



Best New Horror 6

Stephen Jones (Editor) , Lawrence Watt-Evans (Contributor) , Ian R. MacLeod (Contributor) , Elizabeth Massie (Contributor) , Ramsey Campbell (Contributor) , Karl Edward Wagner (Contributor) , Paul McAuley (Contributor) , Garry Kilworth (Contributor) , more... Robert Bloch (Contributor) , Nicholas Royle (Contributor) , Geoffrey A. Landis (Contributor) , Michael Marshall Smith (Contributor) , Harlan Ellison (Contributor) , Brian Hodge (Contributor) , Kim Newman (Contributor) , Esther M. Friesner (Contributor) , Terry Lamsley (Contributor) , Norman Partridge (Contributor) , Richard Christian Matheson (Contributor) , Joel Lane (Contributor) , Douglas E. Winter (Contributor) , M. John Harrison (Contributor) , Charles L. Grant (Contributor) ...less

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This premier collection of the year's finest horror stories contains fear-filled tales from some of the best contemporary writers, such as Brian Hodge, Joel Lane, Ian McLeod, Kim Newman, and others.

Best New Horror 6 Details

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From Reader Review Best New Horror 6 for online ebook

Dave mcloughlin says

had to give this 4 stars just for nostalgic reasons,bought this in Hodges figgis Dublin in the very early nineties on one of my frequent visits,love the best horror series of books,no sharks in the med by Brian Lumley was my favorite in this one,good times

Lucian Poll says

A slimmer volume for the Best New Horror series, this time showcasing twenty-one stories and a poem, all published during 1994. To be honest the book could have been even slimmer. Like volume 5 before it, Best New Horror 6 is an uneven read with a bunch of mediocre stories littering the first half of the book. Skip through that lot, though, and you'll find the latter half significantly better. As ever, it seems, this is a 4/5 from me.

The stories you'll find in Best New Horror 6 are as follows:

Dead Babies – Lawrence Watt-Evans (3/5 – Bill is rushing his wife, Allie, to hospital. Allie's waters have broken and the baby's not hanging around for anyone. Bill is never going to get to the hospital in time, and so they take a detour to Dr Everett's house. Dr Everett accepts them, taking Allie into his parlour. Bill anxiously awaits news in the hallway with Dr Everett's sister, pacing up and down, eyeing a large glass door nearby, growing uneasy about the foul stench filling the house. This is okay, but the story pretty much went in the direction I thought it would from beginning to end.)

Sensible City – Harlan Ellison (4/5 – Mickey and Groppe are two violent police officers who jump bail ahead of an Internal Affairs bust. They hightail it in a car, with Mickey at the wheel. After a while they find themselves on an unfamiliar Interstate route, with no idea where they are or where they are headed. A town called Obedience emerges in the distance, a town with an ominous green tinge in the sky. This is a fun little short: a weird mix of The Ant Hill Mob and the old Creepy and Eerie comics of the 60s.)

Blade and Bone – Terry Lamsley (4/5 – Ogden is on his bike, taking in the sights of rural England on behalf of his laid-up wife, Poppy. A freak downpour sees him urgently seeking shelter amid a line of boarded-up houses. Assuming the area uninhabited, he smashes in the door of a nearby outhouse. As he barges his way in, Ogden has the uncanny feeling that something brushed past him. Could he have released something from the outhouse? And if so, what? This is another strong showing from Lamsley, whose "Two Returns" in Best New Horror 5 was a highlight. This story takes a while to get going but oh my does the ending deliver!)

Harvest – Norman Partridge (3/5 – Raphael lives alone in C-Town. His children are dead. His wife is gone. Everyone else in C-Town has either died or fled. The trees are blackened, the river poisoned. The sounds of a weeping woman float through the empty streets. She is La Llarona, the very personification of all that ill C-Town, and she is keen for Raphael to taste her gruesome, fleshy fruit. I liked this sad and sombre story until the ending, which was weak and suggested Partridge didn't know how to finish it.)

Sometimes, In The Rain – Charles Grant (4/5 – Len's an old man who is given to sitting out on the porch in the middle of winter, chiefly to piss off his live-in younger sister, Gracie. His friend, the splendidly named

Youngman Stevens, is a man who is haunted by his dead wife, Edith. Youngman often sees Edith in the park next to the local boozier. When Youngman goes missing one evening and Len heads out to the park to search for him, Len sees Edith too. This is a fairly straightforward ghost story from Grant, but a nice little chiller all the same.)

Ménage à Trois – Richard Christian Matheson (2/5 – A couple get it on. Repeatedly. With a knife. Of course! This short sequence of vignettes was originally published in an anthology of erotic horror called “Little Deaths”, and clearly the attempt was to evoke a Barkeresque ooh-yeah-baby-cut-me-there-mmm-yeah-peel-my-skin kind of thing, but to be honest it’s about as sexy as finding blood in your stool. I’ve given it one extra star, though, for its unintended comedy value. “Ghastly red licorice” indeed.)

