



Ansible® 455 June 2025

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: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE or a geometric model in concrete of the square root of minus one.

The Sublimation World

J.G. Ballard was in the news again when an April Coca-Cola ad cited a mention of the drink in his alleged 1967 novel *Extreme Metaphors*. This is in fact a 2012 collection of Ballard interviews whose co-editor Dan O'Hara translated the relevant passage from a 1985 interview in French. Coca-Cola's ad agency reassured us that although their initial search used AI, this was followed by a 'manual scan of credible sources' that somehow failed to detect any problem – not even having Ballard misspell Shanghai, where he was born. O'Hara: 'They didn't ask permission and certainly haven't paid to use my translation.' The ad, also featuring Stephen King's *The Shining*, has since been withdrawn. (Designrush, 15 May) [SF²C]

Yoon Ha Lee responded to the current Seattle Worldcon fuss (see 'Rumblings' below) by withdrawing his young-adult novel *Moonstorm* from the Lodestar finalists on the Hugo ballot. (Bluesy, 2 May)

Allen Stroud will step down as BSFA chair at the AGM on 22 June.

Andy Weir's nonexistent (though see below) novel *The Last Algorithm* was recommended in a 2025 summer reading list from the *Chicago Sun-Times*, ten of whose fifteen choices were such AI hallucinations. (*Guardian*, 20 May) 'I'm completely embarrassed,' explained Marco Buscaglia, the human 'creator' of the list. (*Ars Technica*, 20 May) The five real titles included Ray Bradbury's hot new release *Dandelion Wine*. ● Chuck Tingle seized the opportunity to publish the very short Kindle ebook *The Last Algorithm: Pounded by the Fake Book that an AI Claimed I Wrote and then the Chicago Sun-Times Printed as Fact*, whose baffled protagonist Andy Weir was soon cautiously renamed as Andy Mirror. [MW]

Contraposita

6-8 Jun ● **Cymera**: Scotland's Festival of SF, Fantasy & Horror Writing, Edinburgh and online. See www.cymerafestival.co.uk.

7-8 Jun ● **EM-Con** (media), Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham. Weekend tickets £30 (11am entry) or £40 (10am) at www.em-con.co.uk.

14-15 Jun ● **Weird Worcester** (film), U of Worcester Arena. £35; £45 early entry. See www.treasuredfilms.co.uk/weirdworcester.

19-22 Jun ● **Sci-Fi London** (film), Picturehouse Cinema, Finsbury Park, London. Ticket sales still awaited at sci-fi-london.com.

21 Jun ● **Stars of Time** (comics), Steam Museum, Swindon. Tickets £17.50; under-16s £13. More at www.starsoftime.co.uk/swindon.

22 Jun ● **BSFA/SFF AGM** online. Link to be sent to BSFA members.

26-29 Jun ● **Archipelacon 2** (Eurocon), Mariehamn, Åland, Finland. €40 reg; under-26s €20; under-12s €5. See archipelacon.org.

27 Feb - 1 Mar 2026 ● **UK Ghost Story Festival**, QUAD Centre, Derby. Also 6-8 February online. See www.ukghoststoryfestival.co.uk.

18-19 Apr 2026 ● **Sci-Fi Scarborough** (multimedia), The Spa, Scarborough. Ticket sales awaited at scifiscarborough.co.uk.

2-3 May 2026 ● **Portmeirion Steampunk** event, Portmeirion. Ticket sales awaited at steampunk.wales.

2-3 May 2026 ● **Portsmouth Comic Con**, Guildhall, Portsmouth. Tickets £33; concessions and day rates at portsmouthcomiccon.com.

11-12 Jul 2026 ● **Frances Hardinge** conference, Aston University, Birmingham. £130 or £90 concessions at tinyurl.com/fh-conf.

27-31 Aug 2026 ● **Lacon V**, Anaheim Convention Center and hotels in Anaheim, California. \$200 adult reg, rising to \$230 on 15 June. *Other rates unchanged*: \$175 first Worldcon; \$125 YA (18-24); \$100 teen (13-17); \$50 child (6-12); infants free. \$50 WSFS only. See www.lacon.org.

