



Ansible® 443 June 2024

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: Atom, from the 1980s. Available for SAE, or the collected *Pensées* of the Abbé Fausse-Maigre.

## The Higher Common Sense

Neil Clarke loves these AI instructions on how to sell to his *Clarkesworld*: ‘While prior composing experiences can be valuable, it’s not in a general sense required to surrender to Clarkesworld Magazine. [...] From writer’s piece to expulsion, learn how to overcome common obstructions and stay impelled on your composing journey. / Writers commonly hold the rights to their work when submitting to Clarkesworld Magazine, in showing disdain toward the truth that specific terms may move depending on individual contracts or agreements.’ (Facebook, 28 May)

John Linwood Grant has engaged with happy user-friendly Kindle Direct Publishing. ‘ME: “Please unpublish this book because the publisher died. Here is the Funeral Home Notice, the pertinent contract, and all the book details.” KDP: “Please have them contact us from their own email. Have a lovely day.”’ (Facebook, 10 May) Ouija boards are now sought.

Ryan Reynolds, co-star with Hugh Jackman of the superhero movie *Deadpool & Wolverine*, issued a brutally honest disclaimer: ‘This film is as paper thin as a sequel to *Battlefield Earth*.’ (IMDb, 21 May)

Adam Roberts, in a backward-gazing review of Chris Foss’s 1990 graphic work *Diary of a Spaceperson*, boggled at its rich mix of hardware (massive spaceships) and soft porn (the narrator’s all too frequently bare bosom, partly because future muggers strip you of everything from the waist up): ‘You can see the lubricious cynicism of the pairing: you know who likes science fiction? Teenage boys. You know what else teenage boys like? Boobies. Let’s combine them! It’ll be a smash! It’s *Flasher Gordon*. It’s *The Empire Strips Off*. It’s *Book of the New Page-3-of-the-Sun*. It’s *The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Nudity*.’ (Sibilant Fricative, 9 May)

Jeff VanderMeer discovers another anomaly of Area X: ‘I’m on the *Locus* finalist list for best editor with Ann [VanderMeer] ... despite not having edited anything in ages. Ann has, but not me. So, anyways ... just cross my name out.’ (Facebook, 10 May). As usual the list is too long for *Ansible*: see locusmag.com/2024/05/2024-locus-awards-top-ten-finalists/.

## Contrefort

31 May - 2 Jun • **Cymera**: Scotland’s Festival of SF, Fantasy & Horror Writing, Edinburgh. See [www.cymerafestival.co.uk](http://www.cymerafestival.co.uk).

31 May - 2 Jun • **FunCon One**, Palace Hotel, Buxton. £65 reg; £80 with added ‘warm fuzzy feeling’; £40 concessions. See [funcon.lol](http://funcon.lol).

8-9 Jun • **EM-Con** (media), Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham. Weekend tickets £30 (11am entry) or £40 (10am) at [www.em-con.co.uk](http://www.em-con.co.uk).

9 Jun • **Seek-Locate-Celebrate** (*Blake’s 7*; formerly Forever Avon), Steventon Village Hall, Steventon, Oxford, OX13 5RR. 10am-4pm. See [www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon](http://www.facebook.com/TeamBlakeForeverAvon).

12 Jun • **Tolkien Lecture** by Neil Gaiman, Oxford Town Hall, Oxford. 6pm. See [tolkienlecture.org](http://tolkienlecture.org).

19-23 Jun • **Darkness in the Fields** (folk horror), online. £45 reg, £25 Sat/Sun only, plus fees. See [tinyurl.com/ditfmidsummer2](http://tinyurl.com/ditfmidsummer2).

21 Jun • **Summer Solstice at Jodrell Bank** (Alan Garner event), Jodrell Bank, Cheshire. £40 reg; students £32. See [tinyurl.com/43b23xnd](http://tinyurl.com/43b23xnd).

22-23 Jun • **Jupiter’s Ghost** (sf play by Tani Gill), The Cockpit, London. See [www.thecockpit.org.uk/show/jupiters\\_ghost](http://www.thecockpit.org.uk/show/jupiters_ghost).

22 Jun • **BSFA/SF Foundation AGM** online event, 9:45am-4pm. GoH Nina Allan. See 31 May post at [www.sf-foundation.org/fresh-about](http://www.sf-foundation.org/fresh-about).

