

Critical Mass

Critical Mass is a group of SF fans who meet regularly to critically discuss works of SF/Fantasy. Critical Mass has been running for over three decades now.

It was formed in 1989 at the urging of [John Foyster](#), one of the members of the Australian Science Fiction Review editorial collective, shortly after he moved to Adelaide from Melbourne.

It was modelled after *The Nova Mob*, a discussion group founded in Melbourne in 1970.

We meet once a month to critically discuss SF & Fantasy, with a guest speaker focussing on a specific topic.

While it initially dealt primarily with written SF, in recent years it has included talks on films, comics and radio dramas.

We meet at 6:30pm on the fourth Wednesday of the month, Feb — Nov, currently at Kappy's Cafe, 22 Compton St, Adelaide

You can join us in person, *or* via Zoom.

The best way to find out about meetings is to sign up for our email newsletter, which comes out twice a month with details of meetings and snippets of info about SF & Fantasy works: <https://adelaidefanreview.com/critical-mass/>

March 17th: Climate Fiction

Kate Treloar looked at *cli-fi*, starting with the new Kim Stanley Robinson

"The recently released *The Ministry for the Future* starts in the immediate future, with climate change impacts escalating but STILL so much inaction from the masses. Opening with a bang, a near-future literal killer heatwave in India leaves millions dead. An event finally galvanising enough to stir India at least into serious action to fight climate change. Albeit with a controversial scheme deliberately polluting the atmosphere to spark a cooling event.

Ultimately *The Ministry for the Future* does find success by acknowledging action needs to be tied to the economy. Mini lessons along the way helpfully explain these more technical economic aspects.

It is this distinctive stylistic format of interspersed information and chorus of perspectives that takes this book to the next level.

There IS a lot to take in. Some reviewers have described this as an "info dump" and I can imagine it is too much for someone just looking for a novel to enjoy. But if you like your SF smart and with attention to realistic detail, this one's a cracker!

Ministry... is epic in scope, global in its coverage, original, educational and entertaining. It is an unashamed call to all of us to notice the seriousness of our collective situation.

But it's also hopeful. Rather than an apocalyptic ending, this book role-plays the potential we have to make real change in realistic time frames. A highly recommended read."

— full review at

<http://www.wild-goose.net/articles/a-novel-approach-to-climate-change/>

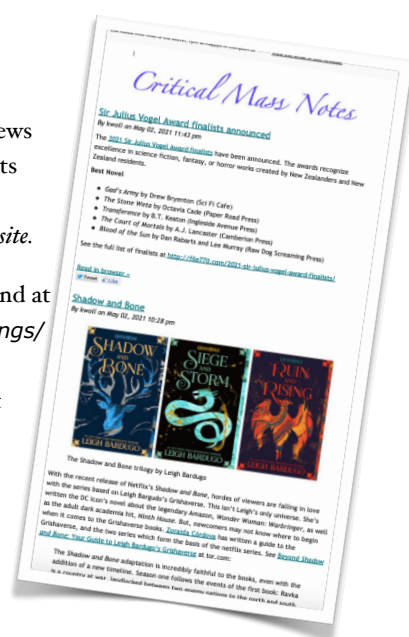
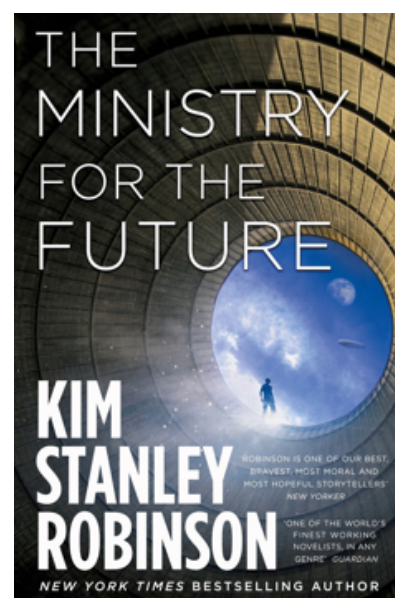
Online

The Critical Mass newsletter comes with snippets of news about awards, TV shows, stories and details about events from *Critical Mass* and the *Nova Mob*.

