

# ansible



## ANSIBLE 67 FEBRUARY 1993

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax **0734 669914**. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo by Dan Steffan. *Ansible* is available for SAEs, whim, or (moneyed idiots only) £12/year, and supports ABIGAIL FROST for TAFF.

DR SAMUEL JOHNSON responds to various **affronted** sf writers quoted in recent *Ansibles*: 'An author places himself uncalled before the tribunal of criticism, and solicits fame at the hazard of disgrace.' Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?

### A Miscellany of Men

**Frank Arnold** (1914-87), tutelary spirit of London sf meetings since the 40s, stars in a well-researched 24pp photo-biography by Dave Rowe in *Outworlds 65* (available for whim or \$5 from Bill Bowers, PO Box 58174, Cincinnati, OH 45258-0174, USA).

'**Prince Patrick Eze**' of Nigeria honours *Ansible* with an effusive letter asking for the use of its bank account to keep \$30,500,000 his 'Federal Ministry' has spare, and offering 30% commission for this service. Students of news exposés say these folks' amusing habit is to use the requested bank details, signature and company letterhead to empty your account. I'm most flattered to be thought worth conning....

**David Garnett** has a gloat: '25 years ago I invested 5/- (which isn't 25p but six pints!) in surface mailing *Mirror in the Sky* to Damon Knight, who was Berkley's sf consultant. They made me an offer I couldn't refuse (\$1,000), and I received the contract exactly 8 weeks after posting the MS. Those were the days.... And some people can still work fast. Boxtree, for example. Signed my 3-book contract with them, they've paid me, printed the books and I now have my copies: all in under a month. I always knew it shouldn't take 12-18 months!'

**John Grant** raves: 'TELEPHONE LINES SIZZLE ACROSS OCEAN AS AUTHOR OF REVISION OF MAJOR REFERENCE BOOK HURLS ABUSE AT CRINGING EDITOR OVER MONUMENTAL COCKUP! No, nothing to do with Peter Nicholls, for once. My advance copy of the *Encyclopaedia of Walt Disney's Animated Characters* has just arrived, and I've already noticed that jolly old Hyperion have left in the old material on the Wuzzles and the Gummi Bears (so you now have two roughly similar 1200-word articles within five pages) while omitting to put in its place the new stuff on *The Prince and the Pauper*, which is totally ignored by the book. Could this be the fastest reprint ever of a Grant title?'

**David Hartwell** is doing another arcane sf anthology, of Xmas stories timed for the 1993 festivities. 'By late January he sounded really desperate for stuff,' recounts Brian Stableford.... The deadline was 31 Jan, alas. Buy my story, Hartwell!

**Patrick Nielsen Hayden** sends a flyer about *Nude Trek 2: The Wrath of Klothes*, the first nudist Trek convention, run by The Slugs Nudist Club in chilly Washington State (22 Jan). Perhaps the most macabre aspect is his covering note: 'NOT A HOAX'.

**Kim Newman** modestly notes, 'I've been up an Alp at a film festival drowning in complimentary champagne and French babes, both of which have unadvertised down-sides.'

**Chris Priest** watched the recording of *The Glamour* as a BBC radio play (dramatized by Chris himself, directed by Janet Whitaker). 'I particularly liked the recently constructed, purpose built radio drama studio. It was a surreal place ... built to allow just about every conceivable aural circumstance. One bit was carpeted, another had bare boards, another flagstones, another gravel, etc. The staircase linking the two levels has three "strips": bare wood (institutions), carpet (houses) and stone (dungeons). There are numerous different doors to be slammed, opened, rattled, locked. I poked around, trying to imagine what someone would think were they to wake up in

the room without knowing what it was used for.