Like Shattered Stone – Joel Lane (4/5 – Peter is a sculptor who suddenly finds he’s creating amazing work while he is asleep. One morning he wakes up naked, tool in hand (stop it), to find he has rendered in granite an extraordinarily detailed forearm of a child. Another morning, a child’s head. It’s all very nice, but it’s a world away from the smashed cars and burnt-out buildings he was intending to sculpt. One evening, while cutting through a side street to Soho Road, Peter spots a dark, sealed-up building. The walls of said building aren’t brick, however. They look a little like granite. This is a weirdly playful curiosity from Lane, couched, as ever, in bleak reportage from the Black Country.)

Black Sun – Douglas E. Winter (1/5 – Warning! Warning! Mood piece alert, folks! Abandon all hope you seekers of plot and story and character and the merest glimmer of sunshine, and hunker down while another writer succumbs to a ruddy good wallow in self-indulgence. Okay, I’m being a little unfair here. At the time this won an International Horror Critics Guild award for short fiction, so *somebody* must have liked it. Also, in the editor’s introduction, Winter describes this as a years-in-the-making attempt to make sense of his mother’s death. In that case I genuinely hope he reached a sense of catharsis and closure while writing this. Either way I’ll be happy to live out my days never having to read it again.)

Isobel Avens Returns To Stepney In The Spring – M. John Harrison (3/5 – And Isobel Avens can stay there. Harrison has created in Avens one of the most deeply irritating characters I’ve read in a long time. In a story that takes an absolute age to go anywhere she quickly sapped away every shred goodwill I had towards it. Mick “China” Rose (no, me neither – do I look like a horti-fucking-culturalist?) is a courier servicing assorted medical research companies. His other half, the delightful Isobel, yearns to fly like a bird, and she’s got her eyes on a boffin who might help her in that regard. Amazingly, despite everything running against it, Harrison manages to turn this story around in the latter third. For any book nerds out there, Harrison later took this story, added Choe Ashton from “Anima” (his story in Best New Horror 4) and turned it into the British Fantasy Award nominated novel “Signs Of Life”. I’ll pass, thanks.)

The Dead Orchards – Ian MacCleod (5/5 – Caitlin is a poor girl who finds herself the centre of a rich old man’s attention. He begs her to come visit him, promising her money and more, but she is wary. She knows her mother disappeared long ago when she was lured to the same grounds. Caitlin has every right to be wary too, for her host possesses a secret enchanted well. Those who drink of its waters fall into a catatonic state, a quality that the old man has taken murderous advantage of time and again. This excellent, full-blooded horror story is chock-full of gothic imagery, and leads up to a very satisfying ending. Job done!)

What Happened When Mosby Paulson Had Her Painting Reproduced On The Cover Of The Phone Book – Elizabeth Massie (5/5 – From one excellent story to another. In “What Happened...” we are introduced to a tragic young boy called Elliott whose wellbeing, confidence and schooling is destroyed by an ailing mother who is quick to lay on the emotional blackmail and a father who barely tolerates the pair of them. Elliott opens the mail one morning and sees a classmate’s painting on the cover of the phone book, which makes

him realise how much of his potential he is wasting. But what can he do to improve his lot? This is a sad story made all the more heartbreaking by the fact Massie drew on her experience as a teacher to write it.)

The Alternative – Ramsey Campbell (3/5 – Highton returns home one evening to his wife and two kids. Theirs is a cramped two-bedroom flat in a grotty, run-down estate. Both Highton and his wife, Valerie, have to sleep in the sitting room to give their teenage daughter and junkie son separate rooms. But something weird happens when Highton goes to sleep. When he wakes, Highton is a successful accountant with a model family and all the trappings of a comfortable lifestyle. Which life is real and which is the dream? This is okay, but I couldn't quite shake the notion that Campbell was trying too hard, and "The Alternative" chimes false as a result. List five things you'd expect to find in a stereotypical well-to-do household or rough council estate during the mid-90s and four of them will show up in this story.)

In The Middle Of A Snow Dream – Karl Edward Wagner (3/5 – Niane Liddell is an exotic dancer with a drug habit and the mental scars of a hard life. She's had a few brushes with death, the latter brought about through a Demerol overdose. She is sent to a retreat for recovering addicts, but something about the place seems off. She soon realises her fellow patients have all had near-death experiences too. This was one of Wagner's final stories before he died at the age of 48, and it left me wondering whether this was truly the finished article. The pacing of the story is uneven to say the least. Wagner spends time building up interesting characters in Niane and her fellow exotic dancer girlfriend Navonna, but the moment they both enter the retreat it seems he cannot wait to throw monsters at them and finish the story. Not great, sadly.)