You can access old posts at the adelaidefanreview.com website.

Links to recordings of events at Masscon '21 can be found at <https://adelaidefanreview.com/masscon-21-recordings/>

Similarly, links to recorded Critical Mass sessions are at adelaidefanreview.com/critical-mass-recordings/



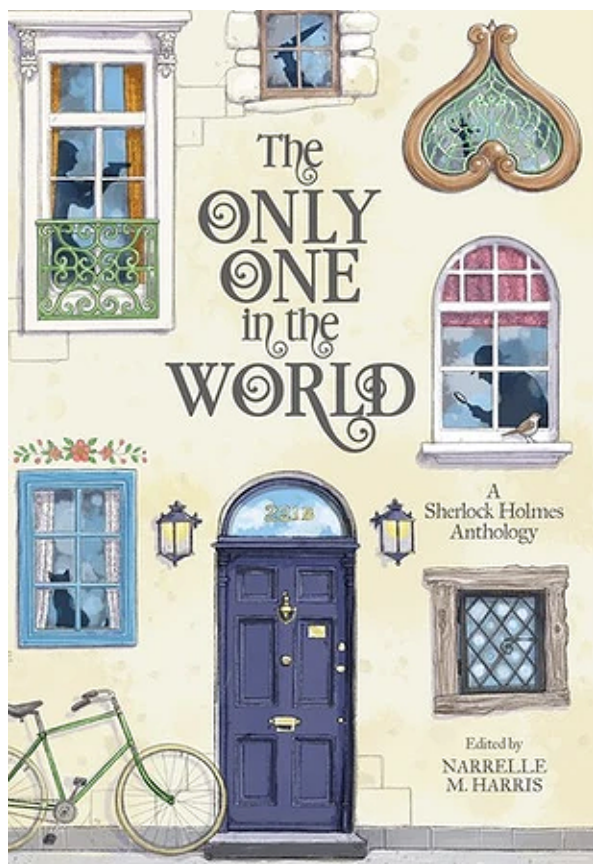
April 21st: The Only One in the World

Our guest this month was **Narrelle M Harris**, who talked about her new anthology of Sherlock Holmes stories. She was joined by some of the authors, including *Katya de Becerra*, *Lucy Sussex*, *LJM Owen*, *Jason Franks*, and *Lisa Fessler* (Germany).

"In the middle of the year that went nowhere, I asked writers from around the world to interpret what Holmes and/or Watson might be like if one or both came from a cultural background different from Conan Doyle's London-centred Victorian/Edwardian England, in stories where they also did not have to be white upper-class men.

The characters could change in any and many ways to suit the story, so that readers could explore the Great Detective and his biographer from new and different angles.

The result is [**The Only One in the World.**](#)"



May, June, August: We discussed the Hugo nominees for Best Novella:

- *Come Tumbling Down*, Seanan McGuire
- *The Empress of Salt and Fortune*, Nghi Vo
- *Finna*, Nino Cipri
- *Ring Shout*, P. Djèlí Clark
- *Riot Baby*, Tochi Onyebuchi
- *Upright Women Wanted*, Sarah Gailey

We decided the Nghi Vo should win...

July 28th: British fan Rob Hansen was our guest, to talk about the history of British fandom and the selection and reprinting of fannish writings as Epubs (both the Ansible ebooks and the TAFF collections).

September, October: We discussed six of the **online SF magazines** — *Uncanny*, *Lightspeed*, *EscapePod*, *Clarkesworld*, *Strange Horizons* and *Apex*.

November 24th: Roman talked about **Empires, Galactic & Magic**, looking at Arkady Martine's *A Memory Called Empire* and Aliette de Bodard's *Servant of the Underworld*. Certain traits are common to empires: the treatment of adjacent lands as inferior, the primacy of the central empire's culture, and the problems with succession of the rulers of the empires.

MassCon '21

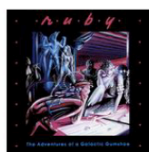
Over the years, Critical Mass has staged an occasional one day convention. This year, we decided to do so *online* via Zoom, in January.

