

Ansible



Ansible 179 June 2002

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: Sue Mason. Available for SAE, margil, orakh, simple swizzle, Martian vuzd, or zith.

ACCA. It was that time of year again: the Arthur C. Clarke Award was presented on 18 May at the London Science Museum, with copious free wine before and after. Five of the six nominees (Connie Willis couldn't make it) trembled in the front row of the Imax theatre as administrator Paul Kincaid worked up suspense *via* such delaying devices as a special presentation to Sir Arthur's brother Fred, for his hero work behind the scenes. Then last year's winner China Miéville—togged up, for the first time in living memory, with a suit and tie—opened the fatal envelope as quickly as he could, and presented the souvenir bookend and £2002 cheque to Gwyneth Jones for her 'near future fantasy' *Bold as Love*. Gwyneth later recollected in tranquillity: 'The operation was really very painless. Neither fear nor hope possessed me. I didn't have a thought in my head when China stood up, besides well, now we can all clap the winner, stand around nattering for a bit and then go home...' She had been repeatedly shortlisted for previous Clarke Awards; her editor at Gollancz, Jo Fletcher, said 'Fifth time is the charm!' Despite widespread concern that the Imax screen might at any instant light up with a terrifying seventy-foot talking head of Sir Arthur, it wasn't used.

The Tomorrow People

Ben Bova's sf novel *The Rock Rats* was illustrated on Amazon.com—for a short glorious period in April and May, until the authorities noticed—with a cover scan which subtly modified his name to BEN DOVA.

Simon R. Green's irresistible inspiration met an immovable object: 'I've sold a series of books to Ace... the third of which features a torch singer who puts across sad songs so powerfully that members of the audience go home and commit suicide. Sometimes they don't even bother to go home first. Anyway, my title was *Do Lemmings Sing the Blues*. My American editor's response: Over my dead lifeless body.'

Judith Merrill's long-awaited memoirs have been assembled by her granddaughter Emily Pohl-Weary from a partial draft and various fragments. *Mike Moorcock*: 'In the new (and recommended) *Better to Have Loved: The Life of Judith Merrill*, I am credited with transforming "a formerly mild science fiction called 'Flagship' into what became known as 'New Worlds'." I suspect this is a case of editing done after Judy's death. The book is full of interesting and generally affectionate insights into the sf scene of the 40s, 50s and 60s in particular.' • *Michael Swanwick* remembers 'the only time I ever met the lady. It was at a Readercon, shortly before she died. I was sitting at a table with other writers when, moving with great difficulty, she sat down and joined us. "You're looking well, Judy," somebody said. She looked at him sternly and said, "I am in constant pain." Then she smiled the very best smile in the world and added, "But so what?"'

Richard Cowper (John Murry) might have been amused that there was standing room only at his funeral on 7 May. Rob Holdstock and David Wingrove delivered tributes; Chris Priest read a moving passage from John's autobiography. Later we recalled his favourite anecdote, of the alarming lady who welcomed him to the first UK Milford with a kiss and a cry of what sounded like, 'You have the eyes of a prune!' It was Anne McCaffrey. Who thought he looked like one of her characters...

Brian Stableford defines his literary goals: 'My ten millionth published word will appear before the end of the year—my arithmetic isn't sufficiently exact for me to identify which one it will be—and I realize to my horror that it has taken me 37 years. If it took me another 37 years to get to twenty million I'd be in my 90s; having no confidence in my ability to last so long I'm hoping to get it done in 21 years—if I can manage that I'll only be 75, and will be able to reassess the situation to see if it's worth trying for twenty-five million.'

J. Michael Straczynski was tickled to learn that his unfavourite UK fan Bryan Cooney (of Wolf 359 con-running infamy) had posed as a courier to sneak into Bridge Studios, Vancouver, where *Jeremiah* and *Stargate* are filmed, and was twice ejected with extreme prejudice after begging actors to sign photographs. 'So outrageous was the situation that, apparently, whatever minor franchise license he had has been revoked by MGM, and by orders of those at *Stargate* if he attempts to

slip onto the lot again he will be arrested on sight.' JMS deeply regrets that 'all this happened within 100 yards of my office on the lot, and I was completely unaware of it until the email came, and I was then able to verify the situation with those directly involved. For this I would've set up a lawn chair on the grounds and sold tickets....' [AH]

Concremation

10 Jun • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Pat Cadigan and guests TBA. 6:30pm. 'You dog.' Borders staff tend to deny all knowledge of these events when phoned; the May reading nevertheless happened.

