

Ansible



Ansible 189 April 2003

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GRIM NEWS. Big Engine, my favourite British small press, has sadly run out of steam. Ben Jeapes—founder and proprietor—explains: 'I'm sorry to break the sad news that Big Engine is going down. • I'm seeking insolvency as the response to two stages of reasoning. (1) BE is running out of capital and won't be able to keep going as it is. This is not insuperable, and it could be overcome with reinvestment and a renewed spurt of time and energy on my part. But this brings me to (2), which is that I don't really want to reinvest. Over the last couple of years I've had to accept that my strengths are as a writer, not as a businessman. I base this on the facts that my writing has (a) been more enjoyable and (b) paid me more than Big Engine since I started in 2000. I would feel awkward seeking reinvestment as I couldn't put my hand on my heart and say I would do the best that could be done with the money. So, best not to. • All the contracted authors have been informed; all the authors who have manuscripts in with me will be (apologies to those who read this first). This also means that *3SF* will be suspended, at least pro tem. The ideal situation would be to find someone who will take on the books and/or the magazine. I'm putting out feelers but would welcome suggestions to ben@bigengine.co.uk.'

The Productions of Time

Paul Barnett has resigned his art-editorial position with Paper Tiger in order to spend more time being John Grant and writing actual books.

Arthur C. Clarke couldn't resist responding to a query about Joycean influence on *2001*, in Roger Ebert's *Chicago Sun-Times* 'Movie Answer Man' column (23 February): 'Ashamed (?) to admit I've never read a word of Joyce—who I believe invented the useful name "quark". Now involved with a much better Irish writer—Lord Dunsany has asked me to write intros to two of his g'father's books.' [PM]

Peter Hamilton offers a travel tip for authors: 'I was GoH at the Mecon 6 convention in Belfast [7-9 March], flying out from Stansted. Due to a combination of forgetfulness and plain stupidity I didn't have my passport or driver's licence with me when I checked in at the airline desk. Official UK photographic identification of all passengers being the security requirement these days, the lady behind the counter was resolutely not ever going to allow the likes of me on board the plane without it. That is until I produced a copy of the convention handbook, with a 2cm square, somewhat blurred, B&W author's photo of me on page 5. She let me go through. Oh, and it was a great little con, too.'

David A. Hardy, our utterly famous sf and space artist, has now set his mark on the skies: 'Just heard that an asteroid has been named after me. (13329) Davidhardy = 1998 SB32 ... Discovered 20 September 1998 by Spacewatch at Kitt Peak. I was gobsmacked!'

Diana Wynne Jones was subjected to ruthless house style when attempting to promote her new *The Merlin Conspiracy*: 'Publicity for this book seems to involve being photographed an unusual number of times—usually the same local photographer appearing with a different hat on and a different book of rules. Did you know that the *Daily Mail* insists that all women have to be photographed in a skirt? And not in black. I had to buy a skirt.'

J.K. Rowling and Warner Bros. have begun legal action in Holland to prevent the sale of Dmitry Yemets's book *The Magic Double Bass*, featuring the character Tanya Grotter. Copyright/trademark infringement and unfair competition are claimed. (*Publishers Lunch*, 13 March)

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro is to receive the 2003 World Horror Convention Grand Master Award at the event itself, later this month. [L]

Zoran Živković, the Serbian sf author (born 1948) who's a regular contributor to *Interzone*, is in fact not Zoran Živković the new Serbian Prime Minister (born 1960). Though they do both live in Belgrade. [JH]

Conditory

12-13 Apr • **Unconvention 2003** (Fortean), Commonwealth Institute, London. £27.50 or £17.50/day, plus 50p postage for ticket(s). Contact IFG, 9 Dallington St, London, EC1V 0BQ. 020 7687 7058.

14 Apr • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London (top floor).

With Pat Cadigan, Justina Robson, and Colin Greenland. 6:30pm.

18-21 Apr • **Seacon '03** (Eastercon), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. £45 reg (£68, €75) or £22 (\$35, €37) supporting only. £60 at the door. Day rates £30 Sat or Sun, £15 Fri or Mon. Contact 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR. • *Stop Press*: Liz Holliday can't make it to Seacon, so her writing workshops there are cancelled.

