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Ansible 228 July 2006

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Web ansible.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Bill Rotsler**. Available for SAE or operating manual for offog.

Editorial. Did I mention that I've written a book about Harry Potter?

Fall of the Sky Lords

Paul Barnett of Mythic Entertainment (who is not 'our' author, aka John Grant) explains the High Fantasy nuances of *Warhammer Online*: 'The best thing is that all the races are total clichés! Orcs are soccer hooligans! Dwarves are like Northerners. They like to drink, they spend all their time down pits and they've got no money ... and the Dark Elves are plotting ... but we don't care about that! Everybody fights everybody, forever, and that's all we're really interested in.' [GS]

Malcolm Edwards, with Rob Holdstock, Roy Kettle and others, returned to Kensal Green Crematorium on 16 June for the interment of John Brosnan's ashes. Legal complications had delayed this ceremony for over a year, since John left no will, but ... 'Gollancz had paid the delivery advance for the unfinished *Mothership Awakening* shortly before his death to tide him over financially—and we therefore decided to spend a good chunk of it on a memorial plaque. • So we did that, stood around for a bit thinking our various individual thoughts, then came back home and sat in the garden for the rest of the day drinking far too much. Rob and Roy have all the drafts and disks for *Mothership Awakening*, and will finish it between them for publication next year. • We retained a small quantity of the ashes, which Garry and Annette Kilworth are going to take out to Australia later this year and scatter somewhere appropriate, perhaps a vineyard. You have to buy a box for the purpose from the crematorium, which proved to have two stickers on the underside. One said "John Brosnan"; the other, "Made in Poland". None of us had known that.'

Kim Newman pondered on his and Paul McAuley's Sidewise Award nomination (see below): 'We've worked out that the only possible way to win any awards would be to travel back in time and give Columbus directions to India, thereby obliterating all the competition from history ... though that would probably mean the creation of a timeline in which there were no awards to win. So it's back to pins in dolls ...'

The Perishers, the much-loved *Daily Mirror* cartoon strip first seen in 1958, came to an end on 10 June. [C] There was no explanation, but apparently the backlog of scripts by long-time writer Maurice Dodd (died 31 December 2005) had run out. No more Eyeballs in the Sky....

Terry Pratchett has a crushing reply for interviewers who ask him whether he'd appear on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*: 'No, I happen to be one of those people whose memory shuts down under pressure. The answers would come to me in the middle of the night in my sleep! Besides, I am a millionaire.' (*ALCS News* interview, May)

J.K. Rowling was voted 'Greatest Living British Writer' by readers of the new UK *Book Magazine*, winning by an unspecified 'long margin'. Terry Pratchett came second; other familiar names on the list include Philip Pullman (6), Iain (M) Banks (14), Alasdair Gray (=19), Neil Gaiman (=21), J.G. Ballard (=28), Jasper Fforde (=36), Diana Wynne Jones (=36), and Michael Moorcock (=44). Muriel Spark appeared in 15th place as, presumably, Greatest Living British Writer Who Is Dead.

Theodore Sturgeon's celebrated Law was (mis)quoted in an article by Paul Ross about the awfulness of TV, and Sturgeon himself received short shrift: 'Oh, and that mention of sci-fi reminds me. Sturgeon's Law—the one about 95 per cent of everything being crap—you've probably never heard of him. That's because his novels and stories are pretty poor. Ironically, he's not part of the five per cent that makes the rest of the rubbish bearable.' (*Independent*, 12 June) [LB]

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro is the latest horror/dark fantasy author to be declared a Living Legend by the International Horror Guild.

Consectaneous

7 Jul • **British Fantasy Society** 'Awards Showcase' open night, Devereux pub, Essex St, off Strand, London. 6.30pm on. All welcome.

10 Jul • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Top floor, 6.30pm. With Pat Cadigan, Amanda Hemingway, Geoff Ryman.

