

# Ansible



**Ansible 57 April 1992**

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**STOP PRESS:** some sort of 'event' is apparently due on 9 April. *Ansible* is sifting media reports in hope of ascertaining what's up and giving readers full, one-line coverage in May, or June.

## They Walked Like Men

*Douglas Adams* caused alarm when unexpectedly sighted in Folkestone: 'Heaven knows what he was doing there—we assume just gratuitously hanging around in W.H.Smith's being very tall and attracting no attention whatsoever. We retired outside to construct scenarios *re* his presence, mostly featuring him having escaped from the hotel room where he was supposedly slaving over a hot writing implement, though I gather the novel has already been turned in.' [MS]

*Iain Banks* was reckoned to be 'extremely amusing' down under at the Adelaide Writers' Week ... not to mention 'also ideologically sound despite claiming, at the beginning of his Official Festival Talk, that he'd intended to smuggle in a machete with which to cut off the Prime Ministerial ocker hand that had dared to rest upon Her Majesty....' [YR]

*Orson Scott Card* was announced as winner of the 'Skylark Award' (presented by NESFA to people they like) at Boskone 29. In its Doc-Smithian way the trophy is topped with a lens, and former winner Jane Yolen explained why—ever since a tragic conjunction of the Skylark, the sun and her best coat—it is traditionally accompanied by a gift smoke-alarm.

*Arthur C. Clarke*—interviewed in the *Washington Post* on 9 Mar—identified his notorious illness as post-polio syndrome, waxed enthusiastic about computer-simulated gardening on Mars (the planned futurology book is to be *The Snows of Olympus: A Garden on Mars*—'It's really farming on Mars, although that doesn't sound quite so romantic.'), mentioned that his fax machine was swamped by crazed fans' birthday messages on HAL 9000's supposed 'creation date' of 12 Jan 1992, and muttered as usual of 47 projects in hand.... [MMW]

*Storm Constantine* featured recently in *Siren* magazine, reviewing Gothic rock groups and conferring 'a strange, incongruous note of literacy' on this publication. [JH/JN]

*Lionel & Patricia Fanthorpe* achieved a huge *Publishers Weekly* splash for *Secrets of Rennes-le-Château* (Samuel Weiser, spring list, \$12.50), a revamp of their invisibly published 1982 book. 'The link between Rennes-le-Château and Visigothic churches, Cathar castles, Templar fortresses, Roman gold mines, Mary Magdalen, Lazarus, Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Grail, the Habsburgs, and even with the Money Pit on Oak Island in Nova Scotia, are all given strange credibility by the authors and researchers, Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe [*sic*].' Malcolm Edwards notes: 'A front page ad is, of course, a Big Thing....' Umberto Eco offered no comment.

*John Foyster* has learned how to be GoH at Australian cons in complete safety, by arranging a remote-control presence from Malaysia. 'John delivered his Guest-of-Honour speech from Kuala Lumpur by telephone, linked to a public address system in the "Contract" convention hotel in Adelaide: Greg Hills reports that the convention crowd of thirteen responded to this speech (which credited the previous night's outbreak of purse-snatching in Kuala Lumpur as a compliment to John's "Godfather" presence) very favourably....' [YR]

*Gwyneth Jones* won the first James Tiptree Jr Award for sf exploring/expanding gender thingies, for her *White Queen*. This prize took the form of a chocolate typewriter. [JG]

*Paul Kincaid* is telling everyone how he missed the London Bridge bomb blast on 28 Feb by a mere ten minutes, being how late his train was: 'I felt I had been spared fortuitously to go home and write a seven-volume Chinese epic.' [PK]

*Ken Lake* boggled fandom with the announcement that he's selling all his worldly goods, taking a farewell tour of the world (fannish accommodation sought) and planning never to return to these blighted shores. Was it something we said?

*Duncan Lunan* has been enjoying interesting times ('After they put my solicitor in jail, my life began to straighten out again.'). Having typed mounds of his stuff into various alien computers, he now discovers himself with masterpieces after masterpiece on CBM-64 and Mac disks which his Amstrad PCW can't actually read, and is seeking expert help.... [DL]

*James Randi* sends updates on Uri Geller's lawsuit against him, with thanks for countless defence-fund donations: 'The US judge in the case has ruled that we may ask Mr Geller to prove his psychic powers under deposition.'

*Tom Shippey* is said to be editing *The Oxford Book of SF Stories*, offering £500 a story for reprints and claiming a first hardback print run of around 20,000 copies. I was not invited. Neither was my snarling informant. [Anon]

*Brian Stableford* reports that his vampire novel *Young Blood* has not after all been renamed (see A54) ... thanks to the sarcasm of his proposed credit to Simon & Schuster's sales folk for warning that the original title was inadequately 'perfidid'. At Picocon, he informed a rapt audience that *all* sf ought to be sarcastic. 'The reader should never be left feeling comfortable. The hero should never get the girl.'