The Temptation Of Dr Stein – Paul J. McAuley (4/5 – Henry Gorrall and his sometime unofficial assistant Dr Stein investigate the body of a young girl pulled from the river. Gorrall is furious when the body fails to arrive at hospital. It seems the girl has been stolen by bodysnatchers. Events take a chilling turn when the girl is found in the company of a sideshow charlatan calling himself Dr Pretorious. Remarkably, the girl is alive... kind of. I didn't come to this story with high hopes if I'm honest, despite it bagging a British Fantasy Award. Not only is it set in an alternate reality, but also in the same universe as a then-recent book by the author. Cheeky. I needn't have worried. McAuley wisely keeps the alternate reality stuff squarely in the background and focuses instead on his characters and excellent writing.)

Wayang Kulit – Garry Kilworth (4/5 – While enjoying the rustic delights of Bali a man is handed an invitation to attend a wayang kulit – a sacred shadow puppet play. Impressed with the show, he checks out the booth while nobody is around. He casts an eye over the assorted puppets in the booth, his shadow falling against the screen. One of the shadow puppets moves, settling into place, its shadow meeting his. Our man soon senses a growing pain in his shoulders and comes to realise the shadow play isn't quite finished. I really liked Kilworth's "Inside The Walled City", which was a highlight of Best New Horror 2, and this story is very much on a par with that.)

The Scent Of Vinegar – Robert Bloch (4/5 – Greg Kolmer is a young man who is keen to locate Kitty Earnshaw's place, a fabled house of ill repute from cinema's golden era, lost to the years somewhere up in the Hollywood hills. Greg is convinced he will find his fortune there, a treasure trove of dirt on the leading men of the age. Instead he finds a golden girl lying in one of the rooms, a girl with sharp teeth who, bizarrely, seems able to detach her head from her shoulders. This Stoker-winning story is a fun read with a wonderfully satisfying ending.)

The Homecoming – Nicholas Royle (4/5 – Daniela returns to Romania, her homeland, in the aftermath of Ceausescu's bloody downfall. Upon arriving she can't be absolutely certain the nightmare is over. Bucharest is a wreck, yes, but other than that the city still seems brimming with informers and secret police. Strange dreams and uncomfortable truths come to light when Daniela attempts to find her brother. This story

previously appeared in Jones' "Shadows Over Innsmouth" anthology, but thankfully this is one of those rare occasions where an author dips his toes lightly into Lovecraft territory and produces superior work. True, the tired Lovecraftian trope of a perpetually fearful protagonist is given an airing here, but the quality of the story makes up for it.)

The Singular Habits Of Wasps – Geoffrey A. Landis (5/5 – There are a few 5-star stories in this volume but this is the best of the bunch. In "The Singular Habits of Wasps" Landis presents for our delectation a stonkingly good Sherlock Holmes story. Watson is worried for Holmes. The great detective has gone missing a number of times since returning from investigating the disappearance of a mortally wounded farm hand. With each disappearance of Holmes it seems a lady of the night ends up slaughtered. Holmes couldn't be the notorius Jack The Ripper, could he? Remember, folks, when you have eliminated the impossible, what remains, however improbable, must be the truth.)

To Receive Is Better – Michael Marshall Smith (4/5 – Jack is a man on the run, hiding on a subway train, desperate to avoid drawing attention to himself. But the cards are stacked against him, for Jack has never known the outside world. To make matters worse, he is missing an eye, some fingers and a leg. He has spent his whole life being kept in a tunnel, with all the other spares, like cattle. Needless to say, Jack is a more than a little pissed at his lot. This was originally published in another of Jones's many anthologies, "The Mammoth Book Of Frankenstein", and it's typically brilliant of MMS to find an intriguing twist on the Frankenstein story, and over a decade before a certain Booker-nominated novel of 2005 too.)

The Alchemy Of The Throat – Brian Hodge (5/5 – Giovanni is a castrato soprano purchased from the conservatory by an incredibly wealthy man called Julius. Giovanni is initially wary of Julius – he has heard what has become of some castrati at the lusty hands of their patrons – but it seems Julius is content for Giovanni to sing for him. Julius's friends, on the other hand, are another matter entirely. This is a superb story, sumptuously told. Hodge certainly isn't afraid to go there, in more ways than one.)

Out Of The Night, When The Full Moon Is Bright – Kim Newman (5/5 – This novella-length story sees another mash-up from Newman, his third in as many books. "Red Reign", in Best New Horror 4, was a brilliant story which took in Dracula and pretty much everyone of note, both real and fictional, from the Victorian era. "The Big Fish", from Best New Horror 5, however, was a largely unsuccessful attempt to shoehorn Chandler into Lovecraft's universe. This time around Newman clearly thought, "The Legend of Zorro, WITH WEREWOLVES!" And do you know what? He's only gone and pulled it off. This is great, bloodthirsty fun. Tuck in!)