4-6 Aug • **MeCon 9**, Queen's Elms Centre, Malone Rd, Belfast.

£18/€27 reg; £20/ 30 at door. £5/ 8 supp. Cheques to QUB Science Fiction & Fantasy Society. Contact: 99 Malone Rd, Belfast, BT9 6SP.

7-13 Aug • **Gatecon UK** (*Stargate*), Cheltenham. £120 reg; £55 per day. Online booking only, it seems: www.gatecon.com.

18-21 Aug • **Discworld Convention IV**, Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley. £50 reg, but the event is near its limit of 750 members. Online registration has now closed. Please query before booking: PO Box 102, Royston, Herts, SG8 7ZJ; or, preferably, info@dwcon.org.

23-27 Aug • **L.A.con IV** (64th Worldcon), Anaheim, California. Now \$200 reg; same at door. Day: \$75 (\$50 Wed, \$60 Sun). Contact L.A.con IV, c/o SCIFI Inc, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

1-3 Sep • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Manchester. £70 reg; £30 day. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

22-24 Sep • **Fantasycon 2006**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James Street, Nottingham. Now £55 reg; BFS members £50. Day rate for Saturday only: £20. Contact (SAE) Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ. *Main hotel now fully booked*; overflow rooms available.

10-12 Nov • **Armadacon 18**, Novotel, Plymouth. GoH Richard Bonehill, Trevor Truran. £25 reg, £22 concessions. Contact 4 Gleneagle Avenue, Mannamead, Plymouth, PL3 5HL.

10-12 Nov • **Novacon 36**, Quality Inn, Walsall. GoH Ken MacLeod. £36 reg; £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

6-9 Apr 07 • **Convoy** (Eastercon), Adelphi, Liverpool. Now £55 reg, £27.50 supp. Contact Convoy, 81 Western Rd, London, E13 9JE.

19-22 July 07 • **Sectus 2007** (Harry Potter conference), Park Crescent Conf Centre, London (opposite Great Portland Street tube). £45 reg to 31 Oct 06; £55 to 31 Jan 07; £65 thereafter. Contact 251 Reddicap Heath Rd, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands, B75 7ES.

21-24 Mar 08 • **Orbital** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Now £45 reg; £20 supp or junior (12-17), £5 child (5-11), £1 infant. Contact 8 Windmill Close, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3AL.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Transhumanist Dr Nick Bostrom talks about genetic modification of humanity and draws the usual line: 'When I first got interested in this area a few years ago, the discussions would typically revolve around the question, "Is this science fiction? Or are we dealing in realistic future possibilities?"' (*Guardian*, 9 May) [JJ]

R.I.P. Jim Baen (1943-2006), noted US sf editor and founder of Baen Books, died on 28 June following a stroke on the 12th. He was 62. [SJD] He began his publishing career at Ace in 1972, and after a stint editing *Galaxy* and *If* magazines returned to Ace in 1977 as sf editor (later executive editor and vice-president), and also editor of the paperback magazine *Destinies*. In 1980 he joined Tor, and left in 1983 to form the still-successful Baen Books, noted for innovative use of free e-texts and extracts to promote printed books. (A personal note: he gave me some much-needed boosts by publishing Langford stories in *Destinies* and, when I feared its life was over, reissuing *The Space Eater* as a 1987 Baen title. Thanks again, Jim.) • **Tim Hildebrandt** (1939-2006), US fantasy artist who was one half of the well-known Brothers Hildebrandt, died on 11 June at age 67. With his (surviving) twin brother Greg he created the original, iconic *Star Wars* poster, a series of 1970s Tolkien calendars, and many paperback covers. Since 1982 they had worked separately. • **George Kashdan** (1928-2006), US editor and writer for DC Comics from c1946 to 1968, died on 3 June. His titles included *Aquaman*. [PDF] • **Gyorgy Ligeti** (1923-2006), Hungarian avant-garde composer best known in sf circles for his contributions to the score of *2001*, died on 12 June aged 83. • **Rod MacLeish** (1926-2006), US radio/TV broadcaster and author of the fantasy novel *Prince Ombra* (1982), died on 1 July at age 80. The noted poet Archibald MacLeish was his uncle. [AIP] • **Karl T. Pfllock** (1943-2006), US ex-CIA author of some short sf and the debunking book *Roswell: Inconvenient Facts and the Will to Believe* (2001), died on 5 June; he was 63. [SFWA] • **Allan Prior** (1922-2006), UK playwright, novelist and prolific TV scriptwriter who wrote five episodes of *Blake's 7*, died on 1 June. He

