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## REVIEWS - BOOK

### Essential Science Fiction - A Concise Guide

By Jonathan Cowie and Tony Chester

Published by Porcupine Books, 2005

...by Tony Bailey

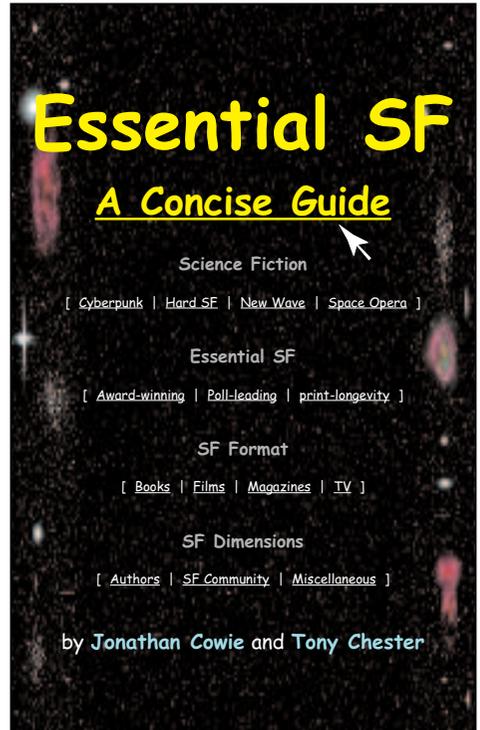
A guide to the best Science Fiction? Surely we can make up our own minds about what we think is best! Can't we? Well, this Essential guide does not tell you what to like; it is a comprehensive A to Z directory of SF literature, movies, Television series and graphic SF that helped to shape the 'things that came'.

It has been compiled and written by Jonathan Cowie and Tony Chester; both are associated with the Science Fact and Fiction Concatenation, [www.concatenation.org](http://www.concatenation.org). The criteria for inclusion into their tome is based on what the 'many' consider the best, the entries are taken from the Hugo and Locus awards, the Blackwood film poll, attendees of the Festival of Fantastic Films and Authors whose works are three quarters of a century or more old and still in print.

After an introduction by Vince Clarke (Fan Guest of Honour at the 1995 Glasgow Worldcon) and before the A to Z blasts off there is a section that explains what the book is about, why it is here and how to use it. There is also an interesting chapter called 'A Brief Perspective on SF', in which is explained what constitutes SF and an outline of its history.

There is more than just a list of books, authors, films and TV series (as if that wasn't enough to keep you happy anyway) there are also entries for the major conventions that take place around the world, the various awards (some of which are the basis for this book), SF clubs, film festivals, magazines and SF terms. You can really learn a lot from all this info!

At the end of the book is a 'Collector Core Checklist' for you to compare your collection to the 'Essential' guide's list. I did this only to find that to my horror and shame I had only read and



owned two of the many hundreds of books, my film collection faired better at owning 38 (although I had seen a further 60 of the films mentioned), and owning 9 of the TV series. After going through these check lists it is clear that I really should read some of these books as well as the usual sci-fi that takes up my train-time to and from the office!

This is a great book for every SF fan from the seasoned enthusiast to compare notes or (especially) for a newcomer to the genre who wants to make up some ground and get started with some of the most Essential Science Fiction.

Jonathan Cowie will be at the LOTNA meeting on March 26 with some copies of the Guide at a special discounted offer cash price of £7.00 for Contact readers and LOTNA members otherwise the guide is available from Porcupine Books for £8.90 (UK, including postage)

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