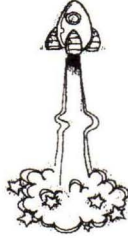


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From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. Web news.ansible.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Sue Mason**. Available for SAE or the Shining Trapezohedron.

Orbital. The 2008 UK Eastercon at Heathrow seemed highly successful, with guests of honour Neil Gaiman, Tanith Lee, China Miéville, Rog Peyton (fan) and Charles Stross all on excellent form. Total membership was estimated as 1,300-odd actually attending. The event returns to the same Heathrow hotel, the Radisson Edwardian, as Odyssey 2010 on 2-5 April 2010: guests are Alastair Reynolds, Liz Williams, Mike Carey, and Fran & John Dowd (fan). • **BSFA Awards** went to Ian McDonald for *Brasyl* (novel), Ken MacLeod for 'Lighting Out' in *disLocations* (short), Andy Bigwood for the *disLocations* cover 'Cracked World' (art), and Brian Aldiss for *Non-Stop* (1958 anniversary award). Also Peter Mabey received a life membership as the longest-established BSFA member still paying his annual sub. • **Doc Weir Award** for unsung heroes: Eddie Cochrane. • There were lots of good programme items that I deafly missed. Rare negative comments concerned access difficulties (narrow stairways that couldn't handle crowds) and erratic air conditioning (bake in the dealer's room or freeze in the real ale bar); the latter should be fixed by 2010. Alarmingly, my overflow hotel—the Renaissance—proved to be a rebranding of the old Heathrow Hotel where 30 years ago I and others ran the first airport Eastercon, Skycon '78.

The Sigma-Sequence

M. John Harrison won the Philip K. Dick Award for *Nova Swing*; Minister Faust's *From The Notebooks Of Dr. Brain* had a special citation.

Larry Niven, as any fan might expect, is in the Sigma sf writers' think tank which offers 'unconventional thinking' at US Homeland Security science/technology conferences. In March, *National Defense* magazine gave unenthusiastic—some say slanted—coverage to a recent Sigma panel's 'rambling, sometimes strident string of ideas [...] Niven said a good way to help hospitals stem financial losses is to spread rumors in Spanish within the Latino community that emergency rooms are killing patients in order to harvest their organs for transplants.' *Niven*: 'The problem [of hospitals going broke] is hugely exaggerated by illegal aliens who aren't going to pay for anything anyway.' *Jerry Pournelle*: 'Do you know how politically incorrect you are?' *Niven*: 'I know it may not be possible to use this solution, but it does work.' *ND* also claimed that, rather than answer audience questions, panellists 'used their time to pontificate on a variety of tangentially related topics, including their past roles advising the government, predictions in their stories that have come to pass, the demise of the paperback book market, and low-cost launch into space.' [NH] That sounds familiar.

Terry Pratchett's donation of a million dollars for Alzheimer's research ('Personally, I'd eat the arse out of a dead mole if it offered a fighting chance.') was very widely reported. The fevered brain of Pat Cadigan perceived that this could be equalled if a million fans each gave a pound to the same cause, a campaign very soon named 'Match It For Pratchett'—with its own website at www.matchitforpratchett.org. Over £2,500 was raised at Orbital, and donations to the Alzheimer's Research Trust in honour of Terry approached £41,000 by 25 March.

Conyschant

23 Apr • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ (closest tube, Sloane Square). 6pm on; fans present in the bar from 5pm. Ken Slater memorial, with Peter Weston.

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

30 Apr • **Clarke Award Ceremony**, London. By invitation only.

30 Apr - 4 May • **Sci-Fi London**, Apollo West End Cinema, Lower Regent St, London. £10/film evenings (10% off until 15 Apr) or £8/film day; 'buy 5 get 1 free'. All-nighters £25. Bookings 020 7451 9944.

3-5 May • **Fforde Fiesta**, 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.

28 Jun • **Tolkien Society Seminar**, Parkstead House, Whitelands College, Roehampton University, London. Papers invited, on 'Freedom, Fate, and Choice in Middle-earth': seminar at tolkiensociety dot org.

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

29-31 Aug • **Mecon 11/Unicon 22**, Queen's Univ, Belfast. GoH Charles Stross. £15/€22 reg; £10/€15 unwaged; £5 supp. Cheques to 'QUB Sci-Fi Society'. Contact 115 Malone Rd, Belfast, BT9 6SP.

5-7 Sep • **ZombieCon**, Bentley, Walsall. Now £45 reg until 31 Aug-ust; £50 at the door. Parent/guardian consent is required for under-18s. Contact 54 Bridge Rd, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2QP.

19-21 Sep • **Fantasycon 2008**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St, Nottingham. Now £60 reg (BFS members and students £50); £70 (£60) from 1 July. Contact 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH.

