

# ansible



## Ansible® 445 August 2024

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### The Galactic Whirl

**Frank Cottrell-Boyce**, novelist and screenwriter with many genre credits including *Cosmic* (2008) and three authorized *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* sequels, was named as the new UK Children's Laureate on 2 July – taking over from Joseph Coelho. (BBC, 2 July) [PY]

**Greg Egan** on the great IT disaster of 19 July: 'Crowdstrike have advised that the world will be reverted to its last valid backup set, dated 7 Jan 2014, within the next 30 minutes. Please make paper notes of anything important to you from the intervening period, and tape them to the refrigerator door in a prominent position.' (Mastodon, 20 July)

**Stephen King**, in a newspaper symposium where many authors named their '10 Best Books of the 21st Century', was not afraid to include *Under the Dome* (2009) by Stephen King. (*New York Times*, 8 July) [AIP]

**George R.R. Martin** had a little grumble about Glasgow 2024: 'I am not on any programming. It is not for lack of trying, though.' He wanted a phone discussion of proposals for a Wild Cards event and a Howard Waldrop memorial (with films), but was asked to fill in the official online 'Planorama' form like everyone else; whether he did isn't clear from his post, but one assumes not. (9 July) The story was picked up by the local and then national press (*Glasgow Times*, 11 July; *Guardian*, 17 July; BBC, 18 July), and large tracts of social media were duly Plunged Into War.

**Mike Resnick's** five Hugo awards have been donated by his widow Carol to the US Worldcon Heritage Organization for their regular Worldcon exhibit. (WHO press release, July)

**J.M. Straczynski's** afterword to *The Last Dangerous Visions* (of which advance copies have been circulating for a while) takes the unusual step of naming and shaming eleven authors, mostly women, whom he invited to contribute but who said no or didn't reply. He suggests they're afraid of online outrage ('This is not necessarily the best time to be dangerous'), neglecting less exciting possibilities such as lack of time, lack of interest or simply not wanting to get involved with a Harlan Ellison project which for several decades was a cobwebbed fannish joke. Of the 102 authors announced in 1973 plus the uncertain number later acquired by HE, fifteen have made it to the final cut, with nine more added by JMS.

**Jack Vance's** anagrammatic homage, the major *Dungeons & Dragons* bad guy Vecna, appears on one of the Royal Mail D&D stamps. (25 July)

### Confriar

SOLD OUT 2 Aug • **Writing Fantasy** (discussion and signing) with George R.R. Martin and Sir Philip Pullman, Oxford. Live streaming to be available via the link at [www.oxfordwritershouse.com/events](http://www.oxfordwritershouse.com/events).

3-4 Aug • **Surrey Steampunk Convivial**, Stoneleigh, Epsom. See [bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial](http://bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial).

6 Aug • **Extra London Pub Meetings** before Worldcon: Cask Pub & Kitchen, 6 Charlwood Street, Pimlico, from 3pm (meet the GUFF delegate!) and The Crown, 51 New Oxford St, upstairs 7-11pm. All welcome. If the Crown is closed try Bloomsbury Tavern, 236 Shaftesbury Avenue (ground floor, same times). See also [news.ansible.uk/london.html](http://news.ansible.uk/london.html).

8-12 Aug • **Glasgow 2024** (Worldcon), Glasgow SEC. £230 reg; first Worldcon and 'historically under-represented' £165; Scots residents £150; under-26s £135 (£95 if Scots); under-16s £90; under-11s £55; under-6s £5. Virtual membership £80. Day rates at [glasgow2024.org](http://glasgow2024.org). *Owing to a mix-up regarding the cancelled 1 July price rise, PR5 as initially released gave higher at-the-door rates (£255 reg etc.) which will not take effect.*

9-11 Aug • **TFnation** (*Transformers*), Hilton Birmingham Metropole near the NEC. Various day ticket rates at [tfnation.com/2024](http://tfnation.com/2024).

16-19 Aug • **Erasmuscon** (Eurocon), Rotterdam, Netherlands. €125 reg; under-23s €75; under-13s €10, under-3s free. Under-19s must be accompanied by an adult. See [www.erasmuscon.nl](http://www.erasmuscon.nl) for day rates.

17 Aug • **Small Press Day**, various events throughout the UK and Ireland, and online. See [smallpressday.co.uk](http://smallpressday.co.uk).

