

Ansible



Ansible 208 November 2004

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. <http://ansible.co.uk>. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Atom**. Available for SAE or the extra prime number between 5 and 7.

Editorial Gloat. Those familiar with a certain novel called *The Leaky Establishment* will understand my complicated but, on the whole, smug reaction to this BBC web-news item: 'A former Russian nuclear scientist has handed over to police eight containers of plutonium-238 he had stored at home for eight years.' (AB) If only he had brought them home from work accidentally, in a borrowed filing cabinet....

The Instrumental Knot

'**The Late Brian Aldiss**' has felt himself carefully all over and concludes that his deceased status, as recorded in Charles Shaar Murray's *Independent* review of Iain M. Banks (22 Oct), is greatly exaggerated. 'I no longer take the *Independent*. It got so depressing; it was either suicide or take *The Sun* instead.... I believe that "the late Brian Aldiss" is simply a misprint for "the great Brian Aldiss".' Other recent Aldiss adventures include the filming of his *Brothers of the Head* in Norfolk, with near-identical 19-year-old twin actors strapped into the same costume to represent the conjoined protagonists. 'I had to play myself, and did it in one take, though it is metaphysically amusing to pretend you are acting naturally, while going disguised as yourself....'

Margaret Atwood, who famously does not write about talking squids in space, was surely pleased by Suzi Feay's description of her as a likely Booker International nominee in the *Independent on Sunday* (10 Oct): 'Canada's ice queen is formidably gifted, her oeuvre ranging across styles and genres.' Though perhaps the close of the next sentence was less appreciated: 'As well as sharp feminist fables, she has written poetry, criticism, historical and futurist novels, and has recently colonised the world of sci-fi.' At least, in defiance of the usual newspaper stylebook, it didn't read '... beamed down to Planet Sci-Fi.'

Steve Aylett has a cunning line in self-promotion: his latest release, plugging a collection of 550+ quotes from his own work, brags that 'his books have thoroughly alienated everyone who prefers reading crap.'

George Lucas will, next June, become the 33rd person honoured for Lifetime Achievement by the American Film Institute. [SFS]

J.R.R. Tolkien placed third in the Forbes.com list of 'Top-Earning Dead Celebrities Of 2004', with posthumous earnings of \$23m. Ahead of him are Elvis Presley (\$40m) and Charles Schulz (\$35m); the roster of the stinking rich continues with John Lennon (\$21m), Dr Seuss (\$18m) and that icon of many an sf story, Marilyn Monroe (\$8m). [LW]

Contriturate

5-7 Nov • **Armadacon 16**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. £30 reg, £27 concessions. Too late now to do anything but turn up!

5-7 Nov • **Novacon 34**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. £40 at the door.

8 Nov • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Top floor, 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Jay Caselberg. There will be no Dec or Jan meeting; La Diva reconvenes in Feb 2005.

9 Nov • **Sci-Fi (sic) Table Quiz**, upstairs in Florence Nightingale pub, Waterloo end of Westminster Bridge, London. 8pm. £10 entry per table of 4, in aid of TAFF and the James White Award. Prizes and raffle.

13-14 Nov • **P-Con 2**, Ashling Hotel, Parkgate St, Dublin 8. GoH Juliet E. McKenna. £15/€20 reg. £7/€10 supp. Contact: Yellow Brick Rd, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland.

24 Nov • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Graham Joyce.

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

23 Dec • **London Circle Open Xmas Meeting**, upstairs in Florence Nightingale pub, as above. 5pm to late. All welcome.

19 Feb 05 • **Picocon 22**, Imperial College Union, London. GoH Gwyneth Jones, Jon Courtenay Grimwood. Details TBA. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB.

11-13 Mar 05 • **DeciKon: AKFT 10** (Trek), Fircroft Hotel, Bournemouth. Now £25 reg to 6 Jan 05; £30 thereafter. Rooms approx £33 pppn. Contact 12 Greenfield Rd, London, N15 5EP. 0208 801 8867.