27 Sep - 4 Oct • **Milford Writers' Conference**, Trigonos Centre, Snowdonia. Published authors only. Enquiries c/o Homeway House, 40 Westhay Rd, Meare, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9TL.

11-12 Oct • **NewCon 4**, The Fishmarket, Bradshaw Street, Northampton, NN1 2HL. Now £40 reg (BSFA members £35). £10 supporting; £20 per day. Contact 16 Albany Road, Northampton, NN1 5LZ.

8 Nov • **Music from the 21st Century**: Barry Gray (*Thunderbirds* and other Gerry Anderson music) centenary concert, Royal Festival Hall, South Bank, London. Tickets: www.southbankcentre.co.uk.

7-9 Nov • **ArmadaCon XX**, Royal Fleet Club, 9-12 Morice Square, Devonport, Plymouth, PL1 4PQ (*new venue*). £35 reg; £30 concessions; £10 supp. Contact 20 Pinewood Close, Plympton, Devon, PL7 2DW.

14-16 Nov • **Novacon 38**, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. Now £38 reg; £42 at the door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others Research Us. 'I've always been a fan of H.G. Wells, the 19th/20th century British sci-fi author. You know, he's the guy who penned such classics as "The War of the Worlds," "The Time Machine" and my personal favorite, "1984."' (Greg Bucci, city editor, *Mohave Valley Daily News*, 13 March) [MRL]

Hugo Nominations. NOVEL Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*; Ian McDonald, *Brasyl*; Robert J. Sawyer, *Rollback*; John Scalzi, *The Last Colony*; Charles Stross, *Halting State*. • NOVELLA Nancy Kress, 'The Fountain of Age' (*Asimov's* 7/07); Kristine Kathryn Rusch, 'Recovering Apollo 8' (*Asimov's* 2/07); Lucius Shepard, 'Stars Seen Through Stone' (*F&SF* 7/07); Connie Willis, 'All Seated on the Ground' (*Asimov's* 12/07); Gene Wolfe, 'Memorare' (*F&SF* 4/07). • NOVELETTE Daniel Abraham, 'The Cambist and Lord Iron: a Fairytale of Economics' (*Logorrhea*); Ted Chiang, 'The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate' (*F&SF* 9/07); Greg Egan, 'Dark Integers' (*Asimov's* 10/07); Greg Egan 'Glory' (*The New Space Opera*); David Moles, 'Finisterra' (*F&SF* 12/07). • SHORT Stephen Baxter, 'Last Contact' (*The Solaris Book of New SF*); Elizabeth Bear, 'Tideline' (*Asimov's* 6/07); Ken MacLeod 'Who's Afraid of Wolf 359?' (*The New Space Opera*); Mike Resnick 'Distant Replay' (*Asimov's* 4/07); Michael Swanwick, 'A Small Room in Koboldtown' (*Asimov's* 4/07). • RELATED BOOK Diana Glycer, *The Company They Keep*: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien as Writers in Community; Barry Malzberg, *Breakfast in the Ruins*: SF in the Last Millennium; Luis Ortiz, *Emshwiller: Infinity x Two*; Jeff Prucher, *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of SF*; Shaun Tan, *The Arrival*. • DRAMATIC: LONG *Enchanted*; *The Golden Compass*; *Heroes* Season 1; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*; *Stardust*. • DRAMATIC: SHORT *Battlestar Galactica*, 'Razor'; *Doctor Who*, 'Blink'; *Doctor Who*, 'Human Nature'/'Family of Blood'; *Star Trek New Voyages*, 'World Enough and Time'; *Torchwood*, 'Captain Jack Harkness'. • EDITOR: SHORT Ellen Datlow, Stanley Schmidt, Jonathan Strahan, Gordon Van Gelder, Sheila Williams. • EDITOR: LONG Lou Anders, Ginjer Buchanan, David G. Hartwell, Beth Meacham, Patrick Nielsen Hayden. • ARTIST Bob Eggleton, Phil Foglio, John Harris, Stephan Martiniere, John Picacio, Shaun Tan. • SEMIPROZINE *Ansible*, *Helix*, *Interzone*, *Locus*, *The New York Review of SF*. • FANZINE *Argentus*, *Challenger*, *The Drink Tank*, *File 770*, *Plokta*. • FAN WRITER Chris Garcia, David Langford, Cheryl Morgan, John Scalzi, Steven H Silver. • FAN ARTIST Brad Foster,

Teddy Harvia, Sue Mason, Steve Stiles, Taral Wayne. ● CAMPBELL AWARD ('not a Hugo') Joe Abercrombie, Jon Armstrong, David Anthony Durham, David Louis Edelman, Mary Robinette Kowal, Scott Lynch.

