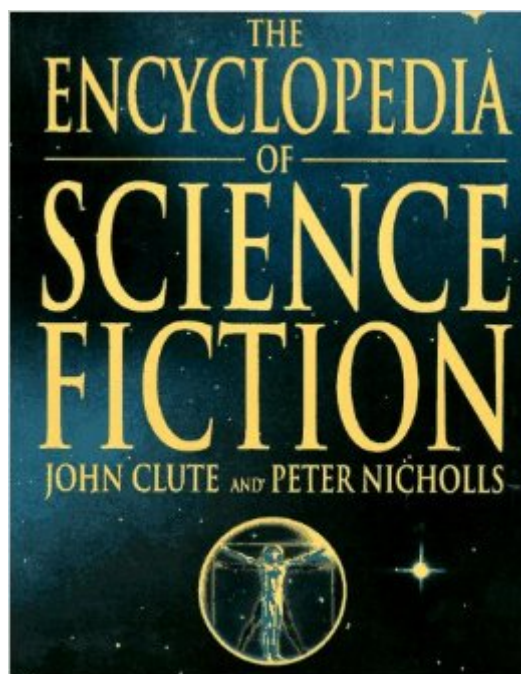


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The Encyclopedia Of Science Fiction



Synopsis

Encompassing 4,360 entries that provide critical insight and biographical and bibliographical data, an updated edition of a popular science fiction reference features a carefully cross-referenced format.

Book Information

Paperback: 1386 pages

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Customer Reviews

This book may not include everything you ever wanted to know about science fiction, but it definitely comes closer than any other work in existence. Long-time fans will enjoy the extensive analytical and bibliographical material. Beginners looking for a useful introduction to the genre are sure to find it here. It's impossible to completely describe the contents within the space of a short review.

However, a summary should be enough to give a general impression. There are (alphabetically-sorted) articles on all different aspects of the genre, from the cinema to the written word. To start off, there are biographies on every major science fiction writer from the 19th century-1993, and almost all of the minor ones. These biographies, although of varying quality, are almost all of considerable interest. As well as listing all of the writer's major contributions to the genre, they often include analyses of the author's writing styles, including discussions of specific works. Although readers may find themselves disagreeing with some of the contributors, it is nonetheless fascinating to read the opinions of other devotees. Perhaps just as important, there are many articles on the various science fiction magazines and their editors. Such articles are vital to

any comprehensive discussion of the genre; after all science fiction started out in the magazines, and many fine stories are still published there. These articles include detailed and interesting descriptions of the magazines' histories, including editors, major contributors, and high and low points of success. In addition to written fiction, considerable attention is paid to science fiction movies. There is little information on actors, directors, or screenwriters, but plenty about the movies themselves.

Sometimes they do a book and just get everything right. Many reference works on Sci-fi are distressing by how much truly essential material is left out or ignored. Not this one. For instance, years ago I read an extremely early and very odd book by Philip K. Dick called THE COSMIC PUPPETS. Most Sci-fi reading guides or dictionaries or surveys omit this title, but not this one. I have a friend who is an exceptionally good mainstream novelist, Jack Butler, who usually publishes his highly praised and critically acclaimed works on publishers like Knopf or Penguin. But he also published on Atlantic Monthly Press what he intended as a straightforward Sci-fi novel in the grand tradition. Because Jack's reputation is as a mainstream writer and because it was published on a prestigious literary press, the novel was almost universally ignored by the Sci-fi community and Sci-fi reviewers (even when Gregory Benford wrote a review lavishing it with praise, it was published not in a Sci-fi mag but in the New York Times). But when you look Jack up here they not only have a listing, they recognize the book as the superb work it is and evince an understanding that its failure in the Sci-fi community stems from marketing errors. What I like most about the book is its combination of balanced, critical judgment on the one hand with a careful thorough-goingness on the other. The work is too short to be completely exhaustive, but it is about as complete as a single-volume work of just under 1,400 pages can be. It is hard to imagine how they could have done a more thorough job than they did. The book is currently out of print, but anyone interested in Sci-fi should search out a copy. I might go so far as to say that if you can own only one Sci-fi reference book, this is the one you should own.

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