

# Ansible



## Ansible 329 December 2014

From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website [news.ansible.uk](http://news.ansible.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Brad W. Foster. Available for SAE or a pack filled with Big Beaver Essentials.

Season's Greetings, as always, to all the *Ansible* readers out there!

### The Snuggly Winter

**Adam-Troy Castro** is disconcerted: 'Twitter just suggested that I follow Jay Lake. / I found that unnecessarily hostile.'

**John Clute** was declared a jolly good fellow—that is, an Honorary Visiting Fellow—at Anglia Ruskin University.

**Peter Firmin**, co-creator with Oliver Postgate of such Smallfilms genre classics as *The Clangers* and *Bagpuss*, received a special lifetime honour at the BAFTA Children's Awards on 23 November. [MPJ]

**Stephen King** on what still rankles: 'Early in my career, *The Village Voice* did a caricature of me that hurts even today when I think about it. It was a picture of me eating money. I had this big, bloated face. It was this assumption that if fiction was selling a lot of copies, it was bad. If something is accessible to a lot of people, it's got to be dumb because most people are dumb. And that's elitist. I don't buy it.' (Interview by Andy Greene for *Rolling Stone*, 31 October) [AIP]

**Ursula K. Le Guin's** fine National Book Awards acceptance speech caused some stir. 'Hard times are coming, when we'll be wanting the voices of writers who can see alternatives to how we live now, can see through our fear-stricken society and its obsessive technologies to other ways of being, and even imagine real grounds for hope. We'll need writers who can remember freedom—poets, visionaries—realists of a larger reality.' See/read it all at [www.ursulakleuin.com/UKL\\_info.html](http://www.ursulakleuin.com/UKL_info.html).

**Christopher Nolan** reassured everyone who complained about inaudible dialogue in *Interstellar*—repeatedly drowned out by loud music and effects—that this 'impressionistic' approach was intentional, indeed 'adventurous and creative'. So there. (*Hollywood Reporter*, 15 November) • Another view: 'The film's audio and complexity have both been hotbeds for debate, especially in regard to the scientific soundness of the plot. In the grand scheme of things, however, *Interstellar* is not a science fiction film; it is a film about humanity and the way people live.' (Brett Stewart in *Liberty Voice*, 30 November) [MK]

### Conperseyner

5 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Xmas Open Night**, The Two Chairmen, 1 Warwick House St, London, SW1Y 5AT, 7pm-11pm. Free.

6 Dec • **Dragonmeet** (gaming), ILEC Convention Centre & Ibis Earls Court, 9am-midnight. £10 at door. See [www.dragonmeet.co.uk](http://www.dragonmeet.co.uk).

18 Dec • **London Christmas Meeting** (NB not at the usual First Thursday venue): upstairs room, The One Tun, Saffron Hill, near Farringdon tube. All evening, 4/5pm to late; all welcome. Free.

Ending soon: 4 Jan 2015 • **Longitude Punk'd** (steampunk exhibition), Royal Observatory, Greenwich. 10am-5pm. £7 adult, £5.50 concessions, £2.50 child 5-15, under-5s free. Also family rates.

24 Jan 2015 • **SFSF Social**, Eten Café, York Street, Sheffield, S1 2ER. 4pm-late with guest readings and Q&A; all welcome. Free.

6-8 Feb 2015 • **Con271kin** (filk), Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey, Colchester. £37 reg, £27 unwaged. Cheques to UK Filk Convention, c/o 119 Whitehill Lane, Gravesend, DA12 5LU.

7-8 Feb 2015 • **Microcon**, Exeter University. Details awaited; the web page (and the whole societies.ex.ac.uk subdomain) has vanished. 30-31 Mar 2015 • **Sideways in Time**: Alternate History and Counterfactual Narratives (conference), Liverpool University. Call for papers: deadline 15 December. See [sidewaysintime.wordpress.com](http://sidewaysintime.wordpress.com).

29 Apr 2015 • **Brave New Worlds** (academic conference on dystopian fiction), Newcastle University. Call for papers: deadline 15 December. See [dystopianconference.wordpress.com](http://dystopianconference.wordpress.com).

19-23 Aug 2015 • **Sasquan** (Worldcon), Spokane Convention Center, Spokane, WA, USA. \$190 reg; \$95 YA/military; \$80 child; \$40 supp. Rates may rise on 1 January 2015. See <http://sasquan.org/>.

23-25 Oct 2015 • **Fantasycon**, East Midlands Conference Centre & Orchard Hotel, Nottingham. Registration cost to follow at the [fantasycon2015.org](http://fantasycon2015.org) site. The hotel (linked from there) pretends to be full until you enter the special corporate booking code FANTASY15.

4-6 Nov 2016 • **BCon** (Eurocon), Barcelona, Spain. €30 reg to 27 April 2015; under-25s €10; under-16s free. See [www.eurocon2016.org](http://www.eurocon2016.org).

