



Ansible® 434 September 2023

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website news.ansible.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Ulrika O'Brien**. Available for SAE, surrealist boxing or an invitation to the Unquiet Wedding.

Fits & Starts

Greg Egan sees the writing on the wall at the X-movie formerly known as Twitter. 'Breaking: Platinum Tier verification will require submitting buccal swabs, and granting X dot com the perpetual, unencumbered right to leave traces of your DNA at crime scenes.' (Ex-Twitter, 20 August)

Harrison Ford on the snake species discovered in Peru and named *Tachymenoides harrisonfordi*: 'These scientists keep naming critters after me, but it's always the ones that terrify children. I don't understand. I spend my free time cross-stitching. I sing lullabies to my basil plants, so they won't fear the night....' (*Hollywood Reporter*, 15 August)

Sean CW Korsgaard of Baen Books, perhaps best known for a daft Nebula vote-rigging claim that was covered in *Ansible* 429, contrived to get himself banned from Twitter.com for posting a tasteful little fantasy about 'getting in my time machine to save cinema by killing Kevin Smith and Joss Whedon in 2004.' (17 July). [F770]

Adam Roberts on the (alcohol-free) lager brand Days: 'How much is James Lovegrove making from licensing his novels to beer companies? I think we should be told.' (Facebook, 9 August)

Michael Whelan was not best pleased to learn that – on top of all the regular illicit uploads of his artwork – one 'creator' has not only been training an AI to create dodgy Whelan pastiches but begging for Patreon funds as reward for this naughtiness. 'Michael Whelan is an incredible imaginative realist painter and now you can generate art similar to his signature style within your own Stable Diffusion workflow.' (Twitter.com, 7 August) *Later update*: 'The "overfit" images on display have been removed, however, we are following up on removal of Michael's art used in training and any product of that unauthorized use.' (11 August)

Contrafissura

SOLDOUT 2 Sep • **Whooverville 14** (*Doctor Who*), QUAD Centre, Derby.

8 Sep • **42: The Wildly Improbable Ideas of Douglas Adams**, British Library, London. In-person tickets at £16 sold out; £5 online. See www.bl.uk/events/42-the-wildly-improbable-ideas-of-douglas-adams.

10 Sep • **Popcorn** (media), Magna, Sheffield. Tickets £11.22; under-17s £9.09; under-7s free. See popcorncon.com.

12 Sep - 15 Apr 2024 • **30 Years of The Wrong Trousers**, Cartoon Museum, London. See www.cartoonmuseum.org/whatson.

15-17 Sep • **Fantasycon 2023**, Jury's Inn Hotel, Broad St, Birmingham. £81.50 reg; students £66; under-16s £41 (BFS members £10 less); under-4s free. See www.hwsevents.co.uk/shop-2.

22 Sep • **Terry Pratchett** at the Unseen University (conference), Trinity College, Dublin, and online. Free. See tinyurl.com/y63jdcpc8.

23-24 Sep • **Nor-Con** (media), Norfolk Showground Arena. £39 reg; under-14s £19; family (2+2) £110. See www.nor-con.co.uk.

29 Sep - 5 Oct • **Birmingham Anime Film Festival**, Edgbaston and Digbeth. Films separately ticketed at www.baff.uk.

29 Sep - 1 Oct • **Lakes International Comic Art Festival**, Bowness-on-Windermere. Weekend pass £20 (£12 concessions). Day rates Saturday £16 (£8), Sunday £8 (£4). See www.comicartfestival.com.

30 Sep • **Innsmouth Literary Festival**, Kings House Conference Centre, Bedford. 10am-5pm. £20 reg; under-16s £15; booking closes 23 September. See innsmouthgold.com/innsmouth-literary-festival.

6-8 Oct • **Grimmfest** (film), Odeon Great Northern, Manchester. Full pass for all screenings and events £79.50 plus fees at grimmfest.com.

7-8 Oct • **Nevermore** (Gothic), online. £15 weekend or £10/day. See www.thefolklorepodcast.com/store/c9/Forthcoming_events.html.

7-8 Oct • **Octocon**, Gibson Hotel, Dublin. €60 reg; concessions €40; YA or supp €20. Registration open at octocon.com.