17 Aug • **Stars of Time** (comics), Winter Gardens, Weston-super-Mare. £11.55; child/concessions £7.21. See [www.starsoftime.co.uk](http://www.starsoftime.co.uk).

23-26 Aug • **Frightfest** (film), London, Odeon Luxe, Leicester Square. Festival passes £225 rear circle, £240 stalls, £250 circle; for day

passes at various rates see [www.frightfest.co.uk/filmsandevents/](http://www.frightfest.co.uk/filmsandevents/).

23-26 Aug • **Asylum XIV** (steampunk), The Lawns and other Lincoln venues. Weekend pass £45 inc fees at [www.ministryofsteampunk.com](http://www.ministryofsteampunk.com).

24-25 Aug • **Dublin Comic Con**, Convention Centre, Dublin. Various ticket prices (extra for early entry, etc.) at [dublincomiccon.com](http://dublincomiccon.com).

29 Aug - 2 Sep • **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Society), St Anne's, Oxford. £120 reg. See [www.tolkiensociety.org/events/oxonmoot-2024/](http://www.tolkiensociety.org/events/oxonmoot-2024/).

SOLD OUT 31 Aug • **Whooverville 15** (*Doctor Who*), QUAD Centre, Derby. No more tickets at [www.derbyquad.co.uk/events/whooverville15/](http://www.derbyquad.co.uk/events/whooverville15/).

7-9 Feb 2025 • **Contabile 35** (filk), Wensum Valley Hotel, Norwich. £43 reg; £33 concessions. More details at [c35.contabile.org.uk](http://c35.contabile.org.uk).

18-21 Apr 2025 • **Reconnect**, Hilton Lanyon Place Hotel and ICC, Belfast. Now £80 reg; £40 discounted (under-18s, concessions, Eastercon first-timers, Irish residents); £25 supp. See [easterconbelfast.org](http://easterconbelfast.org).

23-26 May 2025 • **Jodiworld** (Jodi Taylor), Doubletree by Hilton, Coventry. Waiting list – £10 deposit asked – at [www.jodiworld.org](http://www.jodiworld.org).

7-8 Jun 2025 • **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).

21 Jun 2025 • **Stars of Time** (comics), Steam Museum, Swindon. Ticket sales awaited at [www.starsoftime.co.uk/swindon](http://www.starsoftime.co.uk/swindon).

**Rumblings.** *Glasgow 2024* tweeted on 15 July that draft programme schedules had gone out to nearly a thousand people. 'There is over 1000 hours of programming!' • *Business Meeting* agenda publication was slightly delayed because there are a record 50 items of business, with multiple proposals sparked by the horrors of 2023. What a fun meeting it will be. • *Hugo Voting* closed on 20 July; two days later, Nicholas Whyte's Glasgow Hugo team announced that 3,813 final-ballot votes were cast and that 'at least 377' fraudulent votes, with 'obvious fake names' etc., had been detected and disqualified. Many favoured a particular 'Finalist A' in an unspecified category. Reportedly at least one sponsor refunded WSFS membership fees for those who confirmed they'd voted as instructed. See full statement at [glasgow2024.org/hugo-awards/statement-22-july-2024/](http://glasgow2024.org/hugo-awards/statement-22-july-2024/). Much media coverage followed; the *Guardian's* headline (23 July) asserts that, as was carefully not stated, Finalist A is 'one writer'.

### Infinitely Improbable

**Science Masterclass.** 'Hippopotamuses can become airborne for substantial periods of time, researchers discover' is a Sky News headline somewhat deflated by the revelation that 'substantial periods of time' here means 'up to 0.3 seconds' (6 July) Hey, I myself can levitate! For a little bit.

**Awards.** *Arthur C. Clarke: In Ascension* by Martin MacInnes. • *Prometheus* (libertarian): NOVEL *Critical Mass* by Daniel Suarez. HALL OF FAME *The Truth* by Terry Pratchett. • *Scribe* (media tie-ins): ADAPTED NOVEL *Ultraman* by Pat Cadigan. GRANDMASTER ('Faust' award) James Reasoner. • *SF and Fantasy Hall of Fame* creators: Nicola Griffith, Nnedi Okorafor. • *Shirley Jackson: NOVEL The Reformatory* by Tananarive Due. SPECIAL/NOVEL *A Haunting on the Hill* by Elizabeth Hand.

