

# UNISPHERE

#45

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FAN-PRO COORDINATION BUREAU

## Ionisphere #45, March 2025

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Cover art: detail from “Ideal View of  
Saturn’s Rings and Satellites from the  
Planet” by Agnes Giberne, 1898

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### Editorial

Firstly, I would like to thank John Thiel for running Ionisphere for so long! And I am thrilled to continue the legacy of the fanzine: bringing pros and fans together in conversation about what we all love, SFF. My hope is to do John’s vision justice. I’m always open to suggestions as to how to better the zine, and I look forward to your letters of comment. Also, if you would like to get involved in the zine, please send in your interviews, articles, and essays. I will also be running free ads for books by N3F members, so send those in as well. ¼ page is ideal for the ads. Likewise, if members have new books coming out, please get in touch about

a possible interview. I also encourage all amateur writers in the club to submit to the N3F short story contest.

In this issue we have an interview with editor, author, and fan writer Gideon Marcus, founder of Galactic Journey and Journey Press, as well as the author of The Kitra Saga. This issue also features an interview with author and editor D.J. Butler, about the recently launched Ark Press and The Ark Prize. Also presented here is an article by Justin T. O’Conor Sloane, editor-in-chief of the newly relaunched Worlds of IF and Galaxy magazines, about his motivations for bringing back these epic publications from bygone eras of science fiction and fantasy.

I aim to bring you a wide selection of voices and perspectives in this zine, from fans and pros alike, and hopefully demystify the differences in the process. Agree, disagree, argue, comment – I hope you will. And I hope you will send in letters of comment to express your opinions about what appears in these pages. Discourse is always a good thing, and as far as I am concerned, difference in opinion is also a healthy thing, always worth debating in a civil manner.

What might the future of SFF bring? I’m no clairvoyant, but I do believe that those working in our field might have an idea – so let’s share those different visions of the future and see where it might take us.

Jean-Paul L. Garnier  
Joshua Tree, CA  
March 2025



## Why I Relaunched *Worlds of IF* and *Galaxy* Magazines

Justin T. O'Connor Sloane

To give this the proper treatment, we need to go back a ways. My introduction to science fiction was like the turning of a key in my mind that



mightily fired the pistons of my imagination and once that engine had roared to life, it drove me steadily onwards into a vast and intoxicating realm of ideas. Science fiction has rightly been called the literature of ideas—and to me, ideas, much like single malt scotch, are proof enough that the cosmos loves us. I was reading science fiction and fantasy as a kid and watching the TV shows and movies and it just thrilled me. I couldn't



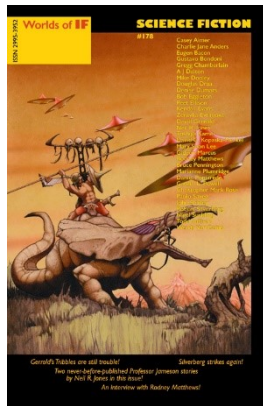
get enough of it. I wanted to involve myself in that world in some way, some day. For decades, that science fiction dream grew and evolved until finally it announced itself in the form of inspiration paired with vision paired with the willingness to commit the time, energy and money to transfer it from the world within my mind to the world outside. So, I started a publishing company and then secured the intellectual properties of *Worlds of IF* and *Galaxy*. *Worlds of IF* was actually the first SF magazine that I remember seeing the cover of (not *Amazing Stories* as one might assume). I looked at it quizzically, wondering what exactly was meant by its title. Little did I

know that I was seeing a message from my future, one that has now occupied hundreds of my lucubatory hours. I love history and have taught the subject for many years. In the relentless, churning march of civilization, so many wonderful things have been lost. And so many of them have been forgotten. Retrieving lost elements of culture—as though they were physical artifacts—from the abyss of time has always appealed to me. In a sense, it's like being an archaeologist of ideas. And a relaunch is a reincarnation of ideas. I am happy that these sister magazines dance together once more in the light of their new day.

