

Ansible



Ansible 150 January 2000

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AUTOPRAY. Never underestimate the power of random sf prophecy. Now the coin-fed pray-o-mat envisioned in Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* and Zelazny's *Lord of Light* has come to hideous life in the Millennium Dome, whose religious section features an oversized slot machine (or machines; accounts vary) piously captioned, 'It pays to pray'. Insert 20p and lo! the thing selects and displays a random prayer. All this is part of the Dome's 'Faith Zone': *Ansible's* prediction for 2000 was that feisty heroine Faith Zone will soon have her own comic book.

Cosmic Carousel

Douglas Adams has withdrawn his claim of not writing sf (see A144). Over the radio on 2 January he admitted that he'd *tried* not to write sf, but those damned robots and spaceships still kept creeping in.... [KB]

Arthur C. Clarke, who has been banging on for ages about how the new millennium isn't until 2001, is surely refusing to accept a penny in royalties for the latest (Nov 1999) reworking of his 1961 *Profiles of the Future*—which Gollancz have wickedly subtitled 'Millennium Edition'.

Ellen Datlow is cheerful again: 'I've been hired as fiction editor of SciFi.com, the Sci Fi Channel's website, formerly called The Dominion.'

Terry Gilliam has become 'attached' (it says here) to the *Good Omens* movie, based on that Terry Pratchett/Neil Gaiman novel of comic Armageddon. [CS] He'll be directing, and also co-writing the script with one Tony Grisoni (Neil: 'Terry P and I went through Writing the *Good Omens* Movie Hell almost a decade ago, and wouldn't go back again for all the tea in Balham.').—but has another film to make first, *Don Quixote*. Both authors approve of Gilliam's involvement, but Terry P remains cautious: 'as Nanny Ogg says, there's many a slip 'twixt dress and drawers. When they start filming, then I'll get a bit excited.'

Mike Moorcock's 'Nomads of the Time Streams' fan club preserved deadly secrecy about moorcock@60.com, a 60th-birthday presentation volume with 60 contributors (including many of the Usual Suspects) which was thrust upon the great man at his 18 December celebration.

Alison Spedding, still serving that 10-year drugs sentence in Bolivia, is in poor health, losing blood daily, and suspects she may have cancer. The prison refuses to allow the comprehensive in-patient testing asked for by the local hospital. British consular officials will intervene and request a pardon only in cases of terminal illness, but—Catch-22—no testing means no diagnosis. (Prisoners Abroad, 020 7833 3467.)

Michael Swanwick was bitten by That Bug before the New Year: 'I received a summons for jury duty, directing me to report on "January 3, 1900". All my life I've had the suspicion that the powers that be were out to get me. This may explain why.' Meanwhile, hot Hugo news: 'Just in time for Christmas Eve, a package arrived with the award—or, rather, the Hugo kit, for, like a tricycle, some assembly was required. The orange model of Ayers Rock was chipped and the base was scratched, from having spent four months in the trunk of somebody's car. But what did I care? It was a Hugo! Then I saw that the plaque had been made out to "Michael Swanwick".... • I think the moral here is clear: never win a Hugo in a country where they've never heard of you.'

Bryan Talbot gloated over receiving 'a keg of real ale, just in time for Xmas. This is the strangest royalty payment I've ever had. A week or two ago, Mary spotted a guest ale called "Up in Smoke" in a local pub and recognised the illo on the logo—Chester P. Hackenbush the Psychedelic Alchemist from *Brainstorm Comics*, my first underground work from the 70's (just reprinted, by the way). So I got in touch with the brewery, pointing out that I owned the copyright and—voilà! Next year, they're moving into bottled beer and are seriously considering doing a *Heart of Empire* brew, using the frontispiece as the label!

Condurangin

4-6 Feb • **Didgeri-12** (filk), Forte Posthouse, Milton Keynes. £22 reg, £11 unwaged. Contact 119 Whitehill Lane, Gravesend, DA12 5LU.

19 Feb • **Picocon 17**, Imperial College Union, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB. GoHs Brian Stableford, Garry Kilworth, Ian Watson, Juliet McKenna. £8 reg; £5 concessions. Contact ICSF, above address.

11-12 Mar • **Mecon 2000**, Queen's U of Belfast. GoH Harry Harrison, Ian McDonald. £12 ref to 10 Mar, £14 at door (£7/day). Contact 24 Malton Ct, Upper Malone Rd, Belfast, N.Ireland.

18-20 Aug • **Lexicon** (Unicon 2000), Exeter College, Oxford. GoH Philip Pullman. *Note new venue*: 'St Hilda's decided to have builders in for the duration and offered only dust and rubble, but Exeter is a city-centre college with character, charm and very reasonable room prices.' [MB] Contact 18 Letchworth Ave, Bedfont, Middlesex, TW14 9RY.

