

Ansible

Comments on *Ansible 51* were sufficiently alarming. 'I thought I'd died and gone to heaven,' burred Ashley Watkins. 'Everyone will think you're gay,' added Abigail Frost after close study of the text. 'Now you can quote me saying outrageous things about the *Million/Intersore* scam!' wrote Maureen Speller. Chris Priest summed it up: 'The reappearance of *Ansible* was greeted by most as a portent of good times; of course, I tend to see it as a portent of something else.' What?

Graphic Debauchery

17 Oct: Gollancz launched their new line of graphic novels with almost lavish drinks at a odd-shaped London gallery. The walls were hung with originals—often in a rather confusing order—from the initial books *A Small Killing* (Alan Moore/Oscar Zarate) and *The Luck in the Head* (M. John Harrison/Ian Miller), plus future glories like the Ian Macdonald-scripted *Kling Klang Klatch ...* which from the specimen on view would appear to be about depraved teddy-bears.

The usual rabble of sf freeloaders was diluted by an influx from the sensitive worlds of art and comix. Alan Moore's major-prophet beard and hairstyle successfully concealed his reactions (if any) from the masses. Most artistic comment was directed at cuddly editor Faith Brooker's simulated leopard-skin shoes, clearly the hit of the evening. A Gollancz publicity master explained the shortage of *Luck in the Head* review copies with the effortless fluency of one whose first infant words were, 'Your cheque's in the post.' David Pringle waved dummies of his new *Realms of Fantasy* (conspicuously lacking the words 'Realms' and 'of') and his old *Million*, issue 6, resubtitled as 'The Magazine About Popular Fiction' in hope of explaining it to the public and stemming a tide of fiction submissions formerly rejected by Mills & Boon. 'Since they've fired you, are GW Books folding?' I asked him tactfully. He said, with caution: 'They say no, but, in effect ... yes. They're claiming to "revive" the line in 6-12 months. Some chance.' GW novels by Garnett, Watson, 'Yeovil' etc. remain in limbo.

Meanwhile ace reviewer John Clute was poring delightedly over his latest task, being *Futurespeak: A Fan's Guide to the Language of SF* by Roberta Rogow (Paragon House \$24.95). 'This entry has more mistakes than words,' he marvelled:

SLANS (literary): Superhuman successors to homo sapiens in a series of stories by A.E. van Vogt, beginning in 1925 with Galactic Lensman....

'She's a Trekkie,' explained Mr Pringle. 'The entries on *Star Trek* are quite good. The entry on "Future History" omits Robert Heinlein. As for the New Wave....' He blenched and sought consolation in the Bulgarian wine, which had run out.

The books? *The Luck in the Head* was and is an effectively unpleasant story, here tizzied up by Miller in his chaotic 'asylum images' style (as opposed to the better-known 'tight pen' art—his phrasing), which conveys the nastiness but is tiring to read ... some of the scattered text was hard going even in those full-sized originals. *A Small Killing*, with trad speech balloons, has the expected word-perfect script from Moore, dissecting the familiar idea that people Get On In Life by doing violence to their old selves, and tracking its yuppie adman hero back through bad turnings to his first 'killing' as a kid. Good hallucinatory climax (with one creaky bit ... an early, implausible flashback which seemingly exists only to be

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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo: Dan Stefan. Available at random fan gatherings, by whim or for stamped addressed envelopes—sorry, no paid subscriptions.

Significantly Echoed in the finale). Zarate's water-colourish art, though swerving occasionally and dangerously towards a 'funny papers' look (cf. his and Alexei Sayle's *Geoffrey the Tube Train and the Fat Comedian*), is just about right for the surreal images here—as slick, schematic realism wouldn't have been.

But where was Mike Harrison? A vast, unattributable voice intoned, 'He might get out more if they hadn't nailed his feet to a pedestal.' By now the lavish victuals had dwindled to fizzy water and detumescent celery: Chris Evans led us off to a pub, which in retrospect was a mistake....