27 Oct - 25 Feb 2024 • **Fantasy: Realms of Imagination** (exhibition), British Library, London. £16; under-12s free; other discounts vary with weekdays, school terms, etc. See www.bl.uk/events/fantasy.

26 Nov • **Stars of Time** (comics), Tropicana, Weston-super-Mare. £10 plus booking fee; other rates at www.starsofetime.co.uk.

2-4 Feb 2024 • **Contabile** ³₄ (UK filk), Palace Hotel, Buxton. £39 reg; £29 unwaged; other rates at www.contabile.org.uk/tripletime/.

16-18 Feb 2024 • **UK Ghost Story Festival**, Museum of Making, Derby. Also online 12-15 February. See www.ukghoststoryfestival.co.uk.

12-14 Apr 2024 • **Springmoot** (Tolkien Society), annual dinner and members-only AGM, Jesus College, Cambridge. Bookings are awaited at www.tolkienociety.org/events/agm-and-springmoot-2024.

31 May - 2 Jun 2024 • **Cymera**: Scotland's Festival of SF, Fantasy & Horror Writing, Edinburgh. *New dates*. See www.cymerafestival.co.uk.

19-21 Jul 2024 • **Fantasy Forest** (cosplay), Sudely Castle, Cheltenham. Ticket sales awaited at fantasyforest.co.uk.

Rumblings. *Worldcon 2024*: Glasgow Worldcon rates will rise on 1 October. • *Middle-earth Festival*: the middleearthfestival.wordpress.com home page still promises a September 2023 event at a new venue, but the website FAQ and Facebook group suggest it won't return until 2024. • *Worldcon 2025*: this year's Chengdu Worldcon opened the site selection voting in August, with Seattle being the only bid on the ballot form.

Infinitely Improbable

The Weakest Link. *Bradley Walsh*: 'In 1962, John Glenn became the first American to eat a meal where?' *Contestant*: 'McDonald's.' (ITV, *The Chase*, 22 August) [RJ]

Awards. *Arthur C. Clarke Award*: *Venomous Lumpsucker* by Ned Beauman. • *Munsey Award* (pulp community): Richard Bleiler. • *Kirkus Prize* fiction finalists include *White Cat*, *Black Dog* by Kelly Link and Shaun Tan. [F770] • *Mythopoeic Awards*: ADULT *When the Angels Left the Old Country* by Sacha Lamb. CHILDREN'S *The Ogress and the Orphans* by Kelly Barnhill. NONFICTION – INKLINGS *Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis: Friends in Co-inherence* by Paul S. Fiddes. NONFICTION – OTHER *Fantasy: How It Works* by Brian Attebery. • *Sidewise* (alt-history) finalists: *LONG Appliance* by J.O. Morgan; *Babel* by R.F. Kuang; *Beat the Devils* by Josh Weiss; *Begin the World Over* by Kung Li Sun; *The Peacekeeper* by B.L. Blanchard; *Three Miles Down* by Harry Turtledove. SHORT 'Kingsbury 1944' (9/22 Analog) by Michael Cassutt; 'A Sky and a Heaven' (*Other Covenants* ed. Andrea D. Lobel and Mark Shainblum) by Eric Choi; 'Why the Bridgemasters of York Don't Pay Taxes' (*ibid*) by Gillian Polack; *It's Real Life* by Paul Levinson; 'Dreams of Electric Mothers' (*Africa Risen* ed. Sheree Renée Thomas, Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki and Zelda Knight) by Wole Talabi. • *Splatterpunk* best novel: *Playground* by Aron Beauregard. [L] • *Sturgeon* (short): 'Rabbit Test' (11/22 *Uncanny*) by Samantha Mills.

