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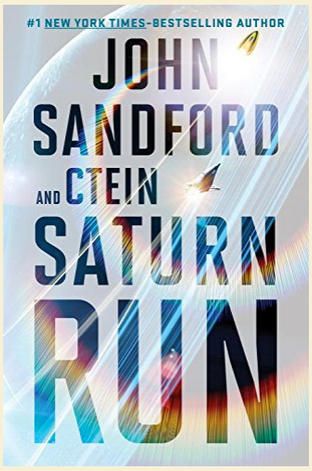
Sunday, 04 October 2015

'Saturn Run' Takes Off!



[**UPDATE**: *If you missed the interview, the John Hines Show is available as a podcast, for streaming or download. Thanks to Richard Parkin for this. —Ed.*]

Two good friends-o'-TOP will be on the radio tomorrow morning. For the Tuesday launch of their co-authored sci-fi thriller *Saturn Run*, John Sandford (known as John Camp around here) and our own Ctein will be interviewed live on the John Hines Show on WCCO-AM (CBS), Minneapolis, Minnesota, at 11:00 a.m. Central Time (that's 9 a.m. on the Left Coast, noon on the Least Coast). It should run about half an hour. WCCO streams on the Web for folks who aren't in the Twin Cities area.

Additionally, John and Ctein kick off a multi-city book tour soon. They'll be visiting Scottsdale, Arizona; San Francisco, California; Seattle, Washington; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Houston, Texas, either separately or together. Here's the full schedule.

The link leaves out two appearances by Ctein only in Minneapolis —on October 10th at Uncle Hugo's Science Fiction Bookstore, and on October 14th at Dreamhaven books. Contact Ctein at ctein@pobox.com for details on those.

Of course you can pre-order *Saturn Run* for imminent delivery if you haven't already! Break a leg, John and Ctein!

Mike

(To see all the comments, click on the "Comments" link below.)

Featured Comments from:

No featured comments yet—please check back soon!

Posted on Sunday, 04 October 2015 at 08:23 PM in Books, Ctein, John Camp | Permalink

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Comments

Ordered!

Posted by: John Bohn | Sunday, 04 October 2015 at 10:21 PM

I have long been interested in science fiction and I am probably going to get this one.
Although I'm happy to see it already in audiobook format, which I love, I am saddened to see that it does not exist yet in e-book format.
Some pundits say that the delays and price hikes of ebooks (often more expensive than hardcover books!) from traditional publishers is a campaign to push back e-books as long as possible, in order to protect their traditional income source, paper books.

Posted by: Eolake | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 03:52 AM

Aw, durnit, the audiobook is only available on CD, for a price. Well I'm sorry to say I will not get it until I can get it either as e-book or as downloadable audiobook.
This is not a principled stand. Reading on paper is very inconvenient for me after getting used to e-books and paying the price for a CD audiobook (50 bucks here in the UK!) is reserved for the rare occcation when I *really* know what I want.

Posted by: Eolake | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 04:01 AM

Congratulations!! I will be reading the book and listening to the interview.

Please do not, "Break a leg ..." as I have so carelessly succeeded in doing a couple of weeks ago. :o(

Posted by: Darlene Almeda | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 04:33 AM

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What an odd list of tour cities. Are those places with concentrations of sci-fi fans?

@Eolake: I ordered the kindle version which will be available Tuesday.

Posted by: Ken Tanaka | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 08:44 AM

At less than two bucks more than the Kindle version, I went for the print book. I enjoy the portability of the kindle, but still prefer real ink on paper.

Posted by: mike in colorado | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 09:37 AM

Thank you, Ken.
I guess the Kindle version is hidden for me on the US site because you cannot buy any e-books from Amazon USA if you're not inside the USA. This does not explain though why it does that show up on the UK site.

Posted by: Eolake | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 11:27 AM

Dear Eolake,

I think I'm going to be taking point on most of these questions, because John is busy getting ready for the trip (logistically, it starts sooner for him, because I'll be back home on Wednesday before setting out again) and because, honestly, as a first timer this stuff interests me a lot more than John (who has been through it, oh, three dozen times).

First, I must start with the disclaimer that frequently appears here. Despite its worldwide audience, TOP is US-based. I am US-based. I have no knowledge of customs, policies, legalities, or distribution channels in other countries. Don't even ask.

Having said that, the book is simultaneously releasing, on October 6, in all formats––hardback, audio book CD, and a variety of e-book formats. Which e-book format depends on the seller. Amazon pushes Kindle. Barnes & Noble pushes Nook. The Apple Store pushes their format. A lot of booksellers are selling it as an epub. Go to my website, or John's, or Putnam's to find lists of sellers and links to them.

But what is getting released when, overseas? No way for me to know. If there are problems getting the book in a certain form in a certain country, I can assure you that is not Putnam's desire. They want to sell as many damned books as possible. You have a complaint? Take it up with governments' international trade policies. Really.