Condom

8-10 Nov • **Altercon 666**, London. GoH John 'Great Beast' Jarrold. Elusive, crepuscular, multi-venued and redolent of fish-oil, this event is too secret to be listed here. Sorry.

(Sources have traced the fish-oil motif to Altacon 1990, where a functionally impaired John Brosnan shouted his GoH speech: 'FISH-OIL! GIVE ME FISH-OIL! FISH-OIL! ... FISH-OIL! I WANT FISH-OIL! FISH-OIL! ... FETCH FISH-OIL! FISH-OIL!!!!' Etc, etc.)

15-17 Nov • **Fantasycon XIV**, Ramada Inn West London. £30 reg (£25 BFS members): GoHs Dan Simmons, Jonathan Carroll and Brian Lumley.... Rooms £44/single, £68/double. Contact 15 Stanley Rd, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE—in haste.

21 Nov • **BSFA London meet** at Old Coffee House, Beak St, with stupefyingly famous Iain Sinclair.

30 Nov to 1 Dec • **X-asm**, The Hotel Metropole, Leeds. £12 reg, £15 at the door, rooms £25/person/night. GoH M. John Harrison. Contact 16 Aviary Place, Armley, Leeds, LS12 2NP.

17-20 Apr 92 • **Illumination**, 43rd Eastercon, Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. £20 reg. GoHs Paul McAuley, Geoff Ryman, Pam Wells (fan). Plus TAFF winner JEANNE BOWMAN or Richard Brandt. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. PR3 (Oct, with hotel booking form) warns that membership rates rise on 5 Nov. To what? ... They don't actually say.

22-25 May 92 • **Inconsequential**, Aston Court Hotel, Derby. £15 reg, rooms £32/single, £52/double. Contact 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby, DE3 6ES. 'Humour' theme. Ho, ho.

'Late Aug' 92 • **Car-Con II** in two vehicles hurtling round the M25 (no, not a joke). £12.50 reg. GoH Kevin Davies. Contact 68 Gotch Rd, Barton Seagrave, Kettering, NN15 6UQ.

8-12 Apr 93 • **Helicon**, 44th Eastercon, Hotel de France, Jersey. £20 reg (£22 from 1 Dec 91). GoHs John Brunner, George R.R. Martin. Contact 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ. First PR now out, and conscientious Eddie Cochrane provides an Erratum Note: 'On p.3, for the lap of an Italian-Tasmanian maiden please read a machine in Aldermaston.'

Rumblings. Birmingham's sparsely attended **Twentycon** (July) lost over £1100 in tides of apathy; conrunning expert Martin Hoare says sympathetically, 'The Brum Group's been creaming a profit off boring Novacons for years, so they can afford it.' In contrast, **Wincon II** (August) came out £898 ahead—£500 earmarked for **Wincon III** in August 94 and the rest for Various Fan Charities. But what of the first **Wincon's** mislaid funds, and its allegedly hard-to-locate treasurer J*y H*bb*rt? [Resolved since we went to press for *Novacon*—Ed.]

ConFiction has almost broken even, says *Shards of Babel*—the outstanding debtors being *Locus* and Malcolm Edwards....

P.K. Dick Celebration (Oct): 'Appalling,' said Brian Stableford. 'I stuck it for one day.' He bewailed inadequate facilities,

hard seats, boring speakers, and ideologically correct catering with the choice of (a) a vegetarian chef's delight at £5, or (b) hunger. 'Was there a bar?' I asked. 'There was this *small hatch in the wall* that was very occasionally open for bottled beer....'