22 Jun • **Stars of Time** (comics), LC, Steam Museum, Swindon. Adult ticket £17.50; other rates at [www.starsofetime.co.uk/swindon](http://www.starsofetime.co.uk/swindon).

6 Jul • **Tolkien Society Seminar** on his ‘Romantic Resonances’, Leeds Hilton and online. Free. See [www.tolkienesociety.org/events/](http://www.tolkienesociety.org/events/).

7 Jul • **Aintree-Con**, Aintree Racecourse. 10am-4pm. Adult tickets £11; other rates at [www.ljeventsentertainment.com](http://www.ljeventsentertainment.com).

19-21 Jul • **Fantasy Forest** (cosplay), Sudely Castle, Cheltenham. SOLD OUT except for a few Sunday-only tickets: see [fantasyforest.co.uk](http://fantasyforest.co.uk).

26-29 Jul • **Continuum** (RPG), Cranfield University CMDC. £60 reg; day pass £25 for any day. See [continuumconvention.co.uk](http://continuumconvention.co.uk).

3-4 Aug • **Surrey Steampunk Convivial**, Stoneleigh, Epsom. See [bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial](http://bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial).

17-18 Aug • **For the Love of Fantasy**, ExCel, London. Tickets

£51.70; under-10s £22; under-5s free. See [www.fortheloveoffantasy.com](http://www.fortheloveoffantasy.com).

17 Aug • **Small Press Day**, various events throughout the UK and Ireland, and online. More awaited at [smallpressday.co.uk](http://smallpressday.co.uk).

14 Sep • **Popcorn** (media), Magna, Sheffield. Tickets £12; under-17s £9.50; accompanied under-7s free. See [popcorncon.com](http://popcorncon.com).

7-8 Dec • **Women in the Black Fantastic** (SF Foundation conference), online. Call for papers (by 2 August) at [tinyurl.com/2s4m2bbf](http://tinyurl.com/2s4m2bbf).

5 Apr 2025 • **Bedford Who Charity Con** (*Doctor Who*), King’s House, Amptill Road, Bedford, MK42 9AZ. 10am-5:30pm. Tickets £49.50; under-14s £20. See [bedfordwhocharitycon.co.uk](http://bedfordwhocharitycon.co.uk).

**Rumblings**. *Glasgow 2024 Worldcon*: the Hugo Voter Packet was released on 20 May. Membership rates rise to the final at-the-door level on 1 July. See [glasgow2024.org](http://glasgow2024.org). • *Levitation* (Eastercon 2024) has issued a Final Report including venue assessment and accounts – suggesting this event would have had serious financial difficulties without the £38,000+ ‘pass along’ funding from previous Eastercons – at [eastercon2024.co.uk/report](http://eastercon2024.co.uk/report). • *Middle-earth Festival*, September (formerly at Sarehole Mill, Birmingham; a new venue has long been promised): owing to lack of funds and sponsorship there will be no 2024 event. • *Son of Chengdu?* The Chinese local-government and business interests that apparently took control of the 2023 Chengdu Worldcon away from both Chinese and overseas fandom have announced a grandiose ten-year sf development plan that includes another Worldcon bid within five years. [F770]

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us**. *Which Story Was That?*: ‘The stereotypical sci-fi citizen is cold, sombre, aloof and efficient.’ (*Guardian*, 19 May) [DA]

**Awards**. *Arthur C. Clarke Award* shortlist: *Chain-Gang All-Stars* by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, *The Ten Percent Thief* by Lavanya Lakshminarayan, *In Ascension* by Martin MacInnes, *The Mountain in the Sea* by Ray Nayler, *Some Desperate Glory* by Emily Tesh, *Corey Fah Does Social Mobility* by Isabel Waidner. Winner to be announced on 24 July. • *Robert A. Heinlein Memorial Award*: William Shatner. • *SFRA Award for Lifetime Contributions to SF Scholarship*: Lisa Yaszek. [L] • *SFWA Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award*: Jennell Jaquays (posthumous).

