

# Ansible



**Please Note!** My personal web pages at [www.ansible.demon.co.uk](http://www.ansible.demon.co.uk) vanished at the end of July. I'd be grateful if links could be changed to [ansible.co.uk](http://ansible.co.uk)—just delete the '.demon' bit. The *Ansible* site remains at [www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/Ansible](http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/Ansible), and is now mirrored at [news.ansible.co.uk](http://news.ansible.co.uk).

## The Spider Strikes

**Ramsey Campbell** confides: 'The noxious Christopher Barker is now putting it about that I've tampered with the BFS [British Fantasy Society] awards because a book he published wasn't nominated.'

**Orson Scott Card** told the *LA Times* why few notable sf novels become films, with particular reference to his own development hell: 'The problems that have plagued *Ender's Game* are the same that have plagued other award-winning science fiction books. Science fiction is set in a world contrary to our reality, so you have to have an explanation. And explanation time on screen is unbelievably dull.' [PL] Explain that to me again, Professor Card, as though I knew nothing of it....

**James Doohan** is suffering from Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and diabetes, but as a farewell to his fans is making one last con appearance, in Hollywood on 28-30 August. On the 31st, he becomes the sixth *Trek* actor to get a Hollywood Walk of Fame star. He's made his peace with William Shatner, whom he disliked for so many years. [DKMK]

**Terry Pratchett** assures the world that any alarming reports of his recent hospital visit are MUCH EXAGGERATED: 'What I had was an angioplasty, where they widen arteries in the heart by going up through your leg (believe me). No real cutting, no weeks in bed, it's an out-next-day-job. I gather there was some "excitement" because I reacted badly to something or other, but I was out of it and dreaming of sandwiches and, indeed, was out next day. • I'm not making a big deal out of this one way or the other. It wasn't an emergency operation, although it would have had to be done sooner or later; it was needed because of the long term effects of high blood pressure I didn't know I had, and which is now nice and low because they've got the pills right.' [CS]

**Christopher Priest** was disconcerted to hear of the new *Argosy* magazine (#2, May/June 2004), whose story 'Cruelty the Human Heart' by O'Neil De Noux opens thus: 'In my first fifty years of life, I've only hated one person. Truly hated. Christopher Priest, white male, born November 22, 1963. That's right, he was born the day John F. Kennedy was killed. No, the president's soul wasn't recycled into Chris Priest, no fuckin' way.' The story continues to build up the unpleasantness of this character—who tortures cats, and worse—until he eventually meets rough justice at the narrator's hands. Although the given birthday doesn't fit either the original Priest or the Christopher Priest Formerly Known As Jim Owsley (who is black), the British one asked De Noux whether this choice of character name was sheer coincidence. He received, with some relief, an apologetic assurance that it was. Rumours of chortling® sounds from Sherman Oaks, CA, are totally unconfirmed.

**Kim Stanley Robinson's** interview in the *San Diego Sun-Tribune* explained his reputation: 'early in his career he got tagged as a "literary science fiction writer"—that is, one concerned with the working out of difficult problems in the near-to middle-future, as opposed to, say, emulsifying extraterrestrials with high-tech hardware.' (4 July) Our bemused reporter Tony Cullen remarks: 'And there I was thinking he was tagged as a "literary sf writer" because he writes good books.'

## Connivent

10 Aug • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London: CANCELLED this month, says Pat Cadigan, but the event will return on 14 September.

20-23 Aug • **Discworld Convention IV**, Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. GoH: Guess Who, plus The Usual Suspects. £50 reg. Contact PO Box 102, Royston, Herts, SG8 7ZJ. 07092 394940.

25 Aug • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Sean McMullen.

2-6 Sep • **Noreascon 4** (62nd Worldcon), Boston, MA. Advance registration is now closed. \$200 at door; children \$100. Day: \$50 Thur, \$75 Fri, \$80 Sat, \$80 Sun, \$50 Mon (children \$25, \$35, \$40, \$40,

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\$25). Contact PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

3 Sep • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Princess Louise pub, Holborn, London. 6.30pm onwards. All welcome. Next: 10 Dec.

11-18 Sep • **Milford SF Writers' Conference**, Snowdonia. Contact Top Flat, 8 Bedford St, Kemp Town, Brighton, BN2 1AN.

2-3 Oct • **Construction 3** (Interaction staff weekend), to be held 'somewhere in the north of England.' The fourth Construction will be in Glasgow itself, Spring 2005. Further details to be announced.

