibly my favorite scene in the episode occurs when Hotaru challenges Kokonotsu to create a delicious culinary combi-

nation of different Umai-bou flavors. I had coincidentally watched a YouTube video earlier in the week in which the person making the video took different flavored Umai-bou and combined them with various actual foods to create new taste sensations. It fascinates me that such a culture exists around what are essentially large, diversely-flavored Cheetos, and these are the things I really like to learn about. It amuses me that there are more desirable ways of eating the “fries” that the characters snacked on, or that you can buy what are essentially mini-donuts in cute little packages (they look way yummier than the dusty powdered-sugar “Donettes” that are ubiquitous at American gas stations). And now I’m really craving something sweet and doughy to spoil my dinner.

I didn’t have especially high expectations for this show, but I thought it might be an amusement worth checking out. I could conceivably see myself watching another episode or two just to gain some more trivial knowledge about Japanese treats, but the characters themselves make doing so feel like more of a chore than an amusement.

Pros: It’s fun to learn about Japanese cultural tidbits, and Japanese treats and snacks are one of those obscure areas that don’t get a whole lot of coverage in the West.

Cons: The characters are irritating in various ways and the women especially get the short end of the character development stick. The comedy is heavy-handed.

Grade: C-

Television

Supergirl, a Short Retrospective By George Phillis

Supergirl was the first superhero television show with a female lead on a major network since Wonder Woman and The Bionic Woman in the late 1970s. It ran for a year on the major network, had more than twelve million viewers for the first show, and then was transferred over to the CW. By report, the primary issue was the special-effects cost. Scenes with flying, super-powers, peculiar combats, and the like simply cost a lot of money.

The show had the extreme good fortune to recruit Melissa Benoist as the lead actress. She was able to handle several different roles between her public and her secret identities in a convincing way. She encountered the physical limitation that, at least according to her, the technology for generating flying scenes really has not made a great deal of progress in the last half-century, so that the scenes were, to put it mildly, physically demanding.

I have previously praised the show, so in this short piece I shall review things that might have been done better, as learning for the future. On one hand, the writers wrote themselves into a corner in several ways. Unlike the comic book Supergirl, the video Supergirl could not fly in outer space because she needed to breathe. Also her flight power apparently only worked close to a planet, though in later episodes that claim was retconned. Finally, they established she arrived at age 12, then did not use her powers for a decade, eliminating the possibility of flashback scenes with a second lead actress to reduce the load on the heroine.

There was some indecision as to the direction and audience. At the front-end, the show was marketed as a family show that parents and daughters and sons, the daughters being tween-age or so, would plausibly watch. Soon thereafter diversity and soap-opera issues arose, so that the heroine after some seasons had an affair with another superhero, one of the lead support actresses was revealed to prefer women to men, and so forth. None of these decisions were in principle wrong, but a chunk of the original audience drifted away.

The Hollywood temptation to cast all male actors as being at least 6 feet tall or more ran into the difficulty that, although Benoist is a respectably tall woman, she was noticeably shorter than a considerable number of the male super-friends. The show soon acquired a large cast of super-friends, each with their own story arc.

Late in the series, the handling of the terminator of two major arcs to my eyes was dropped by the writers. Earth was invaded by a near-invincible Kryptonian monster. In their first hand to hand, the monster beat Supergirl almost to death. The writers then set up several aids to Supergirl, notably that the monster always fought with one foot on the ground, somewhat like Antaeus, and the use of Supergirl's indestructible cape to tangle monsters in a fabric they could not break. Having done this, they instead introduced another superheroine, and the other superheroine defeated the Kryptonian monster, exactly as Supergirl might have done.

On the same line, in the last season Supergirl was confronted with a magical creature from the fifth dimension. At the end of the season, a way to enhance her super powers with a solar laser emitter was introduced. Just before she had been powered up, the use of the device was discontinued, and Supergirl instead got to talk the people of her city into not believing in the imp's powers. The imp and Lex Luthor were then destroyed by an array weapon of Luthor's that malfunctioned. Once again, to terminate the arc, Supergirl did not come to the rescue, at least as a superheroine.

