

SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE            *The Solaris Book of New Science Fiction*  
EDITOR           George Mann  
PUBLISHER       Solaris  
COPYWRIGHT    2007  
PRINTING         2007

I don't read many anthologies, puzzling since I enjoy reading and writing short stories, but after reading this one, I may pick up some more. Mr. Mann has gathered an interesting set of writers for this book, mostly British since Solaris is a British publisher, and most of whom are unknown to me.

In my experience, anthologies are a mixed bag, just like magazines *Analog*, *Asimov's*, and *Science Fiction and Fantasy*. That's not a bad thing if you think about it – everyone has different taste in stories so if all the stories appealed to me chances are none would appeal to someone else. A happy medium is important so that more people will buy the book. A side benefit is that you might find yourself reading a story that you would not have since it is in the book anyway thus expanding your palate.

Of the 16 stories, here is the breakdown:

- Really Liked – 4
- Enjoyed – 4
- OK – 4
- Didn't Care For – 4

Of the four I didn't care for, only one was poor in my opinion, the other three just had subject matter that I don't like.

My favorite was the last story – *The Farewell Party* by Eric Brown. It tells the story of a group of friends who hang out at a pub once a week and one day a stranger comes in and becomes a friend. The science fiction aspect unfolds gradually as we find out more about the stranger. Even though I saw the ending coming, it was very satisfying. The reason I like this one best is because the characters are well written and the story line flows so brilliantly.

The most humorous story was *Jellyfish* by Mike Resnick and David Gerrold, two names well known in this genre. It is a tongue-in-cheek, no holds barred, no prisoners satire on the science fiction writing life, conventions and publishers. I laughed out loud several times, and if you have been in the field for long, the inside jokes will induce serious hilarity – don't drink anything while reading this unless you want it coming out your nose as you laugh.

The story that confused the heck out of me was *Four Ladies of the Apocalypse* by Brian Aldiss. I just could not get a handle on it. Oddly, it was the shortest story in the book.

Some of the notable authors in this collection, in addition to those mentioned, are Neal Asher, Stephen Baxter, Peter F. Hamilton, and Mary A. Turzillo. While many of the authors are probably well known, I am not familiar with their work.

If you enjoy short fiction, I recommend adding this book to your collection.

I give it 3.5 out of 5 rings of Saturn.  
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