



## Ansible 177 April 2002

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**HELICON 2: EASTERCON 2002.** I wasn't there to report, but the event seems to have gone well despite low numbers. • **BSFA Awards** were duly presented: NOVEL *Chasm City* by Alastair Reynolds; SHORT 'The Children of Winter' by Eric Brown (*Interzone* 163); NONFICTION *Omegatropic* by Stephen Baxter; COVER ART the *Omegatropic* cover by Colin Odell. [TB] • **Eastercon 2004** is inevitably the one serious bid, Concourse, with its Blackpool Wintergardens site—not inevitable, but overwhelmingly preferred by voters to the Heathrow alternative. [PNN] See below. • Dave O'Neill boggled: 'Jersey TV managed to run a piece on the con without using references to fans beaming in ... there must be hope for the place.' Dental Cavity Fandom was well served by the Hotel de France chocolate shop's sale of '7,200 individual chocolates over the weekend, 1,200 of which were champagne truffles.' [CR]

### The Transcendent Tigers

**Isaac Asimov's** death in April 1992 was hastened by AIDS, according to the recent autobiographical collection *Isaac Asimov: It's Been a Good Life*, edited by his widow Janet Jeppson. He was given an infected blood transfusion during 1983 heart bypass surgery. What rotten luck. JJ wishes to correct a misleading *Locus* report that she (rather than the doctor) persuaded Asimov to keep silent about this illness. [HE]

**Ray Bradbury** had his name inscribed on the 2,193rd paving-stone star of the Hollywood Walk of Fame on 1 April. [PB] This mighty honour, accessible to those not famous enough for the Grauman's Chinese Theater forecourt, had previously gone to Lassie and Rin Tin Tin.

**Karen Joy Fowler** and other finalists for the 2002 PEN/Faulkner fiction award failed to impress the *Washington Post*, which sneered: 'Round up the usual suspects and tell them they are the finalists ...', leading to the *Publisher's Lunch* headline 'PEN/Faulkner Nominees Look Familiar'. Only one of the five had been shortlisted before (Claire Messud in 1996; she lost), but who cares about mere boring facts? [ED]

**David Gemmell's** fantasy *Stormrider* came with a Bantam UK publicity sheet which the author may find deflating: 'This is the eagerly awaited FINAL novel in the Rigante series.' Their caps, not mine.

**George Lucas** is at the nasty end of a \$140 million libel suit following his attempt to suppress the film *Starballz*, 'an explicit sex parody of outer space adventure movies'. Lucas's claim that this misused *Star Wars* intellectual property was thrown out of court by a federal judge in January. The countersuit arises from a Lucas spokeswoman's remark implying that *Starballz* 'is directed to children', outraging the adult pornographers at its production company Media Market Group.... [PB]

**Mike Moorcock** awaited surgery in late March: 'The gangrene we'd hoped to stop on my foot is now serious and I have to have an operation rapido. This is a vascular bypass which might work. If it don't I get the crutch and the parrot and five weeks in Bognor in the panto version of *Treasure Island*. So there's always a silver lining. And if I can get to keep the bits they cut off, I can make a fortune from my loonier fans by selling them on e-bay.' Later: 'Could you just say I lost the toes in a nasty wah-wah/fuzz pedal accident. It sounds cooler, somehow. I did get the gangrene from dancing too much, believe it or not.'

**Nick Webb**, former Simon & Schuster MD, has moved to the wrong side of the tracks and become an author: he's writing the authorized biography of Douglas Adams for Headline. Simo, hard at work on the unauthorized bio for Hodder & Stoughton, comments through gritted teeth: 'I'm not worried. I publish before him and I know I'll have masses of information he won't have. Of course, he'll have about £60,000 that I won't have....' Who will be the victor in this deadly Adamsian tussle between Hodder Headline (owners of H&S) and, er, Hodder Headline?

**Liz Williams** was hideously pulped, since her new novel *Empire of Bones* stars a "freedom fighter" based not-very-loosely on India's Phoolan Devi. Bantam had got as far as having the covers printed. Then they were all sent to the shredder ... when we realized that the back blurb described the heroine as a "terrorist". My agent suggested it might sell more copies, for those inclined to purchase it for July 4th bonfires, but it got pulped anyway.' (Out, with bowdlerized blurb, on 28 March.)

### Contrafagotto

13 Apr • **Signs of Life**, Friends House, Euston Rd, London. Free event 10am-5pm. GoH M. John Harrison, Gwyneth Jones. Including the utterly thrilling BSFA AGM (pre-lunch) and SF Foundation AGM (end of day).

20 Apr • **UK in 2005 Open Meeting**, Florence Nightingale pub, London. 'Social' session from 2pm, Worldcon bid discussion 7:30pm.

