

THE CLARION

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Photo Credit: Majestic Nursery & Gardens

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Photo credit: Rachel Hall, "Still Life #1," Charcoal, 24"h. X 18," Sinclair Community College Purchase Award, Donor: Burnell R. Roberts

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Hello and welcome,

I've often said that Sinclair is a world apart but in truth no other place better represents the reality of Dayton. The pride, faded glory, inequities- our campus is a perfect example of the best and worst of the Gem City.

Think about it: students of every background come here to learn and build a better future for themselves. Professors, having done the same, pass those lessons to the next generation. As a student body, you've got to admit: we have our saints and ghouls, good folk and bastards. Between such a wealth of humanity lies The Clarion.

Like our fellow media professionals, we walk a thin line. We deliver truth as best we can and entertainment when possible. You ask for the season's latest fashion statement and we tell you: light blue jeans with a literal spot of brown. We are the pulse of an entire student body.

I say the above because over the past two semesters our paper has endured significant financial hardship. Promises of funding have either been broken or fallen by the wayside. Hours have been cut and alternate revenue streams ferociously tapped. Yet it has not been enough.

While the powers that be assure us everything is fine, student journalists are holding bake sales. Unlike the clubs that join us on the proverbial corner, Clarion staff are employees yet are expected to beg for their bread.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Ismael David Mujahid,
Executive Editor
Photo Credit: Layllah Mujahid



In spite of that, you hold in your hands a magazine produced from that rare alchemy of skill and passion. Our team has eaten pavement and moved mountains. It has been our mandate to deliver the best and we have delivered.

So it is with great pleasure that I share this edition with you. We had the privilege of interviewing not one but two Sci-fi legends! We have the story of two Sinclair locations closing.

A member of the team wrote the incredible story of an educational farm. Not to mention the gaggle of reviews, poems, and news for you to pour over.

Our team has fought battles to get this issue to you. But as a wise man once said, no matter how much you fight, the only battle that matters is the last. Until then, whenever that is, let's enjoy the ride.

Here's to the fight ahead,
Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor



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The garden at Learning Tree Farm is a feast for the senses, and visitors are encouraged to give the fresh produce a taste.

Photo Credit: Macey Heys

No farms, no food

Local endeavors to preserve the planet and end hunger

By Macey Heys, Managing Editor

Have you ever driven on the country roads that are woven between the suburbs of Dayton? If so, you've seen the green fields that span as far as the eye can see. Maybe you've thought: wow, that's a lot of corn. Perhaps you've seen fields, not of corn, but of livestock...horses and cows, for example. Have you ever wondered about those who keep our grocery stores stocked with the items we require to sustain ourselves and the environment?

First, The Clarion spoke with Jeff Pansing from Majestic Nursery, located in West Alexandria, Ohio. In addition to his impressive background in horticulture landscaping, Pansing grows a variety of crops on his farm including several acres of corn, soybeans, and pumpkins.

In the fall, Majestic Nursery is transformed into a farmer's market, which includes a seven-acre pumpkin patch and a 15-acre corn maze.

"We've been doing this for 27 years, and those we saw as children now bring their children. It's like a tradition for families to come to the farm, and it develops a community," Pansing said.

"So many people are very far removed from agriculture. When people think of food they think of grocery stores, but they don't realize the role that agriculture plays in putting food in grocery stores," he said.

Perhaps what is even more concerning, Jeff Pansing pointed out, is the extreme hunger and poverty that occurs right here in Dayton without most of us being aware of it. By partnering with various food banks such as Miami Valley Meals and Society of St. Andrew, Pansing was able to donate several thousand pounds of crops.

"In the last year, we have been able to donate 2,581 pounds of squash, which accounts for 15,000 servings of food," he said.

In addition to farmers markets, there are horse farms, dairy farms, grain farms, and so many more. In a small corner of West Dayton, there is an educational farm called the Learning Tree Farm. This community of educators, volunteers, and people who care about the land and animals are teaching our youth about nature; Earth; our home, while helping save it one acre at a time.



In addition to sourcing their own honey, Majestic Nursery grows an enormous variety of mums and daylilies.

Photo Credit: Majestic Nursery & Gardens



A sweet piglet looks forward to greeting all the kids.

Photo Credit: Macey Heys

The Learning Tree Farm was started 50 years ago by two elementary school teachers: Sally Keyes and Jean Ryan. What started as a small program that hosted a few hundred students a year, has since grown into a community that sees several thousand students from over 100 schools, in addition to having their own Nature Preschool. The Clarion spoke with Jean Ryan to understand more about the diverse roles of farms.

"We discovered that kids were out of touch with the outdoors, where their food came from, and they had never seen animals up close. It was the kids who inspired us because we would take them on field trips to parks and on bike hikes. All the teachers realized that we needed to get kids outdoors more, we actually had no intention of starting a farm," Ryan said.

In realizing that children were having difficulty learning in the confined space of the classroom, and after searching for land to potentially use as a space for learning, plans for the Learning Tree Farm took root. With the help of friends, family, and the community, it all started coming together.

"We got children outdoors and they could discover bird nests or a tree struck by lightning. They were really smart kids but they couldn't learn in that traditional setting. We wanted to get them to make connections with what they were trying to learn in the classroom with what was outside, so they could see the real thing," she said.

However, the farm is much more than about learning, it's also about escape. Ryan explained that, each year, more and more families came to the farm. Often, to remove themselves from the fast-paced-ness of life.

She said, "For a lot of people it's a nice getaway because they're so bombarded with electronics, and just distracted from life."

Concerns for the business of agriculture and maintaining a farm are the same today as they were 50 years ago. Plus, with worsening climate change and insufficient leadership, concerns nowadays are even greater.