was 84. [SR] • **Aaron Spelling** (1923-2006), highly prolific US TV 9producer responsible for *Fantasy Island* and *Charmed*, died on 23 June aged 83. • **Richard Stahl** (1932-2006), US character actor whose chief genre credits were *Slaughterhouse Five*, *Beware! The Blob*, and *Highway to Heaven*, died on 18 June; he was 74. [SJD] • **Lennie Weinrib** (1935-2006), US actor who did voice work for TV cartoons including *Batman*, *H.R. Pufnstuff* (which he also wrote) and *Scooby-Doo*, died on 28 June at age 71. [GW] • **Arthur Widmer** (1914-2006), US film special effects pioneer who invented Ultra Violet Travelling Matte (forerunner of the bluescreen process), died on 28 May aged 91. [CH/GW]

As Others See Us II. Despite critic Diane Kristine's suggestion that Scott Peters 'downplays the science fiction elements' in his post-abduction TV saga *The 4400*, Peters himself cheerfully admits the worst: 'I think any time you have a world where 4400 people appear out of a ball of light, you've already got a pretty strong sci-fi convention.' (Blogcritics.org, 7 June 07) Though not quite as big as a Worldcon. [DB]

Sidewise Awards shortlists: LONG Ian R. MacLeod, *The Summer Isles*; Sophia McDougall, *Romanitas*; Paul Park, *A Princess of Roumania*. • SHORT William Barton, 'Harvest Moon' (*Asimov's* 9/05); A.M. Dellamonica, 'The Illuminated Heretic' (*Alternate Generals III*); Kim Newman & Paul J. McAuley, 'Prix Victor Hugo Script'; Jason Stoddard, 'Panacea' (*SciFiction*, 9/05); Lois Tilton, 'Pericles the Tyrant' (*Asimov's*, 10/05)

Court Circular. **Debbie Miller** (aka Miller Lau) reports from high society: 'Jessica Rydill was married to Stephen Saunders on June 3rd, in the Guildhall in Bath. An afternoon party was held at Jessica's parents house—in glorious sunshine, hurrah! We all sat in our summer finery drinking champers in the garden. The event was attended by Sarah Ash, Juliet McKenna, Deborah J Miller & of course, the now Mrs Saunders, aka Jessica Rydill. A veritable feast of female Fantasy authors.... (I haven't yet thought of a suitable collective noun, I'm sure you can Mr Langford!) Let me think ... how about coven?'

Bram Stoker Awards. NOVEL (tie) David Morrell, *Creepers*; Charlee Jacob, *Dread in the Beast*. FIRST NOVEL Weston Ochse, *Scarecrow Gods*. SHORT Gary Braunbeck, 'We Now Pause for Station Identification'. LONG Joe Hill, 'Best New Horror'. ANTHOLOGY Del Howison & Jeff Gelb, *Dark Delicacies*. COLLECTION Joe Hill, *Twentieth Century Ghosts*. NON-FICTION Stephen Jones & Kim Newman, *Horror: Another 100 Best Books*. POETRY (tie) Michael A. Arnzen, 'Freakidents'; Charlee Jacob, 'Sineater'. LIFE ACHIEVEMENT Peter Straub. SMALL PRESS Necessary Evil Press. [ED]