24 Apr • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker: er, dunno.

3-6 May • **Damn Fine Convention (Twin Peaks)**, Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Shepperton. £25 reg; Norwegians free, if resident in Norway. Contact 37 Keens Rd, Croydon, CR0 1AH.

12 May • **Fantasy Fair** (10th anniversary event), Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. Contact 01477 534626.

18 May • **Arthur C. Clarke Award**, Science Museum, by invitation, from 6:30pm. Also panels etc arranged by Pat Cadigan, 2pm-6pm, admission free: 'As in gratis, no charge, in for nowt, nada, nil.'

1-3 Jun • **plokta.con 2.0** (small, friendly, superfluous tech), Hilton National Hotel, Basingstoke. GoH John Meaney. £25 reg. Cheques to *Plokta*, 24 St Mary Rd, Walthamstow, London, E17 9RG.

9-11 Aug • **ConteXXt** (Unicon 20), University of Gloucestershire. Joint event with **HarmUni 2** (filk relaxacon). GoH Keith Brooke, Ben Jeapes. Now £30 reg. Contact 17 Cow Lane, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7SZ.

16-19 Aug • **2002: A Discworld Odyssey** (DWcon 3), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. GoH Terry Pratchett (of course) and many of the usual suspects. *Reduced rates* from 1 April: £45 reg, £30 concessions, £10 supp—reverting to £50, £35 and £15 at the end of July. Contact (SAE) 23 Medora Rd, Romford, Essex, RM7 7EP.

1-3 Nov • **Novacon 32**, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. Now £35 reg to 20 Oct; £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

9-12 Apr 04 • **Concourse** (Eastercon), Blackpool Wintergardens. GoH Mitchell Burnside Clapp, Danny Flynn, Christopher Priest, Philip Pullman, Sue Mason. £25 reg, £15 supp, £15 children (5-17), infants (0-5) free. Rates to rise in June if not before, *except* that full reg for the unwaged will be held at £25 until the con. On-line credit card payment facility planned. Contact 479 Newmarket Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8JJ.

**Rumblings • Worldcon 2006.** Los Angeles is bidding to hold this event on 23-27 August in Anaheim, against Kansas City's 31 August to 4 September bid. LA presupporting membership: \$20 to Los Angeles in 2006 c/o SCIFI Inc, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, California 91409, USA. • **Worldcon 2005.** It is Officially Too Late for another bid to oppose Glasgow in the current site selection voting. Only an 'unprecedented' rejection of the UK bid at ConJosé can save us now. [KS]

### Infinitely Improbable

**Geek Futurology Dept.** 'In 1975 Ed Roberts, the founder of MITS, a calculator company based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, put a micro-chip in a box with a screen and called his invention Altair, after a character in *Star Wars*.' (John Cassidy, *dot.con*, 2002) [GW]

**More Awards.** *Philip K. Dick Award* for best original US paperback of 2001: Richard Paul Russo's *Ship of Fools*. [GVG] • *Sapphires* for sf romance: NOVEL *Finders Keepers*, Linnea Sinclair; SHORT 'Kinsman', Susan Krinard (in *Out of This World*). • *Oscars* in 'major' categories eluded the 13-times-nominated *Lord of the Rings*, as predicted by cynics; it won for make-up, musical score, visual effects and cinematography. The *Harry Potter* film scored zero out of three nominations. *Shrek* won as best animated feature. The new *Planet of the Apes* merely picked up a couple of 'Golden Raspberry' anti-Oscars, as worst remake and for Charlton Heston as worst supporting actor. [SG]

**R.I.P.** *Martha Beck*, popular US Midwest and Chicago-group fan since the 1950s, died from respiratory failure on 13 March. Earl Kemp wrote: 'Throughout the last fifty years she has been the soul and spirit of fandom, making every convention or just a simple party something extraordinarily special just by her presence.' • *Joan Abbe Benford* (1938-2002), Gregory Benford's wife, died from cancer on 25 March. 'She

