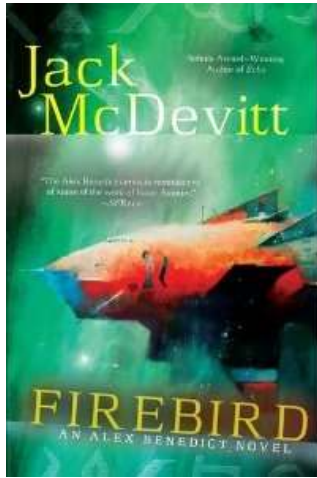


The 7 Question Interview with Jack McDevitt



Jack McDevitt is an American science fiction author whose novels frequently deal with attempts to make contact with alien races, and with archaeology or xenoarchaeology. McDevitt's first published story was "The Emerson Effect" in The Twilight Zone Magazine in 1981. Two years later, he published his first novel, *The Hercules Text*, about the discovery of an intelligently conceived signal whose repercussions threaten human civilization. This novel set the tone for many of McDevitt's following novels, which focused on making first contact. Frequently this theme is mixed with both trepidation before the unknown and a sense of wonder at the universe. With *The Engines of God* (1994), McDevitt introduced the idea of a universe that was once teeming with intelligent life, but contains only their abandoned artifacts by the time humans arrive on the scene. Although it was initially written as a standalone novel,[citation needed] the main character of *The Engines of God*, pilot Priscilla Hutchins, has since appeared in five more books, *Deepsix* (2001), *Chindi* (2002), *Omega* (2003), *Odyssey* (2006), and *Cauldron* (2007). The mystery surrounding the destructive "Omega Clouds" (which are introduced in *The Engines of God*) is left unexplored until *Omega*. McDevitt's novels frequently raise questions which he does not attempt to answer. He prefers to leave ambiguities to puzzle and intrigue his readers: "Some things are best left to the reader's very able imagination." His novel *Seeker* won the 2006 Nebula Award for Best Novel, given by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. He has been nominated for the Nebula Award fifteen times; *Seeker* is his only win.

Some of his novels are:

- Firebird
- Cauldron
- Infinity Beach
- Time Travelers Never Die

His official website can be accessed here: <http://jackmcdevitt.com/default.aspx>

The WritingRaw.com 7 Question Interview

Please let us know who you are and how we might know you:

Jack McDevitt. I write SF. Nebula winner in 2006 for *Seeker*. Newest novel, *Firebird*, should be arriving in stores approximately November 1. Also becoming available: mass market edition of *Echo*. Both are Alex Benedict mysteries, from Ace.

Any news you would like to share concerning upcoming projects:

I served as co-editor with Les Johnson for *Going Interstellar*, an anthology of stories and scientific speculations regarding how we might (or might not) leave the solar system.

Due out in May. My contribution is a piece of fiction titled "Lucy." Also, I collaborated this year with Mike Resnick on The Cassandra Project, which reveals the truth behind the Watergate burglary. Cassandra will be available in November 2012. Finally, I've been writing short stories for Analog, Asimov's, Lightspeed, and John Joseph Adams's upcoming anthology Armored.

Thoughts concerning the current state of the literary world:

If we're talking about the SF world, we are in good hands with people like Nancy Kress, Gregory Benford, Rob Sawyer, Kevin Anderson, Gardner Dozois, Larry Niven, Mike Resnick, David Brin, and enough others to fill a couple of pages. If the question refers to changing technology, I'm watching the events like the developing struggle between Amazon and some of the book chains and, like everyone else, I have no idea where it will all end-- Except that I'm pretty sure the writing itself will go on for a long time.

Who is/are your favorite author/s and why?

Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, James Thurber, H. L. Mencken. Best writer to learn from: Hemingway. Most entertaining SF writers: Bradbury, Clarke, Heinlein. (I suspect the ones you especially appreciate are the ones you grew up with.) The current generation, however, is doing pretty well.

Have you written a book you love that you have not been able to publish?

No. My books have all been published. And happily all but the first remain in print. The count is now at eighteen. Plus four collections of short stories.

Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

I've had a reasonably successful career. That's attributable, I think, to the fact that I write the kind of SF I've always enjoyed reading. Keep the technology to a minimum. Create characters who are believable. Stir in some tension and set a clock running. Stay away from heroes and villains. Get some sense of wonder into the narrative. These seem to be the characteristics also that my readers like. So I've been very fortunate in that we all seem to share a similar taste. I'm grateful for that.

How do you feel about what WritingRaw.com and other literary sharing sites are attempting to do for new writers?

People trying to make the grade as professional writers need to be able to communicate, to talk with each other, and to share ideas. And also to realize they're not alone. What they're trying to do is not easy to accomplish. Sites like Writing Raw can

make a substantial difference.

* Bonus Question – Required reading:

Let me rephrase the question a bit: What book might ignite a passion for reading in someone who otherwise has never shown much enthusiasm for the written word? Years ago I was a high school English teacher. I realized fairly early that the classic writers in the curriculum operated in a different culture and at a different level from my eleventh and twelfth graders. I decided my job was to show my students how much sheer joy is available in a book. If I could do that, the kids would eventually find Dickens and Lamb and the others for themselves. I tried several books. The one that worked, worked beyond belief, was Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles*.

WritingRaw.com would like to thank Jack McDevitt
for taking the time out of his busy schedule for this interview.