

This Here...

"...pedantic and trivial..." (M Strummer)

EGOTORIAL

FAMILY XMAS

Yes, 'tis the season and all that for families, if you are lucky (or unlucky) enough to have them.

But first, a little housekeeping note: this slips a couple of days because of a bit of lurgy and general seasonal commitments & that. It's still December though, innit?

When my youngest was, well, very young (and I was still living in Southern Maryland) and resident with the grandparents, we had the happy seasonal habit of spending Christmas Day together, which DoBFO went by the wayside when I moved to Las Vegas coo er gosh over 15 years ago. A couple of visits have occurred since then, the last one being (according to FBF memories) an only slightly alarming eight fuckin' years ago.

Perhaps equally alarming is me realizing that when I picked up **Babs** (as she is now known, transition in progress) from the airport on the 23rd I was wearing the same fuckin' shirt as in eight-year-old photos. I am unsurprisingly tempted to don the same vestment for a departure selfie, but don't.

We have a nice Xmas lunch at home in the company of **Jen's** son and daughter-in-law, Bill & Megan. After attempts of various success (well if you ask me they were various) over the last few years to be "fancy" with the Yuletide nosebag, this year, given my difficulty with standing up and walking around for any length of time or distance, I thought to make it easier on myself by doing a slow cooker pork loin "roast" and found a nice recipe for that with baby

red taters and carrots adorned with a sauce of chicken stock, balsamic vinegar and honey. All good, with planned sides of green beans with butter & garlic and some sautéed mushroom & onion with a bit of garlic, Marsala, lemon juice and parsley. And, perhaps dissonantly, individual Yorkshire puddings.

I should have known that the stressy bits of getting it all done to arrive at the same time was going to be anxious-making to say the least, but all the scran did get done and was well-received, thank fuck!

Megan objects somewhat to being included in the Selfie o'

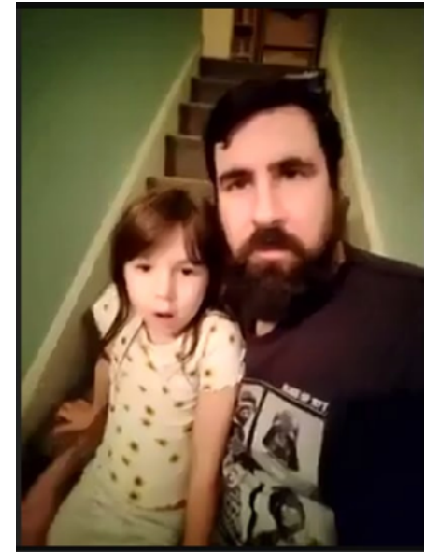
the Day, but is persuaded to get in after setting the timer on the phone camera, so there we all are (photo this page), only slightly dazed, although drink has been taken by me & **Babs** alone...

Xmas Day is also usual for me to have a video call with my son Sean & the grandkids, but the timing didn't quite work for that this year so we postponed until Boxing Day instead.

The composite (top of page 2) is us on Zoom. Little Owen (left) looks grumpy because I

chose to express disapproval at his choice of football shirt (Manchester United, Ronaldo) in no uncertain terms. His other granddad is Man U, though, so I suppose I ought to cut the wean a bit of slack, but still. Ava cheers me up immensely, though, when Sean prompts her with the question "Can you see what badge is on Granddad Nic's shirt?" I close in on the screen to make meself readable and am duly repaid with a joyous shout of "WATFORD!" I like that kid...





Boxing Day brings our annual “Waifs & Strays” open house party, a bit undersubscribed this year compared to some past efforts, but that’s down to the hols falling midweek, since Merka doesn’t shut between Xmas and New Year like more ~~drunken~~ civilized parts and people actually have to work. (Mind you, so did Sean, but he was on earlies.)

The chili (cooked on Xmas Eve) was again a hit, although we couldn’t be arsed to take any photos this year. A nice time was had by all, drink was taken and I somehow managed to acquire a heavily bruised big toe. Since **Roy Hessinger** had fell down and bugged up *his* foot a day or so before (prompting me to remark “You’ll do anything do avoid coming out to a party, won’t you?”), **Jen** tells me “You *really* know how to show empathy with your friends” ...

Babs is due to fly back out next day, assuring us of having had a good time while here. **Jen** insists we must take a selfie because we apparently look far too serious in the Xmas Day pic, so here it is...



It’s all good.

December 2024

TAFFNESSABOUTS

2025 WESTBOUND RACE: IT’S ON!

The official announcement (*Taffluorescence* newsletter and the ballot) will be up very shortly into the New Year at <https://taff.org.uk/>, but we are privileged to announce here that the candidates for the race to Seattle Worldcon 2025 are:



Zi Graves : “As my nominators can vouch – varying as they do in fandom origins from vidding, to zines, to games and media conventions, to good old traditional sci-fi – I like to try a little bit of everything, and get a range of perspectives on fandom. Hopefully I brought some of that breadth to Eastercon when they let me run the programme in 2023!

“Why not send me off to North America for a whole new continent of perspectives to explore? I promise to share cat photos, and whatever I can bring through customs...”

Nominators: Claire Brialey, Dave Hodson, Alex “Tygrys” Stan (EUR); Hannah Orlove, Spike (NA)

Mikołaj Kowalewski : “Third time’s the charm, they say. In my 10 years in fandom, I have been a conrunner (including 2025 Polish Natcon), volunteer, panellist, board member of the ESFS, and (to my great delight!) GOH liaison at the Glasgow Worldcon for Ken MacLeod. Originally from Poland, I’m currently living in Copenhagen, Denmark, and making lots of Nordic fandom connections. When I’m not organising or travelling, I enjoy SF literature and board games. TAFF seems like a great opportunity to meet more fellow fans overseas, and for me to tell you all about the wonderful Polish and Nordic fandom.”

Nominators: Fia Karlsson, Marcin "Alqua" Kłak, James Shields (EUR); John Pomeranz, Geri Sullivan (NA)

Jan Vaněk jr. : "Czech (rarely even proud), 1976 (so personal Golden Age coincided / Booming 90s), sercon(n?!)ish / bookish.

Fanac online / int'n'lly since good old Usenet: edited ISFDB, Wikipedia when (they) still young, sent SFE corrections, commented @focal-point blogs, pilgrimaged European Worldcons, pub WOOFzine Newt News. Honestly, kinda failed @all.

Yet: 2022 – expanded Fancy3 >100k words, many quite original / unique / revelatory, some commended. Still find immense, invigorating, useful fun. Fanhistory now easy even for such as I, standing on shoulders o' jiants. (Ackermanese too...) Come over, water's fine! Fancyclopedists for TAFF! (& v.v.)

Other interests translatology, Sorabistics, craft beer. More: [Fancyclopedia.org / User:Jvjr](https://fancyclopedia.org/User:Jvjr)."

Nominators: Rob Hansen, Jaroslav Olsa jr, Wolf von Witting (EUR); Gary Farber, Mark Olson (NA)

Voting will commence (and the ballot goes online) on January 1st. Candidates are invited to further pitch their woo in these pages, of course...

CORFLUX

42 PR3 NOW AVAILABLE

<https://corflu.org/Corflu42/Corflu42%20PR3.pdf>

Yes, a week or so delayed, but Progress Report 3 is now out & about for your delectation and chock full o' expected goodness.

A lot of this is about the voting by Corflu members for the "Fanzine of Honour" out of an unlucky list of 13 nominees. This is something I encourage members to do. The list is broad and includes North American and Australian fanzines, but for meself I'd suggest that a UK fanzine ought to cop the plaudits at a UK Corflu. Mind you, it's a wicked temptation to campaign for *Apparatchik*, knowing that none of the editors will be there to bask, innit?

Programme and banquet details are also included, and apparently Watford v Hull City the week before is considered ancillary to the con.

A memorial get-together for John Nielsen Hall is being planned, adjacent to but not part of the Corflu itself, since some of the potential participants won't be attending the con. At least that's what I've heard. Further details on that from anyone sorting it would be welcomed...

<https://corflu.org/>

F3S, FfFS OR FFS

PUB NIGHTS

Yes, we're still to-ing and fro-ing about how "Far-flung Farey Safari" gets abbreviated. Queen of Spreadsheets **Claire** still likes "FFS", but does it even matter? Anyways...

The start of this month has hosted a flurry of planning and associated bookings of travel and accommodation. Unsurprisingly, much fannish interaction (other than at Corflu 42 and Reconnect) will occur up some pub or another. But the time you get thish, there'll be only a tad over three months to go before we embark, which suddenly seems like "soon come" after a period of "it's fuckin' ages away innit?" I shall thus reveal some dates and locations which are fairly well nailed down as well as a couple of possibilities and no doubt a bit of wishful thinking...

