

Ansible



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PUBLISHERS' WAYS. Editor, on phone: 'Hello! Remember that book we talked about!? Can you write it and make it 77,000 words long!? In one month!?' Langford: 'Er, it needs research. Three months minimum if you want it to be any good.' Editor: 'Oh no! It's urgent! The Autumn list, we need it for the Autumn list! I'll have to talk to so-and-so! I'll call you right back! Hang on!' Langford: waits patiently by telephone, for nine days so far.

Watchers of the Dark

Ian Ballantine, co-founder with Betty Ballantine of Ballantine Books in 1952, died in March after long heart trouble. [DD]

Samuel R. Delany's tongue-in-cheek ploy to improve the political correctness of his reissued porno epic *Equinox* (aka *The Tides of Lust*) is to make all its characters 100 years older. No one could possibly complain about explicit underage sex scenes involving a boy and girl aged, respectively, 113 and 115....

David Garnett rants: 'I've been trying to find someone else to take on *New Worlds*. A new publisher which plans to launch an sf list at Glasgow was asking for material, so I sent them a copy of *NW*. They phoned and were very interested in taking over the series—until they realized that I wanted *paying* for the anthologies. Most of their authors, they said, have other jobs and don't have to rely on money from writing to make a living. So they usually pay only an "honorarium" or a "nominal fee". Not paying authors—what a brilliant way of cutting costs.... • PS: Yes, it's Ringpull.' Now read on.

John Gribbin demonstrates the miracles of synchronicity: 'Does anyone care that my really rather good novel *Time Switch* is in limbo because an editor (alias Anne Editer) at Ringpull wants me to rewrite the characters to match her stereotypes of scientists instead of matching the kind of scientists I've worked with for thirty years? (And this after Bob Shaw said he really liked it as it was!) Does this mean I won't get launched (let alone lunched) at *The Scottish Convention*?' New light may be cast on this question by grim revelations below....

George Hay wants the SF Foundation to remember its original aims and 'go back to getting decisions taken at key meetings where at least 50% of those present are actually sf authors or activists. I think Andy Sawyer and Co. are going great guns in *academic* terms, but what about some useful input into space exploration, planetary political issues and the rest of it?' Come on, Andy, take a day off cataloguing that library and organize a Mars probe.

Rog Peyton was mortified by my spoof 'Ansible news from 2010' column (*Interzone* 94), when a not terribly alert customer sent him condolences on the bit about his Andromeda Bookshop having closed down since printed books had become extinct. Rog would like a 200-point banner headline here, saying **ANDROMEDA LIVES!**, but space is tight as usual....

Ken Slater is most grateful for the many letters and cards received from fans and customers after the sad death of Joyce Slater (they had been married since 1948). Understandably, he doesn't yet feel able to cope with personal replies to all this.

Maureen Kincaid Speller breaks more bad news: 'Ringpull have gone into voluntary liquidation, reasons unknown so far. I'm a creditor (about £300, which I suspect I won't see). I can't get to the creditors' meeting next week but am looking for a proxy who can, so we may find out more. • One wonders of course what position this leaves Jeff Noon in. *Pollen* is at the

proof stage....' Review copies have appeared, though rather late. Ringpull had six-figure debts and was tipped over the edge by its instant book on footballer Eric Cantona—which infringed the copyright of *Cantona: My Story* and needed to be expensively reprinted.

Colin Wilson 'has after nearly 20 years written a sequel to *The Space Vampires*. He's having difficulty finding a publisher to take it on—it's 250,000 words long. Oddly enough, I think the vastness would add to its commercial potential, but then I'm not a (practising) publisher!' (*Paul Barnett*)

Convallamarin

Until 7 May • **Star Trek Exhibition**, City Arts Centre, Edinburgh. £3.50 at door, £2 kids/unwaged. 10am-5:30pm Mon/Tue/Sat, 10am-9pm Wed/Thu/Fri, noon-5pm Sun.

13 Apr • **Ringpull Creditors' Meeting**, Stephen Conn & Co, 2nd Floor, 17 St Ann's Sq, Manchester, M2 7PW. 11am.

14-17 Apr • **Confabulation** (Eastercon), Britannia International Hotel, London Docklands. No more mail registrations: £25 reg at Wellington on 6 April, £35 at door. Day memberships £10 Fri or Mon, £15 Sat or Sun. Supporting members can have 1 day free, or full membership at the door for £15.

20 Apr • **Clarke Award** presentation, The Conservatory pub. With Colin Greenland as MC. Doors open 6pm or so.

29-30 Apr • **Babcom 95** (*Babylon 5*), NEC, Birmingham. Huge big event, assumed to be Significantly Non-Cheap. Contact 22 Reindeer Court, City Centre, Worcester, WR1 2DS.

14 May • **Fantasy Fair**, Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. GoH Bryan Talbot, Stephen Gallagher. 10:30am-4pm. £1 admission. Contact 58 Pennington, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 0RB.

