

Ansible



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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: **Harry Bell**(issimo). Available for SAE or a porgee pouch.

Convoy Cancelled. As warned in *Ansible* 230, the 2007 Eastercon needed a hefty membership boost and had committed itself to getting further assurances about Adelphi Hotel security in order to continue. One or both failed to materialize, and the cancellation was announced on 31 October. The Convoy bid was assembled late in the day when no one else was prepared to bid for the 2007 event. Now, though, plans for a last-minute replacement—to be held over Easter, though probably on a smaller scale than Eastercon—are being energetically discussed.

Minions of the PUKON

Margaret Atwood ran true to form in the *Wired* anthology of six-word sf stories: 'Starlet sex scandal. Giant squid involved.' [EK]

John Clute revealed more or less unexpected longings in a recent appreciation of Kim Stanley Robinson: 'A tureen might balance on the top of the head of Stan Robinson, like the antlers of Bambi ... We noticed the low center of gravity of the man. The assumption of balance. The calmness of the eyes under the tureen one kept longing to place upon the head.' (*Capclave 2006 Convention Guide*) [KMcA]

Chris Priest saw *The Prestige* film at last and was alarmed by the dropping of a name that wasn't in his novel, nor in the annals of magic: one scene turns on the appropriate use of a stage magician's Langford knot, or 'Langford double'. ('I can slip a Langford under water ...') • *Meanwhile, on 5 November*: 'The premiere was a blast of tremendously enjoyable unreality, the like of which I had never experienced before. It was all incredibly good fun, with wonderful food, more champagne than we could drink (but had a good shot at, and did drink more than we should have), plus glittery company with names and faces of vast familiarity ... Michael Caine, Andy Serkis, Hugh Jackman, and so on. We have Lizzy and Simon's photos to prove most of it. • I thought the red carpet outside the cinema where the premiere took place would be laid from the door of the cinema to the kerb, where the car would drop us. Instead, the car stopped what felt like two tube stops away from Leicester Square, whereupon we were confronted with a red carpet stretching away into the distance. It was lined on both sides by hundreds of fans with cameras, all calling my name and trying to get me to wave to them. (They had a funny way of pronouncing "Chris" ... it sounded more like "Hugh". Wonder if that was anything to do with the actor who was walking a few paces behind us?)' [CP]

Senator Rick Santorum (R) had a blinding political insight: the USA has avoided terrorist attack for five years because the 'Eye of Mordor' was instead fixed on Iraq. 'As the hobbits are going up Mount Doom, the Eye of Mordor is being drawn somewhere else,' Santorum said ... 'It's being drawn to Iraq and it's not being drawn to the U.S.,' he continued. 'You know what? I want to keep it on Iraq. I don't want the Eye to come back here to the United States.' (*Herald Standard*, 17 Oct) [JDB] Exactly who are the hobbits in this analogy remains uncertain. We await a new Middle East analysis when Santorum has read Doc Smith.

Michael Swanwick writes: 'I was on a panel at Capclave this past weekend, where—at last!—Patrick Nielsen Hayden explained reading for the *Wired* Generation: "The book is the source code, the brain is the compiler, and the experience produced in the reader is the executable."'

Terri Windling's Devon house went on the market with a unique selling point: 'The images adorning the walls of Weavers Cottage were created by a British artist who won an Oscar for best set decoration on *The Lord Of The Rings*. Alan Lee's *The Goblin Market* mural is based on Christina Rossetti's 19th century "fairy tale" poem of female sexuality. It is housed in the kitchen ...' Other artists involved were Brian Froud and Charles Vess. The estate agent naturally tries to have it both ways: 'the murals had added £25,000 to the value of the cottage. But the new owner could paint over them if they wished.' (*Metro*, 10 October) [FM]

Contristation

10-12 Nov • **Armadacon 18**, Novotel, Plymouth. Now £30 reg.

10-12 Nov • **Novacon 36**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. £40 at the door.

22 Nov • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews,

London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Jo Fletcher.

8 Dec • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Devereux pub, Essex St, off the Strand, London. 6.30pm onwards. All welcome.

6-9 Apr 07 • **Convoy** (Eastercon), Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool: CANCELLED. Refunds will follow. Contact Convoy, 81 Western Rd, London, E13 9JE. Watch this space for a possible alternative.

19-22 July 07 • **Sectus 2007** (Harry Potter), Park Crescent Conf Centre, London. Now £55 reg until 31 Jan 07; £65 thereafter. Contact 251 Reddicap Heath Rd, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands, B75 7ES.

3-5 Aug 07 • **MeCon 10**, Queen's Elms Centre, 78 Malone Rd, Belfast. GoH Iain M. Banks. £14/£12 concessions, rising to £16/£14 concessions on 1 Jan 07. Contact 115 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6SP.