First, let me note a bit of aggro, and in fact what has spurred firmer planning. I've been waiting (and waiting) for April booking dates to appear on Norse Atlantic's website, expecting them to show up in November, and when they didn't, shurely December will result in availability. I eventually find an email to contact their customer service and ask about this. The reply says "For now we have no plans for this route [LAS-LGW] beyond what is available on our website."

Well, arse!

Speaking of, I determine that I should get off mine and start having a shufti at what else is on offer. Not to bore you with hours of Googling ect, I find that we can get Virgin Atlantic Premium for about the same as what Norse would have cost as long as we can tolerate a layover each way, which of course we can as a trade-off for legroom and other comforts for the aged and infirm. Flights are duly booked and paid for, and we'll be sorting in to (and out of) Heathrow instead of Gatwick, which is DoBFO less convenient for getting to Croydon upon arrival on April 2nd, but ah well...

On to the pubs, then...

Thursday April 3rd : London First Thursday at the Bishop's Finger, Smithfield. This one's as DoBFO as it gets, shurely?

Friday April 4th : A possible smaller gathering TBA...

Sunday April 6th : Provisionally at the Wellington, Waterloo, which longtime First Thursday habitues will recall as the site of a notorious Xmas incident not involving trouser presses. I've got family (my sister **Emma Honey** & other girls) coming up from Portsmouth for this one, and since they'll be getting in at Waterloo (at least I think so) the old Welly seemed a reasonable location. I'm also tagging this'un for a bit of an LSE reunion, but anyone else is also welcome...

Monday April 7th : Somewhere in or adjacent to Finchley with **Amanda Epstein** and potentially any others from the 'Star Trek' conventions crew...

Tuesday April 8th : **Dave Hodson** rashly mentions in the latest Corflu 42 PR (see above) that on this, his birthday, we shall be off to Vicarage Road to watch my beloved Watford FC hopefully tuff up Hull City (7:45pm kickoff). A pub may also be involved at some point...

Monday April 14th : The Briar Rose, Birmingham (adjacent to New Street station). For any of the BSFG/Novacon crew that I won't otherwise be in the same room with at either Corflu or Reconnect. My dear bruv **Martin Tudor** is attempting to rally the troops, gawdelpus...

Wednesday April 16th : A no doubt palatial and classy venue in Leeds, TBA by **Graham James**, also gawdelpus ect...

FUNDRAISING NEWS

Continued thanks, of course, to the Corflu 50 fund for awarding us the status of 2025 delegates to Corflu 42 and thus covering that significant bit of the trip. (And *only* that bit, as is proper.)

"That significant bit" is, DoBFO, not the entire visit which includes Reconnect (Eastercon in Belfast) as well as fannish ~~pisshup~~ genteel get-togethers as described in part above. Thus, we will have to engage in some serious extra begging.

At the moment we're awaiting news about an in-progress funding stream (inevitably and fannishly sekrit at the moment), and we're expecting to get actual numbers around mid-January for that. We're still going to need dosh beyond that, though, so there will likely be the announcement of a "GoFundMe" or similar begging platform in next month's ish, or quite possibly a little sooner via various bits of social media.

Stay tuned!

HEALTH DIARY

GOT TO ADMIT, IT'S GETTING BETTER?...

Having had the bonce MRI'd and being relieved of \$100 for the trouble, the results showed no abnormalities, so the persistent headaches remain an annoying mystery. My own theory is that it's the tinnitus causing them when I'm not wearing the hearing aids, and the noise when I am. I perhaps ought to make a new appointment at the audiologists since I suspect it's the high frequency sound I'm having trouble with in the sense of getting too much of it. Fuctifino guv...

Sad to report that I've had a couple of rough weeks with some unspecified lurgy which may be going around, although in poor old **Roy Hessinger's** case *he* appears to have come down with the bronchitis which has sadly

precluded his appearance at any get-togethers. Get well soon that lad!...

For meself, ironically, the best I've felt this month so far was on the day of my visit to nice Dr. Gollard on the 11th, at which he is well pleased by my important numbers (WBC below 20, RBC normal, hematocrit 46%) and opines that I am actually looking well. The below 50% hematocrit means that a scheduled phlebotomy can be cancelled, yippee. It's not that I mind the process so much as having to go out and get it done, and the cancellation has left the last week clear of Stuff To Do except for driving **Jen** around a bit, so of course I have assiduously applied meself to the fanac [falls off chair]. Well, a bit, not as much as I could or should have, but ey...

MOVIE NIGHT



RED ONE

When this'un came out in November (and it's still in some theaters) it got unmercifully slagged by the critics who contributed to the weedy 31% positive rating on *Rotten Tomatoes*. However, in one of those frequent disconnects, the audience score was a thumping 90%. The box office, \$176.9 million against a reported budget of \$250m (plus marketing

costs) marked this as a “told you so” Xmas turkey by the smirking set, probably contributing to the movie dropping on Prime Video a mere month later, where the snobs were likely confounded by the flick immediately becoming the #1 streamed movie in the US and the most-watched film debut ever on that platform.

Initial knocks had cacklingly reported Dwayne Johnson’s supposedly less-than-stellar timekeeping and on-set behavior vs his \$50m salary. In what’s a somewhat fair criticism, one reader review on imdb states “Dwayne playing every other Dwayne he’s Dwayned” and, possibly more inaccurately, considers both JK Simmons and Lucy Liu to have been “wasted on this really with their bit parts” also saying that Chris Evans “is slipping into this pigeon hole of playing the same character in every movie.”

Perhaps a fair-ish point about Evans, but come on now, Simmons and Liu are shurely above any criticism at all for anything they choose to do. Lucy does play to type, sure, but how can you possibly go wrong with JK as Father Christmas?

Round here ‘Red One’ was deemed a hugely entertaining two hours which didn’t seem that long at all as it skipped by with hardly a dull moment.

I can’t do better to express the appeal than the imdb review by “GrumpyMovieBuff” who says, in part:

Red One is pure entertainment. It knows what it is, leans into it, and doesn’t try to be anything else. Movies like this are a rarity these days - a fun, self-aware story that’s well-executed without taking itself too seriously. Think ‘The Toxic Avenger’ or other classics that knew they were dumb fun and embraced it. That’s Red One, and it absolutely works.

It’s frustrating to see some modern audiences trashing this movie. People seem to have forgotten what it means to just sit back and be entertained. Not every movie needs to be some deep, artistic exploration of the human condition. Sometimes, a film just needs to make you smile, and Red One nails that. Pure escapism.

If you’re tired of agenda-driven, over-serious films that forget to actually entertain, Red One is a breath of fresh air. It’s unapologetically fun, smartly written, and a reminder of why we love movies in the first place.

Agreed in full...

RADIO WINSTON

GUEST COLUMNIST : DON MILLER

[[Nic : I find myself in the only slightly unusual position of writing an introduction to a column I haven’t got yet - devoid of any striking inspiration thish, I end up asking dear old mate Don Miller (aka MILLLLLEERRRRRR!!) to

supply something, perhaps on the basis of the ‘Guardian’ ‘Honest Playlist’ feature, preying shamelessly on his usual affability and level of intoxication at this year’s ‘Waifs & Strays’. For good or ill, this is what I get...]]



My taste in music? So many genres, so little time. My tastes run the full gamut. I was raised on classical. My father played cello in orchestral show-bands on the Las Vegas strip. He taught me, and I played cello for some 8 years. We had a baby grand piano, and I dabbled for a few years without an instructor.

My tastes became mixed during high school, listening to rock albums not heard on radio. During

the same time, a friend influenced me with old big band music. I became a big fan of Benny Goodman, Paul Whiteman, Xavier Cugat, and Django Reinhardt. In my high school tel-comm class, I played disc-jockey on a closed circuit radio station. My senior year, I was doing 90 minutes a day spinning records. I still remember hearing several albums for the first time in 1974 and loving ‘em; 10CC ‘Sheet Music’, Supertramp ‘Crime of the Century’ & ZZ Top ‘Tres Hombres.’

After graduating in 1976, I worked in radio for some 10 years, playing progressive rock, Top 40, disco, and country music. Most stations had a strict playlist with little room to improvise. My biggest challenge, was playing big-band music at 50,000 watt AM KDWN. There was no format, no instructions... alone in the studio, working 7 hour shifts. Two turntables, a mic and mixing board, and a closet full of vinyl records. The average cuts were 2 to 4 minutes and I tried to work 3 songs ahead of myself... but sometimes having to drop the needle with no prep. The potential audience was Las Vegas and the entire west coast, from Mexico to Alaska. It was nerve-wracking. I had a mellow voice and enough experience, to avoid sounding like a 22 year old kid, out of my league.