"We saw land being gobbled up by the acre back in the 60s. Even though the farm is just one little corner, we wanted to save some land. It's depriving wildlife of their habitats," she said.

On the other hand, with more resources and advanced technology, there is hope yet that agriculture, in the future, has the ability to go in the opposite direction than what we're seeing today, and that more people will feel the need to protect nature from being destroyed by human greed.

Ryan said, "People are becoming more aware of the fact that land is being destroyed, and they are trying to preserve it. The same with alternative energy; wind and solar energy is getting more developed. Also, the farm is a part of the conservation easement, which ensures that this land will always be kept in green space."

Next time you're driving through the country, when you look out at the fields, remember the small, yet vital role these hard working individuals play in keeping Earth and its inhabitants alive. A single person with an idea has the chance to have a positive impact in this world and on others' lives; will you be that person?

The end of an era in Englewood and Huber Heights

Students and faculty brace for the closure of two Sinclair learning centers

By Davis Miller, Intern



The Englewood campus is not currently hosting any classes. It is, however, open to students and faculty on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
Photo Credit: Jay Mazega



At its peak, the Huber Heights campus hosted 3,000 students.
Photo Credit: Jay Mazega

In 2006, spurred by a looming recession and an increase in prospective students, Sinclair opened the doors of two regional campuses in Englewood and Huber Heights. After various factors led to low enrollment at these campuses, at the close of the fiscal calendar in 2024, their doors will be closing.

In a conversation with The Clarion, Catherine Petersen, Sinclair's Chief of Public Information, said, "Having the regional centers was so convenient for our Northern audience of students, so they didn't have to come downtown."

At peak enrollment, Englewood saw about 2,500 students and Huber Heights saw 3,000 students. These metrics were stable for several years. Over the years, various factors, the most dramatic being the COVID-19 pandemic, led to a crash in enrollment.

"The decision was made by the board of trustees earlier this year that it was in the best interest of the college to close those two regional centers. We still have regional centers in Centerville and Mason where both have seen a bounce back in enrollment," said Petersen.

Although a return to in-person learning seems to be preferred, backed statistically by students returning to face-to-face classes in Mason, Centerville, and downtown Dayton. Englewood and Huber Heights weren't able to return to their former successful enrollment metrics.

There's a bittersweet sentiment from faculty regarding the closures. These regional campuses increased the schools outreach and offered otherwise unavailable resources, such as the allied health labs at Huber Heights. Students often used the campuses to study or receive tutoring and faculty who lived further from downtown would set up their offices there. On the other hand, there's the understanding that, with low enrollment at these campuses, the resources would be better allocated towards improvements elsewhere.

This change will not only affect faculty, but the entire Sinclair community, especially students.

Speaking to The Clarion, former Sinclair student, Parker Moore, who took courses at the Huber Heights campus, said, "It was a really easy drive and a nice environment. I liked my time there a lot."

"I'm sad to see it close, but I'm glad I got the opportunity to go there. . . It was the perfect way to get out of the house for school without making the trip downtown," added the former student.

The college experience is what you make it, but the campus you choose has a large impact. Former Huber Heights and Englewood students and faculty will be understandably downhearted, but the school's hope is that the action may be viewed positively and lead to a brighter future overall.

Ohio's Great American Eclipse

Why swarms of scientists are heading our way

By Macey Heys, Managing Editor

On April 8, 2024, the moon will pass directly in front of the sun, causing the sky to go momentarily dark as it casts a shadow over the earth. Now, it's not a completely rare phenomenon. In fact, total solar eclipses are estimated to occur once every 18 months. However, most happen way out in the vast ocean where it is not easily accessible.

The last eclipse that was visible in the US was in Aug. 2017, however, Ohio was not in the path of totality. In fact, the last time we were in the path was in 1806, and the next occurrence is predicted to be in 2099.

In addition to the fact that we are in the path of totality for this eclipse, what makes this one exciting for scientists is that the sun is at its pique activity (in 2017, it was at its minimum).

What exactly does this mean? The Clarion spoke with Professor Lalitha Locker, the Chairperson of the Physical Sciences Department, who explained in detail why the activity of the sun is critical to this particular eclipse.

"The way the sun affects the earth depends on the solar activity, which occurs on a 11-year cycle with maximas and minimas. This is influenced by the charged particles that leave the sun and reach the Earth's atmosphere. We are expecting this year's maxima to be very strong, and we are still researching how and why certain eclipses are more spectacular than others," she said.

Professor Locker explained that from Dayton, Ohio, the totality of the solar eclipse is estimated to last for two minutes and 43 seconds, which is considered a long time.

"The corona of the sun, which is the outermost layer, or the atmosphere of the sun. This eclipse will give them the opportunity to really study the corona because the light of the photosphere (the part that we see) is so bright that it overshadows the other two layers; the chromosphere and the corona. The corona being so thin, just like our atmosphere gets thinner at higher altitudes, is not something that is easily visible.



Plus, with the solar maxima being close, there will be more activity in that layer of the atmosphere of the sun. Biologists will also be interested because even animal behavior changes a little bit for that short duration of time, as well as atmospheric changes here on Earth," she said.

Even if you're not a scientist, to be able to experience the darkening of the sky, the dropping of temperatures in a matter of minutes, and the wonder that our galaxy is, makes this truly a once in a lifetime experience.

"The department is planning on having telescopes out, pinhole cameras and binoculars, and we will be giving out eclipse glasses to students, friends, and family," Professor Locker said.

If you miss this year's eclipse you won't have a chance to see one like it until 2099. Happy waiting!