17-23 Jun • **Writing on the Wall** festival, Liverpool. 17th: Andy Sawyer's 'SF: the new commonwealth' panel, with Steve Aylett, Gwyneth Jones and others; The Picket, Hardman St, 7-9pm, £3/£2 conc. 19th: Ramsey Campbell speaks at Unity Theatre, Hope Place, 5:30-7pm.

19 Jun • **Don't Panic** 3rd ed. launch, Florence Nightingale pub (upstairs), 7pm on. Free admission to all. 'Lots of HHGG celebs invited.'

21-3 Jun • **SFX Event** (hugely media-oriented), Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. £75 reg! Several actor guests (but definitely not J. Michael Straczynski: 'he hates us he does,' said my SFX contact), plus 'the SFX Team'. When regular columnists ask if they're part of this team, a great silence falls—quite a relief, really. Tickets from 01225 788215.

26 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker: no word as yet.

1-7 Jul • **Eurocon 2002**, Chotebor, Czech Republic. \$20/\$25 reg (it says here; these are US dollars). Contact avalcon@avalcon.cz.

9-11 Aug • **ConteXXt** (Unicon 20), University of Gloucestershire. Joint event with **HarmUni 2** (filk relaxacon). £30 reg, £15 concessions, small children £1. Contact 17 Cow Lane, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7SZ.

16-19 Aug • **2002: A Discworld Odyssey** (DWcon 3), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. Usual guests. *Reduced rates* since 1 April: £45 reg, £30 concessions, £10 supp—reverting to £50/£35/£15 at end July. Contact (SAE) 23 Medora Rd, Romford, Essex, RM7 7EP.

17-18 Aug • **Caption** (small-press comics), Oxford Union, St Michael's St, Oxford. £9 reg (£6 students/unwaged), £12 at door. Contact 18 Hawkins St, Oxford, OX4 1YD.

29 Aug - 2 Sep • **ConJosé** (60th Worldcon), San José, California. Still \$180/£125 reg until advance booking closes on 31 July; \$200 at the door (\$180 on Sat 31 Aug). Contact PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-1363, USA; UK agents 52 Westbourne Tce, Reading, RG30 2RP.

21 Sep • **FantasyCon**, Champagne Charlie's, 17 The Arches, Villiers St, London, WC2N 4NN. 10am-6pm, winding down to pub evening. Guests TBA. £17 reg, £12 for British Fantasy Soc members; £20 at the door. Contact Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ.

Infinitely Improbable

Awards. *Carnegie Medal* for children's fiction: the current shortlist of 8 includes two fantasies by well-known names, Peter Dickinson's *The Ropemaker* and Terry Pratchett's *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents*. • *Lambda Awards* for gay/lesbian/etc writing: the 2002 sf and fantasy category was won by Lisa A. Barnett & Melissa Scott, for *Point of Dreams*. • *Sideways* (alternate history) shortlists ... LONG J. Gregory Keyes, 'Age of Unreason' series—*Newton's Cannon*, *A Calculus of Angels*, *Empire of Unreason*, *The Shadows of God*; Allen M. Steele, *Chronospace*; J.N. Stroyar, *The Children's War*. SHORT Stephen Baxter & Simon Bradshaw, 'First to the Moon'; Ken MacLeod, 'The Human Front'. [SHS] • *Nebula* footnote: Tim Powers's *Declare* was removed from this year's final ballot owing to a limited edition published in 2000.

Zero Hour. From the *Guardian* website, 14 May 2002: 'Lembic Opik MP and *Guardian* science editor Tim Radford discuss the possibility that an incoming asteroid will hit Earth at 2.30pm today'. [BR]

Andromeda Bookshop. Rog Peyton sent grim news a month after being rehired at the shop he founded: 'I was made redundant on Monday afternoon [20 May]. The new owner is not happy that the sales aren't leaping up. No new stock since second week in January! What does he expect? He's left Ped and Laurence as the only staff working 6

days a week (and Laurence is afternoons only). It will be interesting to see how long they can go on before they collapse from exhaustion or stick two fingers up. The new owner assures me that this is only temporary—as soon as the turnover is back to normal, he'll rehire me. Now it doesn't take a genius to work out that if Ped and Laurence can get the turnover up to the old level by themselves then there's no point in rehiring me at all. Neither of them will have time to produce a new catalogue and issuing a new catalogue is the main thing that's needed to get the sales back. I'm afraid the only result I can see from all this is that the new owner will cut his losses and close it down completely. I've always said he has no idea what he was buying. • At least my redundancy has now come through and I can afford to sit back for a short while and consider what I want to do with the rest of my life.'