Thog's Diacritical Masterclass. The three-eyed barbarian chief of a lost tribe speaks: "I am Oom-laut," he said, and those two words seemed to convey the impression that he was afraid of nothing.' (M. Howard Lane, 'Queen of the Huallaga', *Mystery Adventures* 11/36) [DL]

As Others See Us III. In space, no one can hear you busk. A report on (the lack of) buskers in Washington DC subways conjures up that eerie noiselessness of all sf gatherings: 'Somewhere in the bowels of New York's subway there are bongo players and mariachi bands. The tunnels of the Paris Metro are filled with musicians playing nearly every kind of instrument. In button-down Washington? People waiting in sci-fi silence.' (Lena H. Sun, *Washington Post*, 15 June) [MMW]

Mythopoeic Awards shortlist: ADULT Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad*; Lois McMaster Bujold, *The Hallowed Hunt*; Neil Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*; Tanith Lee, *Metallic Love*; Tim Pratt, *The Strange Adventures of Rangergirl*. • CHILDREN'S Holly Black, *Valiant*; Diane Duane, *Wizards at War*; Clare B. Dunkle, *By These Ten Bones*; Jonathan Stroud, *The Bartimaeus Trilogy (The Amulet of Samarkand, The Golem's Eye, Ptolemy's Gate)*. • SCHOLARSHIP: INKLINGS Marjorie Burns, *Perilous Realms: Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle-earth*; Verlyn Flieger, *Interrupted Music: The Making of Tolkien's Mythology*; J.R.R. Tolkien, *Smith of Wootton Major: Expanded Edition* ed. Verlyn Flieger; Wayne G. Hammond & Christina Scull, *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion*; Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. • SCHOLARSHIP: GENERAL Jerry Griswold, *The Meanings of 'Beauty and the Beast'*; Deborah O'Keefe, *Readers in Wonderland: The Liberating Worlds of Fantasy Fiction from Dorothy to Harry Potter*; David R. Loy & Linda Goodhew, *The Dharma of Dragons and Daemons: Buddhist Themes in Modern Fantasy*; Jennifer Schacker, *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England*. Winners announced: August.

Small Press. I thought it must be a hoax, but no: the latest book from Wildside Press is Jim Theis's 1970 'classic', *The Eye of Argon*. [SW]

Outraged Letters. **Mick Davison:** 'We moved into our house in Marlow in 1974. In the attic, we found some drawings but didn't think about them until recently.... They are by Hans Giger, and are signed on the rear. The woman we bought the house from appeared to be German, but we now realise that she may have been Swiss, because the

drawings are to "Heidy" and signed "Hansruedi", so Giger would appear to have signed them to her. The drawings are signed on the front "Giger 66". I haven't got a clue where I could take them for valuation, or just to verify their authenticity.' Any knowledgeable fans out there? • **Simon R. Green** had another near miss: 'Delighted as I was for *Deathstalker Coda* to make the short list for the *Romantic Times*' annual SF award (no, I didn't know they had one either), it has now become clear that DC did not, in fact, actually, win. Maybe instead of repeatedly killing you off in the books, I should have written you a love scene....' • **Roger Burton West** grumbles: 'You might like to be aware that the Quality Inn Walsall, site of this year's Novacon, is charging deposits in advance even to members who have given credit card numbers. This is dubious in the extreme (with the credit card number they already have a guarantee of payment if the member doesn't show up), not authorised on the hotel booking form, unique in my experience of hotels, and something about which I think fandom should be warned.' They also keep the deposit if you cancel in advance owing to ill health, as I learned in 2005.