2-4 Nov 07 • **Novacon 37**, Walsall (again). £35 reg, or £34 at Novacon 36. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. *Slate* can tell what's too good to be sf: '*Battlestar Galactica* (Sci Fi, Fridays at 9 p.m. ET), now entering its third season, is not science fiction—or "speculative fiction" or "SF," or whatever you're supposed to call it these days. Ignore the fact that the series is a remake of a late-'70s Star Wars knockoff. Forget that its action variously unfolds on starships and on a colonized planet called New Caprica. And never mind its stunning special effects, which outclass the endearingly schlocky stuff found elsewhere on its network. Sullen, complex, and eager to obsess over grand conspiracies and intimate betrayals alike, it is TV noir.' (Troy Patterson, 13 October) [MG]

R.I.P. **Paul Ableman** (1923-2006), UK author and playwright whose metafictional sf novel *The Twilight of the Vilp* appeared in 1969, died on 25 October aged 79. [JE] • **Ed Benedict** (1912-2006), animator of *The Flintstones*, died on 28 August; he was 94. [PDF] • **Ron Bennett** (1933-2006), long-time UK fan who was the 1958 TAFF delegate and edited the classic sf newsletter *Skyrack* (1959-1971, now archived on line), died on 5 November soon after being diagnosed with leukaemia. He was 73. [AB] Another pillar of fandom gone. • **Nelson S. Bond** (1908-2006), old-time US author and rare book dealer whose first sf story appeared in *Astounding* in 1937, died on 4 November; he would have been 98 this month. SFWA honoured him as Author Emeritus in 1998. [AIP/RR] Who could forget his other 1937 title, 'Mr Mergenthwirker's Lobbies'? • **Nelson de la Rosa** (1968-2006), Dominican-born 'world's smallest actor' (at 2' 4") who was Moreau's henchman in the dire *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1996 remake), died on 22 October aged 38. [GW] • **William Franklyn** (1925-2006), veteran UK actor who took over Peter Jones's role as the Book for the 2004 Radio 4 *Hitchhiker*, died in October; he was 81. [SJD] • **Phyllis Kirk** (1929-2006), US film actress who was the menaced heroine in *House of Wax* (1953), died on 19 October aged 77. [CH] • **Arthur Hill** (1922-2006), Canadian-born character actor whose genre credits included *The Andromeda Strain*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* and *One Magic Christmas*, died on 22 October aged 84. [SJD] • **Nigel Kneale** (1922-2006), UK tv scriptwriter and novelist most famous for his BBC serials *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953), *Quatermass II* (1955) and *Quatermass and the Pit* (1958-9), died on 29 October. He was 84. Other highly regarded tv productions were his 1954 adaptation of Orwell's *1984*, and the original plays *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1969) and *The Stone Tape* (1972). [JL] • **Darrell Richardson** (?1918-2006), US fan and Southern Baptist minister who was an expert on Edgar Rice Burroughs, died on 19 September aged 88. He had been active in 1940s Cincinnati fandom. [AIP] • **David Stewart** (1960-2006), Irish journalist and sf fan who worked on several Octocons and was a highly effective head of Promotions for the 2005 Glasgow Worldcon, died from oesophageal cancer on 12 October. There are plans for a one-day Dublin event in his memory on 3 February 2007. [POM] • **Philip Strick** (1939-2006), UK film critic and sf enthusiast who taught Britain's first adult sf evening classes and wrote the 1976 *Science Fiction Movies* ('one of the best early books on the subject'—*SF Encyclopedia*), died suddenly on 7 October. He had been a

popular speaker at conventions. ● *Wilson 'Bob' Tucker* (1914-2006), much-honoured US sf author, inventor of the term 'space opera', and unquestioned dean of fandom as we know it, died on 6 October; he was 91. I fondly remember his 1979 UK visit and his insistence on seeking out insignificant young fan Langford 'to shake the hand that tweaked Harlan's nose.' (Don't ask.) A lovable and greatly loved man who 'served for 70 years as the most intelligent and articulate and sophisticated fan the American science-fiction community is ever likely to boast of.' (John Clute, *Independent*, 12 October) ● *Jane Wyatt* (1910-2006, US actress who co-starred in *Lost Horizon* (1937), and much later played Spock's mother in the original *Star Trek* and in *ST IV: The Voyage Home*, died on 20 October; she was 96. Her other genre film was *Amityville: The Evil Escapes* (1989). [AIP] ● LATE ENTRIES: *Pamela Cleaver*, UK children's author and creative writing teacher at UEA, died in November 2005; she published a handful of stories in Richard Davis's *Armada Sci-Fi and Space* anthologies, 1974-1980. [CC] ● *Ivor Latto*, Scots architect who as a fan artist drew covers and interiors for *Speculation*, *Vector*, and other 1960s fanzines, and published one issue of his own zine *Fankle*, reportedly died in Spring 2004. [AIP]

