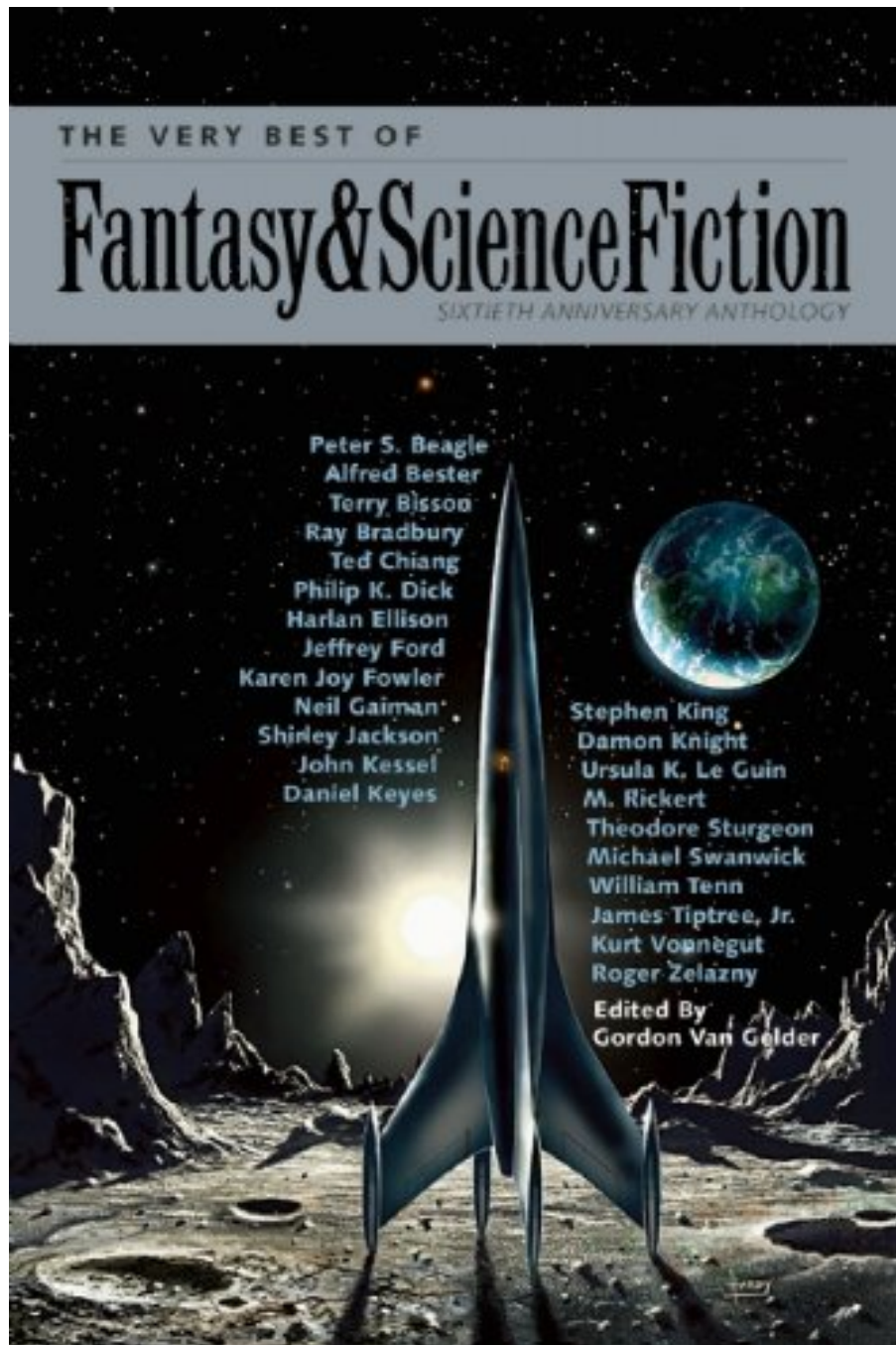


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From Publishers Weekly

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Most helpful customer reviews

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

Solid collection of stories over the lifetime of F&SF Magazine

By Jvstin

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book through the kind offices of the Publicist of the publisher, Tachyon Publications.

The Very Best of Fantasy & Science Fiction, edited by Gordon Van Gelder, is an anthology of stories across the eponymous magazine's 60 year history.

Although I am not a heavy reader of SF magazines (when I read SF stories, its usually in anthologies or collections), it is clear to me, immediately, that F&SF has had a wonderful history of publishing some of the best stories in SF history.

And a swath of those stories are ably collected by Mr. Van Gelder in this collection. The stories range in publication date from 1951 (Alfred Bester's *Time and Third Avenue*) to 2007 (Ted Chiang's story *The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate*).

Arranged in chronological order, the stories show the changes and evolution of the SF story with a high quality of selected stories throughout. Its not just a "most famous" story group either. While there are genre-famous stories like *Flowers for Algernon*, *the Deathbird*, and *Harrison Bergeron*, there are stories that are in that class, but much well less known. (Zelazny's *This Moment of the Storm*, for instance, or Peter Beagle's

story sequel to the Last Unicorn, Two Hearts come to mind)

With that in mind, I devoured this book quickly and gleefully. I enjoyed the touchstones to the classics and old favorites, and discovering new (to me) stories as well. Gelder has done an top notch job.

