

Ansible



Ansible 303 October 2012

From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web news.ansible.co.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Brad W. Foster. Available for SAE or Antagonistic Deconstraining scores.

Tropical Storm Kirk

Desperate Dan, Korkey the Cat and Beryl the Peril of *The Dandy* have reached their sell-by dates, according to the publishers D.C. Thomson, who plan to celebrate the comic's 75th anniversary on 4 December with with a special issue which includes the first *Dandy* and will be the last.

Junot Diaz, Dominican-born author who used sf narrative devices in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), is to receive a MacArthur Foundation 'genius grant' of \$100,000 a year for five years. [L]

Ralph Macchio, actor, fields a question about his 1999 sf role: 'Oh my God. This is like *This Is Your Life*. [Laughs.] You're standing there, you got the big book open. Yeah, it's *The Outer Limits*. Everybody does one. You go up to Vancouver, you shoot an *Outer Limits*. That's the law. I'm not a sci-fi guy—I know people who are nuts about the genre, but I don't really get it, it's not my thing—but it wasn't really sci-fi or gross horror or anything. It was more scientific.' (AVclub.com) [CL]

J.R.R. Tolkien, man of many commemorative plaques—there were already eight in places where he lived, stayed or lived nearby—had another unveiled on 1 October at 2 Darnley Road, West Park, Leeds, where the family lived 1924-1926. (Tolkien Society, 28 September)

John Wyndham is remembered by UK magazine hacks. 'According to new research from the University of Western Australia, maize plants may be communicating with each other by making clicking noises with their roots, an idea that John Wyndham had in his masterpiece *The Day after the Triffids*.' (Giles Wood, *The Oldie*, October) 'It may well be that Britain's homosexuals have all gone quite mad recently, the sort of sinister and mysterious development that might occur in a John Wyndham novel.' (Rod Liddle, *The Spectator*, 13 September) [AMW]

Consacre

Until 4 Oct • **Dickensian Hauntings**, The Basement, Shoreditch Town Hall, 380 Old St, London, EC1V 9LT. 11am-7pm (11am-10pm on 4 October). Free. See www.illuminevent.co.uk/2012/2012-main.htm. With ghost stories, magic lantern, Jack the Ripper talk 6-10pm Thur.

4-7 Oct • **Grimmfest 2012** (horror/cult film festival), Manchester. Weekend pass now £60 + £2 booking. Gory details at grimmfest.com.

8 Oct • **Discovering Alternate Genres**, Custard Factory, Gibb St, Birmingham, B9 4AA. 7-8:30pm. Peter F. Hamilton, Stan Nicholls, others. £8, £5 concessions. See www.birminghambookfestival.org.

10 Oct • **BSEA Special Meeting**, The Argyle pub, Leather Lane, London. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Chinese sf author Han Song. Free.

13-14 Oct • **Octocon**, Camden Court Hotel, Camden St, Dublin. €20 reg; students/under-18s/unwaged €20; supp €10; accompanied under-12s free. Contact: Apt 9, Parliament Bldg, 38-40 Parliament St, Dublin 22, Ireland; info at octocon dot com.

19-21 Oct • **Star Trek London**, ExCeL Centre, London. Tickets from £49 (day £29, 2-day £39) to silly prices (VIP pass £2999; control yourselves, these have sold out). See www.startreklondon.com.

20 Oct • **BristolCon**, Ramada Hotel, Bristol. Multiple guests of honour. £20 to 19 October when advance booking closes; £25 at the door. Cheques to 18 High Leaze Road, Patchway, Bristol BS34 5AF.

24 Oct • **BSEA Open Meeting**, The Argyle pub, Leather Lane, London. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Nina Allan. Free; all welcome.

25-28 Oct • **Bram Stoker International Film Festival**, Spa Pavilion, Whitley. £100 plus various optional extras, or £6 per film. See www.bramstokerfilmfestival.com. Enquiries 05602 722983.