Seeing that many science fiction magazines had gone extinct, but that many lived still, I wanted to contribute some further measure of vitality to the SF field by resurrecting a couple of the well-known classics. The more the merrier and the better for all. I had been publishing various webzines and building a network of exceptionally talented and enormously generous artists and writers. After a while, I felt prepared to take things to the next level, knowing that I had this pool of extraordinary talent to draw from in the relaunch endeavors. To say that these folks stepped up would be an understatement. They are the only reason that these ventures have taken flight and I owe them a profound debt of gratitude. Support and enthusiasm for these magazines has come from every direction, creating this surging momentum of positive energy that has infused and lifted every aspect of what we are doing.



I would also like to credit Steve Davidson of *Amazing Stories*, with whom I have never actually been in communication, for having been a catalyst. Late one night, I was reading something somewhere about how he had found the abandoned trademark for *Amazing Stories* in the USPTO database and had claimed it, relaunching that venerable



magazine. It was one of those light bulb moments that ultimately led to the relaunching of *Worlds of IF* and *Galaxy*.

Part of my motivation for relaunching these magazines was the entirely unrealistic thought that basically

overnight I would be able to make publishing my full-time job. I also delighted in the idea of following in the footsteps—generations removed—of T. O’Conor Sloane. I enjoy the historical context of it all, building on the foundation of what has come before as we journey into the future of science fiction.

<https://worldsofifmagazine.com/>  
<https://galaxysf.com/>

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### **An Interview with Gideon Marcus of Galactic Journey**

*JPG - What is the basic premise and motivation behind Galactic Journey?*

*GM - Galactic Journey is a time machine, a portal to exactly 55 years ago. Unlike most time machines, this one is fixed in distance from the present. That means "Journey Time" moves forward day by day with the modern era. When it's 2025 here, it's 1970 there. Last year was 1969. Next year will be 1971.*

We are a blog: <https://galacticjourney.org>, updated every other day with book, magazine, and movie reviews, space shot summaries, political round-ups, fashion updates, and more. We are a radio station: KGJ (<https://tinyurl.com/kgjradio>) plays the music of exactly 55 years ago, updated almost daily, with a *five day* rotation. KGJ Channel 9 broadcasts (via Discord: <https://discord.com/invite/yqRmpvruaa>) weekly episodes of Science Fiction Theater, a home-made anthology show, every Thursday, including episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, *Star Trek*, *The Outer Limits*, *Space Patrol Orion*, movies (in two parts), and much more.

Last year, we even recreated the Moon landing, with all existing broadcast coverage. In August, we re-lived Woodstock—all 70 hours of it. As Olav Rockne once put it, the Journey is "The most ambitious, immersive, and extensive project in modern science fiction."



The purpose of the Journey is to be a comprehensive multimedia experience. To recreate, as far as is possible, the life of a science fiction fan in that era. It spotlights the otherwise forgotten classics. It serves as a marker for how far we have come since then. It shows us how things come in cycles, with the world of 55 years ago eerily concordant with our own.



*JPG - Spending most of your time 55 years ago, what do you find to be the biggest difference between SFF of that time versus today's SFF?*

GM - By and large, SFF, writing-wise, hasn't changed all that much. Most of the literary innovations of the genre had already been developed by 1970. What *has* changed are the underlying assumptions that come with 55 years of technological and societal progress. We're more willing to be queer in 2025, but queer existed in SFF in 1970 (and before). We're strangely reactionary in a lot of modern SFF, rehashing a lot of the same themes already well covered back in the day.

The biggest difference is the barrier to entry has been dropped...at least if you're willing to try the slog of indie/self-publishing. At the trad pub level, there is definitely a lot more diversity in 2025 than 1970. The published demographics of Journey time have not yet improved much since the '20s—that's about to change, of course.

