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The Year's Best Science Fiction: Thirty-Second Annual Collection



Synopsis

In the new millennium, what secrets lay beyond the far reaches of the universe? What mysteries belie the truths we once held to be self evident? The world of science fiction has long been a porthole into the realities of tomorrow, blurring the line between life and art. Now, in *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Thirty-Second Annual Collection* the very best SF authors explore ideas of a new world. This venerable collection brings together award winning authors and masters of the field such as Robert Reed, Alastair Reynolds, Damien Broderick, Elizabeth Bear, Paul McAuley and John Barnes. And with an extensive recommended reading guide and a summation of the year in science fiction, this annual compilation has become the definitive must-read anthology for all science fiction fans and readers interested in breaking into the genre.

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Customer Reviews

With the amount of anthologies being produced by a slew of talented editors: John Joseph Adams, Jonathan Strahan, David G. Hartwell, etc.; it can becoming quite difficult in navigating the market. As of writing this, there are roughly ten Years Best Anthologies pertaining to science fiction and fantasy. However, none of them are as long running as Gardner Dozois's TM *The Years Best Science Fiction*. Say what you will about the bloated page count of Dozois's TM anthologies, but you cannot deny that he does an excellent job of getting a feel for the current market. Everything is here: new authors, established authors, SF tropes (generally a bad thing), as well as rising literary

movements. To keep this review on the shorter end, I'd like to look at some of what I deemed the better stories in the collection: (it should go without saying that this is all subjective and does not exhaust the list of "good" stories) Lavie Tidhar (an Israeli author whose book *The Violent Century: A Novel* has been described by io9 as "Like *Watchmen* on crack") is the author of the fascinating short story "Vladimir Chong Chooses to Die" (p.199). The main character "Vladimir" chooses to die in a futuristic society where dying, with no artificial means of survival, is a unique and rare act of "individuality." While discussing his options and his memories with a morality specialist, Vladimir may have second thoughts. Nancy Kress, author of

The most astonishing collection, lots of newcomers to the series, expect the unexpected! If you prefer staying in the lukewarm waters of the same well known authors, (I can think of *The Long Utopia* here...) skip this year's collection! Mr. Dozois is daring us this year to plunge in some really exciting prose from names that I was not familiar with. Here are the ones that really shine in my opinion: Jerome Cigut's *The Rider*- I loved it! reads like a futuristic James Bond. Ken Liu- delivers a gruesome police story (a la- *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, not for the meek of heart!) I couldn't put down! *Shooting the Apocalypse* by Paolo Bacigalupi makes for an intriguing argument to read the whole book. I love Karl Bunker- his story did not disappoint, quiet but disturbing story of a bleak future. Same for Elizabeth Bear- *The Hand is Quicker*- strong storyline, in the foreseeable future- we don't fix problems around us - we just "skin" them out! Michael Swanwick is a terrific writer, I got "swallowed" in this storyline (if you read it you'll get my puny attempt at humor!) Same with Alastair Reynolds- (I have to admit, I am a big fan)- in his deep understanding of the challenges of humans spacefaring- this one is interspersed with sarcastic comments on the cultural future! Jay Lake is a great loss, I will miss his writings!!! Ellen Klages was one of the revelations- I was not familiar with her writing, sweet powerful story of the human side of Space exploration. But the true astonishing story that knocked me off my feet was Timons Esaias' *Sadness*!!! I am reading it now a second time and it reveals different levels of "perception" of the storyline, deeper meanings!

This collection contains 36 science fiction stories published in 2014 and selected as the best by editor Gardner Dozois. It begins with the usual well-crafted Summation of the significant events and influences of the past year. The Honorable Mentions section at the end of the book is also valuable; giving readers a sense of what other notable fiction saw the light of day in 2014. The stories are the main attraction, however. Here are six that stood out: Karl Bunker's "The Woman from the Ocean" is an unusual spin on the formula of space travelers who return from a long voyage to find

that things have changed. Sometimes it's the things that have not changed that make a difference. Vandana Singh's "Entanglement" takes social networking to a new level where users are connected to people who match their emotional needs. It works even if it's hard to understand how it works. Michael Swanwick's "Passage of Earth" is the best story I have read in years that highlights the remarkably alien nature of a race of extraterrestrials. The main character is a forensic pathologist who is asked to examine an alien body and speculate about how it thinks. (Along this same line, an honorable mention goes to Jay Lake's "West to East" for clever imagining of an entire alien ecosystem on a planet with strong prevailing winds.) Alastair Reynolds' "In Babelsberg" shows several more ways that an advanced artificial intelligence can think, act, and feel like a human. Karl Schroeder's "Jubilee" provides a glimpse of the relationships between people who live in real time and those who just join in for a few months each century.

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