Science Metaphor Corner. 'The poles of American politics were on a collision course.' (*Washington Post*, 6 August) [PDF]

R.I.P. *David Albahari* (1948-2023), Serbian postmodern fiction author and translator of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, died on 30 July. [AM] • *Michael Bakewell* (1931-2023), UK radio and tv producer, the BBC's first head of plays, whose credits include *1984* (1965), *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1968) and the radio serial *The Lord of the Rings* (1981), died on 11 July aged 92. [AIP] • *Juleen Brantingham* (1942-2023), US author of some 40 magazine and anthology stories 1979-1999, died on 22 July aged 80. [SHS] • 'Butchie' (William George, 1947-2023), US motorcyclist and actor in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), died on 10 August aged 76. [SHS] • *Philippe Curval* (Philippe Tronche, 1929-2023), French author active from the mid-1950s, whose sf novels won several awards including the 1963 Prix Jules Verne and 1977 Prix Apollo, died on 5 August aged 93. [JC] • *John R. Douglas* (1948-2023), long-time US editor at Simon & Schuster, Avon (where he ran the Avonova sf imprint), HarperCollins and others, recipient of a 2023 World Fantasy Award for life achievement, died on 3 August. He is survived by his wife of many years, Ginjer Buchanan, to whom all sympathy. [SHS] • *Ita Ever* (1931-2023), Estonian actress in the Gogol-based Russian Gothic horror film *Vedma* (*The Power of Fear*, 2006), died on 9 August aged 92. [AM] • *Sharon Farrell* (1940-2023), US actress in *It's Alive* (1974), *The Premonition* (1975) and *Night of the Comet* (1984), died on 15 May aged 82. [LP] • *Terry Funk* (1944-2023), US wrestler and actor in *Timestalkers* (1987) plus genre tv series, died on 23 August aged 79. [LP] • *William Friedkin* (1935-2023), Oscar-winning US director of *The Exorcist* (1973), *The Guardian* (1990), *Bug* (2006) and *The Devil and Father Amorth* (2017), died on 7 August aged 87. [LP] • *Valery Gayevsky* (1960-2023),

Crimean fan, poet and author of three fantastic novels plus the reference works *Who's Who in Crimean SF* (2004) and *Encyclopedia of Crimean SF* (2018), died on 21 August. [AM] ● **Matyelok Gibbs** (1932-2023), UK director and actress in *Erik the Viking* (1989), *Superstition* (2001) and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows 1* (2010), died on 14 August aged 91. [AIP] ● **Marc Gilpin** (1966-2023), US actor in *Jaws 2* (1978) and *Earthbound* (1981), died on 29 July aged 56. [AIP] ● **Dan Green** (1952-2023), US comics artist working mainly as an inker for Marvel – co-writing and illustrating the graphic novel *Doctor Strange: Into Shamballa* (1986), and known for a long run on *Uncanny X-Men* – died in August aged 70. ● **Linda Haynes** (1947-2023), US actress in *Latitude Zero* (1969) and *Human Experiments* (1979), died on 17 July aged 75. [SJ] ● **Ron Cephas Jones** (1957-2023), US actor in *Luke Cage* (2016-2018), died on 19 August aged 66. [SJ] ● **Mark Kemble** (1953-2023), US actor in *Netherworld* (1992), died on 14 August aged 69. ● **Tom Kempinski** (1938-2023), UK playwright and actor in *The Damned* (1962), *Moon Zero Two* (1969) and *Moonbase 3* (1973), died on 2 August aged 85. [AIP] ● **Darren Kent** (1987-2023), UK actor in *Jeepers Creepers: Reborn* (2022), *Dungeons & Dragons: Honour Among Thieves* (2023) and genre tv series including *Game of Thrones*, died on 11 August aged 36. [AIP] ● **Bill Laubenheimer** ('Moonmoth', 1956-2023), US fan and filk creator, a past LepreCon Music GoH, died on 19 July after arriving in Winnipeg for Pemmi-con; he was 66. [GG] ● **Sarah Lawson** (1928-2023), UK actress in *The Trollenberg Terror* (1956-1957), *Night of the Big Heat* (1967) and *The Devil Rides Out* (1968), died on 18 August aged 95. [AIP] ● **Mark Margolis** (1939-2023), US actor in *Tales from the Darkside: The Movie* (1990), *End of Days* (1999) and *The Fountain* (2006), died on 3 August aged 83. [LP] ● **Shunpei Maruyama**, Japanese producer of the tv anime series *Girls und Panzer* (2012-2013) and *Princess Principal* (2017) – both with film spinoffs – died in August. [LP] ● **Francis Monkman** (1949-2023), UK musician on the soundtracks of *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Superman II* (1980), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and others including James Bond films, died on 12 May aged 73. [AIP] ● **Clifton Oliver** (1975-2023), US actor in the Broadway stage musicals *The Lion King* and *Wicked*, died on 2 August aged 47. [LP] ● **Robert 'Ozzie' Osband** (1951-2023), Florida fan and space enthusiast who was on the New York in '83 Worldcon bid committee, died on 6 August. [DD] ● **Hersha Parady** (1945-2023), US actress in *Hyper Sapien: People from Another Star* (1986), died on 23 August aged 78. [LP] ● **Sir Michael Parkinson** (1935-2023), noted UK tv presenter who played versions of himself in *Madhouse* (1974) and *Ghostwatch* (1992), died on 16 August aged 88. ● **Arthur Schmidt** (1937-2023), US film editor whose credits include *Back to the Future* (1985 plus sequels), *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), *Death Becomes Her* (1992), *Addams Family Values* (1993) and *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003), died on 5 August aged 86. [AIP] ● **Arleen Sorkin** (1955-2023), US actress and comedian who inspired the DC Comics character Harley Quinn and voiced the role in *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992-1994) plus several more animations and videogames, died on 26 August aged 67. ● **Robert Swan** (1944-2023), US actor in *Somewhere in Time* (1980) and *C.S.A.: The Confederate States of America* (2004), died on 9 August aged 78. [LP] ● **R.J. Theodore** (Rekka Jay, 1980-2023), author of the genre series 'Peridot Shift' – opening with *Flotsam* (2018) – and 'Phantom Traveler', died on 18 July aged 43. [SFWA] ● **Vera Vasilyeva** (1925-2023), Russian actress in the Bradbury-based tv miniseries *Vino iz oduvanchikov* (*Dandelion Wine*, 1997), died on 9 August aged 97. [AM] ● **Peter Vaughan-Clarke** (1957-2023), UK actor in *The Tomorrow People* (1973-1976), died in August aged 66. ● **Igor Yasulovich** (1941-2023), Russian actor in sf/fantasy films from the J.B. Priestley-based *31 June* (1978) via *Mary Poppins*, *Goodbye* (1984) to *Anyone But Them* (2018), died on 19 August aged 81. [AM]