16-17 Oct • **Octocon 2004** (Irish national con), Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Co.Kildare, Ireland. GoH Tanith Lee; special guest Matt Smith of *2000 AD*; many more. €40 reg. Contact Basement Flat, 26 Longford Terrace, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland. Sterling cheques: £30 to Dave Lally #2 A/C, 64 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX.

24-26 Sep • **Fantasycon 2004**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. £50 reg; £45 for BFS members and students with ID. Day membership £20, Sat only. Contact Beech House, Chapel Lane, Multon, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ.

*Rumblings* • **The Scottish Convention**, I mean the 2005 Glasgow Worldcon (Interaction), has appointed Colin Harris as co-chair alongside existing chair Vince Docherty. Half the buck stops here!

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. At last our genre has found an antidote to the austere intellectual chill of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, thanks to Will Smith's performance in *I, Robot*. According to Bruce Snyder, head of distribution at 20th Century Fox: 'He's just so likable, he takes something like science fiction, which can be a little cold, and he makes it warm and entertaining.' (BBC News) [EM]

**Awards**. *John W. Campbell Memorial*: Jack McDevitt's *Omega*, with Justina Robson's *Natural History* as runner-up. • *Wodehouse Prize* for comic fiction (a case of Bollinger champagne from one sponsor, the complete Everyman P.G. Wodehouse from the other, and a Gloucester Old Spot pig): Jasper Fforde, *The Well of Lost Plots*. Winners don't get the actual live pig, presented in memory of the Empress of Blandings, but receive 'a large fibreglass pig on wheels to keep for a year.'

**R.I.P.** *John Barron* (1920-2004), UK TV actor, died on 3 July aged 83. He had an uncredited role as a subeditor in *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961), and appeared in many genre TV productions including *Doomwatch* (1970), *Timeslip* (1970), and *Whoops Apocalypse* (1982). [GD] • *Jackson Beck* (1912-2004), US radio broadcaster who introduced over 1,600 episodes of the *Superman* radio show (Voices: 'It's a bird! It's a plane!' Beck: '*It's Superman!*'), died on 28 July aged 92. He was also the voice of Bluto in 300+ *Popeye* cartoons. [BB] • *Paula Danziger* (1944-2004), prolific US children's novelist whose venture was the romance *This Place Has No Atmosphere* (1986), died on July 8 following a June heart attack. [SFS] • *Sam McKim* (1925-2004), Disney artist who first sketched Disneyland, other Disney parks, and the company's 1964-5 World's Fair exhibits, died on July 9. [SFS] • *Jerry Goldsmith* (1929-2004), US composer of film music who won an Oscar for his 1976 *Omen* score, died from cancer on 21 July; he was 75. Other genre films with Oscar-nominated Goldsmith scores are *Poltergeist*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, and *Planet of the Apes*. He had many other sf/fantasy credits (e.g. *Alien*) and also wrote the music for the original TV *The Twilight Zone*. [PC] • *John Cullen Murphy* (1919-2004), US artist/illustrator who drew the Arthurian *Prince Valiant* strip (now 67 years old) since 1970, died on 2 July aged 85. [PDF] • *'Blotto' Otto Pfeiffer*, long-time US fan, died on 23 July; he was in his mid-70s. Mark Manning writes: 'Early member of Fabulous Seattle Fandom beginning in the '50s, active in Cry of the Nameless, SAPS, the Nameless Ones, and (I believe) Seacon, correspondent to many fans during his heyday, editor of such 'zines as *WRR* and *BOG*, and maker of absolutely wretched puns.' • *Pat Roach* (1943-2004), Birmingham-born wrestler and actor who appeared in *A Clockwork Orange*, three Indiana Jones films, *Never Say Never Again*, *Willow*, *Conan the Destroyer* and others, died from cancer on 17 July; he was 61. [BB] • *Irvin S. Yeaworth Jr* (1926-2004), US film director responsible for *The Blob* (1958) and *4D Man*

(1959), died in a car accident on 19 July. He was 78. [PDF] • **Noraki Yuasa** (1933-2004), who directed 7 of the 8 'Gamera' films, died of a stroke on 14 June aged 71. The giant flying turtle Gamera was Godzilla's main rival for 1960s Japanese audiences' affection. Simo writes: 'I met him in LA in 1999 where he was clearly thrilled to be feted by western fans. He was a delight to interview, even via a translator.'