23 Apr • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker TBA.

27 Sep - 3 Oct • **Milford (UK) SF Writer's Conference**, Hedley House Hotel, York. £15 reg plus £20 deposit against £40/night B&B. Published authors only. Further workshop details from Liz Williams (Secretary), Top Flat, 8 Bedford St, Kemp Town, Brighton, BN2 1AN.

27-8 Sep • **Phoenix Convention (P-Con)**, Ashling Hotel, Parkgate St, Dublin 8. €25 reg, rising to €30 on 21 Apr, €35 at door; €10 supp. Contact: Yellow Brick Road, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland.

4 Oct • **NewCon2**, 'Roadmender' club, 1 Ladys Lane, Northampton, NN1 3AH. 11am-6pm. GoH Stephen Baxter, Dominic Harman, Ben Jeapes. £8 reg (£5 students/unwaged); £9 (or £5) at door. Cheques to Northampton SF Writers Group, 16 Albany Rd, Northampton, NN1 5LZ.

24-6 Oct • **They Came and Shaved Us**, Fairways Hotel, Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland. £30/£(1)45/€45 reg, rising to £35/£(1)55/€55 on 22 Apr. Sterling to 13a Bridge Rd, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2QW; punts/Euro to 123 Carnlough Rd, Cabra West, Dublin 7, Ireland.

7-9 Nov • **Novacon 33**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. £32 reg, rising to £35 after Easter. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

25-27 Feb 05 • **Redemption 05 (B5/B7)**, Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley. Now £40 reg, rising to £45 after 21 Apr 03, £50 after 1 Sep 04. Contact 26 Kings Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

4-8 Aug 05 • **Interaction** (63rd Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. Still £75/\$115 reg, rising to £85/\$135 on 1 June 03. Various discounts for presupporters etc. Unchanged: £32/\$50 child reg, £30/\$45 supporting only. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. In North America: PO Box 58009, Louisville, Kentucky, KY 40268-0009, USA.

Infinitely Improbable

Tiptree Award. This year's winners are M. John Harrison's novel *Light* and John Kessel's story 'Stories for Men' (*Asimov's* Oct/Nov 2002). [FM]

As Others See Us. The latest Sci-Fi Channel miniseries is adapted from *Children of Dune*, and director Greg Yaitanes was quick to perform the traditional Rite of Distancing: "'I looked at this as a story of a family, not a science fiction film,'" says Yaitanes, a Wellesley (Mass.) native who directed an episode of Sci-Fi's *The Invisible Man* three years ago. "What's great about the film is there are empowered women in it. Science fiction traditionally has had a male appeal to it." • What's more, he says, his film offers a lot more than "just hardware and monsters and explosions. There are real human emotions, which is very, very rare in science fiction.'" (*Boston Globe*, 16 March) [DK]

R.I.P. *Sir Hardy Amies* (1909-2003), the Queen's official dressmaker for 48 years, died on 5 March aged 93. The sf connection was his role as wardrobe designer for *2001: A Space Odyssey*. [GD] • **Howard Fast** (1915-2003), US author of such historical bestsellers as *Spartacus* (1951), who published much short sf and fantasy and was long associated with *F&SF*, died on 12 March; he was 88. Fast's genre collections include *The General Zapped an Angel* (1970). [PB] • **Fred Freiberger** (1915-2003), US screenwriter and producer responsible for the second season of *Space: 1999*, died on 2 March aged 88. He also worked on *Star Trek*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Superboy*, and *The Wild, Wild West*, and wrote screenplays for 13 feature films including *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953). [LP] • **Dame Thora Hird**, UK actress who died on 15 March aged 91, inevitably played genre roles in her long career—e.g. in the 1955 *The Quatermass Experiment*, whose success kick-started the Hammer Films sf/horror tradition. [SG] • **Monica Hughes** (1925-2003), Liverpool-born writer of children's sf who lived in Canada since 1952 and won several literary awards, died on 7 March aged 77. Her best-known sf work is the Isis trilogy: *The Keeper of the Isis Light*

(1980), *The Guardian of Isis* (1981), and *The Isis Pedlar* (1982). [O] ● Harry B. Warner Jr (1922-2003), long-time fan, fanzine publisher, historian of fandom and indefatigable letter-writer, died at his fannishly famous home address—423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland—on 17 February (and was not found for some weeks). He was 80. Harry's fanzines included the 1940s *Spaceways* and the long-running *Horizons*, published through FAPA ever since 1939; his fan histories of the 1940s and 1950s were *All Our Yesterdays* (1969) and *A Wealth of Fable* (1976), whose 1992 expansion won him a nonfiction Hugo. He also received 1969 and 1972 Hugos as best fan writer, and was a guest of honour at the 1971 Boston worldcon. Like so many fanzine publishers around the world, I've lost count of the kindly, conscientious and sometimes cranky letters of comment he sent me over the decades. As Bruce Gillespie wrote at the start of his own memoir, 'I've regarded Harry Warner Jr for so long as the patron saint of fandom that it will be very hard to get used to the idea of him not being there.'

