

Ansible

MARCUVIAN HOVER DRUMS
TAKE YEARS TO MASTER...



Ansible 248 March 2008

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: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE or 'mam'ri instruction manual.

The Whirligig of Time

Brian Aldiss has reportedly had a heart pacemaker fitted.

Harry Harrison, sf author of note, is not the same person as Harry Harrison the cartoonist of Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*. But you can't expect the *Guardian* to work that out: they reprinted one of Harrison II's cartoons with a note that he's '... a comics artist, writer and editor specialising in science fiction. His book *Make Room! Make Room!* was adapted for the cult film *Soylent Green* (1973)' (16 Feb) [JGD/HP]

Michael Moorcock is to be honoured as this year's SFWA Grand Master. But, alas, he confirms rumours of further surgery: 'Yeah, I had a big toe off last week in Seaton Hospital, Austin. I've been going to hyperbarics for a couple of weeks and it seems to be doing you good. The tube this time is a communal chamber. The whole thing is like a set of a 1950s sf movie, including the helmet you wear. The other day a guy cracked up in the chamber, just like a bit part actor in a *Twilight Zone* episode. We couldn't do too much because we were in the middle of what the techs call a dive. I'm able to take a notebook in, so now I really know what it's like to work under pressure.' Later: 'The worst horror is that we have a teenager aboard and she asks to watch teeny TV—we're all otherwise readers or snoozers. And then she asks for the sound raised above the helmet noise—we all sound (and indeed look) like Cybermen in there. Or so many trainee Darths.' [6 March]

Andy Sawyer, famous sf librarian, received the SFRA's 2008 Thomas D. Clareson Award for distinguished services to sf studies.

J.R.R. Tolkien's estate is suing New Line Cinema over the *Lord of the Rings* films. Supposedly the estate should receive 7.5% of the estimated \$6 billion gross receipts but, beyond a modest upfront payment of \$62,500, it has had nothing. [JS] Many authors who've dealt with film companies remember similar feats of accounting magic.

Conkabell

6 Mar - 18 May • **Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art**, Barbican Art Gallery, Barbican Centre, Silk St, London, EC2Y 8DS: 'presents contemporary art works under the fictional guise of a museum collection conceived by and designed for extraterrestrials.' Tickets £8.

21-24 Mar • **Orbital** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Advance booking closed on 7 March: £65 at the door. £55 unwaged, £25 junior (12-17), £8 child (5-11), £1 infant. Day rates £20 Fri or Mon, £25 Sat or Sun (unwaged £5 less; junior £10 less). Contact 8 Windmill Close, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3AL.

26 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ (closest tube, Sloane Square). 6pm on; fans present in the bar from 5pm. With Paul Kincaid. I hope to be there.

29-30 Mar • **P-Con V**, Central Hotel, Exchequer St, Dublin. Rates held at Euro25/£15, Euro15 supporting; Euro30 at the door. Contact 253 Sundrive Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12, Ireland. Sterling cheques to 'Dave Lally #2 a/c', 64 Richbourne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

26 Apr • **Alt.Fiction**, Darwin Suite, Assembly Rooms, Derby. Many guests. £20 reg; £16 concessions. Box Office booking: 01332 255800.

3-5 May • **Fforde Ffiesta**, De Vere Hotel, Shaw Ridge, Swindon. Now £30 reg. Day tickets available. Booking: www.ffordeffiesta.com. Cheques to The Fforde Ffestival, 37A Oak Close, Bristol, BS34 6RB.

7 Jun • **BSFA/SF Foundation AGM Event**, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL. Guests TBA.

28-29 Jun • **ConRunner 2008** (conrunning), Britannia Hotel, Wolverhampton. £30 reg until after Easter; £35 to 21 Jun; £45 at door. Day £25. Contact 56 Jackmans Place, Letchworth G.C., Herts, SG6 1RH.

