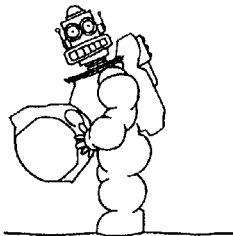


Ansible



Ansible 243 October 2007

From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. Web news.ansible.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Space Weirdo/Automata**. Available for SAE or Wolpec's three truths.

SF in Politics. '... speculation abounds that the incumbent Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, might opt for an early election to establish his own mandate after Blairism. An advertising agency has already won the Labour party account with the strapline "Not flash, just Gordon". Could this be the first UK election fought on SF soundbites? For the Liberal Democrats "Hail Ming, Hail Ming", after its leader Sir Menzies Campbell, would be an appropriate counterblast.' (*Guardian*, 24 Sept) [MP] Things then become strained as the writer tries to connect the Tories' tree logo with Arboria, forest realm of Prince Barin of Mongo. Deep knowledge of *Flash Gordon* minutiae, or just a quick look at Wikipedia?

The Voices of Time

J.G. Ballard helped inspire the Klaxons' *Myths of the Near Future*, which in September won the Mercury Music Prize as album of the year. A Mercury judge, *New Musical Express* editor Conor McNicholas, explained: 'It is a pop record with wide influences from science fiction to literature.' [RP] One track is called 'From Atlantis to Interzone'. [MJE] Meanwhile *Ansible* has received the Spanish group Space Weirdo's CD album *Automata*, featuring a musical homage to John Sladek's *Tik-Tok*.

William Gibson invented Latin, or so the *Guardian* implies: "The purported inventor of the terms "cyberspace" and "matrix" ...' [JM]

Howard Jacobson runs true to form in a recent interview. Anna Metcalfe: 'What makes you cross to read?' Jacobson: 'Science fiction and fantasy; or anything aimed at a child's mind. I don't think children's literature should exist.' (*Financial Times*, 8 September) [HF]

Ursula K. Le Guin reviews Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*: 'It's odd to find characters in a science-fiction novel repeatedly announcing that they hate science fiction. I can only suppose that Jeanette Winterson is trying to keep her credits as a "literary" writer even as she openly commits genre. Surely she's noticed that everybody is writing science fiction now? Formerly deep-dyed realists are producing novels so full of the tropes and fixtures and plotlines of science fiction that only the snarling tricephalic dogs who guard the Canon of Literature can tell the difference. I certainly can't. Why bother? I am bothered, though, by the curious ingratitude of authors who exploit a common fund of imagery while pretending to have nothing to do with the fellow-authors who created it and left it open to all who want to use it. A little return generosity would hardly come amiss.' (*Guardian*, 22 September) Other reviewers followed the 'literary' party line: 'It would be reductive to call this science fiction: it's speculative writing; a novel of ideas.' (Tina Jackson, *MetroLife*, 27 September) [JB]

Ridley Scott told *Wired* that his best-known sf film owes rather little to that guy Philip K. Dick: '*Blade Runner* involved full-bore imagination. Deckard's universe had to be expanded into credibility. That's probably the hardest thing I've done, because there was nothing to borrow from.' [...] *Wired*: 'Is it true that you didn't read *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the book on which *Blade Runner* was based, before making the movie?' Scott: 'I honestly couldn't get into it. It's so dense, by page 32 there's about 17 story lines.' (26 September) [DB]

Jeanette Winterson regards her novel as 'more than speculative': 'I'm not a Luddite; I'm fascinated by technology. There's not a single thing in *The Stone Gods* that's not plausible; it's not flights of fantasy or science fiction, but completely within our reach.' (*Metro*, 25 September) [SK] In this far future, genetic fixing has eliminated ageing, an advanced AI robot can be one's soulmate, and mankind is starting anew on a fresh 'Planet Blue'. But apart from *that*, what has sf ever done for us?

Conacre

Until 5 Nov • **Doctor Who—Up-Close** exhibition, Museum of Science & Industry, Manchester. £20 family, £6.50 adult, £4.50 conc.

6 Oct • **Satellite 1** (50th anniversary of Sputnik), Campanile Hotel, Tunnel St, Glasgow. 10am-late. £25 at door; child (5-15) £5; infant £1.

24 Oct • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Roz Kaveney.

6-10 Aug 09 • **Anticipation** (67th Worldcon), Palais des congrès

de Montréal, Montréal, Canada. *Membership rates announced*: \$Can165/\$US150/£75/Euro115reg;\$Can55/\$US50/£25/Euro35supp; discounts for site selection voters, presupporters, etc. Contact (registration) PO Box 505, Station NDG, Montréal, QC, H4A 3P8, Canada; (other) CP 105, Succursale NDG, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H4A 3P4.