**Mazing Stories.** The 2024 York Maze design commemorates the 25th anniversary of Julia Donaldson's *The Gruffalo* (1999, illustrated by Axel Scheffler), with characters from the book outlined by winding paths in a 15-acre field of more than a million maize plants. (i, 14 July)

**Invisible Idiot: AI Masterclass.** 'The researchers found that feeding AI-generated data to a model caused subsequent generations of the model to degrade to the point of collapse. In one test, text about medieval architecture was used as the starting point, but by the ninth generation the model output was a list of jackrabbits.' (*Nature*, 25 July) [JH]

**R.I.P.** *Erica Ash* (1977-2024), US actress in *Scary Movie V* (2013) and *We Have a Ghost* (2023), died on 28 July aged 46. [SJ] • *Zeev Bar-Sella* (1947-2024), Israeli writer and critic who wrote a 2013 biography of Russian sf author Alexander Belyaev, died on 27 July aged 77. [AM] • *Leo (Lee) Chaloukian* (1927-2024), US sound director for *Near Dark* (1987) and *The Puppetoon Movie* (1987), died on 18 July aged 97. [AIP] • *Cheng Pei-pei* (1946-2024), Chinese-US actress whose films include the wuxia *Come Drink with Me* (1966) and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000, a Hugo winner), died on 17 July aged 78. [SJ] • *Ysanne Churchman* (1925-2024), UK *Archers* actress in *Space Patrol* (1963), *Doctor Who*