**Rumblings**. Following ancient tradition, there is no London BSFA pub meeting in December. Normal service resumes on 28 January.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. On PUA (pick-up artist) culture: 'For it is easy to dismiss the men who look to Dapper Laughs for pulling advice, or who pay a shade under \$3,000 to attend one of Julien Blanc's "boot camps". They're sci-fi saddos; they're World of Warcraft weirdos.' (Hadley Freeman, 'Comment is free', *The Guardian*, 12 November) [SW]

**Awards**. *Nova Awards*. FANZINE *Vibrator*; FANWRITER Christina Lake; FAN ARTIST D. West. Hot competition for these fanzine honours led to the casting of a mighty 17 ballots. • *World Fantasy*. NOVEL Sofia Samatar, *A Stranger in Olondria*; NOVELLA Andy Duncan & Ellen Klages, 'Wakulla Springs' (Tor.com); SHORT Caitlin R. Kiernan, 'The Prayer of Ninety Cats' (*Subterranean*); ANTHOLOGY George R.R. Martin & Gardner Dozois, eds., *Dangerous Women*; ARTIST Charles Vess; COLLECTION Caitlin R. Kiernan, *The Ape's Wife and Other Stories*; SPECIAL/PROFESSIONAL (tie) Irene Gallo, art director of Tor.com, and William K. Schafer of Subterranean Press; SPECIAL/ NON-PROFESSIONAL *Clarkesworld*. [MMW]

**Bears in the News**. Michael Bond, creator of Paddington Bear, was 'very upset' when the British Board of Film Classification gave the new film a PG certificate owing to 'mild sex references' (man disguised as woman flirts with another man; after some public mockery the BBFC changed this caveat to 'innuendo'), bad language (one muffled 'bloody') and dangerous behaviour (e.g. Paddington hides in a fridge). Contrast this with the very much more violent *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay 1*, given a less restrictive 12A certificate. (*Independent* and BBC, 18 November) [MPJ] • *Winnie-the-Pooh* was considered as the patron of a playground in Tuszyń, Poland, but rejected by councillors outraged by the teddybear's lack of 'a complete wardrobe' (this being the mini-shirted Disney animation rather than the unclad original) and possibly hermaphroditic nature. 'The author was over 60 and cut [Pooh's] testicles off with a razor blade because he had a problem with his identity,' expostulated councillor Hanna Jachimiska. (*Independent*, 20 November)

R.I.P. **Russell Aitken**, who ran Obelisk Books in Glasgow (a shop specializing in second-hand sf and crime) from the 1980s to early this century, died on 21 November. [JS] • **André Carneiro** (1922-2014), distinguished and much-anthologized Brazilian sf author whose debut collection was *Diário da nave perdida* ('A Lost Ship's Log', 1963) and whose latest book appeared in 2013, died on 4 November; he was 92. [CMO'B] • **Leigh Chapman** (1939-2014), US actress/screenwriter who was in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1965-1966) and wrote scripts for *My Favorite Martian* (1966) and *The Wild Wild West* (1966-1968), died on 4 November aged 75. [AIP] • **Warren Clarke** (1947-2014), UK actor/producer who played one of the droogs in Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), died on 12 November aged 67. [PDF] He was also in *The Avengers*. • **André Coelho**, Brazilian artist whose comics appearances included *X-Men* and DC's *Flash*, died in early November; he was 35. [PDF] • **Helen Eling** (1937-2014), UK fan and convention-goer involved with the Birmingham SF Group and Novacon/Eastercon committees, died on 26 October aged 77. She is survived by her husband Stan, to whom all sympathy. [RP] Rog Peyton recalls her convention disco fame: 'I shall always remember her as the best dance partner I ever had.' • **Stefan Ghidoveanu**, Romanian sf editor, translator, publisher and most famously broadcaster whose long-running nonfiction radio show *Explorers of Tomorrow's World* was followed by the Romanian sf community for 30 years, died at the end of October; he was 59. [SF2C] • **Jesus F. Gonzalez** (1964-2014), US horror author who as J.F. Gonzalez published over a dozen novels (some collaborative) and four collections, died on 10 November; he was 50. [TM] • **Michael Hayes** (1929-2014), UK producer, director, actor and later newsreader responsible for the classic BBC sf serial *A for Andromeda* (1961) and three *Doctor Who* stories (1978-1979), died on 16 September; he was 85. (*Independent*,

