



## Ansible 108 July 1996

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**BUY THIS OR ELSE.** 'Ansible. Filled with wild rumour, suspect speculation, gross exaggeration, dirt and innuendo ... unputdownable.'—Harry Harrison. Thank you, Harry! To explain: I've been fishing the murky waters of sf circles for promotional blurb lines, as requested by NESFA Press for *The Silence of the Langford* (a hugely expanded trade paperback version of their earlier Langford nonfiction collection *Let's Hear It For The Deaf Man*, with a far too flattering introduction by Teresa Nielsen Hayden). It's actually rather embarrassing to ask people for quotable quotes; Brian Aldiss confessed that it is also embarrassing to be asked, but nevertheless offered 'Deaf maybe, but he's the seeing eye of SF humour. In the Country of the Blind the One-Eared Man is King.' Good old John Grant came up with 'For my money, Langford is the funniest writer active in the sf field today. Why has no one awarded him a Hugo?' I seem to have slightly misled Harry Harrison—a natural side effect of not being able to provide people with copies of what they were so sincerely praising—and he sent in a blurb for *Ansible*, as above. John Clute was so generous that even my shrivelled modesty forbids quotation here; the same goes for Charles Platt. Others approached the task differently, like Bruce Sterling with 'For me, Dave Langford has always represented the highest and definitely the most virulent strain of fandom', Terry Pratchett's 'Wit, slightly deaf person, raconteur and finest swordsman in all of Christendom', and Joe Haldeman's enigmatic commendation 'David Langford writes like a pixie with sharp teeth. Perhaps rabies.' Pat Cadigan was very Pat Cadigan, beginning: 'Bad! Bold! Brazen! No Apologies and No Prisoners! But, enough about me ...' Neil Gaiman permitted a recycling of his horror chapbook blurb: 'Only Dave Langford knows the meaning of the word "fear".\*' (Footnote: 'The other words only Dave Langford knows the meaning of are "Labile", "Glabrous" and "Scrotiform".') Lionel Fanthorpe indefatigably offered a choice of eight, including 'Reading Langford is like eating jugged hare and sleeping with Mrs Beeton for dessert!' and 'More fun than flying with the Red Baron on his last mission! Jane Yolen, sadly too late, sent a cryptic quatrain. And Brian Stableford ... but space remains only for the deft compliments of Peter Nicholls: 'It is a tragedy to readers of serious fiction that David Langford has recklessly chosen to squander so many of his splendid talents on demagoguery aimed at science fiction fandom, the street people of the literary world. His inflammatory rhetoric may stimulate and madden the great unwashed, but it's hardly art.' Which several of these fine quotes, each alone worth the price of admission, will appear on the actual book-jacket? Place your bets now.

### This Sentence No Verb

**Brian Aldiss** broods: 'Awful, all these funerals, enjoyable though the *après ski* undoubtedly is. However, none of us will forget the kindness and decency of Richard [Evans]. He was a friend to me although I was never one of his authors.... I was never a strong believer in the Christian idea of life after death. It sounded too ghastly to be true. But the thought that there might be DEATH after death, as may already have happened in John Brunner's case, is pulverizing for a writer. Chinese-style, I have already ordered my coffin, and am having the text of *Non-Stop* carved on it.'

**Terry Bisson** is completing the late Walter M. Miller's unfinished sequel to *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, for 1997 publication.

**Pat Cadigan** protests: 'Whenever I read libel about myself in that rag you publish, I think, "It's about time." ... You dog.'

**George Alec Effinger** is having a rotten time: 'I'm being sued by the hospital to whom I've owed many tens of thousands of dollars for years. My attorney tells me that because of local state law, the hospital may end up owning not only all the books and stories I've ever

written, and not only all the books and stories upcoming, but also my continuing characters, even after I'm forced into bankruptcy. I may just give up writing and join the Merchant Marine or something.'