11-13 Mar 05 • **Mecon 8**, Belfast. New venue still undecided. GoH

Ian McDonald. £18 reg, rising to £20 on 30 November; £22 at the door. Contact 17 Meadowbank Place, Belfast, BT9 7FE, N. Ireland.

25-28 Mar 05 • **Paragon2** (Eastercon), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. £40 reg, £15 supp, £20 junior (12-16), £5 child (5-11), infants free ... rising on 13 Nov to £45 reg, £20 supp, £22.50 jun, child/infant unchanged. Contact 4 Burnside Ave, Sheffield, S8 9FR.

4-8 Aug 05 • **Interaction** (63rd Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. Still £95/\$170/€145 reg, rising to £110/\$195/€165 on 1 December. £30/\$45/€45 supp. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. In North America: PO Box 58009, Louisville, Kentucky, KY 40268-0009, USA.

9-11 Sep 05 • **Reunion³** (media), Holiday Inn, Leicester City. £75 reg; £40/day Sat or Sun; child £55 or £30/day. Contact Flat 3, Blighwood, 57 Surrey Rd, Poole, Dorset, BH12 1HF.

30 Aug - 3 Sep 07 • **Nippon 2007** (65th Worldcon), Yokohama, Japan. Sterling rates now announced: £90 full adult reg, £23 supporting, £45 child. Contact (UK) 23 Ivydene Rd, Reading, RG30 1HT; (USA) PO Box 314, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701; (Europe) Koninginnegracht 75a, 2514AH Den Haag, Netherlands.

Rumblings • 1984: The Opera. The Spring 2005 Royal Opera House programme lists a May première of G. Orwell's novel in opera form—adapted by Lorin Maazel, better known as a conductor. [PD] • **Octocon 2004**, the Irish national con, approved the bid to combine Eurocon and Octocon in 2007. A similar mandate from Fantasticon (Copenhagen, Apr 2005) is expected for the rival Danish bid. [DL]

Infinitely Improbable

Only Apparently Real. Here's *Focus* magazine (not the BSFA one) on the BBC *Space Odyssey: Voyage to the Planets*, a dramatized documentary: 'But science fiction it isn't. Impossible Pictures, *Space Odyssey's* maker, has created the most authentic vision of humans exploring our planetary neighbours ever.' [NA] For certain values of 'authentic'....

Awards. *World Fantasy Awards* were presented on 31 October: NOVEL Jo Walton, *Tooth and Claw*. NOVELLA Greer Gilman, 'A Crowd of Bone' (*Trampoline*): 'I'm thunderstruck. I'm told there are blackmail pictures of a gibbering woman.' SHORT Bruce Holland Rogers, 'Don Ysidro' (*Polyphony 3*). ANTHOLOGY Rosalie Parker, ed., *Strange Tales*. COLLECTION Elizabeth Hand, *Bibliomancy*. ARTIST (tie) Donato Giancola & Jason Van Hollander. SPECIAL, PROFESSIONAL Peter Crowther for PS Publishing. SPECIAL, NON-PROFESSIONAL Ray Russell & Rosalie Parker for Tartarus Press. LIFE ACHIEVEMENT Stephen King, Gahan Wilson. • *Deutsche Phantastik Preis*. Winners of this German award include J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter und der Orden des Phoenix* as best international novel, and Stephen König (I mean King) as international author of the year. • *British Independent Film Awards*. The zombie horror spoof *Shaun of the Dead* is shortlisted for best film in these awards' seventh annual presentation, scheduled for 30 November. [SG]

Unique Selling Point. Ceefax TV *Choice* finds something positive to say about *Battlestar Galactica* on Sky One: 'Take it on trust and watch anyway—Galactica is genuinely exceptional and the less you like science fiction, the more you'll love this new US drama.' [MB]

