

# Ansible



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From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website news.ansible.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Ulrika O'Brien. Available for SAE, or the complete and uncensored text of *The Avatar's Apprentice*.

## Scroll from the Ninth Dimension

**J.G. Ballard's** 1962 fantasy 'The Garden of Time' is the official theme for this month's New York Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute benefit gala, whose guests must presumably make the tough choice between dressing as doomed aristocrats or as the oncoming barbarian horde. (Vanessa Friedman, *New York Times*, 22 April) [DP]

**Cory Doctorow** on certain billionaires who claim to be influenced by sf: 'These people are saying "we finally created the utopia of *Neuromancer*". And I look at them and I go, "I don't think you read *Neuromancer*. Maybe you just played *Cyberpunk 2077*.'" (*Nautilus*, 5 April) [BA]

**China Miéville** cancelled his acceptance of a literature fellowship at Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service) owing to this institute's seeming complicity with 'a shameful program of repression and anti-Palestinian racism.' (Xitter, 23 April)

**J.M. Straczynski**, introducing a new edition of *Dangerous Visions*, explains the terrible wasteland that was sf before Harlan Ellison: 'For most of their history, the science fiction and fantasy genres were known for stories of vast alien civilizations, far-flung galactic adventures, ragtag groups against an empire ... and for being studiously safe and relentlessly unprovocative. There were exceptions, to be sure: *1984* by George Orwell, *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, and *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess all being notable examples.' [PDF]

**Liz Truss's** memoir *Ten Years to Save the West* (which incidentally 'broke the rules in place for ministers publishing works about their time in office' – Sky News, 18 April) has been sighted in a City of London bookshop shelved with other 'Sci-Fi and Fantasy'. [SB]

## Conturbation

Until 19 Oct • **Heroes: The British Invasion of American Comics** (exhibition), Cartoon Museum, London. See [tinyurl.com/yf54dm38](http://tinyurl.com/yf54dm38).

3-6 May • **Paracinema Cult Film Festival**, QUAD Center, Derby. £45; £25 concessions. Tickets available at [paracinema.co.uk](http://paracinema.co.uk).

4-5 May • **Galactic Gathering** (*Star Wars* theme), National Space Centre, Leicester. See [www.spacecentre.co.uk/whats-on/](http://www.spacecentre.co.uk/whats-on/).

11-12 May • **Portsmouth Comic Con**, Guildhall, Portsmouth. £37; £19.50 concessions; day rates and more at [portsmouthcomiccon.com](http://portsmouthcomiccon.com).

15-17 May • **GIFCon** (University of Glasgow conference), 'Conjuring Creatures and Worlds', online. See [tinyurl.com/yfbdvdwj](http://tinyurl.com/yfbdvdwj).

18-19 May • **HorrorCon UK**, Magna, Sheffield. Weekend tickets £45 (11am entry) or £55 (10am entry); more at [horrorconuk.com](http://horrorconuk.com).

18-19 May • **Surrey Steampunk Convivial**, Stoneleigh, Epsom. See [bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial](http://bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial).

25-26 May • **Lawless** (UK comics), Hilton Doubletree, Bristol. Weekend ticket £75.50 inc fees; day rates at [iawlesscomiccon.co.uk](http://iawlesscomiccon.co.uk).

31 May - 2 Jun • **Cymera**: Scotland's Festival of SF, Fantasy & Horror Writing, Edinburgh. See [www.cymerafestival.co.uk](http://www.cymerafestival.co.uk).

31 May - 2 Jun • **FunCon One**, Palace Hotel, Buxton. £70 reg; £80 with added 'warm fuzzy feeling'; £40 concessions. See [funcon.lol](http://funcon.lol).

8-9 Jun • **EM-Con** (media), Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham. Weekend tickets £30 (11am entry) or £40 (10am) at [www.em-con.co.uk](http://www.em-con.co.uk).

9 Jun • **Seek-Locate-Celebrate** (*Blake's 7*; formerly Forever Avon), Steventon Village Hall, Steventon, Oxford, OX13 5RR. 10am-4pm. See [www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon](http://www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon).

12 Jun • **Tolkien Lecture** by Neil Gaiman, Oxford Town Hall, Oxford. 6pm. See [tolkienlecture.org](http://tolkienlecture.org).