Audio production in radio, led me to transition into TV. For 17 years, I did everything from the basics, up to video editor, promotion producer, graphics, CGI animation, and recorded thousands of voice-overs. Not bad, for someone with very little drive or ambition. I don’t like ringing my own bell, and still sense a great unfulfilled potential.

But I digress, which reminds me of a line from Devo; “How long can this go on?” (Working in the Coal Mine) Oh yeah, music. By the mid 70s, I became self-indulgent, listening to artists like Jean-Luc Ponty, Isao Tomita, and Jean-Michel Jarre. I still love The Moody Blues, so many favorites. One of my first loves in rock music, was YES, ‘Close to the Edge’. Saw them live in 1975, still one of the best concerts I’ve ever

attended. Saw dozens of live shows over 20 years, and severely damaged my hearing. During the late 70s, progressive rock was my favorite genre. Around 1979, I was swayed by New Wave. New favorites included Oingo Boingo, The Talking Heads, Devo, Tom Tom Club, Grace Jones, etc. I saw The B-52s, live on a roof-top at UNLV in 1981. Influence from friends, led me to enjoy blues rock; Allman Brothers, J. Geils Band, Savoy Brown, The Band, etc. I was privileged to see Pink Floyd live in '87.

In the late 1980s, my tastes shifted again, toward synth-pop. I was thrilled to see groups like Depeche Mode and INXS, live during their peak. Las Vegas radio has always been conservative, and lagged behind the times. Around 1990, during vacations, I noticed a trend of really great alternative music, being played on L.A. radio stations. I would bring a cassette recorder, loads of blank tape, and record stations over the air. I would list my favorites, and buy the CDs. Then in fall of 1992, Vegas finally played catch-up. Within a year we had 3 alternative music stations. By 1995, the genre died out. I've always blamed the music industry, and corporate radio owners. Thank Zeus, for the internet. The time gap has closed, between Europe and the US. I love trolling for new eclectic music.

Here's a cross-section of music I currently have in my car, on an MP3 disk: Swingrowers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNHDAtQMsX8>; Caravan Palace <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=io9IQ1v43rQ>; Club Belugas <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6G30r43Cce>; Big Soul <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugqdUiEe69E>; Telepopmusic <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDz2Xk-LRN0>; Griz <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrUET-V2XDI>; My Life With the Thrill Kill Cult https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmHv_s6gpZ0

In 1992, an album I had to drive to Los Angeles to buy... (and one of my favorites of all time); it was a german import and hard to find. YELLO BABY <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3FvRSxelJA>

A few of the albums I bought in the early 1990s include; Happy Mondays <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5HhwecDCQw>; Soup Dragons <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLMWmP6ta04>; Utah Saints <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xg9Wqs4vjZM>; Stereo MCs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctMd5E7rRjs>; Jesus Jones <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvdOScZF200>; EMF <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4gU74gMbp0>; Red Hot Chili Peppers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHUCSknJNx8>

[[Leigh Edmonds has been watching the cricket...]]

TV GUIDE

THE DAY OF THE JACKAL



“Based on” the 1971 Frederick Forsyth novel (its says here) and truer words may never have been spoken. Any similarities between this’un and the book (and the 1973 movie version) are purely situational in that we have a lone assassin-for-hire, a prominent target and a dedicated agent trying to find and stop him.

I also got a case of the arse by learning, midway through the season, that the show had been *renewed* for a second one, which, since the protagonist dies in both the book and the quite faithful big screen adaptation, seemed to me like a major fuckin’ spoiler for how this was going to play out.

This isn’t, however, going to be an exercise in damning with faint praise - I just wanted to get those creeps put of the way first.

The original “Jackal” (book and film) is a cipher, described only by his function and skills, and of course at the end we *still* have no fuckin’ idea who he really is (or was). By contrast, and as per the “modern” mode of storytelling (I suppose we can call it) Eddie Redmayne’s version gets not only a family life but a real name and an extensive backstory.

As, indeed, does the MI6 agent tracking him, Bianca Pullman (a riveting and engaging Lashana Lynch). The whole thing is an exemplar of what we've tended to observe in similar stories of late - the characters aren't merely game pieces to be moved around in service of the plot. Their actions and interactions are more fully integrated with their personalities. It takes some seriously skillful writing to properly pull this off, and there's almost inevitably going to be some draggy bits where you just wish they'd fuckin' just get on with it, but when it's done right, as it mostly is here, what's going on in the personal lives of the characters informs their subsequent actions.

As usual, it's probably unfair to single out any of the fine supporting cast, but since you know I'm going to anyway, pops to Chukwudi Iwuji as Bianca's immediate boss, Lia Williams (MI6 Deputy Chief of Staff) and Charles Dance doing his effortless nasty as the Jackal's employer.

They deserve the recognition, as does Lynch, but haven't quite got as much as Redmayne (unsurprisingly, I suppose, he does dominate) who's got Golden Globe and Critics' Choice award nominations, as has the series itself.

No spoilers, but I will say that the ending (which I was dreading) was ultimately satisfying in setting up season 2 very nicely indeed...

GIVE US A CLUE

Lastish:

"Golden Age editor like John Inman with Harry or Doug (8)"

Steve Jeffery : [D]efinitely on the un-PC side, but eventually clicked that John Inman, as Mr Humphries, had to be the start of the most famous Golden Age editors, CAMPBELL (there being not enough letters in either Gold or Boucher) and plus Harry or Doug, both Bells.

[[Definition: "Golden Age editor"

Wordplay: "like John Inman" = CAMP + "Harry or Doug" = BELL = CAMPBELL...]]

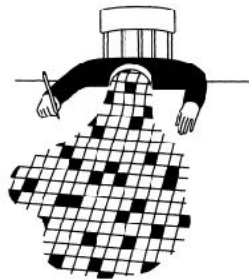
"Insert Eli acrobatically - hanging in there! (9)"

Steve Jeffery : Anagrams, so resorting to my usual way of dealing with Countdown puzzles I jumbled these into a circle until RESILIENT jumped out.

[[Definition: "hanging in there"

Wordplay: "acrobatically" (anagram indicator) "Insert Eli" rearranges to RESILIENT...]]

"Nasty uneven endless debts (6)"



Steve Jeffery : Cryptic time. Debts implies IOUs, leaving two more letters for something nasty, so ODIIOUS. Not sure about the "uneven endless" part of this, which implies a synonym of uneven with a bit left off th- Doh! odd-> od. Neat.

[[Definition: "Nasty"

Wordplay: "uneven" = ODD, "endless" becomes OD + "debts" = IOUS = ODIIOUS...]]

Eli Cohen : I really better stop banging my head against the wall over those crossword clues and write a loc. I could go on about how impossible I find your crossword clues, even (or especially?) when my name is in them, and how I need my head to heal before New Year's Eve, but I'd better send [a loc instead] before I get distracted by something dumb, like *Kerosene*.

Nic : Time magazine's "Person of the Year" is unsurprisingly well enough known, but Alan Connor's crossword blog in the *Grauniad* suggests that cryptic compilers found more appeal in other public figures...

<https://www.theguardian.com/crosswords/crossword-blog/2024/dec/16/the-person-of-2024-according-to-crosswords>

Thish's efforts:

"Basic food item which may keep a fanzine together? (6)"

"Immaculate, having cured the acne? (8)"

"Paper-thin crap, wild with excitement (7)"

ANORAK

CHRISTMAS TRAINS

All right, I'm going to be suitably lazy here, or at least claim the press of seasonal doings, and just bung in more pictures than text, which I hope will give rise to at least some modicum of delight from anoraks and others clocking thish...



I'll start with a local one - the Boulder City (home of **Pat Murphy**) Santa/North Pole Express (photo on previous page) which sells out in a jiff every year. This is a heritage (Friends of the Southern Nevada Railway) 30 minute ride geared toward the weans.

<https://www.boulderrailroadmuseum.org/event/boulder-city-santa-express/>

The Verde Canyon railroad in Arizona also has a Christmas special which looks fun but isn't cheap. At other times of the year some readers might be much more interested in their winery excursion, I suspect...

<https://verdecanyonrr.com/>



What always puts me in mind of trains at this time of year are previous substantive photosets of the CPKC (Canadian Pacific Kansas City) holiday train published by **Dale Speirs** in *Opuntia* over the years. The train tours the full lengths of their lines, this year from November 21st to December 20th, each stop featuring a concert and donations to local food banks. Very Canadian of them innit?...

<https://www.cpkcr.com/en/community/HolidayTrain>

Photo by **Dale Speirs**. For the full impressive set, see <https://efanzines.com/Opuntia/Opuntia-540.pdf>

THE OLD SOD

BY DAVID HODSON

2024 has been a bit of a mixed bag of a year.

