

# Ansible



## Ansible 119 June 1997

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax **0118 966 9914**. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Pete Lyon**. Available for SAE or the contents of Joanna Southcott's Box.

**CLARKE AWARD.** Again sf literati gathered in the Science Museum, to be plied with copious drinks by bar staff recruited from the BSFA and Croydon fandom. Administrator Paul Kincaid gave the usual run-down of nominees and judges; 1996 winner Paul McAuley took the magic envelope and, remembering his own pangs of suspense, ripped it open as fast as he could to announce the winner as ... Amitav Ghosh, for *The Calcutta Chromosome*. Before the obligatory applause, an instant's blank silence hinted that most of the audience had not expected and/or not read this one. Whether the decision will go down in history as 'controversial' is thus interestingly uncertain—as yet. Despite some mutters of 'Pity about *Blue Mars*,' I failed to detect the wrathful knife-whetting that followed the 1993 non-win of *Red Mars*. Steve (Voyage) Baxter smiled bravely. Jo Fletcher, publisher of another nominee (N.Lee Wood, likewise present), was heard to say sporting things about the choice being a good or at least 'obvious' one. I'd better go and read it... Party fashion highlights included the resplendent gent's suitings of P.Kincaid (3-piece) and N.Spinrad (green velvet), although several chaps seemed distracted from these by Molly Brown's mini-skirt. Wheelchairs were also being worn, by elders of the Clarke clan and by Pat Cadigan: 'I broke my foot kicking ass at this German conference. I should have known not to kick asses fortified by years of *Bratwurst* and *schnitzels*... Well, it sounds better than saying I fell on the stairs. You dog.'

### The Demon Breed

**Richard Bachman**, famously 'dead' *alter ego* of Stephen King, has posthumously acquired a middle name. Signing 'old Bachman cheques' for tipping-in to a limited edition of RB's *The Regulators*, King included a 'Richard Cthulu Bachman'.... [DP]

**Michael Bishop** confides: 'I'm finally writing again, but not SF.'

**Nancy Collins** doesn't normally read vampire novels. But as a World Fantasy Award judge, she has dutifully waded through stacks of nominees ... to find several writers, ahem, working in the great tradition of her own *Sunglasses After Dark*. She may be making a little list. [JG]

**Neil Gaiman** suffered the Curse of *Fantasy Encyclopedia* pp380-1: authors whose dates were OK in proof arcanelly appear as e.g. (1960-FRANKENSTEIN MOVIES). 'I hope it's not a prediction of things to come: "Mr Gaiman did not die, exactly, but many bits of him have attained a virtual immortality starring in Frankenstein Movies. Mr Gaiman's right hand is on the shelf in the castle in *Frankenstein Has Risen Up Again* and his stomach is attached to the monster in *Scary Terror of Frankenstein*. His arms and kidneys were in the 'organ donor' scene of *Frankenstein Goes Disco Mama*, but wound up on the cutting room floor...."

**John Gribbin** grumps and brags: 'Frustrated by being unable to find a home for my excellent sf novel *Time Switch*, I have measured the age of the Universe.' In May, Simon Goodwin, JG and Martin Hendry announced new galactic measurements (using Hubble Space Telescope data) eliminating the former astronomical embarrassment of the Universe seemingly being younger than some of its component stars....

**Rob Holdstock** enjoyed 'a lunch party, to welcome back Malcolm Edwards after 3 gruelling weeks of jury service at an Old Bailey murder trial. JACKS (his wife): "For Heaven's sake Malcolm! I don't mind you talking about the trial. But *please* don't mention scrotums being inflated with *decomposition* gases while I'm trying to eat two onion *bhajis*!" MALCOLM (with a little laugh): "It was the two onion *bhajis* that reminded me...." • Rob has his own worries: "The last issue of *Vector* carried an astonishing article revealing the "castration complex" that lies at the heart of my *Mythago Wood* cycle of novels. I am still reeling from the shock! After seventeen years of living (contentedly) with comments along the lines of "uses Jungian archetypes/probably fucks trees", I'd become comfortable with Jung. Now I've got the whole of that bugger Freud to read, just so I can go on the defensive at conventions when challenged about my relationship with father figures! Help me!'

**John Jarrold**, now awesomely established at Simon & Schuster (part-time), gleefully reports that the new S&S sf/fantasy list will be launched next Easter under the imprint name Spectrum.

**Jane Johnson** of HarperCollins was bemused to be rung up by a *Financial Times* chap who asked probing questions on the *Fantasy Encyclopedia*. After being duly polite about rival publishers Little, Brown, she found to her vast embarrassment that the *FT* review credited HarperCollins with the book and quoted Jane as the driving force behind it.

