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Happy New Year. It seems that 2 January 2018 is a highly appropriate *Ansible* publication day for our US readers: 'National Science Fiction Day is celebrated annually on January 2nd by millions of science fiction fans across the United States.' (Nationaldaycalendar.com) [DB] Who knew? • Pardon this intrusion, but 1 January 2018 was the 200th anniversary of the first publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Year 2018!

Arthur C. Clarke's 100th birthday on Saturday 16 December was noted by various newspapers, with the *Grauniad* celebrating it several days early. Crossword-setter and sf fan 'Phi' marked the occasion with a Clarke-themed puzzle whose solvers had to construct and spot the missing term in the sequence MMXMMLXIMMMI. (i, 16 December)

Bill Crider, US author and critic who is best known for crime fiction but has also written horror and supernatural stories and won a Sidewise Award for alternate history, has had cancer for some years and on 5 December announced his move into hospice care: 'A few weeks, a few months is about all I have left.' (billcrider.blogspot.co.uk)

Bill Finger (1914-1974), uncredited during his lifetime as co-creator of Batman, was immortalized on 8 December by the renaming of East 192nd Street in the Bronx, New York, as Bill Finger Way. [AIP]

Mark Hammill bursts free from a cruelly confining pigeonhole: 'From the start the *Star Wars* films have been about the greater good. We get pigeonholed as science fiction, but there's much more to it than that. All those themes you find in fairy tales—friendship, loyalty, heroism—well, "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away" is pretty close to "Once upon a time."' (*Parade* magazine, 3 December) [MMW]

Frank Herbert looks likely to be honoured in his home town of Tacoma, Washington—assuming the final decision this month goes as expected—with part of a new park being called the Dune Peninsula, featuring the Frank Herbert Trail. (*News Tribune*, 7 December) [AIP]

Adam Roberts festively tweeted: 'Marley was Dredd, to begin with. "I AM THE LAW," he bellowed, gunning down carol singers with his Lawgiver and sending Tiny Tim to the isocubes for being in breach of megacity regulations regarding leg functionality.' (21 December)

Jodie Whittaker, according to the all-knowing BBC, 'made her debut as the first female Time Lord in the Christmas special of *Doctor Who*.' (BBC, 25 December) 5,271,009 fans duly pointed out that female Time Lords have long been part of the *Doctor Who* canon and that this is rather like calling Margaret Thatcher the first female MP.

Liz Williams feels even more than usually doomed: 'my novella [*Phosphorus*] has been printed, but in being delivered by courier to my publisher, all the copies have gone missing. But it turns out they have been accidentally kidnapped by the United States Air Force, in that they were mistakenly delivered to an airbase instead of my publisher and someone who now cannot be traced signed for them. / Ian [*Whates*] can't just rock up at an airbase and demand a load of books set on Mars because he'll be shot or sent to Area 51 or something, so the courier now has to sort this out on Tuesday. / Why does this sort of thing always happen to me? Don't answer that.' (Facebook, 30 December)

Convocant

23 Jan • **Frankenstein and Its Legacy** (panel discussion), Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle St, London, W1S 4BS. 7-8:30pm. £16/£10 concessions; members and patrons £7. See tinyurl.com/y99qqrw6.

24 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Artillery Arms, 102 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8ND. 5/6pm for 7pm. Speaker to be announced. Free.

2-4 Feb • **Enharmonicon** (filk), Best Western Hotel, Marks Tey, Colchester. £39 reg and £27 unwaged to 1 February, rising to £42 and £29 at the door; under-18s £1 per year of age; under-5s free. See www.contabile.org.uk/enharmonicon.

5 Feb • **Sci-Feb** (media), Humber Royal Hotel, Little Coates Road, Grimsby. £4 reg. See www.daydreamevents.uk/sci-feb.html.

17 Feb • **Picocon 35**, Beit Quadrangle, Imperial College, London. Guests are Ben Aaronovitch, Emma Newman, Chris Riddell and Paul

Stewart. £12 reg; £10 concessions; £8 ICSF members; past GoHs free (I like that one). See www.union.ic.ac.uk/scc/icsf/picocon/.

25 Feb • **Digi-Con 3** (sf/comics/anime), Doncaster Deaf Trust, Leger Way, Doncaster. From £10 reg; see www.digi-fest.co.uk.

30 Mar - 2 Apr • **Follycon** (Eastercon), Majestic Hotel, Harrogate. £80 reg; £45 YA/unwaged; £30 child (5-17) and supp; under-5s free. Day memberships TBA. Credit-card registration at www.follycon.org.uk.

19-22 Jul • **Nemo 2018** (Eurocon), Amiens, France. Now €50 reg, rising to €55 on 1 June; €60 at door. See eurocon2018.yolasite.com.

