

# Ansible



Ansible 116 March 1997

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**SHEEPISH THOUGHTS.** The world is still being rocked by the mindboggling news of the successful cloning of a BSFA mailing. Hubristic scientists extracted seeds of literary inspiration from an undifferentiated full stop taken from the udder of *Vector*, and successfully grew an identical mailing with the aid of a surrogate publisher. Churches worldwide issued statements of horror at this blasphemous experiment, which violates the express religious prohibitions of the Copyright Act; and pundits were quick to point out the hideous possibilities of a dystopian future in which the wanton rich could create additional BSFA mailings at will, for all manner of undoubtedly degraded uses. The *Daily Mail* went further, with its headline 'CAN WE RAISE THE DEAD?' and sensationalist predictions of what abominations might be spawned from undead genetic material found in old copies of *SF Monthly* or even *Battlefield Earth*....

## A Melon for Ecstasy

**Iain Banks**, teenage role model, was denounced in the (Scottish) *Daily Mail* for being 'recklessly irresponsible ... the latest in a long line of teenage role models to endorse illegal drugs.' He had irresponsibly said that it was a bit hypocritical for smokers and boozers to express blanket outrage at 'drugs', and recklessly suggested that Ecstasy might even be less dangerous than alcohol. One blanches at such infamy.

**John Clute** chortles that subscription orders for the St Martin's edition of the *Fantasy Encyclopedia*—due out: late May in the US—are already double the number of the *SFE*'s entire first US printing. Gosh.

**Tom Holt** grumbled in *Ansible 115* that Janet Berliner's proposal for a 'Hell as tourist trap' novel anthology seemed to him to be rather blatantly pinched from his novel *Faust Among Equals*. The lady's white-hot response declared that this was offensive and indeed impossible, since although *Faust Among Equals* was indeed cited as the sole paradigm example of the sort of fiction she wanted, she had never read it. (Pardon? Er, its mention was suggested by her pal Peter Beagle). Subsequently, the mighty Holt vs Berliner fracas devolved into a polite exchange of e-mailed olive branches. Sweetness and light prevail.

**Simon Ings**, media man, gloats uncontrollably: This little reviews website I was working on last year has turned into an *sf/fantasy/horror* magazine programme on the Sci Fi channel. It's called *ExtraTerrestrial*, it's on from the end of May, and chances are Mike Marshall Smith will be one of the presenters ('I'm away when they're filming, damnit!')

**John Jarrold** has resigned as editor of *Legend*, Random House UK's *sf/fantasy* imprint. No, he wasn't pushed, but is happily embarking on a freelance life beyond the cruel confines of the expense account.

## Contund

8 Mar 97 • **The Nightwatch (B5)**, Connaught Rooms, London. GoH Jeff Conaway. Contact Wolf 359, 141 Waarden Road, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 9BE. 01753 771078. (See next.)

9 Mar • **Sector 14 aka The Nightwatch (B5)**, Central Hotel, Glasgow. GoH Jeff Conaway. 10am-10pm. £20 at door. (Two one-day cons sharing GoH expenses, which formerly confused me.)

15 Mar • **UKCAC (comics)**, Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London. Contact PO Box 146, Glasgow, G1 5RN.

21-3 Mar • **AKFT Convention 3 (Trek)**, Warwick Arms Hotel, Warwick. Registrations (£30) closed 1 Mar, apparently.

26 Mar • **BSFA London meeting, Jubilee, York Rd.** 7pm on.

28-31 Mar • **Intervention (Eastercon)**, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Now £50 reg (£40 unwaged), closing 14 Mar; no at-the-door memberships available. Contact 12 Crowsbury Close,

Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS. (With *Libe Thog's Masterclass*.)

28-31 Mar • **ConnXions (X-Files; UFO/paranormal piffle)**, Hilton National, Coventry. Contact 14 Middleton Grange, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2HP. 0976 382368 or 702291.

19 Apr • **Unconvention (Fortean)**, Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London. Contact PO Box 146, Glasgow, G1 5RN.

26-8 Sep • **Masque 5 (costuming)**, Sheringham Youth Hostel, Sheringham, Norfolk. £20 reg (£25 from 1 May, £30 from 1 Aug). Hostel accommodation £25/person/night full board. Contact 35 Iverley Road, Halesowen, W.Midlands, B63 3EP.