13-14 Oct • **Birmingham International Comics Show**, Millennium Point, Curzon St, Birmingham, B4 7XG. £10 reg; day £6 Sat, £5 Sun; child £6 or £3/day. Contact as above.

13-14 Oct • **Octocon** (Irish national con), Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Ireland. Euro30 reg; Euro15 stud; Euro12 under 18; Euro10 supp. Contact c/o Electric Dragon, 19a Main St, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

19-22 October • **Cult TV 2007**, Heythrop Park Hotel, Chipping Norton, Oxon. £89 reg, £44 child 10-15, under-10s free. Contact PO Box 1701, Wolverhampton, WV4 4WT.

23-27 Oct • **Black Maria** 'ballet+film+electronic music' production, Lilian Baylis Theatre, Rosebery Ave, London, EC1R 4TN. Based on Diana Wynne Jones's novel. Tickets £15. Bookings: 0844 412 4300.

2-4 Nov • **Novacon 37**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. £38 reg. *Advance booking closes 31 Oct: £42 at the door*, or day rates £12.50 Fri, £22.50 Sat, £17.50 Sun. Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

9-11 Nov • **Armadacon 19**, Novotel, Plymouth. £30 reg; £27 concessions. Day rates £18 (£15) Sat, £12 (£10) Sun; £5 for evenings. Contact 20 Pinewood Close, Plympton, Devon, PL7 2DW.

9-11 Nov • **Tolkien's Birmingham**, Plough and Harrow Hotel, Edgbaston, Birmingham. Residential weekend. Cost inc food & 2 nights' stay: £150 sharing, £190 single. Contact GilraenBham at aol dot com.

28 Nov • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Physics Lecture Theatre, Imperial College, 1 Prince Consort Rd, London. 7pm. With Iain Banks.

22-24 Feb 08 • **Nostromo SF Festival**, Newcastle upon Tyne: *new dates but still no further info*. Contact ronan.dodds@gmail.com.

6-10 Aug 08 • **Denvention 3** (66th Worldcon), Denver, CO, USA. See www.denver2008.com/hugodesigncompetition.php for details of a competition to design the Hugo bases. Contact Denvention, Attn: Mary Kay Kare—Hugo Base Design, PO Box 1349, Denver, CO 80201, USA.

13-15 Mar 09 • **Eurocon 2009**, Fiuggi, Italy. *Dave Lally writes*: 'Fiuggi is south east of Rome—spa town in the hills—regular venue for Italcon and Deepcon.' Details and website to follow. Eurocon 2009 voting was contested: the losing bid was Finncon (Helsinki, Finland).

Rumblings • **Distraction**, the small con announced for February 2006 and then postponed to Spring 2008, has been cancelled. Refunds went to paid-up members. There are hopes for an 'irregular series' of one-day pub events under the same name—see www.distraction.org.uk.

Infinitely Improbable

Drop A House On Her From Orbit. It's The Only Way ... Todd McFarlane on his production plans for a new *Oz* film: 'My pitch was "How do we get people who went to *Lord of the Rings* to embrace this?" I want to create [an interpretation] that has a 2007 wow factor. You've still got Dorothy trapped in an odd place, but she's much closer to the Ripley from *Alien* than a helpless singing girl.' (*Variety*, 21 Aug) [IC]

Night's Black Agents. The current, widely reported meltdown at the PFD agency—with literary agents leaving in droves—is likely to affect many UK and UK-based sf people. For example, PFD man Robert Kirby's list includes James Barclay, Stephen Baxter, John Clute, Storm Constantine, Christopher Priest, Alastair Reynolds, Andy Secombe and Conrad Williams. Plans for a new agency are afoot. A total of 21 agents have already resigned, or are about to; PFD is literally falling apart.

British Fantasy Awards. Novel (Derleth award): Tim Lebbon, *Dusk*. Novella: Paul Finch, 'Kid' (*Choices*). Anthology: Gary Couzens, ed., *Extended Play: The Elastic Book of Music*. Collection: Neil Gaiman, *Fragile Things*. Short: Mark Chadbourn, 'Whisper Lane' (*BFS: A Celebration*). Artist: Vincent Chong. Small Press: Pete Crowther, PS Publishing. Non-fiction: Mark Morris, *Cinema Macabre*. Newcomer (Sydney J. Bounds award): Joe Hill. Special (Karl Edward Wagner award): Ellen Datlow.

Thog's Eyeballs Special. 'Langdon's eyes were transfixed on the

pyramids ...' (Dan Brown, *Angels & Demons*, 2000) [BD] • 'His eyes touched his body.' (Gardner F. Fox, *Escape Across the Cosmos*, 1964) [AR] • 'His eyes moved on, touched another animal and another.' (Ibid.) • '... his eyes picked it [a hover-sled] out of the red sand and examined it closely.' (Ibid.) • 'The green seethe of his gaze resembled weeping seas.' (Stephen R. Donaldson, *Fatal Revenant*, 2007) • '... the dangerous and fuming green of his eyes blazed vividly, as incandescent and unclean as small emerald suns tainted by despair.' (Ibid.)

