



Ansible 188 March 2003

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Website: www.ansible.co.uk. Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Sue Mason**. Available for SAE, Williamite, or travel guides to Pththistia.

1 MARCH. Happy St David's Day! Here in Reading the daffodils aren't quite in bloom, but I've marked the occasion by taking a leek.

The Twisted World

Mike Ashley, whom we have long suspected of criminal tendencies, is shortlisted for an Edgar Allan Poe award (the crime field's Hugo): his *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Modern Crime Fiction* made the final ballot under Best Critical/Biographical. Another familiar name in this category is Peter Haining with *The Classic Era of Crime Fiction*. Also, Graham Masterton is up for Best Paperback Original with *Trauma*.

Sam J. Lundwall, dean of Swedish sf authors, has publicly and permanently resigned from SFWA (where for many years he'd been an Overseas Regional Director) after failing to persuade that many-headed organization to oppose war on Iraq. 'The response was, to put it very mildly, rather negative ... I had hopes for so much more. I have so many friends in the US. I have spent more than 30 years in the SFWA, doing my little bit. Now I realize it was all in vain.'

Ken MacLeod has been in the news again, sort of. TV addict Andrew M. Butler excitedly reports that the TV comedy *The Book Group* (UK Channel 4) has a novelist character called Ken MacLeod, usually referred to as Kenny. After another character had sex with and then broke up with him, sf fans thrilled to the resonant line "You're a lousy lay, Ken MacLeod." Any publicity, they say, is good publicity.

Will Self pondered Ben Okri's suggestion that living British authors should be honoured by having streets etc. named after them, and felt that 'none of the British writers I know and admire would dream of accepting such a tin-pot accolade.' With one possible exception. 'I dare say J.G. Ballard would be tickled by the thought of announcements on incoming London flights of the form: "Would you please fasten your seatbelts, as we will soon be landing at Ballard Airport, newly named after the author of *Crash* ..."' (*Evening Standard*, 31 Jan) [JB]

Conto

7-9 Mar • **Mecon 6**, Senior Staff Common Room, Queen's University, Belfast. GoH Peter F. Hamilton. £15 reg, £18 at door; day rates also available. Contact 12 Hopefield Ave, Belfast, BT15 5AP, N.Ireland.

11 Mar • **Douglas Adams Memorial Lecture**, Royal Institution, London, W1. 7:30pm. Richard Dawkins 'marvels at the "strangeness of science"'. Tickets £15, in aid of the gorilla and rhino charities of which Adams was patron. Contact 020 7357 7474 or katy@savetherhino.org.

15 Mar • **Interaction Open Meeting**, City Inn, Finnieston Quay, Glasgow, G3 8HN. From 10am-ish. With 2005 Worldcon site visit 'if there is enough interest', and evening social event. Hotel £65/room including breakfast. Book directly: 0141 240 1002, fax 0141 248 2754.

26 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker TBA. Or not.

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

5 Apr • **The Goldfish Factor**, SF Foundation/BSFA free event, featuring both AGMs. St Bride Institute, Bride Lane, London, EC4Y 8EQ; 11am-6pm. GoH: Ian Watson, Kim Newman. To conclude with a screening of *A Short Film About John Bolton* by Neil Gaiman.

12-13 Apr • **Unconvention 2003** (Fortean), Commonwealth Institute, London. £27.50 or £17.50/day, plus 50p postage for ticket(s). Contact IFG, 9 Dallington St, London, EC1V 0BQ. 020 7687 7058.

18-21 Apr • **Seacon '03** (Eastercon), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. GoHs: Chris Baker, Chris Evans, Mary Gentle. £45 reg (\$68, €75) or £22 (\$35, €37) supporting only. £60 at the door. Day rates £30 Sat or Sun, £15 Fri or Mon. Contact 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR. All single rooms in main hotel now booked.

1-3 Aug • **Finncon X—Eurocon 2003**, Turku, Finland. Admission free! Contact Turku SF Society, PL 538, 20101 Turku, Finland.

31 Oct - 2 Nov • **ArmadaCon 15**, Cophorne Hotel, Plymouth. £28 reg, £25 concessions; rates to rise later in the year. Contact 88 Knighton

Rd, St Judes, Plymouth. Phone 0780 1492114.