22 Jun • **Stars of Time** (comics), LC, Steam Museum, Swindon. Adult ticket £17.50; other rates at [www.starsofetime.co.uk/swindon](http://www.starsofetime.co.uk/swindon).

7 Sep • **Fighting Fantasy Fest 5**, Univ of West London, Ealing. £45 reg; YA £20. See [www.fightingfantasy.com/fighting-fantasy-fest-5](http://www.fightingfantasy.com/fighting-fantasy-fest-5).

24-27 Oct • **Celluloid Screams** horror film festival, Sheffield. Weekend passes and day tickets awaited at [celluloidscreams.com](http://celluloidscreams.com).

18-21 Apr 2025 • **Reconnect**, Hilton Lanyon Place Hotel and ICC, Belfast. £70 reg; £40 discounted (*under-18s, concessions, Eastercon first-timers, fans living in Ireland*); £25 supporting. See [easterconbelfast.org](http://easterconbelfast.org). Refunds are offered to those who now qualify for a discount and paid more.

17-20 Oct 2025 • **Irish Discworld Convention**, Cork International Hotel, Cork. Membership sales awaited at [idwcon.org](http://idwcon.org).

**Rumblings**. *Glasgow 2024* (Worldcon) warns in PR4 that projected in-person attendance is now between 6,500 and 8,500, the latter 'probably above the maximum holding capacity for the site'. There may be a cap on in-person attendance: join early and don't join often. But full-page Worldcon ads in *SFX* magazine continue. [SF°C] • **Hugo Voting** is open (email, 20 April) and closes on 20 July. See login page at [glasgow2024.org/hugo-awards/hugo-awards-final-ballot/](http://glasgow2024.org/hugo-awards/hugo-awards-final-ballot/). • *Contabile 35* (filk, February 2025): venue announcement still awaited at [www.contabile.org.uk/c35/](http://www.contabile.org.uk/c35/).

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. UK convention fans were mildly surprised by a report of the 'All Tomorrow's Futures' book launch at EasterCon, British Sci-Fi Association Fest in Telford', hardly any of them having noticed amid the general desperate fun that 'An increased wave of anxieties about rapid advancement of AI and impact on jobs has been at the epicentre of EasterCon this year.' (Cybersalon.org, 18 April) [LE]

**Awards**. *Arthur C. Clarke*: the complete submissions list of 117 titles was released on 22 April. • *Compton Crook* (sf/fantasy/horror debut): *The Splinter in the Sky* by Kemi Ashing-Giwa. • *Horror Writers Association*: LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT Steve Rasic Tem, Mort Castle, Cassandra Peterson. SPECIALTY PRESS Thunderstorm Books.

**Chog's Science Masterclass**. *Higher Mathematics Dept*. 'In both the cerebro-geometric figures I have mentioned, the complicate figurate of the empress was mechanically woven into the matrix, and because speed was an absolute essential, the possible influence of other minds was reduced to a high level Constant, modified by a simple, oscillating Variable -' (A.E. van Vogt, *The Weapon Makers*, 1947) [LP]