Lovers – Esther M. Friesner (4/5 – A young woman awaits her sweetheart who has gone to war. She sends him a letter, promising him her heart, but then finds her love for him wanes in favour of another. Come her wedding day, an unexpected guest arrives, letter in hand. A four page unbroken poem didn't appeal to me, if I'm honest, but then poetry is often what you make it. Read a poem like a dirge that's exactly what you'll get. Read it with the voice of Vincent Price in your head, however, and it turns into a rather different experience! This is evoked a nice chill down the spine and makes for a good closer.)

Greg Kerestan says

Though Volumes 4 and 5 of this series struck me as a little weak, this one made up for it in a big way. "The Temptation of Dr. Stein" introduces the saga of Doctor Pretorius, immortal effeminate nemesis to Victor Frankenstein, and "Snow Cancellations" is eerie and evocative enough to lodge in the memory for quite a

long time.

John says

Liked No Sharks in the Med, Snow Cancellations, and Bad News the best.

Hannah Belle says

I decided to reread this book before giving it away. I had read this when it was first published and didn't remember much about it. I would say half of the stories are good and of those maybe 3-4 are really good/memorable. Most of the really good stories, while they had supernatural elements, I wouldn't really classify as a horror. My favorite story in the book is a pitch-perfect Sherlock Holmes story, The Singular Habits of Wasps by Geoffrey A. Landis. As I literally read part of this on a beach, it's a decent beach read and is available as a Kindle book if you're interested.

bluetyson says

The Best New Horror (Mammoth Book of Best New Horror) by Stephen Jones (1995)

Clint says

I've read a bagillion of these horror compilations, and I keep buying them and buying them. They are usually never REALLY good, but I like the Stephen Jones Mammoth ones best, even though he's got an eternal hard on for Ramsey Campbell. But the reason these books should be bought and read is because 1) they are usually pretty cheap, especially the ebook versions, which leads to 2), you will almost always find some stories that were well-worth the price of the book. Reading is a ridiculously cheap past-time, even if you buy hardbacks, if you actually read the books. You pay a few bucks for at least a few hours worth of crazy entertainment, and you can have cool conversations about it with your friends, and in the case of horror compilations, you can easily discover new writers.

With the Stephen Jones books, I've gotten to the point where I just skim the first and last parts, the year in horror and the deaths in horror, mainly because I'm always reading them a few years late, but also because their scope is too wide and I don't really care that some YA thriller writer published vol 16 of his Lakewood series or that a dude who worked on special effects for the Twilight Zone for a year died at the age of 98. That kind of thing. But for hardcore horror geeks that stuff is probably golden.

This book had some stinkers and some winners, as usual.

Harlan Ellison's (who himself is as hit and miss as this series) had a hit with the creepy and funny "Sensible City."

"Blade and Bone" by Terry Lamsley was awesome, and is only the third story I've read by this guy, because

his stuff is insanely hard to find anywhere, which is ridiculous in the ebook age. Like Karl Edward Wagner but even more ridiculous because I think he's still alive and is just ignoring money I'd pay him for uploading his stuff to Amazon.

There are a string of stinkers after this. Then, "The Alternative" by Ramsey Campbell, who is my favorite horror god to shit on because he's usually such a dork, but sometimes he's got his shit together, and he does here. This is more Twilight Zone/ Jacob's Ladder than "In Cold Print," but was pretty good.

There were two stories in a row about Southeast Asian supernatural stuff, "Wayang Kulit" by Garry Kilworth and the fucking awesome "The Scent of Vinegar" by Robert Bloch. The latter I actually knew of because it's a popular Thai ghost as well as Malaysian, where it comes from in the story.

"The Singular Habits of Wasps" was INSANE! I loved it! By Geoffrey A. Landis. Never heard of him. I don't really like pastiches, but this Sherlock one was great!!! Better even than Gaiman's "A Study in Emerald." It incorporates Jack the Ripper and aliens. I fucking LOVED THIS.

"To Receive is Better" by Michael Marshall Smith (who the fuck is that?) was also insane. Really creepy and hard-hitting.

"Out of the Night, When the Full Moon is Bright," by Kim Newman. Terrible title, great story about the real life Zorro being a werewolf in modern Los Angeles. Kim Newman is kind of anti-American it seems, but he fucking rocks, and anyway we won the Revolutionary War, bitch! Kidding, no I'm not, but I love Kim Newman.

I don't mention the stinkers because I'm getting soft in my old age and I don't want to crap all over genre writers anymore because they are a dying breed and I don't want them to stop and I don't want to hurt their feelings. And some of the other stories weren't stinkers, but I'm getting tired and have two more books to review. And Douglas Winter's story was TERRIBLE, but I LOVE that guy. But he's a tough lawyer in real life and hopefully can take it.
