

Ansible



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SFX, 'the hot new sf magazine', published its first, June-dated issue in May. No fiction appears and the coverage is chiefly of media sf (David Pringle can breathe again), though there's a suitably eccentric joint interview with Iain Banks and Iain M. Banks. A weird launch party was held in 'Jim Henson's The Creature Shop', Camden Town, inside a disco-lit and smoke-clouded indoor marquee decorated with special effects from *Dr Who*, *Alien*, *Neverending Story*, *Dark Crystal*, etc. Here a Robocop clone prowled the huge crowd firing a VERY NOISY gun, while lady guests complained that the wandering Dalek was taking personal liberties with its plunger. Thanks to a mysterious sponsorship deal, there was a wide choice of either bottled Czech lager or Smirnoff vodka served by drag queens. Millions of famous media folk went unrecognized by me; my one brief chat with **SFX** deputy editor Dave Golder was rapidly broken up by a PR person dragging him away to—as he later put it—"do my duties with Peter Davison (which was hideous—he was in a foul mood)." Ever-watchful Mary Branscombe also names names: 'I saw John Pertwee leave with a full bottle of vodka very early on, after he told the Dalek to sod off.' Written-SF luminaries included John Clute, Mike Scott Rohan, Dick Jude ("What have you written about Forbidden Planet this time, Langford you bastard?"), and, er, that's about it. We never worked out who all the people in *Star Trek* uniforms were. Why doesn't *Interzone* hold parties like this?

R.I.P.

Brian Aldiss on Charles Monteith (1921-1995): 'The Tibetans have just chosen a new panchen Lama by "a system of dreams and visions". By such a system, maybe, Charles Monteith was chosen to be a perfect publisher. He joined Faber & Faber in 1954, eventually to become chairman of the company. Charles had bagged double Firsts in English and Law at Oxford; not only was he brilliant, he was highly amusing and hospitable. And he liked sf. A big man in every way. • He wrote to me in the year he arrived at Faber, inviting me to do a book, my first: *The Brightest Diaries*, a social comedy which met with some success. When he asked me what I was going to do for an encore, I told him I was writing a science fiction novel—*Non-Stop*. 'Good,' said Charles, possibly the only publisher who would have said Good at that time. But Charles was friendly with Kingsley Amis and Bruce Montgomery ("Edmund Crispin"), and was publishing the latter's superb *Best SF* series. He also published the early William Goldings—Bill regarded himself as an sf writer at this time—and John Bowen, among others. Soon he took on other sf writers, Edmund Cooper, James Blish, Clifford Simak, and Harry Harrison, thereby proving to the dimmer fraternity that sf was a commercially viable field of publishing. Much is owed to his perception and enthusiasm. • It was a privilege to be published by the ever-generous Charles, and to meet Sir Geoffrey Faber, another sf buff, and T.S. Eliot, as well as all the Faber poets. I parted company with the firm only when my agent advised it, owing to Faber's reluctance regarding *Billion Year Spree*. • What Charles and I had in common was that we had both read *Modern Boy* in the 30s, and were slaves to the stories of Captain Justice by Murray Roberts; also, we had both served in Burma, where Charles was severely wounded. The wound dogged him for the rest of his life, contributing to his death in May. In today's publishing rat-race, I know only one other publisher who at all resembles the majestic and amusing Charles Monteith.' (*Later Monteith discoveries of note included Christopher Priest and Garry Kilworth.*)

Gregory Benford on long-time US fan **Norm Clarke**: '[He] died March 29 in Ottawa, Canada, age 64. Noted local jazz saxophonist of the skree-honk school, well known as fannish wit. Founding member of Lilapa [mid-60s], baseball fan, not well educated but well

read. Survivors are daughters Jennifer and Laura, ex-wife Gina, two brothers & a sister. Last I saw Norm was when he visited us at MIT (I on sabbatical) 1993, and we took in a Sox game and drank a lot. He died of kidney failure, I believe.' *Benfordian footnote*: 'Lilapa lives on, robustly. I am still a fan, in an APA, contribute regularly to fmz, went to Corflu this year, will be at worldcon. See you there. Once a fan....'