**Blurbismo**. *Dept of Contemporaries*: ‘The best writers of the early 1900s were the first to flood New York with tidal waves, destroy Illinois with alien invaders, paralyze Washington with meteors, and lay waste to the Midwest with nuclear fallout. Now collected for the first time ever in one apocalyptic volume are those early doomsday writers and their contemporaries, including Neil Gaiman, Orson Scott Card, Lucius Shepard, Robert Shekley, Norman Spinrad ...’ (Amazon description of Martin H. Greenberg’s anthology *The End of the World*, 2010) [AW]

**R.I.P.** *Susan Backlinie* (1946-2024), US actress in *Jaws* (1975), *Day of the Animals* (1977) and *The Great Muppet Caper* (1981), died on 11 May aged 77. [AIP] • *Georg Bobjörk* (1952-2024), Swedish fan and convention worker active from 1979, whose infrequent fanzine was *40th Century Cat*, died on 15 May aged 72. [J-HH] • *Roger Bozzetto* (1937-2024), noted French critic who published many studies of sf and fantasy from 1992 to 2014, died on 20 March aged 87. [P-SF] • *John Michael Burns*, UK comics artist/colourist who worked on many Marvel UK titles including *X-Men*, died in February aged 76. [SH] • *Caleb Carr* (1955-2024), US author and screenwriter whose sf novel was *Killing Time* (2000), died on 23 May aged 68. Film credits include *The Osiris Chronicles* (1998) and two in the *Exorcist* franchise. [SJ] • *Dabney Coleman* (1932-2024), US actor in *WarGames* (1983), *Target Earth* (1998), *Stuart Little* (1999), *Meet the Applegates* (1990) and *Devil’s Food* (1996), died on 16 May aged 92. [LP] • *Roger Corman* (1926-2024), US film-maker notorious for many low-budget exploitation movies from 1954 onward, including *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957), *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1960) and *X: The Man with the X-ray Eyes* (1963) – also some enjoyable Poe-based films starring Vincent Price – died on 9 May aged 98. His last work as director was *Frankenstein Unbound* (1990) from the Aldiss novel; as producer, *Death Race 2050* (2017). He was a very popular guest at the 1996 LA Worldcon. • *Mark Damon* (1933-2024), US actor in Roger Corman’s *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1960) and others, producer of *Flight of the Navigator*