Photo Credit: Canva

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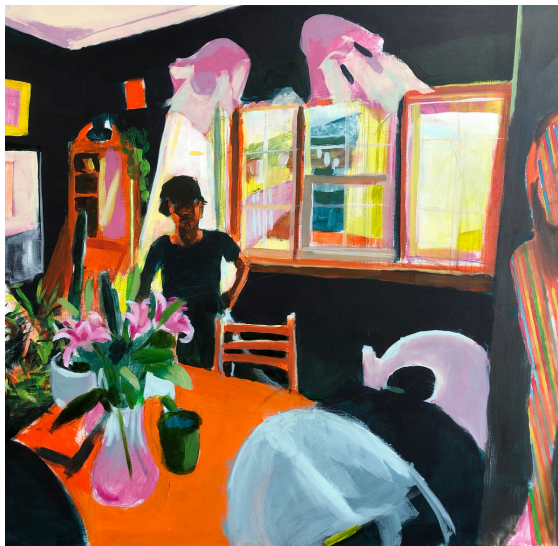
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A Walk With G. Scott Jones

Taking five with a modern jazzman

By Faith Harrel, Reporter

Jazz music has been a part of the global cultural consciousness for generations. You hear it in malls, in movies, and in the cartoons you watch as a kid. Just about everything we know and love has a bit of that classic genre's DNA. But how many of you have met a true, modern jazzman?

Renowned trombone player and musician Umvikeli G. Scott Jones has been a lifelong lover of music. He grew up in a house full of music. Among his first loves was the genre he champions now: jazz. But it all started at home.

"I could sit at the organ and just play it at home. I wasn't necessarily good but I was exposed to it. I also sung in church," said Jones.

This was their gateway into music, but they said his love of jazz was more specific. It began in Detroit, Michigan, where they lived at the time.

"My love of jazz started with oldies from the Detroit area, because of my father's love for listening to older music. The first record I had on repeat was one of Dixieland jazz that I listened to over and over again."

This love of music followed them through school years where Jones first attempted to join a band in sixth grade, but was ultimately refused, unable to join till the next year.

Later in life Jones became an educator, beginning with private lessons while studying for his Master's degree. .

Jones said, "I decided to get a doctorate from West Virginia University to further my teaching career and came back to Dayton permanently where I ended up working at Dayton Public Schools."

Aside from education, Jones has used their musical prowess to form bands and create compositions as well as albums.



Jones' love of jazz began at a young age.
Photo Credit: G. Scott Jones

"One of the first compositions I wrote was my middle school years. As soon as I got in I began trying to write my own music. That led to 'Dance of the African Elephant', which was inspired partly by something our band was playing at the time."

Nowadays Jones writes primarily for their jazz combo that he regularly performs with.

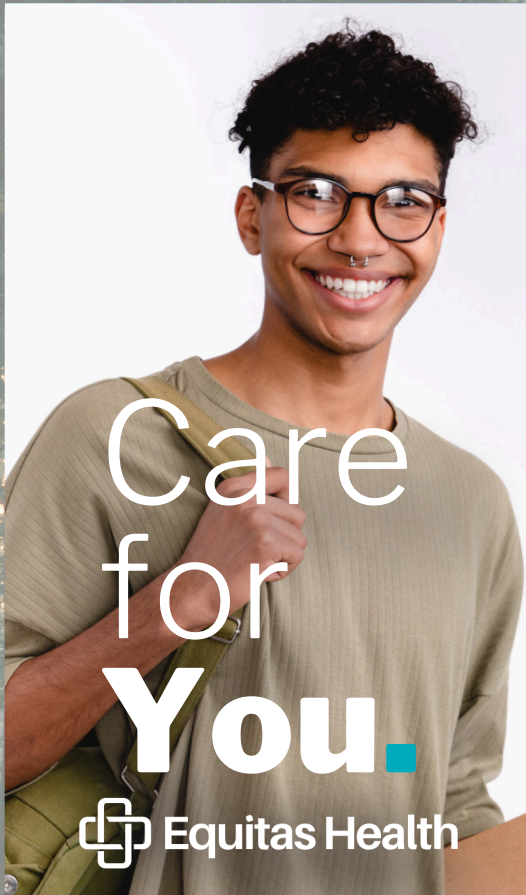
Jones has multiple published composition works, and many more that he plans to have published that he has written. Other than his compositional pieces, Jones has written some albums. That includes "Walk With Me," which was created as a homage to their late son.

They even formulated their own workout technique for jazz horn players called 'Bodybuilding for Brass Players.' A big aspect of playing any instrument is having control of your whole body to be grounded, and if you work your body you understand it for other aspects of your life.

"Bodybuilding for brass players is just to develop a correlation between physical fitness and music, is to build good posture, and foundational stature in which will build their best natural way of playing," said Jones.

It is but one of many ways Jones and other brass players are continuing to hone their craft. Success, as cited by the jazzman, is a process of continual development and growth.

Jones said, "Success is a journey as well as the steps take to do what a person has to do. It doesn't come overnight and is continuous. There is always more to learn no matter who you are or what your level of experience is. Learning, in fact, is part of what makes the journey worthwhile."



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Poetry with The Clarion

"Authority Issues" by M. M. McGowan, Creative Writing student

You know, I was about to do
The thing you just outlined;
Then you had to go and say it,
Now I've changed my mind.

"Mount Kurama" by Edwin Nagasawa, Creative Writing graduate

The moon quietly
Ascends over Kurama
Nary a whisper
Can be heard upon the mount
Gloom blankets it with shadows"

"Life is good" by Macey Heys, Creative Writing student

Life is good today. The sun winks through branches;
the veins of the sky. And in my body the blood runs
and in my body the lungs ache for spring air as I
sprint through the woods admiring how my limbs
move and sway and bend. The breeze and birds
remind me... live.