19-21 Sep • **Fantasycon 2008**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St, Nottingham. £50 reg (BFS members and students £40), rising to £60 (£50) on 1 April; £70 (£60) 1 July. Day rate £25 Fri or Sun, £40 Sat. Contact 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH.

17-19 Oct • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Day's Hotel, Sackville St, Manchester. £70/\$140 reg; £30/\$60 day. Under-17s £30; under-13s £20. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

25 Oct • **Teledoux!** (follow-up to Year of the Teledu), London. 10am-late. Venue TBC: 'probably Doggett's on Blackfriar's Bridge.'

25-26 Jul 09 • **Satellite 2**, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. GoH Iain M. Banks. £40 reg; £10 supp/junior (5-14), £1 infant (0-4). Contact address presumably TBA; meanwhile see www.satellite2.org.uk.

Rumblings • **Sectus 2009**, the Harry Potter con scheduled for June 2009 in North Wales, is cancelled—apparently owing to fannish backbiting over the Lexicon court case (see below). More, though not much, at www.sectus.org [7 February]. Refunds of the £290 fee were promised. Contact 114 Bassnage Rd, Halesowen, W. Midlands, B63 4HF.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. J.G. Ballard is rehabilitated, again: 'For many readers, Ballard is the author of the controversial novel *Crash* (1973), a surreal exploration of sexuality and the motor car. But before *Crash*, and before his wife's death, Ballard's novels had begun to shape a unique suburban dystopia. In its time, this vision was categorised as science fiction. Now we can see it more clearly as deeper, darker and more prophetic.' (Robert McCrum, *Observer* review, 10 February) [JM]

Nebula Shortlists for 2007 work (which sometimes means 2006) include: NOVEL Jack McDevitt, *Odyssey*; Joe Haldeman, *The Accidental Time Machine*; Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*; Nalo Hopkinson, *The New Moon's Arms*; Tobias Buckell, *Ragamuffin*. • SCRIPT *Children of Men*; *The Prestige*; *Pan's Labyrinth*; *V for Vendetta*; *Star Trek: New Voyages*, 'World Enough and Time'; *Doctor Who*, 'Blink'.

R.I.P. *John Alvin* (1948-2008), US artist who painted many iconic film posters, most famously the magic finger of *E.T.*, died on 6 February aged 59. Other work included *Blazing Saddles* (his debut), *Gremlins*, *The Phantom of the Paradise* and the *Star Wars* anniversary posters. [GW] • *Richard Baer* (1928-2008), US tv screenwriter who wrote scripts for *The Munsters* and *Bewitched*, died on 22 February aged 79. [SJD] • *William F. Buckley, Jr* (1925-2008), US newspaper columnist, conservative pundit and occasional novelist who wrote the children's fantasy *The Temptation of Wilfred Malachy* (1985), died on 27 February; he was 82. [ML] • *Ben Chapman* (1928-2008), US actor who was the original *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), died on 21 February; he was 79. • *Robert DoQui* (1934-2008), US actor best known as Sergeant Reed in three *Robocop* films (1987-93), died on 9 February aged 74. [SJD] • *Steve Gerber* (1947-2008), US comics writer who worked on several 1970s Marvel titles—notably *Man-Thing*—and created the satirical character Howard the Duck, died on 10 February. He was 60. His prolonged lawsuit against Marvel, who took Howard the Duck away from him, is a landmark case in comic creators' rights. [TCR] • *Werner Kurt Giesa* (1954-2008), German author who contributed to the Perry Rhodan sequence but is best known for writing the biweekly horror-serial magazine *Professor Zamorra* under the pseudonym Robert Lamont, died on or before 14 February; he was 53. [OM] • *E. Gary Gygax* (1938-2008), US game designer and fantasy novelist best known for his creation (with Dave Arneson) of the original, enormously influential *Dungeons & Dragons* role-playing game, died on 4 March aged 69. [LP] I liked the on-line suggestion that fans should club together to build him a vast tomb full of the deadliest imaginable traps. • *Janet Kagan* (1946-2008), US author whose 1988 novel *Hellspark* had a devoted following, and who won a Hugo for her novelette 'The Nutcracker Coup' (1992), died on 29 February. [GW] • *Robert Legault*, US copyeditor and former Managing Editor of Tor Books, died from an unexpected heart attack in late February. [RF] • *Stephen Marlowe* (1928-2008), US crime and supernatural novelist who published sf from 1950 to the early 1960s under his birth name Milton Lesser, died on 22 February; he was 79. [AIP] • *Barry Morse* (1918-2008), London-born actor—in Canada from 1951—whose many genre roles included Professor Victor Bergman in *Space: 1999*, died on 2 February aged 89. [MMW] • *Julian Rathbone* (1935-2008), UK novelist whose sf venture was the future-dystopian *Trajectories* (1998), died on 28 February. He was 73. [JC] • *Alain Robbe-Grillet* (1922-2008), French experimental author who wrote some