*JPG - Moving from SFF of the 60s into the 70s, what major thematic, or literary, shifts have you noticed?*

GM - The New Wave is the big shift, a willingness to experiment not just with topic (that was the revolution of the '50s) but with form. Sometimes it works, sometimes it comes off as precious. But that's what experiments are for. The biggest worries are overpopulation, dehumanization through technology, and environmental catastrophe. Nuclear war has ceased to be the omnipresent threat and subject it was in the 1950s.

*JPG - Galactic Journey not only covers SFF, but also news, culture, and space history - what are the greatest benefits of analyzing SFF in the broader context of the time it was produced?*

GM - The idea that fiction is truly timeless and lives apart from its era is an unreachable ideal. It's impossible to understand a time without doing it holistically. It's all very fine to read all the Hugo Finalists of the last seventy years and evaluate them by modern tastes and sensibilities, but without really understanding the past, the relics of that time are, at best, misunderstood and, at worst, completely mischaracterized.

Science fiction is inspired by new technologies, new concerns. It comments on the society that spawns it, offering cautionary tales and aspirational visions. While there are uncanny parallels between modern times and the Journey era, there are also fundamental differences. By knowing the past, the stories become much more intelligible and more enjoyable.

Aside from this, the main reason our focus is so broad is that the Journey is more than a review site, more than a celebration of dusty old tales. It is a door to an earlier edition of our current times.

*JPG - What are the most significant changes in fandom that you have noticed in the decades you've been involved?*



GM - *Star Trek* was something of a sea change. Worldcon went from being an event attended by a few hundred to one whose attendees went well over a thousand. An almost parallel ecosystem evolved, largely composed of female fans, who were not too familiar with science fiction fandom and its SMOFs, but they loved Mr. Spock and the *Enterprise*. They wrote stories and held mini-conventions. *Trek* also provided an outlet for traditional fans, again mostly female. People like Ruth Berman, Bjo Trimble, Lois McMaster (Bujold), Vonda McIntire and Astrid Anderson (Bear).



Since the Journey has started, we've also seen a lot of the early generations start to pass away. Kuttner and Pratt in the '50s. Piper, Boucher, Ley, Sellers, George Brown, Beaumont in the '60s. Traditional SF fandom started around 1930, so the party is already passing on to new blood. Some fans, like Forrie Ackerman, are still hip-deep in fanac. Others, like Harlan Ellison and Silverbob, have become super-accomplished pros. Even if the trappings of fandom remain constant from 1950 to 1970, its character changes as its characters change.

*JPG - What made you decide to branch out from fandom into being a novelist and publisher?*

GM - I don't know that 'branch out' is the right term. I was a professional (nonfiction) writer long before I dove into the Journey in 2009. I wrote my first SF stories in high school, and I co-wrote a fantasy novel in the early '90s (six rejections!)

But the Journey was definitely the impetus for becoming a pro writer. I felt I didn't have the right to judge other folks if I didn't have skin in the game. Plus, how cool would it be for my work to appear in outlets that existed in both time frames? To date, my work has been published in *Amazing*, *IF*, *FAPA*, and *AHIKS*. I've gotten Hugo noms and an N3F Laureate. If I were to walk through the portal back to Journey time, these would all be recognizable plaudits!

As for Journey Press, that came directly from Galactic Journey. Our first book, *Rediscovery: Science Fiction by Women (1958-1963)* was just a matter of collecting our favorite stories and soliciting introductions from Journey associates. We want to publish works like the ones we're reading about...just updated for the 21st Century!

*JPG - How do you balance your fan/pro work?*

GM - When I figure that out, I'll let you know.

Seriously, my greatest blessing is that I'm not doing the Journey alone. More than 30 folk actively participate, one way or another. My aim is that, if I die tomorrow, the work will go on. The Journey still takes a lot of time every month, between the 3-4 articles I write, the broadcasts I put together, the stations I maintain, editing every single article, and all the other housekeeping chores, but even without me, things are decentralized enough that the burden's not too great.

As for my pro work, I've kind of given up on short stories of late in favor of novels. I try to write 2000 words a week, which I've found is no great hardship. I've recently started working with a nonprofit in an operations capacity, so we'll see if I have to cut that down at all.