## Connascency

10 Apr • My birthday. • **Chris Evans** signs *Chimeras* at Book Inn, Charing Cross Rd, 6-8pm, and later falls over in the pub.

17-20 Apr • **Illumination**, 43rd Eastercon; Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. £25 reg. Rooms £28/person/night. GoHs Paul McAuley, Geoff Ryman, Pam Wells (fan), TAFF winner Jeanne Bowman. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

24-26 Apr • **Emerson**, Eurocon; 'Kurbans' Congress Centre, Freudenstadt, Germany. GoHs Brunner, Spinrad, Banks, Walther. Too late to pre-register now: DM65 at the door.

30 Apr - 3 May • **Warp One**, 35th UK Trek con, Middleton Tower Holiday Centre, Morecambe. £30 reg, rooms from £26.70/person/night full board. To boldly contact 69 Merlin Crescent, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 6JB....

19-21 Jun • **Protoplasm**, Parkers Hotel, somewhere in Manchester. £16 reg (£18 from 1 May, £20 at door). GoH Bob Shaw. Rooms from £18.50/person/night. Contact 1 Shoemsmith Ct, Merchants Place, Reading, Berks, RG1 1DT.

25-26 Jul • **Hasticon**, Library, Hastings. GoH David Gemmell. Contact 53b All Saints St, Hastings, TN34 3BN. 'I hope to concentrate on "Applied SF",' quoth George Hay.

6-8 Nov • **Novacon 22**, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. £18 reg, £20 after Easter. GoH Storm Constantine. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, W.Midlands, B66 4SH. PR1 warns that *membership numbers may have to be limited*.

21-23 May 93 • **Corflu 10**, the US fanzine-fan con, Inn on the Park, Madison. GoH to be chosen as usual by lot. \$35 reg. Splendidly silly flyer, *Queen of all Dairyland*, to hand. C/o SF<sup>3</sup>, Box 1624, Madison, WI 53701-1624, USA.

28-31 May 93 • **Mexicon V**, *No Fixed Abode*. £18 reg. 'Written sf slant. Contact: 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, W.Midlands, B66 4SH. Now venue-hunting after a traditional nasty from the Cairn Hotel (entire staff changed; 'What's Mexicon? You booked last May? Well, we've booked another event. And our room rates are now £40/night minimum.')

1-4 Apr 94 • **Bid Collapse Horror!** *Nic Farey* writes: 'As you may have surmised, the **Contact** Eastercon bid has folded. I'm sure you can find funnier reasons to print than the real ones, basically my underlying ill-health and overlying personal insolvency. These have combined to shove various "fun" activities aside.... No doubt everyone is feeling pissed off at me. Ah, well. There's always next time.' [19 Mar] Without the Isle of Man option (I confess I never fancied it, despite whispers that it had better facilities) will the Bristol **Sou'Wester** be unopposed? Or could a new bid emerge from Illumination's smoke-filled bar to ensure that Sou'Wester's 'old and devious' committee suffers the full Ordeal By Very Boring Questions?

## Infinitely Improbable

**BSFA Awards Shortlist.** NOVEL: *Raft*, Stephen Baxter; *The Architecture of Desire*, Mary Gentle; *Eternal Light*, Paul McAuley; *Witches Abroad*, Terry Pratchett; *The Fall of Hyperion*, Dan Simmons. SHORT: 'Bad Timing', Molly Brown, *Interzone 54*; 'Appropriate Love', Greg Egan, *IZ50*; 'Nothing Special', Colin Greenland, *Temps*; 'Crossroads', Paul McAuley, *IZ46*; 'Floating Dogs', Ian McDonald, *New Worlds 1*; 'Colour', Michael Moorcock, *NW1*; 'In the Air', Kim Newman/Eugene Byrne, *IZ43*. DRAMATIC: *Edward Scissorhands*, *Red Dwarf IV*, *Star Trek—TNG*, *Terminator II*. ART: all *Interzone* covers—Geoff Taylor *IZ45*, Mark Harrison *IZ48*, SMS *IZ52*, SMS *IZ54*. 'No Award' is a voting option in the last two but not the first two categories, I didn't quite catch why. [JG]

**Expunged from the Histories:** informants note with strange glee that David Pringle's ten-year retrospective editorial in *Interzone 58* omits obscure name Colin Greenland from the list of *IZ*'s eight original co-editors. Also lost to history: Ian Miller (art editor from #4), Lin Morris (assistant editor from #10), and several of the magazine's former designers....

**R.L.P.** US film-maker Jack Arnold died 17 March aged 75. His best-loved sf movie was *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957); others include *It Came From Outer Space*, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Revenge of the Creature* and *Tarantula*.