surreal fantasy, died on 18 February aged 87. [PDF] In sf, his 'anti-novel' approach famously influenced Brian Aldiss's *Report on Probability A*. ● **Leonard Rosenman** (1924-2008), Oscar-winning composer who scored many genre films (*Fantastic Voyage*, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* and sequel, *Star Trek IV, Robocop 2*, etc), died on 4 March; he was 83. [SFS] ● **Roy Scheider** (1932-2008), US actor best known for *Jaws* and also seen in *SeaQuest DSV* (Captain Nathan Bridger), *2010*, two *Dracula* films, etc., died on 10 February aged 75. His debut film was *The Curse of the Living Corpse* (1964). [GW] ● **Ken Slater** (1917-2008), old-time UK fan and book/magazine dealer who introduced so many of us to the joys of sf and fandom, died on 16 February. He was 90 in December 2007 and celebrated with a January party. Ken, a much-loved figure at conventions for many decades, is generally credited with restarting British fandom after World War II, setting an example to fanzine publishers with his *Operation Fantast* in 1947; he was a founding member (#6) of the BSFA in 1958. Ken and his late wife Joyce were fan guests of honour at the 1987 Brighton Worldcon. With help from his daughter Susie he remained an active book dealer into 2008. ● **Steve Whitaker** (1955-2008), UK comics artist who coloured the 1988 graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, died on 22 February. [JG]

Thog's Mathematics Masterclass. 'The most common problem is factorizing prime numbers.' (Ian McDonald, *Brasyl*, 2007) [LC] For an earlier instance of this proposition, see *Ansible* 153 (and 156).

Outraged Letters. *Guy Lawley*: 'I found out a few weeks ago that Gollancz were planning to re-issue their Fantasy Masterworks #17, titled *Elric*, in April 2008. The new ["Ultimate Fantasies"] edition was to be titled *Elric of Melniboné*. / As you probably know, *Elric* is a compendium of the original 1960s volumes *Stealer of Souls* and *Storm-bringer*. *Elric of Melniboné* on the other hand is the first of Moorcock's new 1970s *Elric* books, a prequel to *Stealer of Souls*. / I wrote to Jo Fletcher twice pointing out that *Elric of Melniboné* is the title of a different book altogether and suggesting that Gollancz revert to the original title. Ms Fletcher wrote back twice justifying their decision in various more or less daft ways. For example she pointed out that Gollancz have 3 different editions of *I Am Legend* in print at the moment, including a film tie-in. Needless to say, all three are still called *I Am Legend*. None of them has been arbitrarily given the title of a completely different Richard Matheson book. / Then Mike himself wrote to Gollancz. I had told him about the name change; Gollancz, surprisingly, hadn't consulted him at all. At this point they decided they would change the name back to *Elric*. / I hear that the title/cover change is now underway in the design department. I also hear that the word at Gollancz is that "some anal nerd Moorcock fan" started the ball rolling on this one. I'm thinking of having that put on a T-shirt.' [16 Feb]

Publishers and Sinners. *Dedalus Books*, UK fantasy publishers whose Arts Council funding was cut for no evident reason (see A247), will now be sponsored for two years by Informa plc/Routledge Books.