Ten Years Ago

Where are they now, the stars of the 1981 'Silicon Fan Poll'? *Favourite/Cuddliest/Most Lovable UK Fan*: Eve Harvey. *Best Dressed*: Chris Atkinson/Joe Nicholas (tie). *Most Illiterate*: Pete Presford. *Favourite Con*: Seacon '79. *Least Favourite*: Mancon '76. *Best Fan Artist*: Jim Barker. *Most Awful Fringefan Group*: Gannets/Trekkees (tie). *Oldest Active Fan*: Terry Jeeves/Ethel Lindsay/Rog Peyton (tie). *Fave SF Writer At Age 15*: Asimov. *Worst SF Novel Ever*: 'The Number of the Beast'. *Worst Movie*: 'The Black Hole/Plan 9 From Outer Space' (tie). *Worst TV SF Space: 1999. Owner Of Largest Male Fan Appendage*: Robert P. Holdstock. *Funniest Fan*: Leroy Kettle. *Drunkest*: Greg Pickersgill. *Fan Who Falls Over Most*: D.West. *Worst Fansine Ever*: *Fansine Fanatique*. *Writer Of The Most Boring Letters*: Joe Nicholas. *Most Pretentious Current Publication*: *Omni* (Intersone was =4th). *Deafest Fan*: oh come now.... (*Ansible* 21, Nov 81).

Eroticon 6: October

Martin H&are drools: Where else could a convention about eroticism be held but in the Tollgate Motel near Gravesend? We arrived at 11pm to find the fetish party well under way. Jean wondered about its dress (or undress) code: investigating, I met Judith Looker in a fetching leather dress whose skimpiness was an obvious effort towards animal friendliness.

'Everybody is trying to outweird each other,' she explained.

I ran back and donned a propeller beanie while Jean chose her slinky PVC frock in case of water pistol fights. The party was great fun with a wild array of costumes: naughty nurses, vicars, gladiators, Nic Farey in a sequined dress. I wish I'd taken my camera, not so much to snap the costumes as staff and mundanes who wandered past. The beanie was a popular fannish fetish—everybody wanted to spin my propeller.

Official guests Mary Gentle, Alex Stewart* and Richard Wells were joined by the artists Chris Achilleos and Peter Pracownik. The programme was interesting—sometimes even sercon. By order of the committee it was not pornographic but about eroticism in SF. Many discussions came back to censorship, a cause of concern to most con members.

This was a very friendly and enjoyable con, with that fannish spirit I remember from long ago. The committee were efficient and even laid on a crate of beer for the (very) late night showing of *Rocky Horror*. An interesting programme, accessible guests, a good hotel despite bemused staff.... There has to be a sequel: Eroticon 6, the Second Coming?

[* Erotically famed editor of *Prongs of Priapus*—Ed.]

Naming Names

Greg Bear's February 1992 visit to Britain will (says the Brum Group newsletter, correcting itself) actually be a 1993 visit.

Paul Brasier's quarterly sf magazine *Nexus* has yet to publish its second, or July, issue. I'm told that Howard Waldrop is really mad at Paul, who apparently commissioned him to do something, forgot what it was, and wrote asking Howard to tell him what he'd agreed to write. How like Paul. [MS]

Chris Evans, long lost in the obscurity of teaching, is working like crazy to finish his first novel since, I think, 1985....

David Garnett has had to lower his *New Worlds* word rates. I'm paying £40 per thou. (I lost out on #1, paid out too much at £45 per—couldn't stop buying brill stories!)

Garry Kilworth is on the Smarties prize shortlist (for best children's novel) with *The Drowners* [SG]. I liked the book, a 19th-century ghost story about the arcane technology of water meadows ... but was it our Garry or Methuen's copy-editor

who put all the period measurements into litres and metres?

Stan Nicholls will co-edit [SG], that is, be deputy editor of [DP] David Pringle's planned *Realms of Fantasy* (Spring 92?).

Terry Pratchett pays the Price of Fame, being deprived of the 1992/3 Eastercons owing to GoH spots in Australia and New Zealand. Likewise Novacon: 'the World Fantasy Con is at the same time and I'm going because the fantasy mafia have put *Good Omens* (by ✪NEIL GAIMAN✪ and some bald guy) on the award shortlist.' He mysteriously adds, 'I don't go to baleful Mexicons any more.' Who's been baleful at him, now?