In fannish terms, it's probably been my most active year since the 1980s. I've attended a U.S. Corflu, my first U.S. con since 1988, an Eastercon, a Worldcon in Glasgow, and Novacon. I've kept pounding out this column for Nic. I've also committed myself to running the next Corflu in

Newbury. All-in-all, a pretty busy year, especially once you add all the London pub meets at the Bishop's Finger and London Comic Marts with Rob Hansen and James Bacon among others.

I doubt there will be another year like it.

Las Vegas was never a city that I had any plans to visit. The only previous reason I'd convinced myself I had for visiting it was to see where *The Night Stalker* was filmed way back in 1972, but it was a reasonable suspicion that most of the locations no longer existed, and Seattle seemed like more of an attraction based on 1973's *The Night Strangler*.

All of which took no account of Nic rocking up there and asking me to start writing these columns. I have to admit a Corflu on it's own wouldn't have attracted me across the pond either, but both Nic and I have had health

problems and, as I've written before, I've made the mistake of thinking there's still all the time in the world to see important people in my life, much to Nic's chagrin, although it's not his longevity I'm doubting (to quote Greg Ketter in Glasgow about Bryan Barrett: "I miss the big bugger." Hearing an American say the word bugger is...odd!)

I will admit that my nefarious plans to run a Corflu in the U.K. were hatched with two extracurricular motivations,



other than the obvious one of not allowing a gap year to happen, in mind. Firstly, I wanted to support Tommy and James' Eastercon by trying to attract as many Americans and others that might not otherwise show up to at least think about attending. The other was always to get Nic and Jen to visit the U.K. one way or another. Thankfully, that nice Mr Jackson intervened to make that an inevitability. It's satisfying when at least 50% of a plan comes together. It was a highlight of the year to meet Jen Farey, it'll be another highlight to have been instrumental in her first trip outside of the United States.

Eastercon in Telford was small by Eastercon terms. Everyone was keeping their financial powder dry for the Glasgow Worldcon in August. It also, on a smaller scale, summed up all my problems with using conference centres as venues for conventions. Don't get me wrong, I understand fully that the twenty-ring circus that is a Worldcon needs to use such venues, but Eastercons suffer when as few as 600 people, more often 800-1000 people admittedly, are forced to use facilities designed to house several thousand people comfortably. The advantage Telford had was the main hotels were within comfortable walking distance, although the venue did its best to make the route as challenging as possible with bollards and hazard tape seemingly randomly all over the place.

Worldcon in August came along and, for the first time in a year (since the previous year's Eastercon), covid became an issue with several hundred reported cases. There were multiple cries of should have made everyone mask up, or other mitigation suggestions, but the truth is the majority of people, rightly or wrongly, no longer regard covid as the issue it once was. Personally, I have no doubts that covid is still a major issue, but that's because the numbers of people keeping up with vaccination recommendations are falling significantly, mostly due to either crazy conspiracy theories about the vaccines or a belief they've had enough gunk pumped into their arms already. At the time I thanked my lucky stars that I'd either missed a dose of covid or the vaccines had done their business, but it seems likely I had a mild dose that the tests didn't pick up due to their failing accuracy detecting more up to date variants. After an appointment with my doctor, it was also likely that I picked up a dose of some variant or another either in or returning from Las Vegas; there are some other lesser known symptoms that are becoming more widespread and have been pointed out to me since.

Novacon is my favourite regular con again, just as it was in the 1980s. It's the place where I'm most likely to run into the people I seem to get on best with – Mark and Claire, John Harvey, Tommy, Caroline and Brian, even James made an impromptu appearance this year – and it's a venue where my increasingly flaky hearing can cope with the background noise (another minus point against large aircraft hangar-style

buildings with reflective surfaces). I'm having to withdraw from several other social events I try to attend regularly due to my hearing. Tinnitus is a nuisance at the best of times, plus it knocks the sharper, higher tones off your range of hearing. I don't think I'm nearing Dave Langford levels of disability yet, though...

I've been arguing for a while that it's probably time to find a new pub for the First Thursday meetings in London due to the steep stairs that lead to the room that's reserved. Quite rightly, others point out that it's nearly impossible to find a pub with an affordable room for hire on the ground floor in London, but it's only going to become more and more of an issue. The London Comic Marts have allowed Rob Hansen and I to reconnect with Dave Cockfield and, although he has expressed a wish to come along on the first Thursday, he has to use a walking stick permanently and would be vulnerable on the stairs, especially coming down them after a few pints. We're all on the receiving end of the ravages of time, those stairs disturb me more and more each month.

I think, once this year's Corflu and Belfast Eastercon are done and dusted, I'll probably only attend Novacon in future. I just don't have the stamina for more than that these days, although a Corflu in Chicago or a reason to re-visit New Orleans would be tempting. I would like to see San Francisco as well. Of course, another issue with any international travel is being stuck in a pressurised tube designed for people that are 5'10" when I'm 6'4" and 120+ kilos. I can afford to plan for events with reasonable costs; first class air travel isn't a reasonable cost for me. Maybe Europe will have to suffice for future travels. I do intend to attend the Eurocon in Berlin in July 2026, Metropol Con, and was extolling the virtues of the previous con there in 2023 to Paul Kincaid at Worldcon. Berlin is a pretty city with good transport links and plenty else to see should the convention drag. I also still believe that Berlin will probably host a Worldcon, with many of the same team running the event, in the relatively near future, so that might be a highlight for people to look forward to.

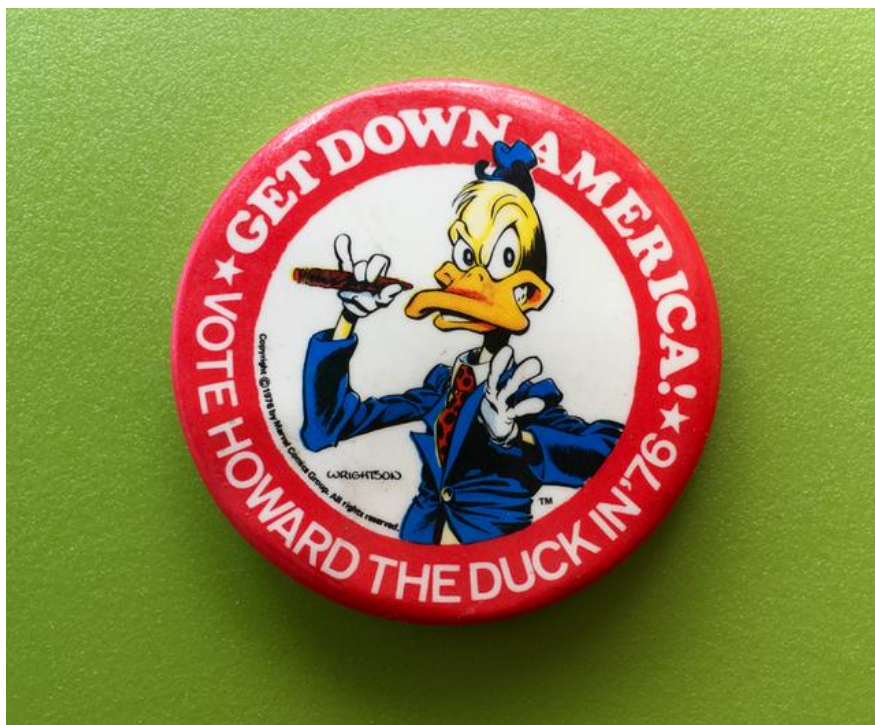
This year's New Year's resolutions for me are simple:

Get the Corflu done and dusted with no major fuck-ups or disappointments. I don't think this will be too difficult to achieve given the good people I have around me and it'll only take a couple of final bursts of energy to get all the arrangements finally cemented into place. There will be no more convention organising for me after this, although I did have another long conversation with Paul Kincaid in Glasgow about the possible need for a Mexican style convention; a smaller con with a tight focus on the written word. The problem I have with this idea, thinking about it more since, is there just aren't the authors around these days that would inspire me to do it plus the one American writer I'd have loved to bring to the U.K., Jack McDevitt, is now an

89-year-old man and also probably wouldn't be interested in being jammed into a pressurised tube for 10 or 11 hours travelling half way around the world and back. It's probable that this idea only appeals to me out of pure nostalgia; the days when we could sit around getting pissed with Iain Banks and Rob Holdstock and had the stamina to stay up until 3am three nights in a row and still be up in time for breakfast despite the hammering headache. It's absolutely certain the like will never be seen again.

The month after this year's Eastercon I have a play to appear in. Along with a drama group that I socialise with I have been writing a comedy murder-mystery; a "Then There Were None" style whodunnit based in a manor house which is hosting a post office reunion party. I play an aging punk rocker ex-teaboy who was sacked for filling his tea urn with the water from the office cleaner's mop bucket. I haven't been fitted with the multi-coloured mohawk wig yet. The play will be filmed over several nights, it will be uploaded to youtube, I will NOT be sharing the link...