'I assumed radio plays were recorded with a group of actors holding scripts and standing around one microphone. ("Ahem, only *The Archers* is done like that!" they said as they ticked me off.) The way my lot did it was almost like a stage play. The fight scene was meticulously rehearsed, with all the punches and oof noises arranged so they were close to microphones: several takes, with much falling over and bruising. Bed scenes are recorded in a bed (which folds out of the wall), with sheets! "God, if I'd known this," I said, "I'd have put in a scene in a swimming pool." The sound man visibly paled. "We don't like swimming pool scenes...." Nor do they like scenes in cars: too many noises that change all the time (gears, traffic, etc) and which have to be timed to the script. They still cut cabbages in half for beheadings ("not much call for that these days"), but I saw no coconut shells anywhere. The sound of a ring-pull beer can defies aural science: they had to go down to the vending machine and buy a few cans of Coke.

'A highlight was listening to the effects people build up a car bomb from scratch, beginning with a dynamite explosion (sounded a bit like a door slamming), then layers added to give echo, reverberation, windows shattering, metal lumps skidding down the road, ground juddering, windows rattling, people screaming, alarm bells going. When this was played to the actors, two of them ducked—I too jumped out of my skin, and I knew it was coming! The BBC people were so pleased with it that they put it into the effects library. Me: "Here, that's my car bomb!" They: "Sorry, squire, it's ours now."

'All lost, of course, as it squirts uselessly through the 2" speaker on a transistor radio.... But I was awed by the manifest professionalism and hard work of it all; felt shagged out at the end, and I was just watching.' [CP] *Broadcast scheduled for BBC Radio 4 on Easter Monday evening. CP is also toiling on a 3-part TV drama serial commissioned by BBC2 and called The Cull.*

**David Redd** is getting there slowly: 'My last *New Worlds* story submission was bounced as usual, but Dave Garnett says he is quoting part of my covering letter in his editorial. Maybe I should forget stories and simply write covering letters.'

**Guy N. Smith** sends the vital datum not available last issue: his fan club costs £10/year, £25/life. Members get 10% off rare GNS books, including Polish editions—amaze friends with the Polish for *Phobia (Fobia)*, *The Sucking Pit (Trzesawisko)*, *Fiend (Szatan)* and *Crabs on the Rampage (Odwet)*....

### Confrication

5-7 Feb ♪ **Pentatonic** (filk), Rozel Hotel, Weston-super-Mare. £25 reg. Too late now to do anything but Just Turn Up. Or in my case, Just Shudder And Stay Home.

17 Feb ● **BSFA: V&A** pub on Marylebone Station, moving to the Conservatory—Café Munchen that was—in March, with a likely change to *2nd Wed* each month. (To be confirmed.)

6-7 Mar ● **Microcon**, Exeter University. GoH Colin Greenland. Contact 24 Buddle Lane, Exeter, EX4 1JH. ASTONISHING DEVELOPMENT! UNPRECEDENTED NOVELTY! DOES NOT CLASH WITH—

13 Mar ● **Picocon**, Imperial College Union, Prince Consort Rd, London. 10am-11pm; £5 reg. 'Changed date.'

19 Mar ● **British Fantasy Soc** open night with Karl Edward Wagner: Falkland Arms, Bloomsbury Way, WC1. 6:30pm on.

19-21 Mar ● **Economy II** (Shoestringcon XIV), Hatfield. GoH



Storm Constantine. £8 reg, UH students/PSIFA members £5. Contact PSIFA, UHSU, U of Herts, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9AB.

26-28 Mar • **Trek Dwarf**, Swallow Hotel, Peterborough (so says the latest, infallible *Small Fry* listing—but the last con PR I saw indicated a move to the Holiday Inn, Leicester. Surely they didn't move back again?). £35 reg. Contact 47 Marsham, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, Cambs, PE2 5AN.