**Michael Swanwick** enjoyed the Great US Con Flood in May: 'Disclave this year was particularly exciting. Con-goers were treated to a genuine sf moment Sunday at 5:30 am, when a mechanical voice blasted them awake with the words, "THIS IS THE BUILDING. THERE IS A FIRE EMERGENCY. EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY." Followed by alarms. On the way out, many of us noticed water pouring from a room on the fourth floor, which had been set aside for the alt.sex.bondage parties. The water took several hours to be turned off and caused considerable damage to everything below. • It was later determined that a water-sprinkler broke after somebody roped a fellow pleasure-seeker to it. The hot (but unconfirmed) rumour is that one of those involved was a New York City police officer. While the incident did put a damper on the convention, it gave everyone the opportunity to sort out their priorities. Jane Jewell, photo correspondent for *Locus*, failed to grab her cameras and bitterly regretted it after seeing the milling masses of celebrity refugees. Her husband, Peter Heck, emerged from the building clutching the MS of his next Mark Twain mystery novel. • The hotel refused to extend its check-out time for those inconvenienced, but did offer a 50% discount to those who knew to demand one loudly and repeatedly. The rest of us were charged full price, on the theory that if we weren't screaming at the help, we must have enjoyed the experience. More proof, if proof were needed, that on the day the Meek finally inherit the Earth, the Brash will tie up the whole thing in court.'

### Contrectation

25 Jun • **BSFA** London meeting, Jubilee, York Rd, nr Waterloo. 7pm on (but fans are lurking in the bar by 5pm). With Diana Wynne Jones.

4-6 Jul • **Nexus** (media), Forte Post House Hote, Bristol. £42 reg. Contact 26 Mile Rd, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 9PQ.

5-6 Jul • **MancheXter** (*X-Files*) Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. £30 reg. Contact PO Box 89, Manchester, M14 7GE.

11-14 Jul • **The Alliance** (B5), Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. GoH J.M.Straczynski; many others. £70 reg. Contact Wolf 359, 141 Waarden Road, Canvey Island, Essex SS8 9BE. 01753 771078.

18-20 Jul • **Convocation** (Unicon 16/RPG), New Hall, Cambridge. GoH S.Brust. £20 reg. Contact 19 Uphall Road, Cambridge, CB1 3HX.

25-7 Oct • **Octocon/Eurocon '97**, Dublin Castle. GoH Robert Jordan; several others. Now £25(1) reg, £30 from 25 Jul. Contact (SAE/IRC) Eurocon, PO Box 5130, Dublin 4, Eire. Worrying communication problems are reportedly being dispelled by new-broom publicity officer Brendan Ryder, reachable on (+353) 1 493 4712; and the long-delayed Progress Report 2 was announced as 'now shipping' on 4 June.

22-5 May 98 • **Lazlar Lyricon II** (*Hitch-Hiker*), Scotch Corner Hotel, Darlington. £30 reg; ZZ9 members £25. Address correction of Famous Simo Typos: 67 South Pk Gdns, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 1HZ.

**Rumblings** • **San Francisco in 2002** ... another Worldcon bid! Pre-supp memberships \$20.02 to PO Box 64128, Sunnyvale, CA 94088, USA, or (UK) £12 to S.Davies, 52 Westbourne Tce, Reading, RG3 2RP.

• **Fantasticon** (24-6 May) contrived by ruthless non-publicity to fall far below its planned 1,500 attendance in the Harrogate Centre—whose staff answered late enquiries with a helpful 'It's been cancelled.' It had moved to the Harrogate Crown Hotel, reports GoH (one of many) *Terry Pratchett*: 'I don't think there were more than 200 people, which made it a con with a very high guest/attendee ratio. Taking into account the information I'd been given earlier in the week, that means more than a third of registered attendees stayed away or, possibly, were frightened off. With the exception of an event in a certain city some years ago, the mere name of which causes a wince to cross the faces of those veterans who attended, I've never been to a con that had shrunk so much from its original spec. It was pleasant enough, in a Dunkirk Spirit sort of

way, but some people somewhere must have either made some bad mistakes or been very unlucky.' Especially the dealer who believed that 1,500 membership figure and hauled his stock across from America. ● **L.A.con III**, the 1996 Worldcon, has passed on \$22,000 from its surplus to each of the next 3 Worldcons: LoneStarCon2, Bucconeer and Aussiecon 3. ● **Intuition** left its cash-box in the Adelphi Hotel, and urgently begged the departing intervention crew to rescue it. 'Luckily,' writes Snide Informant, 'it hadn't been touched—like the stack of Intuition progress reports dated Nov which lie unposted, gathering dust.' ● **Minicon** (Minneapolis, Easter 98) has asked me to be FGoH: whoopee!