Games

Neko Atsume: Kitty Collector Review by Jessi Silver

I no longer self-identify as a gamer; the fandom started to attract too much controversy and as someone who didn't really appreciate where AAA gaming was headed, I finally bailed out (no hate towards people who identify as gamers, though). I'm someone who doesn't enjoy being involved in drama, and what I was seeing was truly beyond the minor geek drama we all know and occasionally like hearing about; women questioning the status quo started getting death threats, the industry attitudes weren't really changing to reflect real-life demographics... I just felt unwelcome and a little bit nervous to boot. There are a lot of brave women out there who continue to engage with the fandom – Anita Sarkeesian is the “big” name (and a controversial one, but I like her videos and the type of analysis she does, haters gonna hate), and Leigh Alexander is one of my favorite writers on the subject, hands down. But I,





personally, am just too nervous to directly engage anymore. Maybe that makes me a wimp; I like to say I have a well-developed sense of self-preservation.

I have, though, gotten into casual gaming over the last year or so. Anime is my main fandom and it's where I devote the majority of my energy, but sometimes I just need a little break and if I can pop in for 10 minutes and play something, that helps me a lot. My recent favorite game for this purpose is a little something you might have heard of called *Neko Atsume*.

Neko Atsume: Kitty Collector is a cell phone/tablet game that you can download for free for iOS and Android systems (you can pay money for items in the game, but you can have plenty of fun for free). In the game, you have a yard that you can fill with things to attract the neighborhood kitty cats – cushions, scratching posts, toys, cat trees... the list of items is really extensive. If the cats enjoy what you've provided, they leave you fish – silver and gold – in exchange. You can then use those fish as currency to buy bigger and better toys, and the cycle continues until you lose interest. All of the cats eventually give you special trinkets if they like your yard well enough – they're items that are technically worthless, like birthday candles, books of matches, and broken toys, but to a cat they are special gifts that demonstrate the true extent of their love. There are also “rare” cats that show up if you meet certain requirements, mainly by having special/unique items placed in your yard.

The game fits into a weird genre called “maintenance games” in which there really aren't any end goals in mind or even a plot to worry about; the fun comes from cultivating a certain aesthetic, collecting things, enjoying the atmosphere, and appreciating the cute artwork. The *Animal Crossing* series of games are a much more famous example from this genre; anyone who's played and enjoyed the games from that series will understand that what's “fun” about those games are the exploration aspect as well as the satisfaction that comes from collecting all the items for the museum, designing and renovating your home, getting all the different fruits to grow in your town, and building up your infrastructure. It can be incredibly engrossing, especially for a genre that's considered very “casual” and doesn't get a lot of love from the mainstream gaming fandom.

I, frankly, don't have time to play many video games. *Neko Atsume* is really the perfect solution to that. I have it downloaded on my Android phone and check in on my kitties a few times throughout the day (and occasionally during the night if I'm having one of those nights – one of my friends mentioned that she thinks the game might be on “Japan Time” since that's where it was developed, making certain cat appearances likelier to happen when we're asleep in the US). I refill the cats' food dishes, switch out items in the yard, take photos if something cute is happening (one of the things you can do is have a photo album for each cat), and see if the kitties have left me anything. On paper it's completely low-stakes; nobody gets hurt and there's no tension or hard goal. You can play the game how you want. But I always have a positive feeling when one of the cats leaves me something special or a new cat visits my kitty playground. As someone who could be a crazy cat lady if the stars aligned a certain way, playing this game helps fulfill that desire without having a house full of cats.

I think some people appreciate having a concrete goal in mind when they're playing a game. I find that I have a lot more fun when I'm the one deciding how to have my fun. Just like enjoying the freedom that games like Minecraft and the Elder Scrolls series provide, I like being able to define my own success in games like Neko Atsume. It's a nice change from the daily demands and expectations of boring old real life.

SerCon

John D. MacDonald Bio-Bibliography

by

Jon D. Swartz, Ph.D.

N3F Historian



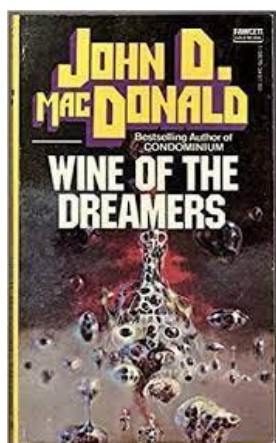
John Dann MacDonald (1916 – 1986) was an American novelist, short story writer, and journalist. He was a prolific author of crime and suspense novels, many set in his adopted home of Florida.