26-28 Oct • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Manchester Conference Centre, Sackville St. £70 reg. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN; Gil at manchesterfantasticfilms dot co dot uk.

28 Oct • **Paperback & Pulp Book Fair**, Park Plaza Hotel, 239 Vauxhall Bridge Rd, London, SW1V 1EQ. 10am-3pm. £3.00 at the door only. Enquiries 01202 849212 or wardzinski@hotmail dot com.

9-11 Nov • **Novacon 42**, Park Inn, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. GoH Jaine Fenn. £40 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

11-18 Nov • **Thought Bubble** (comics), Leeds, including 17-18

November comics convention. See www.thoughtbubblefestival.com.

16-18 Nov • **Armadacon 24**, Future Inns, Plymouth. Date change from 9-11 Nov. £30 (£25 concessions) to 18 Wadhams Rd, Liskeard, Cornwall, PL14 3BD. £35 (£30) at the door.

16-18 Nov • **Winter Horrors** (workshop), Dove Valley Centre, Derbyshire. £150 inclusive. Contact alexdavisevents@hotmail.co.uk.

CANCELLED: 23-25 Nov • **WexWorlds** (sf festival), Wexford, Ireland. 'Due to unforeseen circumstances' is all it says at www.wexworlds.net.

29 Nov - 1 Dec • **The Dolls of New Albion** ('steampunk opera'), Oval House, 52-54 Kennington Oval, London, SE11 5SW. 8pm. Tickets £5. See www.ovalhouse.com/whatson/booktickets/DollsOfNewAlbion.

29 Aug - 2 Sep 2013 • **LoneStarCon 3** (71st Worldcon), San Antonio, Texas. \$180 reg; YA/military \$110; child \$75; family \$480; \$60 supp; next price hike 31 December. See www.LoneStarCon3.org.

31 Oct - 3 Nov 2013 • **World Fantasy Convention**, Hilton Brighton Metropole, Brighton. Now £125 reg; £50 supp; no at-door or day memberships. Cheques to 130 Park View, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6JU; PayPal at www.wfc2013.org. Hotel booking is now open.

Rumblings, London 'First Thursday' pub meetings began as weekly teashop sessions on Thursday 9 December 1937. Celebrate the 75th anniversary at the 6 December 2012 Melton Mowbray gathering! [JB] • **Loncon 3** (2014 Worldcon, London) dates won't rise until early 2013. Paid-up 'Friends' can upgrade to attending membership for just £25.

Infinitely Improbable

As **Others See Us**, *The Guardian* reported Stuart MacBride's plaint that while crime in any past setting passes as historical crime fiction, 'Set the same crime 20 years into the future and suddenly it's SCIENCE FICTION!!! RUN AWAY!!! And a lot of readers won't even try it. There's something about a book set in the future that makes them think of aliens, space ships, and pasty teenagers living in their parents' basements... So I call Halfhead a near-future thriller to try and encourage people to give it a go. And that's an approach that didn't go down too well with some sections of the Sci-Fi establishment.' Perhaps that means the pasty, basement-dwelling teenagers among us. Next came a more robust quote from journalist David Quantick: 'SF is also geeky because it's like a geek—it can't do relationships, its sex is all fantasy and it can build a warp engine but it can't make a cake. Crime, even the loner PI stuff, is about people who drink too much, have relationships, get lonely and—most importantly—feel sad when their loved ones die. Mark Billingham's very good on the human effects of murder. Harry Harrison isn't. I expect.' (*Guardian*, 19 July) [NLW]