R.I.P. *Irv Novick* (1916-2004), US comics artist whose career began in 1940 and who drew *Batman* from the 1960s to the 1980s, died on 15 October after long illness. He was 88. [SFS] • *Christopher Reeve* (1952-2004), US actor famous for his title role in four *Superman* films (1978-87), died from heart failure on 10 October, following systemic spread of infection from a pressure wound. He was 52. Paralysed in a 1995 riding accident, Reeve had campaigned tirelessly for spinal research. [DKMK] Many fans who attended the 1979 World SF Convention in Brighton remember him accepting the Dramatic Presentation Hugo for *Superman* with a diplomatic grace that charmed even the *Hitch-Hiker* clique whose applause was loudest when nominations were read. • *Lyn Smith* (1944-2004), Australian fan and widow of Bob Smith (1930-2003; see A188), died from leukaemia on 24 September; she was 60. [YR] • *Greg Shaw* (1949-2004), US fanzine fan and con-goer who achieved fame as a rock music entrepreneur, died on 19 October; he

was 55. His extensive experience in fan publishing, including the early-60s Tolkien fanzine *Entmoot*, spawned music zines like his long-running *Who Put the Bomb*. ● *John Vanible* (1955-2004), long-time New York fan and con-goer, died on 27 September aged 49. James H. Burns writes: 'He was on the staff of many Lunacons, other conventions, and helped out at Worldcons. He was also a Lunarian.' ● *George Tage Valentin Sjöberg* (1930-2004), a major figure in 1950s Swedish fandom, died on 11 September; he was 73. From John-Henri Holmberg's longish obituary: 'He wrote and illustrated both as George Sjöberg and as Tage Valentin ... became one of the first active Swedish fans, with the fifth fanzine to appear in the country, *Star SF Fanzine* (1955-1957); [then] *Fhan* (1957-1959), and the first four issues of *SF Forum* (1960-current)—the fanzine of Stockholm's Scandinavian SF Society, of which Sjöberg was co-founder and first chairman.' Other achievements included the first Swedish mail-order sf book business. Activity in nationalist/racist politics led to his expulsion from the SSFS in 1962 after inviting the chairman of a fascist organization to address the society; he had little subsequent contact with fandom. ● *William J. 'Bill' Widder* (1926-2004), US fan since the 1930s, died in mid-October aged 78. His *Master Storyteller: An Illustrated Tour of the Fiction of L. Ron Hubbard* was shortlisted for a 2004 Hugo. [L] ● *Tetsu Yano* (1923-2004), long-time Japanese sf fan, author and translator, died on 13 October aged 81. His many translations included the works of Heinlein and Herbert; as a writer he was best known in the West for his novella 'The Legend of the Paper Spaceship' (English translation 1984). [SFWA]

In Typo Veritas. On Cate Blanchett's *Lord of the Rings* ears: 'She had the prosthetics bronzed for prosperity.' (*Guardian*, 16 Oct 04) [IE]

Random Fandom. *Brian Ameringen* mourns yet another bookshop: 'I noted only the other day that Plus Books 2000 (formerly Plus Books) of Abbey Parade Merton had finally closed. I believe it was run for a time by Arthur Sellings, on behalf of Les Flood ...?' ● *David V. Barrett* reels in horror: 'M.J. "Simo" Simpson was on Radio 4 this morning [28 Oct] talking about Godzilla films (I think 48 of them, but not certain) and forthcoming academic conference celebrating 50 years since the first one. Treated with some astonishment, but not a bad interview.' ● *Keith Brooke*, owing to ISP incompetence, lost oodles of e-mail addressed to his *iplus.co.uk* and *infinityplus.co.uk* domains in the last two weeks of October. He begs for anything important to be sent again. ● *Terry Jeeves* has goodish news, following his prostate cancer worries (see A202): 'Healthwise I have been declared cancer-free and see the specialist next March for a check up. Meanwhile I have pains in back and pelvis. There's always something.'