8-10 Sep • **Fantasycon 24**, Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. £50 reg (BFS members £40). Address update: contact (SAE) Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, CW9 8PQ.

29 Dec 00 - 1 Jan 01 • **Hogmanaycon**, Central Hotel, Glasgow. Now £35 reg, £10 supp, rising on 1 Apr to £45/£15. Contact 26 Avonbank Rd, Rutherglen, Glasgow, G73 2PA.

23-25 Mar 01 • **Portmeirion (Prisoner)**, Portmeirion, N.Wales. Contact (SAE) Six of One, PO Box 66, Ipswich. *NB date*: info sent for A149 had the wrong days and a scrawled year that looked like 2000.

Rumblings • **Incandescent**, Pat McMurray's 2002 Eastercon bid, has quietly died. Its intended 'south-coast venue', assumed to be Brighton, demanded far too much for rooms and function space. [MP]

Infinitely Improbable

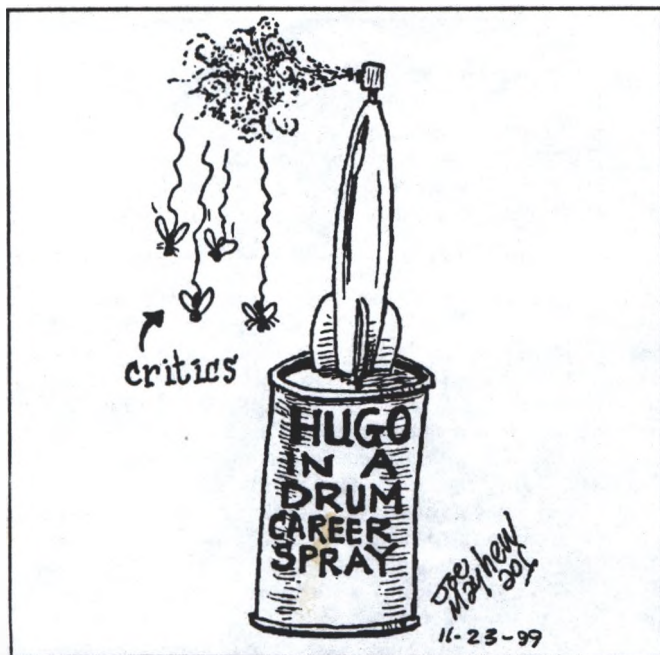
Skiffy Honours. Among the 1,998 people on Britain's overstuffed New Year honours list were Julie Andrews (*Mary Poppins*; now a Dame), Malcolm Bradbury (some borderline sf, e.g. *Rates of Exchange*; knighted), Sean Connery (many sf films; knighted), Doris Lessing (unashamed sf novels, 1987 Worldcon GoH; Companion of Honour), Ian McEwan (who rated an *SF Encyclopedia* entry; CBE), Liam Neeson (acted in some movie; OBE), Michael Palin (much sf/fantasy in Python movies; OBE), Dave Prowse (Darth Whatsisname; MBE), and Anne Wood (oh God, she invented the Teletubbies; CBE).

Publishers and Sinners. Richard Curtis of US Curtis Agency fame launches his E-reads.com imprint this month, with 2,000-odd titles—mostly out-of-print published work, including much sf—in electronic and print-on-demand formats. He hopes that tight editorial screening will attract readers who have conspicuously not flocked to the web sites that publish virtually anything (for a fee). A 5,000-title list is expected by the end of the year. • *2000 AD*, home of Judge Dredd, decided after 'about 20 minutes' of millennial deliberation not to update itself to *3000 AD*. • *HarperCollins US* killed off its HarperPrism sf imprint and will absorb the sf list into the recently acquired Avon Eos line. [SFC]

Thog's Out-of-Control Metaphor Masterclass. The pause was pregnant though it was unclear whether the birth which was clearly imminent would have to be induced or would occur naturally. Just as Cornwall thought he was going to have to perform a Caesarean, Phillimore went into labour all on his own.' (Tim Heald, 'Elementary, my dear ... Cornwall', *Mail on Sunday*, 26 Dec) [TF]

Pirates of the Web. The *SF Encyclopedia* team was alarmed when Patrick Nielsen Hayden found the entire second edition—in fact the 1995 CD-ROM update—lurking on a web site in Estonia. Also present was much copyright sf, including *Chocky*, *Neuromancer* and all Douglas Adams's novels. A grumble to the site's apparent owner, a department of Tartu University, led to the naughty pages being made inaccessible ... but the actual culprit, one Jaak Parik (who apparently designed the university site), still flaunts his bootleg fiction though not the *Encyclopedia* at <http://jp.bumpclub.ee/5.html>. M'learned friends are now busy reminding people that Estonia signed the Berne Convention in 1994.