## Infinitely Improbable

**Updates & Outrage.** Ken Bulmer, at last report, was still in hospital following his March stroke ... Vince Clarke writes: 'I'm told that he's now well enough to sit up and read. It looks as though he will be confined to a wheel chair after he leaves.' Get-well messages: via Vince at 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2BN. ● Andrew I. Porter is emphatically 'less than thrilled' with my tiny A118 mention of *SF Chronicle's* delay between issues, feeling this is far too tragic a subject for quips, even friendly ones. His preferred wording: 'Andrew Porter, promising to get his act together, has finally published *SFC* #191, 6 long months after #190 appeared; he promises #192 will be out in a lot less time.'

**Thog's True U.F.O. Masterclass.** Joe McNally, a man of perhaps greater intertidity than sense, has actually read Dr Courtney Brown's *Cosmic Voyage* (Hodder 1997). p6: 'This is a book of fact, not fiction.' ● p74: 'Martian society experienced some major catastrophe. Many Martians died and some were rescued ... The rescuers were the beings we now know as Greys.' ● p138: 'During the two years I conducted the research for this book, I was often struck by the similarities between many of the ideas that were presented in the show *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and the data obtained about real ET activities through remote viewing. [... My] goal was to learn whether ETs were somehow manipulating the minds of the writers so that they would come up with ideas for the show.' [Guess what? They were! JM] ● p148: 'I began by asking Jesus again if he wanted us [humans] to work with the Greys regarding their genetics project. [...] He categorically stated that we must work with them. They are God's children, no less valuable than those we call human. I asked him if the Grey project had something to do with a greater evolutionary goal, like merging with God in some way. He responded in the affirmative.' ● p190: 'I was resting on my bed, still somewhat bilocated, and I got the impression that it will be the Martians and the Greys who will teach us how to live underground. But the Martians will be the ones who actually live with us, holding our hands...' ● *And the ultimate, stupefyingly cosmic revelation:* 'I knew then who had brought me to the Greys. The voice said, "These are the beings whom you want to help." It was the voice of my Aunt Elsie.'

**Magazine Jungle.** *The Dark Side*: one of the complaining (*Ansible*, *passim*) contributors has received partial payment and swooned in amazement. Steve Green reckons he has not actually been sacked as a columnist but has 'joined the growing ranks of non-persons whom Allan Bryce declines to communicate with.' ● *Eclipse*: last issue, Alex Stewart identified this new sf mag as published by the Allan Bryce/Ken Mills/'Ebony' (their Liskeard-based holding company) empire, like *The Dark Side* and *Infinity*. Steve Holland thinks the similarity of addresses is coincidental ... *Infinity*, Starlite Publications Ltd, PO Box 36, Liskeard PL14 4YT; *Eclipse*, Phoenix Publications, PO Box 33, Liskeard PL14 4YX. Another roving reporter states that Bryce/Mills will neither confirm nor deny any connection with *Eclipse*, while 'if you ring *Infinity's* old telephone number and ask for the newly named *Eclipse* advertising person, you get them. [A theory about this:] *Ebony* is first and foremost a contract printer. It could be they've taken on *Eclipse* as an outside job, which would explain the similarity of layout. And if the deal includes services like selling advertising, that might account for the telephone numbers.' ● Why is this an issue? Several writers and advertisers, who wouldn't mind supporting a new and independent UK sf mag, claim bad memories of dealings with *Infinity* and to some extent *The Dark Side*....

**Hazel's Language Lessons.** Ursula Le Guin ransacks her Harrap's Concise Spanish-English dictionary again: 'cha-cha-chá *nm*, chachachá *nm* Mus cha-cha, cha-cha-cha. ● I think you have to read it aloud to appreciate it fully. The italicized bits read especially well.'

**R.I.P.** Lou Stathis (1952-1997) died on 4 May, aged 44, in the aftermath of chemotherapy for brain tumours. An editor of DC Comics' upmarket *Vertigo* line, he'd been active in 70s sf fandom, worked for Dell, freelanced as a rock journalist, and had editorial posts on such magazines as *Amazing*, *Fantastic*, *Heavy Metal*, *High Times* and *Reflex*.

His New York wake on 7 May was crowded beyond capacity with hordes of comics, music, publishing and sf/fan friends.