**John Grant** was urgently consulted when Gollancz heard from 'an Arthur C. Clarke fan offended by the fact that the last two **GENTRY LEE** and Arthur C. Clarke books he'd bought had contained profanities like "fuck" ... Could it be guaranteed that *Richter 10* by **MIKE McQUAY** and ACC was oathless, before he lashed out his £15? Could I, asked Jo Fletcher, recall from copyediting the thing? "Fucked if I can remember," was all I could respond.'

**Sarah Lefanu's** slim but sensible *Writing Fantasy Fiction* (A&C Black, £8.99) makes publishing history: the first writers' guide to recommend regular study of *Chog's Masterclass!* 'Comparable to Tolkien at his best'—*Ansible*.

### Conhydrine

6-7 Jul • **Andromeda Opening**, 2-4 Suffolk St, Birmingham: ace sf outlet celebrates 25th birthday and new shop. Opening 12 noon with Banks, Gemmell, Pratchett; signings all day and from 11am Sun with 30-odd authors; party Sat eve (Hotel Ibis).

6 Jul • **Armageddon Fireworks**, Whitchurch (nr Pangbourne), open 8pm, firing 22:30. £4 at gate. Bar, barbecue, etc.

11-13 Jul • **Speaking Science Fiction**, U of Liverpool conference. £130 inc hotel. Contact Andy Sawyer, SF Foundation, Sydney Jones Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool, L69 3DA.

12-14 Jul • **Faircon '96**, Glasgow: CANCELLED. 'We will be going ahead in 1998, though—the 20th anniversary of Faircon '78.'

13-15 Jul • **Contagion (Trek)**, Glasgow Thistle Hotel (the renamed Hospitality Inn). £18/day Sat, Sun; £14 Mon. Contact PO Box 867, Rutherglen, Glasgow, G73 4HR.

20 Jul • **Intervention Open Meeting**, Jubilee pub, York Rd, nr Waterloo. 1pm for 2:30pm. Open-to-all discussion of 1997 Eastercon programme (theme: 'Communication').

21 Jul • **Farber Day**, 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, NW3. Arcane fundraising event aimed at bringing fabled US fan *Gary Farber* to England for Novacon, coating him in molten chocolate, and tossing him to a pack of ravening Maenads (B.Hardcastle, A.Scott, P.Wells).

21 Jul • **Minanimi Con II** (animé), Hilton National Hotel, Portsmouth. £15 ref; £20 at door. Contact 15 New Rd, Fair Oak, Eastleigh, Hants, SO50 8EN.

26-29 Jul • **Albacon 96**, Central Hotel, Glasgow. £30 reg; £35 at door. Contact F1/2, 10 Atlas Rd, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE. 0141 558 2862; fax 0141 332 3838.

9-11 Aug • **Delta Quadrant**, Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. £35 reg. Contact (SAE) PO Box 8966, Gt Barr, Brum, B43 5ST.

18 Aug • **Richard Evans: in memoriam** gathering upstairs at the Princess Louise pub, 208 High Holborn, WC1. 6:30pm. All who knew him are welcome. *John Jarrold* adds: 'I knew Richard as a friend from the early 80s. In late 1987 he was shrewd enough (or mad enough) to take me on at Macdonald Futura to run the Orbit sf list.... He was as good a boss and friend as anyone could have, as honest and straightforward a man as I ever met. To say I will miss him is to understate the case by many orders of magnitude.'

19-26 Oct • **Milford (UK) Writers' Conference**, Maidencombe, Devon. £168 all in (inc. meals); some places may still be available. Contact 31 Shottsford, Wessex Gdns, W2 5LG.

24-6 Dec • **Yulecon**, Plough & Harrow Hotel, Edgbaston, Birmingham. £20 reg and 3xSAE. Contact 56 York Rd, Torpoint, Cornwall, PL11 2LG. 01752 812698.

**Rumblings** • *Cuddles* reports that various fan-run UK conventions have received alarming tax demands, which she ascribes to 'the man in charge of Stargazers Productions. Seems that attendance figures for his [professional, taxable] events have dropped ... miffed that fans are going to fan-run events, he has "grassed" to the Inland Revenue.' If I knew of an upcoming Stargazers event (Babcom etc), I would promptly not go to it... • **London Meetings** ... disaffected mutterings about the Wellington pub are being heard; expect flyers touting alternatives soon. • **Discworld Convention** ... this June event was by all accounts a hot success; I'm still sulking after being taken ill *en route* and having to turn back. Chief GoH Terry Pratchett, despite earlier misgivings, allotted measured praise to the chairman: 'I am now prepared to say that Paul Rood can leave very high marks on tall buildings.'

