

Ansible



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SELLOUT? I hereby cease my mocking of endless bloody spinoffs from creations like Terry Pratchett's Discworld ... since I've just been correcting the proofs of my 'own' *The Unseen University Challenge: A Discworld Quizbook* (Gollancz, real soon now). And—as Kingsley Amis once remarked while deftly leaping aboard the James Bond bandwagon—jolly good luck to me.

Planet of the Voles

Arthur C. Clarke's latest has a gracious Foreword explaining that readers should be told exactly what they're buying here: a novel wholly written by the late Mike McQuay, based on a 2½pp Clarke movie outline (also included). This foreword made little impression on whoever designed Gollancz's jacket for *Richter 10* by **ARTHUR C. CLARKE** and Mike McQuay....

Neil Gaiman is temporarily back in England and wearing his TV scrippwriter hat: 'Spent today at the *Neverwhere* offices, near Tower Bridge, doing casting—fascinating; walked away with the "pink" scripts, which have me terrified. I keep opening them and finding phrases like "SCENE 19—Deleted", which I know I never wrote. This weekend I'm going to have to fill the same sort of rôle a plastic surgeon would after a mad axe-wielding thug had done his worst. • Except that the producer and director aren't mad thugs, just people with a practical idea of what we can do in 30 minutes, on time and within our budget. • Also looked around the Freemasons Hall in Holborn, some rooms of which will be doubling for the British Museum (although we'll also be shooting in the Egyptian Room of the museum).' *Luer*. 'I'm starting to go. "I think I'll produce and/or direct in future." More chance of what you do actually being seen that way.' [12/13 Jan]

David Garnett uncovered the horrid truth: 'It's 30 years since my first dealings with publishers, so I thought it was about time I found out what I was doing. Looking through a copy of Michael Legat's *An Author's Guide to Getting Published*, I came to a section on the kind of books which can't be published commercially: "poetry or science fiction or treatises on unpronounceable compounds or a manual of Pig Sticking, or even an account of your package holiday ..." It's evident there's more to the decline of sf publishing than we realise—or are poetry and pig sticking and package holiday writing also suffering because of all these interminable fantasy series which are taking up so much shelf space? • New news on *New Worlds Real Soon Now!*

Simon R. Green darkly adumbrates: 'I'm currently putting together a TV series. Apparently there's a growing need among Brit TV to find a British answer to *The X-Files*....'

Walter M. Miller (1922-1996) died in January; reportedly he shot himself while deeply depressed over illness and the recent death of his wife. For a long time he had written nothing and been reclusive, but some years ago contracted with Bantam to produce a sequel to his classic *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960); several hundred pages of this were written, but Miller had been looking for a co-author to complete it. He is still warmly remembered for *Canticle* and some strong short stories, including the Hugo-winning 'The Darfsteller' (1955). *Joe Haldeman's* fine personal memoir of Miller (written for *Locus*) concludes: 'He lived nearly three quarters of this century; he produced a novel and a few stories that secured him a place in our secluded pantheon; he survived a lot of pain and finally had had enough.'

Charles Platt has been visiting Japan, 'where translator Mikuru Abo kindly arranged a dinner with about ten editorial staff from Hayakawa, the primary publisher of serious science fiction in Tokyo. Incredibly, Hayakawa's editors have somehow retained a true and pure fanlike passion for science fiction and are untouched by the rot of

cynicism afflicting editors in New York who know all too well the disastrous commercial consequences if they publish intelligent novels that they actually like to read. I was even more amazed when my share of a lavish ten-course Chinese feast was underwritten by the editors themselves. Imagine the staff of, say, HarperCollins taking a writer (and his girlfriend) to dinner and paying for the whole thing out of their own pockets! I was almost moved to tears. • Everyone was extremely shy and painfully sincere, and none of them knew what to make of my tasteless business cards. • Overall, I was excited to discover that devotion to literature still exists among editors in the 1990s, but I was a bit depressed to have to fly 10,000 miles to find it. • PS. None of the above should be construed to imply that the Hayakawans have no sense of humour. In a recent issue of their magazine they reprinted an article of mine describing my interest in cryonics and illustrated it with cute little cartoons showing my severed head being gripped by metal tongs and dunked in liquid nitrogen. The likeness was quite accurate....'

