

# Ansible



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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk). Fax 0705 080 1534. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Sue Mason's outfit for the 2001 Hugo ceremony. Available for SAE or unobtainium.

**FINNCON/BALTCON.** Where were all the mosquitoes they'd warned me about? I didn't see one, but lots more people than I'd expected travelled to Jyväskylä in the middle of Finland for its arts festival (30,000 attendees mentioned) and associated sf convention. Thanks to cunning sponsorship deals Finncon admission was free, and more than 2,000 fans came and went over the weekend; contrast the UK Eastercon figure of 814. Guests were Jonathan Carroll, who told a few horror stories of dealings with Hollywood; free software guru Richard Stallman, who true to his principles refused to autograph anything bearing the evil © sign; performance artist Stelarc, complete with his bionic Third Arm ('It cost \$20,000 to develop') and fearful pictures of himself dangling from impaling hooks; local author Johanna Sinisalo, still ecstatic at winning Finland's major literary prize with an sf novel; and fan guest Ahrvid Engholm, armed with a mosquito repellent so potent and liable to cause skin cancer that it was banned in Sweden. And me, they let me in too. Posters in pubs listed all these guests and described me as 'Man of Ansible'. Big thanks to Irma Hirsjärvi—whose Finncon job title was 'alpha female'—and her mighty committee for persuading their Ministry of Foreign Affairs to pay the way of allegedly distinguished journalist D.Langford. Sense-of-wonder moments included finding a net provider called sci.fi and realizing too late that my intention of leaving the pub and going to bed as soon as it got dark was fatally flawed, since this never happened.... Arriving home exhausted but full of cheer after copious Finnish hospitality, I found Irma's e-mail summation: 'I'm half dead (actually three quarters), and very happy. People say that this was the best Finncon ever done, and when other people than we here in Jyväskylä say that, it may be quite true.' Next, Turku in 2003.

## Three Worlds To Conquer

**Jeffrey Archer** was in the news for (besides the usual reasons) being the proposed captain's name in the coming *Star Trek* prequel series *Enterprise* ... since cautiously changed to Captain Jonathan Archer. [MP]

**Michael Bishop** brags: 'On May 19, nearby LaGrange College, here in Georgia, USA, where I occasionally teach creative writing, bestowed on me an honorary doctorate of humanities. My wife Jeri was suitably impressed. "I had to work for my degree," she told me admiringly.'

**Diana Wynne Jones** has been struggling with 'the little matter of pleurisy, combined with the World Fantasy Awards. In fact, the former helped the latter on unexpectedly much, in that I seem to be the only judge to have read all 206 books. Yes, count them. I did. Now we're at the stage of scrambling for lists; when I put in my recommendations, I get distraught cries of "Oh, God, do I have to read that too?!" And when, with a view to lightening the mood a little, I suggested that *A Kiss of Shadows* [by Laurell K.Hamilton] ought to have been subtitled *Elfin Lays*, all I got was a harassed silence. Sad. • Actually, I'm here to tell you that the WFA is a caucus race and a MUG'S GAME. I would not do it again even if they paid me next time. There are too many books and not enough time, and the management chip in all the time and try to direct the judges' choice.' *Later, 20 July*: 'I thought it was over—until the 207th book arrived this morning, full of the customary vampires. Am I the only person in the world who is BORED by vampires?'

**Kathryn Lindskoog** is at it again. After causing a stink with *The C.S.Lewis Hoax* (1988) and its claim that Lewis acolyte Walter Hooper forged that embarrassing fragment *The Dark Tower*, there's more on 'what she believes to be a truly diabolical literary crime' in her *Sleuthing C.S.Lewis: More Light in the Shadowlands*, published this month and arguing that 'several literary and theological works attributed to the British author are, in fact, the product of systematic forgery.' [PL] Oh dear, this may put ideas into the heads of HarperCollinsPublishers....

**William Shatner**, who reportedly lost some \$10 million in a failed internet company, is now reduced to charging \$75 for autographs—but a 6 July *Guardian* story added that, at least when hurrying to catch a plane at LA International, he can be bargained down to \$50. [JM]

**Michael Swanwick**, busily writing a short-short story in Ellen Datlow's *Sci Fiction* for each element of the periodic table, makes a bold

bid for sf immortality with his treatment of a famous inert gas. 'The story is titled "The Eye of Argon". So the next time some fanboy tries to tell you that nobody knows the author of that particular story ...' Will the Swanwick Revelation duly oust the discredited Jim Theis Heresy?

