



Regular
Version

Space Man

We caught up with Stephen Baxter, one of the finest Sci-Fi writers in Britain today.

The X Files

Being a Science Fiction writer is never easy. Being a British SF writer doubly so. However, Stephen Baxter is making a good fist of it, as one of the world's foremost SF authors. His books have been hailed as containing 'the most awesome ideas in science fiction today'.

At the moment, Baxter is working on a new book, focusing on theories of Evolution on a cosmic scale. At the same time, he's promoting his current novel, *Origin*, the third in a series revolving around the Fermi Paradox - physicist Enrico Fermi's idea that if aliens existed, they'd already be here among us (when he first asked the question, his Hungarian-born colleague Leo Szilard is reported to have responded, "They are among us, but they call themselves Hungarians"). This book takes the series to a slightly spooky conclusion.

Hard Science

He's renowned for basing his books around science as opposed to pure speculation - this leads to some closer-to-home introspective SF compared to other work in the genre. So what does he think about some of the scientific issues in the public eye? As far as paying millions of dollars for a space flight, "no, I don't think I would, even if I had the money - it seems far too self indulgent a way to spend money".

He's always been interested in writing, and although it started almost as a hobby "once it got to the point where my writing income was matching my day job, I went for it full time". And it's an addictive game - "when you start out you say, 'I'll be happy just to get this one book published' and then after that happens, you just want to publish one more book and it carries on like that..."

2001: A Sci-Fi Golden Age?

He's also well known for *The Light of Other Days*, his collaboration with Arthur C. Clarke, a riff on the idea of a 'time viewer', which can dial into any event in the past. With Clarke living in Sri Lanka, collaboration must - presumably - have been difficult?. "Not really - we worked out the chapter outline and then just went away and worked in chunks. You're often alone as a writer, so it wasn't too different". As for current Brit-SF, "I think we'll look back on this as a golden age - with newer writers like Paul McAuley, while someone like Brian Aldiss is still producing interesting stuff. I think there's a great thing about the culture that gives us an edge".

So what happened to the old SF dreams of conquering the universe? "It's more a case of exploring and preserving life than being all-conquering. We'll find ways to do it - I wouldn't be surprised if mankind goes back to the moon in my lifetime".

Stephen Baxter's Origin is out now, published by Voyager.

Anthony Dhanendran

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