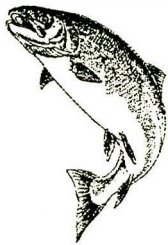


Ansible



Ansible 69 April 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 (idiots only) £12/year. Amazing final offer: vote **Abigail Frost** for TAFF!

DATELINE 1 APRIL 1993. • Tim Illingworth announces that owing to Channel Islands 'fish war' disruptions, Helicon is moving to a more desirable hotel in Leeds. • *Interzone* makes a bid for the mass market by introducing Page Three nudes, beginning with Anne McCaffrey. • David Wingrove complains to the BSFA that his new **Chung Kuo** volume was obtusely reviewed and unfairly over-praised. • Twenty-five years after the acceptance of its first story, *The Last Dangerous Visions* appears. • John Clute writes an entire review in monosyllables (*sard, pyx, brott, quop, storge, tath* ...). • *Ansible* finally achieves an error-free issue, and so does *Critical Waev*. •

The Revelling Princelings

Brian Aldiss was first to hope that *Ansible* #soixante-neuf would be 'an extra sexy issue'. See our attached erotic microdot.

John Brunner's trip to Helicon as GoH met with a problem. The Home Office took charge of his wife Li Yi's passport last October and were still sitting on it in March. JB's fear was that Li Yi, as a Chinese immigrant, might just be queried and not re-admitted to the mainland. But (after a small campaign of letters from fellow-authors and fans) all is now well....

Paul Barnett can match Maureen Speller's proofreading stories in A68: 'In a single story by Alan Brennert for *New Stories from the Twilight Zone* we find a pre-Colombian Indian priest who's familiar (by name) with Stoicism and whose culture is familiar with chorales. His religion is based on the ethical precepts of Christianity. Meanwhile, in the modern age, we have a man at the point of death realizing that it's "time to pay the piper", though quite why he should want to call the tune at that moment is not explained. Perhaps to take his mind off the fact that he's seeing a babble of voices.... Another Brennertism: "Eyes closed, images raced through his mind."

'As Peter Nicholls has suddenly backed out, I am to be drafted as his *Encyclopaedia*-promoting clone at Helicon. "Yes," I protested weakly, "but can I cope with all the casual sex?"

Harlan Ellison is said to be visiting Britain in connection with a TV programme being made about him. Spurred on by helpful John Clute, the TV company repeatedly begged Chris Priest to appear and be controversial. 'This is an eleven foot bargepole request,' quoth CP, preparing to afflict Mr Clute with 'a telephonically transmitted psychic death-ray'.... After Helicon decided it already had enough guests, the 1995 Intersection committee took up HE's offer of a Helicon appearance if his expenses were paid. However, Barry R. Levin's book catalogue, mailed 18 Mar, announces: 'At the time of this writing, Harlan Ellison is faced with the prospect of open heart surgery.' Some people worry that an agenda involving both a 5,000-mile flight and an imminent dash to hospital for life-saving surgery is rich in what sf critics call Cognitive Dissonance.

Patrick Nielsen Hayden reveals all: 'What became of *Alternate Skiffy* is the common problem of small-press projects: I was out of commission for weeks due to quitting smoking, Mike [Resnick] went to Africa, I got sick again, Mike was tangled up in lawyers.... Since our agreement with giant Wildside Press calls for us to get paid on delivery of a MS, we need to get those (several) delinquent contributors to finish their bits, then get everyone's penny a word to them....'

Garry Kilworth's story 'The Sculptor' topped the 1992 *Interzone* reader poll, as did Mark Harrison's cover for *IZ65*, Martin

McKenna's interior art and ... 'Ansible Link' (nonfiction). [DP]

Maureen F. McHugh won the James Tiptree Jr award for 'gender-expanding sf' with her novel *China Mountain Zhang*.

Leigh Priest (Kennedy) acquired British citizenship by taking what I didn't know we Brits had—our Oath of Allegiance....

David Pringle was 'astonished' to discover that some fans are still anti-*Interzone* thanks to its initial funding (profits from the 1981 Eastercon, Yorcon II). No complaints about this ever reached him.... 'What I am aware of, though, is a sniping campaign against the magazine which has been mounted over the years by various BSFA "worthies" (Kev McVeigh is an egregious example), a campaign which has consisted of constant damning with faint praise, nudge-nudge snide remarks, assertions that "everybody knows" this or that or the other about the magazine, implications that the fiction we publish is generally below par (without ever being specific about which stories they have in mind), and so on. Chris Reed of *BBR* has added his voice to this low-level sniping ... but of course he's an "envious rival" and hence has an obvious motive. For the most part, I haven't let it bother me—though after seeing a belittling comment about *Interzone* by old-time fan Terry Jeeves in a *Vector* letter column, I said to myself, "I bet he hasn't seen the magazine since issue one," and sent him a recent copy. Sure enough, he kindly wrote back saying that he hadn't looked at the magazine in over ten years and that, yes, it was now a much better publication than he had expected.' [DP]

Ian Watson, golden boy of UK sf, is 50 on 20 April.