Apocwyphal? *Elderly Lady at Waterstone's*: 'I'm looking for something for my grandson; he's 16 and not really into reading, though he likes Pratchett. What might you recommend?' *Waterstone's Person*: 'Has he tried Rankin?' *EL*: 'Yes, I suppose that would keep him quiet, but I was really wanting to get him a book.' (Bent's Notes, *The Bookseller*)

Arthur C. Clarke Award shortlist: Matthew de Abaitua, *The Red Men*; Stephen Baxter, *The H-Bomb Girl*; Sarah Hall, *The Carhullan Army*; Steven Hall, *The Raw Shark Texts*; Ken MacLeod, *The Execution Channel*; Richard Morgan, *Black Man*. ● As usual, there was some fuss about the jury's choices. Administrator Tom Hunter writes: 'In an SF Crowsnest interview I said: "In many ways the Award isn't so much about picking the 'best' book of the year (although we are still very good at that too) and is more about pushing at the edges of our genre." While this was part of a broader point about the many different ways in which the Award is viewed by the sf community and beyond, it's clear to me now that such comments can easily be read as suggesting there's an agenda behind the selection process, which is not and never has been the case. The Clarke Award is known for the high level of passionate debate it can inspire, but I apologise for any confusion and concern I have unintentionally provoked while promoting the Award this year.'

Publishers and Sinners. A Games Workshop mole reports sweeping cuts in their publishing arm after a poor Christmas for games sales. Marc Gascoigne, founder of the imprints Solaris (sf/fantasy) and Black Library (game ties), is now on 'gardening leave' with redundancy expected to follow. BL seems safe but the future of Solaris is less certain.

R.I.P. *Jane Blackstock* (1947-2001), late of Gollancz, died of cancer on 3 March—two days after her 61st birthday. Jo Fletcher writes: 'Jane, formerly Gollancz's formidable rights director, took on the role of publisher when Liz Knights died; she was at the helm when Gollancz was bought by Orion, but chose not to remain with the company.' ● *Ray Bradbury* (1950-2008), UK fan and long-time stalwart of the Birmingham SF Group, died on 17 March—about a week before his 58th birthday. He was a skilled conjuror and member of the Magic Circle whose occasional performances in fandom were much appreciated. [PW] ● *Sir Arthur C. Clarke* (1917-2008), UK-born sf and science author who for decades had been genuinely world-famous, died in Sri Lanka on 18 March: he was 90. Several examples of his sf, notably *The City and the Stars* from 1956, still evoke that old sense of wonder for the most jaded fans. It goes without saying that tributes appeared in countless major newspapers and on-line platforms; my own more or less formal piece will be in *SFX*. Despite colossal fame, Sir Arthur didn't forget his early roots as 'Ego' Clarke in 1940s/1950s British fandom. When *Ansible's* most infamous department quoted him in 2002, he replied with delight: 'Now I can die happy—finally made it to MASTERCLASS!' Overhead, without any fuss ... ● *Dr Christine Haycock*, widow of Sam Moskowitz and an active fan in her own right, died on 23 January aged 84. [AIP] ● *Raymond Leblanc* (1915-2008), Belgian comics publisher whose co-founded Editions du Lombard produced the famous *Tintin* magazine (1945-1988), died on 21 March aged 92. [JW] ● *Anthony Minghella* (1954-2008), UK scriptwriter and director who wrote and directed the ghost story *Truly, Madly, Deeply* (1990), died unexpectedly on 18 March. He was 54. [JJ] ● *Jody Scott* (1923-2007), UK-born sf author who wrote *Passing For Human* (1977) and *I, Vampire* (1984), died on 24 December last year; she was 84. ● *Dave Stevens* (1955-2008), US cartoonist and comics writer/artist who created *The Rocketeer* (filmed by Disney in 1991), died from leukaemia on 10 March. He was 52. [JG]

Blurbismo. 'What Jensen discovers will turn the world upside-down, literally.' (Jonathan Cape blurb for Mark Wernham, *Martin Martin's On the Other Side*, 2008) [BA]

As Others Mourn Us. Simon Drake (who he?) shares his feelings on the *Times* website: 'Arthur C. Clarke is dead. Farewell. Etc. So are we going to be hammered by publishers re-issuing all his well known titles and a few more that you should also get to know? Is it possible that a young writer, living in the "now" (ACC's "future" for when he was writing) could be coming up with fantastic visions that equal ACC and isn't it only fair for the young writer to be on the market as well? I see his death as a good thing. Get the great ACC resurgence over and done with and then SF Writers can get back to spreading great ideas into a rapidly changing world. I give credit to ACC, I even put his Three Laws of Robotics into the preface of my book *Love Data*, but it's time for a new generation to get into the public eye.' [20 March] Poor dear.