I have an ambition to write a book about Steve Gerber, the U.S. comic book writer who created Howard the Duck and, arguably, Alan Moore. Gerber has always been my hero in terms of comic book creators. His run on Man-Thing at Marvel in the 1970s is as close to gonzo as mainstream comic book writing can be and it's my ambition to finally own a "Get Down America: Vote Howard the Duck in '76" pin badge before I die. Writing has started on the project, a potential publisher is out there, I'm still buying reference material to read. Who knows if it'll ever appear?



LOCO CITATO

[[*"Sometimes people try to destroy you, precisely because they recognize your power — not because they don't see it, but because they see it and they don't want it to exist."* (bell hooks) ...]]

From:
necronaut13@gmail.com



November 30

Steve Green writes:

Your salute to 1960s actress Vitina Marcus almost procured the correct response from the dusty caverns of my brain, since I immediately envisioned her decked out in green make-up, which incorrectly led to my trying to recall if she'd played an Orion slave girl in *Star Trek*, a line of enquiry quickly dismissed because the only two Orion roles in the original series were essayed by Susan Oliver (albeit a fantasy implanted in Capt Pike's bonce) and Yvonne Craig. I had, of course, temporarily mis-filed "the Girl from the Green Dimension" who tried to entrance Dr Smith in two episodes of *Lost in Space*.

[[*Yes indeed, and well done!...*]]

From: srjeffery@aol.com

December 1

Steve Jeffery writes:

"...a rather American take on "1960s bands that vanished without trace". The Tremeloes? All right, arguable, but the Hollies? The Small Faces? The Yardbirds?"

Yes, I wonder whatever happened to the Yardbirds, and various members like Relf, Clapton, Page and Beck. Did they go on to do anything after leaving the band?

As for the Tremeloes, their own time in the spotlight might have been limited (although they are apparently still gigging) but two members, Poole and Hawkes have left their own traces through their children, Poole's daughters forming Alisha's Attic and Hawke's son Chesney having not a little success on his own.

[[*Quite so...*]]

Back at school someone came up with a way of

distinguishing between the subjects on the timetable:

“Maths is sums. Physics is sums with pictures. Chemistry is pictures with sums. Biology is pictures.” (Or as he put it, “a lot of drawing maps of the backs of rabbits”. Although that may have been just Zoology.) Mind you this was back in the days before computers, and when even pocket calculators were a rarity. (I still have my old school slide rule and logarithms book, although whether I can still use either of them is debatable.)

From: mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

December 2

Mark Plummer writes:

I continue to marvel at your ability to produce issues of *This Here...* that appear simultaneously monthly and about every two days. I'm sure #81 came along only a couple of days after #80 with its 'Omphaloskepsis' column about Don D'Ammassa 'Pining For The Fjords'. (Tangentially, our local cheese shop recently managed to score a supply of Nidelven Blå, the Supreme Champion at the 2023 World Cheese Awards and thus officially the best cheese on Earth. It was also described, accurately, as a 'Norwegian Blue', leading to what I suspect is an almost entirely generational divide in their customer base over whether this instantly provoked the thought 'Beautiful plumage'.)

[[Five weeks between #80 and #81, in fact...]]

I don't know if you're familiar with a 2011 film called *Midnight in Paris*. Gil Pender is a successful screenwriter and aspiring novelist who is visiting Paris with his fiancée and her wealthy family. While walking back to his hotel alone, a 1920s car pulls up at the stroke of midnight and offers him a lift. He finds he's literally transported to Paris in the 1920s, meeting people such as Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Picasso and so on. This is an era to which he's already emotionally drawn and he makes the same trip in the same way on later nights, meeting more pivotal figures from the arts world in the manner of so many time travellers who somehow contrive to find a past inhabited largely by celebrities. There is, though, a fictional character, Adriana, who is baffled by his fascination with her era as to her surely the Golden Age was the Belle Époque. One night while walking with her – in the 1920s – a horse drawn carriage appears and transports them to Paris in the 1890s, where they meet Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, and Degas at the Moulin Rouge. To Adriana this is the greatest time, but here she finds the guys are talking about how great it must have been to be around during the Renaissance.

[[Don't think I've ever clocked that'un...]]

I then found this comment from Alan Burns in a 1958 fanzine called *Satellite*. Burns had himself earlier edited a fanzine called *Gestalt* which he'd later passed to Jim Marshall:

'You know, I suppose, that *Gestalt* died of moribundity as soon as Jim Marshall got himself a Gestetner rotary, as long as *Ges* was produced by sweat and toil it lived, but ease killed it.'

I imagine Alan Burns probably thinks that there's a difference between creating your physical copy on a rotary duplicator, as I imagine Don D'Ammassa did, and producing your copy on a flatbed. Now *that's* real fanning.

I shouldn't criticise Don for having his own definition of a fanzine. I have one of my own and it excludes things that others would include so I can hardly complain if Don's definition excludes still more, including me. Personally, I don't disagree with the statement you quote, 'There is a difference between having a third party create your physical copy and doing it yourself. If you have never done so, it might be understandable that you do not recognize the difference.' I suspect that if you have to go through the process of typing stencils, running them off on a duplicator, collating them, stapling them, hand-addressing the envelopes and so on, it likely makes you think a bit more about what you're doing and why and to whom you're sending the result. The caveat to that is that when you look at *some* of the examples of fanzines thus produced you have to conclude that *some* people didn't think about it very much.

[[Don's first sentence, "There is a difference..." is DoBFO. It's the second which makes it patronizing, innit?...]]

The question, surely, is: is the difference between the two methods so great as to mean that an artifact produced by one is so comprehensively divorced from the other that it's not the same thing? We used to run off fanzines on a duplicator using electrostencils generated from laser-printed originals rather than the pure quill typed stencils, granted. We did it because at the time it was significantly cheaper than any available alternative and we stopped because it was getting harder and harder to get the parts and supplies and the ancient machinery kept breaking down. So now we produce our fanzine, the same fanzine, as a PDF file sent electronically to our printers in Sheffield who then ship a box of finished copies back to us and that's usually the first time that we see a the new issue in print. We generate mailing labels using a mail merge program, as we've always done, and so the only remaining physical labour bit is buying the stamps and envelopes and then stuffing and mailing the print copies, and emailing the e-copies. To me, the current process doesn't feel so detached in intent from its precursor that I feel I need a name for the result.

[[Agreed, and the "intent" is what seals the deal. As with all the extremist Luddites, I'm led to ponder whether D'Ammassa churns his own butter, for example, on the

premise that it's not the same if you're buying it up the shops...]]

I wonder whether Don's comment (for which I don't have the context), 'That's like comparing print books to ebook' is telling. I mean, personally, and for most purposes – where the book is primarily a text delivery mechanism – I have no problem comparing and indeed equating print books and ebooks. I'd agree an exception for some books where there are important graphic, design or layout considerations that don't entirely (and currently) work very well on an e-reader but, for instance, earlier I was reading *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* on an e-reader and I don't feel the experience would be materially different if I was reading a paperback. I like physical books and we have a house full of them, but now that I'm 60 and am seeing more and more friends battling with their parents' or their own need to divest themselves of physical artifacts for whatever reason I am increasingly conscious of the burden they represent.

Actually, though, I think – *pace* Alison Scott's comment in #81 – that Don's approach is materially different from your 'immutable object' view, for all that we know that the immutable object argument didn't entirely work in the way you

intended, falling prey to the common problem when drawing a line around a particular set that it either includes something that shouldn't be included or excludes something that shouldn't be excluded or both. I think you were trying to distinguish between a work that's continually updated and refreshed, like a blog, and a periodic assemblage of work, like a fanzine (at least as I understand and use the term). I think that is a valid distinction, and something like an unscripted podcast is a different thing again, although – and I can't stress this enough – that's not to claim one has primacy even though we as individuals may *prefer* one over the other. So to me, *Banana Wings*, *This Here...* and – I'm afraid I had to look this up – *Mythologies* are all fanzines even though one is mimeo, one is professionally printed augmented with ecopies, and one is entirely electronic. To me there's a clear commonality. And *Nerds of a Feather* and