Reading Old SF. *Brexit Metaphor*: "I grieved when the British Isles were destroyed," said Dr. Oberhausen. "Such a lovely culture, really. So basically solid. Immovable. But that is weakness, also." (Frank Herbert, *The Dragon in the Sea*, 1956) ● *If Only He'd Written 'Florida'*: "... and from one forgotten pest-hole in Borneo, leprosy, long imagined extinct, re-appeared." (Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination*, 1956)

Listicle Horror. A claimed list of all-time sf bestsellers places *Brave New World* at #12 – 'unable to secure reliable figures' – and goes up from there, not all numbers being the latest: *The Martian* (3+ million sales), 2001 (3+m as of 1992), *Stranger in a Strange Land* (5m as of 1990), *The Handmaid's Tale* (8+m), *Frankenstein* (~8m), *Fahrenheit 451* (10+m as of 2011), *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (15+m), *Foundation* (20+m for the entire series), *Dune* (20+m), 1984 (30+m), and in top place *The Hunger Games* (100+m for the trilogy). (Bookriot.com, 8 August) [BA]

Outraged Letters. *Sam J. Lundwall* writes that his daughter Karin Lundwall 'as of right now has left her position as publishing manager at Forum, one of Sweden's biggest publishing houses, in order to be CEO of

the Science Fiction-Bokhandeln (the SF Book Store), taking over after the founder and CEO Maths Claesson who died earlier this year.' (Email, 25 August). ● *Lloyd Penney on A431*: 'Star Trek street names? I would have thought that Warp Drive would be at the top of the list.'

Random Fandom. *Chengdu Worldcon*: Infographics posted at a Chinese site linked to the local sf association include a panel of six guests of honour: Robert J. Sawyer and Liu Cixin as before, plus new additions Michael Swanwick, David Wesley Hill, Touya Tachihara and Kim Bo-young, while the controversial Russian guest Sergey Lukyanenko mysteriously isn't shown. (mp.weixin.qq.com, 17 August) ● *John Scalzi* just celebrated the 20th anniversary of his first sf convention (Whatever, 28 August); I plan to lie low for my corresponding 50th in November.