Magazine Scene. *Scheherezade*, after an 18-year run, published its

last issue at Eastercon: editor Liz Counihan wants more time for her own writing, although 'My sister and Art Editor, Deirdre, hopes that when she has time she'll be able to revive the magazine.' ● *Wendy Bradley* corrects A247: *Farthing* is on hold entirely for financial reasons (Wendy needs £3,000 to publish the next issue and pay authors) and no personal health problems were involved. Your editor grovels.

More Awards. *Prometheus* (libertarian) finalists for 2007 work: Tobias S. Buckell, *Ragamuffin*; Ken MacLeod, *The Execution Channel*; Larry Niven & Edward M. Lerner, *Fleet of Worlds*, Harry S. Turtledove, *The Gladiator*; Jo Walton, *Ha'Penny*.

Outraged Letters. *Darren Nash* of Orbit unwisely talked to *The Times* about Arthur C. Clarke: 'This was distilled into the comment piece you see in today's *Times* [20 March]. It's not how I would have chosen to write it—apart from the last two paragraphs, which are taken from my Orbit blog piece, they're not my words—but it seemed harmless enough, so I signed off on it. / Imagine my fury, this morning, when I opened the paper to see the headline that dominated the page where "my" commentary piece appeared. I would like to state, for the record, that had I had the tiniest inkling that there was an agenda to rehash the vile rumours spawned by that gutter-dwelling piece of bog paper, the *Sunday Mirror*, not only would I have refused to speak to anyone from *The Times*, but I'd have cordially invited them to go forth and multiply. I'm relieved, at least, that "my" words didn't appear in the same article—I can only imagine how livid Terry Pratchett must be feeling right now—but I'm no less angry. I don't want my name on the same continent as an article that revisits that pernicious—and obviously politically motivated—smear campaign, let alone on the same page. [...] Arthur C. Clarke was one of my heroes. I grew up reading his novels, short stories and non-fiction and it is that work that is directly responsible for me being where I am today—and in many ways, who I am today. You only need to read my piece on the Orbit website to see the high regard in which I held Sir Arthur. / I want to dissociate myself completely from that article in *The Times*, now joining the black list of newspapers I will never buy again. I shouldn't have expected any better from a Newscorp publication, but somehow I did. More fool me.' (Jack Malvern's *Times* article 'Arthur C. Clarke's honour delayed by sex claims' devoted its first seven paragraphs to the never-substantiated 1998 allegations, before finding space for lesser matters like 2001, satellites and the tributes from Terry Pratchett and Patrick Moore.)

Random Fandom. *Bruce Gillespie* is madly pleased to have won this year's Peter McNamara Award for life achievement in Australian sf. ● *Marcia Illingworth* writes: 'Faldo, Tony (blindpew) Smith's first Guide Dog, passed away on 3/03 at 7:20PM, with my arms around him and Tim by our sides.' ● *Rob Jackson* hauled a load of prozines to Eastercon for the unknown fan who won them at the 2007 LFF auction, but they still weren't claimed. Unknown fan, please note that Rob will pay shipping costs: contact jacksonshambrook at tiscali co uk. ● *Jonathan Palfrey* on the vast A248 obituary list: 'It's a pity you feel obliged to kill so many people every time, but I suppose The Duty has to be done. Have you ever thought of delegating the job to your granddaughter?'

C.o.A. *Dave Locke*, PO Box 485, Pownal, VT 05261, USA. *Pat & Roger Sims*, 12 Sweetgum Dr, Unit A, Orange City, FL 32763-9023, USA.

Guesting. *Brian Aldiss*: 'Just back from a rousing time in Florida, where I attended the 29th year of the IAFA.... Also, I was in Tampa at the South Florida University, where a learned choir of guys sang my praises. Everyone enjoyed that—particularly me. Now I'm home and full of energy. I'm thinking of having a second pace-maker fitted.' ● *Simon R. Green* had to drop out as World Horror Convention MC owing to the agony of (a) trapped nerves and (b) side effects of medication for (a).

A248 Update. 'Roger Von Bergendorff is elusive as an sf artist, but ISFDB and *Locus* list covers for several Gregory Benford and other sf titles 1986-1993, as by Roger Bergendorff or Bergendorf. [WL/JS]

Thog's Masterclass. *Eyeballs in the Sky*. 'Her eyes seemed to come back from somewhere else ...' (Timothy Zahn, *The Backlash Mission*, 1986) [IC] ● *Teleology Dept.* 'In the dawn of time, Man, the monad, was encased in stone. He had to struggle through into vegetable life, then, by acquiring locomotion from plant to animal, from medusa to holothurisan; thence to work his way out of the primeval waters, develop wings and limbs—' (Clive Trent [Victor Rousseau], 'Human Pyramid', *Spicy-Adventure Stories*, April 1941) [DL]

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