Rumblings. *Seattle Worldcon 2025*: all fandom was plunged into war, or so it seemed, by the admission on 30 April that Seattle had vetted potential programme participants with ChatGPT (to the especial annoyance of creators whose work was used without permission or payment to train this Large Language Model). An apology from con chair Kathy Bond followed on 2 May, and a much longer statement on 6 May. The latter revealed that rather than asking whether applicants were good speakers or moderators, the prompt fed to ChatGPT began: 'Using the list of names provided, please evaluate each person for scandals. Scandals include but are not limited to homophobia, transphobia, racism, harassment, sexual misconduct, sexism, fraud.' LLMs were also mentioned, perhaps not

incidentally, in a public resignation statement by WSFS division head Cassidy and Hugo administrators Nicholas Whyte and Esther MacCallum-Stewart (Bluesy, 5 May). In Bluesy comments, Nicholas Whyte quasi-explained: 'Frankly one can get tired of fighting all the bloody time.'

Infinitely Improbable

As Others Are Inspired by Us. 'Each toilet is individually styled – no templates, no repetition. Drawing inspiration from sci-fi, retro-futurism, and art deco, they've become part of the storytelling. These aren't pit stops. They're visual moments. And they've been built to be remembered.' (Press release for the new Ibiza nightclub UNVRS) [PE]

Awards. *Clarke Award* shortlist: *Private Rites* by Julia Armfield, *The Ministry of Time* by Kaliane Bradley, *Extremophile* by Ian Green, *Annie Bot* by Sierra Greer, *Service Model* by Adrian Tchaikovsky, *Thirteen Ways to Kill Lulabelle Rock* by Maud Woolf. ● *Kurd Laßwitz* for best translation into German: *Monk & Robot* by Becky Chambers. [F770] ● *Otherwise Award* (formerly Tiptree), now presented to a shortlist (of four this year) rather than a single winner or tied pair: *In Universes* by Emet North, "Kiss of Life" by P.C. Verrone (*Fiyah*), *Rakesfall* by Vajra Chandrasekera, *Walking Practice* by Dolki Min translated by Victoria Caudle.

R.I.P. *Denise Alexander* (1939-2025), US soap-opera actress whose early credits include *Tom Corbett: Space Cadet* (29 episodes 1951-1955), died on 5 March aged 85. [AIP] ● *Joe Don Baker* (1936-2025), US actor in *Edge of Darkness* (1985), *Leonard Part 6* (1987), *Congo* (1995), *Mars Attacks!* (1996) and three James Bond films, died on 7 May aged 89. [LP] ● *Robert Benton* (1932-2025), US director and screenwriter whose script credits include *It's a Bird... It's a Plane... It's Superman!* (1975 film) and *Superman* (1978), died on 11 May aged 92. [LP] ● *John Boardman* (1932-2025), US fan active since 1950 in cons, clubs and APAs, and treasurer of the 1967 Worldcon, died on 29 May aged 92. [AIP] ● *Ruth Buzzi* (1936-2025), US comedian and actress in *The Lost Saucer* (1975-1976), *Freaky Friday* (1976) and *Fallen Angels* (2006) plus much animation voice work, died on 1 May aged 88. [LP] ● *Greg Cannom* (1951-2025), Oscar-winning US make-up artist whose films include *Dracula* (1992), *Bicentennial Man* (1999), *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008) and *Watchmen* (2009), died on 9 May aged 73. [AIP] ● *Aidan Chambers* (1934-2025), Carnegie-winning UK young-adult novelist who edited and contributed to many ghost-story anthologies, died on 11 May aged 90. [GC] ● *Aurora Clavel* (1936-2025), Mexican actress whose genre films include *Dr. Satán y la magia negra* (1968) and *Chanoc contra el tigre y el vampiro* (1972), died on 19 May aged 88. [SJ] ● *Mara Corday* (1930-2025), US actress in *Tarantula* (1955), *The Black Scorpion* (1957) and *The Giant Claw* (1957), died on 9 February aged 95. [AIP] ● *Peter David* (1956-2025), prolific US author of many comics scripts (including a long stint on Marvel's *The Incredible Hulk* for which he shared an Eisner Award with artist Dale Keown), novels, novelizations – especially in the *Star Trek* universe – and tv scripts, died on 24 May aged 68. [GVG] He received the 2021 Grandmaster Scribe Award for life achievement in tie-in books. ● *Jean-François Davy* (1945-2025), French director of *Le seuil du vide* (1972) and co-producer of *Le secret de Sarah Tombelaine* (1991), died on 2 May aged 79. [SHS] ● *Leslie (Les) Dilley* (1941-2025), UK production designer and art director who won Oscars for his work on *Star Wars* (1977) and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), died on 20 May aged 84. Other films include *Superman* (1978), *Alien* (1979), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *The Abyss* (1989). [AIP] ● *Stephen Fabian* (1930-2025), noted US sf/fantasy artist active from the late 1960s, best known for interior illustrations but with many cover credits too, died on 6 May aged 95. [BE] He received nine Hugo nominations (two as fan artist, seven as pro artist) and the 2006 World Fantasy Award for life achievement. ● *Samuel French*, US actor in *Pegasus: Pony with a Broken Wing* (2019), died on 9 May aged 45. [AIP] ● *Ed Gale* (1963-2025), 3' 4" US actor/stuntman who starred in *Howard the Duck* (1986) and played the killer doll Chucky in *Child's Play* (1988 plus sequels), died on 27 May aged 61. Other films include *Spaceballs* (1987), *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey* (1991) and *Lifepod* (1993). [SJ] ● *Jane Gardam* (1928-2025), noted UK author whose work includes ghost stories and the children's fantasy *Through the Dolls' House Door* (1987),