**Random Fandom.** Jim Barker secured that *SFX* cartoonist post (A118). His first task: to illustrate a column on Big Dumb Objects.... ● Steve Green received long-delayed *Critical Wave* photocopier bills, leaving him and Martin Tudor £4,200-£4,500 in debt: they plan to get a bank loan. 'The final issue is aimed for release at Novacon 27, touch wood, which will also mark *Wave's* 10th birthday.' ● Jay Harber can't read this owing to eye/nerve disorders, and seeks audiotope correspondents: 626 Paddock La, Libertyville, IL 60048-3733, USA. ● Murray Moore wants essays and art for his self-explanatory 'tributezine' *Harry Warner Jr, Fan of Letters* ... 377 Manly St, Midland, Ont L4R 3E2, Canada. ● Caroline Mullan & Brian Ameringen are selling 'over 400 feet of bookshelves (with a rather nice house attached) in Harrow. Site of many famous fannish parties, but still in sound decorative order. Spacious kitchen, site of famous fannish punches. Large study, site of famous fannish food. 3 bedrooms, sites of famous fannish liaisons.... 0181 863 8849. ● Eunice Pearson solicits members for her horror APA 'Hallow'een' (£6/year): 2 New Houses, Pant, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 2AB. ● *TAFF*: still no sign of the £80/month repayments promised from Jan 97 by fund-mislayer Abigail Frost. ● Heloise Tudor suffered weeks of inexplicable medical crises, beginning with 30% loss of birth weight via dehydration when only a week old. On 3 June she was declared Cured. [MT]

**Terror & Treachery!** Harlan Ellison, selling his review copy of Curt Siodmak's *The Third Ear* (1971), peps it up with a typically understated inscription. '[The review] became an icon of terror and treachery in my career, as it was a review that two SF professionals (friends of Mr. Siodmak) interpreted as being undeserved, and they decided to "get even" by ruining my ability to sell my work. To screw my career & life. / They didn't succeed, but only because I hired a P.I., discovered their machinations, unmasked them, and brought them to book. 2 well-known professional writers. / And when one of them dies, I'll happily reveal the names, and release the documentation.' Cool! [DP]

C.o.A. Neyir Cenk Gokce, Menevis Sk. 83/14, A.Ayranci, Ankara, 06690, Turkey. Paul Hood, 112 Meadowside, Eltham, London, SE9 6BB. Lucy Zinkiewicz, PO Box 2019, Windsor, QLD 4030, Australia.

**Thog's Masterclass.** 'His two missing teeth could be seen only when he smiled.' (Jack Dann, *The Memory Cathedral*, 1995) ● *Bravura Flinging Dept:* 'He flung out his hands. Rebecca caught them like tossed discs.' ... 'Then he gathered himself, more determination and will than strength, and flung his head hard and fast to the left, as far as and farther than it would go.' (both Melanie Tem, *Tides*, 1996) ● *Solid Geometry Dept:* 'The alien device was a blank, black cube about a foot high and three feet long.' (Philip E.High, *Twin Planets*, 1967)

## Jimmy Taurasi's Cellar

**Harry Harrison remembers Sam Moskowitz (1920-1997) ...**

There we were on Sunday, November 6, 1938, a motley bunch of teenagers, signing the by-laws of the newly organized Queens Science Fiction League. There I was, along with Will Sykora, Thomas S. Gardner—and Sam Moskowitz. So I've known Sam for 60 years. Watched him grow into an overweight truck driver with a cigar stuck into his mush. Then watched him lose weight—and cigar—and mutate into the sleek editor of a frozen food magazine.

But that was just to keep the money flowing while he devoted the rest of his life to SF. Sam was first in many things in SF both in and out of fandom. But he was a fan first last and always. And I shall miss him. Never endowed with much of a sense of humour, he could take a lot of ribbing and not mind it. I remember at some convention I caught him coming out of a meeting of the Burroughs Bibliophiles. (A masterly oxymoron there.) 'Hi, Sam,' I said. 'Is that William or Edgar Rice?'

Deeply serious, Sam responded ... 'William could have learned a lot from Edgar Rice.'

I agree with John Clute. The SF I grew up with is now a thing of the past. It was a nice, homey, friendly world where all of the writers knew each other, and the BNFs as well. Each death of a magazine, death of a friend, diminishes that world.

We were broke—but I think we were happy. I note from the by-laws that the annual membership in the QSFL was one dollar.

Or ten cents a month for ten months if you couldn't lay out a monster sum like that at one time. [22 May]

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