17 May • **Roy Lewis** of *The Evolution Man* fame gives a talk to Richmond Writers' Circle, 8pm: Room 14, Richmond Adult & Community College, Parkshot, Richmond, Surrey. All welcome. £1.00 at door. Directions: (01734) 876572. [JB]

14-15 Oct • **Octocon** (Irish national event), Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, nr Dublin. £12 reg—that's *Irish* pounds. Contact (2xiRC) 30 S Circular Rd, Dublin 8, Ireland.

27-31 Oct • **Welcome to my Nightmare** (horror part of UK Year of Literature Festival), Swansea. Details to follow. Contact 14 Druslyn Rd, West Cross, Swansea, SA3 5QQ.

3-5 Nov • **ReCONTAniméTed**, Grand Hotel, Birmingham, £16 reg (£21 from 1 May, £26 from 1 Nov). SAE to 13 Prescott Clo, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 ORD. 01295 256284.

2-3 Mar 96 • **Microcon 16**, Exeter Univ. Contact Darrel Manuel, Cornwall House, St German's Rd, Exeter, EX4 6TG.

5-8 Apr 96 • **Evolution** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, near Heathrow. Fan GoHs announced: Paul Kincaid and Maureen Kincaid Speller. £20 reg to 18 April—£24 thereafter. Contact 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

24-7 May 96 • **Inconsistent** aka Inconsequential V: third in the sf/humour con sequence (oh, these subtle fannish wits). 'Somewhere in the Midlands.' £15 reg to end May 95. Contact Flat 1, 31 Saxon Rd, South Norwood, London, SE25 5EQ.

Rumblings • **Microcon**: GoH Ramsey Campbell had fun searching the Exeter campus for this 'most thoroughly concealed convention'. The map on the back of the programme book had a pointer saying *You Are Here* and indicating the middle of a pond. So I found some security guards and showed them the programme, and they hunted for ages through this list of the day's events—and were suddenly inspired! "This

would be the Morris Dancers' Buffet Lunch, right?" Portrait of noted horror author nervously checking his trousers for small bells and ribbons. • **The Scottish Conbention's** latest scare has been the merry discovery that they were passing around virus-infected membership database disks. ('Am I the only person using an anti-virus program in the whole of the Indecision team?' writes a bemused Anon. 'What are they all doing, sticking their heads in the sand and muttering "it'll never happen to me...?") Fearless co-chair *Martin Easterbrook* wishes me to quash vile rumours, some of them emanating from the committee itself, that the Central (fan/party) Hotel was fully booked before any actual booking forms went out. Always glad to oblige, boss.

Infinitely Improbable

'This ... Remarkable ... Book.' Mighty publisher Jim Baen plans a national US advertising campaign for Newt Gingrich's clunky, ghosted alternate-world sf novel *1945*. With characteristic scrupulous integrity, he's basing the publicity on quotes avowedly 'taken a tiny, tiny bit out of context' from sarky comments on advance extracts. For example, the book's purple passage about a 'pouting sex kitten' found 'sitting athwart' the hero's chest provoked the critical dig, 'This is an instant classic which will be draped athwart the Speaker's neck by his opponents in every election he runs in from now on.' You guessed it: Baen is quoting only the phrase 'An instant classic!' ... and loudly expresses hopes of being sued for it, since 'The only thing I'm missing is the publicity of a court action.' [CM/MJW]

Tiptree Award. Co-winners were Nancy Springer for *Larque on the Wing* and Ursula Le Guin for 'The Matter of Seggri' (in *Crank*)—this being the first time the 'gender-bending' sf award has gone to a short story. [LS]

C.o.A. Etc. *Merf Adamson* seeks fandom again after 15 years: 18 Asket Gdns, Oakwood, Leeds, LS8 2NW. *Sandra Bond*, Longfield, Worthing (Working? Watling? Oh, the joys of hand-written faxes) St, Gailey, Stafford, ST19 5PR. *Mike Glycer/File 770*, 145 E.Sierra Madre Bl., Apt.10, Sierra Madre, CA 91024, USA. *Andrew I.Porter*, man of dignity, wishes fans to put away childish things such as calling him 'Andy'. Mr Porter is 49.

SFX is a new magazine about sf ('mainly films and TV, but also books, comics, models, toys ...')—out soon from Future Publishing in Bath, best known for their computer titles. Editor Matt Bielby; deputy editor Dave Golder. The usual suspects Barnett, Langford and Stableford are leaping aboard.

Fanfundery. **GUFF** was decisively won by Ian Gunn and Karen Pender-Gunn with 87 first-preference votes (Kim Huett got 19, LynC 4, Hold Over Funds 4, No Pref 1). So they will attend The Scottish Convention, poor things. • **TAFF** deadline is 29 April: this month is your last chance to vote right, i.e. for Dan Steffan! • **DUFF**: Pat and Roger Sims of Cincinnati won the subsidized DUFF trip from America to Thylacon, the 1995 Australian National Convention in Tasmania.

Award Shortlists. *Philip K.Dick*: Alexander Becher, *Rim*; Jack Cady, *Inagehi*; Ian McDonald, *Scissors Cut Paper Wrap Stone*; Lisa Mason, *Summer of Love*; Lance Olsen, *Tonguing the Zeitgeist*; Robert Charles Wilson, *Mysterium*. • **BFA** novel award: Iain M.Banks, *Feersum Endjinn*; Eric Brown, *Engineman*; Greg Egan, *Permutation City*; Gwyneth Jones, *North Wind*; Ian McDonald, *Necroville*. • **Lancs County Library/Natwest Children's Book of the Year** ... Garry Kilworth gloats over the shortlisting of his sf novel *The Electric Kid*.