25-27 Feb 05 • **Redemption 05** (B5/B7), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley. £35 reg rising to £40 after 9 Mar 03, £45 after 21 Apr 03, £55 at door. Contact 26 Kings Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

Rumblings • Interaction, the 2005 Glasgow Worldcon, can now accept membership payments on-line: www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. SF was once again defined in a 27 Feb *Newsnight* discussion of whether designer babies could lead to a genetic underclass as in *Gattaca*. Professor Steve Jones explained that this was a ridiculous speculation, since 'Gattaca is a science-fiction film—it's cowboys and Indians with rocketships.' [TK] • George Clooney applies a familiar spin to that remake of *Solaris*: 'Believe me, Fox wasn't thrilled to do a \$47 million sci-fi film that has nothing to do with sci-fi and everything to do with a man's belief system.' (Interview, *Time Out*, Feb 12-19) [PE]

Nebula Finalists (or, Charlie Stross Conquers The World!): NOVEL Kelley Eskridge, *Solitaire*; Neil Gaiman, *American Gods*; Ursula K.L. Guin, *The Other Wind*; Robert A. Metzger, *Picoverse*; China Miéville, *Perdido Street Station*; Michael Swanwick, *Bones of the Earth*. • NOVELLA Adam-Troy Castro, 'Sunday Night Yams At Minnie and Earl's' (*Analog* 6/01); Richard Chwedyk, 'Bronte's Egg' (*F&SF* 8/02); Andy Duncan, *The Chief Designer* (*Asimov's* 6/01); Charles Coleman Finlay, *The Political Officer* (*F&SF* 4/02); Bud Sparhawk, 'Magic's Price' (*Analog* 3/01). • NOVELETTE M. Shayne Bell, 'The Pagodas of Ciboure' (*The Green Man*); Richard Bowes, 'The Ferryman's Wife' (*F&SF* 5/01); Ted Chiang, 'Hell is the Absence of God' (*Starlight*); Gregory Frost, 'Madonna of the Maquiladora' (*Asimov's* 5/02); Allen Steele, 'The Days Between' (*Asimov's* 3/01); Charles Stross, 'Lobsters' (*Asimov's* 6/01). • SHORT CAROL Emshwiller, 'Creature' (*F&SF* 10/01); Jeffrey Ford, 'Creation' (*F&SF* 5/02); Megan Lindholm, 'Cut' (*Asimov's* 5/01); Jack McDevitt, 'Nothing Ever Happens in Rock City' (*Artemis*); Tim Pratt 'Little Gods' (*Strange Horizons*); Michael Swanwick, 'The Dog Said Bow-Wow' (*Asimov's* 10/01). • SCRIPT *Shrek*, 'Unreasonable Doubt' (*The Dead Zone*), *The Fellowship of the Ring*; 'Once More with Feeling' (*Buffy*).

R.I.P. Lana Clarkson (1961-2003), the 41-year-old actress shot dead at record producer Phil Spector's home on 3 February, had several minor genre credits: the Conan-esque *Deathstalker* (1984) and *Barbarian Queen* (1985), *Amazon Women on the Moon* (1987), etc. [SG/GW] She had also attended numerous US comics and media conventions. [AIP] • **Bob Smith** (1930-2003), British-born Australian fan whose links with Melbourne fandom began in the 50s, died from cancer on 24 February. He was 72 and is survived by his wife Lyn. Bruce Gillespie writes: 'Bob Smith was one of Australia's most stalwart fans during the fifties and sixties, dropped out after the 1972 Sydney convention, which he helped organize, and reappeared during the 1990s, with many letters of comment to Australian and overseas fanzines. Always cheerful, well informed and opinionated, he will be much missed.'

Thog's Unfortunate Turns of Phrase. 'Supernatural thriller writer Doug Clegg has been known as an innovator. In order to bring attention to himself and try to bore a solid core of genre fans, he became one of the first ever to give an e-book away for free on the Internet.' (*PWDaily*, 7 February 2003, spotted by Paul Barnett.)

Censorship Horror! Our one e-mail subscriber at parliament.uk was denied his February issue by some strange power which has yet to master the apostrophe: 'Ansible 187 • This is to advise you that your email has been blocked and will be deleted by the Houses of Parliament in due course since we believe it has inappropriate content. The intended recipient has not received the email. • In the event that you believe the email has been blocked incorrectly please contact the intended recipient directly to discuss its release.' *The Register* reports that this new, prudish blocking system objects not only to raunchy *Ansible* but to MPs' own e-mail discussions of legislation about s*x....

