

# Ansible



**Vote for Quatermass!** *Ansible* tends to ignore elections, but the UK Independence Party's TV ad makes daring use of sf imagery: 'The giant squid represents the EU of course (just in case you miss the point it has 12 stars tattooed on its ugly forehead). The "alien body" looms over St Paul's, swiping its tentacles at terrified passers-by, it "smashes" our currency and engulfs the Houses of Parliament.' [BBC/NH] Way to go....

## The Sky Lords

**Stephen Fry** knows that Douglas Adams didn't write that icky sf stuff: 'I'm not a fan of science-fiction but neither was Douglas. He just happened to write a book about space and time. / I wouldn't want to mention names but I do think science-fiction writers take themselves far too seriously.' (Ireland OnLine news) [NH]

**David A. Hardy's** Hugo campaign is off to a good start: '*Futures: 50 Years in Space* was awarded a Sir Arthur Clarke Award [see A213] for "best written presentation". Both Patrick [Moore] and I receive a handsome engraved glass "obelisk" of exactly the same proportions as the black one in 2001, but also bearing a famous diagram showing three geostationary satellites in orbit. (In case you haven't noticed, it is exactly 60 years since Arthur's very significant article appeared in *Wireless World* [1945], proposing these for communication.)' [3 April] • More bragging followed: 'My cover on the November 2004 issue of *Analog* was voted "best cover of the year" in their AnLab Readers' Poll—the third consecutive year that I have won this. Not bad for a Brit, eh?'

**Kazuo Ishiguro** still draws a line between his clones-for-organs saga *Never Let Me Go* and those talking squid in outer space: 'The point, says Ishiguro, is not to create a science-fiction scenario but to find a metaphor through which to look at aspects of the human condition, such as friendship and ageing and the myths with which we comfort ourselves as we hurtle towards oblivion.' Likewise: 'I am not interested in devising futuristic landscapes, he says, This is the world as we know it, except for one major tweak.' (*Waterstone's Books Quarterly* 16) [WP]

**John Meaney** reports from the heady world of tie-in publicity: 'In that well-known bookshop, F\*\*\*\*s, the atmosphere was buzzing in the SF section tonight [8 April], as staff discussed their new promotion strategy. With a screening of *Hitch-Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy* about to occur in London, the opportunities were shimmering: costumes, glamorous hair-dos, and ... "I know," said one of the booksellers. "We could bring Douglas Adams into the shop." I told her it was an excellent idea, and one that he surely would have approved of.'

**Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle** are to receive the 2005 Heinlein Award for 'outstanding published work in hard science fiction or technical writings inspiring the human exploration of space.' Which reminds me that the latest N&P novel to arrive here is a fantasy, *Burning Tower*, whose Voyager edition has a jacket painting of a huge, blazing, medieval fortress. Cover artist Steve Stone was presumably not informed that the setting is prehistoric America, fourteen thousand years ago, or that *Burning Tower* is merely a female character's name....

**J.K. Rowling**, author of some books, appeared in April's *Sunday Times* list of the 1,000 richest Brits. She was placed at equal 96th with £500 million, down from last year's 91 (when she had only £430m). Terry Pratchett, author of some other books, was not included. [SG]

**H.G. Wells**—remember him? The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* doesn't. From an article on forthcoming movies: '*War of the Worlds*, the Steven Spielberg-Tom Cruise remake of the Orson Welles radio classic ...' [S] By way of further ignominy, the Wells mural that for nearly 20 years was a popular feature of Market Square in his Bromley birthplace has been whitewashed into oblivion. Admittedly its imagery was slightly confused—besides a giant *Food of the Gods* chicken and a 1952 *War of the Worlds* movie flying saucer, there was also a Tripod from the 1984-5 BBC TV adaptation of John Christopher's novels. Heedless of this year's *War of the Worlds* remake, and hoping to become a World Heritage site in 2006, Bromley wants to replace the dilapidated mural with a new one themed for the more respectable Charles Darwin 'and his use of the local Downe countryside in the development of his theories.' According

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From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. <http://ansible.co.uk>. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (online). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Atom**. Available for SAE or giant nucleared-powered zeppelins.

to the head of Bromley's heritage and urban planning committee: '... in memory of the previous mural, we are keen to include references to Wells in the new design.' [JS] A Tripod, perhaps, caught in the very act of failing to be naturally selected.

## Contline

9 May • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Top floor, 6:30pm. With Pat Cadigan and guests whose names are shrouded in mystery.