As Others See Us. 'As for his readers, [Anthony] Powell can hardly be blamed for his plummy fans any more than, say, J.G. Ballard should be blamed for the flakiness of his, or Anne Tyler for the limpness of hers.' (Ian Sansom, *The London Review of Books*, 21 Oct) ● Sebastian Shakespeare, reviewing Andrew Crumey's novel *Mobius Dick*, announces that this author 'has that commodity so rare among sci-fi writers—a sense of humour.' (*The Literary Review*, August 2004) [CB]

Small Press. *Beyond*, the sf/fantasy horror magazine ed. David & Linden Riley, published 3 issues in 1995 and has now relaunched. [JE] Contributors are offered a mouth-watering £2.50 per thousand words. Contact 130 Union Rd, Oswaldtwistle, Accrington, Lancs, BB5 3DR, UK.

Thog's Coming Attractions. Gordon Van Gelder sends a tasty line from a novel apparently not yet published, filed here as the *Ill-Aimed Insults Dept*: "Let me see your pubic hair," he insulted her ears.' (Dora Levy Mossanen, *Courtesan*, forthcoming ?2005)

C.o.A. *Rich Coad and Stacy Scott* (from 20 Nov), 124 Cottage Ave, Richmond, CA 94801, USA. *Elaine Cochrane and Bruce Gillespie*, 5 Howard St, Greensborough, VIC 3088, Australia. *Toni Jerrman* and *Tähtivaeltaja* (sf mag), Itämerenkatu 22 B 21, 00180 Helsinki, Finland.

J.K. Rowling's Language Lessons. Marion Pitman writes: 'I'm sure it will interest no-one to know that in *The Geordie Dictionary*, by Scott Dobson, published in Newcastle in 1974, *muggle* (or *muggy*) is defined as "a small marble made of glazed earthenware".'

Outraged Letters. *Brian Aldiss* on Kyril Bonfiglioli: 'Just a note about Bon, mentioned in latest *Ansible*. That mighty man was an amateur when it came to editing and publishing *Impulse*. Since he did not continue the numbering of *Science Fantasy*, from which *Impulse* evolved, W.H. Smith refused to carry the "new" magazine. So it went down the tubes. ● And look what has happened to WHS! ● Incidentally, Bon planned another change. He had literary ambitions—which was why he rid himself of the rather weedy-sounding *Science Fantasy*—and was going to change *Impulse* to *Caliban*. I still like the title *Caliban*. It's still going free for any ambitious young editor....' Andy Cox of TTA Press,

still pondering a new title for *The Third Alternative*, has duly been informed. ● *Pat Cadigan* breaks it gently: 'I always love *Ansible*, so I feel a bit petty about making any criticism. But for some reason, I just can't help it: why didn't you mention Peter Weston's book? You dog.' ● *Mark Olson* confides: 'Pete [Weston] was wondering why his book never gets mentioned in *Ansible*.' ● *Peter Weston*, author of a book, writes: 'You swine, Langdorf! I kill you deady. No free beer for you at Novacon.'

Fanfundery. *TAFF*. Oops: nominations for the 2005 eastbound race close at midnight on 20 Nov, not the 24th as mistyped last issue. NA candidates with hats definitely in the ring are Curt Phillips and Suzanne 'Suzle' Tompkins; at least one other has been Thinking About It. ● *James Bacon* reports: 'Terry Pratchett sought me out as *TAFF* delegate while he was GOH at Noreason. To my grateful surprise, he handed over \$280 to me for *TAFF*. He had raised this himself for *TAFF* at an auction at the Discworld con. A very generous act indeed.'

Literary Corner. Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever may be dead but he won't lie down; it was my joyous duty to read Stephen Donaldson's new Covenant book *The Runes of the Earth* for review in *SFX*. To be fair, that famously knurled and argute vocabulary has been somewhat toned down since 1983, but statistical analysis of favourite words this time around led me to predict that the sequel must be titled *The Eldritch Phosphores of Formication*. (In fact it's *Fatal Revenant*. So much for prediction.) Thog's favourite metaphor is drawn from plumbing: 'If she did not discover some clear answer to her questions soon, the cistern of her soul would crack open.' But there's little joy here for clenched fans, despite page 32's 'Her stomach clenched'...