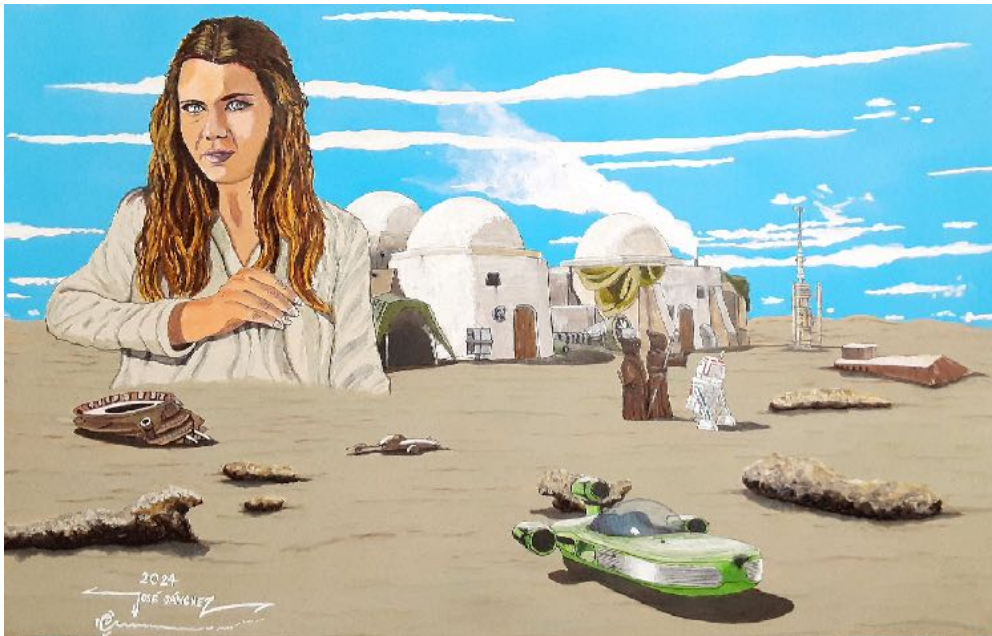
Octothorpe aren't, with no disrespect intended to either. Lots of other perfectly decent things such as *Private Eye*, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and the rather good spiced pear and goats cheese salad we just had for lunch aren't fanzines either.

[[And thanks for that an'all, expectedly described better than I could have done...]]

Can I articulate then *my* definition of a fanzine? I'm not sure I can. Maybe, 'a periodic assemblage of written and/or artistic work produced by one or more science fiction fans and distributed to a mailing list of other science fiction fans and possibly made more generally available'. I suspect that won't survive contact with what-about-isms but then it doesn't have to as I know what I mean.

[[As long as it's "immutable", shurely?...]]

I am of course flattered that **Steve Jeffery** thinks we "treat



everything [we] write and edit with the same meticulous attention to detail". So far as APA writing is concerned, I write the date – in full, Monday 2 December 2024 – and then start writing and carry on until I stop, whether through the desire to do something else or external intervention such as a Person from

Porlock trying to deliver something here that meant for Shirley Park Road. Mailing comment, anecdote, article... it doesn't matter, whatever comes to mind. I'm pretty slow, because I check various things as I go along, trying to avoid asserting what I think is *probably* true. I do subsequently revise, trying to improve the language and eliminate typos without revising the opinions, and then get Claire to check it too because I know I'm absolutely hopeless at proofreading my own writing as I see what I 'know' is there. It's a different style, certainly, but I'd like to think my attention to detail is roughly the same.

I can't say whether we're more diligent than others or whether we even live up to the reputation we seemingly have. We are fussy about standardisation and so would change anybody else's use of 'standardization', for instance, as well as anything American to British English, single-

rather than double-quotes, en-dashes rather than em-dashes or spaced hyphens and so on. I suppose it is true that we check what we write and what others write for us and so, seeing as it was Steve who mentioned it, I'll use the example that in a recent letter from Steve about music I was double-checking which titles were albums, and which we'd thus put in italics, and which were song titles, which would go in single-quotes; and there's was also a passing reference to somebody's first single and I checked that was correct, not least because I thought it was wrong (it wasn't). I aspire just a little bit to the diligence of the *Vanity Fair* fact-checker. They once emailed *Private Eye* after a columnist had claimed in a passing reference that *Private Eye* had brought down governments. Was this correct? 'I only need to know that it has brought down one government,' the fact checker explained. Or the fact-checkers at *The New Yorker*. In *Letters from London*, Julian Barnes described one of his column in which he references a Landseer hanging in Buckingham Palace. This gave the fact-checkers a 'little problem'. They wanted to confirm that the painting was still to be found hanging in the same location. 'Well, I suppose you could always ring up Buckingham Palace,' Barnes said. They'd already done that. The problem was that the Palace refused to confirm or deny even having the painting.

[[I don't do so much of the consistency checking (single/double quotes, italics, dashes ect) for this here chime of wrens, although sometimes I will if I have time. Nor do I standardize to "American English" in locs, for example - a practice I've followed since Arrows of Desire, in fact. BEAM is more diligent in those respects, though...]]

Thanks for the kind mention of *Banana Wings*. And great to see more from **Rich Coad**, albeit sad that it flows from the death of another friend.

December 4

Knew there was something else I meant to mention. While I assume you weren't serious, I should clarify that I wasn't "narked (or perhaps just nervous) that [my] name was originally first in the credits" for the *Kerosene Papers*. My contribution was minimal, and really based on stuff done years ago. I contributed virtually nothing to the collection process so it was right that your name should appear first.

[[Methinks the Strummer doth protest overmuch (and perhaps inaccurately), though you can't blame him for wanting to place some distance between himself and The Kerosene Papers, whether out of repressed shame or fear of retribution...]]

However, there's also the matter of alphabetisation: F comes before P. I suppose it could be argued that M comes before N, but personally I tend to work on the basis that when alphabetising names then you do it by surname if the surname is given, so it's OK to say 'Mark and Nic' but it's 'Nic Farey and Mark Plummer'.

This may seem like a pedantic and trivial point but I think I'm particularly attuned to it because it really does nark me when people refer to us as 'Mark Plummer and **Claire Brialey**' – because whether alphabetising by forename or surname Claire's name precedes mine, no question. I had a real difference of opinion with Peter Weston about this in 2008 when he was organising Cytricon V. For some reason couples were list jointly in the membership list and nearly *every time* Peter listed them as 'male name and female name', the one exception being 'Flick and Mike Scott'. And when I pointed it out Peter just couldn't or wouldn't see why it was an issue.

[[Perversely, perhaps, while I list you in eg fanzine credits in your preferred order, I tend to think of the two of you as "Mark and Claire", with the minimal defense that I've known you longer (187 years now, according to SF Fandom - Its Part in Our Downfall)...]]

This was of course as nothing to the Worldcon a few years back where the bought-in registration software required that where there were multiple memberships at the same address one of them was the 'master' membership and the others subsidiary. That was bad enough, but in our case the membership they picked to be the master was mine and there was no good reason to do that – although there was a bad one.

From: kim.huett@gmail.com

December 3

Kim Huett writes:

To satisfy the eternal incredulity of **Steve Jeffery** I would like to point out that when I wrote the letter he refers to I was on the same thing I am always on when writing letters of comment. That thing being very a comfortable lounge chair purchased from a store that specialises in high quality second-hand furniture. Much of the furniture this establishment sells comes from embassies and this lounge chair certainly feels like no expense was spared. I trust Mr. **Jeffery** will understand that he cannot have this chair as it's too comfortable and cost me too much to part with it.

Perhaps Mr. **Jeffery** would like some canned goods instead? Recently I discovered the following letter by Michael Rosenblum in *The Sydney Futurian* #9, April/May 1948:

We still have plenty of fantasy published here in book form, and I'd be quite willing to swap it with any Aussie for canned fruit, cheese, butter, and so on. Also any stf published down under. The magazines have already just about died out, as paper has become short again.

From what I understand of Brexit a shipping container full of canned goods might be in order to ensure British fandom doesn't collectively starve to death. Thoughts Mr. **Jeffery**?

Just so you know Nic, when I visited the Australia Post shop to send your card I was served by some GuNToV arsemonkey I'd not seen before (or since). I thought at the time the amount he quoted me wasn't even vaguely correct. However, it was the middle of winter and after months of hacking and coughing due to my throat not coping with the cold weather I just didn't have the will to argue. Some days you GuNToV the bear and some days the bear GuNToVs you.

I don't see the appeal of craft beer. Every one I've ever tried has either tasted like liquefied Nun farts or the tears of puppies, flavours that simply don't appeal to me. I prefer to drink Carlsberg because I like the taste and to celebrate the close ties between Australia and Denmark. I have my good friends over at Dan Murphy's deliver the Carlsberg three cases at a time to my door because that works out at about \$2.20 per 330ml bottle. Not only is the beer cheaper this way but it's delivered to my front door.

[[Nothing much wrong with Carlsberg either in my view...]]

I downloaded all six episodes of the original TV serial 'Quatermass & the Pit' from dailymotion.com recently and now feel slightly embarrassed. I've stated in the past that the TV serial was almost entirely identical to the later Hammer film. Well now I find this to be entirely untrue. All I can conclude is that the serial I thought I watched on YouTube some years ago was in fact the film cut up to resemble a serial. The fact that the fake serial I saw there had a scene I was not familiar with was enough to fool me entirely.