British Fantasy Awards. HORROR NOVEL (Derleth Award) Adam Nevill, *The Ritual*. FANTASY NOVEL (Holdstock Award) Jo Walton, *Among Others*. NOVELLA Lavie Tidhar, *Gorel and the Pot Belled God*. SHORT Angela Slatter, 'The Coffin-Maker's Daughter' (*A Book of Horrors*). ANTHOLOGY *The Weird* ed. Ann & Jeff VanderMeer. COLLECTION Robert Shearman, *Everyone's Just So*. SPECIAL SCREENPLAY Woody Allen, *Midnight in Paris*. MAGAZINE *Black Static*. GRAPHIC NOVEL Joe Hill & Gabriel Rodriguez, *Locke and Key*. SMALL PRESS CHOMU Press. ARTIST Daniele Serra. NONFICTION Grant Morrison, *Supergods*. NEWCOMER (Sydney J. Bounds Award) Kameron Hurley. SPECIAL (Karl Edward Wagner Award) Nicky & Peter Crowther of PS Publishing. [ED]

R. I. P. Waldo T. Boyd (1918-2012), US science/technical author who published one sf story in *If* ('The Salesman', March 1953), died on 15 September. [SFS] • Michael Clarke Duncan (1957-2012), US actor best remembered for his Oscar-nominated performance in *The Green Mile* (1999) died on 3 September aged 54. Other genre credits include *Armageddon* (1998), *Planet of the Apes* (2001 remake), *Daredevil* (2003), *The Island* (2005) and *Green Lantern* (2011). [GD/SG] • Shirley Climo (1928-2012), US folklorist and author of 24 books of retold fables and fairytales from many countries, died on 23 August; she was 83. [PDF] • Michael Embden (1948-2012), UK landscape artist who in the 1970s and 1980s painted over 100 book covers, mostly for sf/fantasy titles (Poul Anderson, Gordon R. Dickson, Roger Zelazny et al),

died on 21 August; he was 63. [RC] • **Shulamith Firestone** (1945-2012), Canadian-born 'cyberfeminist' whose advocacy of new reproductive technologies such as artificial wombs in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) was influential in sf, died on 28 August aged 67 (ioer). [DKMK] • **Herbert Lom** (1917-2012), Prague-born actor whose career ran from 1937 to 2004 and who is best known for the Ealing comedy *The Ladykillers* (1955), died on 27 September aged 95. Genre credits include *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1967), *Doppelgänger* (1967), *Count Dracula* (1970), *Dorian Gray* (1970), *Asylum* (1972), *Dark Places* (1973), —*And Now the Screaming Starts* (1973), *Whoops Apocalypse* (1988) and *Masque of the Red Death* (1989). [SG] • **Michael O'Hare** (1952-2012), US actor most famed for his tv role as Commander Sinclair in *Babylon 5*, died on 28 September; he was 50. [PDF] Further genre credits include the horror film *C.H.U.D.* (1984). • **Wendy Weil** (1940-2012), US literary agent whose authors included Karen Joy Fowler, Molly Gloss, Carol Emshwiller and James Morrow, died on 27 September. [SFS] • Late notice: **Martin Green** (1927-2010), whose one sf novel was *The Earth Again Redeemed* (1977), died on 14 April 2010 aged 82. [DB]

The Weakest Link. Interlocutor: 'Which character in AA Milne's Winnie the Pooh books is named after his son?' Contestant: 'Pooh.' (ITV1, *The Chase*; via *Private Eye*)

More Awards. One we missed earlier: Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls*, illustrated by Jim Kay, scored a first by winning both the Carnegie Medal for its story and the Kate Greenaway Medal for the illustrations. • **Creative Emmy Awards** for arts/crafts/technical achievement: six wins for the tv *Game of Thrones*, including costumes and visual effects. (BBC)

As Others See Us II. Malcolm Tucker (who?) attempts to describe *Star Wars* in a few ill-chosen words: 'The one about the fucking space hairdresser and the cowboy. He's got a tinfoil pal and a pedal bin. His father's a robot and he's fucking killed his sister. Lego. They're all made of fucking lego.' (BBC2, *The Thick of It*, 15 September) [NE]