"Ritual" by Ali Ashhar, poet, short story writer, columnist

It's the month of october and the transition
is up for the day, the chirping birds witness
desolate leaves at the onset of fall season. Beyond
the aloof horizon belies a vibrant ray of hope;
the caretaker's metaphors get busy in bridging
the gap between the inner voice and the outer discord,
the syllables get heavy in the contemporary weather
for they carry the onus of vacant melodies
from erstwhile summer. The breeze of conscience
around
the garden leads to a boulevard where fellow caretakers
vie for utopia; they follow a ritual in the toughest of
times
they profess what comes easiest to them—enlighten the
dark ambiance.


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Cadian Blood

Dembski-Bowden's classic debut

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

Classics are classic for a reason. Whether we're talking the philosophical powerhouse that is "Lord of Light" or spiritual thriller like "The Name of the Rose", great books don't just magically capture our collective imagination. They frame it.

In the grimdark of the far future, "Cadian Blood" by Aaron Dembski-Bowden is to readers what "Memento" is to film aficionados: a standalone tale, aged like fine wine, and a touchstone for the impressive creative talents of its mastermind.

While a passport is pretty much the only surface-level comparison between Dembski-Bowden and Christopher Nolan, read the former's slim action-adventure novel and you'll put it down recognizing both as narrative powerhouses. Only with the Irish-born author however is those skills augmented by a propensity for epic speeches, lasers, sharp dialogue, and badass moments that will have you staying up well past bedtime.

I'm tempted to call "Cadian Blood" the story of a single regiment facing overwhelming odds but in retrospect, it so, so much more. The Cadians cited in the title make planetfall on Kathur expecting an easy reclamation operation only to confront a diabolical faith that shakes every soldier to their core. While the 88th Cadian Shock would much rather be fighting the massive force invading their home world they are ready to sacrifice everything in the battle for Kathur.

Warhammer is often seen as a setting where superhumans battle superhumans for mastery of the galaxy. While to some extent that is true, "Cadian Blood" puts readers in the boots of an average trooper. Despite being a sweet 200 pages, you learn to care for each member of the Shock, from their leader Parmenion Thade to the wisecracking Taan Darrick. How does Dembski-Bowden achieve this?

For me, it was in how immersive the book was, like falling into an ocean of lore without getting bogged down in melodrama or exposition. It kept me turning one page after another even while I dreaded the potential demise of the protagonists.

For his first Black Library novel, Dembski-Bowden tackled a classic Imperial Guard regiment.

Photo Credit: Black Library

PIRE Empire of Silence

The start of an excellent saga

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

Add to that Dembski-Bowden's penchant for lyrically beautiful moments and you have a standout debut novel. Since then, the author has gone on to write many other acclaimed books.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that Christopher Ruocchio's 'Suneater' series became a Booktube darling out of nowhere. Nor would you be alone: thousands of readers looking for a book to obsess over have picked up Empire of Silence, the first in the six-book saga. If my experience is anything to go by, few if any will have been disappointed.

Ruocchio is a rare talent: sci-fi novels told from the first-person perspective are rarely as personable or evocative as his debut. The story of Hadrian Marlowe, the eponymous Suneater, could not be told any other way. So up close and personal, we are given a visceral and emotional look at an infamous xenocide reflecting on a long and complicated life. It's full of drama, heartbreak, and intrigue that never disappoints.

We follow Hadrian's tale from a life of privilege on the lush planet of Delos to the fighting pits of hot and humid Emesh. The betrayals he suffers cut deep, the frequent setbacks he suffers relatable despite the book's otherworldly setting. For a character to carry a series this expansive they need to be dynamic and nuanced. Such a description fits Hadrian to a 'T' as we see him struggle to survive one dangerous encounter after another.

It helps that Ruocchio's complex narrative is woven around an interesting setting. Parts of his world-building have a clear heritage linking the novel to Frank Herbert's Dune and other major series. This is meant as a complement, for despite being next in line to a rich sci-fi tradition the author does more than enough to make the cultures and planets of this interstellar tapestry unique.

Like Gene Wolfe's Severian and Robin Hobb's Fitz, Hadrian's perspective is fleshed out enough to carry the book on his own. The interesting cast around him only serve to deepen his nuance, drama, and reel us in even deeper. If Ruocchio's debut is anything to go by, readers should brace themselves for a couple more weeks or even months locked in the struggles of this impressive cast.

The first book in Ruocchio's 'Suneater' series has caught on like wildfire.

Photo Credit: DAW

Shutter Island

Has the Scorsese thriller aged well?

By Michael McCorkle, Reporter

If you're looking for a masterful psychological thriller chockful of subliminal messages then look no further. Martin Scorsese's "Shutter Island" definitely meets the definition of old but gold.

The plot revolves around U.S. Marshal Teddy Daniels (DiCaprio) and his partner Chuck Aule (Mark Ruffalo), who are investigating the disappearance of a child murderer. As the story unfolds, the line between reality and illusion becomes increasingly blurred, leading to a shocking twist.

"Shutter Island" opens in a boat where we get our first sign that Teddy is not all he claims to be. He soon finds himself in a high-security psychiatric facility located on an isolated island, creating an atmosphere of suspense and dread from the very beginning. The second significant clue is revealed when Teddy is asked to hand over his firearm. Teddy struggles to release his gun. A seasoned officer wouldn't have this issue.

Scorsese's direction is impeccable, creating a sense of unease and tension that keeps the audience on the edge of their seats. The performances, particularly DiCaprio's, are outstanding, adding depth to the complex characters.

However, some critics have pointed out that the film relies heavily on genre tropes and red herrings, which may detract from the overall experience. Additionally, the plot's complexity and the film's pacing have been criticized for being overly convoluted.