*JPG - What is the greatest lesson that being a reviewer has taught you about writing fiction?*

GM - It's the other way around. Writing and publishing fiction has made me more conscious that what I say can be hurtful. 55 years seems like a long time, but a lot of the authors are still alive today, so I try to be sensitive, focusing on what was lacking in a story rather than getting personal.

I don't know that it's helping. I rave about Ted White's work, and he still stopped talking to me...

*JPG - What's coming up next for you and for Galactic Journey?*

GM - The Journey moves ever forward. At both the turn of the '50s and the '60s, I felt a little sad at the eras we were leaving behind, paradigms I had gotten comfortable in. But the point of the Journey is enjoying where we are, discovering the forgotten joys of whatever year, month, and day we happen to be on.

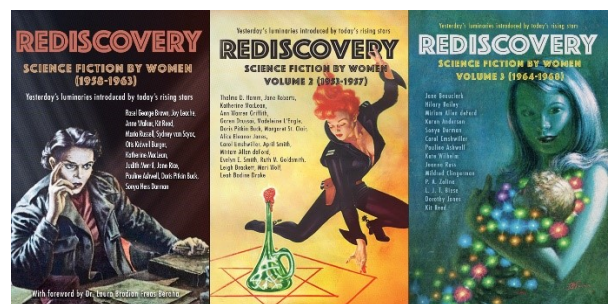
Coming up in April, we'll be covering Apollo 13 in detail. The trickle of SF anthologies is becoming a flood, and we'll try to cover them all (we're already up to two Galactoscope articles per month, and *Orbit* and the like often get their own pieces). The transition from weekly *Star Trek* showings to *Science Fiction Theater* has been a hit, so we'll keep doing that. Wargames are coming out more frequently, and both roleplaying games and

video games are around the corner—we've already reserved another domain just to house these upcoming subjects.



As for me, I'll keep reading my magazines, watching my movies, and otherwise living in the past part-time. It has given me a place to hide when the real world gets too rough, it has offered me opportunities to meet hundreds of amazing people I might never have known, and it has been a lot of fun.

I can't imagine life without the Journey! I hope you all will come along with me.



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### **An Interview with DJ Butler of Ark Press**

*JPG - What are the motivations behind starting Ark Press, and please introduce your team?*

DB - Our shareholders are interested in building an alternative to the big five publishers. Ark Press is a bid to push back against a couple of trends in recent publishing.

One of those trends is the abandonment of the male reader. The conventional wisdom that men don't read has aggravated the problem as generations of editors have lovingly packaged books that have no interest for men. Ark is not interested in excluding women, either as readers or writers, but, although we'll publish a wide range of genres (and we think of literary fiction as a genre), we're not going to write anything that aims exclusively at women.

Another trend we'll push back on is wokeness in publishing. We're not looking for books whose theme is anti-woke, but we're not going to apply the doctrines of wokeness to our readers and we're not going to publish books that preach those doctrines. We're up for publishing a wide range of political ideas, but we're not interested in anything that aims to restrict or delegitimize speech.

Our Editor-in-Chief is Tony Daniel, himself an author of some distinction as well as an editor of long experience with Baen Books and with non-fiction publisher Regnery.

Our other Senior Editor is David "David AF" Afsharirad, another editor with over a decade of experience editing for Baen and a number of short story credits to his name.

*JPG - Can you elaborate on your statement that in all of the books you publish "The humans win in the end."?*

DB - That's our motto. Way too much genre fiction, and especially SFF, has become functionally anti-human. We're not doomsayers, Malthusians, antiheroes, or self-haters, and we don't aim to publish any of them. We're up for dystopias and cynical books that warn us of the dangers and contradictions inherent in the human condition, but we won't publish a book that isn't fundamentally on the side of humans.

Wrapped into that are some other assumptions. We're looking for protagonists who have moral goals and who win by moral means. If they engage in violence, it's with



justification. If they lie, it's to avert evil by deception.

