

# ansible



## Ansible® 392 March 2020

From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website [news.ansible.uk](http://news.ansible.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Ulrika O'Brien. Available for SAE or schematics for building a contrdragon.

### The Blue World

**Dominic Cummings** is profiled: 'His voluminous writings suggest no cultivated interest in the study of art or music, nor, a few allusions to Dostoevsky and Tolstoy aside, in literature, or anyway not in literary criticism, though one wonders whether he might not have a taste for certain forms of science fiction.' (*Guardian*, 6 February) [MMW]

**Boris Johnson's** synopsis of his 2015 film script *Mission to Assyria* came to light in late 2019. This 'glorious wish-fulfilment dream movie, a mixture of *Golan-Globus* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*', stars Marmaduke Montmorency Burton, an 'old Clooney/Connery/Eastwood-type geezer in his fifties, and a 'gorgeous but scholarly archaeologist' (Angelina Jolie or Scarlett Johansson). The mission: to save an ancient Syrian city from ISIS bad guys led by 'a horrible cologne-drenched jihadi with an air of mincing menace'. Helicopters go 'Dugga dugga dugga thwok thwok thwok', enemies are 'spifflicated' with a shovel, and Marmaduke finishes off that cologne-drenched mincing jihadi with the memorable words 'Aargh. Splatteroo.' The script itself is apparently lost, leaving *Plan 9 from Outer Space* safe on its pedestal of fame. (*The Author*, Winter 2019)

**Stephen King** announced (via Twitter) his departure from Facebook, saying he wasn't comfortable with the 'flood of false information allowed in its political advertising'. (*Guardian*, 3 February) [PB]

**Dean Koontz's** use of 'Wuhan-400' for an engineered virus in *The Eyes of Darkness* has, er, gone viral – though that 1981 novel called it Gorki-400; it was changed in a 2008 reprint. (Snopes.com, 18 February)

**George R.R. Martin** is pleased that palaeontologists have named a 'new' genus of pterosaur for House Targaryen in *Game of Thrones: Targaryendraco wiedenrothi*. (*Guardian*, 26 February) [EJ]

### Conquistador

13-14 Mar • **Starburst Film Festival**, The Landing, Salford. 5pm-1am. Tickets £33.25. See [starburstmagazine.com/filmfestival/](http://starburstmagazine.com/filmfestival/).

20 Mar • **Futurefest** (futurology), Tobacco Dock, London. 10am-10pm. Tickets £80; students £35. More at [www.futurefest.org](http://www.futurefest.org).

3 Apr • **H.G. Wells & the Spiders From Mars** (play-in-progress, 'partly fully staged and partly a readthrough'), Cockpit Theatre, London: [www.rawillumination.net/2020/02/hg-wells-spiders-from-mars.html](http://www.rawillumination.net/2020/02/hg-wells-spiders-from-mars.html).

4 Apr • **Bedford Who Charity Con** (*Doctor Who*), University Theatre, Bedford, MK41 9EA. 10am-5:30pm. £42.50 reg; under-19s/students £22.50; under-14s £15. More at [bedfordwhocharitycon.co.uk](http://bedfordwhocharitycon.co.uk).

4-5 Apr • **Sci-Fi Scarborough** (multimedia), The Spa, Scarborough. Tickets (per day only) are available at [scifiscarborough.co.uk](http://scifiscarborough.co.uk).

10-13 Apr • **Concentric** (Eastercon), Hilton Metropole near the Birmingham NEC. Now £90 reg; concessions £60; under-18s £30. Day rates £20 Fri or Mon, £40 Sat or Sun: more at [www.concentric2020.uk](http://www.concentric2020.uk).

16-19 Apr • **StokerCon** (horror), Grand and Royal Hotels, Scarborough. £130 reg; HWA members £120. See [stokercon-uk.com](http://stokercon-uk.com).

17-19 Apr • **Springmoot** (Tolkien Society), Mercure Exeter Rougemont Hotel. Includes AGM for members only, and annual dinner. See [www.tolkiensociety.org/events/springmoot-and-agm-2020/](http://www.tolkiensociety.org/events/springmoot-and-agm-2020/).

6 Jun • **Carlisle Comic Con**, Carlisle. 9:30am (£10) or 10:30am (£8) to 5pm. Other rates at [www.wonkyrocketevents.co.uk/carlisle/](http://www.wonkyrocketevents.co.uk/carlisle/).

