



## Ansible 294 January 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 the manual for Computer 1578/32/W1.

**Welcome to 2012.** The *Ansible* staff wishes you all a Happy New(ish) Year, while privately thinking 'At least it can't be as bad as 2011....'

### The End of the World

**Douglas Adams** was invoked as reassurance that it's OK for a serious journalist to like *Doctor Who* and interview Matt Smith, because this is safely different from all that horrid sci-fi stuff: 'Surely there are parallels with Douglas Adams—one of the early *Who* writers—who later, in *Hitchhiker's*, created a universe to explore not science fiction but the human condition.' (Euan Ferguson, *Observer*, 4 December) [PE]

**Bea Ballard**, J.G. Ballard's daughter, broke silence in a newspaper interview about the John Baxter biography of her father that—as summarized by the subeditor—'brands him as racist, sexist and a stranger to truth.' (*Telegraph*, 18 December) 'I do feel some of the things presented as fact in this book sully important aspects of my father's and our lives.' It is mentioned that she has 'compiled a six-page list of the most obvious factual errors in the biography.' [MPJ]

**Penelope Lively**, author of *Astercote* (1970) and other fine children's fantasies as well as adult literary novels—one of which won the Booker—was made a Dame in the UK New Year Honours. Maggie Gee, who has written some sf and fantasy, received the OBE.

**George R.R. Martin** is *USA Today's* Author of the Year (2011).

**J.R.R. Tolkien** would have been 120 today, 3 January 2012.

### Convicious

18 Jan • **Clarke Odyssey Lecture**—'Arthur's Vision for Man in Space', BIS, 27/29 South Lambeth Rd, Vauxhall, London, SW8 1SZ. £10 (BIS members free): book online at [www.bis-space.com](http://www.bis-space.com).

19-28 Jan • **Neverwhere** (play), Progress Theatre, Reading. 7:30pm; matinees 2:30 on 21st, 28th. £10; £8 concessions. See [www.progresstheatre.co.uk](http://www.progresstheatre.co.uk). Box office 0118 960 6060.

25 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Christopher Priest.

2-4 Feb • **SFX Weekender 3**, Prestatyn Sands, Holiday Park, North Wales. Charged by accommodation, from £250 for 2 (£545 for 5) 'basic' up to £400 for 2 'VIP'. Online booking (£6 booking fee) at [www.sfxweekender.com](http://www.sfxweekender.com). Contact & children's bookings: 08700 110034.

3-5 Feb • **Duple Time** (filk), Ramada Grantham Hotel. £40 reg; £27 unwaged; under-18s £1/year; under-6 free. Cheques: UK Filk Con, c/o Flat 1, 61 Marks Rd, Salisbury, SP1 3AY.

18 Feb • **Picocon 29**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7/8pm. £10 reg at door; £8 concessions; £5 ICSF members; past GoHs free. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

24-26 Feb • **Satellite 3**, Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow. GoH Charles Stross. £45 reg until 31 January; £10 supp or under-15s; £1 under-5s. Contact Satellite 3, PO Box 3738, Glasgow, G41 4YD.

6-9 Apr • **Olympus 2012** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £65 reg, £55 unwaged. £20 supp/under-17s, £5 under-12s, £1 under-5s. Contact 4 Evesham Green, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 9RX, or enquiries at [olympus2012.org](http://olympus2012.org). *Membership refunds for those who find they can't make it remain available until 31 January.*

18-20 May • **Discover Festival**, Snibston Discovery Museum, Coalville, Leicestershire. GoH Peter F. Hamilton, Graham Masterton. £45 reg plus £2 online booking fee at [www.discoverfestival.co.uk](http://www.discoverfestival.co.uk).

27-30 Sept • **Fantasycon 2012**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. GoH announced: Joe R. Lansdale, Mary Danby. *Now £55 reg (BFS members £50) until 31 May.* Payment at [fantasycon2012.org/join.php](http://fantasycon2012.org/join.php), or to 10 Haycroft Gdns, Mastin Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S43 3FE.

31 Oct - 3 Nov 2013 • **World Fantasy Convention**, Hilton Brighton Metropole, Brighton. GoH announced: Richard Matheson, Richard Christian Matheson. £100 reg; £50 supp. Cheques to 130 Park View, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6JU; PayPal at [www.wfc2013.org](http://www.wfc2013.org).

