



Space Cowboy Books Presents: Simultaneous Times Newsletter

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the last Simultaneous Times Newsletter of 2022. It's been an interesting and productive year, hopefully it's been a good one for you too. In this issue we bring you an interview with Jonathan Nevair, author of the new science fiction thriller *Stellar Instinct*. This issue also features a Con Report from guest writer Robin Rose Graves about our wonderful time at LosCon 48. We truly had a magical weekend, and it was amazing to finally meet so many friends and colleagues in meatspace. I'm already looking forward to going again next year, and hopefully paneling again.

As always we'd love to hear from you, so get in touch at spacecowboybooks@gmail.com Jean-Paul L. Garnier



After debuting with a space opera trilogy, what made you decide to write a science fiction thriller?

The Wind Tide trilogy took a lot out of me. It was a heavy series, both for the sweeping scale of the world and the ethical and emotional struggles

that served as its thematic foundation. Deciding to write a standalone thriller was a way of swinging the writing pendulum in the other direction. It offered me a chance to craft a self-contained story that focused on pacing and economy of words, while emphasizing action and adventure. Plus, I love secret agent and espionage tales. My childhood was filled with movies and books about spies. I looked through my bookshelves the other day and noticed that my collection is mostly either science fiction or spy/espionage thrillers. I've always wanted to write a secret agent novel – knowing the genre so well made it easy to work with content and tropes. I just had to educate myself on the story structure and beats of thrillers.

What differences did you encounter while worldbuilding for a standalone novel versus a series?

The view “ahead” is visible in a standalone. I knew that whatever I introduced to the secondary world in *Stellar Instinct* had to be made clear when first mentioned or returned to before the book was finished to make good on promises to readers. I learned a lot about

the give-and-takes of different genres as a writer by crafting a standalone. The advantages with a series, and a space opera especially, had to be adjusted and swapped out for the important elements in a thriller. The wonderful aspect of a standalone is that everything is tied up tight at the end of the book. In the series, I had many open subplots, developing themes, and promises to either push off or address as the later books rolled on.

The protagonist of Stellar Instinct is an agent, and a poet, and there are passages with her poetry – what made you decide to make this a point of characterization, and what challenges came up with the poetic aspects?

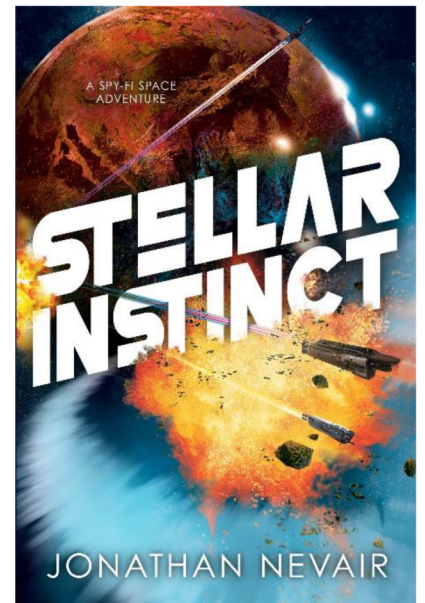
As a secret agent, Lilline is a superstar and that made her main character arc rather flat, which is typical of many superheroes, etc. I wanted there to be inner conflict, as well as a substantial character arc in the story, so I decided that she would be a struggling poet. It ended up working very well with the job of secret agent because I was able to play off the conflict between anonymity professionally and poetic voice. She is inspired to words by her job, but she can't tell anyone who she is and therefore her poems seem hyperbolic. I didn't have too many issues with crafting the poetry because I chose to make her a bad poet (like me). It relieved me of having to write successful poems, and then served as fodder for her interactions and the tension with other characters in the story.

What were the pleasures and challenges of mixing genres?

I had a great time exploiting a secondary world built as an expansive galactic universe for a secret agent plot. So many settings, alien species, technological inventions and cultural possibilities to create that expanded what would be possible in the primary world. For a spy-fi thriller that was very enjoyable.

I've noticed that all of your books feature older people, which can be uncommon in fiction, what do you find important about featuring multiple generations?

I'm not sure why I do this, except to say that as a 51-year old, I see the world from where I am age-wise. That makes generating characters that are older easier and more natural for me as a writer. But I'm also drawn to mentor characters, and therefore wisdom through experience is a factor in deciding on character age. The



specific relationship between Lilline and Granny Kissy came partly from wanting tension for Lilline with a previous relation's outstanding service record in the agency. I will admit that Downton Abbey's close bond and relationship dynamic between Violet and Mary Crawley was an inspiration!

You're also an art historian, how does this affect your approach to writing fiction, and how does it differ from your academic writing?

My academic writing background is most helpful in the research and planning phases. I'm used to working through stages of R&D, and then organizing and establishing a thesis and following it with evidence leading to a conclusion. That helps with plotting. In terms of art historical experience, I've had readers tell me they appreciate how cinematic and vivid my world building is, especially in a sensory way, in my novels. That is probably from years of writing and lecturing about visual subjects, transcribing what I am seeing into words – an ekphrasis of sorts adjusted to fiction.

What's next for you, and what are you currently working on?

I'm currently holding two projects in my hands and deciding which one to pursue first. I'm in the planning stages for a space fantasy series, but I also have a standalone science fiction thriller idea that is pulling me. I wouldn't rule out more mission assignments for Agent Lilline Renault, either.

<https://bookshop.org/a/197/9798985855579>

<https://www.jonathannevair.com/>

Convention Report: LosCon 48

By Robin Rose Graves



Los Angeles' longest running Science Fiction & Fantasy convention might be on the smaller side, but populated with loyal attendees. As a newcomer, I worried I'd be shunned as an infiltrating outsider, but any fears were quickly dispelled within the first event I attended.

People were welcoming and kind, and just as eager to talk about their love for Science Fiction as I was.

An array of events offered something for everyone - though I can't help but think despite being a SFF convention, things leaned more towards the Science Fiction side - not that I am complaining. As a writer, I found panels such as "Everything you Need to Know About Editing" and "The Art of Poetry" to be both informative and inspiring (not to mention there's at least a dozen of other writing-related panels I missed out on due to the fact that I can only be in one place at a time). I left the con with a newfound inspiration to write a SciFaiKu every day, thanks to Wendy Van Camp's reading in "Imaginative Verse: A Reading of Speculative Poets." Perfect for the Science Fiction writer, it was incredible to hear from actual scientists in the panel "Getting the Science Right."

I attended the "Trouble with Tribbles Script Read" in hopes that David Gerrold might be there to read his script (he was attending the Con afterall). While the event wasn't what I initially expected, it ended up being a lot of fun. Audience participants were given characters from the script, and together we voice acted the beloved episode. (Your's Truly read as Cyrano Jones, the mischievous vendor who initially sells a Tribble to an unexpecting Lt. Uhura).

But fear not, I did end up meeting David Gerrold in the vendor's alley, and I even left with a signed book! Not to mention, later running into Larry Niven outside of one of the parties on the 17th floor. But despite meeting big names, nearly every person I encountered at the con was friendly and fascinating, usually with some sort of creative project they were passionate about. I spent about half my time at the Con just talking to people, and being surrounded by such creative types who are engaged in the same interests as myself was a unique and inspiring experience.

As social media continues to become less-user friendly in favor of marketing ads, in-person meetups like LosCon are not only a break from doomscrolling and discourse, but a necessity in order to keep our community connected and thriving.