One of the most successful American novelists of his time, MacDonald sold an estimated 70 million books. His best-known works include the popular and critically acclaimed Travis McGee books, and his 1957 mystery novel *The Executioners*, which was filmed as *Cape Fear* (1962), starring Gregory Peck and Robert Mitchum, and then remade in 1991.

Pseudonyms

Over his career, MacDonald used several pseudonyms, including John Wade Farrell, Scott O'Hara, Peter Reed, Henry Riser, Robert Henry, and John Lane, among others.

This bio-bibliography will mainly be concerned with John D. MacDonald (JDM) and his SF work.



SF Books

Wine of the Dreamers (1951). Paperback edition titled *Planet of the Dreamers* (1953).

Plot: The book is set both on Earth (dealing with a top-secret military spaceflight project in an imagined 1975) and a far-away planet of humans able to influence Earth while they sleep, believing that the planet and all its inhabitants are simply part of their dreams that they can toy with. MacDonald described his book as “a symbolic novel of how when original purposes are forgotten, the uses of ritual can be destructive.”



Ballroom of the Skies (1952).

Plot: The story involves Earth sometime after World War III, with Brazil, Iran, and India as the prevailing superpowers. The reasons behind humanity's history of perpetual war and strife is that leaders of an intergalactic empire are always chosen from among humans but must first be tested by extreme hardship.

The Girl, the Gold Watch, & Everything (1962).

Plot: Most genre critics view this book as MacDonald's only science *fantasy* book, as opposed to his science *fiction* work. The protagonist, Kirby Winter, inherits a gold watch that thrusts him into a thriller fantasy that never lets up. *The Girl, the Gold Watch & Everything* was adapted for a 1980 TV film, that resulted in a 1981 sequel, *The Girl, the Gold Watch, & Dynamite*.

Time and Tomorrow (1980) [collection of the three books discussed above]

SF Short Fiction Collection

Other Times, Other Worlds (1962).

Contents:

Martin H. Greenberg (introduction)

The Mechanical Answer (originally published in *Astounding/May, 1948*)

Dance of a New World (*Astounding/September, 1948*)

Ring Around the Redhead (*Startling Stories/November, 1948*)

A Child Is Crying (*Thrilling Wonder Stories/December, 1948*)

Flaw (*Startling Stories/January, 1949*)

But Not to Dream (*Weird Tales/May, 1949*)

The Miniature [as by Peter Reed] (*Super Science Stories/September, 1949*)

Spectator Sport (*Thrilling Wonder Stories/February, 1950*)

Half-Past Eternity (*Super Science Stories/July, 1950*)

The Big Contest (*Worlds Beyond/December, 1950*)

Susceptibility (*Galaxy/January, 1951*)

Common Denominator (*Galaxy/July, 1951*)

Game for Blondes (*Galaxy/October, 1952*)

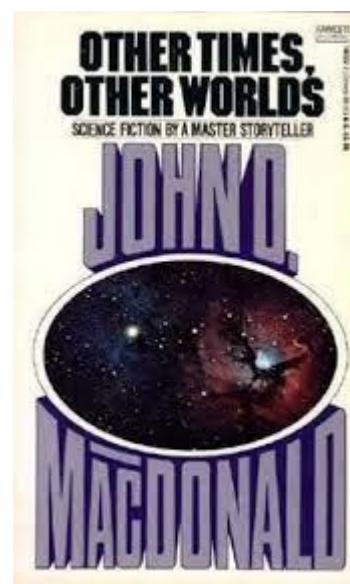
Labor Supply (*F&SF/May, 1953*)

The Legend of Joe Lee (*Cosmopolitan/October, 1964*)

The Annex (*Playboy/May, 1968*)

Afterword (JDM)

Bibliography (by Len & June Moffatt)



Personal Life

MacDonald was born in Sharon, Pennsylvania, on July 24, 1916, and was educated at the University of Pennsylvania, Syracuse University, and Harvard University, 1934 – 1939. He received degrees from Syracuse and Harvard. He married Dorothy Mary Prentiss in 1937, and

they had a son, John Prentiss (aka Maynard).

During World War II, MacDonald served in the China-Burma-India theater with the Office of Strategic Services, attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel.

The first of his short stories was published after the war. He moved from New York to Texas, and then to Mexico, and finally, in 1949, to Florida, where he lived in Sarasota. Along the way, he wrote for the pulps and for slick magazines such as *Esquire* and *Cosmopolitan*.