## Infinitely Improbable

**R.I.P.** *Dee Ann Farey* died on 14 June, of the cancer which it was hoped she'd beaten. She was 34. Condolences to her husband, Nic Farey (and sons Justin and Thomas): PO Box 178, St Leonard, MD 20685, USA. • *Brigitte Helm* (1906-96), best remembered in sf for her rôle as Maria and the robot double in the 1926 movie classic *Metropolis*, died in June. • *Ethel Lindsay* died early in the morning of 16 June, all too soon after the cancer diagnosis that left her determined to enjoy her expected 6-12 remaining months. *Greg Pickersgill* writes: 'About a year ago I wrote to Ethel saying, essentially, that in almost all of my criticisms of her and her fanning I was wrong. I'd be rereading a lot of issues of her *Scottishe* and *Haverings* and they are fine and distinct fanzines, full of interesting things, that I now recognized that I had been too young or to properly appreciate back in the 70s. She seemed quite pleased and said it was never too late for egoboo, even after 20 years. I'm damned glad I said that then....' Messages of sympathy can be sent to Ethel's cousin: Alison Paterson, 54 Spencer Cres, Carnoustie, DD7 6DZ.

**Bram Stoker Awards** (for horror). NONFICTION *The Supernatural Index*, Mike Ashley and William Contento; COLLECTION *The Panic Hand*, Jonathan Carroll; SHORT 'Chatting With Anubis', Harlan Ellison; NOVELETTE/NOVELLA 'Lunch at the Gotham Cafe', Stephen King; FIRST NOVEL *The Safety of Unknown Cities*, Lucy Taylor; NOVEL *Zombie* by Joyce Carol Oates; LIFE ACHIEVEMENT Harlan Ellison.

**C.O.A.** *Chris Donaldson & Paul Oldroyd*, 20 Ickburgh Rd, London, E5 8AD (belated mention of 1995 move!). *Jerry Kaufman/Suzanne Tompkins*, 3522 NE 123rd St, Seattle, WA 98125, USA. *Jon Singer*, 10402 SE 16th Street, Bellevue, WA 98004-7142, USA.

**In Typo Veritas.** Publicity flyers for the coming Simon Archer/Stam Nicholls *Gerry Anderson: An Authorized Biography* credit the famed puppeteer with a TV series called *Stringray*.

**Random Fandom.** *Debbie Cross* of Wrigley-Cross Books was given the much-feared Elron award for editing and publishing *Down The Badger Hole*, thus 'inflicting Lionel Fanthorpe on a new generation of sf readers.' • *Steve Higgins* is trying to flog off half his book collection prior to a coming move: SAE for list to 50 Cannon Street, Eccles, Greater Manchester, M30 0FT. • *Dave & Hazel Langford* boggled at the realization that, as of 12 June, they had been married for 20 years. Gosh! • *Andrew I. Porter* of *SF Chronicle* has rejoined the human race after 3 months lost to mental shutdown 'from a combination of diet medication and SADD, aka hibernation syndrome ... Yes, this was my brain on drugs.' He too mourns Ethel Lindsay: 'She was my agent for *Algol*, then *Starship*, then *SFC*, for more than 30 years.' The UK agent for *SFC* is now Rob Hansen, 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, E6 1AB. • *Bob (Glasgow) Shaw* promises fearful tales of being framed by the *News of the World* and facing an Industrial Tribunal.... • *Simo* has tasted new glory: 'A first time con-goer went up to Simo holding a copy of SFX, and asked Simo if he'd sign it for him. We laughed. "You'll all laugh on the other side of your faces," he said, "in 10 years time when Simo's really famous this'll be worth a lot of money." We laughed again.' [D]