1-2 Jul • **Science for Fiction**, Imperial College, London. Science presentations for published authors only: afternoon of 1st, all day 2nd. £30 including catering. Contact Dave Clements, [davecl@mac dot com](mailto:davecl@mac dot com).

26 Jul • **Forever Avon** (*Blake's 7*; was Maximum Power), Steventon Village Hall, Steventon, Oxfordshire. 10am-4pm. Tickets £26.64 including fee. Booking via [www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon](http://www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon).

29 Jul - 2 Aug • **CoNZealand** (Worldcon 78), Wellington, New Zealand. Now NZD \$450 reg; \$250 YA; \$225 unwaged; \$105 child (born 2005+), infants (born 2015 +) free, \$75 supp. *Hugo nominations are still open, closing on 13 March*. See [conzealand.nz](http://conzealand.nz).

9-11 Oct • **Lakes International Comic Art Festival**, Kendal, Cumbria. 'Early bird' weekend passes now on sale at £30; students and under-16s £20; rates rise on 1 April. See [www.comicartfestival.com](http://www.comicartfestival.com).

24 Oct • **Whooverville 12** (*Doctor Who*), QUAD Centre, Derby,

DE1 3AS. Tickets £50; concessions £33; under-12s £10; bookings are open at [www.derbyquad.co.uk](http://www.derbyquad.co.uk), now linked from [whooverville.org](http://whooverville.org).

31 Oct • **BristolCon**, Hilton DoubleTree Hotel, Bristol. £25 reg; £15 concessions and under-18s (£30/£20 from June, £35/£25 at door); under-14s free. Online registration now open at [www.bristolcon.org](http://www.bristolcon.org).

31 Oct - 1 Nov • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Manchester. £90 reg, rising to £99 on 1 April. See [fantastic-films.com/festival/](http://fantastic-films.com/festival/).

13-15 Nov • **Novacon 50**, Mercure Nottingham Sherwood Hotel, Nottingham. £50 reg (*may rise at or after Easter*); under-17s £12; under-13s free. Registration is now open at [novacon.org.uk](http://novacon.org.uk).

5-7 Feb 2021 • **Long Play**, '33 (and 1/3)rd UK Filk Convention', Union Hotel, Grantham. GoH Leslie Hudson (overseas), Chris O'Shea (UK). Registration details awaited at [www.contabile.org.uk](http://www.contabile.org.uk).

**Rumblings.** Worries about the COVID-19 coronavirus are bound to have an impact on large fan gatherings. Concentric is liaising with public health bodies and will discuss the situation with the hotel on 6 March.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** 'According to the statistics on display in Helen Taylor's lavishly publicised new study [*Why Women Read Fiction*], women bought 76 percent of the general fiction sold in the UK in 2017 and blokes a paltry 24 percent. Even when it came to the classics, women were still ahead (52 to 48) and it was only when you reached questionable sub-genres such as horror (46/54) and sci-fi (25/75) that the guys really came into their own.' (*Private Eye*, 7 February) [RF]

**Awards.** *Compton Crook* (first sf/h novel) shortlist: Mike Chen, *Here and Now and Then*; Alix Harrow, *The Ten Thousand Doors of January*; Ada Hoffman, *The Outside*; Arkady Martine, *A Memory Called Empire*; Sarah Pinsker, *A Song for a New Day*. • *Crawford* (debut fantasy novel): Tamsyn Muir, *Gideon the Ninth*. [L] • *Gaughan* (emerging artist): Iris Compiet. • *Horror Writers Association Life Achievement*: Owl Going-back, Thomas Ligotti. [F770] • *Irish Comic News Hall of Fame*: Pádraig Ó Méalóid. • *Nebula novel shortlist*: Charles E. Gannon, *Marque of Caine*; Alix E. Harrow, *The Ten Thousand Doors of January*; Arkady Martine, *A Memory Called Empire*; Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *Gods of Jade and Shadow*; Tamsyn Muir, *Gideon the Ninth*; Sarah Pinsker, *A Song for a New Day*. • *Oscars*: two wins for *Joker*, Joaquin Phoenix for best actor and Hildur Guðnadóttir for best score. Best animation: *Toy Story 4*. • *Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame*: Thomas Blackshear, Barbara Nessim, Drew Struzan; posthumously, Edmund Dulac, Jean Giraud (Moebius), Jeffrey Catherine Jones. [AIP] • *Skylark*: Betsy Wollheim.