11 May • **Clarke Award Ceremony**, English Heritage Lecture Theatre, London. By invitation only.

20-22 May • **Fantastic Films Weekend**, Nat Mus Photo, Film & TV, Bradford. £45 reg, £35 wkend, £15 day. Box office 0870 70 10 200.

25 May • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans in bar from 5pm. With Harry Harrison.

3-5 Jun • **Construction V**—final Interaction staff weekend before the Thing Itself. Location now confirmed as Stevenage, Herts.

29-31 Jul • **Clarecraft Discworld Event**, Warren Farm, Woolpit, Suffolk. Camping weekend. £5 reg to Clarecraft, Unit 1, Woolpit Business Park, Woolpit, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP30 9UP.

29-31 Jul • **Precursor 2** (relaxacon)—CANCELLED, alas, owing to lack of members. Contact The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 8HG.

30-31 July • **Caption** (comics), Wolfson College, Oxford. £10 reg; £5 unwaged. Guests TBC. Contact 149 Campbell Rd, Oxford, OX4 3NX.

4-8 Aug • **Interaction** (63rd Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. £110/\$195/€165 reg to 30 Jun. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

14 Aug • **Banopticon** (*Who*), Marine Ct Hotel, Bangor, Co Down, Ireland. GoH C. Baker. £20 reg. Info: [banopticon2005\[at\]yahoo.co.uk](mailto:banopticon2005[at]yahoo.co.uk).

2-4 Sep • **Festival of Fantastic Films 16**, Day's Hotel, central Manchester. Guests and membership rates TBC.

15-16 Oct • **Octocon**, Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Ireland. Guests TBA. Now €30 reg, student €25, under-18s €15 until 1 Oct, to Octocon, Basement Flat, 26 Longford Tce, Monkstown, Co. Dublin. Sterling £20, £15, £10 to 'Dave Lally #2 A/C', 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

23-25 Feb 07 • **Redemption 07** (B7/B5), Hinckley Island Hotel, Leics. Now £45 reg, to 9 Aug 05; £50 to 31 Aug 06; £55 to 9 Feb 07; £60 at door. Contact 26 Kings Meadow View, Wetherby, LS22 7FX.

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. Suneel Ratan of *Wired* knows where to find true sf innovation: 'While most sci-fi—whether on TV, in movies or books—remains aimed toward science geeks or overgrown adolescents, producer Ronald Moore and the Sci-Fi Channel have essentially reinvented the genre by giving it an edgy, current, broad-based appeal.' [JH] • Janice Eisen is much amused that 'people who dedicate their entire lives to a single movie [*The Big Lebowski*] should look down on sf fans.' This a spokesman explains the regular Lebowski Fest: 'People have likened it to a "Star Trek" or science-fiction convention, but we have women and nobody speaks Klingon.' (AZcentral.com article)

**Nebula Awards**, announced 30 April: NOVEL Lois McMaster Bujold, *Paladin of Souls*. NOVELLA Walter Jon Williams, 'The Green Leopard Plague' (*Asimov's* 10/03). NOVELETTE Ellen Klages, 'Basement Magic' (*F&SF* 5/03). SHORT Eileen Gunn, 'Coming to Terms' (*Stable Strategies and Others*). SCRIPT *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*.

**R.I.P.** **Bill Bowers** (1943-2005), major US fan and fanzine publisher for several decades, died on 18 April after years of failing health. He was 61. In the 1960s he co-edited *Double:Bill* with Bill Mallardi, and since the 1970s published seventy issues of the impressive *Outworlds*, with #71 still in progress; both these fanzines collected multiple Hugo nominations. He tied as winner of the TransAtlantic Fan Fund in 1976. Bill will be very much missed. [DL] • **John Brosnan** (1947-2005), Australian writer, magazine columnist and sf film expert long resident in Britain, was found dead in his flat at Ortygia House, Harrow, on 11 April, after friends were unable to contact him. The cause of death was acute pancreatitis. John wrote five books on genre cinema, many sf adventures, some pseudonymous horror novels (often in collaboration

