

non-fiction

WHAT WE'RE UP TO

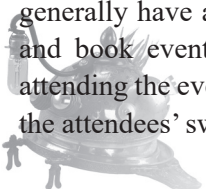
EDITORIAL BY DIANE L. WALTON

Summer 2023 has come to an end. How did things go for *On Spec*? Well, the highlight would have to be the evening of this year's Aurora Awards. In recent years, the Auroras have been presented via a digital ceremony, with nominees waiting in the virtual "green room" backstage and going live when their name is called as a winner. It's a fun ceremony and we applaud the organizers, Mark Leslie Lefebvre and Liz May Anderson, for their hard work in presenting the event.

Our magazine was a nominee in the category of Best Related Work and lost to a couple of excellent anthologies. Congratulations to *The Astronaut Always Rings Twice*, edited by Shannon Allen and JR Campbell, Tyche Books, and *Nothing Without Us Too*, edited by Cait Gordon and Talia C. Johnson, Renaissance.

We were well-represented in the categories of Best Short Story and Best Poem/Song. Peter G. Reynolds won the Aurora for his story "Broken Vow: The Adventures of Flick Gibson, Intergalactic Videographer", published in *On Spec* #120. And Melissa Yuan-Innes won for her poem, "Rapunzel in the Desert", published in *On Spec* #122. Kudos to both writers for this achievement! By the way, hard copies of these two issues are still available for sale, as well as digitally through Weightless Books.

That brings me to another subject: our current inventory. We generally have a print overrun of copies that we take to conventions and book events. Sometimes we sell the copies, and if we aren't attending the event, we often provide free copies for the volunteers, or the attendees' swag bags, or other distribution. This year's Lethbridge



Word on the Street, and Alberta Culture Days, and Haliburton's Bookapalooza are examples. If you are planning an event, feel free to contact us for possible freebies for the attendees.

Recently, we've been contacted by two collectors who were eager to have a complete set of *On Specs*, back to Issue #1, and we were able to supply all but a couple of issues. Older issues are rare, but they are still around, so if you are interested in a particular issue or author from our early years, feel free to contact us and we will see what we can do for you.

On Spec's other highlight this year was having a table in the Vendor room at PemmiCon, this year's North American Science Fiction Convention (NASFIC), which was held in Winnipeg in July. The NASFIC is a "floating" convention that gets held in a North American city in a year when the World Science Fiction Convention is held in a country outside North America. We sold copies and subscriptions, met some of our regular subscribers, a few artists and authors we've published over the years, and had a grand time. The convention organizers had a strict COVID masking policy, keeping the convention safer for all attendees. It was the first in-person event in several years for many of us.

We are keeping busy with the editing of stories we purchased during our latest submission period in preparation for future issues. Part of the fun work is finding cover images from artists we like, and you will love what is coming up. We should be announcing a new manuscript submission period by the end of the year. And as usual, we cannot do this work without the financial support from our donors and Patreon friends, as well as the Alberta Cultural Industries Grant program for magazines.

IN THIS ISSUE

We've got the usual mix of authors we've published before, along with works by authors new to us. Fiona Moore explores the concept of virtual tourism to protect ancient sites in "And If Venice Is Sinking"; Lorina Stephens shows how powerful a shorter work can be with "The Keening of a Sparrow"; and Carolyn Watson delights

us with her zany take on a zombie apocalypse in “The Trombone, the Pianist, the Four-Wheeler, and the Zombies”. New to *On Spec*, Antony Paschos gives us his haunting tale, “A Fairy Tale for Sofie”, translated from the original Greek; in R. Keelan’s “Oh Exemplary Restraint, So Rare in the Modern World!”, a research student works for a university professor with a ‘creepy vibe’; Pascal Raud’s “The Chameleon”, originally published in French in the magazine *Solaris* and translated here by Margaret Sankey, starts with a protagonist who wakes up with a bump on his head and finds himself talking to a little girl astride a giant rat—need we say more? We’re happy to bring you “The Written Future” by long-time *On Spec* fiction editor, A.J. Wells, showing a metaphorical journey of those who record stories of the old world before its destruction; A. Reid Johnson, with “The Alien Anthropologist” showing us what can happen when you fail to consider your study subjects’ culture; and Brenda Tremayne’s “Folklore”, where the protagonist is in Portugal, looking for stories of monsters, and finds much more. With poetry from Renee Cronley, M.W. Irving, Crystal Sidell, and Angel Leal, plus our cartoon and bot, and gorgeous bot cover image by Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk and Steve Fahnestalk, along with author and artist interviews by Cat McDonald and Roberta Laurie, we hope you get plenty of enjoyment from this issue.

IN UPCOMING ISSUES

We will have fiction by Lynne M. Maclean, Leslie Brown, L.P. Melling, Andrew Knighton, Karl El-Koura, Andrew Rucker-Jones, Cale Plett, and Ruth E. Walker, to name but a few. Poetry by Jade Wallace, Swati Chavda, Colleen Anderson, Julia August, and K.R. Segriff, and of course the delightful bots and cartoons from Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk. Look for future covers from Jeff Mann, Robert Pasternak, and others. ▪