As Others See J.K. Rowling Readers. 'Probably best to come clean here and admit that I have not read the Harry Potter books. I bought them for my daughter and speed-read a paragraph or two, but I swiftly came to the conclusion that if I was ever going to get into this kind of thing, it would have happened as a teenager. And I'd have doubtless nabbed myself a nice Dungeons & Dragons-playing boyfriend into the bargain. I imagine he would have been called Clive and we would have been blissfully happy, attending Trekkie conventions together.' (Barbara Ellen, *The Observer*, 2 March) [PS]

Random Fandom. *Eastercon LiveJournal* exchange, regarding email notification of programme participants ... *Autopope*: 'I haven't heard hide nor hair from you.' *Committee Person*: 'Who are you?' *Autopope*: 'I'm Charlie Stross, one of your GoH's.' *CP*: 'Ah, it's you ...' [IM] ● **Susie Haynes**, Ken Slater's daughter, plans to continue his Fantast mail-order book business under the name of Fantast Three. [GVG] ● **Steve Stiles** writes: 'Noted Humanitarian and habitual Fan Art Hugo nominee Steve Stiles has broadened his cartooning horizons by designing a medal intended to promote World Peace for the Samaritan community in Israel.' (www.samaritanmedal.org)

Magazine Scene. *Speculations*, Kent Brewster's multiply Hugo-nominated sf magazine which became an on-line sf writers' resource at www.speculations.com, went into suspended animation on 2 March.

Court Circular. That J.K. Rowling/Warner Bros lawsuit against RDR Books, prospective publishers of a condensed print version of Steve Vander Ark's *Harry Potter Lexicon* website, chugs on remorselessly. Even my name was banded in the legal filings, with RDR citing my own HP exegesis as one of six works which didn't get sued despite 'especially striking similarities to the Lexicon in both format and content'. I can't

see the likeness myself, and neither can JKR/WB, whose counter-filing agrees that the Langford epic wasn't marketed as 'an encyclopedia or guide'. I also heard from RDR, asking how I got away with it—that is, whether JKR/WB had been horrid to me. In fact, once Gollancz had let the author's agents see early proofs, all was sweetness and light. ● Terry Pratchett, who has conspicuously failed to sue Andrew M. Butler for editing *An Unofficial Companion to the Novels of Terry Pratchett*, does not approve of this suit: 'In fantasy writing, accusations of copying are very difficult to make. [...] You know who invented wizards? Who invented Goblins? If we were going to start paying royalties for nicking one another's ideas, we'd have all given our life savings to the Tolkien family a long time ago.' (*Independent*, 6 March) [JY]

More Awards. *Bram Stoker* (horror) shortlists include: NOVEL Bruce Boston, *The Gardener's Tale*; Joe Hill, *Heart-Shaped Box*; Sarah Langan, *The Missing*; Dan Simmons, *The Terror*. FIRST NOVEL Joe Hill, *Heart-Shaped Box*; Michael Calvillo, *I Will Rise*; John R. Little, *The Memory Tree*; Erika Mailman, *The Witch's Trinity*; Mary SanGiovanni, *The Hollower*. ● *Gaylactic Spectrum* (gay/lesbian): 2007 awards continued (see A244 for novels). SHORT David Gerrold, 'In The Quake Zone' (*Down These Dark Spaceways*); Joy Parks, 'Instinct' (*The Future Is Queer*); Christopher Barzak, 'The Language of Moths' (*Realms of Fantasy*). OTHER Richard Labonte and Lawrence Schimel, ed., *The Future Is Queer* (anthology); *Torchwood* Season 1 (tv); *V for Vendetta* (film). ● *SF Hall of Fame*: Ian & Betty Ballantine, William Gibson, Richard Powers, Rod Serling. ● *SFWA Author Emeritus*: Ardath Mayhar. ● *Skylark* (NESFA, for general contributions to sf): Charles Stross.