Journalism

During the late 1950s - early 1960s, he wrote a series of columns on a variety of topics, including environmental issues, for a Florida magazine. He titled his column “Off the Beat,” using the byline of T. Carrington Burns.

Later, he wrote a similar column for a Sarasota newspaper.

Stories on Television

CBS-TV’s *Out There* showed MacDonald’s “Susceptibility” (originally published in the January, 1951, issue of *Galaxy*), broadcast on November 25, 1951.

In addition to this SF story, several of his other stories, mostly mysteries, were adapted for showing on TV programs such as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Robert Montgomery Presents*, *Kraft Suspense Theater*, and *Studio One*.

Friendship with Comedian Dan Rowan

In the 1960s, he became friends with Dan Rowan of the comedy team of Rowan & Martin. They visited and corresponded for eight years, and their correspondence became the basis of a book, *A Friendship: The Letters of Dan Rowan and John D. MacDonald, 1967 – 1974*. The book was published in 1986 by Knopf.

Awards/Honors/Recognitions

In 1962, he was president of The Mystery Writers of America.

In 1972, he was named a Grand Master of the Mystery Writers of America.

Over his career, he won several other awards, including an Edgar, a National Book Award, and the George Arents Pioneer Medal for “contributions to American literature.”

Critical Comments

In his 3-volume genre encyclopedia, Tuck wrote about MacDonald: “By the early 1960s he was considered one of America’s most prolific and best-selling writers.”

Stephen King once said of MacDonald: “. . . he was one damned fine storyteller. His novels are brilliantly paced. He wrote for ordinary guys and gals, back-pocket paperbacks aimed at those

who read for pleasure, but he never wrote down to them. King and MacDonald corresponded in the 1980s.

“To diggers a thousand years from now, the works of John D. MacDonald would be a treasure on the order of the tomb of Tutankhamen.” – Kurt Vonnegut.

Trivia

The first SF story of MacDonald’s I remember reading was “The Hunted” in *Beyond the End of Time* (1952), a PermaBook anthology edited by Frederik Pohl. If I remember correctly, a scene from “The Hunted” also illustrated the book’s cover. I had an even closer connection with MacDonald through Len and June Moffatt, SF and mystery fans. The Moffatts were the fans who began *The JDM Bibliophile*, a fanzine about MacDonald and his work. For years the Moffatts and I were members of CAPA and contributed articles and art to CAPA’s monthly *Five By Five*. CAPA was a limited member apa that, when I was a member, also included Jim and Barbara Harmon, Ray Nelson, and John Coker.

Some Conclusions

While MacDonald is remembered mostly as a writer of mysteries, he also wrote popular and entertaining SF and fantasy stories. Some of his short fiction was reprinted in genre anthologies.

At one time MacDonald was making over a million dollars a year from his writing alone.

Death

MacDonald died on December 28, 1986, at St. Mary's Hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, of complications from heart surgery. He was 70 years old.

Survivors included his wife, their son Maynard (who lived in New Zealand at the time), and five grandchildren.

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Note: In addition to the above, several Internet sites were consulted, including Wikipedia, Fancyclopedia 3, and ISFDB.

Video

Nope, Nope, Nopity Nope! UH-UH! From Jim McCoy

Shields up, Red Alert! Seriously, go to your men and tell them to get ready for a fight because I'm about to have Worf beam a proton torpedo aboard the bridge of the Death Star while it annihilates Babylon 5 in full view of the TARDIS as it is consumed by a supernova. As someone famous once said "I'm mad as hell and I'm not gonna take it anymore." There is no need for this type of bullshit. None whatsoever! AT ALL! DO YOU HEAR ME HOLLYWOOD !?!?! ?!?!? ?!?!?!?!?!? WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

Ok, so now we all know I'm mad. Who can tell me why? Oh, that's my job. Oops.

So what set me off is this piece. I found it while innocently checking my Facebook feed. I had some downtime at work and decided to see if I could find something interesting. Well, I found that article interesting in the same sense that Vlad the Impaler found the actions of traitors interesting. Unfortunately, I lack the authority he had and so the guilty are still at large and able to continue killing everything great that came before them.