16-20 Aug • **Worldcon 76** (Worldcon), San José, CA, USA. \$210 reg; \$105 YA (15-21) and military; under-15s \$75; under-6s free; \$50 supp. *Instalment-plan memberships require a first payment by 31 January.* It's now too late to join as a 2018 Hugo nominator and voter, for which the deadline was 31 December 2017. See worldcon76.org.

24-27 Aug • **The Asylum** (steampunk), Lincoln. Ticket prices and extra event charges awaited at www.asylumsteampunk.co.uk.

26-27 Aug • **Stars of Time** (media), Tropicana, Weston-super-Mare. 10am-5:30pm. £6.50; child £3.50. See www.starsoftime.co.uk.

12-14 Oct • **Octocon**, ?Camden Court Hotel, Camden St, Dublin, Ireland (venue TBC). GoH Pat Cadigan. €25 reg; concessions €20; accompanied under-13s free; €10 supp. Join online at octocon.com.

26-31 Oct • **Edinburgh Horror Festival**, various city venues and programme to be announced. See www.edhorrorfest.co.uk.

26-28 Oct • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Pendulum Hotel, Manchester. £85 reg. Other rates TBA at fantastic-films.com.

2-4 Nov • **Armadacon 30**, Future Inn, Plymouth. £35 reg; other rates TBA. PayPal registration at www.armadacon.org.

9-11 Nov • **Novacon 48**, Park Inn, Nottingham. Now £48 reg, to be reviewed after the 2018 Eastercon. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. See www.novacon.org.uk.

Rumblings. *BristolCon's* date was mistyped in A365: it's 27 not 28 October 2018. [DA] See www.bristolcon.org. • **Retro Hugos:** The 2018 (San José) and 2019 (Dublin) Worldcons will present these awards for 1943 and 1944 respectively, honouring work from 1942 and 1943. • **Worldcon 75** (Helsinki, 2017) announced a distribution of surplus funds that includes €12,000 to each of the 2018, 2019 and 2020 Worldcons.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us Frothing. Actor Patrick Gilmore of *Stargate* etc. fame told an interviewer the secret of his success: 'The thing about science fiction is that it has something other genres don't have, and that is a rabid fan base.' (*Vancouver Sun*, 22 December) [FW]

Awards. *New Year's Honours 2018.* Michael Morpurgo, noted author of children's fiction including some fantasy, was knighted; so was Ringo Starr, whose genre credits include *Help!* (1965), *Son of Dracula* (1974) and voice work in the galaxy-spanning *Thomas the Tank Engine* franchise. Hugh Laurie, now a CBE, has also played occasional sf roles—not only in the various alternate histories of *Blackadder*.

Crystal Balls. French film director Jean-Pierre Melville said in a 1970 interview: 'I don't know what will be left of me fifty years from now. I suspect that all films will have aged terribly and that the cinema probably won't even exist any more. I estimate the final disappearance of cinemas as taking place around the year 2020, so in fifty years' time there will be nothing but television.' (*New Yorker*, 1 May 2017) [MMW]

R.I.P. *Jim Baikie* (1940-2017), Scots comics artist best known for *2000 AD* artwork, including Alan Moore's *Skizz* (1983-1995)—with two sequels written and drawn by Baikie—and episodes of *Judge Dredd*, died on 29 December aged 77. [GW] • *Harold Billings* (1931-2017), US librarian, supernatural fiction author and biographer of M.P. Shiel (two volumes published 2005, the third still awaited), died on 29 November aged 86. [PDF] • *Keith Chegwin* (1957-2017), UK actor and tv presenter whose credits include *The Troublesome Double* (1967), *The Tomorrow People* (1975 tv) and *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), died on 11 December aged 60. [JB] • *Alfie Curtis* (1930-2017), UK actor who was Dr. Evazan in *Star Wars* (1977), died on 26 December aged 87. • *Dominic Frontiere*