## Concupy

11-27 Aug • **Edinburgh International Book Festival**, Charlotte Square Gdns, Edinburgh, including sf/fantasy events. 11th: Brian Aldiss & Helen Lederer 10am, Simon Clark noon, Stephen Baxter & Aldiss 3.30pm, John Clute & China Miéville 7pm. 12th: Rob Grant noon, Iain M.Banks & Ken MacLeod 3.30pm, Doris Lessing & Aldiss 5pm, sf quiz 8pm. 18th: Ricardo Pinto 11.30am, Alastair Reynolds & Paul McAuley 1.45pm. 26th: Eoin Colfer (new children's programme addition). Box office 0131 624 5050. NB: Terry Pratchett, announced in *A168* as speaking on the 14th, can't appear owing to family commitments.

13 Aug • **Reading with La Diva Loca**, Borders Books (2nd floor), Oxford St, London. From 6:30pm. Pat Cadigan-hosted sf reading and discussion group, now a regular event on the 2nd Mon each month.

18-19 Aug • **Caption 2001** (small-press comics), Oxford Union. £8.00 reg, £5 students/unwaged, £3 Sun only; £10.00 (£4 Sun) at door. Contact 18 Hawkins St, Oxford, OX4 1YD. 0777 585 0207.

22 Aug • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm.

24-6 Aug • **Eboracon** (Unicon) and **HarmUni** (filk), Langworth College, University of York. £25 reg; students £20; £10 supp. Rooms £22 pppn. Contact 9 Prospect Terrace, Fulford, York, YO10 4PT.

24-26 Aug • **Festival of Fantastic Films #12**, Renaissance Hotel, Manchester. GoHs include Forrest J Ackerman. £60/\$95 reg, £30 supp. Contact 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford, M6 8EN; phone 0161 707 3747.

30 Aug - 3 Sep • **Millennium Philcon** (59th worldcon), Pennsylvania Convention Center & Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. Now \$180 reg (supporters \$140) to 15 Aug; \$200 at door. Later door rates: Sat \$180, Sun \$100, Mon \$35. Day: Thu \$50, Fri \$65, Sat \$85, Sun \$80, Mon \$35. Contact PO Box 310, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0310, USA.

1-3 Feb 02 • **Contabile-Fortean** (filk), Hilton International, Basingstoke. £25 reg. Contact 34 Star Rd, Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7 4HB.

## Infinitely Improbable

**R.I.P. Poul Anderson** (1926-2001) died near midnight on 31 July, after a long struggle with prostate cancer. He had returned that day after a month in hospital to await the end at home, supported by his wife Karen and close family. His son-in-law Greg Bear writes: 'During the afternoon, he received hundreds of emails and messages from friends and readers and fellow writers, which Astrid and Karen printed out and read to him. He died knowing (and how!) that he was loved and valued, and hearing how much his work had entertained and moved so many. Though he was weak at the end, there was no loss of mental capacity, and my last conversation with him was slow but sparkling with the curiosity and deep-seated gentlemanliness that Poul always had, and which was, I think, built into his whole body and being.' Amen to that. It's surely superfluous to list his vast contributions to sf since 1947, marked by seven Hugos for shorter fiction, three Nebulas, and SFWA Grand Master status in 1998; new work is in the pipeline even now. Another great loss. • **Mordecai Richler** (1931-2001), noted Canadian novelist who ventured into children's fantasy with *Jacob Two-Two and the Dinosaur* (1987, noted in *Locust*), died of cancer on 3 July.

**Wedding of the Millennium.** **Maureen Kincaid Speller** was there on 28 July: 'It wasn't so much a wedding as a small convention when Jo Walton married Emmet O'Brien in Hay-on-Wye, the world's largest book room. Guests were thoughtfully supplied with name badges and there was a short but carefully organised programme: the Guest of Honour ceremony was extremely well attended. The bride was dressed in her favourite blue, with a headdress made by Elise Matthesen, while the groom was stylish (and probably incredibly warm) in a tuxedo. Sasha Walton, the Best Man, carried out his duties with remarkable

aplomb. The ceremony was delightful, punctuated with readings by Vicki Rosenzweig and Ken Walton from the GoHs' favourite books, and their speeches were greeted with a good deal of laughter when they promised to "love, honour and negotiate". After champagne and cake (in the shape of a book, complete with iced reviews) and the distribution of hobbit wedding presents by the bride and groom, the guests dispersed to investigate the bookshops, gathering later to show off their various purchases. It was certainly an international event, with guests from Canada, the US, Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands, and Eire, to name but a few, as well as a strong UK contingent. And it was a perfect weekend, blessed with fine weather and excellent company. I know I'm not the only one looking forward to the first anniversary convention.'