**Rumblings.** New Worldcon bids are New Orleans in 2018 and Montréal in 2019. Existing: London 2014, Orlando vs Spokane 2015, Kansas City 2016, Japan vs New York 2017, New Zealand 2020. [CM]

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** An unusual analysis of sf trends: 'One way you can describe the collapse of the idea of the future is the collapse of science fiction. Now it's either about technology that doesn't work or about technology that's used in bad ways. The anthology of the top twenty-five sci-fi stories in 1970 was, like, "Me and my friend the robot went for a walk on the moon," and in 2008 it was, like, "The galaxy is run by a fundamentalist Islamic confederacy and there are people who are hunting planets and killing them for fun.'" (PayPal cofounder Peter Thiel, profiled in *The New Yorker*, 28 November 2011) [MMW]

**R.I.P.** Gilbert Adair (1944-2011) Scots critic, translator and author whose two genre novels are sequels to famous children's fantasies—*Alice Through the Needle's Eye* (1984) and *Peter Pan and the Only Children* (1987)—died on 8 December; he was 66. [JC] • Bob Anderson (1923-2012), UK Olympic fencer who played Darth Vader in light-sabre duels in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, died on 1 January aged 89. [AW] • Shingo Araki (1939-2011), major Japanese anime artist, writer and director whose best-known work in Britain was *Ulysses 31* (Greek mythology in space), died on 1 December. [JonC] • T.J. Bass (Thomas J. Bassler, 1932-2011), US author whose linked novels *Half Past Human* (1971) and *The Godwhale* (1974) were highly regarded (but not, alas, followed up), died on 13 December. He was 79. [MJE] • John Berry, Irish fan who published a huge amount of humorous writing in his own and others' fanzines (mostly from 1954 to the early 60s) and was Fan Guest of Honour at the 1959 Detroit Worldcon, died on 25 November. Sam Long writes: 'Did you know he held the British Empire Medal and was therefore entitled to put BEM after his name?' • Richard Bessière (1923-2011), prolific French sf author whose debut series 'Conquerors of the Universe' began in 1951, died on 22 December aged 88. [L] • A.J. Barker (Andre Barker Bridget), US fan married to Bill Bridget and active with him in the Southern Fandom Press Alliance in the 1980s, died on 23 December aged 64. [AIP] • Gianluca Casseri (1961-2011), Italian fantasy author and magazine editor, killed himself on 14 December after fatally shooting two Senegalese immigrants to Florence and wounding three others. [SHS] • Cheetah-Mike, a chimpanzee claimed to have played Cheeta/Cheetah in 1930s Tarzan films, died on 24 December at a supposed age of 80. [JC] Many chimps (more than one per film) appeared in the role; whether any from the 1930s really survived to 2011 has been questioned. A debunked rival claimant, Cheeta, died on 3 January. • Russell Garcia (1916-2011), US composer and music arranger who scored George Pal's films *The Time Machine* (1960) and *Atlantis, The Lost Continent* (1961), died on 20 November; he was 95. [MMW] • Václav Havel (1936-2011), Czech playwright, poet, dissident, politician and former President of the Czech Republic, died on 18 December aged 75. His plays satirized Soviet bureaucracy through such sf-flavoured devices as the imposition of absurd artificial languages in *The Memorandum* (1965) and a demented computer in *The Increased Difficulty of Concentration* (1968). • Rusty Hevelin (1922-2011), long-time US fan, 1975 DUFF winner, 1981 Denver Worldcon Fan Guest of Honour, and co-founder of PulpCon, died on 27 December; he was 89. [BH] • Russell Hoban (1925-2011), US-born but long UK-resident writer best known for the remarkable children's fantasy *The Mouse and His Child* (1967) and the sf narrative tour-de-force *Riddley Walker* (1980), died after long illness on 14 December; he was 85. Many of his other novels, such as *Pilgermann* (1983) and *The Medusa Frequency* (1987), were threaded with fantastic themes. He was a charming GoH at the first UK Mexican in 1984. [JC] • Glenn Lord (1931-2011), US agent for the Robert E. Howard estate, editor of Howard collections and author of *The Last Celt: A Bio-Bibliography of Robert Ervin Howard* (1976), died on 31 December; he was 80. [SHS/AIP] • Thierry Martens (1942-2011), Belgian author, anthologist, comics historian and former editor of the comic *Spirou*, died on 27 June aged 69. Under his *Spirou* writing pseudonym Yves Varende he also published sf and Sherlockian-pastiche novels.