8-12 Apr • **Helicon**, Eastercon/Eurocon, Jersey. £28 reg. Contact 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ. A travel deal: 'Jersey European does return flights Gatwick/Jersey for £69/£79 depending on time of day. 4 flights a day out, 3 back—is there a pile of planes at Jersey airport?' [CC] • **Sally-Ann Melia** demands mega-publicity for her Helicon Writer's Circle: contact her at 11 Spinney Drive, Cheswick Green, Solihull, B90 4HB. ('Don't ask how I'll manage if 13 writers arrive speaking 13 different languages.') • **Helicon Person**: 'A bit of luck: fewer people have joined than expected so we needn't print as many PRs and have more cash in hand!' *Ansible*: '... My brain hurts.'

28-31 May • **Mexicon 5**, Scarborough. Now £20 reg. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH. PR2 with a Mexican Xmas greeting was amusingly mailed in late January.

1-3 Oct • **VoCon**, Hitcher con; Tollgate Hotel, Gravesend. Now £18 reg. Contact 17 Guildford St, Brighton, BN1 3LS.

1-4 Apr 94 • **Sou'Wester**, Eastercon, Liverpool. £20 reg. Contact 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ. Pre-supporters should curb their excitement at the *Jan Brum Group* News report of an '£18.00 discount' and send £18, not £2.

Easter 94 • **Elydore**, media, Guernsey. Vast package deal (plane, hotel and registration); pay £??? by instalments. Contact 'High Hopes', La Vrangué, St Peter Port, Guernsey, C.I.

24-8 Aug 95 • **Intersection**, 53rd Worldcon, Glasgow. Rates multifarious, with intricate discounts; new rates apply from 1 Jan, but no figures have reached me. Contact: as *Mexicon*.

**Rumblings** • The **Australia in 1999** Worldcon bid feels it's too early as yet for presupporting memberships (publicity help is preferred), a bidding committee, a city or a hotel. To avoid favouring any plausible venue, the 'Advertising Committee' is interestingly restricted to Faulconbridge (pop. 1500) fans and their pals. Contact them at 43 Chapman Pde, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia. • 'The **Anne Rice** signing at Forbidden Planet was as popular as feared. The two-hour queue did a triple conga line round the Conservatory, out the back door and up the stairs. People started to read their books at the back of the queue and had finished by the front. Even Terry Pratchett would have tipped his hat in disbelief.' [SJ]

## Infinitely Improbable

**Clarke Award Shortlist** for best novel of 1992: Ian McDonald, *Hearts, Hands and Voices*; Marge Piercy, *Body of Glass*; Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars*; Richard Paul Russo, *Destroying Angel*; Michael Swanwick, *Stations of the Tide*; Sue Thomas, *Correspondence*; Lisa Tuttle, *Lost Futures*; Connie Willis, *Doomsday Book*. (Also 'bloody good but ineligible' commendations to Karen Joy Fowler's *Sarah Canary* and M. John Harrison's *The Course of the Heart*.) Winner to be announced 25 March at the Groucho Club, London: 6pm for 7:30pm. [DVB] All are welcome, but take out a large bank loan if you plan to buy any drinks.

**Dredd Words**: a leak about 'the new Judge Dredd series that Virgin are starting. They're planning to launch with two titles rather than three, having seen a synopsis and 15,000 words of specimen text from three authors ... one of whom, fantasist Stephen Marley, was given the thumbs-down by Fleetway for his characterization of Dredd as a brutal, ruthless, heartless, one-track-minded fascist bastard—because he's not, you see, that kind of guy at all.' The Dredd novel contracts have an unusual *descending* royalty scale: 'This is apparently because Fleetway's percentage ascends so sharply with increased sales that everyone else has to absorb part of it. Good pay for not reading their own comics, eh, if their strictures on Dredd's

characterization are anything to go by....' [PB]

**Apostrophe Watch**. It seems this 'Swiss' bakery in Teignmouth has a placard offering (wait for it) gateau'x. [MR] But the most depressing thing I've seen in a recent fanzine is the Retired Fan Teachers' Consensus (Derek Pickles, Terry Jeeves) that today's kids should be told *never* to use apostrophes, as experience shows they will only use them wrong. [Stet 7] Gawd.