(1972, 1974, 2017), *Artemis 81* (1981), *Ghost in the Water* (1982) and others, died on 4 July aged 99. [CM] ● **Frederick Crews** (1933-2024), US academic best known for *The Pooh Perplex* (1963), a tour-de-force collection of essays on the Winnie-the-Pooh tales parodying various critics – including the dread F.R. Leavis – and critical schools, died on 21 June aged 91. [AIP] His follow-up *Postmodern Pooh* (2001) is also great fun. ● **Shannen Doherty** (1971-2024), US actress in *The Secret of NIMH* (1982), *Charmed* (111 episodes 1990-1994), *Satan's School for Girls* (2000) and *Witchslayer Gretl* (2012), died on 13 July aged 53. ● **Tonke Dragt** (1930-2024), Dutch children's author/illustrator whose works include six sf/fantasy novels, died on 12 July aged 93. [AM] ● **Shelley Duvall** (1949-2024), US actress in *Popeye* (1980), *The Shining* (1980), *Time Bandits* (1981), *Frogs!* (1993), *Casper Meets Wendy* (1998), *Big Monster on Campus* (2000) and others, died on 11 July aged 75. [HSB] ● **Yvonne Furneaux** (1926-2024), French actress in *The Mummy* (1959), *The Death Ray of Dr Mabuse* (1964) and *Frankenstein's Great Aunt Tillie* (1984), died on 5 July aged 98. [LP] ● **Peter B. Gillis** (1952-2024), US comics writer whose Marvel work included *Strikeforce: Morituri* (as co-creator) and *Micronauts: The New Voyages*, and who adapted *The Last Unicorn* for IDW in 2010, died on 20 June aged 71. ● **Benji Gregory** (1978-2024), US former child actor in *ALF* (101 episodes 1986-2004), *Back to the Future* (1992 tv), *Once Upon a Forest* (1993) and others, died on 13 June aged 46. [LP] ● **Deborah P Kolodji** (1959-2024), US poet and former SF Poetry Association president who created the SFPA Dwarf Stars awards for ultrashort poems and edited several anthologies of these, died on 21 July. [F770] ● **Jon Landau** (1960-2024), US producer whose films include *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (1989), *Solaris* (2002); *Avatar* (2009 plus sequel) and *Alita: Battle Angel* (2019), died on 5 July aged 63. [F770] ● **David Loughery** (1953-2024), US screenwriter whose credits include *Dreamscape* (1984) and *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* (1989), died on 9 July aged 71. ● **Randal Malone** (1958-2024), US actor in very many low-or zero-budget sf/horror films from 1996 to 2018, died on 28 July aged 65. [SJ] ● **Claudio Mancini** (1928-2024), Italian producer/production supervisor for *The Tenth Victim* (1965), *Contamination* (1980) and *The Witches' Sabbath* (1988), died on 28 June aged 96. [SJ] ● **Vladimir Matveyev** (1952-2024), Russian actor in the *Fellowship of the Ring* tv adaptation *Khraniteli* (1991, as Sam) and *Salyut-7* (2017), who also dubbed Russian versions of *The Omen* (2006) and two *Pirates of the Caribbean* films, died on 2 July aged 72. [AM] ● **Mike Milne** (1946-2024), UK animator and visual effects man for *Walking with Dinosaurs* (1999), *Walking with Beasts* (2001), *The Last Dragon* (2004) and others, died in June. [AIP] ● **Bob Newhart** (1929-2024), noted US comedian and actor in *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* (1970), *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (1998), *Elf* (2003) and others, died on 18 July aged 94. [LP] ● **Lyubomir Nikolov-Narvi** (1950-2024), Bulgarian author and Tolkien translator whose 8 sf novels include *The Tenth Righteous Man* (1999), died on 20 July aged 74. [AM] ● **Noriko Ohara** (1935-2024), Japanese voice actress in *Doraemon: Nobita's Dinosaur* (1980), *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (1982-2002), spinoffs from both, and many others, died on 12 July aged 88. [HM] ● **Salvatore Puntillo** (1935-2024), Italian actor in *Deep Red* (1975) and *The Psychic* (1977), died on 14 July aged 88. [SJ] ● **Whitney Rydbeck** (1945-2024), US actor in *Love at First Bite* (1979), *Battle Beyond the Stars* (1980), *Friday the 13th IV* (1986) and genre tv series, died on 15 July aged 79. [SJ] ● **Doug Sakmann** (1980-2024), US independent horror film-maker and effects man whose credits include the HPL spoof *Lovecracked!* (2006 anthology film), *The XXXorcist* (2006), *Evil Head* (2012) and *Curse of the Weredeer* (2023), died on 27 June aged 43. [SJ] ● **Rhondi Ann Vilott Salsitz** (1949-2024), US author who from 1984 published many sf and fantasy novels as Emily Drake, Elizabeth Forrest, Charles Ingrid, Anne Knight, Jenna Rhodes, R.A.V. Salsitz and Rhondi Vilott, died in late July aged 74. [SE] ● **Hassani Shapi** (1973-2024), Kenyan actor in *The Phantom Menace* (1999), *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) and others, died on 17 July aged 51. ● **James Sikking** (1934-2024), US actor whose many genre films include *The Terminal Man* (1974), *Outland* (1981) and *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* (1984) and *Morons from Outer Space* (1985), died on 13 July aged 90. [SJ] ● **Roberta Taylor** (1948-2024), UK actress in *Frankenstein* (1984) and *The Witches* (1990), died on 6 July aged 76. [AIP] ● **Gennady Tishchenko** (1948-2024), Russian artist and creator of animated films including *Vampires of Geona* (1991) and the Tolkien-based *Mr Bliss* (2004), died on 20 July. [AM] ● **Robert Towne** (1934-2024), US screenwriter for *Last Woman on Earth* (1960), *The Tomb of Ligeia* (1964), *Greystoke* (1984, as P.H. Vazak) and others, died on 1 July aged 89. [LP] ● **A. Heather Wood** (1945-2024), UK folk singer and publisher, formerly with Tor as consulting editor and assistant to Tom Doherty, died on 15 July aged 79. [F770] ● **Tom Wyner** (1947-2024), US voice actor in *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* (1993),

*Ghost in the Shell* (1995), *Digimon* (1999-2003), *Transformers: Car Robots* (2000) and many more, died on 30 June aged 77. ● **Michael Zulli** (1952-2024), US wildlife illustrator and comics artist who worked on *The Puma Blues*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Swamp Thing* (unpublished issue), *Sandman* and others, died on 8 July aged 71. [NC]

**The Weakest Link.** Q. 'The mythological hero Hector was killed in which war?' A. 'The First World War.' (BBC1, *The Finish Line*) [PE]

**Publishers and Sinners.** Orbit is launching a new horror imprint called Run For It, whose first titles will appear in Summer 2025.