Thog's Translation Masterclass. 'Just before she collapsed, her nipples had pointed proudly to the sky.' ● 'Tyler was fuming with hatred, so much so that he was in tears. He was, in fact, sad.' ● 'Leslie had sensitive ears. Flora's voice seeped into every one of his cells through his eardrums, and rocked him gently from within.' (all Koji Suzuki [of *Ring* fame], *Paradise*, trans Tyran Grillo, 2006) [RF]

World Fantasy Awards, presented on 4 November: NOVEL Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*. NOVELLA Joe Hill, *Voluntary Committal*. SHORT George Saunders, 'CommComm' (*New Yorker* 8/05) ANTHOLOGY Marvin Kaye, ed., *The Fair Folk*. COLLECTION Bruce Holland Rogers, *The Keyhole Opera*. ARTIST James Jean. SPECIAL/PROFESSIONAL Sean Wallace, Prime Books. SPECIAL/NON-PROFESSIONAL David Howe & Stephen Walker, Telos Books. LIFE ACHIEVEMENT John Crowley, Stephen Fabian.

How to Write Headlines. The *Sunday Telegraph* magazine ran a (good and serious) article on James Tiptree Jr by her biographer Julie Phillips, flagged on the front cover as *The Woman from Mars: How a sex-change socialite became a sci-fi god*. ● John M. Ford would surely have laughed no end at the *St Paul Pioneer* headline for his 27 October memorial event: *Crafters of sci-fi attend obscure writer's eulogy*. [ML]

Moving Pictures. The Childsplay tv production of Terry Pratchett's *Johnny and the Bomb* is shortlisted for an International Emmy (results 20 November) and two BAFTAs: best drama and best script. [CS]

Random Fandom. *Saxon Bullock* wants someone, anyone, to rent his flat in Bounds Green (London N11) for 6 months to June 2007, when the lease runs out: 07904 009859. ● *Graham Charnock*, self-confessed Old Man whose fanzine *Phile* appeared in 1966, is 60 this month.

As Others See Us II. *Slate* continues to treat *Battlestar Galactica* as a very special case: 'But most critics take pains to point out that this is more than another dorked-out sci-fi fest.' (13 October) [HF]

Fanfundery. TAFF: with Eastercon 2007 cancelled, Chris Garcia and Mary Kay Kare are racing to ... where? ● *JETS*, the one-off Europe to Nippon 2007 fund, has two known candidates: Liam Proven and Robert Sneddon. Nominations close 13 Nov. ● *Bellissimo!* is a fine showcase of Harry Bell's fan art, compiled by Rob Jackson (Chinthey, Nightingale Ln, Hambrook, nr Chichester, PO18 8UH) and available from him or US agent Rich Coad (124 Cottage Ave, Richmond, CA 94801) at £8/\$14 post paid. A4; 122pp inc card covers. Proceeds to the Get Harry fund (Bell to Corflu 2007); any surplus to TAFF, GUFF, etc.

The Soft Sell. Fine Condition Books offers a particularly mouth-watering copy of Keith Roberts's *Molly Zero*: 'Hard Cover. Very Fine/Very Fine. Signed by Author. An immaculate, unread copy of the first edition of this 1980 novel, published in the genre-defining yellow dustjacket by the golems of Gollancz. Pristine blue boards are kept in place by a spine so tight, solid and clean that the Bridge over the River Kwai would lean on it for support, pages as white as a pair of tennis shorts after their first biological washday and a dw whose superlative condition redefines the concepts of cleanliness and shine ...' [BA]

C.o.A. *Lilian Edwards* has moved to take up a Chair of Internet Law for a year: 52 Orchards Way, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1RE. *Derek Pickles*, Flat 4, Holroyd Ct, 18 Aygill Avenue, Bradford, BD9 6JL.

The Hard Sell. *Battlestar Galactica* (what, again?) has unveiled a sure-fire scheme to boost the viewer figures. Synopsis: 'When Baltar is held hostage and tortured, Six will take pity and mentally "please" him to ease his pain. In fact, nudity and free love are rampant on the Cylon base ship. "We reveal a very sensual, libertine permissiveness among the Cylons," says exec producer Ron Moore. There's even a

rumor that we'll see some three-way Cylon sex. "Oh, that's way more than a rumor," Moore promises.' (*TV Guide*, 2 October) [TW] Oh dear.