Random Fandom. *Tony Cullen* has hot news from the February reading at Borders: 'Pat Cadigan, having visited Rome, announced that

she is now styling herself "La Dolce Diva". • *Hal O'Brien* spotted a fannish analogy in the business news: 'Jeff Bezos—Will Bezos pull off another banner year? In 2002, Amazon turned a profit and was the best-performing stock on the Nasdaq. Then again, these days that's a little like owning a top-of-the-line mimeograph machine.' (*Fortune*, 3 Feb 2003) • *Greg Pickersgill* feels crowded out of house and home by Memory Hole fanzine library duplicates. 'Ideally I want to pass them on to British fanzine fans. Now I really do understand that there ain't no more such thing as free at all, but I'm giving you what is pretty much the last chance, for if no-one bites at this I am going to start dumping them. In fact you have until Easter 2003 to do something about it, so contact me direct: gregory@gostak.demon.co.uk. I will pay postage on cartons sent Inland UK, and I will even pay your fuel costs if you care to drive here and collect large quantities. This is a great opportunity to find out which are the good fanzines—the old fashioned way, by reading through a goddamned lot of them and making your own mind up.' 3 Bethany Row, Narberth Rd, Haverfordwest, SA61 2XG. Hurry up: the MH distribution service will close soon owing to lack of UK interest.

Outraged Letters. *Steve Baxter* 'happened to be in NYC when the Columbia news broke. All very sombre. I take no pleasure in my prediction of such a thing in *Titan*, published in 1997. I predicted a crash of the oldest orbiter, Columbia, on reentry as that's the second most dangerous time of the mission after launch, and in 2004 (not 2003) as I knew there'd be more than 100 missions by then and the odds were on a failure. But I guessed an internal failure rather than a problem with the tiles, as it looks to be as I write. The fact that this was going to happen sometime only enhances the courage of those who climb aboard those beasts, I think. I remember being enthralled by John Young's first flight of Columbia; shame she won't end up in the Smithsonian where she belongs...'. Later: 'Of course the big winner from Columbia, given the themes to the news specials I saw [in NYC], is anybody who can play the French horn very very slowly.' • *Mike Moorcock* grumbles: 'Yeah I'm sorry about Columbia. I'm also grateful that one of them didn't come through our roof. Call me a cynic or something but I'm still feeling for the women and children who get hit by our other rockets around the world and I just can't seem to share in the common lachrymosity. Though I think debris-looters are despicable.' • *Teresa Nielsen Hayden* marvels: 'SFWA stupidity once again astonishes all onlookers. This time, it's scheduling the Nebula ceremony for Easter weekend. This puts it up against Eastercon, Minicon, Norwescon, the World Horror Convention, CostumeCon, something or other in New Zealand, and I'm probably forgetting a few more, plus two major religious holidays (it's smack in the middle of Passover).' • *Andrew I. Porter* reproves: 'I didn't see an obit in *Ansible* for Mary Wesley (1912-2002), who besides writing a whole bunch of "novels of British Mores", to quote the *NY Times*, also did *The Sixth Seal* (1969). This was a post-nuclear holocaust novel in which most people and animals around the world disappear in a burst of multi-colored snow. [...] Wesley, 90, died 30 December 2002 at home in Totnes, Devon, England.' • *Bob Rickard* takes us on a topical trip down memory lane: 'Remember the *Dune/Al Qaeda* crossover stuff ... I've just realised that Herbert's Emperor of known space is called Shaddam ... did anyone else spot that?'

Fanfundery. *TAFF*: Randy Byers won the eastbound TransAtlantic Fan Fund race and will attend Seacon '03 at Easter as part of a UK *TAFF* visit running from 6-24 April. Valid ballots that expressed a preference: NA 110 + Euro 50 = 160 total. Breakdown of first place votes: Byers 45+28=73, Colin Hinz 10+5=15, Mike Lowrey 22+8=30, Curt Phillips 32+9=41, Hold Over Funds 1 (NA). [VG] Trailing candidates were eliminated in the first round by the 20% rule. • *DUFF*: Guy & Rosy Lillian won the US-Australia Down Under Fan Fund race with 101 first place votes, a simple majority. Trailing: Mike & Linda McInerney (58), No Pref (12), Hold Over Funds (1), and a solitary write-in for Harry Warner Jr. 170 valid ballots were cast. [NF/PM]

Red House Awards 2003. Contenders for these children's book awards (voted by children) include Lemony Snicket's *The Ersatz Elevator* and Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident* in, respectively, the younger and older readers' categories. [FM] Presentations on 14 June.