I'm not an audiobook fan, so I know nothing about downloadable vs. CD audiobooks. For what it's worth, though, Paula listens to lots of audio books and she says Eric Conger did a very good job reading ours. That totally exhausts my knowledge of the subject.

Those pundits you refer to are idiots. Okay that's not entirely correct. They are ignorant idiots. For best-seller, mass-market books like John's and mine, we (by which I mean me and John and the publisher) make as much or more money from a non-paper sale as a paper sale. When you think about the cost of producing and distributing an electronic version of the book vs. a paper version, the difference in wholesale price between the two could actually be less than the difference in fulfillment costs. We're not in the 99-cent-e-book business.** All of us are gonna make real good money off of non-paper books.

Also, for this kind of the book, total non-paper sales will be comparable to paper sales; they might even be larger. For many people this is disposable literature. Or, at least, the kind where they don't care about having the artifact of a physical book on their shelf.

So, intentionally suppressing non-paper sales? That's just throwing money away! It would be bugfuck stupid. Putnam's is not bugfuck stupid. Most publishers aren't. Anyone think paper book production and distribution is easy and cheap? Think again. For non-specialty books, if publishers thought they could get away with entirely eliminating paper books without losing a whole bunch of sales, they'd do it. Really.

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**On a tangent, because someone is bound to ask this: “Why do I have to pay so much for any book like yours if it's so cheap to produce?” Answer: because as with any piece of art (written with a very small a), you are not paying for the material cost, you're paying for the experience and enjoyment you get. The stuff has no intrinsic value.

The more the buyer values the experience, the more they are willing to pay. Some musicians can get $200 a ticket. Some can only get $20. The ones who get $200 don't work 10 times as hard and don't have to have 10 times the overhead (although they might choose to). The author who gets a five-figure contract does not have 1% of the “production costs” that John and I do. My darkroom photographic prints were considerably more expensive and took considerably longer to make than Ansel Adams' did. By the manufacturing-cost argument, he should not command prices 10-100 times higher than mine; mine should be higher than his.

I will now sit back and wait for the bucks to come pouring in.

Still waiting. Sound of crickets.

Dang.

That is it. There is no more to it than that. Manufacturing-cost arguments are tiresome because they have no connection to reality.

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-- Ctein's Online Gallery http://ctein.com
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Posted by: ctein | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 12:56 PM

Ken Tanaka wrote "What an odd list of tour cities. Are those places with concentrations of sci-fi fans?". Possibly towns that have known populations of extra-terrestrial aliens?

Posted by: Richard Parkin | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 01:34 PM

Dear Ken,

About the tour, I asked similar questions because I was interested in how this all works. It turns out there is much method behind the madness. I will say, upfront, that I don't know why Putnam's didn't fly us both to New York today and start a tour that works its way west. I'm betting there's a good reason for that. I just don't know what it is. But, given that, here's how the madness works:

The book tour needs to be short. Two reasons for that. The first is the John does 3 to 4 of these a year, so long book tours would be insane and far too disruptive to his life. The second reason is that most of the benefit of a book tour is in the first week; after that the gains from it fall off exponentially.

Why is that? Because the game you're playing is generating buzz, big buzz, right out of the gate. So, whistle stops. They really do boost sales a lot. That's what gets you on the bestseller lists. it's not about the sales that get you on the list, per se. It takes relatively few sales to get on the list. It's that being on the list gets you attention. And that gets you more sales. A lot more sales.

There's a book on the science of persuasion (the real science and research, not Madison Avenue myths), I forget the title. One of the big take-home lessons from it is that humans are pack animals who want to please the rest of the pack. Fortunately, we have big brains, so we are not like dogs. We're not slaves to this. But we have a subconscious urge to follow the majority and, statistically, it makes a difference in how we behave en masse. It's why politicians are constantly try to spin polls to show that they have 55% of the expected vote over their unworthy opponent. It doesn't matter if it's made up. It turns out it doesn't even matter if we know that it's made up. It still biases us and it actually gives them a real boost in the real vote.

In the same way, being on the bestseller list, better yet debuting at number one on the bestseller list (which is what those first-week sales get you) gets people thinking, consciously or unconsciously, “Hey, maybe this is a book I should think about buying.”

So, short tours. Given that we're not starting on the East Coast, we don't go there, because the distances and time zone stuff cost us a day. John is the one with the big time constraints, so it's designed as a loop that starts and ends at his home. That's why I'm flying to Phoenix and then back to the Bay Area, because that makes the most space-time sense.

As to the particular cities and venues we're hitting? They are places where one or both of us (mostly John) has a big following and does big business for him. Poisoned Pen in Scottsdale will sell hundreds and hundreds of copies of John's books; they have a major mail-order business. The Bay Area is an obvious, no-brainer stop. Both for this kind of book and because I live here. I'm going to have fun doing a headcount on Wednesday to see if there are more people in the audience who are there for John than for me. I think there's a good chance of it.