Chris Priest was boggled and delighted to find that he had indeed won the £3,000 James Tait Black Memorial prize for his *The Prestige*. The presentation was in Edinburgh on 26 Jan. (*The Scotsman* was swift to praise this award as 'something of a surprise choice' of 'a relatively little-known novelist'....)

Robert Rankin, nameless spies inform us, has heard about the BSFA Awards and dropped a subtle hint: 'As a British writer of Science Fiction for the last sixteen years, who do you have to shag at your place to get an award? Yours hopefully....'

Kaye Webb, fondly remembered by a generation for her editorship of the Penguin children's imprint Puffin (1961-79) and *Puffin Post* magazine (1967-89), died on 16 Jan aged 81.

Conceptismo

2-4 Feb • **Obliter-8** (8th UK film con), Forte Crest Hotel, Milton Keynes. £25 reg. Contact ... er, just turn up?

4 Feb • **Picoco 13**, Imperial College, Prince Consort Road, London. 9:30am-8pm (bar to 10:30pm). GoH Rob Holdstock, Chris Priest, Stephen Baxter. £8 reg; students £4.

23-5 Feb • **Dissection** [sic], Scottish Convention post-mortem event, Rutland Hotel, Sheffield. £24 reg (£25 by credit card). Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

27 Feb • **BSFA meeting**, Jubilee pub, York Rd, nr Waterloo. 7pm on. Tue, not Wed, for this month only. Guest: maybe.

2-3 Mar • **Microcon 16**, Exeter Univ. Contact Darrel Manuel, A408 Cornwall House, St German's Rd, Exeter, EX4 6TG.

5-8 Apr • **Evolution** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, near Heathrow. Now £32/\$48 reg (since Xmas). Contact 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX. 'Anyone who hasn't booked a room yet because they thought, poor saps, that it was soft old Pat McMurray doing hotel, is in for the nasty shock of realizing that it is Heartless Chris Bell and they are in Dead Deep Trouble.' [CB]

6-8 Apr • **Generations II** (*Trek*), Albert Hall, London. £10-£45 daily, depending on seat poshness; 3-day bookings 10% off. Contact 4 Aspenwood Ho, Ipsley St, Redditch, B98 7AR.

26-29 Jul • **Albacon 96**, Central Hotel, Glasgow. Now £30 reg. Contact F1/2, 10 Atlas Rd, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE.

29 Aug - 2 Sep • **LA-Con III** (54th Worldcon), Anaheim, California. GoHs James White, Roger Corman, Elsie Wollheim, more. \$130 reg (cutoff date 31 Jul; more at door). Contact Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA. Euro agent: Kees van Toorn, Postbus 3411, NL-3003 AK Rotterdam, Netherlands.

11-13 Oct • **Octocon 7** (Irish national event), Royal Marine

Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, nr Dublin. Contact (2xIRC) 30 South Circular Rd, Dublin 8, Ireland.

18-20 Oct • **Masque 4** (costuming), Moat House, W.Bromwich. £25 reg (£30 after Easter). Contact 130 Hamstead Hall Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham, B20 1JB.

25-8 Oct • **Cult TV III**, Haven Centre, Caister. Contact (SAE) PO Box 1701, Peterborough—no postcode given.

28-31 Mar 97 • **Intervention** (Eastercon), Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Now £25 reg/£15 unwaged (£30/£20 after Easter); cheques to 'Wincon'. Contact 12 Crowsbury Close, Ermsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS.

14-16 Jun • **Nexus** (Trek), Holiday Inn, Bristol. £35 reg. Contact 26 Milner Road, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 9PQ.

Rumblings • **Arthur C. Clarke Exhibition** (and *Trek* display) continues until March at the Science Museum. With *Wireless World*, Oct '45.... • **Intuition**, possibly now the sole 1998 Eastercon bid, sends a flyer which neglects to mention which year it's bidding for. Proposed venue: Piccadilly Jarvis Hotel, Manchester. £2 pre-supporting to 43 Onslow Gdns, Warrington, Surrey, SM6 9QH. • **Australia in '99** is a splendid Worldcon bid: \$10 pre-supply to PO Box 99, Bayswater, Vic 3153, Australia; in UK, £5 to 45 Tilehurst Rd, Reading, RG1 7TT.