[PDF] ● *Jerry Robinson* (1922-2011), US comics artist generally acknowledged as the creator of Batman's most memorable foe the Joker (he also gave Robin his name), died on 7 December aged 89. [SG] ● *Bob Sabella* (1948-2011), long-time US fan, author of *Who Shaped Science Fiction?* (2000), publisher of the fanzine *Visions of Paradise*, and current Official Editor of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, died on 3 December. He was 63. [SG/RL] ● *Ronald Searle* (1920-2011), celebrated UK cartoonist perhaps best known for creating St Trinian's and drawing Nigel Molesworth, died on 30 December aged 91. Genre-related work includes sf daydream sequences in the Molesworth books written by Geoffrey Willans, spoof mythology in his solo *Zoodiac* (1977) and story character crossovers including Kafka/Lewis Carroll in *Marquis de Sade meets Goody Two-Shoes* (1994). His style was inimitable, his range extraordinary. ● *Don Sharp* (1922-2011), Tasmanian-born film director best known for Hammer studio work, died on 18 December aged 89. Films included *The Kiss of the Vampire* (1963), *Witchcraft* (1964), *Curse of the Fly* (1965), *Rasputin, the Mad Monk* (1966), *The Face of Fu Manchu* (1966), *Jules Verne's Rocket to the Moon* (1967) and *Psychomania* (1973). As a radio actor he played 'Mitch' Mitchell in the 1953 BBC *Journey Into Space* and its sequel *The Red Planet*. [SG/MPJ] ● *Joe Simon* (1913-2011), US comics writer and artist who with Jack Kirby created Captain America in 1941 and worked on the 1940s *Sandman* for DC, died on 14 December aged 98. [MPJ] ● *Kathleen Stein*, US science writer who was a staff journalist at *Omni* for many years and wrote the popular-neuroscience book *The Genius Engine* (2007), died in a fall on 13 November. [SW] ● *Darrell K. Sweet* (1934-2011), noted US sf/fantasy cover artist since 1975, died on 5 December aged 77. His distinctive work appeared on several popular series including Piers Anthony's Xanth books, Stephen R. Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, L.E. Modesitt's *Recluce* and Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*. [PDF] ● *Louis Thirion* (1923-2011), French sf author who published more than 30 novels beginning with *Waterloo, morne plaine* (1964), died on 9 December; he was 88. [L] ● *Shinji Wada* (1950-2011), prolific Japanese manga creator whose best-known works are the *Sukeban Deka* comics and media spinoffs, died on 5 July at the age of 61. [PDF]

**The Weakest Link.** *Danny Baker*, comedy quiz show host: 'Which science fiction film starring Sting also starred a giant worm?' *Tony Hawks: 'Moon.'* (*History Repeats Itself*, Radio 5 Live, 4 December) [MPJ] ● *Alex Trebeck*: 'For \$1,000, name the author of the 1956 novel *The City and the Stars* who was knighted in 1998 by Queen Elizabeth II.' *Contestant*: 'Who was Isaac Asimov?' (*Jeopardy*, 2 December) [AIP]

**Court Circular.** Steven John Busti is suing the makers of the *Cowboys & Aliens* film based on a 2006 graphic novel, since 'he came up with the concept of a group of 19th Century cowboys who fend off an alien assault in a Wild West backdrop in 1994.' (BBC, 2 December). [MPJ] And our own Howard Waldrop did it in 1987 with 'Night of the Cooters' (*Omni*). ● Gary Friedrich, creator of the Marvel Comics hero Ghost Rider in 1972, failed in his legal bid for a share of film and other spinoff rights: the judge ruled that 'If Friedrich ... had any rights to the character or the work at the time he endorsed the cheques ... he relinquished those rights to Marvel.' (BBC, 30 December) [DVB] ● More *Avatar* lawsuits! Bryant Moore sued James Cameron and 20th Century Fox in December, asking \$2.5 billion damages since 'Cameron stole his idea for the movie from Moore's screenplays, entitled *Aquatica* and *Descendants: The Pollination*.' (TMZ.com via *TheCelebrityCafe.com*, 19 December) The screenplays were allegedly submitted to Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment in 1994 and 2003. Meanwhile sf author Eric Ryder says he worked for two years with Cameron on a film based on his own 'KRZ 2068', with 'striking similarities' to *Avatar*, while Gerald Morawski knows *Avatar* is based on his pitch to Cameron for his un-filmed *Guardians of Eden*. (*Entertainment Law Digest*, 21 December). ● A change from cinema: Jeff Kinney's 'Wimpy Kid, Inc' company—whose bestselling *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series has been spoofed as *Diary of a Zombie Kid* (2011) by Fred Perry & David Hutchinson—is suing the latter's publisher Antarctic Press for copyright and trademark infringement. (*PW*, 22 December) [AIP] A previous lampoon, *Tales from the Crypt: Diary of a Stinky Dead Kid* (2009), was labelled PARODY in big letters and escaped legal reprisals. No such label on *Zombie Kid*.

**As Others See Us II.** "Harrison Bergeron" had been published in 1961 in the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, a paid-by-the-word, cultish monthly for hardcore admirers of literary science fiction.' (Charles J. Shields, *And So it Goes: Kurt Vonnegut, A Life*, 2011) [MM] That paid-by-the-word sounds pretty damning, doesn't it?