R.I.P. John Archer, the actor and radio announcer best known for introducing the 1940s *The Shadow*—'Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows.'—died on 5 December aged 84. He also played the lead role in *Destination Moon* (1950). [PB/SH] • *Sir Rupert Hart-Davis*, a grand old man of UK publishing, died on 8 December at age 92. His Hart-Davis imprint published much sf by Ray Bradbury and E.C. Tubb. [PB] • *Joseph Heller* (1923-1999), whose unforgettably black wartime farce *Catch-22* (1961) influenced sf



without being sf, died of a heart attack on 12 December. He was 76. ● *Madeline Kahn* of *Blazing Saddles* fame, whose most notable sf movie performance was in *Young Frankenstein*, died from ovarian cancer on 3 December; she was 57. ● *Desmond Llewellyn*, the 85-year-old actor who played gadgeteer 'Q' in 17 James Bond films, died after a head-on car crash when driving to a book signing on 19 December. [BB] ● *Clayton Moore* (1914-1999), TV's masked 'superhero' The Lone Ranger, died on 29 December aged 85. [BB] ● *Ludek Pesek* (1919-1999), astronomical artist whose popularity was second only to Chesley Bonestell's, died of a heart attack in Zurich on 4 December. [BE/TPS] ● *Keith Forbes Scott* (1920-1999), Canadian author of several short sf stories, died in Toronto on 17 November. [CD]

Outraged Letters. *Almost Everyone* pointed out A149's prominent typo (corrected in later printings) that dated Charles D. Hornig's *Wonder Stories* takeover to 1993 rather than 1933. Not so many knew that Mike Moorcock's 60th birthday was on 18 and not 16 Dec. I grovel. ● *Pat Cadigan* announces that Ellen Datlow is coming to London this month: 'December 31, 1999 was her 50th birthday, and I am hereby ordering every last one of you—and anyone else I may have forgotten/left off the list—to celebrate it on January 28—venue to be announced. ● This is going to be an Ellen Datlow Roast, which means we are all going to talk about her. In front of her, this time. Please prepare some short remarks on the theme of What Ellen Datlow Means To You.' Contact Pat if you suspect you're one of the forgotten, or indeed 'anyone else deeply affected by Datlow (this means everybody).' ● *Avedon Carol* felt A149 should have mentioned the late Quentin Crisp's typecast role as Queen Elizabeth I in *Orlando*; belatedly I also remembered that he played 'Dr Zaius' in the Frankenstein movie *The Bride* (1985) ● *Mike Moorcock* offers a 'jollier thought' in the wake of his A149 rage at HarperCollins: 'Everyone who votes Green, sympathises with the Seattle protests and is against monopolistic business practices but who buys a Tolkien book new is actually putting money into the hands of their arch-enemy Murdoch. And fuelling the steamroller that they fear will crush them. *How the Hobbits Helped Rupert* by Christopher Robin Tolkien.'

Thog's Subeditor Masterclass. 'A sufficiently prominent science fiction writer, however, seems to be indistinguishable from an expert.' Thus *New Scientist's* Xmas feature on prediction, bylined David Langford. The odd thing about that little sneer at Sir Arthur and his Third Law is that I didn't write a word of it. Indeed I'd decided the Clarke Laws were far too familiar to quote again; NS stuck them all in anyway, cutting trivia like my own examples and conclusion to make room. Sigh.

Fanfundery. *TAFF:* the new ballot is out, with Tommy Ferguson, Sue Mason and Tobes Valois contending for the westbound trip to Chicon, the 2000 Chicago Worldcon. ● *DUFF:* nominations are open for the Y2K Down Under Fan Fund race, Australasia to Chicon. Candidates need to find 3 Australasian and 2 NA nominators by 15 Feb. Contact Terry Frost, 4/8 Walker Street, West Brunswick, Vic 3055, Australia.

C.o.A. *Avon* and *Morrow* moved to the HarperCollins address, 10 E 53rd St, 12th floor, New York, NY 10022, USA. *Jim Burns*, 'The Cottage', 126 Upper Westwood, Bradford on Avon, Wilts, BA15 2DH.

James & Debbie Hartley, 4 Charlwood Terrace, London, SW15 1NZ. *Alan Sullivan*, 26 Thornford Rd, Lewisham, London, SE13 6SG. *Lucy Zinkiewicz*, 3/12 Margaret St, Strathfield, NSW 2135, Australia.