Random Fandom. *Andrew Bartmess*, fresh from complaining that the US Franklin Mint stole his *Star Trek* 3D chess rules to go with their *Trek* chess set, now reports even more bitterly that since he took legal action the Mint is wickedly short-changing purchasers by shipping sets *without* his rules.... • *Rob Hansen*, demon driver, had a brief but intense dispute with a steel post: his car lost and is off the road for an unknown period. • *Michael J.Walsh* of the World Fantasy Con despairs of fandom's sf awareness. As noted approvingly in *A91*, the WFC is nominally organized by The Baltimore Gun Club: far from remarking 'Aha! Jules Verne!', fans tend to look blank or even become actively stropky about the link with 'some collection of gun nuts....'

Publishing Fun. I can hardly wait for *New York Smells* by Caroline McKeldin (Oct): 'The first and only scratch'n'sniff (interactive) postcard book of New York City ... pictures (and smells of): a pretzel vendor, flowers on Park Avenue, Lady Liberty (complete with a smelly Hudson River), the garlic smells of Little Italy, the smell of hanging ducks in Chinatown, Stadium hot dogs, Deli pickles ... hay from a horse-drawn buggy, racks of fresh bagels, the pungent odor from the Fulton Fish market and exhaust fumes from the interminable traffic jams.' [DH] Inspiration for a scratch'n'sniff fanzine here: the choking fumes surrounding Abigail Frost, the rich ambience of Greg Pickersgill's beard, the chocolate whiff exuding from Pam Wells, the ancient musty reek from within Ian Sorensen's wallet, the confidence-compelling pheromones of any Intersection board member....

Aboriginal SF, that peculiarly named US sf magazine, has suspended publication and is returning submissions unread. However, editor Charles Ryan hints at rescue plans. [SFC]

Wired UK carries Charles Platt's searing account of how he competed in a high-profile Turing test with \$100,000 offered for an AI program that convinced the judges it was a real person. None did, but by a cunning strategy of 'being moody, irritable and obnoxious', Charles emerged as the 'most human human' in the test (prize: a nice bronze medal). For next year's competition, AI programmers will surely take the hint and make their creations rude and annoying ... Artificial Platt.

Science Week featured a panel on 'Are writers demonizing the new genetics?' *Jonathan Cowie* pukes: 'Very limp and poorly organized. The writers were Maureen Duffy (*Gorsaga*) and Stephen Gallagher (*Chimera*) ... I was surprised Paul McAuley was not there, or other sf writers we know and love: were they even asked? The presentations were what you would have expected at an sf con 15 years ago, with discussion tied up in that old undergraduate chestnut "what is the responsibility of scientists to society for their science" (analogous to a con panel getting bogged down on defining sf). There was no speaker co-ordination: later speakers lamented that what they planned to say had been covered. References to sf were virtually limited to *Frankenstein*, H.G.Wells, Michael Crichton ... and the works of Duffy and Gallagher. The Q&A session saw a steady trickle from the auditorium to the pub. Conclusions? There were none. Not worth the £10 ticket.'

Revelations. A convivial *Ramsey Campbell* was asked at Microcon which UK editor caused him such pain with the first version of his novel *The Claw* (see Afterword in the 1992 reissue). 'Wild horses would not make me admit it was Rosie Cheetham,' he declared staunchly.

Thog's Masterclass. 'Satisfied at seeing all of them go down, one by one, through his keyhole, Morgan, fully dressed but wearing only his socks, eased out of his room and down to Green's.' (Jack Chalker, 'Now Falls the Cold, Cold Night', *Alternate Presidents*) *David Bratman* wishes to explain: 'Nudism and the ability to squeeze through keyholes are features of Chalker's alternate 1856 not otherwise discussed in the story' • 'Her languid arms reached up for him, her nipples curled convulsively.' (Paul Di Filippo, 'Distributed Mind', *Interzone* 94 ... spung!) 'The soundless thrum of maneuvering thrusters rumbled through the jumpship's deck like a dragon's purr.' (Julia Ecklar, 'The Human Animal', *Analogue* 4/95)

A92 Correction.—*Patrick Nielsen Hayden* explains the Nebulas: 'No, the tie was for fourth place, resulting in six Nebula nominees. Then the jury added an additional nominee, as they almost always do—for a total of seven. In fact, noting which works were on the preliminary ballot, it's pretty obvious that the jury's addition was *Temporary Agency*.'

Fifteen Years Ago ... *Brian Aldiss* soared to fame in *Private Eye's* 'Pseuds Corner' when he wrote of James Joyce: 'this Torquemada of tale-telling began as an insipid poet: *Lean out of the window / Golden-hair, / I heard you singing / A merry air*. Whether or not the first word was a misprint for "leap" has been disputed.' (*Ansible* 25, April 1980.)

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