• **Publishers and Sinners.** *Jo Fletcher* of Orion/Gollancz became engaged to Ian Drury of (keeping it in the family) Orion/Weidenfeld & Nicolson, during a Turkish holiday in June: 'I am incredibly happy.' Wedding expected next Spring. • **Jonathan Weir**, late of Amazon.co.uk and HarperCollins, has joined the same family as Gollancz's latest publicity manager, replacing Nicola Sinclair. • **Lucy Dixon** left Hodder & Stoughton publicity on 16 July and moved to John Murray.

• **As Others See Us II.** *The New York Times* magazine marvels at the promotion of Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*: 'This sort of push by a publisher is not so unusual for a big first novel. But it is curious for a big first novel about dueling magicians that is uncompromisingly literary without being shy about taking the genre seriously. And her novel is being published with none of the fantasy trappings, none of the comforting camouflage that it is for children. It is being published, well, like a regular book.' [HC] Good heavens!

• **Random Fandom.** **Brian Aldiss** received this year's First Fandom Hall of Fame Award. • **John D. Berry & Eileen Gunn** are briefly visiting London (and then Prague) in late September. • **Ron Gemmell** wants to return to the fanzine scene after the equivalent of 'trekking round Tibet for the last ten years': 8 Kinsale Dr, Locking Stumps, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 6LX. • **Steve Green** prepared a list of fanzines eligible for the Nova Award, so that interested voters could request copies, and is miffed that the *Plokta* News Network censored all the street addresses owing to nebulous fear of putting this information on line. • **Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden** had a flood in the basement of their new Brooklyn apartment on 7 July; many books and fanzines were rescued from copious warm water released by a broken heater valve. [LN] Eerily, the Langford cellar was (harmlessly) flooded by a Reading cloudburst on 27 June.... • **Bill Pearson** was less lucky; his house in Mayer, Arizona, burned to the ground on the night of 2/3 July. 'I've been an avid collector for fifty years. No one will ever know the extent of what went up in flames that day. In financial terms, I estimate the total value in today's dollars at somewhere between a quarter and a half million dollars. But to a few of us in this world who truly appreciate original art and other rare items, some of it would be considered priceless.' Ouch. Steve Stiles adds: 'Bill was the co-editor, with Dan Adkins, of the mid-fifties fanzine *Sata Illustrated*, probably the best illustrated and reproduced dittoed fanzine of all time. He's also the current editor of *Witzend*, founded by the late artist Wallace Wood.'

• **Silly Season.** After generating vast publicity with reports that the new *Doctor Who* can't feature the Daleks owing to deadlock with Terry Nation's estate, the BBC announces that a deal has been struck and the fabled cyborg exterminators will appear after all. (BBC News, 4 Aug)

• **Cyberbullies** (remember Fandom.com?) still stalk the land, closing harmless Harry Potter fan sites and claiming that established fragments of our language are protected intellectual property. That is, lawyers representing the *Lord of the Rings* film companies are busily menacing the owner of the Shiremail.com domain: because, you see, 'Shire' is Tolkien's very own word which was his. Anyone daring to use it must be trading on valuable *LOTR* 'goodwill', despite its having been around for a millennium or so. [R] People with domain names containing other uniquely Tolkienian words—like elf, dwarf, orc, one, ring, or Sam—should start preparing their defences now. Looking at all those Fords on the official Middle-Earth map, I fear for davidlangford.co.uk ...

• **Science Masterclass.** *Dept of Temporal Anomaly*. "'It's not clear to me how I was able to foresee the future'." / "As I pointed out," Dr Burr said with an air of impatience, "you crossed the interstellar dateline of time. In doing so your mind approached a future date while your body remained in the present." (Robert Tralins, *The Cosmozoids*, 1966) [AR]

• **Small Press.** *Albedo One's* unpublished-story contest has a €1000 prize, 6,000 words max, \$2/€3 entry fee, to Aeon Award, PO Box 5861, Fairview, Dublin 3, Ireland. Shortlist deadlines bimonthly from end Sep 04 to end Mar 05. E-submissions allowed. Further tortuous details at [www.albedo1.com](http://www.albedo1.com). • **Orbital:** I hate to speculate that a magazine about sf has gone under before its first issue, but editor Steve Williams's unbroken silence in recent months is not encouraging. Nor is the website, with its promise of topical Venus transit coverage in a June issue that no one has seen.... • **Premonitions 2004** (sf, horror, poetry, art) is described as a 'relaunch issue': 60pp A4, £4.50 (\$13 overseas) to Tony

Lee, Pigasus Press, 13 Hazely Combe, Arreton, Isle of Wight, PO30 3AJ.