Outraged Letters. **Dave Lally:** 'Good to see you at Harry Harrison's funeral. As an addendum to that, his daughter (Moira) has just posted that in the last few days—and at his request—his ashes were taken to Dalkey Harbour (just south of Dublin—on the east coast) and there scattered. (He held Irish Nationality—just like me!)' • **Dave Row** has a Chicon footnote: 'As you were probably distracted by the technology-interrupted Hugo ceremony *Ino, I'd gone to bed long before—Ed.J*, you may be amused that in the panel discussion "Bad writing—no cookies!" (with yes, real cookies!) consisting of excerpts of truly awful fiction snippets read to the audience (fortunately an early morning item so we were protected from the probably-inevitable brain death by being asleep), the chosen pieces were dominated by excerpts from Thogs Masterclass. The only piece of mainstream (?) fiction to come close to Thog for sheer awfulness was, interestingly, *Fifty Shades of Grey*....'

We Are Everywhere. From the *Financial Times* profile of billionaire Peter Thiel: 'Mr Thiel often references the sci-fi promise and optimism of the 1950s and 1960s. His favourite book is *Lord of the Rings*. He pays homage to the fantasy series in the Tolkienesque names of his various investment vehicles, such as Mithril Capital Management, named for the lighter-than-air mythical metal; Lembas, a secret-formula bread made by elves, and Rivendell One, a haven city for the forces of good.' (25 August) Does he get menacing letters from the Saul Zaentz Company ordering him to stop this misuse of Tolkien's terms? [NMW]

Random Fandom. *The Nova Awards* for fanzine activity are open for voting (closing on 31 October, paper ballots to be available at Novacon): www.novacon.org.uk/nova_wards.php. Sources hint that if low voter turnout persists when voting is free online and so are most eligible fanzines, this could be the end of the Novas. All the universe—or nothingness? Which shall it be, Passworthy? *Which shall it be?* • **Ed Kramer**, co-founder of the huge US Dragon*Con, and his twelve-years-delayed trial on child molestation charges were covered in *Atlanta Magazine* for 1 September. Petrá Mitchell writes: 'A lot of the material has been previously reported, but this story gets into the financial details. It makes it clear that while Dragon*Con claims Ed Kramer has nothing to do with it these days, he's still getting about \$3 per attendee, and that it adds up to a nice living which directly provided the time and resources for him to travel and [allegedly] collect at least one new victim (and possibly more) until his latest arrest, and will now be financing another round of attempts to obstruct justice. / Hopefully this will convince a few more people to walk away from Omelas.'

Magazine Scene. Jonathan Strahan's *Eclipse* genre anthology series (four volumes to date) is switching to online publication as a free monthly magazine, *Eclipse Online* at Nightshadebooks.com. [PDF]

The Dead Past. 40 Years Ago: before the Internet, conspiracy

theorists had to write to sf newsmagazines. 'A freind (sic) from Stockport warns me that a new "secret service of terrifying magnitude" has got my name down as a potential collaborator with alien invaders, who are apparently expected shortly. I'm not alone, however, since "everyone who has ever contributed to your zine or any other in the field of amateur (sic) publishing" is also on the list. Ah well, at least someone is reading *Checkpoint* ...' (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint* 25, October 1972) • **30 Years Ago**, a programme of daft games at Silicon 6 provided the tiny seed that grew into Mexican Accent Fandom and Mexican (not to mention a then undreamed-of literary agency): "'Silicon vs Dostoevsky' was the silliest game of all—since it won John Jarrold the Sili Award, it must have been. It involved miming the missing part of a record of Basil Rathbone in *The Brothers Karamazov*, with points given for accent, style, passion and overall—Linda Pickersgill carried off the latter as the only contestant wearing overalls, but John J.'s impassioned gesticulations in a welter of accents (Mexican, the Fonzy, Cagney ...) secured his victory.' (Judith Hanna, *Anisble* 29, October 1982)

James White Award. This competition for the best unpublished story by a non-professional author is now open for entries, with a 16 December deadline. Entry is free; £300 first prize plus publication in *Interzone*; £100 second prize. Details at www.jameswhiteaward.com.