Thog's Science Corner. 'As I think you were told before, thyrum-261 is not indigenous to Earth. It comes from a binary star system called the Pleiades, a system not far from our own. / Now, as you can probably imagine, planets in binary star systems are affected by all sorts of forces because of their twin suns—photosynthesis is doubled; gravitational effects, as well as resistance to gravity, are enormous. As such, elements found on planets in binary systems are usually heavier and denser than similar elements found here on Earth. Thyrum-261 is just such an

element. / It was first found in petrified form in the walls of a meteor crater in Arizona in 1972.' (Matthew Reilly, *Temple*, 2000) [JS]

Speaking for Boskone. Our spies at Boskone 40 in Boston last month report that Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden were jointly awarded the New England SF Association's Skylark Award, presented in memory of Doc Smith for contributions to the genre. Splendid! • But Teresa seemed far more excited by a party incident that resonates with my own bad behaviour long ago at the 1987 Worldcon: 'Short version: Jo Walton dumped her glass of Coke over David Brin's head at the Tor party. / Slightly longer version: Jo Walton dumped her glass of Coke over David Brin's head at the Tor party; all rejoice.' • Meanwhile, Paul Barnett made a flying visit to Boskone as representative of Martina Pilcerova, this year's winner of the Jack Gaughan Award for sf art: 'Associated Press adds: "In accepting the trophy on Ms Pilcerova's behalf, grizzled nonentity Paul Barnett perorated to the gathered multitudes to almost tedious length on matters artistic, such as the instance of Ms Pilcerova getting somewhat interestingly smashed in Reno on pina colada, and Ms Pilcerova's unfortunate encounter with a portaloos in Buford (Pop. 2), Wyoming."'

C.o.A. *Seth Breidbart*, 1300 Yale Place, Minneapolis, MN 55403, USA. *Flick*, 14 Jeffreys Court, Jeffreys Rd, London, SW4 6QE. *Omega & Harry Payne*, 24 Sycamore Ave, Potternewton, Leeds, LS8 4DZ. *Howard Waldrop*, 3213 Barton View Dr, Austin, Texas 78735-6934, USA.

Small Press. Eileen Gunn's sf webzine *The Infinite Matrix* is short of funds again, and has embarked on US public-radio-style fundraising, with much of the good stuff withheld until readers contribute enough.

Group Gropes. *Birmingham*: Brum Group meetings, usually 2nd Fri each month, are now upstairs at the Old Joint Stock, Temple Row. Chris Priest is speaker on 14 Mar. 7:45pm; £4 admission, members £3. • *Reading*: All meetings now in The Corn Stores, Forbury Rd—7:30pm on 3rd Mon of month; every other Mon 9pm. • *London First Thursdays*. The Barley Mow (50 Long Lane, between the Barbican and Farringdon tube stations) seems the closest we have to a consensus venue from 6 March onward. Falling attendance at the Silver Cross, and vocal opposition to this pub, have made meetings there unviable despite residual support. • *London Prisoner Group*: like other city groups this 'has seceded from the crisis-ridden Prisoner Society [Six of One] over its lack of accounts, elections and AGM' [DL]. LPG, the last known Florence Nightingale sf group meeting (4th Tue?), has moved to the Jubilee.

Mediawatch. On BBC Radio 4 *Desert Island Discs* (23 Feb), George Clooney chose William Shatner's recording of 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' as a record he'd like to be marooned with, on the grounds that it would help him escape from the island. As Clooney approximately put it, 'If this recording were playing, you'd hollow out your own leg to make a canoe to get away.' [PW] • Paul Barnett ponders on 'an interesting value judgement' in *Publishing News' Media Direct* e-zine: 'STEPHEN KING'S BOOKS are notorious[ly] hard to convert into successful movies, but *Dreamcatcher* has the potential to be up there with *The Shining*, *Carrie*, *Pet Semetary*, *Misery* and *Christine*.' Paul: 'In other words, it could be Real Good like *Pet Semetary* and *Christine* rather than crap like *The Shawshank Redemption* and *The Green Mile* ...'

The Dead Past. 30 Years Ago: 'The *Sunday Times* & Victor Gollancz Ltd are offering £500 for the best unpublished sf novel and £500 for the best volume of unpublished sf stories [by authors without prior sf book publication] ... Judges will be Brian Aldiss, Arthur C. Clarke, Kingsley Amis, & John Bush (of Gollancz).' (*Checkpoint* 33, 10 March 1973). Charles Logan and the late Chris Boyce tied for the novel prize with *Shipwreck* and *Catchworld*; the submitted collections were ransacked for an anthology featuring debut sf stories by Garry Kilworth and D. West.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Too Much Information*. 'The patron licked his fingers with saliva.' (Peter Senese and Robert Geis, *Cloning Christ*, 2002) [ED] • *Eyeballs in the Sky Dept*. 'His itinerant brown eyes darted onto the dim city street outside.' (*Ibid.*) • *Dept of Single Yet Amazingly Devastating Shots*. 'The Scorpion smirked before sending a bullet into Francesco's forehead. Looking around the blood and gut-spattered dining room, the killer ...' (*Ibid.*) • *Religious Burdens Dept*. "'The Crusader vision of our equestrian order is at the service of our faith" were words from Muhlor's investiture into a centuries old order of Church knighthood that he carried with him everywhere.' (*Ibid.*)

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