We alternated talks and panels with games and discussions, and were pleased to welcome a number of guests from overseas.

We had John D Berry — writer, designer and typographer talking about his history, and about turning from fan to pro... A Talk presented online at Mass Con '21 : *From Fan to Pro* [https://youtu.be/Jeb7tBoAKgA].

Also of interest, as it was the 50th anniversary of of AUSFA (Adelaide Uni SF Association), was a talk with Jeff Harris and Alan Sandercock about the formation of the group.

What else? We invited Eugene Bacon to reprise her Nova Mob talk on *Afrofuturism*; we had a podcasting panel; and Adam repeated his talk on the first SF story, *A True Tale*, by Lucian of Samosata. Gillian Polack gave a talk on Jewish SF, Karen J Carlisle organised a Steampunk Tea Party, and I suggested some useful sources for radio drama.



Ruby 1: The Adventures of a Galactic Gumshoe

By: Meatball Fulton

Series: Ruby - Galactic Gumshoe, Book 1

☆☆☆☆ Write a review

On the planet Summa Nulla (crossroads of the galaxy, high point of nothing) someone is manipulating the media...



Danger 5: Stereo Adventures

By: Dario Russo, David Ashby

Narrated by: David Ashby, Sean James Murphy, Aldo Mignone, Michelle Nightingale, Nataša Ristić, Shaun Micallef, Dario Russo, Cathy Adamek, Noemi Remete, Bluey Byrne

bThis series contains mature themes and strong language and listener discretion is advised./b...



The Sandman

By: Neil Gaiman, Dirk Maggs

Narrated by: Riz Ahmed, Kat Dennings, Taron Egerton, Neil Gaiman, James McAvoy, Samantha Morton, Bebe Neuwirth, Andy Serkis, Michael Sheen

☆☆☆☆ Write a review

When The Sandman, also known as Lord Morpheus - the immortal king of dreams, stories and the imagination - is pulled from his realm and imprisoned on Earth by a nefarious cult, he languishes for decades before finally escaping...

slides from the radio drama talk are at
<https://adelaidefanreview.files.wordpress.com/2021/audiodrama.pdf>

2020 & 2021 The Years in Review



This zine recaps the Mob's 2020 and 2021 years and includes Ian Mond's recommended reading lists, the events, and a financial report. To everyone who is on the membership list, attended, participated, or spoke, thank you for making the Mob interesting and engaging, as meantime we brought in new technology, a COVID-Safe Plan, a ticketing system, and similar things arising from the public health emergency. 2020 and 2021 were a time of changes; the Mob has come through well.

The COVID-19 SARS-2 pandemic grew from faraway news bites to, in March 2020, the first of what became six lockdowns over the next eighteen months as real-life events tracked the science fiction we'd been discussing at the Nova Mob. We set up video-conferencing using Jitsi and then Zoom, and strengthened our friendship with Adelaide's Critical Mass as South Australia joined the on-line events. Membership has been steady: a pandemic appears not to be a time when people seek out new organisations to join. Over the two years the Nova Mob met 19 times; 12 meetings were videoconference-only, 7 meetings were at the Kensington Town Hall ("KTH"), and 3 used both methods. On-line attendance proved more popular than face to face meetings - an average 22 vs 14 people; Zoom enables international guests but face to face did help members see their way through the pandemic. 54 people from the mailing list attended at least one meeting. Speakers were evenly split between Mob members and guests. Many thanks to Lucy Sussex, Julian Warner, and Natalie MacLachlan for their continuing role in Nova Mob ideas and co-ordination.

Financially the funds are in adequate shape considering donations have dropped due to the lack of face-to-face meetings, and Zoom and KTH both changed to payments a year in advance. We've paid for Zoom to July 2022 and KTH to Nov 2022. The current low state of funds will pick up in time for the Zoom renewal in July. Donations were higher than the formal records show, we have a magic money tin? I single out with thanks Critical Mass for their kind offer (accepted) to share the cost of the annual Zoom subscription (and not monthly, line item is misplaced below). Any member can use the subscription if you've a need, particularly a science-fictional need, so please ask. We now have a PayPal option for donations. KTH remains a good home for the Mob. I attest the accounts below are correct.