(1986) and executive producer of further genre films, died on 12 May aged 91. [SJ] ● *Jeannie Epper* (1941-2024), US stunt performer in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Wild Wild West* (1999), *Minority Report* (2002), *Freaky Friday* (2003), *The Book of Eli* (2020) and many more, died on 5 May aged 83. [AIP] ● *H. Bruce Franklin*, award-winning US academic critic and anthologist whose books include *Robert A. Heinlein: America as Science Fiction* (1980) and *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (1988; 2008), died on 19 May aged 90. [JC] ● *Ian Gelder* (1949-2024), UK actor in *Torchwood* (2009), *Game of Thrones* (2011-2016) and other genre tv series including *Doctor Who*, died on 6 May aged 74. [SF<sup>2</sup>C] ● *Jon Haward* (1965-2024), UK comics artist who drew Dan Dare, Judge Dredd and Spider-Man, and adapted classics including *Frankenstein*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, was reported in early May as having died aged 58. [SH] ● *Darryl Hickman* (1931-2024), US actor in *The Tingler* (1959), *GoBots: Battle of the Rock Lords* (1986) and genre tv series, died on 22 May aged 92. SJ ● *Bernard Hill* (1944-2024), award-winning UK actor in *The Wind in the Willows* (1996), parts 2 and 3 of *The Lord of the Rings* (2002, 2003), *The Scorpion King* (2002), *Outpost 11* (2013) and others, died on 5 May aged 79. (BBC) ● *Jan A.P. Kaczmarek* (1953-2024), noted Polish composer whose film scores include *Pale Blood* (1990), *Doppelganger* (1993) and *Lost Souls* (2000), died on 21 May aged 71. [AIP] ● *Edgar Lansbury* (1930-2024), UK producer of *Godspell* (1973) and *The Clairvoyant* (1982), died on 2 May aged 94. [SJ] ● *James Laurenson* (1940-2024), New Zealand-born actor in *The Turn of the Screw* (1974), *The Monster Club* (1981), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1987) and others, died on 18 April aged 84. [SJ] ● *R.F. Lucchetti* (1930-2024), hugely prolific Brazilian writer active since age 12 in newspapers, pulp magazines, radio, films, tv and over 1,500 books including Brazil's first space opera series, died on 5 March aged 94. [L] ● *Tony McFarr*, US stuntman in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014), *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay 2* (2015), *Jurassic World* (2015), *Guardians of the Galaxy 2* (2017) and others, died on 14 May aged 47. [LP] ● *Elizabeth MacRae* (1936-2024), US actress in *The Incredible Mr. Limpet* (1964) and *The House of the Dead* (1978), died on 27 May aged 88. [SJ] ● *Oleg Moroz* (1938-2024), Russian science writer whose sf novel is *Problema SETI* (*The Problem of SETI*, 1988), died on 20 May. [AM] ● *Akira Nakao* (1942-2024), Japanese actor in *The Vampire Doll* (1970) and several Godzilla films beginning with *Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla II* (1993), died on 16 May aged 81. ● *Don Perlin* (1929-2024), US comics writer/artist best known for Marvel's *The Defenders*, *Ghost Rider*, *Moon Knight* (as co-creator) and *Werewolf by Night*, died on 14 May aged 94. [SE] ● *Vitaly Pishchenko* (1952-2024), Russian author of ten sf novels who chaired the Russian writers' union council for sf/adventure fiction since 2003, died on 10 May. [AM] ● *David Redd* (1946-2024), UK author, fan and Milford UK attendee who began to publish short sf in *New Worlds* in 1966 – most of his fiction is in *Collected Stories* (2018) – died on 11 May aged 78. [GP] His fanzines included *Dr Faustenstein* 1979-1980. David was a long-time *Ansible* contributor and an old friend. ● *Albert S. Ruddy* (1930-2024), US producer and screenwriter whose credits include *Megaforce* (1982) and *A Gunman's Curse* (2019), died on 25 May aged 94. ● *Allan Servoss*, award-winning US artist who created covers and interiors for Arkham House and other weird fiction publishers, died on 16 May. [SJ] ● *Richard M. Sherman* (1928-2024), Oscar-winning composer who with his brother Robert (1925-2012) created music and songs for many Disney films including *The Sword in the Stone* (1963), *Mary Poppins* (1964), *The Jungle Book* (1967, 2016) and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968), died on 25 May aged 95. [F770] ● *Robert Smets* (1940-2024), Belgian fan and convention-goer active since 1970 who edited some 80 issues of the SFAN sf club's *SF-Magazine* and in later life published a number of genre stories, died on 14 March aged 83. [FR] ● *Morgan Spurlock* (1970-2024), US documentary maker whose credits include *Comic-Con Episode IV: A Fan's Hope* (2011), *The Death of Superman Lives: What Happened?* (2015) and *The Star Wars fan study In a Galaxy* (2015-2016), died on 23 May aged 53. [LP] ● *Hideyuki Umezaki* (1955-2024), Japanese voice actor in *Mobile Suit Gundam ZZ* (1986), *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood* (2009) and other anime, died on 17 May aged 68. ● *Gudrun Ure* (1926-2024), Scots actress who starred in *Super Gran* (1985-1987) and was in *The 10th Kingdom* (2000) and other genre series, died on 14 May aged 98. [SJ] ● *Wim van de Bospoort* (1955-2024), Dutch fan, collector and artist who worked on many conventions including the 1990 and 1995 Worldcons, died on 6 May aged 68. [KvT] ● *Johnny Wactor* (1986-2024), US actor in *Siberia* (2013), *Dead Talk Tales I* (2024) and genre tv series, died on 25 May aged 37. [LP]

**The Weakest Link.** *Ben Shephard*: 'In which play by Oscar Wilde does the character Jack Worthing explain that he was found in a handbag?' Contestant: 'The Rocky Horror Show.' (ITV, *Tipping Point*) [PE]

**March of the Robots.** Early last year Meta (Facebook, Meta AI etc)

considered buying Simon & Schuster so they could train their Large Language Model on all that company's books. Authors, it was suggested in a moment of unusual generosity, might get \$10 per book for all such rights; but the idea of negotiating licences was eventually dismissed as too tiresome and time-wasting. (*New York Times*, 6 May) As the CEO of S&S summed it up: 'Instead, I guess they just decided to steal everything.'

**Random Fandom.** *A Pilgrimage to Linlithgow* is suggested by Dave Lally to 2024 Worldcon-goers: a D.C. Fontana *Star Trek* novel named the town as Scotty's birthplace (in 2222) and the Museum has a blue plaque.