David V. Barrett sadly reports: '**Christopher Hodder-Williams**, author of *Chain Reaction*, *The Main Experiment*, *The Egg-Shaped Thing*, *Fistful of Digits*, 98.4, *Coward's Paradise* and many other novels, most of them sf, died of a heart attack on 15 May (following a long illness). He was 69.... I worked with him on the MSS of a number of novels since 1983, and had been acting as his agent for the most recent, *Schizorama*, about a schizophrenic and "care in the community."

The 8th Earl of Clancarty, famous for UFO books under the byline Brinsley Le Poer Trench (his actual name, minus an initial 'William Francis'), died in May aged 83. Perhaps his finest hour was the 1979 House of Lords UFO debate, whose transcript in *Hansard* sold out on the following day....

Charlotte Franke (1935-95), for many years a stalwart of the UK Milford sf conferences, died in Germany this May. [DG]

Secret Sharers

Brian Aldiss had immense fun with his recent 'Time Capsule caper': the sixth form of West Buckland school on Exmoor was mobilized with metal detectors to locate the biscuit tin of 'raunchy tales' nervously buried there by the great man while himself a hand-reared pupil, over 50 years ago. News coverage extended as far as the *Peebles Observer*, the Hong Kong press and Radio 4: the reported raunch-level of the 'saucy stories' varied considerably from paper to paper. 'I now hope to sell the stories to the nation,' says Mr Aldiss in an exclusive fax. 'Would take anything between ten grand and a million....'

John Clute's *Look at the Evidence*, his second mighty collection of sf 'reviews and stuff, mainly 1987-92', will be co-published by Serconia Press (USA) and Liverpool University Press here ... another happy indication of Liverpool U's 'growing attentiveness to sf general,' beams John. The book features an exhilarating rant about editorial malpractice at what JC is not alone in reckoning the world's worst professional outlet for sf/fantasy reviews: the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Julian Flood has stepped into Rob Holdstock's long-vacated shoes—writing scenarios and fiction for the *Elite* computer game, reincarnated as *Frontier*. JF brags of pillaging countless fictional sources including, at length, a Langford story called 'Blit': 'this isn't ripoff, old chap, this is respectful quoting....'

Diana Wynne Jones underwent four hours of emergency spinal surgery on Monday evening (29 May), and in two days was sufficiently recovered to display 'a filthy temper'. She apparently has only two unreconstructed vertebrae left.... [DVB/CB]

Garry Kilworth broke down under our ruthless lack of questioning and repeatedly admitted that his novel *The Electric Kid* has won the Children's Book of the Year Award, sponsored by NatWest (so that's what they do with my bank charges) and voted on by children. The book is 'currently being translated into American, with esoteric words such as "perhaps" being changed to "maybe"....' [DG]

Brian Stableford's *Interzone 95* review(s) originally contained some nasty remarks about David Garnett's *Stargonauts*, removed (by agreement) to spare DG's feelings—except that editor Pringle thoughtfully read that bit over the phone to DG.

Conspersion

3 Jun • **Pat Cadigan** holds court at The Conservatory, 12:30.

6 Jun • **H.G. Wells** stands for *The Time Machine's* centenary out today, looking quite remarkably grotty and unWellsian.

24-5 Jun • **Interception**, Hertfordpark Hotel, Stevenage: **Scottish Convention** staff weekend (non-staff also welcomed into the parlour, heh heh). No fee. Contact: as Intersection.

28 Jun • **BSFA**, Jubilee pub, York Rd, London (nr Waterloo). Upstairs room, 7pm. With Gwyneth Jones.

1 Jul • **Armageddon Fireworks**, Hardwick House, Whitchurch, 8pm for 10:30. Bar. £3.50; £4 at gate. 01734 843219.

1 Jul • **Hypotheticon** (sf/gaming), Central Hotel, Glasgow. GoH Maggie Furey, Tom Holt. £10 reg, £15 at door. Contact 10 Atlas Rd, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE.