**Outraged Letters.** *Ric Cooper* responds to Simon R. Green (A293): 'I had the Dalek Cutamatic too in the mid-60s, when I was about 9 or

10. It was a thin wire stretched across the jaws of a U-shaped frame, connected to a battery box (9v I think) to heat up the wire. The Daleks and their chums were printed on thick sheets of expanded polystyrene. My first thought, obviously, was to use it to torture my little brother, but after some experimentation I was bitterly disappointed to find that, although hot enough to cut polystyrene foam, I couldn't so much as raise a burn on my hand with it. So no diced digits, more's the pity.' ● *Martyn P. Jackson* confirms that politics and *Who* remain intertwined: 'Doctor Who and Sherlock writer Mark Gattis was interviewed on Richard Bacon's BBC Radio 5 Live show this afternoon, where he and Bacon revealed that the BBC preview screening of the Christmas episode of *Doctor Who* was attended by both George Osbourne and Ed Balls, along with their children. Prior to the event the warm-up man had asked the kiddies to name a *Doctor Who* monster, and an adult voice piped up "George Osbourne".' (21 December)

**Magazine Scene.** Sheryl Tempchin's *Zahir: A Journal of Speculative Fiction* has ceased publication, although online issues can still be read at [www.zahirtales.com](http://www.zahirtales.com). [MA] ● *Lightspeed* (sf) and *Fantasy*, both edited and now published by John Joseph Adams, are to merge without any reduction in fiction content; there will be less nonfiction.

**Random Fandom.** *Guy H. Lillian III* missed Christmas: he 'suffered a fairly dramatic faint in a local superstore on December 18 and is only today, New Year's Eve, free of the horsepistol, two feet of guts to the lesser and woozy in the extreme. *Challenger 34* is delayed but I did publish once already in 2011.' Ouch! ● *Curt Phillips* has taken over as Official Editor of FAPA following Bob Sabella's death (above). ● *D. West* declined the Rotsler Award for life achievement in fanzine art (whose presentation was announced in A293). 'Basically, to accept an award with Rotsler's name attached would be to accept his (unspoken but very evident) opinion of fan art as worthless doodling.' Needless to say, this view is contested by admirers of the late Bill Rotsler.

**The Dead Past.** *75 Years Ago*, on 3 January 1937, that first sf convention as we know it was held in the Leeds Theosophical Hall. Rob Hansen ([www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/THENArchive/1937con.htm](http://www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/THENArchive/1937con.htm)) has previously unpublished photos (including the young Clarke), the official souvenir report and Ted Carnell's delayed report: 'Everyone made speeches, plenty of ideas and suggestions floated around, an Association was formed. The last we remember of the meeting was sneaking off into a private sanctum, lighting a gas fire, and dropping off to sleep utterly worn out. But, as we remember, they did form the Science Fiction Association, and the noose was drawn a little tighter round our lily-white throats. / That original meeting really started the ball rolling in, this country, and from it all the fan clubs (all four of 'em), evolved and owed allegiance. They were the four Hells. Leeds, Liverpool, London and Leicester.' (*Sands of Time*, January 1943) ● *70 Years Ago*: 'A letter from Arthur C. (Ego) Clarke, mad scientist of the B.I.S., informs us that he is now at No 2 RAF radio school as an instructor. [...] Damon Knight, well known fan and editor of "Snide" has broken into the pro magazines and is now illustrating for "Future" and "Astonishing Stories".....' (*Futurian War Digest*, January 1942)

**Fanfundery.** *TransAtlantic Fan Fund*. The 2012 TAFF winner is Jacqueline (Jacq) Monahan. More at [taff.org.uk](http://taff.org.uk). ● *GUFF* final reminder: the voting deadline is 22 January. See [taff.org.uk/guff.html](http://taff.org.uk/guff.html).

**Thog's Masterclass.** *My Name is Legion Dept.* 'Given his somewhat unassuming appearance, he looked no different from the teeming horde that had descended nightly on Glastonbury since war had begun reaching England's shores.' (Barry Reese, 'Restoration: An Adventure Starring Devlin Jones', *Startling Stories*, Spring 2009) [DL] ● *Dept of Draculaic Homage.* 'She bent her head over the old book, her eyelashes heavy on her cheek.' 'When I grasped his hand, my heart leaped into my fingers.' '... it made all the blood in her veins suddenly writhe and coil.' 'When the waitress had returned with our tea, Helen stirred it with a somber face.' 'His feet were clad in narrow black boots indescribably different from any boots I'd ever seen.' (all Elizabeth Kostova, *The Historian*, 2005) [PB] ● *Neat Tricks Dept.* 'She reached into her pocket and pulled out her fist.' (Kiki Hamilton, *The Faerie Ring*, 2011) [PM] 'My hands are already dirty just from setting foot on this planet.' (Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson, *Hellhole*, 2011) [PM]

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