Despite these criticisms, "Shutter Island" is widely regarded as a well-crafted and engaging film. It's a haunting exploration of the human mind that leaves viewers questioning their own perceptions of reality.

"Shutter Island" is a thrilling cinematic experience that showcases Scorsese's skill as a director and DiCaprio's talent as an actor. While it may not be for everyone, those who enjoy psychological thrillers will likely find it to be a compelling and thought-provoking film.

Shutter Island was originally released in 2010.

Photo Credit: Paramount Pictures

Mr. and Mrs. Smith

Amazon Prime's remake pulls no punches

By April Littleton, Reporter

Releasing the entire eight-episode series on Feb. 2, Amazon's "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" quickly rose to no.1 in over 130 countries on Prime Video according to Deadline and other industry sources. So what's all hype? Let's dive in and see if we can find the secret to this series' instant success.

Let's begin with the fact that this remake, almost 20 years after Simon Kinberg's "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" movie was first released, stars Maya Erskine from "Pen15" and Donald Glover, also known as Childish Gambino. Erskine and Glover are both multitalented individuals that utilize all their gifts. Donald Glover actually co-created this series with Francesca Sloane. Glover was also involved in the writing and directing of episodes on top of being the male lead.

Next, this rendition of "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" was created in a way that it doesn't matter if you've watched the 2005 movie starring Brad Pitt and Angelia Jolie. This adaptation has "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" applying to work as spies disguised as a married couple. So, Jane and John Smith are fully aware their "spouse"/partner is a spy, unlike in the series predecessor. Jane Smith addresses this work arrangement in the first episode by saying, "You draw less attention as a couple. You know, you're less likely to defect if you're relying on a partner. It's an old KGB tactic." With this major shift in the storyline, this Spy-Thriller series quickly evolves into a Rom-Com.

Not sure if that is a pro or con for people, it does align to the vision Donald Glover shared during his interview with Entertainment Tonight at the show's premiere though.

Glover said, "I'm not a big fan of remakes, so this was kind of a big deal to kind of take it on. Once I saw the original, I was like, 'This is a good date movie.' And I was like, 'Maybe I could make a good date show out of it?' Like, you know, something me and my wife could watch together."



Prime's latest series stars Donald Glover and Maya Erskine.

Photo Credit: Amazon

The show certainly meets Glover's high standards. In addition to its great performances, the series has stunning cinematography. You feel the explosions of mission one, the breaking of bones after their first failed mission, the cold of Calfosch, Italy during their "first vacation" and the warmth of Lake Como, Italy as they avoid flying bullets.

This series' pace is slower than your typically spy-thriller, which enables viewers to get invested in the characters and actually go along with them as they evolve. Each episode lets the audience witness the progression of our titular couple, with even episode titles like 'First Date' to 'Couples Therapy' expanding on the theme of each instalment. This type of pace also gives the showrunners time to develop the characters and make them relatable. If its reception and my viewing experience is anything to go by, it has certainly worked.



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Shadow King: An interview with Gav Thorpe

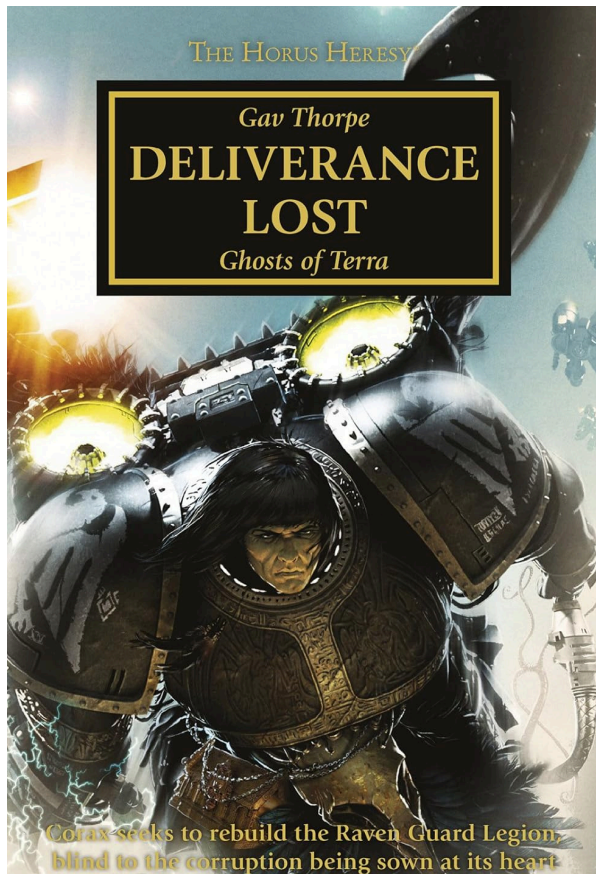
The best-selling author looks back on over three-decades of Warhammer

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

Across the constellation of speculative fiction stories, Warhammer's iconic Horus Heresy needs little introduction. Counting more than 70 books written over 15 years, the epic series helped licensed fiction's polestar break into the mainstream. A glance at the authors that made the massive project a reality reads like a roll call of contemporary sci-fi's best: Dan Abnett, Aaron Dembski-Bowden, Guy Haley.