14-16 Jul • **Dimension Jump** (*Dwarf*), somewhere. SAE to Garden Cottage, Hall Farm, Scotton, Norwich, NR10 5DF.

4-5 Aug • **Clwydcon** (small press/poetry), Celyn Horticultural Coll, Northrop, Clwyd. £7 'enrolment fee' to P.E. Presford, 'Rose Cottage', 3 Tram Lane, Buckley, CH7 3JB.

11-13 Aug • **Nexus** (*Trek/sf*), Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Bristol. GoH: John 'Q' de Lancie, others. £35 reg (less for 1/2 days only) + 3 SAEs; no advance booking after 28 Jul. Contact 26 Milner Rd, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 9PQ. [SR]

19-20 Aug • **Precursor**, now moved to Hertfordpark Hotel, Stevenage: pre-Worldcon 'fannish relaxa'con' party. Contact 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London, E6 1AB.

24-8 Aug • **The Scottish Convention** (Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. £90 reg, £100 at door. No advance memberships after 22 July. Contact Intersection, Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR. Only two more *Ansibles* to go before zero hour....

11-13 Jul 96 • **Speaking Science Fiction**. U of Liverpool conference. £130 inc hotel. Contact Andy Sawyer, SF Foundation, Sydney Jones Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool, L69 3DA. (*Accidentally listed last issue as being in 1995—oops!*)

26-29 Jul 96 • **Albacon 96**, Central Hotel, Glasgow. NB: changed dates owing to a titanic clash with Contagion. Contact 10 Atlas Rd, Springburn, Glasgow, G21 4TE.

Rumblings • **Judith Clute's** paintings are on show at Lauderdale House, Waterlow Pk, Highgate Hill, N6, until 11 June. 0181 348 8716.

Infinitely Improbable

Japanese Whippers. One cause of Uri Geller's famous failed lawsuits against psychic debunker James Randi proved to be an interview conducted via interpreter by a Japanese reporter who spoke no English. Randi's remark 'Geller has no social conscience' reached Japanese print as, approximately, 'Uri Geller is a loathsome social disease...' [MMW]

C.O.A. Cat Coast & Dave Hicks, 22 The Uplands, Rogerstone, Newport, Gwent, NP1 9PA. **Fiona McHugh & Paul Voermans**, 11 Leinster Grove, East Brunswick, 3057, Australia. **Jonathan Palfrey**, SITE, Mini Parc Alpes Congres, 6 rue Roland Garros, 38320 Eybens, France. **Ringpull** (*redivivus*), Albion Wharf, Albion St, Manchester, M1 5LN.

Oh No! *The Federation of Australian Writers Bulletin* has issued a WARNING to CONTRIBUTORS: 'An FAW member who sent work to L.Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future, which was promoted in recent editions of the *Bulletin*, has advised us that her work was returned unopened. This indicates that this publishing body has closed or changed address. We would therefore advise FAW members against submitting work to this publisher.'

Thog's Masterclass. 'Sweat broke out on his brow as he wrestled with his brain ...' (Julian Flood, 'Control', *Tomorrow* 6/95) [MMW] • 'They were within two hundred meters, rocketing toward nullgrav steel doors that could absorb a direct hit from a meson without buckling.' (Margaret Weis & Don Perrin, *The Knights of the Black Earth*, 1995)

The Never-Ending SF Encyclopaedia. Grollier's spiffy CD-ROM edition should be out real soon now. **John Clute** promises: '75 author entries by me added, and a lot more than that by Peter Nicholls on everything else. Lots of new

corrections, and (at a very rough guess) about 600 entries updated by me, and about 90 by Peter.'