*JPG - When the press states that it aims "... to reclaim the Great American Novel," what are some examples of these types of books that come to mind and what do you think these novels can achieve moving forward?*

DB - We think there are Shakespeares and Melvilles and Twains that have yet to be discovered and published. We think a thriller or a western can tell us something important about the human spirit, and in specific answer to your question, something intrinsic and essential to the American psyche. We think those books can be found outside the university and brought directly to the reader by a publisher who is looking for them. We think the Great American Novel should have readers who choose it in bookstores and on Amazon, and not just students who are assigned to read it by professors. We think a great novel can change hearts, convert a nation, beat swords into plowshares, and make a grown man cry. We're looking for those novels.

*JPG - While the press will be focusing on SFF, it will also be publishing political thrillers, historical novels, and more. What elements do you think unify these genres and their readers?*

DB - Only that they can generate amazing, uplifting, heroic works of beauty.

*JPG - Having worked as an editor at WordFire and Baen, what editorial*

*experiences, lessons, and notions will you be bringing to Ark Press?*

DB - I think an editor's role is like the role articulated by Steve Albini for his work in music production. I'm not looking for books that I can shape into what I want; I'm looking for books that touch my heart and excite my interest, and I see my role as helping the writer to develop the book into the best book that it can be, fulfilling the author's vision and intent.



One of the fun aspects of my role at this publisher is that I'm the primary host of the Gopher Wood Lounge, which is our YouTube / X video channel. You can find it here on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@GopherWoodLounge>. I also share X posting responsibilities with David AF — check us out at @ark\_press, and see if you can tell which of us is responsible for which post!

*JPG - Ark Press is also launching The Ark Prize (with substantial prize money), tell us a bit about the theme for the contest and what you'll be looking for in a submission?*

DB - Yes, the prize is a publication contract with a \$10,000 advance, which is quite substantial!

The deadline for submissions is National Taco Day this year, which is October 7, 2025. You can submit your manuscript and your treatment (query letter plus synopsis) at <https://ark.press/pages/prize>.

The novel must be at least 50,000 words long. It can be of any genre. The theme of the novel must be America 2076, but you can interpret that however you want. We're aiming to publish the winner on July 4, 2026 (America's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday).

And what we HOPE is that we receive multiple books worthy of publication, in which case we'll declare one the winner and make offers to publish all of them.

*JPG - Aside from working as an editor, you are also a prolific novelist. What are you currently writing and what's coming up next for you?*

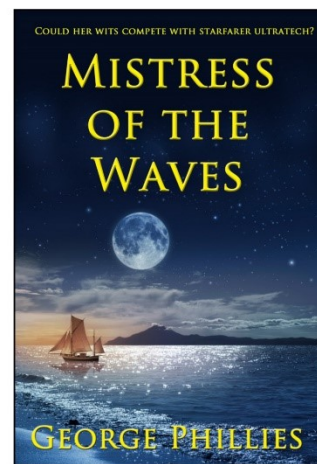
DB - I am editing THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT, which is the sequel to THE CUNNING MAN and THE JUPITER KNIFE, by me and Aaron Michael Ritchey. These books are about a hedge wizard who is also a sugar beet farmer in 1930s Utah. In THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT, Hiram Woolley travels to Mexico to unravel some of the darker secrets of his own family. I have cover art but it doesn't have the title on, so I'm not allowed to share it yet.

What I need to do soon, and maybe it's next, is the next book in The Witchy War, which will be SERPENT MOTHER. It's about the catastrophic wedding of the Heron King.

<https://ark.press/>



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Goddard is a world trapped in its non-technological present by brilliant social engineering. Orphaned Amanda Kirasdotr rescues a space traveler, flies on his starship, and wants a starship of her own. That's challenging when the hottest ship on Goddard boasts three masts and a full set of sails. She must overcome storms, pirates, poverty, and the mysterious Order of the Bell.

