

Ansible



Ansible 171 OCTOBER 2001

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Joe Mayhew**, fondly remembered. Available for SAE, spikkle, spime or Mustick.

TEN YEAR HITCH. *Ansible* hasn't missed a month since its revival with issue 51 in October 1991. Good grief. With 9 irregular 'half issues' thrown in for special occasions and the confusion of fan bibliographers, that's 130 issues since its return, 180 in all. I may well need a rest.

One Is One

Brian Aldiss told the on-line *Guardian* his theory about *AI*'s relatively modest takings when first launched: 'Perhaps audiences tired of David's winsomeness ... Perhaps—my money is on this one—it is just too intelligent for adolescents, to judge by the initial runaway box-office success of the moronic new *Planet of the Apes*.' Also, 'Of course there is no love affair, no archetypal boy meeting archetypal girl ... The very missing item that excludes science fiction from wider popularity.' [JW]

Jo Fletcher confided that the Orion Books tenth birthday party on 13 September continued to 1am with 'dancing, a woman with a snake and a man with leather chaps and aluminium baskets of chocolates, allegedly ...' Would the latter have been Malcolm Edwards, I wonder?

Diana Wynne Jones became disgruntled with the World Fantasy Award in mid-September: 'I have just resigned from the WFA judging panel. I disagree so radically with them all. And now they are talking about God being on the side of the disputed book. So I give up!'

Gwyneth Jones responds to *AI70* comments on her 'seized' story: 'Terribly sorry about the not-remotely-arousing juvenile porn. May I recommend *The Amber Spyglass*, which has some hot scenes with underage teens making out.' Coo er gosh.

Chris Priest on *AI*: 'The first 30 minutes or so are more or less par for the Kubrick genre, stylized interiors, declarative dialogue, all form and no feeling. Then a style upheaval, as things change hilariously for the worse. We embark on about an hour and a half of consistent risibility. Quite early on, as David, the robot boy, walks through the woods with his robot teddy bear, I found myself compelled to utter aloud, "Jesus Christ". We went on grimly, disbelieving. After more shenanigans the characters go to a theme park amazingly like the interior of a hyped up Millennium Dome! The star attraction is a huge model of a woman's body. You can WALK THROUGH IT! However, our characters are on a quest and seek the help of "Doctor Know", a sort of online database with an animated cartoon head. It looks and acts exactly like the execrated Help animation in Microsoft Word! By this time, mine wasn't the only mocking voice being raised from the dark auditorium of the Odeon. Things head on downwards. David discovers a warehouse full of crates containing robots: one lot is labelled "Darlene", the other lot "David". Our David, the supposedly real one, backs away. One of the crates begins shifting and shaking. Could there be something inside, trying to get out? We are in unmistakable Buzz Lightyear territory! (But the glorious Buzz-in-a-box scene is shorter, wittier and better acted. It came out two years earlier, too.) After more questing, the little robot boy wants to be reunited with his mother but discovers he can have only "one magical day" alone with her. Echoes of the Dome again! Ribald laughs and rude catcalls throughout the cinema! Incredibly, there is even worse still to come, implausible, sentimental, desperate. You feel relief at the end, glad to be spared any more. A truly dreadful film destined to be a cult classic for masochists.'

Michael Swanwick reminisces on Worldcon 2001: 'The children's librarian chosen by the Hugo administrators to receive the Hugo for J.K. Rowling stumbled descending the stairs from the stage, fell, and dropped the award. Local con people rushed forward to see that she was unhurt and, when reassured this was so, hurried over to the Hugo to determined that it was unhurt. Sheila Williams, who was stabbed in the foot by the thing and walked around with a small limp for the rest of the con, was slightly miffed that they never got around to her.'

Gordon Van Gelder's *F&SF* holding company is *SPILOGALE*, which (I speculated) must be some menacing global organization whose HQ gets detonated at the close of a James Bond movie. 'I picked it in part because it sounds so unusual. In point of fact, it's the name of the genus of spotted skunks on which my father wrote his doctoral dissertation.'

Conticent

All Oct • **Derby Festival of Words** in various parts of Derby, with sf theme and many sf events. Details from Naomi Wilds, 01332 715434.

5-7 Oct • **Animecon UK**, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. GoH Gilles Poitras, Helen McCarthy. £40 at door. Contact ... well, no time for that.

5-7 Oct • **Supernova-Retribution** (*Trek*), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. £50 reg. Not sure whether it rises at the door.