International Horror Guild. Novel award shortlist: Brett Easton Ellis, *Lunar Park*; Elizabeth Kostova, *The Historian*; Hilary Mantel, *Beyond Black*; Peter Raftos, *The Stone Ship*; Carl-Johan Vallgren (trans Paul Britten-Austin), *The Horrific Sufferings of the Mind-Reading Monster Hercules Barefoot*. • The IHG anthology shortlist consists of 'No Award', provoking an open letter of complaint signed by 68 horror notables and circulated by Stephen Jones. This bewails the judges' inability to find the required minimum of 3 worthy titles for nomination in this category: 'As a result, in our opinion, they have brought into question the entire value of the IHG Award and its standing in our community.' Other professionals, some of whom refused to sign the letter, seem to agree that 2005 wasn't a terribly good year for horror anthologies.

The Dead Past. *25 Years Ago*, a London sf landmark passed: 'Dark They Were & Golden Eyed' bookshop was selling off all stock at half price for cash early this month: rumours of £100,000 debts and incipient closure have come to my ears....' All too true. Meanwhile, Andrei Tarkovsky bewailed his fate in the *NFT Bulletin*: 'I do feel that *Solaris* is the least successful of my films because I was never able to eliminate completely the science-fiction association.' (*Ansible* 19, July 1981)

Fanfundery. TAFF. The 2007 eastbound race was announced on 25 June. Aspiring candidates from North America need to provide nominations from 5 fans (3 NA, 2 European), a 100-word platform, \$20 bond, and a pledge that if they win, they'll travel to Britain for the 2007 Eastercon, Convoy. Contact: Suzanne Tompkins (NA administrator), PO Box 25075, Seattle, WA 98165, USA; SuzleT at aol dot com. • *The TransAtlantic Hearing Aid* (1985): this is the Dave Langford TAFF trip report, whose publisher Rob Jackson has found a stash of copies in the attic. (Not, alas, signed by H.R. Giger.) A5 booklet, 74pp+covers, many fine cartoons: £5 or \$10 post free from me, with all proceeds to TAFF.

Hideous Gaffes! A227: Though Paul Gleason claimed for most of his career to have been born in 1944, his actual dates are 1939-2006 and he died at age 67. [MY]

SFWA increased its dues by \$20 on 1 July: the 10x ratio between annual and life membership takes the latter from \$500 to \$700.

Thog's Masterclass. *Eyeballs in the Sky Dept.* 'His eyes ran like weasels over the faces of the other players ...' (Philip José Farmer, 'Attitudes', *F&SF* 10/53) [PDF] • *Dept of Spung!* 'Even through two layers of combat armour, I felt her nipples brush against my back ...' (Karl Hansen, *War Games*, 1981) • *Close Shave Dept.* 'Moonlight ran up her cheek like a knife.' (Nancy Kress, *Beggars in Spain*, 1991) [BA] • *Dept of Submersion.* 'The impact rattled his bones, and he dog-paddled furiously before he realized that the flood was only waist-deep at the bottom, instead of wholly submerged as it would have been in the real world.' (James Stoddard, *The High House*, 1998) [NR] • *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'The priest's richer, deeper voice chased the Thiefmaker's objection right back down his throat.' 'The Thiefmaker tried to let a vaguely sincere expression scurry onto his face, where it froze in evident discomfort.' (Scott Lynch, *The Lies of Locke Lamora*, 2006) [RGP] • *Dept of Sound Effects.* 'If the professor's machine body had been equipped with a heart, it would have sung for joy at these welcome thought impressions.' (Neil R. Jones, 'The Jameson Satellite', 1931) [TMeD]

Ansible 228 © Dave Langford, 2006. Thanks to Brian Ameringen, Liz Batty, Ian Cavell, Damien Broderick, Ellen Datlow, Paul Di Filippo, Steven J. Dunn, Chip Hitchcock, Ian Johnson, Denny Lien, Tim McDaniel, Andrew I. Porter, Nonie Rider, Steve Rogerson, Graham Sleight, Gary Wilkinson, Sean Wallace, Martin Morse Wooster, Mark Young, and our Hero Distributors: Roger G. Peyton (Bum Group News), Janica Murray (North America), SCIS, and Alan Stewart (Australia). Special extra grovels to Gollancz. 5 Jul 06