Oscars 2003. Fantasy was rewarded by the victory of Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* as Best Animated Feature, while *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* received the small consolation prize of wins for Achievement in Sound Editing and Best Visual Effects. [SG]

Thog's Translator Masterclass. '... there is practically no radio-activity in the soil of this part of the galaxy.' (Stanislaw Lem, *The Invincible*, 1976 Penguin UK translation) [EO'B]

Rights or Wrongs? James Follett put out an incandescent release about current BBC7 digital radio repeats of his 1981-82 sf radio series *Earthsearch*. These were apparently 'authorized' by the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, originally set up to collect fiddly sums like blanket fees for academic textbook photocopying, and to distribute the take to ALCS-registered authors. Follett writes: 'The BBC had not renewed their broadcast rights. The previous year [2002], without my knowledge, the BBC had held secret meetings with a company called ALCS Ltd and appointed them to act as my literary agent and the literary agent for several other writers! Furthermore, without any reference to me, ALCS Ltd had agreed a fee scale of £10 per broadcast hour [rather than £450 per episode plus 50% for broadcasting them twice a day, as negotiated in 1980] for the BBC to repeat my work, without my consent, without my knowledge, and without the boring necessity of the BBC having to worry about securing copyright. My total fee for the BBC7 repeat of the entire serial would be £100! Needless to say, I'm not a member of ALCS and never have been. [...] To say that my agent and I were "incandescent with rage" would be a mild understatement. Together we would've provided a respectable firework display except that it was the BBC doing all the celebrating. Imagine waking up one morning to discover that an estate agent that you had not appointed had put your house on the market without telling you and, furthermore, was selling for 2 per cent of its 1980 value! Further developments are nervously awaited; I have asked the Society of Authors to comment.'

Random Fandom. Simon Bradshaw now wields the power of high, middle and low justice as Chair of the SF Foundation (elected 8 March), Farah Mendlesohn having stepped down after two terms of office. ● John Foyster continues to publish e-fanzines despite doom-laden noises from the medical profession: 'Oh, yes, at the end of February the doctors noted that my earlier chemotherapy drugs weren't being successful. Oh, dear. Do you understand the meaning of "Palliative Care"?' ● Sharon Lewis (writes Jonjo) 'would like to thank everyone who sent her get-well messages during her stay in hospital for her appendectomy. She is now feeling much better and is recovering at home.' ● Sue Mason is all agog: 'A picture of mine will hang in the National Portrait Gallery from 10th April until 22nd June. Wow!' The self-portrait, of Our Sue belly-dancing, then goes on tour: Nat Gall Cardiff, 3 July - 30 Aug; Glasgow Gall of Modern Art, 13 Sep - 16 Nov; Manchester Art Gall, 24 Nov - 20 January 04; Ormeau Baths Gall, Belfast, Feb-Mar 04.

Sapient Pearwood. A Pratchettian moment was spotted in a press release on safety testing from the snappily titled European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardization: 'In one test, the luggage itself broke into the passenger compartment, potentially threatening other occupants.' [ZB]

C.o.A. Mary Kay & Jordin Kare, 908 15th Ave E, Seattle, WA 98112, USA. Tony Keen, 48 Priory St, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2AN. John Richards (temporary), Flat 1a, 45 Christ Church Rd, Doncaster, DN1 2QD.

Outraged Letters. John Brosnan found the grail: 'In last Sunday's *Observer Magazine* [8 Mar] best-selling author Wilbur Smith kindly passed on his solution to the problem of writer's block: "Even after writing 29 novels, I hate the loneliness, the doubt. Usually halfway through a book I have a serious depression, so I go on safari on my ranch in

South Africa, or fishing off my island in the Seychelles. When I come back and re-read it, I think, "What was that all about, Smith? It's fine, just get on with it." So there you have it. Just buy yourself a ranch in South Africa and an island in the Seychelles and all your writing problems will disappear. It's just so bloody obvious I'm surprised it never occurred to me before.' ● Richard E. Geis points out a fundamental flaw in *Ansible 188*: 'I see my name was not in the issue, but I forgive you.' ● Simon R. Green muses on an aside from *A188*: 'Buildings named after sf writers, hmmm; The Moorcock Bordello?'