Death Will Not Release You. Just before Xmas our spies found an apocalyptic website exposing the Magi Project, whose 'Luciferian New World Order' leaders were arranging a second Journey of the Magi leading up to the birth of Antichrist. Several ringleaders are named, two of whom would seem somewhat handicapped in their efforts to bring about the end of the world: Mahatma Gandhi and Isaac Asimov. [AC]

Random Fandom. *Grant Canfield* won SCIFI's second Rotsler Memorial Award for life achievement in fanzine art. ● *Alison Freebairn* reports 'with barely suppressed glee' that (as emerged only in December) she's been barred from the Pavilion Theatre as retaliation for her *Stage* review of their 1998 Xmas panto. ● *Arthur D. Hlavaty* broke his arm on 28 December while changing a light bulb—the stepladder collapsed beneath him and he had a nastily close encounter with a door on the way down. Ouch. [KJM] ● *Science Fiction Chronicle* published its 20th anniversary issue in December. ● *Jon Singer's* message of seasonal cheer: 'Did you hear the one about the wretched & boring debater who was widely acknowledged to be a master of the *ad sominem* argument?'

Web Uplift. *David Brin* addresses 'all of you folks who are interested in SF as it applies to educating the next generation. ● In conjunction with *Analog* magazine, I am launching my Webs of Wonder contest, at last! ● I'm offering a \$1,000 1st prize etc. for the best web site that links good SF stories to curriculum needs of teachers in the field. ● To learn more, go to <http://www.analogsf.com/wow>. ● The time scale for creating contestant sites is very short. We've made a July deadline, in order to be able to award the prize at the Chicago Worldcon, over Labor Day. So it's essential that we get the word out pronto!' [DGA]

Fan Press. *The Millennium Atom* is a new Atom cartoon collection from Ken Cheslin's tireless photocopier: A4, 120pp by my count, plus wraps. Includes classic *Hyphen* covers and the illustrated John Brunner verse alphabet *Tomorrow May Be Even Worse* (1978). Suggested contribution to costs: £3, or \$8 in bills—send twice this at least! 29 Kestrel Rd, Halesowen, W. Midlands, B63 2PH. ● *Space*Time Buccaneers*, Ian Gunn's ambitious and funny sf graphic novel, sold out its first UK print run, raising some £190 for his memorial fund. A second printing now looms: £10 from Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 6JE.

The Curse of Fame. ITV teletext (5 Jan) announced the winners of their challenging *Watership Down* quiz, featuring tough questions like 'Who wrote *Watership Down*?' Their answer: Douglas Adams. [CN]

Group Gropes. *Science Fiction Ireland*, the national club, was to have been wound up on 7 December owing to general burnout in Irish fandom. Instead, it's going into limbo for up to 5 years in hope of a resurgence; the newsletter, David Stewart's *BlankSpace*, continues as an irregular personal fanzine. 43 Eglinton Rd, Dublin 4. ● Also, Dublin's s/h sf bookshop Flying Pig is closing owing to lack of business. [DL]

Thog's Masterrclass. 'A silence descended like steel doors slamming down around the room.' (James P. Hogan, *Voyage from Yesteryear*, 1982) [JB] ● 'The second pair made ineffectual grabs at him and Lin lashed out with bunched fists, feeling a solid crunch run up his arms from his knuckles.' (A.V. Clarke & H.K. Bulmer, *Cybernetic Controller*, 1952) [BA] ● *Dept of Hello Sailor!* 'His hands began to probe [the lady] more fiercely. / No, not that way. She required the same delicate, experienced touch as the sails and the tiller of the *Pegeen*.' (Andrew M. Greeley, *Ascent Into Hell*, 1983) [PB] ● *Dept of Low-Slung Cheeks:* 'The tears burned his cheeks as they ran down under his shirt collar.' (James Patterson, *Cat & Mouse*, 1997) [PB] ● *Dept of Eyeballs in the Sky:* 'She slid off the passenger's seat; then, with folded hands, in the traditional gesture of greeting, she lowered her eyes, luminous and Kohl-rimmed, to the ground.' (Mary Anne Weaver, 'Gandhi's Children', *New Yorker*, 10 Jan) [MMW] ● 'I fought free of her clenches, and now the only thing between she and I, is an unfilled coffin. And this Lamona, whom once I loved, is now an irksome creature, and as she stalks about the open bier, my love is consumed by the horror. For from off her bones there drips decay, and as the light palpitates with each fleeting, beating, throbbing of this exhausted heart, I perceive two eyes of black groping nearer.' (R.D. Peters, 'Lamona', *Times, Thoughts ... Words*, 1993) [ED/GF]

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