

# Ansible

GREETINGS, EARTHINGS!  
WELCOME TO THE  
GALACTIC FEDERATION!



Ansible 184 November 2002

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk). Website at [www.ansible.co.uk](http://www.ansible.co.uk). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: D. West. Available for SAE, whim, or a couple of bottles of Numnumo.

**SURPRISE!** Searching the British Library website for one of their publications, I found an unexpected new role for myself in the blurb for the BL's Jack Vance critical anthology: 'In this collection of appreciations, Hugo and Nebula award-winning authors Dan Simmons and Gene Wolfe join with academics such as David Langford ...'

## Tales of Three Hemispheres

**Neil Gaiman** won his lawsuit against comics tycoon Todd McFarlane on 3-4 October, establishing his copyright interest in 'Angela' and two other Gaiman-created characters in the McFarlane *Spawn* universe, along with his copyright interest in five comics he had written. He was awarded \$45,000 (the full amount requested by his lawyers) for unauthorized use of his name and biography to imply that he'd endorsed a recent reprint of some of this material. Much more in back royalties may yet be due, and it's speculated that as part of the settlement McFarlane will be asked to release whatever rights he may actually have to the long-tied-up *Miracleman* comic. Any Gaiman profits beyond lawyers' fees will go to charities like the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. *Neil*: 'Well, it really wasn't about money. It was about fairness, and sticking to agreements. I may be nice, but I'm not a doormat.'

**Graham Joyce** tried to explain his first novel to his father.... *Joyce Junior*: 'It's about dreams, and what they mean.' *Joyce Senior*: 'What do you mean, what dreams mean? They mean you're asleep.' [MP]

**Josh Kirby** is remembered in Paul Kidby's cover for *Night Watch* by Terry Pratchett. The painting parodies Rembrandt's 'The Night Watch', which at Terry's suggestion appears on the reverse of the UK hardback for comparison: 'No sense in the artist being smart and some people not noticing, eh? Note Josh Kirby in the picture where, in the original, Rembrandt painted himself.' Just half a face, right at the back....

**Darren Nash**, former marketing manager for fiction and the Earthlight sf/fantasy imprint at Simon & Schuster UK, became Earthlight's senior editor in October—replacing John Jarrold, who left in August. Darren was suitably disconcerted when Walter Jon Williams congratulated him on having achieved 'omnipotence'.

**Andre Norton** has been 'gravely ill' in hospital after surgery, and though now improving needs cheering up. Cards or flowers can be sent to her c/o 114 Eventide Drive, Murfreesboro, TN 37130, USA.

**J.K. Rowling** was the subject of deeply unexciting rumours that there might be eight rather than seven novels about Harry You-Know-Who. Besides the five known titles (one still forthcoming), Warner had registered three more as trademarks in 2000: *HP and the Alchemist's Cell*, *HP and the Chariots of Light*, and *HP and the Pyramids of Furmat*. In fact, 'The extra names were all part of elaborate efforts to hide (and/or decide) the name of *Goblet of Fire* before it was published.' [PL]

## Contessionation

9 Nov • **Costume Closet** (costuming), Warwick Arms Hotel, High St, Warwick. 9:30am on. £10 reg, £5 child. Contact: er, just turn up.

9 Nov • **DangerCon 40** (*Dangermouse*), Ruskin House, corner of Park Lane and Lower Coombe St, Croydon. 11am-11pm. £1 at door.

11 Nov • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Ken MacLeod, Chris Priest. Next event February 2003.

27 Nov • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker TBA.

21-23 Feb 03 • **Redemption** (B5/B7), Ashford International Hotel, Ashford, Kent. £50 reg; £55 at door. Day: £30, £35 at door. Children £15 or £10/day. Contact 26 King's Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

22 Feb 03 • **Picocon 20**, Imperial College Union, London. GoH Dr Jack Cohen, Gwyneth Jones. £8 reg, students £5, ICSF £2. Contact ICSF, IC Students U, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB.

1-2 Mar 03 • **Microcon**, Exeter University campus. More TBA.

30 Mar 03 • **Fantasy Fair**, The Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. 10:30am-4pm. Contact 5 Arran Close, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 7QP; phone 01477 534626.

18-21 Apr 03 • **Seacon '03** (Eastercon), Hanover International Hotel,

Hinckley, Leics. Now £45 reg (\$68, Eu75) or £22 (\$35, Eu37) supporting only. Contact 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR. • *Newsflash*: the Tiptree Award is being presented outside the USA for the first time ever at Seacon '03, on the Friday evening.

