

Aussiecon 4 Newsletter #1

Aussiecon 4 68th World Science Fiction Convention
Melbourne Convention Centre, Melbourne Australia 2-6 September 2010



At the Con

A Celebration of Science Fiction

The World Science Fiction Convention ('Worldcon') is an annual global celebration of all things speculative in fiction, open to everybody. Held most often in the USA, the Worldcon is headed for Australia this year. Known as Aussiecon 4, the event will be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre during 2-6 September 2010.

As much writers festival as fan fest, Aussiecon 4 represents a rare opportunity for Australian science fiction, fantasy, and horror aficionados to mingle with authors, artists, editors, agents, and other members of the international and Australian science fiction community.

Aussiecon 4 promises the ideal forum for insight, inspiration, and networking. Multiple streams of panel discussions on a wide range of topics will be fielded by some of the biggest names in global SF. What is more, there is always an opportunity in the relaxed and convivial atmosphere of the con to stop, sit, and share a drink.

One of the star events of every Worldcon is the presentation of the prestigious Hugo awards for achievements in science fiction and fantasy fiction, film, and fandom (and more). The 2010 Hugo award winners will be determined by the votes of those who register to attend Aussiecon 4 early.

Although several science fiction conventions are held in different states of Australia each year, none come close to the scale and sophistication of a Worldcon. The event brings together a few thousand professionals and enthusiasts from around the world.

In fact, the premium field of authors, illustrators, and other leading industry figures at Aussiecon 4 is expected to be the largest ever assembled in Australia. If you're interested in the speculative fiction genre, Aussiecon 4 is simply not to be missed.

Meet the Committee

Fiona Park, Communications Division volunteer

Like every member of the voluntary Aussiecon 4 organising committee, Communications Division volunteer Fiona Park has a love for speculative fiction. In Fiona's case, this passion was sparked by the introduction to Raymond E Feist's classic fantasy epic *Magician*, during her undergraduate days at university.

Less than two decades later, Fiona is a voracious reader of both science fiction and fantasy, and is currently working her way through the 'P' section in the acclaimed Melbourne Science Fiction Club (MSFC) library. "I don't have many favourites," Fiona says. "I'm willing to read just about anything! At the moment I'm up to the novels of [1940s-1950s author] Lewis Padgett."

This willingness 'to give anything a go' epitomises Fiona's attitude to life in general. She joined the MSFC little more than a year ago, before which she hadn't even attended a science fiction convention, only to find herself an integral member of an essential division of the biggest annual volunteer-run science fiction convention in the world. "I figured the best way



to get to know people would be to get involved," she says. "I feel comfortable getting things done behind the scenes."

Fiona is certainly qualified to 'get things done'. In her day-time job, she is the Executive

Director of the Royal Melbourne Showgrounds; plus she has nearly completed a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) at the prestigious Melbourne Business School, and sits on the board of not-for-profit group Disability Attendant Support Services Inc (DASSI). Amid all this, she still finds time to go orienteering a couple of times a week, participate in an annual medical mission to the Philippines for Rotary, and succeed as a serial home-renovator.

"Last year was certainly a massive year, but it's been lots of fun," she says. And what does 2010 have in store for Fiona? In addition to her role with the Communications Division for Aussiecon 4, she'll complete her MBA—no less.

In Short

Aussiecon 4 is a five-day gathering of authors, artists, fans, and publishing industry professionals to celebrate international and Australian science fiction, fantasy, and horror

Guests of Honour

- **Kim Stanley Robinson:** Multi-award winning author of the Mars trilogy (*Red Mars*, *Blue Mars*, and *Green Mars*)
- **Shaun Tan:** Award-winning artist and writer whose works include the acclaimed wordless novel *The Arrival* and *The Rabbits*.
- **Robin Johnson:** Dedicated Australian fan

Inspirational Program

- **Concurrent Streams of Panel Discussions:** Guest of Honour presentations, author insights, writing craft, popular culture and politics, young adult fiction, academic theory
- **Art Show:** Hundreds of original pieces for sale, including children's and young adult exhibits.
Apply to exhibit now.
- **Dealers Room:** Booksellers and specialist dealers of jewellery, new and second-hand books, toys, and other science fiction, fantasy, and horror merchandise
- **Hugo Awards Ceremony:** The 'Oscars' of science fiction, voted on exclusively by Aussiecon 4 members & registered attendees.
Nominations open 1 Jan to 13 March 2010.
- **Masquerade:** Professional and amateur costumers present their best work
- **Special Events:** Concerts, live theatrical presentations, artist and writer workshops, and more
- **Film and Video Program:** Genre classics, TV episodes, and movies, including the latest Hugo Award nominees

Contact/Register

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5 Minutes With...

Trudi Canavan

What's your most recent published work, and what are you currently working on?

Right now I've paused in writing *The Rogue* to proof *The Ambassador's Mission*. Both are from the Traitor Spy Trilogy, a sequel to my first series, the Black Magician Trilogy.

Name the three best books you've read recently, and why.