7 November, whose obituary headline credits him with 'the sci-fi series "The Andromeda Strain"'.) • *(John) Hayden Howard* (1925-2014), US author of 19 sf magazine stories 1952-1971 and one novel, *The Eskimo Invasion* (1967), died on 23 October; he was 88. [LS] • P.D. James (1920-2014), distinguished UK detective novelist—made a baroness in 1991—whose one sf venture was *The Children of Men* (1992, filmed 2006), died on 27 November. She was 94. • *Glen A Larson* (1937-2014), US TV producer whose sf series included *Battlestar Galactica* (1978-1979), *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (1979-1981), *Knight Rider* (1982-1986), *Manimal* (1983) and *Automan* (1983-1984), died on 14 November; he was 77. [LP] • *Larry Latham*, US artist, animator, producer and director known for the Emmy-winning Disney series *Talespin* (1990-1991) and the web comic *Lovecraft is Missing* (2008-2004), died on 2 November. Further credits include *The Smurfs* (1981), *Challenge of the GoBots* (1984-1985) and *DuckTales the Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp* (1990). [SJ] • *Michael Lennick* (1952-2014), visual effects artist whose films include *Videodrome* (1983), *The Dead Zone* (1983), *Millennium* (1989) and *Earthquake in New York* (1998), died on 7 November aged 62. [SFS] • *Alan L. Lickiss*, US author of some ten short stories since 1996 (five collected as *High Heeled Distraction*, 2010), died on 10 November. [PDF] • *Walter W. Lee Jr* (1931-2014), author of the monumental *Reference Guide to Fantastic Films* (three volumes 1972-1974)—an important early study of sf cinema that earned him a special award from the 1975 Worldcon—died on 23 November aged 83. [SL via KIJ] He also wrote the horror-sf novel *Shapes* (1987) with Richard Delap. • *John Moat* (1936-2014), UK poet and novelist who with John Fairfax founded the Arvon creative writing workshops, and who contributed to Fairfax's *Frontier of Going: An Anthology of Space Poetry* (1969), died on 11 September; he was 78. [JWS via CC] • *RA Montgomery* (1936-2014), US author of many genre-themed 'Choose Your Own Adventure' gamebooks and the 1990 *Trio: Rebels in the New World post-holocaust sf series*, died on 9 November aged 78. [PDF] • *Mike Nichols* (1931-2014) Oscar-winning US director/producer whose genre ventures were *The Day of the Dolphin* (1973), *Wolf* (1994) and *What Planet Are You From?* (2000), died on 19 November; he was 83. [LP] • *Stu Schiffman* (1954-2014), long-time US fanzine fan, artist and connoisseur of alternate history, died on 26 November aged 60. [DKMK] His quirkily distinctive artwork earned him the 1990 Hugo for best fan artist and the 2010 Rotsler Award for life achievement; he won TAFF in 1981; he was a friend. Much sympathy to his partner Andi Schechter. • *George Slusser* (1939-2014), US academic critic whose sf studies range from *Robert A. Heinlein* (1976) to *Gregory Benford* (2014), and who also edited/co-edited many crucial anthologies, died on 4 November aged 75. He was a co-founder and Curator Emeritus of the J. Lloyd Eaton Collection of SF & Fantasy Literature. [SHS] • *Edward Summer* (1946-2014), best known as founder of the Buffalo International Film Festival but also (amid much else) a former New York comic-shop proprietor, writer for Marvel and DC, and associate producer and story writer of *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), died on 13 November aged 68. [MF]

**Scholarly Insight Dept.** 'I believe that [Sax] Rohmer's texts aim at effects that differ fundamentally from the effects that high modernist literature aspires to.' (Ruth Mayer, *Serial Fu Manchu—The Chinese Super-villain and the spread of Yellow Peril ideology*, 2014)

**Magazine Scene.** *Terraform*, a new online sf news/fiction site at [motherboard.vice.com/terraform](http://motherboard.vice.com/terraform), launched in November with a manifesto by editor Claire Evans (late of *OMNI Reboot*) that feigned ignorance of the vast competition: 'But, weirdly, there's a distinct dearth of science fiction in its purest, arguably its original, form—short fiction—in the environment to which it seems best-suited. The internet.' After many comments pointing out the existence of *Strange Horizons*, *Tor.com* and the rest, subtle changes were made: the first two words of 'In fact, it's strange that there isn't more fiction commingling with the newsy posts and personality quizzes and status updates ...' became 'There are tons of great publishers of science fiction online-but still ...' [ED]

**Science Corner.** 'Amateur and professional astrolgers alike captivated by "incredible" storms across Uranus.' (Headline on the *Independent* website, 14 November) [PE]

**Random Fandom.** *Steve Green* has stepped down after more than ten years as administrator of the Nova Awards (see above). • *Kim Huett* sends a Chicon III progress report's 'officialdom' page, revealing that this 1962 Worldcon had a Morals Committee chaired by Algis Budrys. Gosh! • *Scott Lynch* tweeted: 'Holding out hope for Peter Jackson's *Leaf by Niggle*, because I hear Legolas is only in it for about forty-five minutes.' [PNH] • *Adam Roberts* facebooked: 'Ridley Scott has finally explained his decision to use an all-white cast in his movie of Alex

Hayley's *Roots*. Perfectly reasonable.' • *Jeff VanderMeer* revealed the secret 2014 WFC code: 'You can't use the word party for World Fantasy Convention ... parties 'cause of the con hotel. So instead of the word "party" we're using the words "orwellian sh\*tstorm".' (His asterisk.)