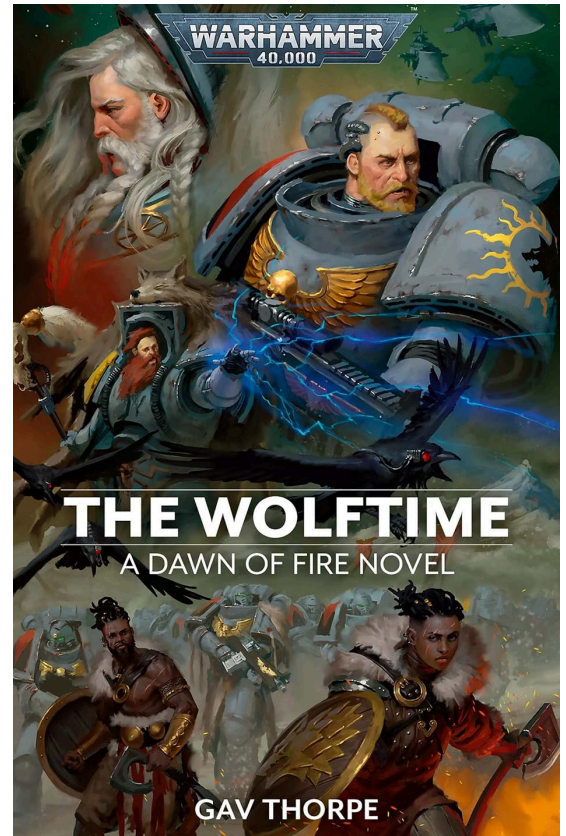
Yet even among such exalted company, Gav Thorpe is a legend. With the Horus Heresy book series ending with "The End and the Death Vol. III," it seemed like the perfect time to speak to Thorpe about his work on the landmark project. Thankfully, he was more than happy to oblige.

"A sense of relief," the New York Times best-selling author said with a laugh when asked how he feels about the end of the Horus Heresy. "And of course, pride to have been part of such a great project. In terms of scope, it was absolutely massive. Nothing like it had been done before. There's definitely a great sense of pride to have worked with so many amazing authors on a once in a lifetime endeavor."



In his epic career Thorpe has brought a long list of iconic characters to life including the Ravenlord Corvus Corax.

Photo Credit: Black Library



In 'The Wolftime' Thorpe takes readers to the legendary planet Ferris.

Photo Credit: Black Library

Thorpe would come into the project midway through its first batch of novels, starting with the short story, "Raven's Flight", in 2010. His novel, "Deliverance Lost," followed shortly after.

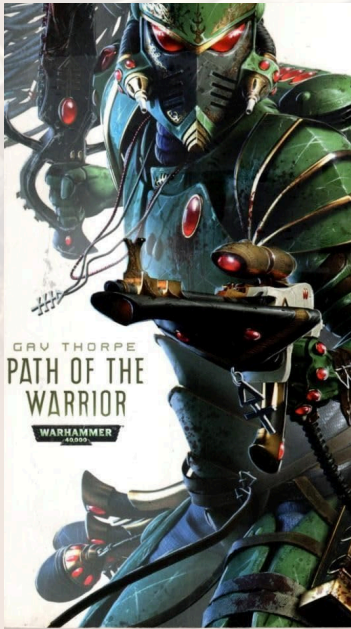
Speaking about his first forays into the series, Thorpe said, "It was a major responsibility. To join at that stage, I just didn't want to drop the ball and ensure I handed it off in the best way possible."

Thorpe, a David Gemmell Award winner, was not new to writing epic tales when he joined the Heresy team. He'd already penned a number of acclaimed titles such as "Path of the Warrior" and the "Sundering" trilogy. His ability, even back then, to make the supernatural and superhuman relatable to readers made him stand out. That talent for humanizing the inhuman would be taken to 11 in the Heresy and luckily for sci-fi fans, Thorpe was up to the challenge.

"Unlike 40k, the Heresy was a blank canvas that we could fill however we wanted. It was also different in that while it was its own setting, it would tell one continuous narrative from beginning to end," he said.

Longtime readers can appreciate his growth in that time. Over 40 novels on from the publication of "13th Legion," he's proud to continue learning as an author.

"I've become more adept at layering. Before, a lot of my work was told from a single perspective but working on something like the Heresy helped me expand to writing from multiple perspectives. A story of this scope can't really be told from a single point of view," said Thorpe.



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Since the publication of "Horus Rising," military sci-fi has not been the same. Nor has the author, a fact proven by his favorite characters and moments from the project. Each one shows a world of difference from the fatalism of Colonel Schaeffer and the blasted fields of Kadillus.

In his "Path" books, Thorpe explores the culture of an alien Aeldari. They remain a favorite with fans.

Photo Credit: Black Library

"On one hand I really enjoyed writing Navar Hef. He's a microcosm for the Raven Guard really and a victim of the Heresy. Like so many, he thinks his dreams have a come true but has a tragic end," Thorpe said.

Fans of the series have been enthralled by its massive cast, emotional highs, dramatic lows, and massive intergalactic battles. Surprisingly, his other favorite character is a certain mysterious villain the author says was great fun to explore.

"At the other end of the spectrum is Luther. He starts as a proud figure and develops into a mostly unaware villain. He later realizes what he's doing but does it anyway. One thing that makes him unique, however, is that he is just about the only character in Warhammer to be seduced by chaos but steps back right at the edge."

In terms of specific moments, the Heresy is full of memorable ones for the author. Top of the list for Thorpe is a heart-wrenching audio drama.

"'Honour the Dead' was certainly a highlight for me. It was a turning point for the legions, where the line between what they were and what they would become in 40,000 is drawn. It's where they realized things would never be the same and that the best they could do was honor the fallen."

Work across multiple mediums has seen earned the British author plenty of plaudits. Key to that success was approaching each format differently.

"In some ways short stories are a lot easier because I can focus on one idea from beginning to end. Yes, there's room for different characters but in terms of theme or story conceit you really want to focus on one and carry it through to the end. Novels on the other hand require side plots as there is more space to maneuver," said Thorpe about the many mediums he works in.

It should be noted that every writer's process and path to success is different, a fact Thorpe is quick to acknowledge. Still, there's much we can learn by trying different approaches that have worked for others.