R.I.P. *Jerry Bono* (1945-2007), key costumer for *Star Trek: TNG* and *DS9*, died on 31 August aged 65. [PDF] • *Anthony Carras* (1921-2007), US film editor whose genre work included several Roger Corman movies, died on 15 August; he was 86. [JE] • *Terry Dartnall*, Australian academic whose sf/fantasy stories are collected in *The Ladder at the Bottom of the World* (2006 ebook), died on 24 September. [ASFB] • *Emilio Ruiz del Rio* (1923-2007), Spanish set decorator, model maker, matte painter etc. whose genre films included *Dune* (1984) and *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) died on 14 September aged 84. [CH] • *Denny Martin Flinn* (1947-2007), US actor/author who wrote the 1995 *Trek* novel *The Fearful Summons* and (in collaboration) the screenplay of *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, died on 24 August; he was 59. [DKMC] • *Leslie Flood* (1921-2007), UK book dealer and literary agent who co-founded the International Fantasy Award, reviewed for *New Worlds*, and continued the E.J. Carnell agency after John Carnell's death in 1972, died in Spain on 1 August; he was 85. [PW] He helped shape the Gollancz sf list as its chief reader through the later 1960s; on his retirement in 1986 he received a special British Fantasy Award. • *Alice Ghostley* (1926-2007), US actress who was a regular in *Bewitched* and played Granny in *Addams Family Reunion* (1998), died on 21 September; she was 81. [CH] • *Charles B. Griffith* (1930-2007), US screenwriter—mostly for Roger Corman, whose autobiography calls Griffith his main writer—died on 28 September aged 77. His films include *Attack of the Crab Monsters*, *A Bucket of Blood*, *Not of This Earth*, and *The Little Shop of Horrors*, where he had several walk-on parts and voiced the carnivorous plant Audrey Jr. [CH] • *Max Hodge* (1916-2007), US TV writer who created the *Batman* character Mr Freeze, died on 17 August aged 91. [PDF] • *Madeleine L'Engle* (1918-2007), much-loved US author of the Newbery Medal winner *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962) and other admired fiction for children, died on 6 September. She was 88. I enjoyed several of her novels. • *Marcel Marceau* (1923-2007), celebrated French mime who appeared in *Barbarella* (1968) as Professor Ping, died on 22 September aged 84. • *Lois Maxwell* (1927-2007), US-born actress best known for playing Miss Moneypenny in 14 James Bond films (more appearances than either Connery or Moore), died on 29 September; she was 80. • *Hiroshi Osaka* (1963-2007), Japanese anime director and co-founder of the *Bones* studio, died on 24 September aged 44. Most of his films were sf. [PM] • *James Rigney Jr* (1948-2007), US writer who as Robert Jordan published the lengthy, best-selling 'Wheel of Time' fantasy sequence—beginning in 1990 with *The Eye of the World* and whose final volume is unfinished—died on 16 September aged 58. In 2006 he was diagnosed with the rare blood disease amyloidosis (see A225). There have been many tributes from the sf world and outside.

Science Masterclass. *Girl in the Golden Atom Dept.* 'Adam Hart-Davis is on the summit of La Palma in the Canary Islands, searching for planets around other suns. He discovers how it is possible to find planets too small to see.' (*Radio Times*, September) [AK]

Outraged Letters. *David Pringle* on the death of Aida Young (see A242): 'To me ... she is most notable as the woman who commissioned J.G. Ballard, probably circa 1967, to write the "treatment" for a movie which eventually appeared in 1970 as *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*. According to JGB, she had read *The Drowned World* and, since that contained lots of mud and ferns and whatnot, and even some mention of dinosaurs, she thought he would be just the man to pen a follow-up to Hammer's *One Million Years BC* (1966). The fact that *When Dinosaurs ...*, when it eventually appeared, gave screen credit to one "J. B. Ballard" kind of belies the notion that she was very familiar with JGB's work—but, what the hell, maybe it was someone else's error; Aida was only the Producer, after all.' • *Yvonne Rousseau* on the updating of Enid Blyton: 'Another note on the [Magic] *Faraway Tree* series: apparently the modern version no longer has a boy and girl named Dick and Fanny; they've become Rick and Frannie—while Dame Slap has become Dame Snap, and no longer engages in orgies of caning.'