Infinitely Improbable

Awards! **Awards!** **Arthur C. Clarke Award** shortlist: Patricia Anthony, *Happy Policeman*; Stephen Baxter, *The Time Ships*; Ken MacLeod, *The Star Fraction*; Paul McAuley, *Fairyland*; Christopher Priest, *The Prestige*; Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age*. [PK] • **Philip K. Dick Award** shortlist: Shale Aaron, *Virtual Death*; Bruce Bethke, *Headcrash*; Greg Egan, *Permutation City*; Richard Paul Russo, *Carlucci's Edge*; Amy Thomson, *The Colour of Distance*; Elisabeth Vonarburg, *Reluctant Voyagers*. [GVG]

Random Fandom. Mike Glicksohn was an eye-witness: 'Fans came from as far away as Chicago, Toronto and Cincinnati for the 16 Dec nuptials of Bob Shaw and Nancy Tucker in Ypsilanti. As only one close friend (female) of Bob's had been able to fly over from England, I stood up as Bob's best man at the high Episcopalian service. Bob was feeling poorly but still leaned towards me when we knelt after communion and, as the chalice was given to the bride, muttered "Actually, I'd prefer a pint." As of 21 Jan, Bob was still feeling grotty from the same presumed bug; antibiotics had been prescribed. He and Nancy return to England shortly. • *Teddy Harvia* invites us to Guess Who: 'I received a pseudo-personalized letter yesterday from a science fiction writer friend masquerading as a foreign service official at the American Embassy in London pleading for Hugo nominations. I don't think I was ever so blatant. Yes, I drew space aliens dreaming of rockets, but I never had them beg.' • *Steve Sneyd* is at it yet again with *Flights from the Iron Moon*, 128pp surveying sf poetry in 1980s UK fanzines and small press: £2.50/\$6 from 4 Nowell Pl, Almondsbury, nr Huddersfield, W.Yorks, HD5 8PB.

Publishers & Sinners. John Brunner's obituaries aroused some new UK reader interest, especially in *Stand on Zanzibar*; now intrepid, risk-taking Arrow Books say they will 'consider' a SoZ reprint provided they receive 3,000 or more firm orders placed through bookshops.

C.O.A. *Andrew A.Adams*, 40 Fife Park, St Andrews, KY16 9UE. *Michael Ashley*, 15 Howgill Green, Woodside, Bradford, BD6 2SE. *Malcolm Davies & Kate Solomon*, 312 Mill Road, Cambridge, CB1 3NL. *Heidi Lyshol & Kjetil Gunnarson*, Maridalsvn. 235 A, N-0467 Oslo, Norway ('for at least a few months'). *Tom Perry*, 1717 Apalachee Parkway, #445 Tallahassee, FL 32327, USA. *Sarah Prince*, PO Box 711, Keene Valley, NY 12943, USA. *Linda Strickler*, 11 Park Edge Close, Roundhay, Leeds, W.Yorkshire, LS8 2LP. *Wrigley-Cross Books*, 1809 NE 39th Ave, Portland, OR 97212, USA.

TAFF Wars. The 1996 campaign rages on: *Simo* relentlessly raises his profile by smuggling naughtiness into *SFX* (Michael P.Kube-McDowell, author of the "Sim O'Fortaff" trilogy ...); a riposte in #9 credits this trilogy to Martin Tudor, with titles *No Way*, *No Chance* and *Over My Dead Body* and offering insider snippets: "We here in the *SFX* office are as mystified as anybody as to why David Pringle's interview with J.G.Ballard in our Feb issue completely ignores the subject of