As Others See Us. *The Bookseller* reacted predictably to a grumble about snobbish literary attitudes. 'You hear this sort of thing all the time from SF wallahs, who bang on about the Booker Prize and never seem to take the pleasure they should in the fact that they are Not As Other People. In fact I am contemplating a series of riotously funny fantasy novels set entirely in Chipworld, a self-contained universe that hovers permanently just above Terry Pratchett's shoulder.' (17 May 2002) [DN]

Group Gropes. *London:* cries of horror resounded in May as the Florence Nightingale, current home of various London fan meetings including the traditional first-Thursday-each-month evening gathering, stopped serving meals after 5:30pm. Greasy, inadequate 'bar snacks' such as potato wedges remain available for the truly desperate. • Ex-landlord Kevin confides that 'his spy told him that takings at the Dead Nurse are down by over 2,000 quid a week since he left. Fan groups and darts groups are all leaving.' [RN] • *Leytonstone:* new sf pub meeting launched. 7pm at The Walnut Tree, 857-61 Leytonstone High Rd, on the Tuesday after the first Thursday each month, e.g. 11 June.

R.I.P. *John Nathan-Turner* (1948-2002), BBC producer responsible for 130 episodes of *Doctor Who* from 1980 to 1989, died on 3 May aged 54. He first joined the show as a floor assistant in 1969. [JW] • *Bill Peel* (1915-2002), who scripted the animated *101 Dalmations* and *The Sword in the Stone*, and contributed to many other Disney classics, died on 5 May at age 87. He also wrote 35 children's books, several of them award-winners. [PB] • *Bruce Pelz* (1936-2002), US fan who was a mainstay of the Los Angeles SF Society, a past Worldcon chair, and did invaluable work in archiving the history and publications of fandom, died from a pulmonary embolism on 9 May. He was 65. I'll miss Bruce's staunch support for the fan funds, and his endless punning 'Tripe Report' postcards, sent from countless exotic places as he travelled the world on cruise ships with his wife Elaine (to whom all sympathy).

Thog's Critical Masterclass. 'In these stories of madness and shivered reality, frissons are the body language of the day.' (Edward Bryant, *Locus*, May 2002) [MMW]

Outraged Letters. *Steve Matthews* has another tale of TV woe: 'I produced Channel Five's horror anthology *Urban Gothic* which ran for 22 eps over 2000-1. It rated very well—far better than its obscure slot average—and received increasing critical acclaim. It provoked love and hate, but whatever you thought of it I think it was brave and different; however it will be no more, it seems. The attitude seems to be that it's cheaper and easier to buy and promote American product. Frustrating: the chances of British TV making new groundbreaking horror or sf are lessening rather than increasing.' • *Mike Moorcock* mourns: 'Very, very sorry to hear of the death of Joan Harrison, Mrs Harry Harrison. She was always the very best company and was a brave, feisty, independent lady who never took any crap. She was one of my personal heroines. This was somewhat shattering news, especially when I learned John Murry had died. I was also very sorry to hear of George Alec "Piglet" Effinger's death. He produced two of the books I liked best in relatively recent sf—*What Entropy Means To Me* and *Maureen Birnbaum, Barbarian Swordsman*. A week of heavy news.' • *Charles Platt* grumbles: 'I really don't want to read any more news items about Moorcock's toes. I think you should drop this topic unless he loses at least a whole foot.' • *Andrew I. Porter* sends a complaint about *SF Chronicle*, which Warren Lapine of DNA Publications has apparently been changing behind his back: 'The first two articles in the May *SFC*, the first about buying another mag, the second about Ellison and AOL, were actually written by the publisher, not by *SFC*'s Andrew Porter. The Ellison article was written without the knowledge or participation of Andrew Porter—and in fact at no time during this whole thing did Ellison or his attorneys cooperate with my trying to untangle a very confusing and complicated news item. I wish Warren had bylined these items, but it's too late now. • When I sold *SFC* to DNA, I had a three year contract to stay on and

do the news. Two years have passed, and I'm into the final year of the contract. Frankly, having done news-stuff for 40 years (starting with a column in *SF Times* in 1960, then *SF Weekly* from 1966 to 68, then *SFC* starting in 1979), I think I have paid my dues, and a heck of a lot more. I would like to do Something Else in SF in future years. Maybe even get a job that pays all my bills, which *SFC* really hasn't ever done. • Everything changes, and judging by all the obituaries of the last month or so, I would prefer to change my job before I shuffle off to oblivion. And I'd like to have fun at worldcons again, instead of working at them.'