25-7 Oct • **Octocon/Eurocon '97**, Dublin Castle. GoH Robert Jordan; others TBA. £20(I) reg; £25 from 24 Apr, £30 at door. Contact 6 Drom-nz-nane Park, Beaumont, Dublin 9, Ireland. NB reduced rates—they were altered the day after A115, Feb.

14-16 Nov • **Novacon 27**, De Vere Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern. £25 reg, rising on 1 Apr. *Hotel booking forms now out*. Contact 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

2003 • **Toronto Worldcon Bid**. UK presupporting rate is £9 ... cheques to pro-tem agent D.Langford, Usual Address.

**Rumblogs • Corflu UK ... A115** listed this bid (to hold the 'US' fanzine con in Leeds, 14-15 Mar 98) as apparently a definite event. This has been seen as a devilish plot to embarrass the bidders, especially Ian Sorensen. Er, I forgot to include the word 'bid'.... • **London Meetings Move?** A largish party from the Wellington explored the Jubilee on 6 Feb. It seemed popular: Kevin the landlord welcomed us and reckoned he'd lay on extra bar staff and throw open the upstairs room should fannish demand suffice. The long-term question is whether the pub can cope should attendance rise again to 300-400. *Getting there:* the NW exit from Waterloo Station (Exit 6 to South Bank, by POLICE sign, far right as you face the destination boards) leads to a walkway over York Rd; don't cross but descend the steps to pavement level and turn left.

## Infinitely Improbable

**Nebulas.** Novel finalists: Nicola Griffith, *Slow River*; Nina Kiriki Hoffman, *The Silent Strength of Stones*; Patricia McKillip, *Winter Rose*; Tim Powers, *Expiration Date*; Robert J.Sawyer, *Starplex*; Neal Stephenson, *The Diamond Age*. Winners to be announced at the dread US Nebulafest on 19 April.

**The Shady Side.** Further unattributable reports from long unpaid contributors to *The Dark Side* add that the total amount known to be owed is around £4,000; that pressing for payment causes the publishers (nominally Stray Cat Ltd) to go into paroxysms of whingeing about 'disloyalty'; and that the company setup is interestingly fireproof. 'Each one of the numerous (mostly porn) mags published by the partnership of Allan Bryce (editorial) and Ken Mills (printer) is put out by a different limited company with their own PO numbers. Thus *Infinity* was published by Starlite Publications. The benefit (for them) of having each title in an air-tight box, with its liabilities limited to that particular company's assets, will not be lost on you. A whole flock of phoenixes.' • Totally unrelated is the rumour that Stray Cat are suing Andromeda Bookshop (Birmingham) over non-payment for an ad ... the Andromeda position reportedly being that the ad was for the 1996 opening of their new shop but didn't appear until at least a week afterwards.

**Random Fandom.** *Chuch Harris* insists on sharing the glad news announced as a Channel 4 tv listing: 'Sun 6pm Howard Goodall's *Organ Works*'. • *Dave Langford* distinguished himself in the Attitude fanhistory quiz by failing to name the first winner of TAFF even while staring vaguely at Vince Clarke in the front row of the audience.... • *Brian Lombard*, a fan for many years, is stuck in a South African prison

and might enjoy the odd fanzine: B.Lombard 96524974, Pollsmoor Medium A, Private Bag X4, Tokai 7966, S.Africa. • **Jeremy Paxman** to University Challenge teams (5 Mar): 'Published in 1996, *The Unseen University Challenge* quizbook is based on the works of which author?' *Hopeful Irish Student* (Queen's, Belfast): 'Er ... the Marquis de Sade?' (JB,JB) Discworld quizbook author swoons, fulfilled at last. • **Greg Pickersgill** proved himself a master of deft political repartee in the small hours at Attitude, when some dinner-jacketed Conservatives (masochists who had paid £68 apiece to be in the same room as David Mellor, elsewhere in the hotel) wandered intrusively into our bar conversation. 'Just FUCK OFF,' Greg compellingly argued. • **Mark Plummer** (at the same event) was overheard asking whether any poem on the wombat has used a rhyme other than *combat*? Mark loses 10 points for not memorizing the D.G.Rossetti (attrib.) quatrain cited in *Ansible 114*.... • **Brian Robinson**, who died in Jan, had asked for his sf/fanzine collection to go to TAFF and other worthy causes: transport is being arranged.