Chris Priest has delivered his Radio 4 play of *The Glamour*, with (by BBC request) yet another changed ending. And: 'The Beeb has sent me Part 1 of their *Quiet Woman* tv dramatization, and I am mucho impressed with the professional and imaginative job they are doing. (Unlike other previous dramatizations of my stuff.) The minor film of *Wessex* being made in Australia has creaked into life again. I am a Media Man.'

Infinitely Improbable

HarperCollins *Reshuffle*: upwardly mobile Malcolm Edwards soars to 'Publishing Director—Fiction' (all fiction); Jane Johnson is sf/fantasy/horror editorial director. 'ME's empire is now almost of Austro-Hungarian extent. He will soon be permanently in meetings, emerging only to pick up his salary.' [CP]

Eurotemps: the second 'Temps' semi-superhero anthology is set for Penguin/Roc publication in 1992, with these supremely well-ordered contents: 'If Looks Could Kill' (D.Langford), 'A Virus in the System' (Christopher Amies), 'Hide and Seek' (Jenny Jones), 'Le Grand Moans' (Anne Gay), 'El Lobo Dorado is Dead, is Dead' (Liz Holliday), 'Playing Safe' (Marcus Rowland), 'Sortilege and Serendipity' (Brian Stableford), 'Photo Finished' (Molly Brown), 'Monastic Lives' (Graham Joyce), 'The Foreign Post' (Colin Greenland), 'A Problem Shared' (Tina Anghelatos—the only first sale), 'Totally Trashed' (Roz Kaveney), 'The Law of Being' (Storm Constantine) ... 'Plus various linking bits by me,' adds hero editor Alex Stewart.

Seduction of the Innocent: the return of *Thunderbirds* to BBC2 has outraged the anti-smoking lobby. 'Children ... will all see Lady Penelope constantly holding a cigarette,' gasps an ASH person in the *Grauniad*. [AJF] But does she ... inhale?

Late Obit. Steve 'Mr Horror UK' Jones's anthology *Shadows over Insmouth*, assembled for the H.P.Lovecraft centenary in 1990, finally died of eldritch publishing apathy this year. An ashen-faced Steve explained: *Tāi tāi Shub-Niggurath!*

Fortean Phenomena: 'I've just heard that Nutley, E.Sussex, was recently showered with packages of cannabis. Nothing to do with Neil Gaiman surely?' [MS]

RIP ... Arkady Strugatsky, 14 Oct; and Gene Roddenberry of *Star Trek* fame, 24 Oct (in Santa Monica, CA). [AJF]

TAFF *Up roar?* For fear of postal regulations, Jeanne Bowman's campaign fanzine *Dangerous Visitors* (mailed in Britain by a visiting pal) carries the only UK return address Jeanne had handy in her last-minute rush at the printers' ... being that of our nevertheless impartial TAFF administrator Pam Wells. A flood of one accusing complaint has poured in to Pam from politically correct Joseph (for it is he) Nicholas.

Beyond The Enchanted Duplicator ... Michael Ashley is reviewing this Willis/White 'fan classic sequel' and has got as far as, 'Gah—*The Enchanted Convention* really sucks.'

Lies: 'Steve Green is to edit *Fear*, bought for £500 from Newsfield's liquidators by Pegasus (*Gamesman* etc.) of Brum; John Gilbert is allegedly "contesting this bitterly" ... thus A52's first (Novacon) printing, but it's all wrong. Boo to David Pringle's research. Nervous apologies to the others concerned.

Text © Dave Langford, 1991. We can read IBM 3½", IBM 5¼" 360k or PCW 3" disks by arrangement. *Ansible* may be xeroxed for fan groups. Inputs: Abigail Frost AJF, Steve Green SG, Chris Priest CP, Maureen Speller MS. revised 6/11/91