books and instead concentrates on JGB's enormous cinematic career, which consists of: (a) story treatment for *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*; (b) source material for *Empire of the Sun*; (c) source material for *Crash*, and that old double act (d) er, and (e) that's it.... The makers of *Gerry Anderson's Space Precinct* are describing as "outrageous" rumours that they are planning to sack the series' producer, a Mr G.Anderson.' • Rival candidate *Martin Tudor* has meanwhile been invoking Jungian synchronicity by applying for an IT job at the Training for All Foundation, or T.A.F.... • Recent e-mail TAFF debates (not concerning any virtue or defect of these mere actual candidates) have vanished into white-hot realms beyond sense, with neither 'side' having a monopoly of daftness. Even my attempt at soothing noises last issue was subtly characterized by one fan as 'pouring gasoline'. A summary may follow when the dust settles. • **DUFF:** I'll copy ballots on request for Brits interested in the 1996 Australia-USA race (Dednam, Heap, Middlemiss).

1995 Guardian UK Top Sellers. No sf, except for media tie-ins.... Labouring in the titanic shadow of John Grisham at #1 are: Stephen King, *Insomnia* #9; James Herbert, *The Ghosts of Sleath* #22; Terry Pratchett, *Soul Music* #24 and *Interesting Times* #25; Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* #32 and *Taltos* #68; Charles L.Grant, *X-Files: Goblins* #40 and *X-Files: Whirlwind* #44; Doug Naylor, *The Last Human* #45; David Eddings, *The Hidden City* #62; Clive Barker, *Everville* #94. [JMJ]

Outraged Letters. *David Gemmell* disagrees with *Spy X's* opinion (*A100*) that one of his 'Alexander the Great' books was better in the original MS than after *Legend* editorial input had allegedly bumped up the fantasy content. 'The MS for *Lion of Macedon* was edited by Liza Reeves, who—as always—much improved it. The sequel, *Dark Prince*, was edited by Deborah Beale. I have been extremely lucky with all my editors, and not once has undue pressure been brought to bear on me. Yes, there will be times when an editor feels more—or sometimes less—fantasy elements should be dealt with, but even in my earliest days no one insisted on any revisions.... Back in the late 80s when I informed Random that I was intending to write a fantasy Western they told me they didn't think it would sell, as the market for any kind of Western was dead. But they added, "if that's what you want to do, go for it!" When *Wolf in Shadow* was published Random threw their marketing muscle behind it and it is still in print today.'

Maison d'Ailleurs: January saw floods of paper and e-mail petition forms about this unique sf museum, the 'House of Elsewhere' in Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland, whose funding faced a 70% cut by the local town council. The petition deadline was 26 Jan ... but donations would surely be welcomed by the museum's 'Amis' group (like unto the UK *Friends of Foundation*): AMDA, case postale 3181, CH-1401 Yverdon-les-Bains.

R.I.P. Burne Hogarth, celebrated Tarzan cartoonist and founder of the US School of Visual Arts, died on 28 Jan aged 84—in France, after being GoH at the International Comic Art Festival. • *Jerry Siegel* (b. 1914), co-creator of Superman, reportedly died on 29 Jan. [RH]

Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards will be presented at Corflu (fanzine fans' convention, Nashville, Tennessee, 13-15 Mar). 'If you are a fanzine fan and would like to participate please list your top three votes in each category—Best Fanzine, Best Fan Writer and Best Fan Artist—for the calendar year 1995. Send your vote to Janice Murray, PO Box 75684, Seattle, Washington 98125-0684, USA. Deadline: 29 Feb. Since E-mail votes will be tallied as well as votes received by mail, there will be no official ballot. A postcard is sufficient. All votes must be accompanied by a name and mailing address.' [JMJ]

Thog's Flasterclass. 'He glanced fleetingly down, with a prick of lust, at her shapely legs.' (Peter James, *Alchemist*) [S] • 'Ruben's left eyebrow twitched upwards, forcing a grunt past the plug of mince and potato that sounded vaguely impressed.' (Alex Stewart, 'Yesterday', in *Beyond*; may be partially deciphered by the understanding that the character is eating shepherd's pie.) [DVB]

Stop Press. Bob Shaw was hospitalized on 31 Jan after 'cardiac arrest complicated by pneumonia and complete liver shutdown'. Get-well-soon wishes c/o Nancy: 695 Judd Rd, Saline, MI 48176, USA.

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