**Collect the Set?** Fabbri Publishing/Brown Partworks are test-marketing a new sf partwork in the Exeter and Scots Border areas. Each weekly instalment is bagged with an sf novel: issue 1 has *The War of the Worlds* (with 'free' Orson Welles broadcast for £4.99 or without for £2.99, depending on region). Modern selections are also planned. Contributors include the usual suspects: Clute, Langford, Stableford....

**R.I.P. Adriana Caselotti** (1916-1996), who voiced Snow White in the Disney movie, died on 18 Jan. Apparently the only other movie work she ever did was to voice a single line in *The Wizard of Oz*. (PB) • **Maurice Goldsmith** of the International Science Policy Foundation died on 1 Mar after long illness. He was best known in sf as a founding father, administrator and judge of the Arthur C. Clarke Award; indeed he was on the judging panel for the still unfinished 1997 award.

**C.o.A. Brian Ameringer** (new work phone) 01483 792420. *ConCancin* (2003 Worldcon bid for Mexico) c/o PO Box 905, Euless, TX 76039-0905, USA ... zip code correction. *Paul Vincent & Janet Bentley*, 65 Norton Road, Pelsall, Walsall, W.Midlands, WS3 4NR.

**Outraged Letters.** *Simon R.Green* liked the 'numerology' in *AI15*: 'I remember when DC Comics were based at 666 Madison Ave, and the editors lived in fear the religious right would find out and target them. Of course, these days they produce comics like the excellent *Preacher*, which runs competitions in its letter column like "I'd like to have sex with Mother Teresa because ..." and "Self-cruifixion: how do you hammer in the last nail?"' • **Charlie Stross** is horrified by my vile practice of publishing C.o.A. notices, especially in the web version of *Ansible*. 'I'm trying to hunt down and slay every instance of my postal address on the net, in view of a disquieting incident a couple years ago when a paranoid schizophrenic who spent too much time on Usenet apparently told a friend of mine that he thought I was Jesus Christ and he wanted to meet me. Luckily he didn't know where I lived [...] and most fans I know aren't paranoid loons who stalk people they meet over the net, but you never know.' H'mm. Of course it would save me lots of work to have a policy of never publishing addresses. At present, *Ansible* does so only on request. Perhaps fans planning to make this request should first carefully assess their similarity to Jesus Christ. • PS: *Chris Priest*, during a Microcon conversation on the state of the net, offered the widely acclaimed insight that for strict plausibility, no sf novel set in the near future can realistically not mention C.Stross by name....

**Hazel's Language Lessons:** Spot the Fan, in Yoruba. *a-gbótíkèkè-mà-gbè-byáwó*, he who spends his resources entertaining people with alcoholic drinks without anything in particular to celebrate. *a-dà-ni-dúró-d'ont'gbèsè*, he who stops you with idle talk until a creditor catches up with you. *akídánlárín tí mójù òru ògànjó*, a nitwit who makes faces at people at the darkest hour of the night. *òjù kò'nkò konko*, sharp and protruding eyeballs. *a-má-ni-tòkèkè-bo'mú*, he who causes another person so much confusion that he pushes a morsel of food into his nostrils instead of his mouth. (JMN)

**BSFA Jihad.** Following on from our lead story, undercover fundamentalists at Bramley Mailing Services declared a *fatwa* against the first BSFA mailing of 1997, consigning some 25% of the packets (including vital BSFA Award and AGM forms) to fiery perdition. As one hard-to-refute spokesman pointed out, 'It is the will of Allah that disaster must

always afflict the accursed BSFA AGM and awards.' • Mighty remainings ensued, enabling *Ansible* to mention the novel award finalists: Gill Alderman, *The Memory Palace*; Iain M.Banks, *Excession*; Stephen Bury (half of whom is Neal Stephenson), *Interface*; Ken McLeod, *The Stone Canal*; Kim Stanley Robinson, *Blue Mars*; Bruce Sterling, *Holy Fire*. • The BSFA Tombola seeks sf books and grot for intervention: bring to the con and/or contact BSFA Money Cloning Project, 60 Bournemouth Rd, Colkstone, Kent, CT19 5AZ; phone/fax 01303 252939.