Genres that forget their history are condemned to fail by that forgetting. Collections like this help the genre of SF keep in mind its roots and history. Any serious fan of science fiction would do well to dip their oars into this volume.

The lineup:

Of Time and Third Avenue, Alfred Bester
All Summer in a Day, Ray Bradbury
One Ordinary Day with Peanuts, Shirley Jackson
A touch of Strange, Theodore Sturgeon
Eastward, Ho!, William Tenn
Flowers for Algernon, Daniel Keyes
Harrison Bergeron, Kurt Vonnegut
This Moment of the Storm, Roger Zelazny
The Electric Ant, Philip K Dick
The Deathbird, Harlan Ellison
The Women Men Don't See, James Tiptree Jr (Alice Sheldon)
I see You, Damon Knight
The Gunslinger, Stephen King
The Dark, Karen Joy Fowler
Buffalo, John Kessel
Solitude, Ursula K Le Guin
Mother Grasshopper, Michael Swanwick
macs, Terry Bisson
Creation, Jeffrey Ford
Other People, Neil Gaiman
Two Hearts, Peter S Beagle
Journey into the Kingdom, M Rickert
The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate, Ted Chiang

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Many must-read stories in this collection

By Stefan

The Very Best of Fantasy & Science Fiction: Sixtieth Anniversary Anthology is an excellent collection of 23 stories picked from the treasure trove of short fiction that's been published in the eponymous magazine over the past 60 years. Editor Gordon Van Gelder -- also the editor of the magazine since 1997 -- has done an admirable job, picking stories that illustrate the diversity of both the genre and the magazine. As such, this is a great anthology for SF&F fans as well as newcomers looking for a taste.

The line-up of authors in this collection looks like a veritable Who's Who of speculative fiction: Ray Bradbury, Philip K. Dick, Stephen King, Roger Zelazny, Ursula K. Le Guin, Neil Gaiman -- just to name a few of the most famous ones. What's even more impressive is the fact that all the stories collected here saw their first publication in the magazine. It really gave me pause when I realized that a towering classic such as "Flowers From Algernon" by Daniel Keyes first appeared in this digest-sized magazine (and if you haven't

read that story yet, you have at least one perfect reason to get this anthology right now!). Every story is preceded by a brief and thoughtful editorial note, often highlighting its author's involvement with the magazine.

The quality of these stories is, as could be expected, almost uniformly excellent. Stand-outs for me were: the previously mentioned "Flowers For Algernon" which is about a mentally retarded man who gains a brief period of brilliance via a scientific experiment; "Solitude" by Ursula K. Le Guin, an exquisite and touching story set in her Hainish Cycle; "Creation" by Jeffrey Ford, about a young boy's attempt to create life; and "Mother Grasshopper" by Michael Swanwick, about how a far-future civilization becomes reintroduced to death. If I could give these stories individual ratings, they'd all have five stars by their names, with the majority of the others getting a solid four stars. The only disappointment for me was "Buffalo" by John Kessel, a reverie about a fictional meeting between the author's father and H.G. Wells.

By the numbers: out of the 23 stories collected here, I'd call 12 solidly science fiction, 6 definitely fantasy, 1 horror, and the rest hard to place but trending towards the fantastical. Included in that last category is Harlan Ellison's "The Deathbird", which is more or less a genre of its own and one of the oddest things I've read in years. The stories are spread out across the six decades of the magazine's existence, although strangely enough not a single story from the eighties was included. The earlier part of the anthology is predominantly science fiction, and as fantasy became more popular over the years, more stories of that genre appear towards the end of the collection. The only real "high fantasy" story included here is Peter S. Beagle's "Two Hearts," in which the author revisits his classic *The Last Unicorn*. In terms of length, the stories vary from barely 3 pages (Neil Gaiman's "The Others," a terrifying vision of hell) to Stephen King's 44 page story "The Gunslinger," one of the 5 stories that make up the novel of the same name, originally serialized in the magazine.

Another number, and one that might raise an eyebrow, is 5: the number of female authors represented here, compared to 18 male authors. Also, some readers may look for one or more legendary stories from the magazine that unfortunately aren't represented here. My personal pick would be to add Fritz Leiber's "Ill Met in Lankmar" novella, originally published in *F&SF Magazine* and certainly one of its classic -- and now sadly underappreciated -- stories.

Still, it's easy to second-guess almost any anthology, let alone one that attempts to span the life of one of the most revered magazines in speculative fiction. When all's said and done, this is undeniably an excellent collection of stories -- one that will give readers a great look at the history of *F&SF Magazine* and, in doing so, the history of the entire genre. It's possible that some reader will already be familiar with many of these stories, but if you aren't, *The Very Best of Fantasy & Science Fiction: Sixtieth Anniversary Anthology* is practically a must-read. Highly recommended.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Well-balanced

By bluemoose

Making a sci-fi and fantasy anthology is no easy task, but the editors have done a good job of finding stories across the whole spectrum, from shoot-em-ups to intellectual sci-fi, psychological/inner world fantasy and medieval sword and sceptre. There are many lesser-known stories from more popular writers that are still great reads. This is a great book for sci-fi fans who are looking for other works by their favourite authors, and for people looking for new authors to discover.

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