attended many sf conventions and was a noted art educator ... she was frequently portrayed by her husband in such novels as *In the Ocean of Night*, *Artifact* and *Eater*.' [GB] • **R.A. Lafferty** (1914-2002), Irish-American author of offbeat, unclassifiable sf, fantasy and tall tales, died on 18 March after long illness. He was 87. As a baroque stylist, gleeful connoisseur of conspiracy theories, devotee of Native American culture, conservative Catholic (with a Chestertonian taste for paradox), reworker of old myths and coiner of new ones, Lafferty became a beloved cult figure in sf and was avidly taken up by small presses as his work grew ever more quirky, flamboyant and uncommercial. He won the 1973 short story Hugo for 'Eurema's Dam' and was honoured with the World Fantasy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1990. Alas, Lafferty ceased writing after an early-1980s stroke, followed by another in 1994 and the onset of Alzheimer's; he spent his last years in care. A genuine wild talent whose high spirits, blarney and madness hugely enriched our genre. • **Dudley Moore** (1935-2002), UK actor who died on 27 March aged 66, was one of the original 1961 *Beyond the Fringe* quartet and is also remembered in sf/fantasy circles for his roles in *Bedazzled* (1967) and *The Bed-Sitting Room* (1969). • **Cherry Wilder** (1930-2002), New Zealand-born sf author, died in hospital in Wellington, NZ, on 14 March; she was 71. Yvonne Rousseau writes: 'Widowed in 1992 in Germany, Cherry subsequently battled cancer, crippling arthritis, and depressing financial problems, but persevered in her writing and her warm international friendships. She left 3 unpublished novels: her Peter Pan thriller, *Crocodile Tears*, her Oxford occult/horror novel, *The Demon Codex*, and her 4th Hylor fantasy, *The Wanderer*. Her short stories and her 9 published novels (including the sf Torin trilogy, with marsupial humanoid) ingeniously transmute her cultural experience: 28 years in New Zealand, 22 in Australia, and 21 in Germany. Anti-authoritarian, generous in her enthusiasms, exhilaratingly inventive, and magically fun to be with: Cherry is very sadly missed.'

**Thog's Modern Astronomy Masterclass.** '... there is not the slightest bit of evidence that even a single planet exists in any other star system.' (John A. Keel, *The Mothman Prophecies*, 1975, updated 1991, 2002)

**ICFA.** John Clute reports: 'The 23rd International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in Florida carried on this year, mostly, as before: synergy, hi-jinks, hard work, sun and shadow. Joan Aiken, the GoH, gave an address of surpassing, hypnotic serenity: it was about a Series of Dreams, and had much the effect (on me, anyway) of one of the best of her fairy tales. Only one cloud: the Awards Banquet which closes off festivities on the fifth day was—to the eloquently voiced dismay of a wide range of participants—marred by the ICFA Board's arguably unseemly bestowing upon two Board members of a Service Award given normally one at a time, at blessedly great intervals, only to Board members. The event was further marred by a very long presentation speech that remarkably managed to offend every faction, race, sex and ethnic group theoretically or actually in attendance, without pleasing the recipient. As the days passed, however, the cloud lifted, and the main memory was of five days absolutely not wasted. Excelsior.'

**Harlan Ellison Joins Scientologists!** That is, in an interesting US copyright law decision, the Ellison lawsuit against AOL (for not promptly removing pirated net copies of his work) failed partly because 'AOL could not be held liable for direct copyright infringement following Religious Technology Center v. Netcom.' ... RTC being the ever-litigious Scientologists, who lost their action against Netcom. [LE]

**Outraged Letters.** *Mog Decartin* leaps to Greg Egan's defence: "No," she hissed. Aw come on guys. You can hiss without S sounds. It's built into the human voicebox. I mean, to me, a hiss is basically just a violent whisper.... snakes, after all, are not saying "SSSS" but more like "HHHHHHH". (I know this because I speak the language of the snake people.) Cats even more so.' • **Gardner Dozois:** 'I only ever met Harry Nadler twice, and haven't had any contact with him for more than thirty years, but he was very kind to me when I was a young fan attending my first-ever science fiction convention (Buxton in 1968), letting me, a total stranger, spend the night in his house on the way to the con, and I saw the news of his passing with a pang of regret. He was a good man. May he rest in peace.' • **Simon R. Green** feels glum: 'I heard recently that Nigel Kneale, still a writing force, approached the BBC with an idea for a spooky new Quatermass series, set in the early days of the British Rocket Group, when they were being forced to work with ex-Nazi scientists ... and couldn't get anyone to listen to him. No one wanted to know. Crying bloody shame or what?'

**Small Press.** *Light's List* (17th ed, 2002) covers over 1,500 English-language small press mags worldwide. 70pp. £2.50 inc post (US\$6; \$7 air) to John Light, 37 The Meadows, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 1NY.