As Others See Us II. Further movie press-pack burlblings: 'In fact, it is this very unknown aspect of the film's subject that makes *The Core* not just another science fiction movie. Says producer David Foster: "We've seen sea adventures and space odysseys, but traveling into the core of the earth is largely unexplored territory.'" Which, as groaning informant Dan Kimmel notes, will no doubt come as a great surprise to the adapters of Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and Burroughs's *At the Earth's Core*. ● Sita Williams, producer of the sf series *The Last Train*, explained that despite suspended animation and asteroid impact, 'it's not science fiction, it's post apocalyptic fiction.' [GH]

Fanfundery. The fandom.co.uk and fandom.org.uk net domains, heroically acquired by Michael J. Lowrey in 1999 to save them from the (now fallen) evil empire Fandom.com, and paid for by him ever since, will be auctioned by Randy Byers at Seacon '03. Proceeds to TAFF.

Accolade. Alas, the UK sf author who was the key to the 8 March *Spectator* crossword is no longer with us to appreciate it (or, more likely, to blow raspberries at the *Specsy's* far-right politics). The puzzle contained a 50-letter unclued quotation from an article on 1960s fashion, plus its author's forename and surname, clued without definition: 'Set about gossip? On the contrary' (6) and 'Tense, in charge? Right (6)'. This should pose no difficulty to our cosmic-minded readers.

Filmwatch. Described by Paul Barnett as the week's gloomiest fantasy movie news is the *Variety* report that John Travolta is likely to star in a new remake of *Harvey* (1950). In this version, presumably, the six-foot-three rabbit is invisible to others because he's completely Clear.

Small Press. Discreetly blowing my own trumpet: Chris Priest and I have started a tiny e-book outfit at www.ansible-editions.co.uk, with the first titles being the unpublished John Sladek novella *Wholly Smokes* and David I. Masson's fine 1968 collection *The Caltraps of Time*, now expanded with three 1970s stories to comprise his complete sf. For those who prefer print editions, we have a co-publishing deal with Cosmos Books: *Caltraps* is scheduled for POD release later this year. And the new Langford title from Cosmos is *Up Through an Empty House of Stars: Reviews and Essays 1980-2002*—listed on Amazon in hardback (May 2003) and paperback (November). Help this man become a capitalist!

The Dead Past. *Thirty Years Ago*, at Eastercon 1972 (OMPACON): 'The British Sf Award was not presented this year due to popular apathy.' (*Checkpoint 37*, April 1973) ● *Ten Years Ago*, Clarke Award controversy raged as the £1,000 cheque went to Marge Piercy for *Body of Glass*, with Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars* as runner-up. 'At least 3 sf publishers [are] planning a future boycott after this year's baffling result,' reported David Garnett, while Roz Kaveney tersely described the winner as 'Not awfully good.' Yet secret sources confirmed that the decision was near-unanimous, the Piercy being the first choice for five voting judges and second for the sixth. (*Ansible 69*, April 1993)

Thog's Masterclass. *Physics Dept.* '... no, affinity wasn't quite the right word, it felt more like they were two north poles of a bipolar magnet, each vigorously, automatically repelled by the other.' (Jo Clayton, *Blue Magic*, 1988) [PM] ● *Dept of Anatomy.* 'Ace crept back down the corridor, her heart pounding in her neck. She swallowed, trying to push it away, concentrate on what she was doing, but it wouldn't shift.' (Dale Smith, *Dr Who—Heritage*, 2002) [LC] ● *Dept of Genealogy.* 'Lord Voldemort—who is the last remaining ancestor of Salazar Slytherin ...' (J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, 1998) [AS] ● *Dept of Bunker-Busting Metaphor.* 'If the interior of the cone is lined with copper or other metal, this melts and squirts forward with the plasma jet, giving it teeth to punch through armour plate like a fire hose through sand.' (*New Scientist*, 8 March) [TW] ● *Classics Dept.* 'We are between the wild thout of certainty and the mad zitidar of fact—we can escape neither.' (Edgar Rice Burroughs, *The Gods of Mars*, 1918)

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