(1931-2017), US composer of theme and incidental music for the first season of *The Outer Limits* (1963-1964 tv), died on 21 December aged 86. [RCh] Further music credits include *Incubus* (1966), *The Flying Nun* (1967), *The Invaders* (1967-1968) and *The Immortal* (1969-1971). ● **Bob Givens** (1918-2017), US artist and animation worker with Disney from 1937 (Donald Duck, *Snow White*) and Warner Bros. from 1940 (where he redesigned Bugs Bunny and later drew *Tom & Jerry*), died on 14 December aged 99. [PDF] ● **Annie Goetzinger** (1951-2017), award-winning French comics artist, died on 20 December aged 66. [F770] ● **Howard Gottfried** (1923-2017), US producer of *Altered States* (1980), died on 8 December aged 94. [AIP] ● **Alain Jessua** (1932-2017), French director and screenwriter whose films include *Shock Treatment* (1973), *Paradis pour tous* (1982), *Frankenstein 90* (1984) and *The Colours of the Devil* (1997), died on 30 November; he was 85. [GC/PDF] ● **Suzanna Leigh** (1945-2017), UK actress whose films include *Tom Thumb* (1963), *The Deadly Bees* (1966), *The Lost Continent* (1968), *Lust for a Vampire* (1971), *Beware My Brethren* (1972) and *Son of Dracula* (1974), died on 12 December aged 72. [SG] ● **Rose Marie** (1923-2017), US comedy actress whose occasional genre credits include *Witchboard* (1986) and *Sandman* (1993), died on 28 December aged 94. [PDF] ● **Heather Menzies-Urich** (1949-2017), Canadian-born US *Sound of Music* actress with genre credits in *Sssssss* (1973), *Logan's Run* (1977-1978 tv), *Piranha* (1978), *Captain America* (1979) and *Endangered Species* (1982), died on 24 December aged 68. [GD] ● **Heather North** (1945-2017), US actress who from 1970 voiced Daphne in *Scooby-Doo*, *Where Are You* and its many spinoffs, died on 30 November aged 71. [F770] Another voice credit was *Captain Caveman and the Teen Angels* (1977-1980). ● **Dick Orkin** (1933-2017), US actor and radio producer who created and starred in the widely syndicated superhero-spoof radio series *Chickenman* (launched 1966 as a *Batman* parody), died on 24 December aged 84. [PDF] ● **Martin Ransohoff** (1927-2017), US film/tv producer whose credits include *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967) and *Nightwing* (1979), died on 13 December aged 90. His tv production house Filmways was responsible for *Mister Ed* (1961-1966) and *The Addams Family* (1964-1966). [AIP] ● **Lona Rietschel** (1933-2017), award-winning German comics artist, died on 19 December 2017 aged 84. [F770] ● **Tommy Silverros** (1961-2017), Swedish fan who was active in the Malmö sf group, comics and Tolkien fandoms, and worked on the Helsinki Worldcon, died on 24 November aged 55. [J-HH] ● **Michiru Shimada** (1959-2017), Japanese writer for much anime from 1980 to the 2017 tv series *Little Witch Academia*, died on 15 December aged 58. [PDF] ● **Joe Wehrle, Jr.**, US author, illustrator and fan whose artwork appeared in *Galaxy*, *If*, *Whispers* and various small-press publications, died on 10 December aged 76. [F770] ● **Leslie H. Whitten** (1928-2017), US author of the horror novels *Progeny of the Adder* (1965), *Moon of the Wolf* (1967), *The Alchemist* (1973) and *The Fangs of Morning* (1994), died on 2 December aged 89. [MMW]

The Weakest Link. *Jeopardy* answer: 'The Ministry of Information Retrieval may or may not be in South America in this 1985 dystopian film.' Contestant: 'What is *Blade Runner*?' (28 December) [AIP]

Court Circular. The Lexis-Nexis Top 10 Copyright Rulings of 2017 include the decision in favour of publishers and literary estates in the suit against Fredrik Colting and his Moppet Books, whose *KinderGuides* were abridged children's versions of copyright texts (among them Arthur C. Clarke's *2001*) with brief study notes. As District Judge Jed Rakoff put it: 'Fair use ... is not a jacket to be worn over an otherwise infringing outfit. One cannot add a bit of commentary to convert an unauthorized derivative work into a protectable publication.' [AIP]

As Anthologists Saw Us. 'Ten years ago, a collection such as this would have been a collection of technological nightmares—crazy robots, poisoned wastelands, megalomaniac computers, fiendish subliminal advertising techniques, mega-death dealing microbes and warheads. [...] Today these nightmares are no longer the preserve of the science fiction writers. They are part of our daily lives.' (Anthony Cheetham introducing his *Science Against Man*, 1970) What a surge of nostalgia one feels for those crazy robots and other everyday perils of 1970.

SF Encyclopedia. The magic-number landmark of 2017 was 20,000 cover images in the *SFE* Picture Gallery, achieved in November.

Magazine Scene. Kelly Abbott's app-based multi-genre fiction magazine *Great Jones Street*, launched in 2016, closed down on 31 December—although 'Our catalog is for sale, and there are some interested buyers.' The app itself will also be for sale. [PDF]

Random Fandom. *Leroy Kettle's* collected fanzine writing from the 1970s and 1980s (including the complete run of his poll-topping fanzine *True Rat*, with a few strategic omissions to protect the guilty)

is now available as *True Rat: The Beast of Leroy Kettle*, edited by the indefatigable Rob Hansen. This is the latest of 25 free fandom-related ebooks downloadable from taff.org.uk/ebooks.php. If you enjoy any of these, a contribution to TAFF is always welcomed. ● In response to fan demand, all TAFF ebooks are now also available as PDF documents.