**Seven-Sided Dinosaurs.** Three new UK 50p pieces, not for circulation but on sale at £10 per coin – coloured versions £20 – depict the *Megalosaurus*, *Iguanodon* and *Hylaeosaurus*. (Natural History Museum)

**R.I.P.** *Paul Barnett* (1949-2020), Scots author and editor active since the 1970s, usually as 'John Grant' – the first book with this byline being the 1979 sf anthology *Aries 1* – died on 3 February aged 70. He wrote 12 'Lone Wolf' novelizations based on Joe Dever's gamebooks; several solo novels of which the cosmological fantasy *The World* (1992) was most critically acclaimed; and much nonfiction including *Encyclopedia of Walt Disney's Animated Characters* (1987) and *A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Film Noir* (2013). He was technical editor of the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (1993) and co-editor with John Clute of *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997). On a personal note, he commissioned my first solo book back in the 1970s, collaborated with me on various sf convention newsletters and the genre parodies *Earthdoom* (1987) and *Guts* (2001), created the character Thog the Mighty who still presides over Thog's Masterclass, and was a close friend. His last email to me, shortly before his unexpected death, began: 'Many thanks for [Ansible 391]: lots of great reading, as always, and blessedly no nasty surprises among the obits.' (3 February) • *Orson Bean* (1928-2020), US actor whose genre credits include *The Star Wagon* (1966), *The Hobbit* (voice, 1977), *The Return of the King* (voice, 1980) and *Being John Malkovich* (1999), died on 7 February aged 91. [PDF] • *Zoe Caldwell* (1933-2020), Australian-born actress whose films include *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) and *Lilo & Stitch* (2002), died on 16 February aged