Mistress of the Waves is about overcoming economic and technological challenges. Yes, there are pirates, a revolution, and the mythical giant squid, but Amanda solves her challenges through hard work, thoughtful investment and planning, and clever responses to a massive fiscal bubble. Her answers are quite the opposite of 'we have gunpowder, so let's conquer the world'. Amanda has 'we have trading ships. Let's make the world a better place.'

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2025 N3F Amateur Short Story Contest  
Story Contest Rules and Entry Blank

To enter a story, on a separate page, please supply the following information, followed by your story:

- 1) Title of story (for identification): Author's name and address: Author's email address:
- 2) Answer DO or DO NOT I do/do not wish to become a public (no dues, no vote) member of the N3F and receive for free all N3F magazines.

Testify: I have read the rules for the 2025 N3F Amateur Short Story Contest, and I agree to them.

Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Jefferson Swycaffer, P. O. Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373 ; or email [abontides@gmail.com](mailto:abontides@gmail.com)

We are here to encourage new writers, to reward the new kids on the block. We want writing that is not that good. We want stories from people who don't know their object from their subject, who don't know where commas go, and who use apostrophes to denote plurals -- but who have a story to tell. We want stories from guys and gals nobody's ever heard of...but in the years ahead, we will.

1. This contest is open to all amateur writers in the field, regardless of whether they're members of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. For the purposes of this contest, we define an amateur as someone who has sold no more than two (2) stories to professional science fiction or fantasy publications.
2. Stories entered in the contest must be original, unpublished, not longer than 8,500 words in length—and related to the science fiction, fantasy, or similar genres in the opinion of the judge.
3. Email attachments of Word documents are acceptable for submission. Manuscripts on paper should be typed, single sided on 8 1/2"-by- 11" white paper, double spaced, with pages numbered. The name of the author should not appear anywhere on the manuscript to ensure impartial judging. Photocopies are acceptable, if they are of good quality. Computer printouts must be legible.
4. Contestants can enter up to three stories. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) if you would like your story returned at the end of the contest. Stories will not be returned without an SASE. Do not send your only copy in case of accidental loss. We are not responsible for lost manuscripts.
5. Email entries will be accepted. Send to Jefferson P. Swycaffer at [abontides@gmail.com](mailto:abontides@gmail.com). No guarantee can be made of email receipt. Privacy and property rights will be absolutely respected. No one other than the Short Story Judge will ever see the submission.
6. There are no entry fees.
7. Cash prizes totaling \$100 will be awarded as follows: First prize is \$50, second \$30, and third \$20. Honorable mentions and semi-finalists will receive a certificate of award.
8. Send all manuscripts to the contest manager: Jefferson Swycaffer, P. O. Box 15373, San Diego, CA 92175-5373; [abontides@gmail.com](mailto:abontides@gmail.com). Emails with the story attached in word format are preferred. Paper manuscripts are acceptable. All entries must be received or postmarked no later than Dec. 31, 2025.
9. The Short Story Judge is a published science fiction professional, and also a loving fan of the sf and fantasy genres. All comments and critiques are solely the Short Story Judge's opinion, but he promises to be constructive and polite.
10. Stories will also be reviewed by the Editor of the N3F Fiction zine *Eldritch Science*; authors of suitable tales will be invited to submit their tales for publication in our zine. This review and invitation will only occur after contest winners have been announced, so it can have no effect on the contest outcome.
11. The NSF may want to publish an electronic book including top entries from one or more years of publication. You will not be contacted about this until after the contest is over and prizes have been awarded. If we want to publish your story, you will have to sign over to us first world serial rights. Your willingness to sign over rights cannot affect whether or not you win the contest. Winners will be notified as soon as the judging is completed. Announcements and notifications of winning entries will be made by March 2026. Please take your time and submit your best work. You can resubmit stories previously entered if they did not win previously. All entries will be kept confidential and will be judged fairly and anonymously. The deadline for all entries is Dec. 31, 2025. Good luck!