I'm going to take a moment and tell you what is wrong with this. I mean, yes, recasting Lando and G'Kar as females is insulting to the fandom, the original cast and J. Michael Straczynski. Yes, they should be played by different actors. Yes, the uniform pictured is thirty-one flavors of fucked up. But honestly, none of that should matter. Because there is NO FREAKING NEED TO REBOOT EVERY DAMN THING EVER!

(Oh, and for the record, I'm not a big fan of Crude Reviews and their rampant SJWism. I don't recommend their site. I was reading the article before I realized what site it was on.)

I've talked about this before. Listen Hollywood. I get the fact that not every idea is Hollywood caliber. I support not making everything that gets suggested because I support quality entertainment and some stuff is just crap. I mean, it doesn't all sink to the depths of gender-swapping Londo and G'kar just to virtue signal in a show that already had females in prominent roles. (Can you say Ivanova, Delenn, Talia, and Lyta, boys and girls.) Oh, and that includes two women who took command of squadrons of ships in battle. And there is no badder-ass in all of SF/F than Susan Ivanova. Still though, that's not the problem.

The problem is you morons and your absolute obsession with rebooting old content. Let sleeping dogs lie. Listen, I came to a love of B5 late. If not for the love and patience of a good woman (who, for the record, never once looked at me and uttered the words "Just watch the show, dumbass." She's obviously a better person than I am.) I may never have watched it at all. The fact remains that it makes no sense to shit all over a show that millions of people watched and loved. And no, if they're going to gender-swap Londo and G'Kar, they don't have a respect for the original show.

Look, I get the desire to make a profit. Television studios are capitalistic endeavors. I'm good with that. I'm just saying that:

A.) There is no need to reboot old stuff just to make a profit.

I am watching an episode of *The Walking Dead* while writing this piece. When it debuted, the *Walking Dead* was a brand new show, not a remake. It just finished recording its ninth season. It has an absolutely huge following. It is very obviously profitable, because if it wasn't it would be gone by now. Oh, and the network that created it? American Movie Classics. Reshowing old stuff wasn't good enough I guess. The same with Netflix and Amazon Prime. Odd, that.

B.) There is no lack of ideas out there.

The Orville worked. It's not a reboot. It's not a remake. It's just good TV. Remember what that's like?

C.) Gender-swaps have been known to fail.

We all know the records of the *Ghostbusters* reboot and *Oceans 8*. Stop flushing your money down the toilet. Those weren't aberrations. It's not going to get better next time. If you want to make money with a movie about one or more women, make it with either original content or with content that was originally conceived with female characters. You know, like *Wonder Woman*? That made more money than any previous super hero origins movie. (It has, admittedly, since been surpassed by *Black Panther*, but it made over eight hundred million dollars at the box office.) And honestly, if women and/or minorities want to have more representation then they need to show some integrity and write their own stories instead of stealing them from someone else.

and

D.) Sometimes it takes some intestinal fortitude to get things done.

At some point in the not so distant past, somebody pitched a movie about a tornado filled with sharks. It could not have been an easy sell. It has made millions and produced two profitable sequels. Take some responsibility and make something that hasn't been done before.

I know it's not easy. J. K. Rowling and George Lucas created probably the two most successful science fiction universes in the history of the genre. Hell, they created two of the most successful stories in the history of humanity. Both faced rejection. Rowling was rejected thirty-two times before *Harry Potter* was accepted for publication and created an entire new market of readers. There was no Young Adult market before someone at Scholastic showed some guts and let J.K. Rowling create one.

So yes, it does make sense to make new content. It makes good money if it's GOOD new content. And no, I'm not suggesting that Hollywood should start making every idea that comes their way. I'm just saying that there is plenty of new ground to explore. Hollywood needs to start looking toward the future instead of the past.

Everything they're rebooting came from something that was once a new product. No matter how far back they pull from that's true. *Gilgamesh* is the oldest surviving written story. Go back far enough, and somebody told it for the first time. It's time to tell some new stories for the first time. Not new versions of old stories. New stories. Get it together guys. Stop digging up corpses

and looting them. Put something new on my TV screen.

(Five of my favorite SF franchises were referenced in the first two sentences of this blog. Star Trek, Star Wars, Babylon 5, Doctor Who, and uhh... what? Two nerd points, exchangeable for major bragging rights, go to whoever can name the last franchise in the comments.)