**R.I.P.** *Sergey Abramov* (1944-2024), Russian sf/fantasy author whose 30+ novels include ten collaborations with his father Aleksandr Abramov and six with his son Artyom Abramov, died on 7 April aged 79. [AM] • *Paul Auster* (1947-2024), noted US author whose work includes sf – such as *In the Country of Last Things* (1987) – and magic realism, died on 30 April aged 77. [PK] • *David Barrington-Holt* (1945-2024), UK puppeteer and special effects artist long associated with the Jim Henson Company, died on 13 March aged 78. [AIP] His films include *The Witches* (1990), *The Phantom* (1996), *George of the Jungle* (1997) and *Cats & Dogs* (2001). • *John Barth* (1930-2024), US academic and major author who often made postmodern play with fantasy themes and whose sf magnum opus was *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966), died on 2 April aged 93. [PDF] • *Andreas Björklind* (1967-2024), Swedish fan who was founding chairman of the Linköping sf club and co-organized the early ConFuse conventions held there from 1991, died on 17 April aged 57. [J-HH] • *F. Yorick Blumenfeld* (1932-2024), Dutch-born UK author whose sf works are the post-holocaust story *Jenny Ewing: My Diary* (1981) and *2099: A Eutopia* (1999), died on 8 April aged 91. [AIP] • *Mark D. Bright* (1955-2024), US comics artist active since 1977, who worked on *Iron Man*, *Green Lantern*, *Quantum and Woody* (as co-creator) and others, died on 27 March aged 68. [F770] • *Robin Browne* (1941-2024), UK cinematographer and visual effects artist whose many credits include *Moonraker* (1979), *Krull* (1983) and *King Kong Lives* (1986), died on 28 March aged 82. [AIP] • *Antonio Cantafora* (1944-2024), Italian actor – also as 'Michael Coby' – in *Baron Blood* (1972), *Supersonic Man* (1972) and *A spasso nel tempo* (1996), died on 20 April aged 80. [SJ] • *Terry Carter* (1928-2024), US actor in *Battlestar Galactica* (1978-1979, film and tv) and other genre series, died on 23 April aged 95. • *Carolyn Caughey*, Canadian-born former publishing director at Hodder & Stoughton, where she published many crime and sf authors 1981-2000, died on 14 March. [AIP] • *Ray Chan* (1967-2024), UK art director of *Thunderbirds* (2004), *Children of Men* (2006), *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), *Avengers: Infinity War/Endgame* (2018/2019) and others, died on 23 April aged 56. [SJ] • *Jubilee Cho* (1998-2024), author of the forthcoming children's fantasy *Wishing Well*, *Wishing Well*, died on 6 March aged 25. (SFWA) • *Ray Daley* (1969-2024), prolific UK flash-fiction author whose self-published collections are *Lightning Strikes Twice* (2012) and *A Year of Living Bradbury* (2014), died on 9 April aged 54. [F770] •

Samantha Davis, often uncredited actress in *Willow* (1988), *Through the Dragon's Eye* (1989), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows 2* (2011) and others, died on 24 March; she is survived by her husband, *Willow* star Warwick Davis. [AIP] ● Roger Dicken (1939-2024), UK visual effects artist who worked on *2001* (1968, uncredited), *When Dinosaurs Ruled the World* (1970), *Alien* (1979) and others, died on 18 February. [LP] ● Joe Flaherty (1941-2024), US writer, producer, comedian and actor in *Second City Television* (1976-1981, often as vampire host Count Floyd), *Really Weird Tales* (1986, also as co-writer), *Back to the Future Part II* (1989), *Maniac Mansion* (1990-1993) and others, died on 1 April aged 82. [TM] ● Ray Garton (1962-2024), US horror author with many books published since his first novel *Seductions* (1984) and first collection *Methods of Madness* (1990), died on 22 April aged 61. [SJ] ● Travis Heermann, US author of historical fantasies beginning with the Japan-set 'Ronin Trilogy' (2009-2015), died on 26 April. [SHS] ● Barbara O aka Barbara O. Jones (1941-2024), US actress in *Demon Seed* (1977) and genre tv series, died on 16 April aged 82. [SHS] ● Bruce Kessler (1936-2024), US director of *Simon, King of the Witches* (1971), *Cruise into Terror* (1978), *Deathmoon* (1978) and episodes of many genre tv series, died on 4 April aged 88. [SJ] ● Margaret Lee (1943-2024), UK actress long in Italy whose films include *Colossus of the Stone Age* (1962), *The Twelve-Handed Men of Mars* (1964) and *New York Calling Superdragon* (1966), died on 24 April aged 80. [SJ] ● Michael A. Linaker (1940-2024), UK author of the 1981-1982 'Scorpion' monster novels and 1990s 'Cade' sf police procedurals, died on 10 February aged 84. [SH] ● Ed Piskor (1982-2024), US alternative comics artist whose credits include *X-Men: Grand Design* (2017) and who won a 2015 Eisner award, committed suicide on 1 April aged 41. ● Lynne Reid Banks (1929-2024), Barrie Award-winning UK author of children's and YA fantasy including *The Farthest-Away Mountain* (1976) and the series opening with *The Indian in the Cupboard* (1980), died on 4 April aged 94. [SJ] As a young reporter she covered the 1957 London Worldcon for ITV; some footage still survives. ● Trina Robbins (1938-2024), US fan and artist who first published in fanzines and underground comics, designed Vampirella's costume in 1969, adapted Tanith Lee's *The Silver Metal Lover* and from 1986 worked on *Wonder Woman*, died on 10 April aged 85. [MJ] ● C.J. Sansom (1952-2024), UK author of historical mysteries whose sf novel is the alternate-history *Dominion* (2012), died on 27 April aged 71. [JC] ● Adrian Schiller (1964-2024), UK actor in *Victor Frankenstein* (2015), *A Cure for Wellness* (2016), *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) and genre tv series, died on 3 April aged 60. [SJ] ● O.J. Simpson (1947-2024), US footballer and actor notorious for other reasons, whose rare genre credits include *Capricorn One* (1977), died on 10 April aged 76. [LP] ● John Trimble (1936-2024), long-time Los Angeles fan, con-runner, fanzine publisher and 2002 Worldcon fan guest of honour with his wife Bjo Trimble (to whom all sympathy), died on 19 April aged 87. [DG] The Trimbles ran the 'Save Star Trek' write-in campaign of the late 1960s, which won a third season for the series. ● Lorena Veldzquez (1937-2024), Mexican actress in *The Ship of Monsters* (1960), *Santo vs the Vampire Women* (1962), *Planet of the Female Invaders* (1966) and many more, died on 11 April aged 86. [SJ] ● Dan Wallin (1927-2024), Emmy-winning US sound engineer whose very many genre films include *Howard the Duck* (1986), *Star Trek* (2009), *Super 8* (2011) and *John Carter* (2012), died on 10 April aged 97. [SJ] ● Hiroshi Yamamoto (1956-2024), Japanese author active since 1978 whose translated work includes *The Stories of Ibis* (2006; trans 2010) and *MM9: Monster Magnitude* (2007; trans 2010), died on 29 March aged 68. [JonC]