Ye Olde Gossip Column. Roger Elwood, the late anthologist and Christian fantasy author, makes a surprise appearance in the biography *Anne McCaffrey: A Life With Dragons* by Robin Roberts. In 1972: 'When Virginia [Kidd] wrote to Anne that she and Roger Elwood, who had

been publishing Anne's work, had become lovers, Anne responded by congratulating her. Anne seemed to have been interested in Roger, too, for she wrote, "I shall miss the challenges of his letters, and bank down the fires of anticipation of his arrival [in Ireland].... But I am pleased about the Roger Lovinman arrangement. Jealous, too...." [GVG] To the relief of many who bogged at this, 'Elwood' is here a typo for 'Lovin'.

Rumour Mill. There is talk of a possible American TV 'expose' programme about Harlan Ellison, supposedly based on or inspired by Christopher Priest's *The Last Deadloss Visions* aka *The Book on the Edge of Forever*—although Chris Priest himself is in no way involved.

C.o.A. *Dan Goodman*, 3846 21st Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55407, USA. *Stewart Lloyd*, 10a Potter Ave, Salter Point, WA 6152, Australia. *Neil Rest*, 918 Main St, Evanston, IL 60202-4942, USA.

Blurbismo. *No, Not Literally:* '... a debut paranormal thriller from Melina Morel, *Devour*, in which a woman is torn between a werewolf and a vampire ...' (Diane Snyder, *Romantic Times*, October 2007) [MM]

Small Press. *The Third Alternative* has at last returned ('it should have been two years ago') as *Black Static*, covering the 'darker side' while cheerier sf/fantasy from TTA Press appears in *Interzone*. The first *BS* cover woos readers with a title in incredibly tiny print (8-point?) and a huge image of a housefly. 5 Martins Lane, Witcham, Ely, CB6 2LB. • *Orion's Child*, whose two print issues appeared in 1984, was revived this year as an e-zine: www.galadarn.com/OrionsChild.html.

Random Fandom. *Chris Bell* has been lying low after 'a fairly hefty stroke' in August, but assures us that she's fully recovered. • *Martin Hoare's* Eurocon was nearly ruined by a Mongolian barbecue: 'I swallowed a piece of meat which got stuck in my oesophagus. After a very unpleasant night it was still there leaving me in pain and unable to swallow anything. I gave up the City of Copenhagen reception (the only free beer so far) and got a taxi to the hospital. After many tests I was on a trolley outside the operating theatre, where they were going to surgically extract the meat, when they tried one more swallowing test which worked. I was really glad as I would have been in hospital for most of the convention.' Martin advises *Ansible* readers to chew every mouthful 32 times. • *Terry Jeeves* is the latest recipient of SCIFI's juried Rotsler Award for lifetime achievement in fanzine art. [T]

More Awards. *Xatafi-Cyberdark* (Spain), foreign fiction: Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*. • *Delta* (amateur film), *Contretemps*, a short Belgian fantasy directed by Jean Luc Baillet. [SG] • *Galaxy* (China) for most popular foreign author of the year: Robert Sawyer.

Court Circular. 'Like a hand emerging from a freshly dug grave, enmity has arisen in the once thought settled Harlan Ellison/Fantagraphics lawsuit ...' (*Publishers Weekly* blog, 7 Sep). It's possible to imagine that in some alternate universe, Harlan Ellison decided that although he strongly disliked the tone (vigorous or excessively snide, as you prefer) of Gary Groth's rebuttal of certain Ellison allegations, he was nevertheless required by the terms of the settlement he'd signed to display this on his website for 30 days—and, being a man of his word, he bit the bullet, did so, and emerged from this affair with the maximum possible dignity. But in our timeline, the great man balked....

Group Gropes. *New Irish SF Association:* White Horse pub, Burgh Quay, Dublin. Meetings from 7pm on the first Tuesday of each month. Described as the latest reincarnation of a long-running fan group.

Thog's Masterclass. *Ballistics Dept.* 'Range is about two miles but accuracy is not exceptional above seven thousand yards.' (Philip E. High, *Fugitive from Time*, 1978) • *Dept of Exotic Dressings.* 'Mai Valoris was waiting, her steaming lobster warming on a portable grille, in a translucent mist of red and gold fabric through which he caught glimpses of her skin tints.' (Gardner F. Fox, *Escape Across the Cosmos*, 1964) [AR] • *First Law Dept.* 'Robots were constructed with an inbuilt verboter unit, preventing them from either doing or not doing an action that might result in harm to a human.' (Ibid.) • *Dept of Neat Tricks.* 'He tried to shake his head, but only his heavy jowls moved.' (Ibid.) 'His voice lashed the hands of his men to fire the others.' (Ibid.) 'The girl was watching Carrick biting her full lower lip.' (Ibid.) 'I want them to hear I was set up from the horse's mouth.' (dialogue from *Heroes*, 2007) [RR] • *Hagiography Dept.* 'The camerlengo is only a priest here. He is not even canonized.' (Dan Brown, *Angels & Demons*, 2000) [BD]

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