C.o.A. *William Breiding*, PO Box 1005, Tucson, AZ 85702, USA.

We Are Everywhere. You know sf has conquered the world when a net pundit announces that 'Barack Obama is the Democratic Party's Kwisatz Haderach.' (SnarkyBastards.com) [LP] ● Roger Von Bergendorff, under investigation in the USA for possessing and perhaps manufacturing poisonous ricin, 'is believed to be a computer graphic artist whose work has appeared on several science fiction novels'. No one seems to know which novels. (*New York Times*, 3 March) [MF]

BSFA Story Competition. SF, up to 8000 words; open to UK/Irish residents only; deadline 5 September. Good news: £500 first prize, £50 to runners-up. Bad news: £10 entry fee. More at www.bsfa.co.uk.

The Dead Past. *70 Years Ago*. Televised sf had its 70th anniversary last month: the BBC's partial adaptation of Karel Capek's *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots* was broadcast on 11 February 1938. [AIP] ● *30 Years Ago*: 'The biggest event at Fantasycon [February 1978] was the non-appearance of Stephen King, the Guest of Honour. Illness was given as the official reason (actually his recent vasectomy hadn't healed properly, which is probably the most original excuse for a GoH not turning up in the history of conventions).' (*Checkpoint 87*, March 1978)

Group Gropes. *Hackney Libraries SF Reading Group*: now monthly, 3rd Tuesday. CLR James Library, 24-30 Dalston Rd, London, E8 3AZ. 6.30-7.30pm. More: ReadScienceFiction at Hackney dot gov dot uk.

Thog's Masterclass. *Eyeballs in the Sky*. 'Matilda was lovely, but she had bright burning eyes that you could feel creep down your face and into your belly.' (Arthur N. Scarm, *The Werewolf vs Vampire Woman*, 1972) [BA] ● *Werewolf Truism Dept*. 'Waldo was dead, but not very dead.' (*Ibid*) ● *Life Expectancy Dept*. "Please don't hurt me Mister Werewolf," she begged. "I'm only 21 and I have at least 10 good years ahead of me yet." (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Colourful Idiom*. 'Considering this horrid fact, he drained his vodka and soda and motioned to Mullarney [the barman] to shove up another sheep.' (Sam Merwin, Jr, *The Time Shifters*, 1971). [AR] ● *Time Travel Dept*. "Finding that my new love is my great-grandfather, however happenstantially, requires a certain amount of getting used to." (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Relativity*. 'It's the long accepted theory that a man who could travel faster than light could spin off this planet for a light year or two and return that much younger.' (*Ibid*) ● *True Romance Dept*. 'Sex, like a thousand-headed snake, wound its dark coils and convulsed in agony, tightening upon the conflagration [in the hero's soul] and concentrating its malevolence and potency, pulsing the hellish plasma to new levels of atrocious ferocity.' (Colin Kapp, *Transfinite Man aka The Dark Mind*, 1964) [AR]

Ansible 248 © Dave Langford, 2008. Thanks to Brian Ameringen, Leonard Charlap, John Clute, The Comics Reporter, Paul Di Filippo, John Dallman, Steven J. Dunn, Moshe Feder, Rose Fox, Joe Gordon, Martin Hoare (lift to Ken Slater's funeral), Joe McNally, Making Light, Ian Maule, Olaf Menke, Harry Payne, Lawrence Person, Andrew I. Porter, Adam Roberts, SF Site, Jim Steel, Peter Sullivan, Gordon Van Gelder, Gary Wilkinson, Martin Morse Wooster, Jessica Yates and our Hero Distributors: Vernon Brown (Brum Group News), Janice Murray (N America), SCIS/Prophecy, and Alan Stewart (Australia). 8 Mar 08