24-6 Oct 03 • **They Came and Shaved Us** (in the vein of *Aliens Stole My Handbag* etc), Fairways Hotel, Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland. GoH Robert Rankin, FGOH Pádraig Ó Méalóid. UK £25 reg to 31 Dec, £30 to 22 Apr 03, £35 thereafter, to 13a Bridge Rd, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2QW. Irish/Euro £(I)40/Eu40 to 31 Dec, 45 to 22 Apr, 55 thereafter, to 123 Carnlough Rd, Cabra West, Dublin 7, Ireland.

7-9 Nov 03 • **Novacon 33**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. GoH Jon Courtenay Grimwood. £28 reg rising to £32 on 10 Nov 02; £35 after Easter 03, £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ—and fast!

9-12 Apr 04 • **Concourse** (Eastercon), Blackpool Winter Gardens. Now £35 reg, £25 unwaged; £2 extra for on-line credit card payment. Contact 479 Newmarket Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8JJ. • *Progress Report 1* has some stern words for dieting con-goers: 'As with a convention in a hotel, the reason we can afford to use the site is that they are expecting you to buy food and drink. We will have to enforce this.' [CB]

5-7 Aug 05 • **Bindweed** (Get Out Of Worldcon Free relaxacon), somewhere in York. £28 reg; £14 junior (under 14 at date of con). Contact 81 Western Rd, London, E13 9JE.

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. When the BBC acquired Steven Spielberg's new sf series *Taken* (dealing with 'extra-terrestrial experiences' in the form of good old alien abductions), their head of programme acquisition Sophie Turner Laing was quick to explain its staggering innovativeness, unheard-of in mere science fiction: '*Taken* is designed to have a wider appeal than just to fans of sci-fi, as it tells the stories of individuals and their interactions over many years.' (*Independent*, 23 October) [DB]

**R.I.P.** *Dal Coger*, US midwestern fan since around 1942 and still a con-goer in 2002, died on 2 October. [JS] • *André de Toth* (1913-2002), Hungarian-born director, died on 27 October at age 89. His *House of Wax* (1953) was the first 3D horror film, an effect which—having only one eye—he couldn't see. [BB/PB] • *Richard Harris* (1930-2002), Oscar-nominated Irish actor who did little genre work but played Dumbledore in the first two Harry Potter films, died from cancer on 25 October; he was 72. • *Nathan Juran* (1907-2002), Austrian-born US director who won an Oscar for non-genre art direction and later did much B-movie sf and horror, died on 1 November. His films included *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, with Ray Harryhausen's special effects, and *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman* (both 1958). [BB] • *John Lucas*, writer, producer and director of the original *Star Trek* series, died from leukaemia on 19 October. He was 83. [JS] • *Raymond T. McNally* (1931-2002), *Dracula* scholar and co-author with Radu Florescu of *In Search of Dracula* (1972) and *In Search of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* (2001), died on 2 October aged 71. [L] • *Craig Mills* (1955-2002), US author of five fantasies published from 1982 to 1995, died from a heart attack on 15 October. His debut novel was *The Bane of Lord Caladon* (1982). [GF/JS] • *Dennis Patrick*, US TV character actor who appeared in the 1966-71 Gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* and a spinoff film, died in a fire at his Hollywood Hills home on 12 or 13 October; he was 84. [BB] • *Charles Sheffield* (1935-2002), British-born physicist, science writer, and noted hard sf author, died on 2 November aged 67, having had surgery for brain cancer in mid-August. He is survived by his wife Nancy Kress, to whom all sympathy. Sheffield famously fictionalized the idea of a space elevator in the same year as Arthur C. Clarke's *The Fountains of Paradise*, with his independently conceived novel *The Web Between the Worlds* (1979). His 1993 novelette 'Georgia On My Mind' won both Hugo and Nebula awards. He will be much missed. • *Jonathan Harris* (1920-2002), US actor famed in sf circles as Dr Zachary Smith in *Lost in Space* (CBS 1965-8; 'Oh, the pain ...'), died on 3 November aged 81. [DK]

**World Fantasy Awards**. NOVEL Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Other Wind*. NOVELLA S.P. Somtow, 'The Bird Catcher'. SHORT Albert E. Cowdrey, 'Queen

for a Day'. ANTHOLOGY *The Museum of Horrors* ed. Dennis Etchison. COLLECTION Nalo Hopkinson, *Skin Folk*. ARTIST Allen Koszowski. SPECIAL/PROFESSIONAL (tie) Stephen Jones, Jo Fletcher—both for editing. SPECIAL/NON-PROFESSIONAL Raymond Russell & Rosalie Parker (Tartarus Press). LIFE ACHIEVEMENT George Scithers, Forrest J Ackerman. [L]