C.o.a. Dan Goodman, 2740 Minnehaha Ave., Ste. 130, #64, Minneapolis, MN 55406, USA. Steve Stiles writes: 'My Comcast Mail has bombed for unknown reasons, so I've gone over to Gmail.'

Editorial. This issue was supposed to appear on 1 October, but I couldn't manage that deadline; the *Encyclopedia of SF* continues to eat my life, and this has come to seem normal. Public service announcement: the *ESF* site (and likewise the linked Gollancz SF Gateway) will apparently be down for much of Sunday 7 October while the Hachette IT people do things of a cruel and unusual nature to the web servers. Will our Google rankings take another huge hit? Oh, the suspense.

Fanfundery. **Rob Hansen** is being honoured by the Corflu Fifty, a group of fans who club together to pay some worthy person's expenses to the next Corflu convention (Portland OR, May 2013). Ask UK administrator Rob Jackson for details of goodies available through a CSO online fundraising auction: [jacksonshambrook at uwclub dot net](http://jacksonshambrook.at.uwclub dot net). • **2014 SFLinkcons:** these mini-events taking place around the London Worldcon and Dublin Eurocon will donate at least 20% of any surplus to UK fan funds, ditto to the SF Foundation, and 10% to the BSFA. [DL]

Rarities Nicked. Various sf/fantasy titles including first editions of Asimov, Burroughs (*Tarzan of the Apes*), Dick and Lovecraft are listed as stolen in August 2012 from the Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia. See <http://security.aba.org/security/?p=473>. [AIF]

Thog's Flatterclass. *Dept of Night and Day.* 'The man was whistling a Sinatra song, as he had been doing for all of the thirty years Per had known him.' (Brian Freeman, *Immoral*, 2005) [PB] • *Thumbs Down Dept.* 'He reached for her panties and pushed his thumbs inside. She rose up from the beach, and he slid them off and tossed them away.' (*ibid*) • *Dept of Minimalism.* 'McKee caught Crawford's eye and shrugged with one eyebrow.' (Tim Powers, *Hide Me Among the Graves*, 2012) [PB] • *Sacred Dept.* 'She met Prabhar's gaze. This modern day Brahman wouldn't cow her.' (Sarah K. Castle, 'The Information in a Dream', *Analog*, November 2012) [EM] • *Metaphor Dept.* 'The whisper I'd heard upon reading about the Tracadie lazzaretto geysered into my forebrain.' (Kathy Reichs, *Bones to Ashes*, 2007) • *Eyeballs in the Sky.* "'Spent all night studyin', never worked so hard in my life," he'd gush, his eyes running around her face, desperate for praise like spaniels after retrieving a shot duck.' (Marisha Pessl, *Special Topics in Calamity Physics*, 2006) [PB] • 'Her eyes were bumper-stickered to my head.' (*ibid*) • 'Shirley's eyes were fixed respectfully on her knees.' (J.K. Rowling, *The Casual Vacancy*, 2012) [CMJ] • *Dept of Heroines Who Have Seen Better Days.* 'She struggled to shove the massive oak slab into the corner. Warped by fire, age and rain, she didn't need to prop it open.' (Tina L. Jens, *The Blues Ain't Nothin'*, 2002) [PB] • *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'Her supple arms drooped to the floor and encircled the lamp overhead. Then her long legs joined in.' (Pavel Kohout, *The Widow Killer*, 1995; trans Neil Bermeil 1998) [PB] • 'He saw that Kate was watching him with an expression that was half puzzled, half irritated. He asked her if he could borrow it.' (Paul Bryers, *The Prayer of the Bone*, 1998) [PB]

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