**Trilby Awards** presented at Attitude included ... Best con one-shot: *Babes With Attitude* by Marianne Cain (age 1 month, but sceptics believe she was assisted). Best spoof award: the Hugos. Best attitude: the hotel staff. Worst attitude: Ian Sorensen. Best year for next British Worldcon (averaged vote): 2268. Best fan artist who is not Don West: Sue Mason. Best fan writer who is not Dave Langford: Mark Plummer. Best new idea in conunning: sleep. Race most likely to rule the seavagram: voted to the 100 metres but awarded by the committee to the Weston family. Best fakefan: Tony 'What's a seavagram?' Berry. (MS)

**UFO Funnies.** *Jul 95*: comet discovered by US amateur astronomers Hale and Bopp. *Nov 96*: another amateur, Chuck Shramek, posts a photo on the net showing comet Hale-Bopp attended by a bright object ringed like Saturn, and announces this awesome discovery through the usual scientific channels: Art Bell's US radio phone-in show. Prof (of political science) Courtney Brown explains that his 'Farsight Institute'—specializing in 'scientific remote viewing' and teaching it to punters at \$3,000 per course—has identified the object as larger than Earth, hollow, and under alien control. Brown claims copious further evidence on film; passes a photo of Hale-Bopp plus Object in confidence to Bell and Whitley Strieber; promises public announcement real soon now. *Jan 97*. Bell and Strieber lose patience, post image on net; next day it's identified as based on a particular digital snapshot taken by the University of Hawaii Institute for Astronomy, to which the ringed object has quite clearly been added by image processing. Brown protests feebly that this could be a disinformation campaign aimed at his Institute, but neglects to say how his ace remote-viewers failed to detect the companion's nonexistence. Diehard loons realize the only possible answer: the UHIFA must have tampered with its own photo to erase the Thing With Rings and maintain the worldwide UFO cover-up! Life goes on. (MMW)

**Looking Backward ... 10 years**, March 1987: Patrick Troughton died at a US *Dr Who* con. (*Ansible 49*) • **15 years**, March 1982: Philip K.Dick died in California. (*Ansible 24*) *The Bookseller* fingered Ian Watson as 'star turn' of an ICA fiction conference: 'He thought the morning's offerings "rampant twell", he lambasted reviewers—"they have no power to make things sell, only to stop things selling"—people who use the term sci-fi, the British who underrated science fiction and its practitioners and, much worse, deferred to the Americans. Later, still exuding a powerhouse of energy, he marched off to the loo, pulling down doors and partition walls as he went—at least that's what it sounded like.' (*Ansible 25*) • **20 years**, March 1977: The fannish peer who's been turning up at the London One Tun meetings recently is [...] Jestyn Reginald Austen Plantagenet Philipps, Baron Strange of Knokin, Baron Hungerford, Baron de Moleyns, and Viscount St Davids, Bart. That should put the St Antony hoi-polloi in their place.' (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint 80*). • **25 years**, March 1972: Fredric Brown died in Arizona, and the Tolkien Society was reported as having sent JRRT a well-received jar of tobacco for his 80th birthday. (*Checkpoint 16*) • **50 years**, March 1947: Walter Gillings founded the UK *Fantasy Review* (later absorbed into *Science Fantasy* and taken over by E.J.Carnell).

**Whog's Masterclass.** See *Nipples and Die Dept*: 'Her breath caught in her throat and her nipple burrowed into his palm like a friendly mole.' ... 'Kyna braced her hands on his shoulders and rode him, her breasts swaying in his face like overfilled balloons, the nipples thrusting out enough to put his eyes at risk.' (both Gary L.Holleman, *Howl-O-Ween*, 1996) • *Spiel Chequer Dept*: 'Weston was known for the firm but genital hold he had on his men.' (*Asimov's* slushpile; presumably a submission from shortly after the 1979 UK Worldcon) • *Special Own-Goal Dept*: John Grant, creator of *Thog*, cringed at a line found (FOS) in his story for Mike Ashley's forthcoming anthology of Shakespearean whodunnits: 'Then she would feel her breasts and discover that she lacked a penis ...' (For some reason he changed it.)

*Ansible 116* © Dave Langford, 1997. Thanks to Attitude, John Bark, Jim Barker, Paul Borman, Chris Bell, Rob Hansen, Intervention, Joe McNally, Motrix, Fiona O'Sullivan, Chris Priest, John Richards, Mike Scott, Martin Morse Wooster and our Hero Distributors: Janice Murray (for DUFFI), SCIS, Alan Stewart (02), and Martin Tudor (Brun Group). 6 Mar 97