**News from Pravda.** Possibly taking their cue from all those Australians who gave their religion as Jedi, young Russians in Perm have been filling out census forms with 'hobbit' or 'elf' as nationality. More inscrutably, certain citizens of Rostov-on-Don claim their nationality is 'skiff', a term which the *Pravda* reporter and translator think unnecessary to explain. Could this be the local shorthand for skiffyfan? [BB]

**Random Fandom.** *Forrest J Ackerman's* famous sf collection has been largely dispersed to pay medical and other bills. Its home, the 18-room 'Ackermansion', was sold, and Forry has moved (with a few cherished treasures) to a more convenient bungalow: see C.o.A. He would love to hear from friends. • *Lydia Marano Cover & Arthur Byron Cover* announce that their 21-year-old sf bookshop 'Dangerous Visions' (in Sherman Oaks, California) will close for the last time on 10 Nov—but business continues on-line at [www.readsf.com](http://www.readsf.com). • *Tommy Ferguson* 'finally got married to Leslie Carol Altic at a civil ceremony in Belfast on 29 September 2002 followed by a wonderful honeymoon in Crete. Everything went without a hitch, despite the cream of Belfast fandom being there.' What, in Crete? • *Rog Peyton* is undaunted by losing *Andromeda*: 'I have decided to start up selling books again—second-hand & remainders only to start with.' Send SAE or your e-mail address to Replay Books, 19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL. • *Geri Sullivan* observes that the recent US Silicon 'has the most appalling set of written convention rules I've yet encountered, including one asking that members keep vomiting to a minimum and aim for the sink or toilet. It'd be funny if they weren't so absolutely serious.'

**Judging by the Cover.** A literary agent with a young female client was reportedly asked by the publisher: 'Never mind the book. What does she look like?' This led to speculation about *Interzone* boosting circulation with a special swimsuit issue, while *Liz Williams* devised a cunning plan: 'Fortunately (or perhaps gratuitously), I have a namesake on the Web who is a "fashion model"—when last doing a vanity search for myself, I discovered a picture of "Liz Williams", sporting waist-length blonde hair and a leather thong. Since this is a look which I have not previously considered adopting, I was thinking of emailing her and suggesting she impersonate me at conventions...'

**Awards at Novacon.** *Novas*: FAN ARTIST Dave Hicks. FAN WRITER Claire Brialey. FANZINE Plokta. [PNN] • *James White Award* for best unpublished short story: Julian West, 'Vita Brevis, Ars Longa'. [DS]

**In Typo Veritas.** 'Cook has prepared wild bore and pheasant, with spotted dick for desert.' (Eric Brown, 'The Blue Portal', *Interzone* 181, August 2002) [MW]

**C.o.A.** *Forrest J. Ackerman*, 4511 Russell Ave, Hollywood, CA 90027, USA. *Joe Beedell*, 73 Bournemouth Park Rd, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 5JJ. *Jim Caughran*, 43 Dingwall Ave, Toronto, Ontario, M4J 1C4, Canada. *Eileen Gunn & John D. Berry*, 525 19th Ave East, Seattle, WA 98112, USA (from next week). *Andrew & Suzanne Murdoch*, 9211 Glendower Dr, Richmond, British Columbia, V7A 2Y4, Canada. *Hal & Ulrika O'Brien*, 18540 NE 58th Ct, Redmond, WA 98052, USA.

**Secrets of SF Publicity.** *Ben Jeapes* reports from the uncharted depths of *The Bookseller*: 'This week's [25 Oct] has a Malkovichesque ad for Grimwood's *Effendi* and *Pashazade*, Pocket Books editions, showing a crowded street scene in which every person has JCG's face. (The resemblance to John Malkovich is actually quite surprising.) The caption: "No, you're not seeing things. Starting February 2003 Jon Courtenay Grimwood will be everywhere". Turn the page, and we get phrases like "an absorbing blend of pace, place and character" and the following: "With the bleak, noir atmosphere of Raymond Chandler, the living, breathing background of *The Alexandria Quartet*, and a unique, charismatic hero who is 100% Jon Courtenay Grimwood, *Effendi* is page-turning fiction at its finest." You have to wonder exactly how far someone can lean over backwards to avoid mentioning science fiction or alternate history without their spine snapping...'

**Buff the Vampire Slayer** was the subject of a whole academic conference at the University of East Anglia on 19-20 October: 'Blood, Text and Fears: Reading around *Buff the Vampire Slayer*'. What a shame that *Ansible* didn't learn until too late about such programme highlights as 'Meaning and Myth: Leitmotivic Procedures in the Musical Underscore to *Angel*, Season One', 'Yeats's Entropic Gyre and Season Six of *BtVS*', or the irresistible 'Unaired Pilot or Bad Quarto: Textual Problems in *Buff* and Shakespeare in an Internet Age'.