**Eurocon Awards:** selected by a democratic process of telling fans what to vote for, the British nominations are Geoff Ryman (author), Jim Burns (artist), *Foundation* (magazine), Gollancz (publisher), the BSFA ('promoter') and Ian McDonald (new author). Winners announced at Freucon. [BW]

**TAFF.** A fourth candidate is now rumoured, being Harry Bond standing on the 'Anything's Better Than Kev McVeigh' platform. My lips remain sealed about the intervening two. Meanwhile Jeanne Bowman is planning a collection of rilly triffic instalments from TAFF reports that never actually got finished—thus bringing the authors either massive fame or public humiliation, depending how you look at it.... As for the next westbound race, Richard Brandt conveys a Hint: 'Anyone who's interested in seeing me visit Britain is welcome to ask me to run again at some future date.' Nudge, nudge.

**R.L.P.** Eric Bentcliffe, long-time UK fan editor (*Triode* 1954-1977) and 1960 TAFF winner, died of cancer late in Feb. [AVC]

**Asimov Flogged!** Davis Publications have sold *Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine*, *Analogue*, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* to Bantam/Doubleday/Dell. Supposedly there will be no editorial changes. [JM]

**Hazel's Gourmet Spot: the Durian.** 'As soon as one steps into the airport at Kuala Lumpur, one's aware not only of the heat but of a mingled odour: like sizzling hot iron, and like durian (as I've smelt it through tightly bound layers of thick plastic in Australia). It was not

durian, however—not even durian season. So we contented ourselves with durian ice-cream. (Since high-school geography lessons, I've been fascinated by this paradox of the abominable smell and the swooningly ravishing taste.) The ice-cream—which was yellow—tasted at first as if it were based on siphonings from an old-fashioned lavatory can: one wondered how one could possibly be eating it on purpose. But somewhere there was a change-over point, where one wasn't sure what one was tasting, but wished one could go on tasting it forever. John, however, says the ice-cream is nothing like real durian—which Janeen Webb, on the other hand, says is like eating raspberry ice-cream in an uncleaned public lavatory, and not worth it.' [YR again]

**US Neofan.** Linda Gerstein and Eli Cohen have, as they say in *Court Circulars*, sprogged: Peter Lawrence Cohen, b.18 Feb.

**Ten Years Ago.** Brian Aldiss, fresh from an appearance in Pseud's Corner, was preparing for *Desert Island Discs*: 'the Seal of Respectability which will alienate all self-respecting fans. Beethoven's Ninth or I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate? It is a problem.' Lisa Tuttle tried without success to refuse a Nebula award. Ian Watson savaged Colin Greenland on the front page of *Ansible*, whose editor was subsequently ticked off by Malcolm Edwards.... (*Ansible 25*, Apr 82)

## 'Unpraised, Unrewarded Millions'

'I presume you too have heard from David Pringle,' writes Andy Sawyer, 'with the news that *Million* is to be retitled *Couple of Dozen* and from now on contributors will be invited to send large cheques along with their explorations of the murkier areas of bestsellerdom....'

Yes, alas, the Pringle bombshell is that the fabled *Million: The Magazine of Popular Fiction* can no longer afford to pay its writers ... except with skiploads of free copies. In a circular letter following *Million 8*, the hero editor explains:

'I've been putting off the evil day when I had to decide this, but, facing as I do an as-yet unpaid print bill for issue 7 (never mind issue 8), the time has come to admit that *Million* must cut its cloth to fit its real status as a "little magazine" rather than as a would-be mass-market publication.

'... The magazine has not been doing as well as it should do, although the subscription list continues to rise (slowly). We received no income at all from newtrade sales of issue 6—the money from the few copies which were sold was wiped out by late returns from earlier issues; and I doubt we shall get much, if anything, from issues 7 and 8. Bookshop sales (Murder One apart) are tiny and decreasing. I have invested about £12,000 of my own money in *Million*, and, having lost my salaried job [editing 'GW Books' for *Games Workshop*] a few months ago, I cannot afford to put in another penny. I'm still very hopeful that the magazine will survive (mainly on individual and library subscriptions, not newtrade or bookshop sales).

'... So, with deep regrets, I now have no choice but to introduce a policy of non-payment for articles and reviews published. In this respect, *Million* will resemble countless academic and small-press journals (*Foundation* is one example familiar to us both).

'P.S. None of the above applies in any way to *Interzone*, which is doing rather better than *Million* (though not wonderfully, thanks to the present recession).' [DP, 13 Mar]

Ill winds: my mother has been struggling to buy *Million* for about a year ('No such magazine, love,' say local newsagents in their cheeky South Welsh way), and little knows that she's about to receive an immense bounty of copies as payment-in-kind for my own scheduled or recently published bits....