**A Sign in Space.** Next year, the *Cassini* spacecraft will be launched, carrying a probe and instrument package to the Saturnian system. Those interested may have their signatures carried too ...

scanned and put on CD-ROM. The Planetary Society's journal waxes lyrical: 'Imagine your name flying first through the inner solar system, past Venus and your home world, then out past Jupiter to the enchantingly beautiful worlds of Saturn. There it will orbit for decades, until the spacecraft runs out of attitude-control fuel. Then *Cassini* will slowly begin to spin, gathering speed until it breaks apart. The CD-ROM will continue to orbit Saturn....' Wow. *The Rules*: sign the non-address side of a plain postcard, using dark ink. Send to: *Cassini* Program, JPL, 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena, CA 91109-8099, USA. Signatures accepted until 1 Jan 1997 or when the CD-ROM is full.

**Dare Today, Gone Tomorrow.** The new UK Sunday paper *The Planet on Sunday* appeared on June 16, sold poorly, and instantly folded—despite its 'brand new full-colour adventure' of Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future, by Sydney Jordan.

**Thog's Real-Life Masterclass.** How to describe a survivor type: 'Reiss was thin and drawn, just returned from the war zone known as the Sudan, where he had spent weeks behind rebel lines and survived mortar attacks, a harrowing unauthorized plane trip at the mercy of a malaria-ridden pilot, and being trampled to death by a famine-crazed mob of refugees.' (Textbook example from *Creative Nonfiction: Researching and Crafting Stories of Real Life* by Philip Gerard.) [VR]

**End of an Era.** *Dave Clarke* was there: 'The *Locus* collating sessions are no more. Charles Brown is switching to a mailing service to put the labels on his semi-prozine. The last collating session was held on 27 June. Charlie barbequed large quantities of chicken and pork, hot links and a little duck, and also served watermelon and corn-on-the-cob, and the admonishment to "eat your salad." (I know this is a far cry from the usual meaning of "collating", but the term just stuck from the days when Charlie really did have collating sessions. Of course, that was something like two decades ago.) So, this was the last chance to prove one's manhood by addressing the *Locuses* for large states like NY or California, or to eat barbeque with fingers that taste of rubber bands...'

**Infinity** is a new UK skiffy mag, chiefly media-oriented; dummies of its first (August) issue are endemic in British sf circles. Its seeming aim is to make *SFX* look, by comparison, sober, bookish and deeply uninterested in *The X-Files*.... Starlite Publications, PO Box 36, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 4XT.

**Outraged Letters.** *George Alec Effinger* was far from enthralled by the *A107* comments (by Charles Platt) on the Nebulas banquet and his toastmaster performance: 'I'd just mention that it wasn't Barbara [Hambly] who chose me to be the toastmaster. It was Sheila Finch, who didn't have any idea of my relationship with the SFWA president. • As for van Vogt's Grandmaster being awarded due to his frail health, well, that award is voted on by all the past presidents plus the current board of directors, and I imagine you'd have to poll each of those people to learn their motivations. • I think I'll stop right there, because most of what [Platt] wrote was so asinine I can't be sure that I'll maintain the cool and dispassionate outlook I've worked so hard to achieve.' ('Sorry I was misinformed (by two separate people),' writes C.Platt regarding the first point. Only.) • *Neil Gaiman*, mere seconds after plugging the launch of his series *Neverwhere* on BBC2, 2 Sept (how convenient for British worldcon-goers!), follows up with: 'Oops. September the 2nd was last week's broadcast date. This week I have been told it will be going out either on September 12th or some time in November. I find myself remembering the dedication of the first *Monty Python* book, "This book is dedicated to BBC Programme Planners, without whom anything is possible", and how I puzzled over it as a small boy, wondering if ever I would find out what it meant....'

**Thog's Masterclass.** 'He pressed the button of the vibratory emulator; there was an inaudible beam, a wavelength of death, a movement that was less than a movement, and a motion that was less than a motion. And yet there were movements and motions that were more than movements and motions.' ('Karl Zeigfried', *Android*, 1962)