**From the Spiel Chequer.** 'When God became displeased by Man he disrupted this perfect climate: that caused the floods and the subsequent shifting of the Teutonic plates which split up the land ...' (Andrew Hook, 'The Virtual Menagerie', *The Third Alternative* 27, 2001)

**2001 James White Award** for best story by a new writer has final deadline 26 August. Contact 211 Black Horse Ave, Dublin 7, Ireland.

**Random Fandom.** *Leslie Carol Altic & Tommy Ferguson* 'got engaged on 11 July (to be married 26 Sep 02.) No serious injuries occurred and both parties are recovering well at home, 12 Gypsy St, Belfast, BT7 3FW.' • *Harry Andruschak* wishes to dispel rumours about his health: 'My orchiectomy on 14 May was a success, my PSA is down to 0.3, and I am more likely to die from Mad Cow Disease than from prostate cancer. Moooooo.' • *Chris Bell* has been extensively and painfully rebuilt after an attack of dry rot. I'm sorry, I'll read that again: *Chris Bell's house ...* • *Andrew M. Butler* wants to 'share a delightful quote from the Marxism 2001 event featuring Ken (CIA smuggler) MacLeod, Adam Roberts and China Miéville: "China Miéville has shown us how to be a good socialist and a bad science fiction writer." Oh, I say! • *Dave Hardy* needs to contact Uwe Luserke, 'long-time German fan, organizer of several Stucons and formerly of the Stuttgart area, also known as an art and literary agent under the name Vega Agentur.' Any information to Dave@astroart.org. • *Lucy Sussex* reports from Down Under on 'a small marsupial called the Dibbler, rare, but saved from extinction. It's about the size of a large mouse with a bushy tail. One wonders if Terry Pratchett should contribute to their survival fund, given CMOT Dibbler in Discworld. However, one point of difference—Dibblers belong to the antechinus family, which means they are famously sexually rapacious. The fact that at the end of the breeding season no males are left alive caused zoologists no end of puzzlement, until it was discovered that they'd gone without sleep and food in their sexual frenzy. Leaving a population of pregnant females....'

**Movie Corner: AI.** In a piece on the multiple rewrites suffered by the screenplay, the *Wall Street Journal* claimed: 'Steven Spielberg paid Aldiss more money than he usually makes from a novel for the right to use one sentence from a letter Aldiss wrote the filmmaker trying to reassert his abandoned original vision.' [PL] Naturally we invited Brian to comment: 'When Stanley Kubrick died, I took another look at my 1969 story. Suddenly it was apparent to me how the story of David and Teddy might continue. I wrote a second story, "Supertoys When Winter Comes", more or less for my own enjoyment. • The story was sent to Steven Spielberg, not by me but by my highly esteemed friend, Jan Harlan, who was then making an excellent documentary of Kubrick's life and work (which dispels many of the myths surrounding Stanley). Spielberg immediately accepted the story. • So I sent Spielberg a letter suggesting how the David story—that is to say, my David story—might conclude. Spielberg offered to buy one sentence of the letter. • I would suppose that this amused him as much as it did me. Anyhow, I then got sensible and wrote a third and concluding David story ("Supertoys in Other Seasons"), which incorporated the precious sentence. And—again via Jan—Spielberg bought that story too. [...] As for trying "to reassert my abandoned original vision", as the newsletter claims, that is not the case. The second story was written for my own satisfaction. Many non-writers may have problems comprehending that. The third story—well, I just had a good idea I wanted to exercise.' All three stories appear in Brian's 2001 tie-in collection *Supertoys Last All Summer Long* (adv.).

**As Others See Us.** 'Sci-fi nuts will want a new paperback edition of Philip K. Dick's drug-obsessed classic *Now Wait for Last Year*. SF Masterworks £6.99 4 stars.' (*Uncut*, complete text of review) [DL]

**C.o.A.** *John Betancourt & Wildside Press*, PO Box 301, Holicong, PA 18928-0301, USA. *Soren (Scraps) deSelby & Vijay Bowen*, PO Box 156, Village Station, New York, NY 10014-0156, USA. *Jonathan 'Jonjo' Jones & Sharon Lewis*, 63 Providence Way, Waterbeach, Cambs, CB5 9QH. *Dave & Maryse O'Neill*, 103 Wharf Row, Redwood City, CA 94065, USA.

*Alastair Reynolds*, Rederijersplein 27, 2203 GC Noordwijk, The Netherlands. *Mark Richards*, PO Box 021831, Brooklyn, NY 11202-0039, USA.