**Outraged Letters.** *Stephen Baxter* gloated that *Ansible* missed the third Tuckerized sf fan in his *Evolution*. When I asked who: 'I wish I could tell you it was Pebble the randy Neandertal, but he's obviously working in publishing. In fact it's Ian Maughan, whose robot critters end up eating Mars, a crime which exceeds even his dress sense.' • *Damien Broderick*, 'anticipating the inevitable craze', sent a photograph of his nipple which is inadvertently not reproduced here. • *Many Of You* remarked that Kim Hunter was also in *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), and that Michael Elphick wasn't choked by the Force: that was Michael Sheard in *The Empire Strikes Back* (fatally) and also Richard LeParmentier in *Star Wars* (nonfatally), this scene also featuring Don Henderson, who looks a bit like Elphick.... Meanwhile, as Steve Green helpfully notes, Michael Elphick was in *I Bought a Vampire Motorcycle*.

**Fanfundery.** *TransAtlantic Fan Fund*: nominating deadline for the 2003 eastbound TAFF race extended to 30 Nov 02. Aspiring NA candidates should send a platform of 100 or fewer words, a pledge to make the trip if elected, \$20 bond, and 5 nominations from known fans (3 NA, 2 Europe), to Victor Gonzalez, 263 Elm St, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA. Reported candidates so far: Randy Byers, Colin Hinz, Curt Phillips. • *Down Under Fan Fund*: nominations are now open for the 2003 NA to Australasia DUFF race. Nominations (3 NA, 2 Down Under), 100-word platform, pledge, and \$25 bond to administrators Naomi Fisher & Patrick Molloy by 15 Nov: PO Box 9135, Huntsville, AL 35812, USA.

**As Others See Us (II).** 'Science-fiction films can usually be separated into two sub genres: horror and fantasy.' (Text explaining the nature of sf, from DVD edition of *Sphere*.) [JR]

**The Thog Response.** *Greg Egan* reproves Thog for pouncing on his 'mostly nitrogen—six times as much as on Earth' atmosphere: 'I hate to be a bad sport about my Thog entry, but this is either malice or stupidity. Who said anything about a percentage? Six times "as much" nitrogen would mean six times the pressure to most planetary scientists, and for those in any doubt the next sentence makes this clear.... Thog strains so hard to find misreadings and double entendres these days that he only raises a chuckle when his quotes are more selective and misleading than the review snippets on my dust jackets.' Apologies; Thog is evidently not a planetary scientist. • *Neil Gaiman* takes another view: 'I'd been waiting almost twenty years to be Thogged, and practically sent you a thank you card. (I still think a loud smirk is like a loud tie, being one you can see all the way across the room. My story, & I am sticking to it.) I don't think these Johnny Come Latelies realise how lucky they are, getting Thogged like that, straight out of the box. I've written millions of words. Millions, I tell you. And I had to win a bloody Hugo Award before I got Thogged. You tell the kids today that, and they just laugh at you. And try mentioning Olde English Flavour Spangles, they'll just look at you. They won't even laugh. Just stare.' • *China Miéville* adds a PS: 'Damn you Thog, damn you damn you ...'

**Hazel's Language Lessons.** *Andy Sawyer* reports from the Plaza San Martin in Lima, Peru: 'the central statue has a figure of a woman with a woolly cameloid quadruped on her head. Apparently what was really wanted was a torch, but the word for torch is—you've guessed it—"llama" and the sculptor received his instructions in writing.'

**Group Gropes.** *London, Again*: The Silver Cross had another bad evening on 3 October (fractured gas line, and thus no beer, cider, or any other pumped drinks) and is unlikely to be booked for 2003. Fans are undertaking selfless pub crawls in search of possible alternatives. But the Xmas meeting on 19 December will still be at the Silver Cross.

**The Dead Past.** *Twenty Years Ago*: D.M. Thomas confessed all to *Esquire*. 'When you write the book, it's a virgin. Then when it sells, it loses its virginity. It's the off-white hotel now....' (*Ansible* 30, Nov 82)

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Dept of Eyeballs in the Sky*. "'Seigneur, I have invented forty new dishes for to-night's banquet," Francois said pathetically, his eyes creeping out until they hung on the rims of their sockets like desperate people wavering on the edges of precipices.' (George Viereck & Paul Eldridge, *Salome The Wandering Jewess*, 1930) [BA] • *Neat Tricks Dept*. 'They don't kill any of them but the women are—how you say—mutilated. Same way. And beheaded.' (Charlee Jacob, 'Bonerider', in *Decadence* ed Monica J. O'Rourke, 2002) • 'Mark pulled Anna's blue bikini top off her shoulders and slid them down to her waist.' (Nicholas Kaufmann, 'V.I.P. Room', *ibid*) [PB]