**Had They But Known.** Romance Writers of America filed for US Chapter 11 bankruptcy on 29 May. Owing to Covid and internal conflicts whose root causes have been summarized as institutional bigotry and racism, the membership has fallen from 10,000 in 2019 to around 2,000, while RWA owes some \$3 million to its annual conference hotels, plus nearly \$75,000 to other creditors and a \$1m contract termination demand from the Philadelphia hotel booked for 2025. (*U.S. News*, 29 May) [F770]

**Outraged Letters.** *Graham Charnock* on the New York gala themed for J.G. Ballard's 'The Garden of Time' (see A442): 'BBC's breakfast programme just reported on the Met Gala as having a "gardening" theme. The sound of J.G. Ballard turning in his flower bed was audible.' (7 May)

**The Dead Past.** *30 Years Ago*, a report on the sixth and last Mexican: 'This lightweight event (held in the posh international resort of Stevenage) celebrated the tenth anniversary of 1984's "Tynecon II: the Mexican" to such enjoyable effect that the happy throng voted *nem con* never to do this terrible thing again. [...] An item on censorship saw fearless Roz Kaveney being brutally and repeatedly censored by John Harvey's sound system: "The thing about snuff movies is that WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" [...] Fleeing hordes of audience members refused to speak of the panel on e-mail and fanzines. "It was @hell in there," seemed to be the consensus. "Wibble!" explained Charles Stross, and fell over.' (*Ansible* 83, June 1994)

● *60 Years Ago*, UK publishers irritated sf fans in different ways: 'The most annoying thing about Four Square, besides their use of that horrible term, "Sci-Fi", is their practice of taking an anthology or collection and publishing it in two parts under two separate titles. So far they have done this with *Worlds of Tomorrow* edited by August Derleth (the other part being called *New Worlds for Old*) and *All the Traps of Earth* by Clifford Simak (the other half being called *The Night of the Puudly*).' (Rog Peyton in Peter Weston's *Zenith* 5, June 1964) ● *Also 60 Years Ago*: 'John Wyndham's *Web*, a new novel, due out autumn'. (*Skyrack* 68, June 1964) But it didn't appear until 1979, ten years after John Wyndham had died.

**Fanfudery.** *Corflu Fifty*: the fund for assisted travel to Corflu will bring Nic and Jennifer Farey to the April 2025 event in Newbury, UK. ● *TAFF Books*. Coming next in ebook and paperback: Rob Hansen's *British SF Conventions Volume 2: 1952-1957*, part of a series whose first, third and fifth volumes – respectively covering 1937-1951, the 1957 London Worldcon, and its 1965 successor – have already been published.

**Editorial.** In May, to stupendous yawns of excitement from fandom worldwide, the *SF Encyclopedia* passed the milestones of 20,000 entries and seven million words. We've come a long way since the 1979 and 1993 book editions, as shown by bar charts at [sf-encyclopedia.com/facts.php](http://sf-encyclopedia.com/facts.php). ● Sandra Bond promises me, in a context not yet to be revealed: 'You shall go down in the credits as Zero-G Inertia Consultant, alongside the head brewer at my former job who is Zero-G Beer Consultant.'

**Thog's Masterclass.** *High Style*. 'The queasiness of his discomposure dropped the floor out of the room.' '... treated me with an impatient familiarity, as if we were both sticky and were leaving streaks on one another.' 'He looked dazzled into boyishness by the half-sky of the building's skull.' 'We separated and spent the fading day bobbing shyly around one another like clots in a lava lamp.' (all Kalliane Bradley, *The Ministry of Time*, 2024) [MA] ● *Pond Life*. 'As she looked around, her pupils seemed to grow even wider, black pools surrounded by long reeds of hair.' (Alexandra Benedict, *Murder on the Christmas Express*, 2022) [BA] ● *What I Tell You Four Times Is True*. 'A half-finished keep occupied the spot where the outpost once stood. The builders never completed the keep, and from the looks of things they had abandoned the place some time ago. The unfinished keep was little more than a ruin, empty of lords or knights, servants or tenants. The place felt unfinished.' (Bill Slavicek, *The Mark of Nerath*, 2010) ● *Cuboid Woman*. 'Marcy did not push or shove her way – she was a big woman, tall and muscular in the way a refrigerator is tall and muscular.' (Chuck Wendig, *Wanderers*, 2019) [AK]

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