There have been many highlights over 2021-22 with the largest attendance being for our celebration and farewell of John Bangsund. Rest in peace John. Again, special thanks to the speakers, and for all who have appreciated the Mob in these times.

Murray MacLachlan, Convenor

Nova Mob 2020 - 2021 Calendar years	IN	OUT	Balance	Comment
<i>Starting balance January 2020</i>			\$ 324.80	<i>Cash in the tin</i>
Donations in	\$ 211.50		\$ 536.30	19 meetings, 12 Zoom only, 7 at KTH only, 3 combined
Rent for KTH (Kensington Town Hall)	\$ 135.60	\$ 409.80	\$ 262.10	~\$22.60 per night. "In" is reimbursement from KTH for cancelled meetings
Food		\$ 93.65	\$ 168.45	Also thanks to the people who bought food along (Elaine, Julian, Lucy, Lyn)
Zoom monthly subscription	\$ 70.00	\$ 253.99	-\$ 15.54	Paid monthly Sep 2020 - July 2021. "In" is donation from Critical Mass
Zoom Annual subscription		\$ 138.53	-\$ 154.07	Changed to Annual during Zoom sale. Paid in advance for Aug 2021 - Jul 2022
Thank you gifts to speakers		\$ 107.00	-\$ 261.07	Wine, charities, food vouchers.
Publications - 2019 end of year fanzine		\$ 106.85	-\$ 367.92	Jan 2020. Printing (A3, one side was in colour).
Crockery		\$ 76.10	-\$ 444.02	Trays/plates bought in Jan 2020 for safe food service
Postage		\$ 12.45	-\$ 456.47	
Subtotals	\$ 417.10	\$ 1,198.37		
	\$ 1,198.37	\$ 1,198.37	-\$ 456.47	Expenses paid by MM (eg by credit card, Paypal) & reimbursed by Mob
<i>Closing balance January 2022</i>			\$ 42.45	<i>Cash in the tin Jan 2022</i>
Discrepancy between tin and records	\$ 414.02			Figure to account for Record keeping errors/ Donations/ Magic money tin
			\$ 42.45	<i>Actual funds - cash in the tin as at January 2022</i>

The Nova Mob meets on the first Wednesday of the month, February to November, with a pub meeting likely in December.

Kensington Town Hall

8.00pm - 9.30 pm or so,
first floor Conference Room 30 - 34 Bellair St
Kensington, Melbourne, VIC 3031

Zoom

8.00pm - 9.30 pm Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney time 7.30pm - 9.00pm Adelaide time
Bookmark your Zoom Meeting - it's the same address and details every time
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4177583193?pwd=VjdPL1BhSTBNclN2YnRsejN3Y1hlUT09>
Passcode: nova Meeting ID: 417 758 3193

Attendees are asked to donate \$5 towards rent, tea, coffee, and biscuits. Gold coin is fine if that's appropriate for your circumstances. PayPal nataliem4965@gmail.com Donations of home-made snacks and goodies welcome. First time arrivals are free. Friends, out-of-town guests, and arrivals are always welcome and have an open invitation. Many members gather to dine out together before a meeting, Newmarket Railway Station is 15 minutes travel from Flinders St Station on the Craigieburn line. Tram Route 57.