Now that I've watched the original serial I've found it different in ways I didn't expect. Of course the TV version feels like a smaller, cheaper production but what is curious is the TV version is much less creepy. Instead the tone is much more that of a mystery. The same plot beats are there but the TV version is missing lots of the tension inducing touches that makes the film such a compelling watch. For example, early on in the film there is a scene in which Professor Quatermass and a police sergeant enter an abandoned house close to where the Martian spaceship has been found. In the film version we see the sergeant become increasingly distressed, a bit on the unsubtle side but still tension inducing. In the serial the sergeant shows no sign of nervousness while he explains the history of the supposed hauntings. Quatermass does notice some curious scratches on the kitchen wall and claims to have heard a sound but that's as creepy as it gets. I suppose the BBC preferred Nigel Kneale to tone down his script. After all the fuss the BBC production of '1984' and the scene with the rat engendered I suppose they didn't want to repeat that experience.

There were no such concerns for Hammer Films and indeed I imagine they wanted their version to be tonally as close to the horror films they were becoming known for as that would guarantee a better box office return.

Anyway, while the TV serial doesn't have the budget of the film I didn't feel as if this was a problem until the last episode. Actually the problem was the sequence beginning with the Martian spaceship activating and it being destroyed as that lasted for about 25 minutes.

There clearly wasn't the budget to do this sequence justice given this time length so there was too much stock footage of burning buildings and of cast members pretending to struggle against the influence of the Martian machine. Having cast members stand at a window and tell each other what was going on outside didn't help either. Basically the bulk of the final episode was a very hard watch, which was disappointing because they had done a decent job of the previous five.

I can't help but think they would have been well advised to make only five episodes and significantly trim the final sequence.

Anybody familiar with BBC TV of the 1960s and 1970s will have a lot of fun spotting various British character actors. For example I couldn't help but notice the army sergeant was played by Michael Ripper and the corporal by Harold Goodwin, who between them appeared in just about every British TV show of the period, except 'Doctor Who' for some mad reason.

On the whole I'd recommend watching the serial so long as you don't expect too much of the ending.

[[What was considered a bit of a bum ending was properly mocked in the Goon Show episode "The Scarlet Capsule"...]]

I'm curious as in what way you think Angus Sampson is "implausibly Australian". Go into any inner-city pub, anything called The Rose, Shamrock, & Thistle, or The Baden Powell Hotel and you'll find at least one Angus Sampson. They drink Carlton Draft or Reschs Pilsener and will be wearing a jersey belonging to either the South Sydney Rabbitohs or the Collingwood Magpies. Be aware that if you allow them to engage you in conversation you're going to have to listen to a lot of bullshit and you will have to buy them beers because talking bullshit is thirsty work.

[[I based my remark on Sampson's character portrayal in 'The Lincoln Lawyer' which cannot under any circumstances be described as "ocker", shurely?...]]

Such is life.

December 15

As you know TV has been around for a while now. Not surprising then that many actors have scores, if not hundreds, of TV credits to their names. Mostly though these credits refer to guest spots or supporting roles. Even many famous actors count very few leading roles among their TV credits. This can be for many reasons, some film stars treated TV as an occasional side gig. Some, like Melody Patterson of 'F-Troop' fame, didn't have a hunger for a TV career. In

Melody's case she preferred to focus on the theatre and directing rather than being in front of the cameras. All too often an individual would find their career stymied by the success of a particular character, as happened with Bob Denver and Gilligan. To quote McLean Stevenson on why his career stalled after leaving 'M.A.S.H.', "The mistake was that I thought everybody in America loved McLean Stevenson. That was not the case. Everybody loved Henry Blake."

To me then the great mystery isn't why so many actors have had few leading roles on TV but how the occasional individual has managed to strike it rich again and again. Take Richard O'Sullivan for example, who after building up a bit of a reputation as part of the cast of 'Doctor At Large' and 'Doctor in Charge' went on to star in the following:

- 'Man About the House' (39 episodes)
- 'Robin's Nest' (49 episodes)
- 'Dick Turpin' (31 episodes)
- 'Me and My Girl' (52 episodes)

Not a bad run but just a bit inexplicable as that's more moles roles in TV series than his 'Doctor At Large' co-stars achieved collectively.

As I don't recall him being any more charming than Barry Evans, George Layton, or Geoffrey Davies I find it a bit of a mystery that the executives loved him so.

[[O'Sullivan was certainly "flavor of the decade(s)" in the 1970s and 80s, perhaps because he seemed an unthreatening "type", particularly as Robin Tripp, for which that was required. Mind you, he was in real life knobbing his co-stars Sally Thomsett and Tessa Wyatt, though not at the same time...]]

However, I will contend that the single greatest greatest mystery in TV history is Robert Urich. Like many successful actors Urich has a lengthy list of credits on IMDB. Unlike most actors however he had starring roles in an amazingly large number of TV series. The following list excludes mini-series and anything in which it isn't clear he had a starring role:

- 1973 - 'Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice' (12 episodes)
- 1976 - 'S.W.A.T.' (37 episodes)
- 1978-81 - 'Vega\$' (69 episodes)
- 1982-83 - 'Gavilan' (10

episodes)

- 1985-88 - 'Spenser: For Hire' (65 episodes)
- 1990-91 - 'American Dreamer' (17 episodes)
- 1992-93 - 'Crossroads' (11 episodes)
- 1993 - 'It Had To Be You' (6 episodes)
- 1996 - 'The Lazarus Man' (22 episodes)
- 1998-99 - 'Love Boat: The Next Wave' (25 episodes)
- 2001 - 'Emeril' (11 episodes)

Admittedly a lot of these shows didn't last that long but that's not what interests me. What I find fascinating is the fact that TV executives were so fascinated by Robert Urich that they kept offering him job after job in the first place. And keep in mind that 'Emeril' is his last appearance only because Robert Urich passed away from cancer in 2002. If he had remained healthy I've no doubt the above list would be even longer.

[[Urich's rep as an all around "nice guy" (well, he was Canadian) who was professional and easy to work with undoubtedly contributed to his in-demand status...]]

I'd be interested in knowing if anybody can name an actor with more leading role credits.

[[My feeling, naturally not backed up by any research whatsoever, is that most British actors get one go at a defining role. I thought of John Nettles ('Bergerac') for example, but he did go on to star in 'Midsomer Murders'. Perhaps Peter Gilmore ('The Onedin Line') is a better example of "one and done". Mind you, he appeared in eleven 'Carry On' films as well. The one actor I immediately thought of as having several notable (and quite different) lead roles would be the great John Thaw:

- 1964-66 : 'Redcap'
 - 1975-78 : 'The Sweeney'
 - 1985-90 : 'Home to Roost'
 - 1987-2000 : 'Inspector Morse'
 - 1002 : 'A Year in Provence'
 - 1995-2001 : 'Kavanagh QC'
- And that's not even counting one-off appearances...]]*

In the meantime I've been re-watching 'Kolchack: The Night Stalker' TV series and enjoying it more than I expected. Having already re-watched the two films this seemed the next logical step. It's not A-grade material and I can see why Darren McGavin asked to be released from his contract. The scripts definitely need some tightening up but at the same time I like the



somewhat cartoon feel to the episodes. On reflection I suppose a tongue in cheek approach is the only way a series like this could be remade now that the first season of 'The X-Files' has done such a good job of the serious version. Added amusement for me involved spotting well known actors of yesteryear such as Phil Silvers and Tom Bosley though I'm no doubt missing more than I spot.

I for one do appreciate the fact that your name has been linked to that of Harlan Ellison several times as I can see a definite similarity. Both of you have a decidedly GuNToV history to live down to though I'm not sure if you can equal the Jim Harmon Door Incident from the 1954 Midwestercon. Or even the Cleveland birdbath incident now I think about it.

[[You might very well think that, but I couldn't possibly comment...]]

To me **Bill Breiding** is cultured because I can't imagine him tackling any sort of project without first fortifying himself with a little New Zealand goat cheese and a glass of the finest red. His claim that he is sexually vanilla doesn't detract from this image as I don't see being cultured as an implying an exotic personality.

Damned if I now why you're having your head examined. Surely that's only worth doing if you're willing to do something about what they find in there. And what does one do with a monkey playing an accordion?

Much as I love the intro to 'Space: 1999' I'm not keen to re-watch entire episodes as I have a strong memory of the plots being rather bland. Uncertain memory also suggesting that at least one extra would be killed off in the first five minutes of every episode. It did have me wondering what was going to happen when the Moon base began to run short of staff and maintenance began to suffer.