13-14 Oct • **Octocon 2001** (Irish national con), Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co.Dublin. Advance registration closed 1 Oct; £25(I) at door, £15(I) 'juniors'. Contact info@octocon.com.

15 Oct • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St. Pat Cadigan, Gwyneth Jones, Justina Robson. 6:30-8pm. All welcome. See also 12 Nov.

15-20 Oct • **Anne Sudworth** art exhibition, Gallery 27, 27 Cork St, London, W1S 3NG. 10am-7pm. Phone 020 7734 7595.

20 Oct • **World Video Premiere** of David B.Wake's *20:01—a sunday odyssey* and *20/10—odyssey too*, Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston Road, Birmingham. At 20:01 sharp. 'Over the top premiere outfits please.' Contact the maestro if you want to go: dbwake@cix.co.uk.

24 Oct • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. With Justina Robson.

25 Oct • **Fabulous Harbours**, Heffers Bookshop, 20 Trinity St, Cambridge. 6-7:30pm. Many guests. Contact Sean Flinn, 01223 568521.

27 Oct • **ZZ9 21st Anniversary Party**, Florence Nightingale pub, Westminster Bridge Rd roundabout. 5pm-late. All fans welcome.

9-11 Nov • **Armadacon**, Cophthorne Hotel, Plymouth, G.H. Tom Holt. Still £27 reg; £18 Sat only, £12 Sun. Contact 4 Gleneagle Ave, Mannamead, Plymouth, PL3 5HL. 01752 252827.

9-11 Nov • **Novacon**, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. GoH Gwyneth Jones. £35 reg to 27 Oct, £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

12 Nov • **Reading at Borders** as above. Pat Cadigan, M.John Harrison, Nalo Hopkinson, Ken MacLeod. *NB: no December reading.*

31 May - 2 Jun 02 • **Comics 2002**, Bristol. Fair 1-2 Jun in Empire & Commonwealth Museum. Verbose announcement includes no visible postal address or membership fee. Phone 01275 871856.

Infinitely Improbable

11 September. Nothing to say here, except for one gleam of slightly selfish cheer: our own people, the sf fan/publishing community in America, all seem to be physically unharmed. The bad dreams continue.

Science Corner. *Radio Times* coverage of the new TV science series *Space* was firmly grounded in old Larry Niven stories: 'Space boasts enough gee-whiz facts to satisfy any statistic-hungry schoolboy, but isn't afraid to go beyond the science into the realms of entertainment and speculation. Particularly high on the agenda is an insistence on the fragility of life on this planet—the Solar System is swarming with black holes waiting to devour us ...' (Rupert Smith, *Radio Times*)

Publishers & Sinners. House of Stratus, the UK publisher using print-on-demand technology to reissue countless books including Brian Aldiss's backlist, has reportedly gone into administration. HoS shares ceased trading in July and the London office closed last month.

The Greasy Pole. *British Fantasy Awards* presented 23 September: NOVEL (Derleth Award) *Perdido Street Station*, China Miéville. ANTHOLOGY *Hideous Progeny* ed Brian Willis. COLLECTION *Where the Bodies Are Buried*, Kim Newman. SHORT *Naming of Parts*, Tim Lebbon. ARTIST Jim Burns. *Small Press* PS Publishing. KARL EDWARD WAGNER AWARD Peter Haining. [DJH] • *Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire* (France): won by Chris Priest's story 'The Discharge', trans Maryvonne Sossé as 'Retour au foyer' (*Destination 3000*, ed Silverberg & Jacques Chambon).

R.I.P. *Samuel Z.Arkoff* (1918-2001), co-founder of American International Pictures, died on 15 September aged 83. AIP was noted for cheap teenage exploitation movies: *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein*, *Invasion of the Saucer Men*, etc, etc. [PB] • *Berry Berenson* (1948-2001), actress/photographer who appeared in the 1982

Cat People remake, was on Flight 11 on 11 September. She was the widow of *Psycho's* Anthony Perkins. [SG] • *Alan Dodd*, active in British fandom in the 50s and 60s, died on 5 June from 'natural causes', writes Mike Deckinger: 'He was a prolific fanzine writer, correspondent, and publisher of his own magazine *Camber*. Due to his dislike of large gatherings, he avoided conventions and came to be regarded as a hermit.' • *Meade Frierson*, long-time southern US fan and former President of the Southern Fandom Confederation, died on 24 September. [GHL] • *Patricia Anne Spencer* (1939-2001), popular wheelchair-bound British fan, died on 5 September; she is survived by her husband Douglas. [RN] He adds: 'There were four things that affected Anne's ability to do what she wanted to do. She had angina, so her heart stopped her doing it. She had emphysema, so her lungs stopped her doing it. She had lymphoedema, so her legs stopped her doing it. But then, she had bloody-mindedness, so she did it anyway.'

