

'Fantastic' comedy...

How do we classify Terry Pratchett's DiscWorld series— as fantasy or humour? After pouring over this question much at our online library EasyLib.com, the consensus was to shelve them in humour.

Comic Fantasy— a genre set in an imaginary, fantastic world of wizards, trolls, and gnomes— though sounds like fantasy, is actually a mockery of serious works of fantasy.

Terry Pratchett, unofficial king of the comic fantasy genre, started the DiscWorld saga with the book 'The Colour of Magic', and has penned more than 30 in the series to date.

DiscWorld books are not just a parody on serious fantasy but also a satire on life itself. One of the most hilarious in the series is "Soul Music", where death takes a holiday and 'Music With Rocks In' is introduced to DiscWorld.

The book takes a dig at every known idiosyncrasy of the

...Or comic fantasy? You decide, says VANI MAHESH who discovers that comic fiction is, among other things, a mockery of some serious works of fantasy.

rock-and-roll world— leather toting wizards to frenzied female fans. Whether it is his time-travel novels such as the 'Thief of Time' and 'Night Watch' or his take on the fifth estate in 'The Truth', Pratchett's magic never dims on readers.

A fitting peer to Terry Pratchett is Tom Holt who pens standalone novels rather than the genre trademark of sequels.

Tom Holt's debut novel 'Expecting Someone Taller' is a parody on the operatic 'Ring of the Nibelung' by Richard Wagner. In Holt's work, the all-powerful ring of the Nibelung lands in the hand of an English commoner Malcolm, who then becomes the ruler of England.

In his 'Who's Afraid of Beowulf', archaeologist Hildy Frederiksen excavates a ship where the Vikings on board are still very much alive! Here the comedy starts as the Norse heroes, enroute to slaying their enemy— the 'Sorcerer King', have to battle with modern-day technology.

Fantasy pot pourri

Holt satirises the corporates in 'You Don't Have to Be Evil to Work Here, But it Helps' and in 'Snow White and the Seven Samurai' mixes many a popular fairy tale.

Another superior writer of the genre is Jasper Fforde. In his 'Thursday Next' series, he creates an alternative universe where one can cohabit with characters from any work of fiction. The very idea that one can traverse into a book as well as traverse from one book to another, shows the absolute creative genius of Fforde.

In the 'Eyre Affair', the first of the series, a very likable literary

sleuth, Thursday Next, has the Herculean task of preventing Eyre of Bronte's 'Jane Eyre' from being kidnapped. Thursday not only saves Eyre but also imprisons the man who masterminds the kidnapping inside Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"!

The series continues with four other books where the humour starts with the titles themselves, as in 'Lost In a Good Plot' or 'The Well of Plots'. Others of

the genre who provide a wonderful romp speckled with laughter are Piers Anthony with his Xanth series, Robert Asprin's Myth adventures, and Connie Willis with her Science Fiction parodies.

A discussion on comic fantasy is incomplete without a

mention of the comical parodies of well-known fantasy series. Michael Gerber's 'Barry Trotter' series is smutty; forget about being kid-friendly, it is not even recommended for adults with a normal sense of humour! If 'Lord of the Rings' is your sacred read, then stay far away from Kenney and Beard's (the ones who later started the National Lampoon series) 'Bored of the Rings'.

From twisted names like Dildo and Frito to perverted parodies of every major scene, this 120-page book is a laugh riot if you have read the original. There are also 'Soddit' by ARRR Roberts and the 'Chronicles of Blarnia' by Micheal Gerber— irreverent to the original but humorous nonetheless.