Thorpe said on the topic, "One thing that helps me is to keep in mind the ending. It doesn't have to be a twist or involve a major revelation, but it does help me see where I want my readers to end up. Then I work my way back from that. Knowing the end in advance can help me navigate my way to it."

Reading and dissecting is another way writers can improve. Thorpe recommends writers ask themselves why they like a particular piece of writing and explore ways to emulate it in their own voice.

Characterization is key. The veteran author has a number of techniques he uses to break his characters down and better understand their personalities.

Thorpe said, "It helps to write them in a completely different setting to better understand their psychology. Maybe have them at a funeral and see what they will do. Those sorts of exercises can help get in their heads and better understand how they would approach different situations."

While worldbuilding is great, many speculative writers prioritize it to the detriment of their story and its various elements. In Thorpe's opinion, characters and story cannot take a backseat to the setting.

"What readers want from science fiction has changed since the 50s and 60s, where the 'science' was really prominent and stories were more like vehicles for concepts. These days more is expected and it's not enough to world-build or just explore ideas," said Thorpe.

A poll on his official website further illustrated this point to the veteran author. Asked what was more important to them between characters, plot, and setting, his readers were evenly split between the first two.

"It may sound strange given that a lot of the tie-in work I do is set in these very recognizable worlds. But it shows that even in a setting as distinct as Warhammer, character and story are still very important for readers."

No matter how different from modern man they are, Thorpe advises writers to keep their characters relatable. After all, he explains, authors are humans writing for human readers.

"You always want to leave space for readers to understand the characters. They don't have to agree with what they're doing but at the very least they have to understand where they are coming from," he said.

That's one thing his readers can always count on no matter who Thorpe is writing about. While it remains to be seen where he'll take his loyal fanbase next, it's certainly going to be a wonderful ride.

Villains like Lorgar Aurelian are usually a challenge to write, but Thorpe makes it look easy.

Photo Credit: Black Library

The mind behind Imaro

Charles R. Saunders' legacy

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

In an age where sci-fi and fantasy has taken inclusivity to new heights, it can be hard to imagine things being any different. We can forget, thanks to riches that brim off our bookshelves, of the pioneers that helped make the current golden age of speculative fiction possible. There are, of course, the more famous examples of Octavia E. Butler and Leigh Brackett. Less renowned but no less beloved by those that knew him or his work, is Charles R. Saunders.

To his fans he's the genius credited with inventing Sword and Soul fiction, a sub-genre of Sword and Sorcery tales. But to his friends he was that and more: activist, passionate lover of sci-fi and fantasy, innovator, and a good soul. Fitting then, that part of his legacy includes a body of work that accomplished a lifelong dream.

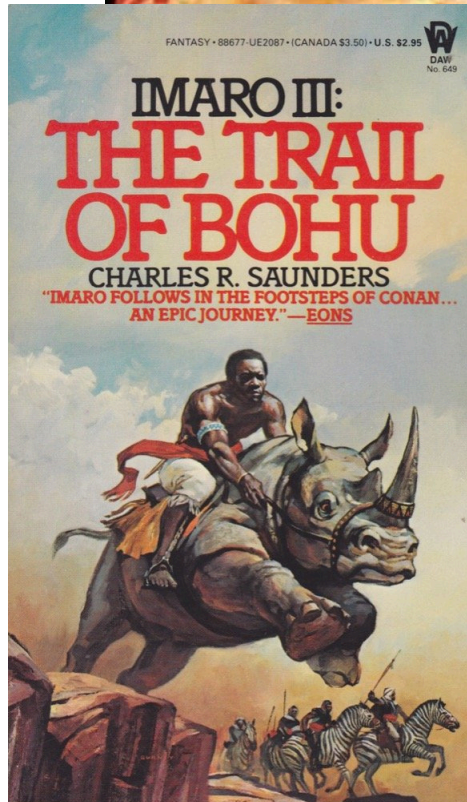
Among the many luminaries lucky enough to have known the mind behind classics like Imaro was World Fantasy Award-winning author Charles de Lint. He was more than happy to talk to The Clarion about his late friend, who died in 2020.

"I first met Charles (Saunders) in the mid-seventies, not as a writer but as a friend of a friend. He was kind enough to take me under his wing and introduce me to the world of 'zines of which I had not experience of whatsoever. We remained friends for the entire time he lived in Ottawa, a friendship we kept up when he moved to Halifax," his compatriot de Lint said.

The lifelong friendship that blossomed between them would see them link up whenever de Lint visited Halifax, be it for book tours or festivals. In a time before internet, much of their intervening correspondence was by letter. He recalls the large network of friends the late author had when they first met and the many interests that drove him.

"Charles was very compartmentalized. He had his fantasy friends, his boxing friends, his work friends from Algonquin. I was one of his fantasy friends and he was happy to talk about any aspect of the genre. It wasn't until he moved to Halifax that his letters started to include elements of other parts of his life, in particular his activism," de Lint added.

That Charles R. Saunders was a man of many interests is easy to tell from a quick look at his body of work. Going past the wonderfully old-school covers of battle scenes and muscular heroes takes you into an amalgamation of the many things he loved. Most importantly, however, is the sheer quality of his work which has led many to call him a natural storyteller.



This cover channels Saunders' love for other pulp classics.
Photo Credit: DAW



Saunders is remembered as the father of Sword and Soul Fantasy.

Photo Credit: Night Shade

"Like Robert E. Howard, who was a big influence on his early work, when you read one of Charles' stories, its impossible to put down until you get to the end. His writing was so vigorous and certainly more nuanced than Howard's. And although Charles wrote fantasy it was based on the real histories, folklore and mythology of Africa. I learned so much from him about it all," de Lint said.