As Others See Us II. An anonymous former bookshop worker remembers: 'Oh, I was difficult. Assigned to the worst section, SF and Fantasy (every day a ton of new loin-cloth nonsense to stack), I preferred to lurk behind the till.' (*Independent on Sunday ABC*, 31 Oct)

Continuity Continued. *Andrew M. Butler* has more to say about Dan Simmons's *Endymion* (see A207): "'Your hair is long, but not wild'" (Silenus to Raul, p69); "'This is the way we look to each other at the moment [...] my short hair filthy'" (Raul on himself, p129). And "'Who is he—the architect?' 'He's a she,' said Aenea, 'and I don't know her name'" (p183), but four pages later: "'I thought he [the architect] was a genius' [...] 'I have to study under this man, Raul'" (p591-2). I put it down to an unreliable narrator (Raul losing his mind), a mistake by Simmons, or "a joke played upon asshole proofreaders".'

The Dead Past. *25 Years Ago*: Malcolm Edwards wrote about the 10 October death of Dr Christopher Evans—psychologist, computer scientist, sf enthusiast and all-round nice guy—at age 48. (*Ansible* 4, Nov 1979) ● *20 Years Ago*: controversy at Novacon 14! 'Rob Holdstock having often told the committee that as GoH he wished to be fawned on by beves of naked dancing girls, they took him approximately at his word and hired a "kissogram" greeting—only for a rumoured Hidden Hand to pay the extra £60 for a "strippogram". The Holdstock grin froze as things jiggled in front of it. Bob Shaw wailed his regret at having missed it all; others were less keen, and protests both verbal and written were duly delivered to the committee ...' (*Ansible* 41, Dec 1984)

Plan 10 From Outer Space. Oh dear. Ed Wood's 'lost' porn film *Necromania* has been discovered, according to Reuters and similar lowlife sources. Oh dear. That is not dead which can eternal lie, And with strange aeons even fluffy Angora sweaters may die.... [T]

Group Gropes. *Dublin*: sf meetings were orphaned by the sale of their Bowes venue after nearly 3 years. Interim meetings are in The Lord Edward pub, 1st Tuesday at 8pm, until a new home is found. [JB]

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Sound Effects*. 'He made a face at me, soundlessly humming under his breath as if he was bored.' (Laurel K. Hamilton, *The Killing Dance*, 1997) [TM] ● 'As Reith approached he heard a sudden wordless cry of outrage from within. "Unclean!"' (Jack Vance, *The Pnume*, 1970) [Jon Almond] ● *Alien Planetology Dept*. 'A tall fountain of spray reached skyward, high enough that its top was touched red by the light of the sun rising in the west.' (S.M. Stirling and David Drake, *The Sword*, 1995) [TM] ● *Dept of Subtle Gender Distinctions*. 'Wade harpooned the lamb chop with his fork and amputated a sizable portion with his knife. He waited until he had consigned it to the mysteries of gastric chemistry before speaking. Shirley was daintily toying with peas.' (Charles Eric Maine, *Thirst!*, 1977) [DF]

Ansible 208 © Dave Langford, 2004. Thanks to Jon Almond, Neal Asher, James Bacon, Alan Bellingham, Molly Brown, Colin Brush, Rich Coad, John Eggeling, Iain Emsley, Paul Dormer, David Fleming, Steve Green, David K.M. Klaus, Dave Lally, Locus Online, Tim McDaniel, Yvonne Rousseau, SF Site, SFWA News, Trufan.net, Lew Walkoff, and Hero Distributors: Rog Peyton (Brum), Janice Murray (NA), SCIS, and Alan Stewart (Oz). 4 Nov 04