

Ansible



Ansible 271 February 2010

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, largesse, or Synapse Beta sub Sixteen.

The 31st of February

Roger Dean had a 'powerful reaction' and 'mixed feelings' on seeing *Avatar*. Those floating island/mountains are so reminiscent of his iconic Yes album art that he's been deluged with congratulations for his assumed contribution. The film had the look and feel of my work for sure. Not all of it but a significant percentage of the film looked like my work. It was like they had access to my DNA. However, 'I have been told by my lawyers not to talk to anyone ...' (*Classic Rock, March*) [MPJ]

Philip K Dick's family may or may not be suing the *Oxford English Dictionary* for its wicked claim that the word 'nexus' appeared in English several centuries before *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), and in Latin a bit earlier than that. But they're making threatening noises at Google for calling its new phone the Nexus One, with the claim that this is a 'trademark violation' and a blatant steal from the book's Nexus 6 androids, while the presence of Google's two-year-old Android operating system *Just Proves It*. (*Independent*, 7 January) [MPJ]

Christopher Hitchens limbers up to admire J.G. Ballard: 'As one who has always disliked and distrusted so-called science fiction (the votaries of this cult disagreeing pointlessly about whether to refer to it as "SF" or "sci-fi"), I was prepared to be unimpressed [...] The natural universe is far too complex and frightening and impressive on its own to require the puerile add-ons of space aliens and super-weapons: the interplanetary genre made even C.S. Lewis write more falsely than he normally did.' (*The Atlantic*, January/February) [AR]

William Shatner reviewed genre-linked male perfumes, opining that Star Trek Tiberius Cologne 'smells vaguely like Captain Kirk after a hard day's work', while Spongebob Squarepants Cologne for Men 'had a harsh overtone of fried eggs and olive oil' and Spider-Man Cologne for Men by Marvel is infused with spider-strength: 'If you work out a lot and don't wash your clothes for about two weeks, this scent might cover that scent. Because it's really powerful.' (*Maxim*, January) [MMW]

Brian Stableford measures himself once more against the masters of sf fecundity: 'Although I could not keep up the hectic publication schedule I attained in March, I managed to publish 30 volumes in 2009 (6 novels, 9 short story collections, 1 non-fiction book, 5 essay collections and 9 volumes of translation), which compares favourably with Lionel Fanthorpe's 29 volumes in 1963 and John Russell Fearn's 32 in 1953. [...] Books were shorter in the old days, so RLF and JRF's titles won't have added up to more than 1.5 million words, whereas my 30 totalled 3 million (although only 2.38 million of those were appearing for the first time). Because mine involved some backlogging-clearing, though, a fairer comparison would be with the number of words I actually produced in 2009 (1.86 million). Ten volumes are currently in hand for 2010 publication and 6 more will be delivered before the end of January, so I hope the year's total will be well in excess of 20. I have, of course, no excuse except for obsessive compulsive disorder and nothing else to do.' (4 January)

Charles Stross has a cunning Hugo-nomination plan for his blog: '... as "Charlie's Diary" largely concerns SF and science fictional pre-occupations, gets roughly 11,000 unique visitors per day [...] and comprises a good chunk of my wife's occupation (for which she is paid), I'm declaring it to be a semiprofession.' After all, "'Locus" always wins, unless it's "Ansible's" turn.' (4 Jan) Actually, *Weird Tales* won in 2009.

Conylene

5-6 Feb • **SFX Weekender**, Pontin's Holiday Park, Camber Sands, East Sussex. Charged by accommodation; shared chalets only; no single rooms. See www.sfxweekender.com for details. Contact 08700 110034.

5-7 Feb • **Van der Filk** (filk), Ramada Hotel, Grantham, NG31 7XT. £32/\$46/€36 reg; £16/\$23/€18 child/unwaged; under-6s £1/\$1/€1. At the door: £35, £17 and £1. Day: £10 Fri, £20 Sat, £15 Sun. Contact 1379 Lincoln Rd, Werrington, Peterborough, PE4 6LT.

20 Feb • **Ghouls on Film** (women in horror), Mixing Bowl, Custard Factory, Birmingham. £6 in advance or at door—space limited, so

please first contact nia dot neb at gmail dot com.

24 Feb • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Tce, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. With David Edgerton.

27 Feb • **Picocon 27**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7/8pm. £10 (probably) at door only; £8 concessions; £5 ICSF members. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

5-7 Mar • **Phoenix Con (P-Con)** 7, Central Hotel, Exchequer St, Dublin. €30 reg, students €15, supp €10; to rise at door. Cheques to Peter McClean. Contact c/o 6 Weston Ave, Lucan, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

19-21 Mar • **Corfu Cobalt**, Winchester Hotel, Winchester. Now £50/\$75 reg, £10/\$15 supp. Advance booking closes 13 March. Day rates £10 Fri, £20 Sat, £20 Sun (not including brunch banquet). Sterling to 45 Kimberley Gardens, London, N4 1LD. USS: Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Tce, Oakland, CA 94611-1948, USA.