died on 28 April aged 96. ● *Mollie Gillam* (1923-2025), long-time UK fan, partner of SF Foundation co-founder George Hay (1922-1997, still remembered by the annual George Hay Lecture at Eastercon) and *Ansible* reader, died on 27 April not long before her 102nd birthday. [SGi] It was always good to hear from her. ● *Gawn Grainger* (1937-2025), Scots actor in *A Christmas Carol* (1999) and genre tv series including *Doctor Who*, died on 17 May aged 87. [SJ] ● *Jackson 'Butch' Guice* (1961-2025), US comics artist whose early work for Marvel included *X-Factor*, *New Mutants* and adapting *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, died on 1 May aged 63. 1990s work included *Superman*, *The Terminator* and *Aliens/Predator*; he became a regular at both Marvel and DC. [SH] ● *Kathleen Hughes* (1928-2025), US actress in *It Came from Outer Space* (1953) – for which her 'screaming in terror' publicity still became iconic – died on 19 May aged 96. Other credits include *The Golden Blade* (1953), *Cult of the Cobra* (1955) and *The Spell* (1977). [SJ] ● *Jack Katz* (1927-2025), US comics artist and writer who worked for various publishers including Marvel but is best remembered for his long independent sf/fantasy sequence *The First Kingdom* (1974-1986) – a significant precursor of the graphic novel boom – died on 24 April aged 97. [AIP] ● *Yevgeny Klyuyev* (1954-2025), Russian absurdist author whose work includes six fantasy novels and a new translation of the *Alice* books, died on 9 May aged 71. [AM] ● *Peter Kwong* (1952-2025), Asian/US actor in *Big Trouble in Little China* (1986), *The Golden Child* (1986), *Theodore Rex* (1995), *Cooties* (2014) and many more, died on 27 May. [SJ] ● *David Lazer* (1936-2025), US producer whose credits include *The Muppet Show* (120 episodes 1976-1981, plus many spinoffs), *The Dark Crystal* (1982) and *Labyrinth* (1986), died on 10 April aged 89. [AIP] ● *Peter Lovesey* (1936-2025), noted UK detective/thriller author whose sf novel was *Goldengirl* (1977) as by Peter Lear, died on 10 April aged 88. [SGa] ● *James McEachin* (1930-2025), US actor in *The Dead Don't Die* (1984) and *2010* (1984), died on 11 January aged 94. [LP] ● *Race Mathews* (1935-2025), Australian fan and politician who was a founder (and member number 1) of the Melbourne SF Club in 1952 and opened both Aussiecon 1 (Worldcon 1975) and Aussiecon 2 (Worldcon 1985), died on 5 May aged 90. [BRG] ● *Ian Morley* (1966-2025), UK fan and membership secretary of the Birmingham SF Group, died on 13 May aged 58. He is survived by his wife Lou, to whom all sympathy. [BSFG] ● *Peter Morwood* (Robert Peter Smith, 1956-2025), UK author whose fantasy series include 'Horse Lords' 1983-1989, 'Prince Ivan' 1990-1993 and 'Clan Wars' 1993-1994, died