NOVA MOB EVENTS 2021-2022

Feb 2020 KTH 22 The Nova Mob 200 Years of Frankenstein	March 2020 KTH 17 Meg Mundell The Trespassers	May 2020 Z 18 Chris Flynn Mammoth: A Novel
June 2020 Z 21 Alan Stewart Longevity Of Wild Cards	July 2020 Z 21 Eugen Bacon Afrofuturism	Aug 2020 Z 28 Farah Mendlesohn Robert Heinlein
Sep 2020 Z 29 Anne Black: The Burlesque of Frankenstein; Lucy Sussex: Vogel's Anno Domini 2000	Oct 2020 Z 32 The Nova Mob John Bangsund – Celebrating A Life	Nov 2020 Z 20 Ian Mond 2020 Mondiale – A World in Books
Feb 2021 KTH & Z 10 Dmetri Kakmi The Door & Gothic Lit	Mar 2021 KTH & Z 12 + 5 The Nova Mob General Discussion	April 2021 KTH 10 Jane Routley Shadow Of the Empire of Light
May 2021 Z 15 John Birmingham A Bestselling Sf Career	June 2021 Z 30 John Clute Fantastika	July 2021 KTH 6 Clare McDonald: Altered Carbon Murray MacLachlan: Oglaf
Aug 2021 Z 22 Charles Taylor Fritz Lieber	Sep 2021 Z 19 Perry Middlemiss Awards: The Rain Heron; The Animals in That Country	Oct 2021 Z 18 Paul Voermans The White Library
Nov 2021 KTH & Z 16 + 7 Ian Mond 2021 - A World in Books	Dec 2021 pub 19 The Nova Mob End-Of-Year – Woodlands Hotel	KTH = Face to Face meeting. Z = Zoom or similar videoconferencing. The number is how many attended.

* No meeting in April 2020 nor end-of-year in 2020 due to the public health emergency. March 2021 had internet and scheduling issues and became a discussion on young adult SF&F with credit to Sue Bursztynski and Sue Ann Barber. Want to use the Zoom account? Please contact novamob@aussiebb.com.au or websmith@internode.on.net

IAN MOND'S PICKS – THE BEST OF THE YEARS

2021

- Other Words: Peasants, Pilgrims, Spirits, Saints by Teffi
- The Employees by Olga Ravn
- Mrs Death: Misses Death by Salena Godden
- The Angels of L19 by Jonathan Walker
- Dead Souls by Sam Rivière
- All the Murmuring Bones by Angela Slatter
- The Good Neighbours by Nina Allan
- Slipping by Mohamed Kheir
- The Confessions of Copeland Cane by Keenan Norris
- The Thing Between Us by Gus Moreno
- Dangerous Visions and New Worlds edited by Andrew Nette and Iain McIntyre
- This Weightless World by Adam Soto
- Build Your House Around My Body by Violet Kupersmith

2020

- We All Hear Stories in The Dark by Robert Shearman
- Sisters by Daisy Johnson
- Bubblegum by Adam Levin
- Mordew by Alex Pheby
- The Only Good Indians by Stephen Graham Jones
- The Harpy by Megan Hunter
- Earthlings by Sayaka Murata
- Ghost Species by James Bradley
- Love and Other Thought Experiments by Sophie Ward
- Temporary by Hilary Leichter

THE NOVA MOB – CELEBRATING SCIENCE FICTION AND SPECULATIVE FICTION AS A CULTURAL FORM SINCE 1970

ATTENDANCE

Adam Jenkins	Julian Warner
Alan Stewart	Justin Ackroyd
Alison Barton	Karen Carlisle
Alison Scott	KRin Pender-Gunn
Bill Wright	Lucy Sussex
Bruce Barnes	LynC
Bruce Gillespie	Marc Ortlieb
Carey Handfield	Malcolm Gordon
Charles Taylor	Mark Loney
Clare McDonald	Meg Mundell
Craig McBride	Michael Green
David Grigg	Murray MacLachlan
Elaine Cochrane	Natalie MacLachlan
Erika Lacey	Nicolette Taylor
Eva Stein	Perry Middlemiss
Gerald Smith	Peter Fagan
Geoff Allshorn	Peter Ryan
Gillian Polack	Rob Gerrand
Soh Kam Hung	Roman Orszanski
Helene Talie	Rose Mitchell
Ian Mond	Sarah Endacott
Irwin Hirsch	Steve Dickson
Jamie Reuel	Steve Roylance
Jane Routley	Sue Bursztynski
Jeff Harris	Terry Morris
Jenny Bryce	Thomas Bull
Jocko Allan	Tony Thomas