**LA Fanzine Horror!** 'At last night's Los Angeles SF Soc meeting it was announced that Loscon 19 had generated profits of over \$4,000 for the club. This after the club decided to save money by not publishing its fanzine *Shaggy* and to cut back its newsletter *De Profundis* to bimonthly or quarterly. Nor will any of that \$4,000 be used to pay back APA-L, which lost a working mimeograph and spirit duplicator, and other hardware, when Robbie Cantor threw it all into a trash container. Several hundred dollars' worth of functioning fanzine production gear are now in some landfill in LA County.' [HA, 8 Jan]

**Parental Lament**. 'My daughter has just constructed her first pair of cardboard Mr Spock ears. *Where did I go wrong?*' [DR]

**Hogu Awards**: *File 770:96* lists 1992 winners of these uncoveted trophies, including BEST HOAX AWARD the 1992 Fanzine Hugo; BEST DEAD WRITER William Shatner; MOST DESIRED GAFIATION Charles N. Brown; BANGER AWARD (what?) Lionel R. Fanthorpe; INVISIBILITY AWARD *The Last Dangerous Visions*. [EW/MG]

**Ten Years Ago**—a Californian auction featured asbestos-bound editions of *Fahrenheit 451* and *Firestarter*, though not the legendary Complete H.P. Lovecraft bound in gorgonzola....

**Hazel's Language Lessons**: **Eskimo**. *nivgornërqutiggssag*, something to take away the taste of fish; *orssúnguvoq*, feels sick from having eaten too much blubber; *sungarnit*, the intestines of the ptarmigan; *pingortôrpoq*, unlucky in throwing the harpoon; *qavak*, man from the south—frequently used to denote stupidity; *suingne!* how it smells of foxes here! (*Schultz-Lorentzen Dictionary of W. Greenland Eskimo Language*, 1927.)

**Clarke's Law Revised**: 'Any technology distinguishable from magic is insufficiently advanced.' [Jeff Swycaffer, *F770:96*]

**Dark Future**<sup>TM</sup>: the A66 report on the legal battle over this title brought outraged responses.... **Abigail Frost**: 'Boring, boring!' • **Kim Newman**: 'I feel mildly guilty since I was the one who mentioned the coincidence [of titles] to GW and Boxtree; I assumed they'd just change the title of our series and grumble a bit.... Incidentally: I've never liked the title much, and I've always felt that the books were hamstrung rather than helped by the games tie-in. My suggestion is that a duly sworn-in jury of literary critics and young adults sit down and read both series then judge who should yield, the loser being stuck with the **Dark Future** title and the winner able to go ahead with something more imaginative. If ever there was an overused word in the genre it's "dark", which gets scattered about as much as "space" and "time" used to in the Gernsback days.... If Kafka were writing today, he'd have called it *The Dark Castle*.' • **Laurence James**: 'The judgment reminds me of the infamous Schleswig-Holstein issue. Which I'm sure you'll recall was so complex that only three men ever understood it. One went mad, one is dead and the third has forgotten....' • **David Garnett** corrected me sternly: 'The GW books *do* have genuine ISBN numbers; where they went wrong was not having the titles listed in *Books in Print*. And it was always planned that GW/Boxtree would relaunch the **Dark Future** books. [Originally] they intended to start the **Warhammer** line in January (now February) and **Dark Future** in August—it was the launch of the latter which was under threat because of the Transworld series.... The only people who have anything to gain by the court case are, as always, the lawyers. Between them, Bantam/Transworld and GW have spent the best part of £100,000 in legal fees. And how much can B/T have paid Laurence James for his series?' • **Boxtree** announced a GW books launch piss-up in Oxford next week. • And **Protostellar** magazine raged, 'You utter sad case, you've stolen our GW vs Transworld scoop—just who the heck do you think you are?' •