Millennial. Radio 4 mentioned 'a proposal submitted to the Millennium Commission: that it should fund a galactic treasure hunt, which would involve sending pound coins into space. The details were a bit confused, but "... this was a suggestion by a Mr Duncan Lunan." And as soon as they heard the name, the audience all laughed.' [DG]

Vote Brit! **Simon Ounsley** has been sending eloquent letters pointing out that our very own *Interzone* came close to winning the Semiprozine Hugo in 1987, and that (with issue 100 approaching) it would be a shame for it to miss out again in 1995 merely through British fans' celebrated apathy. *Verb.sap*

The Bookseller names Pat Cadigan's *Fools* as winner of the 'Arthur C. Clarke Award, given for the best crime novel....' [CP]

The Last Dangerous Fresco. Broadcasting in deadly secrecy to the entire Internet, **Harlan Ellison** revealed a former romantic entanglement: 'Christopher Priest is no more and no less [than] a "jilted lover." I rejected him from *The Last Dangerous Visions* and he has never been able to get over it. Mr Priest, who remains under the impression that he withdrew (and rapidly resold) 'An Infinite Summer' after four months of editorial silence, was more interested by the same bulletin's Renaissance Editor comparison. Again HE identifies himself with Michelangelo being nagged by a philistine Pope to finish the Sistine Chapel as a rush job. CP helpfully comments: 'The Sistine Chapel frescoes took Michelangelo just over four years to complete. He was 33 when he started in 1508 and 37 when he finished in 1512. When Ellison first announced *TLDV's* impending publication, he too was 37. Now he is older than Pope Julius II (60 when elected), who not only commissioned Michelangelo's work but lived to see it completed.'

Thog's Masterclass Special

Chris Bell has been testing her editorial skills on perhaps the most stunningly copy-edited novelization of this or any other decade: *StarGate™* by Dean Devlin & Roland Emmerich! Enjoy.... (*The comments are hers.*)

The Hunter could move no faster than the stone walls of the cave that surrounded him ... • Daniel's nail clippers were no match, so he moved to the desk and sat down. • ... and a Bible in the bottom drawer that probably came with the desk. • The air itself was thick with people. (*This is later made clear*) Skaara clucked like a chicken and flapped his wings. • As soon as the giant disk was revealed, the entire city fell, its knees in one massive human wave, bowing toward the visitors. • The light on the scene in the entrance hall dimmed until the clean edges of the radio began to decompose, dwindling into the approaching night. • ... an oblong asteroid ... that was this planet's moon. • ... dazzling silken costumes carrying all manner of tableware ... • The women met these attempts to communicate with the same aggressive refusal Kasuf had shown. They took the mirror away and wagged their fingers at him. (*I bet the Bosnians would like that kind of aggression.*) • ... the rifle in his hands like a live eel. • In his metal gloves, he carried a five-foot-long weapon. (*It beats a knife down your sock.*) • Daniel's eyes bugged to silver dollar size, it was a goner, waiting to feel the ice-hot blade slit open his throat. • It's skin ... seemed to glow ... emitting a ghostly pall. Daniel wondered whether he might be made of the same unidentifiable substance as the StarGate. • Skaara felt his stomach nearly fall out of his mouth. • Ra nodded once very broadly. • The harsh glare of three guns poured in from every angle ... • The shot went through Freeman's head like a soft watermelon, raining pieces of him onto the screaming crowd. • Still wearing his helmet, his mouth hung open in a way that changed Daniel's expression immediately. • He had been staring at Skaara's large drawing for several minutes when it fell out of his mouth. • It was a hard thing to say to the old man she loved so much, and then ran to catch up with Daniel. • Holding the recently delivered Skaara by one ankle, he lifted the spindly fourteen-year-old as high as he could, until they were face-to-upside-down-face. • Just before the lid closed above him like an infant re-entering the womb, he heard the giant noise of voices erupt outside. • (*Who is in charge at Penguin these days?—CB*)

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