Food of Famous Writers

Sam's Schall's Smoked Chicken. Cooking by Cedar Sanderson



Sometimes I wonder about that woman's sense of humor. I mean, the books are collectively the Honor and Duty series. But the first one is Vengeance from Ashes and she asks me to smoke some chicken. I snorted, and then I got to thinking.

Smoked chicken isn't so much a recipe as a method. It's a way of imparting a lot of flavor to what is essentially a blank slate. Why does everything taste like chicken? Because chicken tastes like nothing much. So smoking the chicken, after using a dry rub on it, is a way to wind up with flavorful, moist, delicious chicken that can be used as leftovers (if there are any, but I planned for it) to add flavor to other things. Like Sam's series, it's a gift that keeps on giving. So grab the book of your choice, whether you want to begin at the beginning with Sam's Vengeance, or pick up the latest in the series, Risen from Ashes. There's a fair amount of sitting and waiting in this, so you will have time to read while cooking!

You're going to want a lot of chicken. I picked up a 10 pound bag of leg quarters to use in this cooking session. I'm a busy woman, and if I made more than the family would eat in a sitting, I'd have leftover chicken, which is so versatile. You could also pick up two whole roasters and cut them up, or simply spatchcock them, if you prefer.

Mix up the rub at any point. You can store this, tightly sealed, and I do. I make this up in large quantities to use for ribs, for instance.

Dry Rub

- 1 c brown sugar
- 1/2 c salt (I use kosher, a larger flake here will help keep the salt dispersed and not clumping)
- 1/2 c chili flakes (1/4 c chili powder if you don't have those)
- 1/4 c cumin
- 1/4 c garlic powder
- 1/4 c onion flakes (powder is better, I didn't have any this time)
- 1/4 cup paprika (I usually have sweet on hand)

Blend all the spices, salt, and sugar together. A food processor works nicely for this. Take a



cupful out to use on the chicken, store the rest.

Prep the chicken by rinsing it, and patting it dry with paper towels. Arrange in a pan, then coat it on all sides with the rub. At this point you can wrap it snugly in saran wrap and refrigerate overnight, or you can go ahead and fire up the grill/smoker.

I like to pre-soak my woodchips before use, as this keeps them from simply going up in flames. If I had access to nice smoking wood I'd handle it differently, but sadly I have to buy my chips. I used hickory for this chicken. You'll want one of the milder woods (apple, peach, cherry, pecan, hickory...) rather than a harsher flavor like mesquite. Or maybe not. I like the milder smoke for chicken.

I have an offset grill-smoker, so I build my charcoal fire in the offset chamber with the chimney. My poor grill is about rusted out, and I'm thinking about moving to a barrel smoker for the next one. You can smoke in a direct-fire grill, just expect your meat to cook faster and therefore pick up less flavor. I have no idea if this would work on a gas grill. I've never used one, any more than I've ever used lighter fluid (gross. Yes, I am a snob. You should be, too! Get a chimney, you won't regret it).

Now, for a quick smoke, which is what I was going to do, I'll finish in the oven. I worry a lot more about making sure my chicken is up to a proper internal temperature of 165F (75C) and sometimes on a slow smoke this can take quite a while. However, the longer you leave it on the smoke, the more yummy smoky flavor you soak up into that bird. If you do bring it in to finish, I recommend putting it on a rack, to allow the schmaltz and juices to run away from the meat, and setting your oven no more than 300F so we cook this thing, not turn it into boot leather. Chicken needs to be safely done, but it can still be moist as long as the juices run clear and the meat is opaque and firm. I can't give you a precise time. I use a probe thermometer inserted partly into the thickest thigh I have, but not touching a bone, to monitor the chicken. My thermometer has a little alarm that sounds when the desired temp is reached.

And that's all there is to it! Well, no, really it's so much more nuanced. There are a lot of variables, from what grill configuration you are using, to how long you leave it on the smoke, and what cuts you are using... but the general idea is to come away with pieces of chicken that have crisp skin, smoke-ruddied outer meat layers, and done all the way through.



If you get enough smoke, you can see a ring of reddish color on the outer layer of meat.

And then you can kick back with some cornbread, salad, an adult beverage, and a book. Happy reading and eating!

Oh, leftovers? I made smoked chicken frittata, and smoke chicken enchiladas (I prefer the New Mexico style), and...



Rocketship
by Cedar Sanderson