**Nebulas.** Here's the interminable final ballot for 2000-1 work. **NOVEL** *The Quantum Rose*, Catherine Asaro; *Eternity's End*, Jeffrey A. Carver; *Mars Crossing*, Geoffrey A. Landis; *A Storm of Swords*, George R.R. Martin; *The Collapsium*, Wil McCarthy; *The Tower at Stony Wood*, Patricia A. McKillip; *Declare*, Tim Powers; *Passage*, Connie Willis. • **NOVELLA** 'A Roll of the Dice', Catherine Asaro (*Analog*); 'May Be Some Time', Brenda Clough (*Analog*); 'The Diamond Pit', Jack Dann (*F&SF*); 'Radiant Green Star', Lucius Shepard (*Asimov's*); 'The Ultimate Earth', Jack Williamson (*Analog*). • **NOVELETTE** 'To Kiss the Star', Amy Sterling Casil (*F&SF*); 'The Pottawatomie Giant', Andy Duncan (*SCI FICTION*); 'Undone', James Patrick Kelly (*Asimov's*); 'Louise's Ghost', Kelly Link (*Stranger Things Happen*); 'Auspicious Eggs', James Morrow (*F&SF*); 'Dance of the Yellow-Breasted Luddites', William Shunn (*Vanishing Acts*). • **SHORT** 'Kaddish for the Last Survivor', Michael A. Burstein (*Analog*); 'The Cure for Everything', Severna Park (*SCI FICTION*); 'The Elephants on Neptune', Mike Resnick (*Asimov's*); 'Mom and Dad at the Home Front', Sherwood Smith (*Realms of Fantasy*); 'Wound the Wind', George Zebrowski (*Analog*). • **SCRIPT** *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; *X-Men*; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*; *The Body* (Buffy episode).

**Random Fandom.** Steve Green mourns another loss (1989-2002): 'Although *Critical Wave* died in 1996, its infamous Canon copier struggled on through a protracted regime of spare parts surgery; but even long-suffering mechanic Martin Tudor has been forced to call it a day. A Viking funeral is planned, as soon as we can make a raft big enough.' • **Martin Hoare** is 50 this month; two surprise birthday cakes appeared at Helicon. • **Rog Peyton** (60 this month) still hopes to save Andromeda Bookshop. An unnamed 'white knight' may buy the business with Rog as manager and some or all staff rehired; failing that, two-thirds of the money needed for Rog's own refloat has been pledged. • **Kevin Standlee** has joined Tom Whitmore as co-chair of ConJosé, this year's Worldcon. (*The Plain People of Fandom*: Is there an exciting story behind this, a lurid tale of committee schisms, feuding, slander, and anonymous e-mails? *Ansible*: You really don't want to know.)

**As Others See Us.** Andy Sawyer scoured the gutters of *TV Times* to learn that 'Dawn French is to star in a BBC "comedy drama", *Ted and Alice*, about a woman whose new boyfriend turns out to be an alien. According to the interview, Ms French doesn't go for stories about aliens, which are "boys' stuff", although apparently this is OK as it's a "love story" and a tired and hackneyed enough basic situation to satisfy her fans. (Actually she didn't say the last bit.)'

**BSFA Nuptials.** *Catie Cary*, former editor of *Vector*, marries Alan Johnson on 4 May; *Paul Hood*, current organizer of the BSFA London open meetings, marries Elaine Hart on 1 June. Congratulatory noises!

**Fanfundery.** The 2002 TAFF race is on, with Chris O'Shea and Tobes Valois contending for the trip to ConJosé (Worldcon 2002). Voting ends midnight 2 June. Ballots available from Sue Mason, 3 York St, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH; or from *Ansible*, or the TAFF website.

**C.o.A.** *Tommy Ferguson & Leslie Altic*, 30 Ava Park, Belfast, BT7 3BX, NI. *Dave & Maryse O'Neill*, 21 Oak St, Bath, BA2 3BR. *Jo Walton & Emmett O'Brien*, 965 Avenue Melrose, Apt 3, Montreal, Quebec, H4A 2R3, Canada. (Jo has been off-line owing to computer hitches.)

**Twenty Years Ago.** *Brian Aldiss* hit the big time: 'Am boning up to be on "Desert Island Discs"—the Seal of Respectability which will alienate all self-respecting fans. Beethoven's Ninth or I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate? It is a problem.' (*Ansible* 25, April 1982)

**The Horror!** Bram Stoker Awards novel shortlists: **NOVEL** *From the Dust Returned*, Ray Bradbury; *American Gods*, Neil Gaiman; *The Lost*, Jack Ketchum; *Black House*, Stephen King & Peter Straub. • **FIRST NOVEL** *Phantom Feast*, Diana Barron; *Skating on the Edge*, d.g.k. goldberg; *Riverwatch*, Joe Nassise; *Deadliest of the Species*, Michael Oliveri.

**Group Gropes.** *FORTH* (Edinburgh) has been meeting every Tuesday evening since 1979 or so: Doric Tavern, Market St, 9pm. [JD]

**Thog's Masterclass.** The zeppelin of bluster Feldman excoriated Freddy with suddenly popped into a cloud of humility.' (David Grand, *The Disappearing Body*, 2002) [MMW] • 'Schofield and Logan fought hard, covered in red emergency lighting.' (Matthew Reilly, *Area 7*, 2001) [MR] • *Dept of Posh Talk*. 'He abluted, accoutred, ate and arrived downstairs in the communal vestibule in good time to be picked up by Hans.' (James Lovegrove, 'Piecework' in *Hideous Progeny*, 1999). [SHS]

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