Small Press. That new UK sf magazine *3SF* launches in October 2002 with Liz Holliday as editor. Subscriptions £20 (BSFA members £18; overseas £25/\$45) for 6 bimonthly issues, to Big Engine, PO Box 185, Abingdon, OX14 1GR. Speaking of Big Engine, I'm gloating over page proofs of my very own BE project *Maps: The Uncollected John Sladek*—358pp plus 20pp prelims, containing a full 60 Sladek stories, essays, and other rarities, eleven of them co-written with Tom Disch.

Dept of Skiffy Predictions. H.G.Wells very nearly foresees that utopian personal transport, the Segway: 'A man had come up along the road on a machine like a small two-wheeled two-seater with its wheels in series, bicycle fashion; lighter and neater it was than any earthly automobile and mysteriously able to stand upon its two wheels while standing still.' (*Men Like Gods*, 1923) [BH]

Random Fandom. *Forrest J. Ackerman*, legendary fan, collector, agent, and monster-movie buff, has been seriously ill at Kaiser Permanente Hospital, Hollywood—but the early *Locus* website report, 'he is not expected to recover,' was far too pessimistic. He continues to improve steadily, and on 20 May was transferred to Amberwood Convalescent Hospital, LA. • *David V. Barrett* on the Gollancz Spring Party: 'You missed the bit outside a bar later on, when Ian Watson and David Pringle were poking their fingers into each other's navels. I'm not sure whether they were comparing depth, texture, wrinkledness, hirsuteness—or misguidedly searching for a male G-Spot....' • *Harlan Ellison*, discussing copyright law and net piracy with Cory Doctorow and Brad Templeton at Baycon on 25 May, denounced listeners as 'an audience of scofflaws' and made the following trenchant debating point to Templeton: 'Do not pull funny faces, motherfucker, when I'm talking.' • *Ben Jeapes* is mortified: 'I'm currently cringing because the lovely, wonderful, efficient Random House marketing department got me on Radio Oxford last week. It went very well, very nice interviewer (even if she did insist on playing the *Star Wars* theme while she introduced me), and only on the way home did I realise I'd announced to the listening population of Oxford that it would take more than a day to get to the nearest planet even at light speed. I did of course mean the nearest star ... drat and double drat.' • *Jon Langford & Helen Tsatsos* have uncled me again, with the arrival of Tommy George Langford after 'we quit the [Chicago] house at 3:47am on May 15th and ran every red light between here and the lake! We were in the hospital for 9 minutes before a robust lad was born (8lb 12oz)...'

The Dead Past. The name Hogwarts first appeared in a 1950s school story, as any fule kno. In *How To Be Topp* by Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle (1954), young Molesworth transcribes the school's Latin play: *THE HOGWARTS* by Marcus Plautus Molesworthus. 'Eheu!' • *Twenty Years Ago.* The Playmate of the Month in the June 1982 *Playboy* was a Hawaiian lady whose favourite authors were E.R. Burroughs, M.Z. Bradley, Moorcock, Tolkien, and John Norman. (*Ansible* 26, June 82) • *Twenty-Five Years Ago.* 'Gene Roddenberry's script for the *Star Trek* movie was rejected because it was too limited and didn't have sufficient sweep and dimension for the large screen. The rejected script featured an encounter with God.' (Peter Roberts in *Checkpoint* 82, June 1977)

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Introspection.* "Impossible to see, the future is," the small Jedi Master replied, his great orbs still looking inward.' (R.A. Salvatore, *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*, 2002) It is suspected that Yoda is here trying to read his own mind. • *Dept of Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'Marley's great, popping black eyes bounced around the room, looking for any sign of retreat from any of the guests.' (James L. Swanson, *The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of*, 2001) [DH] • *Dept of Theology.* 'Remember the first commandment? *Thou shalt not kill?*' (Jack Ketchum, *Right to Life*, 2002) [PB] • *Dept of Morbid Physiology.* 'His sweat was cold and clammy now, and even his anus squeezed open and shut.' (Nick Mamatas, *Northern Gothic*, 2001) [PB]