The Dead Past. *70 Years Ago*, a leading UK stage critic mused: 'Am thinking of starting a movement to be called "Kafka Is Balls", with a club of which I propose to make myself Perpetual President. Not on the strength of having read Kafka—indeed, I have never opened him—but because of what the high-brow magazines tell me about him. Am considering a button with the letters P.P.K.I.B.C. Perpetual President Kafka Is Balls Club.' (James Agate, *Ego* 9, 1948) ● *20 Years Ago*, a cheery editorial now overlaid with much sadness: 'News of Arthur C. Clarke's New Year knighthood for "services to literature" led to debate over whether this is a first for sf. The obvious contender Kingsley Amis was probably knighted in spite of, not because of, his sf/fantasy; the same goes for Compton Mackenzie and Angus Wilson. Fred Hoyle got it for science. Rather dispiritingly, Conan Doyle's and H. Rider Haggard's knighthoods were for Approved Politics, as indeed was Thomas More's ... (Lord Dunsany inherited his title and doesn't count.) So dear old Arthur C. does seem to be the first wholly science-fictional knight. Which of the usual suspects could be next? No doubt Ladbroke's will soon announce their long-term odds on Sir Brian Aldiss, Sir Iain Banks, Sir Terry Pratchett, Sir Iain M. Banks ...' (*Ansible* 126, January 1998)

C.o.A. **Chuck Connor**, 81 Peterborough Road, Crowland, Lincolnshire, PE6 0BB.

Outraged Letters. **Lloyd Penney** on Gregory Benford in *A364*: 'Margaret Atwood is such a revered figure here, I actually cannot see anyone here trying to take her down, in any way possible, so it is good to see non-Canadians doing so, and at least attempting to take the piss out of her. Good on yer, Greg.' (27 December)

R.I.P. II. A few that *Ansible* missed in 2017: **William L. Hamling** (1921-2017), US author, editor and original First Fandom member who began to publish sf in 1939, died on 29 June aged 96. He was managing editor of *Amazing* and *Fantastic* 1948-1951, and editor and publisher of *Imagination* 1951-1958 and of *Rogue* (which he founded) from 1955. ● **Vic Lockman** (1927-2017), hugely prolific comics artist and writer of Disney, Hanna-Barbera and Warner Bros scripts for Western Publishing's Dell and Gold Key titles c1950-1984, thereafter producing countless Christian-themed comics (*Link Lizard Defeats Evolution*), died on 1 June aged 89. [ME] ● **Hank Searls** (1922-2017), US author and screenwriter whose best-known novel is the sf *The Pilgrim Project* (1964, filmed 1968 as *Countdown*), died on 17 February aged 94.

Fanfundery. **DUFF:** Nominations are open until 31 January for the 2018 Down Under Fan Fund race from Australia or New Zealand to North America for, most probably, the San José Worldcon. For more details see downunderfanfund.wordpress.com. ● **GUFF:** nominations are open for the 2018 Going Under Fan Fund southbound race from Europe to Australasia, closing on 15 February with voting until 3 April. The winner will attend Continuum in Melbourne (8-11 June). For full details see ozfanfunds.com/?page_id=92. ● **TAFF:** 2018 candidates (see taff.org.uk) are mercilessly interrogated in John Purcell's third newsletter, posted in late December at taff.org.uk/news/TaffNews03.pdf.

Thog's Masterclass. **Self-Improvement Dept.** 'His stunned brain groped to pull itself up by its bootstraps.' (Emil Petaja, *Lord of the Green Planet*, 1967) ● **Classical Eyeballs in the Sky.** 'It seemed that I was struck by some such light / That broke, reflected back, ahead of me, / Causing my eyes, in flight, to speed away.' (Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*; trans Robin Kirkpatrick, Penguin Classics, 2007) [JFH] ● **One-Legged Horde Dept.** 'The oncoming horde tripped over three writhing forms at its foot ...' (Robert E. Howard, 'The Slithering Shadow', 1933) [MJE] ● **Dept of Scornful Sibillance.** "'You disgust me," I said, each word a hiss.' (Francesca Haig, *The Forever Ship*, 2017) [DVB] ● **Stealth Flyer Dept.** '... they'd carted him across the Atlantic Ocean in an airship wrapped up in gauze bandages and disguised as a patient recovering from a facelift.' (Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 2009) [RCo] ● **The Fruits of Rhetoric.** 'His enormous hand closed over the telephone receiver like a bunch of bananas falling off a tree and landing on a small black beetle.' ('Karl Zeigfreid' [guess who], *Android*, 1962)

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