Clash of Symbols. *Jonathan Coleclough* reports: 'After about 2½ years' deliberation, the Unicode Technical Committee turned down the proposal to include Klingon in the Unicode Standard (unique codes for every character of every language in the world), with the rather pofaced "determined to be inappropriate for encoding". However, Bernard Shaw's little-known, less-used phonetic alphabet 'Shavian' made it into the Standard, and Tolkien's *Tengwar* is still 'under investigation'.

The Stephen Baxter Interview. *Ian Sales* wondered whether the mysteriously appearing Red Moon in Mr Baxter's *Origin* was a homage to the similar device in *The Red Moon Mystery*, a Dan Dare yarn by Frank Hampson. Confronted by *Ansible* with this smoking gun, Steve said: 'Sadly Dan is a bit before my time, and I don't know the *RMM*....'

Thog Speechless. In the aftermath of the fallen towers, a special sf good taste award goes to Author Services Inc for seizing this chance to promote a claimed *Battlefield Earth* TV series. The 'connection' is a godawful L.Ron Hubbard 'peace song' that helpfully informs the world: 'Snarls and strife must be at end! / In peace alone can this earth mend.'

Outraged Letters. *Pat Cadigan* refuses to be downcast: 'It's those little indulgences—the spotlight, the audience, the applause, the publicity, the autograph-seekers and the paparazzi—that make life worth living. Thus, I hereby re-dedicate myself to attention-seeking and glamorous living.' • *James Gifford* very soon withdrew his tirade against the Hugo voting process for Best Related Book: 'Bob Eggleton won, fair and square. I lost—by a damn thin margin, any way you figure it—but I lost. Fair and square. If anyone took my comments as whining or unreasonable, all I can do is claim exhaustion and overwrought nerves from travel—which is not an excuse. I am a rich, rich man literarily—and coming in second to Bob Eggleton in a major Hugo category is a high honor.' • *Norman Spinrad* on *A170*: 'I did not say that quantum mechanics is bullshit in Romania because it's too complicated. I said that particle physics is bullshit because it's too complicated to have the elegance that a good theory requires; they keep having to posit ever more particles to keep it from falling apart. I lay no claim to being the "Feynman" of SFWA, but I have the feeling that Feynman would understand what I said. The ultimate constituent of matter will turn out to be a particle with no mass whose duration approaches zero asymptotically. You read it here first.' • *Name and Address Supplied* corrects the *Enterprise* note in *A169*: 'The Captain was originally named "Jackson Archer", and subsequently changed, prior to filming or announcement, to the now permanent "Jonathan Archer". At no time was it ever "Jeffrey Archer". I'm a sad little trekkie, and follow this stuff.' • *David Stewart Zink* pondered that newspaper quote—'In the world of science fiction, Gardner Dozois is huge'—and sent his revision: 'In the Science Fiction community, Gardner Dozois is about average.'

Ten Years Ago in *Ansible* 51: '... we live amid Signs and Portents. Something is stirring in British fandom, something ancient and very terrible, dimly remembered only by those wrinkled fans in convention bars who swap their wheezy reminiscences of the bad old days. From its grave the age-old horror rises, no longer a mere phantasm of darkness but a tangible form revealed in leprous morning light, a ghastly revenant whose existence can no longer be denied. Yes ... we have another British worldcon bid which actually seems to be doing well.'

Retro Science. *Marcus Rowland* has unearthed the shape of things to come: 'The world is now the shape of a globe, the shape which gives the biggest possible bulk for its surface, but the inside of the earth is still cooling and condensing, and the internal changes are slowly changing its shape. The surface, already condensed to its utmost, will not change with the core; it cannot reduce its area, but it adapts itself to the shrinking interior by taking a shape which occupies less bulk. So the earth is to become a tetrahedron, a sort of pyramid, the shape

which gives the smallest bulk for its surface.' (*My Magazine*, May 1918)