And so on. To the question you didn't ask, which is why aren't we hitting Chicago as well or instead of Minneapolis (I asked John just that)...

We don't have any special followings in Chicago. Both of us are huge in the Twin Cities. I possibly have a bigger personal, social, and professional following in Mppl than I do in the Bay Area. It's why I make three or four extended trips a year to the Twin Cities. Then there's John! Folks who have recently joined TOP may not realize that John used to be based there and was a very well-known reporter and newspaper columnist in St. Paul. He can still be accosted by strangers on the street who recognize his name or face (we have a funny restaurant story about that).

Consequently, we hit the Twin Cities and we're both “hometown” heroes. Viz. the radio interview this morning. It's why I'm staying around another 10 days-- to vacation and to do two, possibly three more book-related events while I'm there.

And, no, I don't know if more of my fans will show up the Roseville Barnes & Noble than his. I'm betting his... But it will be fun to find out.

pax \ Ctein
[Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training!]
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-- Ctein's Online Gallery http://ctein.com
-- Digital Restorations http://photo-repair.com
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Posted by: ctein | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 01:47 PM

I listened to the radio interview which was very good. John mentioned there was some sex in it and Ctein said he wrote most of the first draft ...hmm, I definitely have to buy it. Do spaceships have darkrooms?

I am bummed they are not coming to Austin Texas on the book tour. Lots of mystery, science fiction and TOP fans here. Plus the weather has been beautiful, almost as nice as California.

Posted by: FrankB | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 03:57 PM

We in New York take great exception to being referred to as "the least coast". That comment may well have a chilling effect on sales in the East Coast demographic.

[*Ctein wrote that, not me! --Mike*]

Posted by: Peter | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 05:32 PM

Dear FrankB,

Thanks for listening! But if you buy the book for the sex, you are going to be sorely disappointed. The amount of actual sex is pretty small, insignificant. But we do have fun with its consequences.

A darkroom? A DARKROOM? What, you think this is steampunk or something??

Oh yeah, 85-90% of the first draft is my writing. The published book is about 1/3 nearly word-for-word my first draft, 1/3 John, and the rest such a mashup the DNAs are inseparable.

But, just so's ya knows, John wrote most of the photography/cinematography stuff and I wrote the one minimal bit of sex. Because, why do it the way people expect we will?

pax / Ctein

Posted by: ctein | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 05:44 PM

Congratulations to John and Ctein — I'm looking forward to reading this!

This along with continuing voyages in Elite: Dangerous and a trip to the cinema to watch The Martian helps bear the darkening days in the northern hemisphere.

Posted by: Simon Griffee | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 06:59 PM

Dear Peter,

It's merely the counterpart to the whole "Left Coast" instead of "West Coast" thing. Most folks who say "Left Coast" don't mean it as a compliment, but no one here that I know takes umbrage. It's just word play.

Really, if anyone is going to refuse to buy the book because of such a trivial quip, I can't imagine they were much motivated in the first place.

pax / Ctein

Posted by: ctein | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 09:42 PM

"The amount of actual sex is pretty small, insignificant. But we do have fun with its consequences."

Ctein is one of the few people I know who could write that with a (probably) straight face.

Posted by: Kenneth Tanaka | Monday, 05 October 2015 at 09:57 PM

This does not explain though why it does that show up on the UK site...
If you look on the UK site, it actually says 'available in 1-3 weeks' or something such for the hardback - ie it's launching here after the US for some reason, and the book you can order now is probably the US edition.
The Kindle edition will probably be available at the time the UK edition is published.

The continuing publication lag between the US and the UK - on the same platform - is a continuing curiosity.

For those jibbing at the prospect of adding a few coins to Ctein's coffers (probably less of a concern for John Camp...), you can always wait a few weeks and pick it up second hand.
(FWIW, I'll be paying full sticker price.)

Posted by: Nigel | Tuesday, 06 October 2015 at 01:41 AM

I awoke this morning to find "Satrns Run" already waiting on my Kindle. It cost 12 bucks -- hope it's worth it.

Posted by: Bill Mitchell | Tuesday, 06 October 2015 at 07:42 AM

Dear Bill,

Oh no, you got a cheap knockoff. Our title is spelled SATURN RUN!

Damn those counterfeit books.

[vbg]

pax / Ctein

Posted by: ctein | Tuesday, 06 October 2015 at 05:45 PM

Eolake: I had no issues buying the Kindle version from the US site, though I am in Sweden. It could be that if you're in the UK you are not allowed to however since you have your "own" Amazon, which we don't.

45 pages in so far, it's pretty entertaining though maybe the wittiness is a bit excessive here and there.

Posted by: Christer | Wednesday, 07 October 2015 at 03:06 AM

Fwiw, just finished the book, holiday read. Bloody marvelous. Well done guys.

Posted by: Kev | Saturday, 10 October 2015 at 03:27 PM

The comments to this entry are closed.