**Random Fandom.** *Conversation 2023*: this Eastercon has published its final accounts, showing a turnover of £81,565.01. Nearly £25,000 was donated to sf community projects, mainly the 2024 and 2025 Eastercons, plus fan funds, SFE (thanks!) etc. ● **Dave McCarty and Ben Yalow** were refused full membership of the Glasgow 2024 Worldcon, with attendance fees refunded. No explanation given, but see 2023 Hugos *passim*. [F770] ● **Glasgow 2024** invited members to take part in an advisory online yes-or-no vote on the 2023 resolution to create new Hugos for short and feature-length independent films, which awaits business-meeting ratification.

**No Comment.** "Encyclopedias are like slums," Giles said, "the rotten homes of diseased minds." (Charles Williams, *Many Dimensions*, 1931)

**Sidewise Awards** finalists: *LONG Cahokia Jazz* by Francis Spufford, *Julia* by Sandra Newman, *Sunset Empire* by Josh Weiss, *Wages of Sin* by Harry Turtledove. **SHORT** 'Apollo in Retrograde' by Rosemary Smith, 'Toe-to-Toe' by Mark Ciccone. [SHS]

**Outraged Letters.** **Jonathan Cowie** gives warning to the world: 'I note that Stokercon is using EventBrite to register. I do wish fans would read Brunner, Gibson, Orwell *et al.* EventBrite has an illuminating privacy policy that includes that they will share your details with business partners and will compile details about you from business partners who together will compile a profile of you....' (Email, 2 July) This didn't seem to bother the all-knowing Arthur C. Clarke Award organizers.

**Fanfunder.** **GUFF**: Simon Litten's report of his trip to the 2019 Dublin Worldcon, *Visiting Nearly Kiwiland*, was released in July. Free download with fund donation suggested: ozfanfunds.com/?page\_id=206. ● **TAFF**: a July newsletter gives, *inter alia*, Sarah Gulde's July to October itinerary as 2024 delegate. See [taff.org.uk/news/Taffluorescence5.pdf](http://taff.org.uk/news/Taffluorescence5.pdf). ● **League of Fan Funds**: this informal group which coordinates UK fund-raising for the various causes has a new web presence at [lff.ansible.uk](http://lff.ansible.uk). Meanwhile a boggled Sandra Bond reports: 'Someone is donating to the fan fund auction a pair of boxer briefs signed by Colin Baker.'

**Small Press.** After some weeks of social-media silence, the US Dark Regions Press website disappeared in mid-July; it emerged that the business was listed as for sale in April, though it's since been taken off the market. No recent communication with authors or customers. DRP books remained on sale in online stores, but Amazon at least seems prepared to remove them on sufficiently persistent author request. [WM]

**The Dead Past.** *30 Years Ago*, hyperbole was rampant: 'The Fantasy & SF Book Club claims the *SF Encyclopedia* (offered at £30) is "almost as big as the universe itself!" ... containing in fact "OVER ONE MILLION PAGES". On a similar heroic scale, *SF Chronicle* insists that one net fanzine listing calls me a "500-times Hugo award-winning fan author...."' (*Ansible* 85, August 1994) ● *80 Years Ago*, fandom was treated to a startling literary insight: 'Remarkably little scientific fantasy has been written posthumously.' (*Futurian War Digest*, August 1944)

**Editorial.** After publishing five fat volumes of Algis Budrys's non-fiction, Ansible Editions now wonders about reissuing his original *Benchmarks: Galaxy Bookshelf* (1985) as a shiny new paperback. Alas, AE, like *Ansible* and the *SF Encyclopedia*, will have no official table at Glasgow 2024 because your editor can no longer cope with such huge acoustic-hell events. Hoping all attendees have an utterly spiffy time nevertheless....

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Snakes Alive!* 'With each step, his mighty thighs flexed, and the muscles leaped like living serpents beneath the flesh.' (Norvell W. Page, *Flame Winds*, 1939) [BA] ● *Looking Daggery.* 'Captain Future's gray eyes stabbed the Uranian.' (Edmond Hamilton, *Outlaw World*, 1945) [BA] ● *Superbooze Dept.* 'I've distilled a highly fermented potent suspension – basically 500 proof ...' (*The Flash* series 1 episode 5, 2014) [BA] ● *Sibilant Syllables.* "Don't try to tell me what to do!" For no very good reason he whispered the words so that they flicked out with the sustained hiss of a scared mamba.' (Peter Van Greenaway, *The Crucified City*, 1962) [BA] ● *The Higher Mathematics.* 'Death is not absolute but zero minus to the unknowable degrees of infinity.' (*Ibid*) [BA]