• **Sic, Sic, Sic.** My favourite moment in media coverage of the Cassini-Huygens mission came from UK Meridian local news, which unexpectedly highlighted the artistic angle: '... the probe was named after Christiaan Huygens who discovered Titan.' [C]

• **Outraged Letters.** *Ramsey Campbell* on his unshaven nun, cited last issue: 'Thogged at last! In mitigation I can only quote the poster for *Devils of Monza*: "She was no ordinary nun."' (Eileen Gunn adds: 'You might mention to Thog that shaved nuns were quite a hot item of sexual interest last time I was in New York City, but I believe they are passé now. The unshaven ones aroused no one's curiosity. How different life is from literature....') • **Jayne Dearsley** of *SFX* feels all fannish: 'I interviewed G.P. Taylor last week—author of *Shadowmancer* and *Wormwood*—and boy, was he great! I've never so much as spoken to a Reverend before, and I've also never before done an interview without a single double entendre....' • **Steve Green** nitpicks: 'Surprised you omitted mention of the dire *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1996) in your Brando obit; plastered in white pancake makeup, his Moreau resembled nothing more than the bastard son of Barbara Cartland and Daddy Warbucks.' • **Steve Sneyd** on Ray Bradbury's wrath at *Fahrenheit 9/11*: 'Re Bradbury title adaptation fugue shock horror story ... Radio 2's new series started 3 July: "Barefoot in the Head—Surprising Story of Balearica". Aldiss as Ibiza raver? Next: "Oryx and Crake—the Amazing Stories of The Animals and The Byrds"'

• **C.o.A.** **John Bray**, 10 Cathcart Drive, Orpington, Kent, BR6 8BX. **Marion Pitman**, 97 Liverpool Rd, Reading, RG1 3PN.

• **Editorial.** That restless urge to reprint Langfordiana is coming over me again. I've had a column in every issue of *SFX* since its 1995 launch; it's time to assemble them into a book. Students of *SFX* cover layout will know why this should be called *The SEX Column and other misprints*. Also due from Cosmos Books: a reissue of my sf novel *The Space Eater* with a new cover by the great David A. Hardy! The terms of the Hardy/Langford Pact now compel me to mention his latest art book *Futures* (AAPPL, 2004) and the Best Related Book Hugo in the same sentence.

• **Our Men with the Popcorn.** **John Bark:** 'Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle* (*Hauru no ugoku shiro*) will be the first animated movie for 30 years to compete for the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, 1-11 Sept (*Observer* 1 Aug).' • **Joe McNally:** 'I hope you've spotted that *I, Robot* has been released to the Hispanophone market as *Yo, Robot* ...' • **Sir Laurence Olivier**, 15 years dead, is being dragged from his grave (or rather, from footage in various old films) to command a killer robot horde in the sf flick *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*, 'speaking' new dialogue recorded by another actor. [BB] Hollywood has at last realized that deceased stars can't demand a percentage of the gross.

• **Coincidence?** A 24 July *Independent* crossword had a hidden theme of sf authors' names, deviously clued without definition—from Asimov to Wyndham. These ran round the crossword's perimeter, which was filled out with the words SEEMED and SATANISM. H'mmm!

• **A204 Update.** **Simo** on the obits: 'Max J. Rosenberg was not a producer on Hammer's *The Curse of Frankenstein* as widely reported but merely sold Hammer a different Frankenstein script a few years before. His importance to the genre is that his company Amicus was Hammer's only serious rival in the British horror boom of the 1960s and 1970s.' • **Hideous National Insults!** Many Australian fans wrote in to protest my ignorance of bilbies, long-eared marsupials which Down Under are replacing the hated rabbit as an Easter symbol. Many Irish fans were appalled that David Lee Stone called Eoin Colfer a 'Brit'; Mr Stone is now writing out 1,000 times, 'Wexford is not part of the British Isles.'

• **Thog's Masterclass.** *Neat Tricks Dept*. "'You will manually feel this object with your left hand," he said to himself, "and at the same time you will look at it with your right."' (Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*, 1977) [DW] • **Dept of Cruel and Unusual Geometry.** "The casket was a cube. It was about a meter and a half long, a half-meter wide, another half-meter deep." (Robert Wells, *Spacejacks*, 1975) [CS] • '... the dull-red mists seemed to flow together, enclosing the three sides of a circle.' (Murray Leinster, *The Forgotten Planet*, 1954) [AW] • **Dept of This Won't Hurt A Bit.** 'She looked away, then let him slide gently into the corner of her eye.' (Isaac Asimov, 'Satisfaction Guaranteed', 1951) [MD]

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