on 9 May aged 68. [DD] Other work included sf-novel and tv-script collaborations with his wife (since 1987) Diane Duane, to whom all sympathy. ● *Jayant Narlikar* (1938-2025), Indian astrophysicist and author of several sf novels and collections, died on 20 May aged 86. [AM] ● *Yuri Nikitin* (1939-2025), prolific Russian author active since 1965, whose almost 200 books are mostly sf or fantasy, died on 23 May aged 85. [AM] ● *Rosanna Norton* (1944-2025), award-winning US costume designer whose film credits include *Phantom of the Paradise* (1972), *Carrie* (1976), *Tron* (1982), *Gremlins 2* (1990) and *RoboCop 2* (1990), died on 7 May aged 80. [SJ] ● *Steve Pepoon* (1956-2025), US screenwriter who co-created and scripted many episodes of *The Wild Thornberrys* (1998-2004 plus spinoffs) died on 3 May aged 68. [SH] ● *Sofia Prokofieva* (1928-2025), Russian author of 26 fantasy novels for children and two for adults, died on 5 May aged 97. [AM] ● *Kimble Rendall* (1957-2025), Australian director of *Cut* (2000), *Bait* (2012) and *Guardians of the Tomb* (2018) – plus second unit work on *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) and others – died in April. [GC] ● *Charley Scabies* (1940-2025), US actor in *12 Monkeys* (1995), died on 1 May aged 84. [SHS] ● *Ella Mae Smith* (1932-2025), who lived close to the farmhouse where *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) was filmed and was conscripted along with her husband for the zombie horde – also appearing in subsequent documentaries – died on 21 May aged 93. [SJ] ● *Jim Smith* (1954-2025), US animator/artist whose credits include *Dinosaucers* (1987), *The Real Ghostbusters* (1987), *Cool World* (1992) and *Scooby-Doo! Legend of the Phantosaur* (2011), died on 2 May aged 70. [SHS] ● *Tod Smith* (1952-2025), US comics artist who worked for both DC and Marvel on titles including *The Green Hornet*, *Omega Men*, *The Punisher*, *Spider-Man* and *Wolverine*, died on 4 April aged 72. [SHS] ● *Andrew M. Stephenson* (1946-2025), UK fan, author and (as Ames) illustrator whose sf novels are *Night-watch* (1977) and *The Wall of Years* (1979), died in mid-May aged 78. [IM] He was a founder member of the UK Pieria sf writers' group. Another old friend gone, alas. ● *Charles Strouse* (1928-2025), Tony-winning US composer and lyricist whose musicals include *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman* (1966), *Flowers for Algernon* aka *Charlie and Algernon* (1979) and *Charlotte's Web* (1989), died on 15 May aged 96. Film credits include *The Worst Witch* (1986) and *Deadpool 2* (2018). [LP] ● *Jim Walker*, long-time UK fan, convention-goer and short film maker who published many Eurocon reports in *SF² Concatenation*, died on 30 April aged 81. [SF²C] ●