International Horror Guild Awards. NOVEL Brett Easton Ellis, *Lunar Park*. SHORT FICTION Rick Bowes, 'There's a Hole in the City' (*Sci Fiction*). MID-LENGTH Caitlín Kiernan, 'La Peau Verte' (*To Charles Fort, with Love*). LONG Gary Braunbeck, 'Kiss of the Mudman' (*Home Before Dark*). COLLECTION Joe Hill, *20th Century Ghosts*. PERIODICAL *Postscripts*. ILLUSTRATED Enki Bilal, *Memories*. NONFICTION S.T. Joshi & Stefan Dziemianowicz, eds, *Supernatural Literature of the World: An Encyclopedia*. ART Clive Barker exhibition: 'Visions of Heaven and Hell (and Then Some)'. LIVING LEGEND Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. All presented 2 November at WFC.

Outraged Letters. *Brian Ameringen* finds science imitating sf: 'Galaxies banged into each other 210 million years ago, scientists believe ...' (*Metro*, 19 Oct) I thought E.E. Smith phrased it rather well [*Two thousand million or so years ago two galaxies were colliding ...*] and what's an order of magnitude between friends! ● *John Bark* has a book report: '... *The Complete Polysyllabic Spree* by Nick Hornby, which records Hornby's awesome embarrassment at buying *Excession* (it has a SPACE SHIP on the cover, cringe, cringe). Feel his struggle with the blurb enigmatic: surely an artefact is something you find in a museum? Learn of his painful tears as he manfully tries to relate the plot to the blurb. Pity his ultimate realization that he does not understand SF at all and must abjure the genre for at least 6 months to recover from the trauma—so different from the intense pleasure felt 100 pages earlier re-reading *The Sirens of Titan* (now apparently forgotten).... Unfortunately, I can't vouch for the entire accuracy of the above (I might have made up the tears) and I'm not buying the thing, not even for *Ansible*.' ● *Sam J. Lundwall* continues to flatter: 'Thank you so much for keeping me on the *Ansible* e-mailing list, a shining light in this darkness before the end of whatever it is the end of. I love your intellectuality, your wit, your hair, your way of sloshing the beer. I am mostly silent these days—problems with eyes and various other orifices and limbs &c makes me live a quiet life—but I do enjoy *Ansible*, my main window into That Void Out There.' ● *Vonda McIntyre* takes *Ansible* to task for not stating with sufficient vigour that 'Ursula [Le Guin] doesn't sell inscribed books. She doesn't sell used books at all. She doesn't donate inscribed books to the library charity, either—she sends them to the University of Oregon to reside with the rest of her papers, because otherwise the books would outpace the room in her house (rather than just the room in her bookcases). Your report in the last *Ansible* kind of overlooked the fact that the McNally book got into the wrong stack by mistake ...'

Small Press. *The Hub* is a new, bimonthly UK sf/f/horror print magazine ('80pp colour glossy') edited by Lee Harris and launching in early December 2006. Contact: www.hub-mag.co.uk or Hub Magazine, 3 Cobble Court Mews, York, YO24 1BB. Payment for fiction is £25/thou, but they have a full list and are not yet accepting submissions.

The Dead Past. *30 Years Ago*, Britain's sf newsletter revealed a little known US election promise from Jimmy Carter: 'If I become President, I'll make every piece of information this country has about UFO sightings available to the public and the scientists. I am convinced that UFOs exist because I have seen one.' (*Checkpoint* 76, Nov 1976)

Group Gropes. *Bristol Beer & Blake's* 7 meeting, 25 Nov: Knight's Templar, Temple Sq, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6DG. 12:30-7pm/after.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Female Characterization.* "So much for your methodical methods!" said Ilsa scornfully, wrinkling her nose at him and putting out her little pink tongue.' (Bill Spencer, 'The Watchtower', *New Worlds* 97, August 1960) [JB] ● *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'I tilted my face up, eyes closed against the stinging drops, and watched the garden flash bright with the crack of lightning.' (C.E. Murphy, *Thunderbird Falls*, 2006) [MKK] ● *Dept of Public Nudity in 18th-Century Glasgow.* '... two hundred and seventy three years ago [...] The inmates of these hovels earned a living by knitting caps and mufflers for the inhabitants of Glasgow who, even then, wore almost nothing else.' (Alasdair Gray, 'The Crank That Made The Revolution', 1971) [BA] ● *Influence of Stephen R. Donaldson Dept.* 'Their horses were foul spine-sprung things, malandered about the necks, beshat greenly across the hindquarters, and trailing ropy harls of yellow snot blown from all the orifices of their heads.' (Charles Frazier, *Cold Mountain*, 1997) [MWW]

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