**The Weakest Link.** Q. 'The core of Harry Potter's wand consists of a feather of what mythical creature?' A. 'An owl.' (BBC1, *The Edge*) [PE]

**Court Circular.** Conan the Barbarian may be in the public domain in the UK, but comics creator John Allison has had to abandon his homage story *Conan & the Blood Egg* after grim legal threats from the trademark owner Conan Properties International LLC. (Blog, 22 April)

**The Dead Past.** *10 Years Ago:* 'Ari Handel, one of the screenwriters of *Noah*, responded to complaints about the film's all-white cast by explaining how diversity leads to extreme uncoolness: "Either you end up with a Bennetton ad or the crew of the *Starship Enterprise*.'" (*Independent*) / Peter Jackson's altered subtitle for the third *Hobbit* movie was not, as I'd expected, *The Battle of the Three Armies* with a fourth film added to do proper justice to *The Battle of the Other Two Armies*. (*Ansible* 322, May 2014) ● *20 Years Ago,* Jeff VanderMeer was overwhelmed by the ambience of the 2004 Eastercon: 'Blackpool is just one degree away from being *Clockwork Orange*. I've never seen pigeons eating human vomit before. Nor have I seen such a display of flouncing breasts before, and yet been strangely unmoved, given the context. Nor have I ever emerged from a men's room stall before to realize that there were people having sex in the stalls to either side of me before. Nor have ... but the list is too long.

I'm in shock.' (*Ansible* 202, May 2004) ● *30 Years Ago,* 'William Gibson muttered that, working on the *Johnny Mnemonic* film and meeting a producer, he knew exactly how a virus felt when it met with its own specific antibody.' (*Ansible* 82, May 1994) ● *60 Years Ago,* selected news snippets: 'Bruce Montgomery [Edmund Crispin] spent an interesting two seconds on Easter Sunday breaking his arm :: *New Worlds SF* 142, the first under the Moorcock administration due anytime, pocket book format, and @ a reduced cost of 2/6d :: In *The Outer Limits* programme of 23rd April, *It Crawled Out of the Woodwork* by Psycho screenplay writer Joe Stefano, the villain was called Bloch :: S.E. Essex Technical College recently banned *Village of the Damned*.' (*Skyrack* 67, May 1964)

**As Others Study Us.** *The Best Bait to Use:* '... science fiction writers have been drawn irresistibly to maps'. (Jerry Brotton, *A History of the World in Twelve Maps*, 2012) [CM]