25-28 Mar • **World Horror Convention**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. Now £100 reg, *No at-the-door or day memberships*. Contact PO Box 64317, London, NW6 9LL.

2 May • **Vortex II** (Doctor Who), Europa Hotel, Belfast. Tickets £10; £50 for group of 6. Online (+£2 fee): www.utevents.co.uk. Contact UT Events, 23 Tudor Park, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, BT38 9TP.

12 Jun • **Alt.Fiction**, QUAD art centre, Derby—returning after the 2009 postponement. Guests TBA. £25 reg. Box office 01332 290 606.

27-30 Aug • **Diseworld Convention**. £55 reg, £36 concessions, rising on 1 March to £60 and £39. £20 supp throughout. Contact PO Box 4101, Shepton Mallett, Somerset, BA4 9AJ; info at dwecon dot org.

10-12 Sep • **The Asylum** (steampunk), Lincoln. £40 reg (day rate £20), under-16s £5; under-12s free. Online booking only, it seems, at steampunk.synthesite.com. Contact majorintinker at aol dot com.

17-19 Sep • **Fantasycon**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St, Nottingham. Guests TBA. Now £55 reg, rising to £65 on 1 April (BFS members £10 less); £45 Sat only. Online booking only: www.fantasycon.org.uk. Contact fan at britishfantasysociety dot org.

16-17 Oct • **Octocon 2010**, Camden Court Hotel, Dublin. GoH George R.R. Martin. €40 reg; students/under-18s €30; €10 supp. Contact Apt 56 Shalimar, Monastery Rd, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Ireland.

6 Nov • **BristolCon '10**, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol. 10.30am-6pm (provisional). £15 reg to 24 May; then £20; £25 at door. Online booking facilities (only?) to follow at www.bristolcon.org.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Extraterrestrial Relations. Fury, in the newspaper sense of 'slight fuss', arose from a Bristol health club ad showing a green monster: 'Advance health warning! When the aliens come, they will eat the fatties first.' No one objected to blatant anti-alien prejudice, but use of the f-word was deplored. (*Telegraph*, 5 January) [MPJ]

This Is War. Amazon.com removed all its direct Buy buttons for Macmillan books, including the Tor sf imprint, on 29 January. Macmillan is being punished for insisting on an 'agency'-style sales deal and higher prices for e-books on first release: Amazon prefers to keep them cheap as a selling point for the Kindle reader. With this ploy Amazon showed deep contempt for mere authors, hitting directly at their royalty income. Fans of popular Macmillan/Tor authors are likewise irate. A Kindle team forum posting says this PR disaster was a way to express 'strong disagreement' with Macmillan, but 'ultimately, however, we will have to capitulate'—because of Macmillan's disgraceful monopoly on Macmillan titles. (Conversely, a monopoly on Kindles is of course a Good Thing.) As *Ansible* goes to press on 1 February, Amazon's top management remains silent and those Buy buttons are still missing.

Awards. *British Independent Film Awards*: the sf *Moon* won as best film of 2009 (non-genre-specific), and its director Duncan Jones was honoured as best debut director. [MPJ] • **BSFA Awards** shortlist: NOVEL: Stephen Baxter, *Ark*; Ursula K. Le Guin, *Lavinia*; China Miéville, *The City & The City*; Adam Roberts, *Yellow Blue Tibia*. SHORT: Eugie Foster, 'Sinner, Baker, Fabulist, Priest'; Red Mask, *Black Mask*, Gentleman, *Beast* (*Interzone* 220); Dave Hutchinson, *The Push*; Kim Lakin-Smith,