**Media Awards.** *Hollywood Film Awards:* Animation, *How to Train Your Dragon 2*; Blockbuster, *Guardians Of the Galaxy*. [MFJ] • *International Emmys:* the best drama series award went to *Utopia*, which in anticipation of this triumph had already been axed by Channel 4. [MPJ]

**The Dead Past.** 70 Years Ago, Arthur C. Clarke reviewed *Willy Ley's Rockets: the Future of Travel Beyond the Stratosphere*: 'The first fifty pages of the book contain a detailed history of interplanetary fiction since the first imaginary voyage to the Moon, written in A.D. 120. It is a little odd to think that these stories, which have been popular for eighteen centuries, will soon be written no more.' (*Futurian War Digest*, December 1944) • *Prediction Dept:* Kenneth Tynan foresees *Time Bandits* (1981): '... if a playwright were to revive the anthropomorphic conception of the deity and write a play about God himself, and if he were then to ask my help in picking an actor for the central role, I know exactly in which direction I would point him. I would find it entirely credible that the creator of the universe as we know it was someone very like Sir Ralph [Richardson].' (*The New Yorker*, 1977) • 50 Years Ago: 'Another BBC sf feature, the children's programme, Dr. Who, is to be censored after complaints that recent episodes have not been "ideal children's viewing."' (*Skyrack* 73, December 1964) • 30 Years Ago: 'Frank Herbert turned up for a brief press conference on the *Dune* debacle—er, film—a few weeks ago. There were only two people there who had actually read anything he'd written—myself, and a bald journalist in a shabby mac (yes, I know that describes most of them) who tended to ask magnificent questions like "I read *Dune* the first time it came out and the thing that struck me then as indeed it seems to have struck most of the reading populace is that it's a great story, a wonderful story, I thought the way it unfolded, the way it was sustained, there was so much imagination involved in it. Later on as the years went on, I suppose people have read things into it, I suppose the same thing happened with *Lord of the Rings* and lots of other things. The whole SF genre in general ... I'm sorry I shall get to the question ... is entertainment still your first priority, Mr Herbert?" Herbert: 'I'd feel a helluva lot more comfortable if you'd call me Frank, guys. *Bald Journalist in Mac who Woffled:* Er, thank you, er, Frank... Herbert: Yes it is. Next question? ... etc, etc. Mainly he said what a nice, good, great, magnificent, marvellous, fab, cool, groovy, hip, zowie-gosh film *Dune* was. [...] It might have been a livelier time if anybody there had seen the film, but since it still hadn't been previewed a scant month before release date ...' (Neil Gaiman in *Anisble* 41, December 1984)

**C.o.A. Wilf James** writes: 'I will be evicted in a Dickensian manner from my flat at 106 Jarden Letchworth G. C. after 51 years residency by North Hertfordshire Homes Ltd (NHH) on Tuesday 25th November. This means that I will not be able to support and promote Science, SF conventions and jazz events for the indefinite future.' This sad development follows long legal conflict with NHH. New address not yet known.

**Fanfundery.** *TAFF:* Declared candidates so far for the 2015 west-bound race from Europe to the Spokane Worldcon (Sasquan) are Nina Horvath and Wolf von Witting. Ballot forms are expected to appear on 1 January: the voting deadline will be midnight on 7 April 2015.

**Whog's Masterclass, Dept of Nuance.** 'This planet was different, but quite similar.' '""Their brain is so much like ours, but different,"' the doc said.' 'Their blood is kind of like ours, only totally different.' (all Mike Shepherd, *Kris Longkinfe: Tenacious*, 2014) [PM] • *Diet Fads Dept.* 'I noticed that she'd stopped smelling of yogurt, so she's either sorted out her thrush problem or given up eating it.' (Denise Mina, *Deception*, 2003) [PB] • *Neat Tricks.* 'Arcadia's head moved sharply back of itself.' (Isaac Asimov, '... And Now You Don't', November 1949 *Astounding*) [CG] • *Dept of Phase Change.* 'Arcadia solidified.' (*Ibid*) • *Cognitive Centres Dept.* 'Dorothy's eyes were turned inward to her long-buried memories.' 'Thoughts ran thick and furious inside her head, pulsing through her unmoving body, throbbing between her legs.' (both Debra Ginsberg, *The Neighbors Are Watching*, 2010) [PB]

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