Random Fandom. *Lawrence Dean*, founder of the highly successful Preston SF Group in the early 80s, survived a seriously burst appendix. By now he should be recovering at home: 30 Windermere, (Off Love Lane), Faversham, Kent, ME13 8JQ. [BT] • *John Foyster* has been in intensive care in the Royal Adelaide Hospital after a stroke on 28 September. He was soon conscious and communicating, and we all hope he's making good progress. [EC/BG] • *Marc Ortlieb* sent out the 177th and last issue of his zippy e-newsletter *Australian SF Bullsheet*, dated 14 September. 'When I started this publication in January 1994, I promised myself that, when it stopped being fun, I'd stop doing it.' Amen to that. • *The Plokta News Network* has been revitalized, with copious fannish news and weirdness at the usual address: www.plokta.com/pnn/. • *Simo* gloats: 'I'm one of the pundits on Channel 4's *Top Ten Sci-Fi Shows*, provisionally scheduled for 3 November—Chrysalis TV have taken the unusual step of actually speaking to people who know something about sf, rather than just dragging in unknown "pop stars" and unfunny "comedians". Blimey!' • *SMS* appointed himself our stage reporter: 'The York Unicorn, Eboracon, held (At long, long last) the first known example of Slash SF Radio Drama in Fandom: *Under Mainframe* (Or: *Radas Live In Vain*). Sound effects: The Audience. Players: Cal Loveridge, Sparks, Eira, Sms. Written by Sms, written in legible handwriting by Eira, improvised anyway by the Cast and Audience. Highlights included the "Nude Lesbian Zero G Shower Scene" and the "Vast Telescope Scene". (Called "The Welsh Play" to avoid bad luck).'

C.o.A. *Alison Freebairn*, 48 The Crescent, Walthamstow, London, E17 8AB. Tremble in your shoes, effete London fandom!

The Goodie Bag. *Bryan Talbot* sent the heavily annotated CD-ROM version of his spiffy graphic novel *Heart of Empire* (Dark Horse 2001), and I discovered with a thrill of egoboo that I am cross-referenced under 'Old Farters'. • *Savoy Books* sent their reissue of Anthony Skene's stupefyingly rare *Zenith the Albino* (1936), *Zenith* being a master villain from the Sexton Blake Library who got his own spinoff novel and, says Mike Moorcock's introduction, inspired another albino called *Elic*. • *Ansible* is available as a PC CD-R archive with all back issues (1979-2001), plus most issues of the Langford APAZINE *Cloud Chamber* (1976-2001), and more. £11.75/\$17.50 (post free), cheques to D.Langford. • *Gollancz* sent jacket proofs for my still unfinished *The Wyrdest Link*, incorporating a Lionel Fanthorpe plug written years ago for a different book and not used for space reasons: 'I'd be willing to wrestle a polar bear if it was lying on a Langford book that I hadn't yet read!' • *Big Engine's* Ben Jeapes revealed my apotheosis after ordering a rerun of *The Leaky Establishment* from Lightning Source: 'I learned yesterday (on a visit to the premises) that this was the very first title printed from their new UK facility, and a copy is framed in their office!' Gosh. • *The Encyclopedia of SF* is about due for a third edition, and if plans go ahead the co-editors are likely to be John Clute and David Langford, with Peter Nicholls stepping down as Editor Emeritus. Meanwhile, the latest available text is the 1995 CD-ROM, with copious corrections (and, alas, many new death dates) provided by home-made viewer software which I'm still selling with or without the CD itself: enquiries to me.

Thirty Years Ago. Hugo rumblings after the 1971 worldcon: 'the Best Pro Artist and Best Fan Artist awards have been reorganized to prevent anyone winning both.' • Although Novacon 1 registration cost a stiff 50p, 'membership has risen to 106, above that considered as a hopeful target.' • Malcolm Edwards denied rumours that his fanzine *Quicksilver* might fold. (*All Checkpoint 10* ed Peter Roberts, Oct 1971.)

Thog's Masterclass. 'His mossy, crimson eyebrows threatened to leap off his face and attack at any moment.' (Jayme Lynne Blaschke, 'The Dust', 1998) [AS] • 'With one last crushing gesture he crammed his fist to his ears and dropped dead.' 'A rabbit thumped and ran in Timothy's chest.' "Like ghosts?" "Which use people's ears to look out their eyes!" (all Ray Bradbury, *From the Dust Returned*, 2001) [PB] • 'She had an annoying habit of running her tongue over his teeth, and as she did that, he realised there was absolutely nothing between them.' (Jackie Collins, *Hollywood Wives: The New Generation*, 2001) [JB] • 'Philip retreated into the insect personality, growing almost silent except for his constant cries for help ...' (Robert I.Katz, *Edward Maret*, 2001) [PB] • 'The last chance to stop the operation had passed by. The die was now cast, if not yet thrown.' (Tom Clancy, *Debt of Honor*, 1994) [ST]