86. [GC] ● **Bob Cobert** (1924-2020), US composer with several genre credits from *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971) to *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016), died on 19 February aged 95. [LP] ● **Robert Cogger** (1964-2019), UK fan who was an early committee member of ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha and an organizer of the first Lazlar Lyricon in 1985, died on 29 December aged 55. [CB] ● **Raphaël Coleman** (1994-2020), UK actor in *Nanny McPhee* (2005), *The Fourth Kind* (2009) and *It's Alive* (2009), died on 6 February age 25. [PDF] ● **Robert Conrad** (1935-2020), US actor in *The Wild Wild West* (1965-1969 plus spinoff films), *The Fifth Missile* (1986) and *Jingle All the Way* (1996), died on 8 February aged 84. [MMW] ● **Kevin Conway** (1942-2020), US actor in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1972), *The Lathe of Heaven* (1980), *Lawnmower Man 2: Beyond Cyberspace* (1996) and *Black Knight* (2001), died on 5 February aged 77. [PDF] ● **Clive Cussler** (1931-2020), US author of *Raise the Titanic!* (1980) and many more techno-thrillers often including sf elements, died on 24 February aged 88. ● **Nick (Nicola) Cuti** (1944-2020), US author, artist, screenwriter and animation designer (*101 Dalmatians: The Series* and others), whose Moonchild/Moonie character featured in both comics and novels, died on 21 February aged 75. [SG] ● **Ellie de Ville**, long-time letterer for *2000AD* – working on *Slaine*, *Strontium Dog*, *Defoe*, *Lawless* and many others – died on 24 December aged 72. [SF<sup>2</sup>C] ● **Kirk Douglas** (1916-2020), famed veteran US actor whose genre credits include *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1973), *Saturn 3* (1980) and *The Final Countdown* (1980), died on 5 February aged 103. [LP] ● **George Dugdale**, horror director and screenwriter whose films were *Slaughter High* (1986) and *Living Doll* (1990), died on 14 January. [SG] ● **Freeman Dyson** (1923-2020), UK-born physicist who inspired many sf authors with his far-out speculations – most famously the ‘Dyson sphere’ (which he credited to Olaf Stapledon) – died on 28 February aged 96. ● **Victor Gorelick** (1941-2020), US comics editor who worked for over 60 years at Archie Comics and was editor-in-chief there from 2007, died on 7 February aged 78. [PDF] ● **Ron Haddrick** (1929-2020), Australian actor in *The Stranger* (1964-1965), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1970), *Shirley Thompson versus the Aliens* (1972), *The Haunting of Hewie Decker* (1976), *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1977) and others, died on 11 February aged 90. [GC] ● **Terry Hands** (1941-2020), noted UK theatre director with the Royal Shakespeare Company whose Broadway productions included the unsuccessful 1988 musical of Stephen King's *Carrie*, died on 4 February aged 79. [AIP] ● **Alan Harris** (1938-2020), UK stand-in and character actor in *Space: 1999* (1975-1977), several *Star Wars* films, two *Doctor Who* storylines (1977, 1986) and *Hellraiser* (1987), died on 25 January aged 81. [PDF] ● **Nancy Jean Holland**, US academic who wrote the nonfiction *Ontological Humility: Lord Voldemort and the Philosophers* (2013) and the Witch King fantasy trilogy (2018-2019), died on 25 January aged 72. [DL] ● **Patrick Jordan** (1923-2020), UK actor in *The Pink Panther Strikes Again* (1976), *Star Wars* (1977) and *Lifeforce* (1985), died on 10 February aged 96. [PDF] ● **Hisashi Katsuta** (1927-2020), Japanese voice actor best known as Professor Ochanomizu in *Astro Boy*, died on 21 February aged 92. [JC] ● **Paula Kelly** (1943-2020), US actress in *The Andromeda Strain* (1971), *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973) and *Soylent Green* (1973), died on 9 February aged 76. [GD] ● **Douglas Knapp** (1949-2020), US cinematographer with credits for *Escape from New York* (1981), *Beetlejuice* (1988), *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-2001) and *Star Trek: Enterprise* (2001-2005), died on 3 February aged 70. [AIP] ● **Myron Levoy** (1930-2019), US children's author whose *The Magic Hat of Mortimer Wintergreen* is fantasy, died on 30 December aged 89. [PDF] ● **Ron McLarty** (1947-2020), US actor in *The Postman* (1997), died on 8 February aged 72. [PDF] ● **Michael Medwin** (1923-2020), UK actor in *Scrooge* (1970), *Never Say Never Again* (1983) and others, died on 26 February aged 96. [PDF] ● **Kellye Nakahara** (1950-2020), US M\*A\*S\*H actress who was in *Doctor Dolittle* (1998), died on 16 February aged 70. [PDF] ● **Barbara Remington** (1929-2020), US illustrator who created the cover art for the first Ballantine paperbacks of J.R.R. Tolkien and E.R. Eddison, died on 23 January aged 90. [SE] ● **Gene Reynolds** (1923-2020), US M\*A\*S\*H producer who directed episodes of *The Munsters* (1966), *The Ghost & Mrs. Muir* (1968), *Lois & Clark* (1993) and *Touched by an Angel* (1995-1998), died on 3 February aged 96. ● **Elyse Rosenstein**, US fan who proposed and co-organized the first *Star Trek* convention (New York, January 1972), died on 20 February aged 69. [AIP] ● **John Shrapnel** (1942-2020), UK actor in *Fatherland* (1994), *101 Dalmatians* (1996), *Invasion: Earth* (1998), *Apparitions* (2008) and *Mirrors* (2008), died on 14 February aged 77. [SG] ● **George Steiner** (1929-2020), French-born author and literary critic in whose controversial novella *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* (1981) Hitler is found alive and self-justifying thirty years after World War II ended, died on 3 February aged 90. ● **Dyanne**

**Thorne** (1936-2020), US actress in *Pinocchio* (1971), *Blood Sabbath* (1972), *Wham Bam Thank You Spaceman* (1975) and *House of Forbidden Secrets* (2013), died on 28 January aged 83. [PDF] ● **Eugen V. Witkowski** (1950-2020), Russian author and translator whose works include the historical fantasy *Paul II* (2000) and two Strugatsky Prize-winning sequels, died on 3 February aged 69. [PDF]

**As Others See Us II.** Anne Fadiman on Clifton Fadiman: ‘Our father’s library spanned the globe and three millennia, although it was particularly strong in English poetry and fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The only junk, relatively speaking, was science fiction ...’ (*Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*, 1998)

**Publishers & Sinners.** Marcus Gipps, editorial director of Gollancz and its SF Gateway ebook operation, was upgraded to publishing director in mid-February. (*The Bookseller*, 13 February). [CP] In other news, there have been hints that future funding of the online *SF Encyclopedia* – linked with and feeding referrals to SF Gateway – may not be assured.