with Leroy Kettle) as 'Harry Adam Knight' and 'Simon Ian Childer', and most of the film entries for the 1979 *Encyclopedia of SF*. He was a central member of London 'Ratfandom' in the 1970s; his scurrilous gossip-sheet *Big Scab* shared the 1974 UK Nova Award for best fanzine. Rob Holdstock and Roy Kettle add: 'There are many truths about John Brosnan, and many conundrums. A simple truth is that John had more years left in him than he was finally prepared to fight for. He lost the spirit for life. Not even the success of a book published (*MotherShip*, 2004), its sequel almost completed and a humorous book in the preparation stage could elevate him from the demonic depression into which he had descended. But by then his health was in free-fall and he was refusing to do anything about it. And yet: John's demon was also his triumph. ● He leaves some bloody funny memories, and one superb piece of theoretical human psychology. John's twin pet hates—organised religion (he was an ardent Dawkinist) and alternative therapies, especially homeopathy, were often the starting pistol for spirited and hilarious evening discussions with his friends. And the theory? He always believed that the "default" condition of the human mind was "depression", and all other emotions—happiness, contentment, libido, ambition and so forth—merely the unfortunate side effects of the evolution of intelligence. He fought this corner fiercely. Then, in the mid 90s, an article appeared in *New Scientist* claiming much the same. The triumphant crowing of that boy went on for years! John was never more happy than when being proved right: that depression was the best! We'll all miss him hugely.' The funeral on 29 April was followed by a pub celebration in London. ● *Ruth Hussey* (1914-2004), US actress best known for work other than her appearances in the TV anthology series *Science Fiction Theater*, died on 19 April at the age of 90. [SFS] ● *Sir John Mills* (1908-2005), noted UK actor, died on 23 April following a chest infection; he was 97. His roles included the eponymous hero of the four-part mini-series *Quatermass* (ITV 1979, aka *The Quatermass Conclusion*) and an appearance in the 1993 TV *Frankenstein*. [SG] ● *George P. Cosmatos* (1941-2005), Italian-born film director who ventured into horror with *Of Unknown Origin* (1983) and the *Alien*-like *Leviathan* (1989), died from lung cancer on 19 April. ● *David Hughes* (1930-2005), UK novelist and critic whose *But for Bunter* (1985; US *The Joke of the Century*, 1986) presents an alternate/secret history where 20th-century events are crucially dependent on fictional schoolboy Billy Bunter, died on 11 April aged 74. [PDF] ● *Sir John Mills* (1908-2005), noted UK actor, died on 23 April following a chest infection; he was 97. His roles included the eponymous hero of the mini-series *Quatermass* (ITV 1979, aka *The Quatermass Conclusion*) and an appearance in the 1993 TV *Frankenstein*. ● *Josef Nesvadba* (1926-2005), psychiatrist and satirical author who was known as the king of Czech sf, died unexpectedly on 25 April; he was 78. A notable translated collection of his stories is *In the Footsteps of the Abominable Snowman* (1970 UK; re-issued in America as *The Lost Face*, 1971). [GVG]

**As Others Profile Us.** N. Lee Wood sends a depressing *LA Times* report on the work of the Child Exploitation Section of the Toronto Police Service Sex Crimes Unit: 'On one wall is a "Star Trek" poster with investigators' faces substituted for the Starship Enterprise crew. But even that alludes to a dark fact of their work: all but one of the offenders they have arrested in the last four years was a hard-core trekkie. / Det. Constable Warren Bulmer slips on a Klingon sash and shield they confiscated in a recent raid. "It has something to do with a fantasy world where mutants and monsters have power and where the usual rules don't apply," Bulmer reflects. "But beyond that, I can't really explain it.'" (Staff writer Maggie Farley, 27 April.) This statistic became less impressive when checked by one Ernest Miller. From his weblog: 'I called the Child Exploitation Section of the Toronto Sex Crimes Unit and spoke to Det. Ian Lamond, who was familiar with the *LA Times* article. / He claims they were misquoted, or if that figure was given it was done so jokingly. Of course, even if the figure was given jokingly, shouldn't the *Times* reporter have clarified something that seems rather odd? Shouldn't her editors have questioned her sources? / Nevertheless, Detective Lamond does claim that a majority of those arrested show "at least a passing interest in Star Trek, if not a strong interest.'" [JN] Not quite the same as 'all but one' of the last four years' 100+ offenders.

**Chog's Critical Masterclass, Revisited.** 'After Gernsback lost control of *Astounding Stories*, F. Orlin Tremaine took over as editor in 1931. At first Tremaine followed Gernsback's direction ... but after four years John W. Campbell, a highly-respected author in his own right, took control.' (Applewhite Minyard, *Decades of Science Fiction*, 1998) [DL]

**Bram Stoker Awards.** Here are the shortlisted 2004 novels: P.D. Cacek, *The Wind Caller*; Stephen King, *The Dark Tower VII: The Dark*

*Tower*; Michael Laimo, *Deep in the Darkness*; Peter Straub, *In the Night Room*. (Clive Barker's *Abarat II*, which some might have expected to be a novel finalist, appears under 'Work for Young Readers'.) Michael 'Mr Horror' Moorcock receives this year's life achievement award.