Conyger

London Meetings. In March a new Hamilton Hall atrocity (closing the 'fan bar' for a private party) led to a clear vote for return to the Wellington. For new readers: this pub is opposite the Old Vic exit from Waterloo Station. First Thur each month.

3 Apr • **SF Foundation** 'farewell to London' gathering, upstairs bar of The Conservatory (see BSFA below). All welcome.

8-12 Apr • **Helicon**, Eastercon/Eurocon, Hotel de France, Jersey. £35 at the door or £10/day (£5 on Thur and Mon). Owing to insanity I am editing the convention newsletter; part-time typists and suppliers of hot gossip are eagerly sought.

14 Apr • **BSFA**, The Conservatory, St Giles High St, London. (Tottenham Ct Rd tube.) Sf discussion; all welcome, no fee.

16-18 Apr • **Smofcon 10**, con-runners' con, as Helicon.

30 Apr-3 May • **Warp One** (Trek), Morecambe. £30 reg. Contact 9 Merlin Cres, Edgware, Middlesex., HA8 6JB.

28-31 May • **Mexicon 5**, Scarborough. £20 reg. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

30 Jul-1 Aug • **Lunicon** (Unicon 14), Leeds U, announces Roger Zelazny as chief GoH. £12 reg (price rise threatened; no details of when). Contact LUU, PO Box 157, Leeds, LS1 1UH.

Infinitely Improbable

Clarke Award ... in a slightly shambolic (it says here) ceremony, the £1,000 cheque went to Marge Piercy for *Body of Glass*, with Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars* as runner-up. 'Not awfully good,' complained Roz Kaveney of the winner. 'People were giving the judges very dirty looks. Of course the prime idiocy was not shortlisting *Sarah Canary*....' Award boss David Barrett observes: 'Seems this was a shock decision—apparently there was a lot of muttering. One editor actually got very

shirty with me—though he probably didn't know I wasn't a voting judge. But it was an overwhelmingly clear decision by the judging panel.' David Garnett claims: 'At least 3 sf publishers [are] planning a future boycott after this year's baffling result.' Secret sources confirm the decision was near-unanimous, the Piercy being the first choice for five voting judges and second for the sixth. Apparently most of those who complained and felt Stan Robinson was cruelly wronged had not read *Body of Glass*. Nor me—hence Massive Impartiality.

Apostrophe Watch. Erstwhile 'quality' imprint Picador says of Jim Crace's *Arcadia*: '... a celebration of the city, it's energy, it's optimism, it's scale and it's capacity to re-generate itself despite the deprivations which flourish in it's secrets.'

DUFF: US fans Dick & Leah Smith won 1993's Down Under Fan Fund race to Swancon in Perth, Australia, this Easter.

Literary Bit. An unexpected note from Somerset Maugham (who appears to live in Harrow these days) points out some prophetic phrases in his 1923 *On a Chinese Screen*. Such as: "I don't much care for all these Chinese things meself," answered my hostess briskly, "but Mr Wingrove's set on them." ... "Mr Wingrove won't hear a word against the Chinese," said his wife, "he simply loves them." Etc, etc.

Who? 'Is UK Dr Who fandom as pissed off as in Canada? There's a fair number of Whozits here, plus a major club with chapters all over the continent. Because the Beeb won't commit to any more episodes, the fans are at each other's throats here, sniping, feuding, bitching, libelling and slandering. They want other local conventions to bring in Who actors, totally unmindful of the fact that it costs more than just petty cash to bring a Doctor or companion across the Atlantic....' [LP]

Groupies! Leeds Group has met up *once* this year, I think, unless you consider Steve Glover turning up every Friday, looking around and then going home a meeting. Sad innit? [NER]

Announcements. Paul Kincaid & Maureen Speller will marry on 26 June. • Tommy Ferguson wishes to grovel to John D. Rickett and Neil Curry for helping organize his recent three-week London visit (undertaken solely in order to bribe *Ansible* with beer to print this item). • Barbara & Hugh Mascetti gloat over their offspring Julia (b. 25/2/93). • 'So what's this rumour about Gollancz dropping the graphic novels line?' we asked. Richard Evans, bitterly: 'Those *usually reliable sources*, eh?' Further comment did not follow. • *Critical Assembly I & II*: both hefty volumes of legendary Langford sf review columns are now available at £9.00 each (£9.75 UK mail). • C.O.A. Rhodri James, 18 Harvey Goodwin Ave, Cambridge, CB4 3EU.