**Random Fandom.** John D. Berry reports that Fort George Brewery won an Oregon Beer Award Gold Medal for its Fanzine IPA. (20 Feb)

**Words, Words, Words.** A 2020 discovery: all the dictionaries seem to have missed Alfred Bester’s coinage in *The Demolished Man* (serialized 1952 in *Galaxy*) of the then futuristic word ‘audiobook’. [DS]

**BSFA Awards Shortlist.** NOVEL Juliet E. McKenna, *The Green Man's Foe*; Emma Newman, *Atlas Alone*; Gareth L. Powell, *Fleet of Knives*; Adrian Tchaikovsky, *Children of Ruin*; Tade Thompson, *The Rosewater Insurrection*. ● SHORTER Becky Chambers, *To Be Taught, If Fortunate*; Amal El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone, *This is How You Lose the Time War*; Fiona Moore, ‘Jolene’ (*Interzone* 283); Gareth L. Powell, *Ragged Alice*; Tade Thompson, *The Survival of Molly Southbourne*; Ian Whates, ‘For Your Own Good’ (*Wourism*). ● NON-FICTION Farah Mendlesohn, *The Pleasant Profession of Robert A. Heinlein*; Glyn Morgan & C Palmer-Patel, eds., *Sideways in Time: Critical Essays on Alternate History Fiction*; Gareth L. Powell, *About Writing*; Adam Roberts, *H.G. Wells: A Literary Life*; Jo Lindsay Walton, *Away Day: Star Trek and the Utopia of Merit*. ● ARTWORK (all covers): Aitch & Rachel Vale, *Deelight* by Frances Hardinge (UK); Chris Baker (Fangorn), *Wourism* by Ian Whates; Julia Lloyd, *Fleet of Knives* by Gareth L. Powell; Charlotte Stroomer, *The Rosewater Redemption* by Tade Thompson; Richard Wagner, *Interzone* 284.

**The Dead Past.** *25 Years Ago*, ‘The U of Liverpool’s student newspaper covered the Arthur C. Clarke degree conferment [...]: the book of which ACC said “no other ... had a greater influence on my life” is cited as *Last and First Nun*. I look forward to appropriate plot summaries.’ (Andy Sawyer, *Ansible* 92, March 1995) ● *80 Years Ago*, a warning came from the office of *Astounding SF*: ‘One Benedict Frank Unselt has been causing a bit of trouble recently by alleging to various publishers that L. Ron Hubbard is his pseudonym. Unselt is of medium height, medium build, and has short, sandy-brown hair. [...] Mr L Ron Hubbard is naturally on the lookout for this imposter. / Anyone who had met Mr Hubbard would describe him as tall, gaunt and rugged in appearance; his hair is flaming red.’ (*Science Fiction Weekly* 4, March 1940)

**Editorial.** *Beyond the Outposts*, that fat Ansible Editions collection of Algis Budrys essays, is nearing publication with a first proof copy now awaited: 366 pages, 203,600 words, and 97 footnotes. Stay tuned....

**Fanfunder.** *GUFF 2020* reminder: the voting deadline is 13 April. Candidates and ballot at ozfanfunds.com/?page\_id=152. ● *DUFF 2020* reminder: the voting deadline is 27 March. See downunderfanfund.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/2020-duff-race-ballot.pdf.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Eyes Wide Shut*. Introducing a character: ‘She was a honey blonde, deeply tanned, with light-brown eyes, full pale lips, and a sleek, elegant body. [...] She wore nothing, and she was in a deep sleep ...’ (Robert Silverberg, ‘How It Was When the Past Went Away’, 1970) [AB] ● *Engineering Dept.* ‘Alarm calls went out to guard the world destroying super-hydrogen plant, where chemicals had been manufactured for the purpose of disintegrating certain of the furthest planets so that the entire solar system could be reshuffled to give earth more light and warmth, and to make light and heat controllable.’ (Ralph L. Finn, *Freaks Against Supermen*, 1950) [BA] ● *Obstacle Course of True Love*. ‘I was still unable to come close to her, feeling her full heavy bosom pressed against my chest ...’ (*Ibid*) [BA] ● *Neat Tricks*. ‘Despite the cold lava dust both his hands were eating into his brain.’ (Roy Sheldon [H.J. Campbell], *Gold Men of Aureus*, 1951) [BA]

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