**Fanfundery.** *TAFF*: Suzanne 'Suzle' Tompkins won the 2005 Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund race. 186 ballots cast: Chaz Boston Baden 52 NA votes + 4 Euro + 1 other = 57; Curt Phillips 24+11=35; Suzle 75+8=83; No Pref 4+7=11; CBB and CP eliminated for not gaining 20% of vote in Europe and NA respectively. Congratulations to Suzle! ● Tobes Valois's 2002 trip report *Tobes Taff Ting* (22pp A4) is out: £3.50 to T. Valois, 20 Bakers Lane, Woodston, Peterborough, Cambs, PE2 9QW. ● James Bacon's 2004 report *WorldConNomicon* is also available for £5 post free from Claire Brialey, 59 Shirley Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7ES. ● *DUFF*. The 2005 winner is Joe Siclari: again congratulations! 86 ballots cast: Chris Barkley 2 Australia/NZ + 17 NA = 19; Joe Siclari 8+57=65; No Pref 0+1=1; Write-in 1+0=1. An earlier announcement had just four votes cast Down Under; seven more ballot forms were later found under the bed, as it were, without affecting the result.

**Compleatist's Nightmare.** From Colin Smythe's on-line bibliography of Terry Pratchett: 'In October 1965, Terry pseudonymously took over writing stories for the Children's Circle column in *The Bucks Free Press* (the first of which, spread over 13 weeks, featured characters from what would become *The Carpet People*). Before he left that paper in September 1970 to work for the *Western Daily Press*, apart from his normal reporting and feature-writing activities, he had written over seventy tales that were spread over nearly 250 issues of the paper.' [IC]

**Random Fandom.** *Eileen Gunn* reports from Seattle: 'Lilian Edwards is here for CFP [the Computer, Freedom and Privacy conference], and she's been running off to shop for caviar and jewelry at every break in the program. "Everything is so cheap here!" she exclaims to the tattered denizens of Bushtopia....' ● *Charles Platt* writes: 'I am disturbed to read about the lack of bids for a UK convention. Maybe the time has come for me to return to my roots and save this apparently moribund communal activity from extinction. What a pleasure it would be, to recreate the boredom, drunkenness, and despair of the conventions that I remember so well from the 1960s. Chris Priest, who inducted me into fandom from the BSFA Welcomittee, might lend a hand.'

**C.o.A.** *David G. Bell*, 36 West St, Barnetby, N. Lincs, DN38 6JP.

**Group Gropes.** *London First Thursdays*: April's meeting at the new venue Walkers of Holborn was reportedly a great success. Tony Cullen writes: 'Really, I hate to tempt fate, but if we can hang on to this place I think we may have found a new home.' Fingers crossed, now.

**The Dead Past.** Familiar sentiments in more down-to-earth words from Australia, 64 years ago: 'Graham Stone and Colin Roden, on a hunt for back numbers, found a bookseller who did NOT want to sell his books. He refused to get them down from the shelves (said it was too much trouble) and emphatically stated "that stuff (stf) would drive you ratbag.'" (*Science & Fantasy Fan Reporter* #3, 26 August 1941) 'A much better line than that one about squids in space if you ask me,' adds our researcher Kim Huett.

**More Prizes.** *ABA Book Sense Award*. Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* was this year's fiction winner, with Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* listed as one of four runner-up 'honor books'. [PL] ● *Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award* for outstanding work in children's literature, 2005: to be shared by Philip Pullman and the Japanese illustrator Ryôji Arai. The presentation is this month.

**Chog's Masterclass.** *Game Theory Dept.* 'The best aspect of it was that it was not the last place they'd look for her. Anticipating her reaction, they would look at once in the last place.' (John D. MacDonald, 'Escape to Chaos', 1951) [TmCD] ● *Dept of Noisy Quietude*. 'He said, dropping his voice to a sibilant whisper of well-nigh incredible loudness: "Doorr yonder!"' (Philip MacDonald, *The Polferry Riddle* [UK *The Choice*], 1931) [cj] ● *Fluid Dynamics Dept.* 'Sweat gathered on his forehead, pouring down his vast shoulders.' (Walter Jon Williams, 'Dinosaurs', 1987) [BA] ● *Dept of Big Science*. "'The laboratory covers a dozen floors," the general said, "and in it we have every kind of equipment known. We can produce temperatures of minus 900° Kelvin and we can build up our furnaces to half a billion degrees ..."' (Silas Water, *The Man with Absolute Motion*, 1955)

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