'Johnnie and Emmie-Lou Get Married' (JZ222); Ian McDonald, 'Vishnu at the Cat Circus' (Cyberabad Days); Ian Watson & Roberto Quaglia, 'The Beloved Time of Their Lives' (The Beloved of My Beloved); Ian Whates, 'The Assistant' (Solaris Book of New SF 3). ARTWORK Nitzan Klamer, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea alternate cover art; Stephanie Pui-Mun Law, 'Emerald'; Stephan Martinière & designer Jacqueline Nasso Cooke, Desolation Road cover; Adam Tredowski, Interzone 220, 224, 225 covers (3 nominations). NON-FICTION John Clute, Canary Fever; Deepa D, 'I Didn't Dream of Dragons'; Hal Duncan, 'Ethics and Enthusiasm' [withdrawn by Duncan]; Nick Lowe, 'Mutant Popcorn' (JZ passim); Farah Mendlesohn & Edward James, A Short History of Fantasy. ● Golden Globes: best film was Avatar, and James Cameron also won as best director. Animated feature film: Up. [MPJ] ● Crawford (new fantasy novelist): Jedediah Berry for The Manual of Detection. [L] ● National TV Awards: best drama winner was Doctor Who; David Tennant's Doctor was best drama performance. [MPJ] ● Newbery Medal (YA): Rebecca Stead, When You Reach Me, with sf elements (time travel) and homage to Madeleine L'Engle's A Wrinkle in Time. ● Philip K. Dick (US paperback originals) shortlist: C.L. Anderson, Bitter Angels; Carlos J. Cortes, The Prisoner; Eric Garcia, The Repossessionambo; Daryl Gregory, The Devil's Alphabet; Ian McDonald, Cyberabad Days; Rebecca Ore, Centuries Ago And Very Fast; S. Andrew Swann, Prophets. [GVG]

As Others See Us. Joe Gordon reports email recruiting sf, gaming, and comics folk for a BBC3 project. Only utterly typical fans need apply: 'Does your avatar do more exercise than you? Are you happier running round World Of War craft [sic] than pounding the treadmill at the gym? / If you love playing high-octane games or reading sci-fi and action based comics from the comfort of your sofa, but are turned off at the thought of real exercise, we want to hear from you. / BBC Three is looking for 18-26 year olds who are proud of their lifestyle and leisure choices, to take part in a new series.' Write to lifestylechallengee Betty co uk and they'll be glad to mock you. (FP blog, 11 January)

R.I.P. Kage Baker (1952-2010), popular US author of the Company sf novels, died on 31 January; she was only 57. [AIP] This follows treatment for multiple cancers and January announcements that she had only months, then weeks, to live. Not even weeks, alas. She will be missed. ● Knox Burger (1922-2010), US editor and literary agent who bought Kurt Vonnegut's first short story for Collier's and later represented various sf authors, died on 4 January; he was 87. [AIP] ● Art Clokey (1921-2010), early US worker in stop-motion clay animation and creator of tv's Gumby—star of Gumby: The Movie (1995)—died on 8 January at age 88. [SJD] ● Mog Decarnin (Karen Duff, 1948-2010), US fan whose fanzines included the 1980s Majoan, and who as Camilla Decarnin published stories and co-edited the lesbian/gay sf anthology Worlds Apart (1986), died on 8 January after a heart attack. She was a regular Ansible correspondent. ● Conard Fowkes (1933-2009) US actor seen in 20 episodes of Dark Shadows (1966-1967), died on 14 December aged 76. [AIP] ● Roger Gaillard (1936-2010), curator of Switzerland's Maison d'Ailleurs sf museum 1989-1996 and editor/coeditor of several sf essay anthologies, died on 22 January. [F770] ● Takumi Shibano (1927-2010), leading Japanese fan since the mid-1950s birth of his country's fandom—of which he was long the chief ambassador to the West—died on 16 January; he was 83. He wrote and translated as Kozumi Rei and was a guest of honour at two Worldcons, LAcon III and Nippon 2007. [GVG/F770] ● Zeldia Rubinstein (1933-2010), US character actress best known as the tiny psychic in Poltergeist (1982) and sequels, died on 27 January; she was 76. [BB] ● Jean Simmons (1929-2010), UK-born actress whose genre credits included the 1991 Dark Shadows revival, Star Trek: TNG, Xena: Warrior Princess and voice work in Howl's Moving Castle and Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within, died on 22 January aged 80. [MPJ] ● Ernesto Vegetti, important Italian fan and bibliographer whose catalogue of Italian-published sf has long been a major reference resource, died on 17 January; he was 66. [SS via SHS]

Whiter Shade of Pale. Bloomsbury US did it again despite the 2009 furore over Justine Larbalestier's Liar (see A265). Another indisputably dark-skinned character, the heroine of Jaclyn Dolamore's Magic Under Glass, appears on the Bloomsbury cover as inarguably white. [ML] On 21 January, Bloomsbury apologized and announced the book was being withdrawn for reissue with a new jacket. (Booktrade.info) [AIP]

