

Sci-Fi Recommendations

Sunday February 19, 2023

My son-in-law recently asked me for science fiction recommendations. I read quite a bit of sci-fi when I was a teenager (mostly pulp), but once I started working I switched to mostly non-fiction/technical stuff. I do still read this genre occasionally, though, so I thought it would be interesting to revisit a few.

You'll quickly notice that each bibliography I list is but a small fraction of the author's overall work: I'm only listing works that I've personally read (or at least *tried* to read).

Alan Dean Foster

When I was asked for recommendations, this was the first name that popped into my head as a favorite author of mine when I was a teenager. But, *I couldn't remember a single specific novel of his I'd read*. So, I checked Wikipedia, and then it all came back to me: Along with his own original works, Mr. Foster has created a *lot* of novelizations for film scripts. *That's* why I read so much of his work: For movies I wasn't able to see in the theater, I'd get his adaptation from the library and read that instead! Here are a few I can remember reading:

- *Splinter of the Mind's Eye* (1978) (A Star Wars adaptation)
- *The Black Hole* (1979)
- *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979)
- *Alien* (1979)
- *Clash of the Titans* (1981) (Hey, it's not all going to be sci-fi.)
- *Outland* (1981)
- *The Thing* (1981)

H.G. Wells

While his works are quite old (particularly for science fiction), he's an amazing writer, and they hold up very well. A few I've read:

- *The Time Machine* (1895) (My favorite)
- *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896)
- *The Invisible Man* (1897)
- *The War of the Worlds* (1898)

I'm also reminded that he has a huge bibliography that I *haven't* read. I should revisit it.

H.P. Lovecraft

This one's a bit problematic. His style of writing doesn't fit neatly into the science fiction genre, landing more in the area of horror/cosmic horror. And, as a person, he had some pretty loathsome

views. But, boy, what a writer. The only modern writer that comes to mind in terms of being able to capture this level of creeping dread is Stephen King. Some of his work that I've read:

- *The Call of Cthulhu* (1926)
- *The Colour Out of Space* (1927)
- *The Dunwich Horror* (1929)
- *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) (My favorite)
- *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (1936)

He's another author with a large body of work that I've only read a fraction of.

Robert A. Heinlein

Mr. Heinlein is a towering figure in the world of science fiction, but I'm embarrassed to say I've only read a couple of his novels, a long time ago. I do recall them being good, though:

- *Tunnel in the Sky* (1955)
- *Starship Troopers* (1959)

Greg Egan

Mr. Egan works in the realm of "hard sci-fi": science fiction that is technically detailed, and meant to be as realistic (or at least plausible?) as possible. I've really enjoyed most of his work that I've read, but some were just too tough for me:

- *Neighbourhood Watch* (1987)
- *The Moral Virologist* (1990)
- *Quarantine* (1992)
- *Wang's Carpets* (1995)
- *Distress* (1995)
- *Diaspora* (1997) (My favorite)
- *Oceanic* (1998)
- *The Planck Dive* (1998)
- *Schild's Ladder* (2002) (I couldn't finish this one. Just too technically dense for me.)
- *Riding the Crocodile* (2005)
- *Zendegi* (2010) (I didn't finish this one either, but for different reasons. The story wasn't very interesting and it felt like he couldn't get a handle on the characters.)

Stanislaw Lem

Another hard sci-fi writer, with works that I find almost as challenging as Greg Egan's.

- *Solaris* (1961)
- *His Master's Voice* (1968) (My favorite)
- *Fiasco* (1986)

Michael Crichton

His work tends to veer into political/preachy, but is nevertheless very compelling. He has a writing style that, while very different genre-wise, has a knack for drawing you in that's similar to Stephen King:

- *The Andromeda Strain* (1969)
- *The Terminal Man* (1972)
- *Eaters of the Dead* (1976)
- *Congo* (1980)
- *Sphere* (1987)
- *Jurassic Park* (1990)
- *Airframe* (1996)
- *Timeline* (1999)
- *Prey* (2002)

John Scalzi

Mr. Scalzi's *Old Man's War* series was recommended to me by a friend. I've read the first two, and they're quite good:

- *Old Man's War* (2005)
- *The Ghost Brigades* (2006)

Andy Weir

Mr. Weir is another author who works in hard sci-fi, but I find his work to be more accessible than Greg Egan's:

- *The Martian* (2014) (Absolutely fantastic. I loved the movie too.)
- *Artemis* (2017) (A stumble with this one, unfortunately. It had some good moments, but he had absolutely no idea how to write the main character. I didn't finish it.)
- *Project Hail Mary* (2021) (I'm reading this one now. It's not as good as *The Martian*, so far, but I'm enjoying it.)

Douglas Adams

Finally, if you want to have the most fun a person can have reading "science fiction", here you go:

- *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1980)
- *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* (1987)

From:
<https://blog.devtoprd.com/> - **Jim's Blog**

Permanent link:
https://blog.devtoprd.com/doku.php?id=posts:2023:2023.02.19_scifi_recommend

Last update: **2025/03/30 10:47**