**Fanfunder.** *TransAtlantic Fan Fund:* the 2024 winner is Sarah Gulde with 60 votes to Vanessa Applegate's 31. (Hold Over Funds 4 votes; No Preference 25.) See [taff.org.uk](http://taff.org.uk) for *Taffluorescence!* #3 and #4 with full details. ● *European Fan Fund:* Joro Penchev (Bulgaria) won with 34 votes to 27 for Jane Mondrup (Denmark) and will travel to the 2024 Eurocon (Erasmuscon, Rotterdam, 16-19 August). See latest post at [fandomover.com/category/eff/](http://fandomover.com/category/eff/). ● *Get Up and Over Fan Fund (GUFF):* Kat Clay won the 2024 northbound race with 42 votes to 32 for Ian Nichols (7 No Preference), and will travel from Australia to the Glasgow Worldcon. See [taff.org.uk/guff.html](http://taff.org.uk/guff.html) for full announcement. As a bonus, Ian Nichols plans to come to Glasgow at his own expense. ● *Levitation 2024:* the Fan Funds Auction etc raised some £1000 for EFF, GUFF, TAFF and (thanks!) the *SF Encyclopedia*. ● *Sign of the Times.* Both TAFF and EFF received unusually many ballots lacking the essential donations or voting fees that keep fan funds going. Tut tut. ● *TAFF Books.* New in the Free Ebook Library is *New Worlds Profiles*, collecting the 120 author/artist/etc profiles published 1952-1963 while John Carnell was editor; Rob Hansen's *Challenging Moskowitz: 1930s Fandom Revisited* is now greatly expanded from its 2019 edition; both are also available as trade paperbacks with proceeds to TAFF. Further TAFF trip reports added: Sue Mason's *Into the Wide Purple Yonder* for her 2000 trip and Tobes Valois's *Tobes TAFF Ting* for his in 2002. To see all recent additions go to [taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?all&chron](http://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?all&chron).

**Voice of Doom.** 'A recent *Washington Post* article indicated that only 12% of the reading public were interested in reading science fiction. A perusal of bestseller lists for science fiction shows an even more alarming truth: the science fiction books that do sell are a shrinkingly small number of reprints, classics and novels that had been adapted into movies. [...] Science fiction is not selling.' (*Typebar Magazine*, 24 March) [RG]

**Random Fandom.** *Sandra Bond's* research into the Ken McIntyre award for UK fanzine artwork (1972-2000) confirms that – there being no one to pass it on to – the trophy remains in the hands of its last winner, Sue Mason. *Sic transit.* See the now updated *Fancylopedia 3* entry for details of many exciting typos in the engraved award inscriptions.

**Editorial.** Your editor is perpetually exhausted by maintenance work on the *SF Encyclopedia*, which is now very close indeed to the statistical thrill of 20,000 entries and seven million words, well over three million of them by John Clute; Roger Robinson's tireless work on the Picture Gallery has just taken us past 34,000 cover scans. ([sf-encyclopedia.com](http://sf-encyclopedia.com))

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Every Fibre of His Being.* 'I could feel the fibers of my body turning liquid, going limp, rejecting the scent and moisture of her.' (Theodore Roszak, *Flicker*, 1991) [BA] ● *Neat Tricks.* 'The sound of her breath flamed in my lungs ...' (Paul Hazel, *Yearwood*, (1980) [BA] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky.* 'I cast my eye once more through all the branches.' (*Ibid*) [BA] ● *Boo! Hiss!* "'You fool!" the Druid whispered – and there was rage in the sibilant sound.' (Henry Kuttner, 'Dragon Moon', January 1941 *Weird Tales*) [BA] ● *Climate Change Dept.* 'They were clever, and being short of water on one side of their globe, with much ice on the other side, they decided to make an explosion to tilt the world and bring the ice in a more direct line with the sun. The idea was good, but it was badly managed. The explosion was too big and there was more ice on the Pole than they knew. This great mass melted in a moment and rushed across the world, overwhelming everything and everybody, to fill a great depression on the other side. This caused the world to wobble, and presently overbalance, so that it fell into a new orbit, farther from the sun, where the water again froze. Now everything is covered with a thick skin of ice.' (Captain W.E. Johns, *Now to the Stars*, 1956)

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