Outraged Letters. Michael Scott Rohan on the latest tv trifflids: 'Never mind the improved effects; the new Day of the Trifflids (28/29 December BBC1) was cobbled together out of some low-grade science fiction scriptwriters' handbook. The power of Wyndham's novel lay in its restraint, its sense of mundane reality and everyday people caught up in a holocaust—not the shallow action figurines here, complete with

improbable back stories, campy supervillain and high speed miracle cures. This was leeching on one writer's original ideas with another's mediocre clichés.' (Radio Times, 16-22 January) [LC/SJ] Another correspondent invoked Wyndham in his complaint about similar lavish BBC mistreatment of The Turn of the Screw: 'had the team been reading Village of the Damned by mistake?' (Jeff Wood, *ibid*) [SJ] Probably not, since that's a film version of The Midwich Cuckoos. ● Jane Yolen on Ursula Le Guin's public resignation (see A270): 'Others of us actually resigned from the Author's Guild earlier on (me being one of them) but quietly because our names would have had little cachet in the larger world of literature. But Ursula (praise be always) did it the right way and rattled their cages Big Time. Nevertheless, I received an hour-long phone call from the AG's Paul Aiken who seems to be the Architect of the Settlement. (Why am I reminded of the Pale?) Nice man, wrong fight. I told him I was too angry to change my mind.' (4 January)

Magazine Scene. Weird Tales fiction editor Ann VanderMeer is now editor-in-chief. [SW] ● Kirkus Reviews and Editor & Publisher, axed in December by their owner Nielsen Business Media, continue for now: the former revived in hope of sale, the latter sold to another publisher.

Random Fandom. Steve Green: 'TAFP delegates Anne KG Murphy and Brian Gray have just announced their first child is due in August. This will almost certainly be the first occasion when TAFP brings three delegates across the Pond.' They will be at both Corflu and Eastercon.

Will Power. J.G. Ballard left over £4 million in his will, the bulk of it—after inheritance tax—as legacies of nearly £1.1m to each of his two daughters. His son got £100,000. (Mail on Sunday, 10 January) [DP]

As Others Saw Us. The adventures of Professor Challenger are in one way ... the prototypes of the stories now known by the somewhat degraded generic name of 'science fiction'. But there are in fact several important differences: Conan Doyle's Challenger stories are all based on scientific facts ...' (blurb, The Complete Professor Challenger Stories, John Murray, 1952) [BA] Hard facts like disintegration rays, toxic aether and Earth's secret nature as a living, screaming being...

Court Circular. Ursula K. Le Guin continues to oppose the Google settlement and is one of 368 authors—many of sf and fantasy—who signed her petition objecting to its terms. This was presented in January to Judge Chin, who will preside over the February court hearing. [AIP]

C.o.A. Karen Babich, PO Box 260082, Madison, WI 53726-0082, USA (email/phone unchanged). Chris & Megan Nelson-Lee, 25 Fuhrman St, Evatt, ACT 2617, Australia. Garth Spencer (PO box closed), 82 East 40th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V5W 1L4. Peter Wilkinson (8 Feb), Flat 4, Stratton Lodge, 79 Bulwer Rd, Barnet, Herts, EN5 5EU.

The Dead Past. Fifty Years Ago, in February 1960, John W. Campbell's Astounding SF became, or began its gradual transition to, Analog. ● Thirty Years Ago, Bob Shaw sent a serious scientific letter beginning 'Dear Mr Langford: I have been writing to fan editors for many years, but this is the first time I have ever read a fanzine...' (Ansible 6, February 1980) ● Remember the Noughties? I missed the memorable Washington Post headline for a high-wire championship race across the Han River: 'Skywalkers in Korea Cross Han Solo' (2007). [MG]

Aeon Award. This annual €1000 genre story award is open again. Entries by 30 November to Aeon Award, 8 Bachelor's Walk, Dublin 1, Republic of Ireland, or by email to fraslaw at yahoo co uk, which is the address for general queries. €7 entrance fee. The winner and runners-up (second prize €200, third €100) will be published in Albedo One.

Thog's Masterclass. Remote Throbbing Dept. 'The vial of blood in my hand seems to pound against my temples.' (Nancy Kress, 'The Battle of Long Island' in The Agents of Earth, 1993) [BA] ● Dept of Flaunted Historical Research. "'Just a minute, Mr. Todd, you're a shilling short here.' / 'Ah, terribly sorry, I must a dropped it.' He laboriously counted out three pennies, a ha'penny, and six farthings.' (Laurie R. King, The Beekeeper's Apprentice, 1994) [PB] ● Eyeballs in the Sky. 'Her eyes swung an arc around the steaming pit of the world.' (Phyllis Gotlieb, O Master Caliban, 1976) [CM] ● Animal Husbandry Dept. 'Horses are a kind of sentient motorbike.' (Frank Schätzing, The Swarm, 2004; trans Sally-Ann Spencer, 2006) [AR] ● Dept of Fearful Intimacy. 'Linda felt her mouth dry up, and her tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth.' (Stephen King, Under the Dome, 2009) [LA]

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