London Book Fair. 'Not a vast amount happened, since editors were noteworthy by their absence; the stands were populated almost exclusively by sales/rights people (ALL WITH FUCKIN BOUFFANT HAIR-DOS, thundered Clute after visiting on Monday, COSTIN TWENTY FUCKIN QUID EACH, PAID FOR OUT OF THE MONEY THOSE BASTARDS AREN'T PAYIN ME).' [PB]

First Edition Fever. Fanatical collectors who fell madly on 'special limited first editions' of recent Stephen King novels are a bit pissed off to learn that the cheapo British book club versions of *Gerald's Game* and *Dolores Claiborne* are also the true world firsts ... the latter by just one day. Ho ho. [BRL]

Numerology. Overhearing a call to Fred Clarke, our spy was fascinated when the answering machine announced, 'You have reached Bishop's Lydeard 2001.' Gosh, vanity phone numbers.

That Lawsuit: the Games Workshop/Boxtree injunction against further Transworld sales of Laurence James's *Dark Future*™ titles was upheld on appeal in March.

1,000,000 Pesetas: the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya's annual sf prize is offered once again, for 75-100pp stories in English, French, Spanish or Catalan. Closing date 30 Aug. SAE to *Ansible* for a copy of the lengthy rules.

Bumper Stickers. Good taste exemplar John Foyster trumps the ♥ and ♠ versions with 'I ♣ Baby Seals'. Thank you, John.

SF Encyclopaedia II

What an achievement! There's never been anything like it in science fiction! Yes, after countless lesser authors had failed, John Clute has achieved the amazing feat of getting credit on the front cover of a collaboration involving Peter Nicholls.

The second edition of *The Encyclopaedia of SF* (Orbit) is pretty good too. Statistics: 1,370 pages plus prelims. About 1,300,000 words (the 1979 edition ran to only 730,000). Over 4,360 entries (formerly 2,800). Over 2kg on the internationally accepted Langford Bathroom Scale. One picture, on the jacket (formerly lots). 2¾" thick. Price £45.00, and worth it for the brilliant entries on *Ansible* and its editor alone, not to mention kindly 'contributing editor' Brian Stableford's habit of cross-referencing everything to my and his *The Third Millennium* if not *The Science in Science Fiction*. ('GIANT MUTANT SPACE GOATS,' a typical theme entry might run, 'are notably not predicted by David LANGFORD and Brian STABLEFORD in ...') On the other hand, I gather that Roz Kaveney was incensed to find no cross-reference from her entry to—her own coinage—BIG DUMB OBJECTS. My lawyers have advised me not even to smile.

The Nicholls and Stableford encyclopaedic virtues are already well known. New boy Clute has subdued his famous critical flourishes for hordes of classy new and rewritten author entries (2900+ ... formerly 1817). There is a supporting cast of thousands; I unexpectedly found my own initials on two entries, as a reward for suggesting trifling improvements.

This thing has been years on the road ... as occasional computer adviser I remember the initial horror of discovering that the carefully preserved disks containing the full text of the first edition were obsolete eight-inch floppies whose format made sense only to Granada typesetting machines long since scrapped—I kept hoping to track one down in a museum, but no luck. After all the professionals had failed to crack the code, Macdonald had the whole lot rekeyed and great oaths were sworn that *this time* usable disks would be maintained forever. The subsequent publishers Little, Brown, after being anxiously reminded of this for months and responding with countless soothing noises ('Don't bother your tiny editorial heads—we've got it all sussed!'), recently discovered to their embarrassment that all the enormously many final proof corrections had been entered only on the typesetter's disks, which can't be read back into the IBMs used by our hero editors. This came to light exactly as the text was urgently needed for the coming Nimbus CD-ROM edition. The only thing we learn from history...

(It's not that black. Disk translation services can tackle the job this time around, requiring only vast sums of money. Or Nimbus can merrily plug all the galley and page-proof corrections back into the disk text. 'Shouldn't take too long,' they said breezily. *Ace Technical Editor John Grant*: 'Have you seen the proofs yet?' *Nimbus Person, After Long Pause*: 'Er, no.')

Review it? No thanks—I'm still shagged out from skimming the whole thing on disk and selflessly passing all my nitpicks to the editors instead of saving them up for a trenchant critical article. After a week's dipping into the final production, I've located only a dozen or so minor slips, and only two of which I can say: 'I Told You So, You Should Have Listened To Me!' Let me register just 0.05 of a whinge at the creased pages and groups of pages in my copy, admittedly a complimentary one. (*The Plain People of Fandom*: 'You lucky bastard.')

Of course this immediately becomes *the* indispensable sf reference, a fitting replacement at last for the 1979 edition. Buy it, buy it, buy it. What I tell you three times is true. •