Charlaine Harris's Sookie Stackhouse books, *Triumff* by Dan Abnett, and *The World Without Us* by Alan Weisman. The Sookie books were great travel reading, since they're pacy and small [well, compared to epic fantasy, anyway]. *Triumff* is a hilarious swashbuckling romp and definitely the best fun I've had while reading this year. *The World Without Us* is a fascinating look at how quickly—or slowly—human constructions and creations would crumble before nature if humans ceased to exist. After having enjoyed *Guns, Germs and Steel* and *Collapse* by Jared Diamond, which explored the rise and fall of civilisations respectively, I found *The World Without Us* covered the next step very well.

Other than writing, what have you spent the most time doing, and why?

I suspect the answer is the planning of and taking of trips away from home! At the beginning of last year, my publisher arranged publicity visits to Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra, and then I was a guest of honour at Swancon in Perth at Easter. Mid-year we headed to the other side of the globe for Worldcon in Montreal and spent some time travelling through Canada. More recently, I've been organising flights and accommodation for my annual writing retreat and the Aurealis Awards in Brisbane.



What was the most recent Worldcon you attended? . . . Main highlight?

That would be Anticipation in Montreal [September 2009]. The highlight of the con was hopping into the signing queue for Guy Gavriel Kay, and discovering there are still a few people in the world that I turn into a gushing fangirl around!

I take it you'll be at Aussiecon 4 in Melbourne this year? What's so special about the Worldcon?

Aussiecon is special because it's happening here in Australia! It's going to be great to see the locals having a chance to show their stuff to the rest of the world, and for the rest of the world to discover and enjoy both the talent and the good times we have to offer.

What's the best feedback you've had from a reader/fan at a con?

It's all the best. From the shy and awkward to the gushing and heartfelt to the insightful and intelligent, all good feedback is equal in its awesomeness.

Fast Facts

Favourite food? Chocolate

Beverage of choice? Hot chocolate made from good quality chocolate

Desert Island book? A guide on how to survive on a desert island. [I can always make up stories, but I haven't a clue how to start a fire without matches.]

Best time of day? Mid afternoon.

Song to make you smile? Either Lily Allen's 'F*ck You' or Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op.125 'Choral'.

Any strange writing rituals? When I'm working my way through a gnarly plot problem, I like to knit while I'm thinking.

What are you intending to read next? Depends on Aussie Post. If it arrives in time, a friend's soon-to-be-published novel. If not, then *Slights* by Kaaron Warren.

Can't live without? Chocolate [noticing a pattern here?]

Trudi Canavan lives in Melbourne, Australia. She has been making up stories about people and places that don't exist for as long as she can remember. Her first short story, 'Whispers of the Mist Children', received an Aurealis Award for Best Fantasy Short Story in 1999. When she recovered from the surprise, she went on to finish the fantasy novel-that-became-three, the bestselling Black Magician Trilogy: *The Magicians' Guild*, *The Novice* and *The High Lord*, followed by another trilogy, *The Age of the Five*. In 2009 the prequel to the Black Magician Trilogy, *The Magician's Apprentice* (winner of 2009 Aurealis Award for Best Fantasy Novel), was released and she is now working on the sequel, the Traitor Spy Trilogy. One day she will write a series that doesn't contain three books.

My Worldcon: A Life-Changing Experience

by Tracey Rolfe

My life as a speculative fiction writer and fan can be divided into two phases: pre— and post—Aussiecon 3 (1999). Pre—Aussiecon 3, I didn't know cons existed. An article in *Aurealis* magazine convinced me to sign up (thank you, writer!), and so I took the plunge, and also signed on for a writing workshop on the first morning. That was a fantastic choice because I met people to hang out with for the con and formed strong and enduring friendships.

What I didn't expect was the number of fantastic panels on offer, that after a couple of days I'd get 'panelled out' and would be content to hang with my new friends and talk, that cons would be such a friendly place—nowhere is the gap between 'famous' writers and fans less evident. The real surprise was to find that some people don't attend panels at all, but plan their experience completely around the bar and parties.

Over the years I've attended many memorable panels on diverse topics, such as world-building, blacksmithing, sword-fighting, medieval music, the Cave Clan, writing craft, Babylon 5, and small-press publishing. Some have moved me, some have infuriated me, some have made me think. I've also done workshops where I can, watched movies, and listened to lively Guest-of-Honour speeches and readings.

Since Aussiecon 3, I've attended at least one con every year. My expectations these days are to be stimulated and entertained, to spend time socialising with friends, to attend panels that will inspire me, that I won't get to all the panels I want, that something I'm not expecting to be great will surprise me, and that I'll have a blast. I can't wait!

Tracey's Con Survival Tips

- Don't be afraid to speak to strangers.
- Don't worry about missing a panel or two. Talk to people outside the con setting and start building networks. Ask to tag along with a group that decides to go out for a meal.
- Drink lots of water.
- Visit the dealers' room for a chat or to find that rare book. Check out the artwork as well.
- Attend room parties!
- Plan to spend time in the bar.
- Attend the Hugo Awards, maskobolo, and other special events like book launches. They're fun and make you feel part of a vibrant community of fans and writers.