SFWA will now accept poetry and translated fiction – both in English only – as membership qualifications. (Email release, 21 August)

Going Postal. UK special stamps for 2023 have commemorated the X-Men, Robin Hood, *Blackadder*, *Warhammer* and Discworld (with Paul Kidby art): this month it's Paddington Bear and, in October, Harry Potter.

Magazine Scene. *Interzone* #295 is officially out on 5 September; the mailing of printed copies from Poland began in August. ● *The Magazine of Fantasy & SF* came under fire after buying a novelette from UK author David A. Riley, a member for ten years of the white-supremacist National Front who three times stood as an NF parliamentary candidate. *F&SF* editor Sheree Renée Thomas first thought: '... it's unethical for me to remove a story after I've already accepted it.' [F770] Publisher Gordon Van Gelder followed up: '*F&SF* recently accepted a story by a writer whose background, when we learned of it, turned out to be a cause for concern. We will not be publishing that story. / I stand by my editor's integrity, leadership, and vision for *F&SF*.' (Facebook, 28 August)

The Dead Past. *30 Years Ago*: 'John Grant, proofreading his tenth *Lone Wolf* fantasy, finds that "We thought you were a mercenary bursting in here in search of plunder" has been hugely improved to "We thought you were a mercenary bursting in here in search of a plumber".' 'Overheard: "Arthur C. Clarke is an English gentleman, and far too polite to say that he didn't enjoy a book. After all, he even gave a cover quote to Ben Bova's *Mars*.'" (*Ansible* 74, September 1993)

Cautionary Tale. Sarah Stusek's novel *Three Rivers* was to be published this month by Sparkpress, but Stusek had an online tantrum when one of several advance reviews gave it *only four stars*: 'I had a perfect 5 star average till this bitch came up.' Her refusal to apologize, together with a revenge pile-on of unfair one-star reviews at Goodreads etc. by people who hadn't read the book, persuaded the publisher to drop this author altogether. (Black Gate, 29 August) Oh dearie me.

Fanfunder. *Con or Bust*: the Goldman Fund assisting Palestinians to travel to sf events is now open for its first year's applicants, with the 2024 Glasgow Worldcon as destination. More at tinyurl.com/4hfv3b44.

● *GUFF*: Alison Scott, the 2020 winner, is at last making her delayed Australian trip – arriving in Sydney on 26 September, flying home from Perth on 30 October. ● *TAFF*: Sandra Bond is safely home from her US TAFF adventures. ('Taking my first bath in five weeks. BLISS.') The next TAFF ebook compiled by Rob Hansen is *Generation Femizine*, centred on the 1950s fanzine *Femizine* that was a rallying point for female UK fans – October publication is hoped. Meanwhile, following its ebook release, *Rob's British SF Conventions Volume 1: 1937-1951* has now been added to the select list of TAFF-benefit paperbacks at ae.ansible.uk/?id=taff.

C.o.A. *The Discworld Emporium* (see A432) has moved to Guild House, Station Road, Wincanton, Somerset, BA9 9FE. [FS]

Thog's Masterclass. *Expressionist Dept.* 'Olli watched the disparate pieces of Idris's face chase each other about as he tried to get his thoughts in order.' (Adrian Tchaikovsky, *Lords of Uncreation*, 2023) [DL] ● *Neat Tricks*. 'Just before performing his critical experiment, Professor Lidenbrock's eyes were throwing sparks out through his glasses.' (Jules Verne, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*" (1864; translated by William Butcher 1992) [CG] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky*. 'She winced visibly when Jarvik pulled her eyes away.' (David Eddings, *Pawn of Prophecy*, 1982) [AR] 'His eyes left the garish counter where a disinterested young girl was flipping through a magazine, sliding across the various tables until they came to rest on a mound of dark, curly hair popping over the top of a booth near the back of the shop.' (Drew Hayes, *Super Powereds: Year 3*, 2015) [GS] ● *Crawling Dept.* 'Thanasset's eyebrows tried to crawl up over his jutting supraorbital ridges.' (Randall Garrett and Vicki Ann Heydron, *The Steel of Raithskar*, 1981) [AR]