George Wendt (1948-2025), US actor in *House* (1985), *Alien Avengers* (1996 plus sequel), *Space Truckers* (1996), *Aliens, Clowns & Geeks* (2019) and others, died on 20 May aged 76. [LP] ● *Billy Williams* (1929-2025), Oscar-winning UK cinematographer whose credits include *The Magus* (1968), *The Mind of Mr Soames* (1970), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Saturn 3* (1980) and *Dreamchild* (1985), died on 21 May aged 95. [SJ]

The Weakest Link (Alternate History Dept). *Bradley Walsh*: 'Oliver Cromwell fought a civil war against which English king?' Contestant: 'Canute.' (ITV, *The Chase*) [PE]

Court Circular. In April, Games Workshop simultaneously sued 280 games dealers worldwide for alleged *Warhammer* copyright infringement, using 'a controversial Florida legal tactic called the Schedule A Defendant Scheme' whereby multiple defendants' online stores and funds can be frozen without a cease-and-desist request or any other prior warning of the lawsuit. It soon emerged that the hammer of doom had struck dozens of businesses that shouldn't have been on the list. GW followed up with a form-letter apology ('I have noted that your store has been misidentified and included in the claim') which of course offered no compensation for lost sales during the freeze period. (Spikeybits.com, 22 May) [SB]

Deep Profit from the Dawn of Time. On 22 May the Royal Mail marked the 75th anniversary of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* with twelve Narnia stamps – four Pauline Baynes line drawings with added colour, eight new illustrations by Keith Robinson – plus postcards and assorted tag costing up to £150 (for a signed and framed Robinson set).

The Dead Past. *30 Years Ago*, a report on the launch party for *SFX* magazine 'in Jim Henson's The Creature Shop, Camden Town, inside a disco-lit and smoke-clouded indoor marquee decorated with special effects from *Doctor Who*, *Alien*, *Neverending Story*, *Dark Crystal*, etc. Here a Robocop clone prowled the huge crowd firing a VERY NOISY gun, while lady guests complained that the wandering Dalek was taking personal liberties with its plunger. Thanks to a mysterious sponsorship deal, there was a wide choice of either bottled Czech lager or Smirnoff vodka served by drag queens. Millions of famous media folk went unrecognized by me; my one brief chat with *SFX* deputy editor Dave Golder was rapidly broken up by a PR person dragging him away to – as he later put it – "do my duties with Peter Davison (which was hideous – he was in a foul mood)." Ever-watchful Mary Branscombe also names names: "I saw Jon Pertwee leave with a full bottle of vodka very early on, after he told the Dalek to sod off." (*Ansible* 95, June 1995) ● *20 Years Ago*, Terry Pratchett mused in *The Times*: 'I think about the literary world like I think about Tibet. It's quite interesting, it's a long way away from me and it's sure as hell they're never going to make me Dalai Lama.' (*Ansible* 215, June 2005) I recently found a 1987 letter from Terry with a similarly modest handwritten PS: 'Thanks for the Milford invite, but my stuff isn't up to that kind of thing – Milford is for writers who know how to use long words like "corrugated iron" and "marmalade". TP.' ● *10 Years Ago*, 'John Scalzi's \$3.4 million deal with Tor, for 13 books to be written over ten years (*Washington Post*, 28 May), caused much comment online. Various puppy-aligned pundits indicated that this was a terrible calamity, signalling the imminent End Times for both author and publisher; Vox Day deplored Scalzi's failure to take the wiser course of self-publishing.' (*Ansible* 335, June 2015) Tor and Mr Scalzi still seem reasonably nonchalant about this debacle.

Magazine Scene. Story contracts from MustRead Inc (new owners of *Analogue*, *Asimov's* and *F&SF*) have included 'problematic' clauses that grab media and merchandising rights. Questioned by SFWA, the company said this was 'either an editorial error or a holdover from an outdated contract', which authors can negotiate to have removed. (SFWA, 22 April) As the Bard also put it, 'I can negotiate spirits from the vasty deep....'

Fanfundery. *Fan Fund Books*: the GUFF trip report anthology *GUFF: The Incomplete Chronicles*, published as a free ebook earlier this year, now has a smart trade paperback edition with all proceeds going to GUFF. See ae.ansible.uk/?t=GUFFanth. This will soon be followed by a similar though much fatter paperback of the ebook *TAFF Trip Report Anthology*.

Chog's Masterclass. *Eyeballs in the Sky*. 'He arranged the muscles of his eyes and began to rake the place methodically with a narrowed glance.' 'His eyes rounded. In fact, they popped.' 'Mr. Josef rolled himself a glance of dark warning in the mirror.' (all from Charlotte Armstrong, 'Three-Day Magic', *F&SF*, September 1952) [CG] ● **Feminism Dept**. Our hero Dominic Flandry has a Kingsley Amis moment: 'He watched her, shrugged, sighed – *Women! The aliens among us!*' (Poul Anderson, *A Circus of Hells*, 1970)

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