According to de Lint, his late friend was galvanized to stories inspired by Africa. A love of Howard and other early pulp writers helped drive the creation of "Imaro," perhaps his most famous work. The Canadian author wanted to do for African culture what Conan the Barbarian, Soloman Kane, and other stories did for European-inspired fantasy.

"There's a whole generation of young writers creating new 'Soul and Sorcery' stories, influenced by Charles's work. It might remain a fringe interest, but even back in the day the Sword and Sorcery and Heroic Fantasy we were reading was on the fringes of the genre," de Lint explained.

It's easy to see how a writer like Saunders would thrive in today's more open environment.

"Today fantasy, sf and horror is written from many cultural viewpoints, which is a wonderful thing. But Charles was one of the first to step away from what Howard, Tolkien and other European writers were doing, striking out on his own, borrowing elements of what had come before, yes, but taking them into an entirely new (at the time) direction. I'm sure we would have gotten there eventually, but he was at the vanguard, showing us the way. I hope that will be recognized and remembered," said de Lint.

"He was first and foremost a storyteller, a modern griot, if you will, to borrow an African term from his work. If you like secondary world fantasy and have grown tired of the mock-medieval, Eurocentric thrust that permeates so many of them, I think you'll be delighted to find actual new worlds to explore in his work, based on the histories of Africa," de Lint added.

Beyond just being an incredible writer and visionary, those lucky enough to have known him will remember the man behind "Imaro" for so much more.

de Lint said, "I write to find out what happens next in whatever I'm working on but Charles always needed to have the whole story in his mind before actually writing. I spent many an hour listening to him relate his stories, many of which, unfortunately, never made it to paper. But he left us with many finished works, rich in background, sometimes brutal, sometimes tender, but always utterly absorbing."



Fantastic Plastic:

Making miniatures like you've never seen before

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

Some paint, some collect, and others play games in their free time. But for fans of tabletop roleplaying and wargaming, fun is best had when you combine all three. Removed from the stresses of modern life, settings pumped full of cosmic horror and dark fantasy have fast become a refuge for players around the world.

It may sound ironic but few things can be as calming as daring space marines boarding enemy vessels, void-spawned horrors making veritable buffet out of a merchant vessel, or knights in ancient armor warring for their king. Sentiments voice actor John Christie of Kettering knows well.

"I collect mostly Warhammer 40,000 and have a pile of shame of Skaven that I really need to assemble and play," he told The Clarion about his collection.

"I've been loosely in Warhammer through video games. I played 'Dawn of War' on a friend's computer, played both 'Vermintides', 'Total War Warhammer', and 'Darktide'. About a year ago me and my friends Aaron, Josh and Karen started chatting about Warhammer and its wacky lore," Christie added.

Despite being separated by international borders and hundreds of miles, a game group of sorts was in the making. Under Karen's guidance, Christie would quickly pick up the hobby.

"We've all started collections of various sizes and play all on Tabletop Simulator on account of the distance between us and have been playing for a little over a year," Christie said.

"In the collecting sphere my favorite part is in the assembly of miniature, painting them really stresses me out but the assembling is so therapeutic. It's so easy to just put on a podcast or video playlist and just start trucking along," said Christie.

Another of Christie's mates, Aaron Good, moved over from "Warhammer Fantasy" where he assembled a proud collection of vampires and wood elves. A chance encounter at a friend's house was what kickstarted his passion for painting minis.

"Around 2005/2006 I was over at a friend's house and saw cabinet cases full of the fantasy armies owned by him and his older brother. I think they had High Elves, Lizardmen, and some Chaos Warriors between them. I said 'whoa, these are neat, what are they?'" the Canadian gamer recollects.

Over the course of a few months' worth of lunch breaks Good's friend would tell him the lore of each faction. Coupled with window-shopping miniatures online and reading a few game reports, that was enough to get him hooked.

"My first purchase was a Vampire Counts codex, a box of zombies, and a vampire lord mini, which were still made of metal back then!" said Good.

Years later, on meeting the rest of their burgeoning group, Good decided to try out another game and hasn't looked back since. Good's collection of 40k miniatures include Imperial Guard, Sisters of Battle aka nuns with guns, and a bevy of other factions picked up over time.

"I enjoy the painting part since I have just enough experience to get them looking good enough for me. I guess it was nice to start painting Vampire Counts back in the day since its pretty hard to screw up a skeleton. Gave me confidence," he said.

A quick look online reveals a number of incredible games full of well-sculpted miniatures tailor-made to satisfy that creative spark. Westeros to Agro-worlds, Ea to Middle Earth, you name it there's a sandbox waiting to be played in.

In addition to choosing a game system, Good and his friends recommend players pick a faction they like. That might take some research but it can certainly be worthwhile in the end.

"Find a faction you really dig the look, vibe, and surface level lore of. Sisters of Battle appealed to me immediately because they were dope angel ladies. Nothing more complex than that," Good advised.

Which is where lore and world-building come in. Few settings have invested the decades worth of novels and series that Warhammer has proudly built on over the years. Cool Mini or Not's "A Song of Ice and Fire" is a rare competitor in that regard thanks to the novels of George R.R. Martin that serve as its foundation. For many, in fact, lore is the reason they collect and/or play.

"I chose to play Tyranids 100% because of their aesthetic and the way their stories are told. They are always the antagonists and feel like an unfeeling, unthinking inevitability. My favorite brand of sci-fi is alien horror but specifically the perfectly adaptive aliens," said Good.

But its his piece of advice that is most important. It is at the heart of what makes playing and sharing such an immersive hobby with friends worth every second.

"Have fun," he said. "Everyone likes different parts of the hobby so find the parts you like and go all in on those. Much more fun that way."

The world of tabletop miniatures is vast has something for everyone.

Photo Credit: Aaron Good

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