**Future Classics.** Children's author Laura Erickson has been complaining that no one will publish her book *The Curious Adventures of Max the Maggot: How an insignificant little grub saved the life of a mighty hawk*. From the succulent on-line sample: 'Vanessa's neck wound tasted yummy! Max went to work gobbling infected tissue as if it were the best thing he'd ever eaten, which, of course, it was. His brothers and sisters were hatching out too, and within minutes all of them were lined up around the wound like King Arthur's knights at the round table. Mmmmm, they all thought, but they didn't say anything, being quiet little grubs. They just ate and ate and ate.' [EW] Mmmmm, indeed.

**Group Gropes.** America's legendary N3F (National Fantasy Fan Federation) celebrates its 60th anniversary at Worldcon—a sobering thought. Festive readings at Barnes & Noble, 1805 Walnut St, Philadelphia (6-7 blocks from the con centre), 12:30pm on Fri 31 Aug. [CM]

**International Horror Guild Awards** novel shortlist: *A Shadow on the Wall*, Jonathan Aycliffe; *Silent Children*, Ramsey Campbell; *You Come When I Call You*, Douglas Clegg; *The Bottoms*, Joe R. Lansdale; *Declare*, Tim Powers. IHG Living Legend Award: Alice Cooper (eek!).

**Outraged Letters.** *Dominic Green* finds the weed of publicity (see A168) bears bitter fruit: 'It would appear I have achieved fame indeed. Let my name be scrawled, crudely and in green crayon, on to the hall-owed walls of Thog's Masterclass alongside those of L. Ron Hubbard and John Norman, my literary heroes since childhood.' • *Simon R. Green* was stirred by a Langford SFX column on title changes: 'My Hawk & Fisher titles were perfectly acceptable to my British publisher, but not to the US. *No Haven for the Guilty* became *Hawk & Fisher*. Because: it was the first of a series starring Hawk and Fisher. The second H&F book, *Devil Take the Hindmost*, became *Winner Takes All*. Because: the publisher believed most Americans wouldn't know what hindmost meant. Book 4, a gothic romance pastiche, was *Vengeance for a Lonely Man* in the UK, and *Wolf in the Fold* in the US. Because: the title was too long for the spine. And Book 6, *Two Kings in Haven* in the UK, became *Bones of Haven* in the US. Because ... I haven't a clue. Anti-monarchist feelings?'

• *Cheryl Morgan*: 'Must echo Maureen [Kincaid Speller]'s approval of 2001: A Celebration of British SF. However, I have no idea what she means when describing Nicola Griffith's speech as a "lesbian polemic". I was sat up the front and could hear clearly. As far as I can remember Nicola talked about the need for sf to have good stories, this having been brought on by having her latest book rejected by a UK publisher on the grounds that it was "a rattling good read".' (Maureen: 'I couldn't hear and someone told me next day it was lesbian polemic. Bad Maureen. Mustn't believe everything I'm told.' Apologies to Nicola Griffith; tut-tut to the misinformant.) • *Jon Weir* of Amazon took a holiday from sf, 'only to find that the entire cast of *Voyager* had beamed into Blackpool the very same weekend for a conference! There is no escape....'

**Twenty Years Ago.** Andrei Tarkovsky joined the 'it can't be good, it's sf' bandwagon with his regretful remark 'I do feel that *Solaris* is the least successful of my films because I was never able to eliminate completely the science-fiction association.' The 1981 World Fantasy Con denied allegations of art show cliché censorship, explaining that their phrase 'we will not have any unicorns in the artshow' didn't mean they wouldn't have any unicorns in the art show. (*Ansible* 20, August 1981)

**Fanfundery.** Catherine Mintz's one-off fund to bring Vladivostok fan Yuri Mironets to the 2001 Worldcon raised enough dollars; she thanks all donors. YM will be there Wednesday-Sunday, but like other early leavers will miss the Hugos, unfortunately moved to Sunday night.

**Thog's Masterclass.** Then, mercifully, blackness descended. He was brought out of it when he landed hard on a hard surface on his hands and knees, with which every orifice in his body seemed to explode.' (Sam Merwin Jr, *The Time Shifters*, 1971) [BA] • 'Whit slouched in a high-backed shaker chair with a boot on one knee.' (Jean Stewart, *Return to Isis*, 1992) [PB] • *Dept of Eyeballs in the Sky*. 'The woman took her eyes from him languorously and placed them, in a delicate fashion, on Mosely.' (Jane Jensen, *Sins of the Fathers*, 1997) • "Er ... hi," Marty managed, winching his eyes like injured climbers around the dangerous overhang of her torso and up to the relative safety of her face.' (James Flint, 'Network Network', *The New English Library Book of Internet Stories* ed Maxim Jakubowski, 2000) [both DH]

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