I see Lord Blorp has implied that the material I submit to ANZAPA is of interior quality because it has been submitted to ANZAPA. I do not hold with this as I consider everything I write to be of the same general quality. What I submit to ANZAPA might not be exactly the same in style and content as what I submit to **Bruce Gillespie** for *SF Commentary* but that means little. What I submit to different fanzines tends to also be different in style in content as the material I'm responding to varies. Which would be an excellent argument except I can't help but feel my claim to consistent quality is undermined by the fragmented nature of this letter.

[[I do, in fact, accept your claim to "consistent quality"...]]

Even worse Mr. Ploppy is back with his GuNToV attitude to food. How a miscreant like this can publicly and without shame claim the slimy and half-cooked turds of potato mush common in England are worthy of being called chips is beyond me. How far the English have fallen, from masters of a quarter of the planet to GuNToVs so useless they fail at

potato. The Irish must weep to see how something as basic a potato is beyond the ability of GuNToVs like Mr. Ploppy.

From: leighedmonds01@gmail.com

December 18

Leigh Edmonds writes:

A quick note to let you know that I did receive *This Here...81*. It must have arrived in the week that I didn't have internet access and there was so much junk waiting in my inbox when I logged in again that it took a long time to go through and delete most of it.

I can report that my move went as well as I had hoped so there were no major disasters. However, it will be some time before everything is where it should be again because of my lack of friendly association with numbers. As a result one wall I measured as 3.5 meters before I moved turned out to be 3.05 meters when I tried to fit shelves into the space. This will take a few weeks to resolve.

[[Having seen the photos of the new gaff on FBF I reckon you're well in...]]

The other thing that I had thought about but not factored in was the effect of physical and mental exhaustion that came with the move. As a result I'm still having trouble with making sense of what those little black marks on pieces of paper mean. So I will leave this here and hope to have more mental clarity next time. (No laughing thank you.)

From: garyhubbard969@gmail.com

December 19

Gary Hubbard writes:

Let me show you how my mind works.

Recently, I was reading "Spiderman, Life Story", and in it there's this part where Peter Parker is interning with Reed Richards and in the course of a conversation, Peter chides Reed about the costumes he made for the Fantastic Four:

"...adaptable to flame, stretches with you, doesn't get dirty...You've invented virtually indestructible clothing. Why haven't you made that public? You could change the world."

Reed's reply is to point out that millions of people depend on the textile industry for their livelihoods and the introduction of FF sartorial technology would create a global upheaval. Well, that's a bit of hand-waving to relieve the writer from having to explain why everyone in the Marvel Universe isn't wearing Reed's super spandex (or flying around in bathtubs), but it brought to my mind an old movie I once saw called "The Man in the White Suit" wherein a

somewhat unworldly genius working for a British textile company in the Fifties invents a material that doesn't wrinkle or get dirty and is indestructible to boot. The end result is a riot in the town that depends on the textile plant where he works and people threatening to string him up.

And that brings to mind another movie I saw called, "I'm Alright, Jack" about a young aristocrat who decides to stop being a parasite on society and get a job, but finds it more than he can handle, because businessmen are all grasping capitalists, politicians are greedy and labor leaders are communists. In the end, he decides society can go hang itself and, Candide-like, returns to his ancestral estate, which (we learn at the end) turns out to also be a nudist colony. A sort of upper-crust Garden of Eden, I suppose.

[[Both classic British satires from the 1950s, of course...]]

Another thing I do is collect old (what we call mid-century, because most of them were published in the 1950s) paperbacks, and I recently came across this gem: "Rogues and Lovers". The blurb on the cover says: "From the boudoirs of Paris to the bordellos of Frisco - the oldest hungers drove them." It's a collection of short biographies of famous men, supposedly noted for their prowess in the bedroom. But many of them, like Nero or Rasputin, were way beyond mere rogues and less than actual lovers. But to a true lover of sleaze, such as myself, this book was a real treat. It was lively and captivating; pretty well written, considering the market it was written for.

That's because a glimpse at the colophon informs us that this book, published in 1956, is a collection of articles taken from various magazine of the time with titles like: *Stag, Male* and *For Men Only*. These, as you know, were popular in the Fifties, and if you were a teenager, you could buy them off the rack no questions asked at the A&P, whereas Playboys were kept under the counter.

These old mags are gone but not forgotten, as any internet search will show you. And why not? They made for lively reading - even if they did mix a little scorn in with the leer - and made their mark on the history of American publishing. Back in the day, if you wanted a writing career, it was usual to start with these men's pulps, before moving onto the slicks, (if you were lucky) like *Playboy* or *Saturday Evening Post*. I have no idea how modern wannabes get their careers rolling.

From: portablezine@gmail.com

December 23

W^m Breiding writes:

As you know I was distracted for most of the month of November and into December by RL matters and didn't get a chance to spout off on your 80th issue before I left for West Virginia. (Yes, my sister died on December 10th.)

[[Sorry for your loss...]]

In #81 I wanted to address that sleepyhead down in Australia, **Leigh Edmonds**, and his misconceptions about Power Pop. Power Pop is an enormous, nay, vast subgenre that shouldn't be dismissed by the flick (or more accurately, the click) of his hand. Badfinger is a particularly onerous example, in my book. I've never liked them and considered them to be one of the more turgid and sluggish examples of mediocre 70s pop music. If **Leigh** will reopen his mind a bit I'd like to offer some links to some Power Pop he might enjoy.

[[I'm fairly certain you're wasting your time trying to crack open the somnolent bonce of our Antipodean friend, but carry on anyway...]]

These first two are rich moderate-tempo songs in the same ilk as Badfinger but much better.

The Churchills:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwDhEIZebpc>

The Shore:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrxkV3VqnTw>

Next, we have an example from the '70s of the authentic real thing, by the Beat, the band that was in existence before the British Beat and why the latter had to add "English" to their title.

The Beat:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ObFSUCZf9c>

Next we have two grungier examples of Power Pop.

Matthew Sweet:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOP89SY30jM>

The Elms:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrDpy0JPv0w>

Next we have a very fine, brief, melodic, upbeat song by Parthenon Huxley (also known as P. Hux):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Lq6-BKbRbg>

Lastly, we have a song from an Australian. Some may not consider this to be Power Pop if they have narrow definitions, but I absolutely do:

Butterfly Boucher:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0bKY0MnMtY>

Then we come to the Don D'Amassa problem. I wish this hadn't occurred. I have fond memories of Don from the 70s as both a lochack and an extensive contributor to *Starfire*, my 70s zine, as well as from Don's fine discussion zine, *Mythologies*. I can't really imagine why Don became so threatened by your desire to discuss fanzine making that he dismissed you out of hand.

[[Frankly, neither can I, although I could note that I've latterly observed a definite undercurrent in Don's posts that he does not like to be disagreed with...]]

Don's requirement that a zine must be entirely made by the editor or it is inauthentic is just so wrong that I'm surprised that he couldn't see the illogic in his own argument. Even back in the mid-70s I was doing early experiments with photocopying and photo-offset printing with *Starfire*. This did not in the least affect the fact that these things were handmade amateur journals. Zine makers have always used available technologies. LA fan Gil Gaier

exclusively used photocopy and offset for all three of his zines back in the 70s. While the process of *hand making* is venerable, indeed, romantic, and often can be as satisfying as it can be frustrating, it's not what defines a fanzine. What defines a fanzine is the editor's intent.

Reproduction technique is now fully automated, whether you print it on a home laserjet (no cranking there, Don!), photocopy, or send it to a local printer or take advantage of print-on-demand tech. Fans have always been looking for easier ways to repro their zines. It's the very few who took (or take) joy in the actual process of reproduction. I was one of those, though my repro was often lacking. To most it's a pain in the ass. Personally I'll take a fanzine anyway I can get it. It's the content that matters. (When I transferred to photocopy in the later 1980s and the 1990s I had a sweet relationship with my photocopy shop who were entirely delighted to be printing anything other than flyers and business documents. It was in many ways like doing it myself - he was just pressing the buttons!)

[[Well put, and not just because you're agreeing with me. I'd previously expressed parts of the definition of "fanzine" as being based on the twin pillars of intent and content (as do you), until D'Ammassa added the third rail of process as a seemingly absolute requirement. I do, I suppose, need to add "format" to that definition in a way that excludes eg blogs and podcasts, but that's just in the context of the Fanzine Activity Achievement (FAAn) Awards. In effect, though, as John Hertz complains in his annual (and tedious) cut-and-pasted grouse about the structure of the awards, "fanwriting is fanwriting", and thus in the individual categories people could be voting on the basis of eg writing in blogs, FBF posts or on the lav walls in Glasgow for all I know. Unless I'm pretty completely convinced that someone voted for hasn't

Chat



had any qualifying work in a fanzine in the previous year I won't ask for a citation or correction, taking just about all votes on trust...]]

Exemplar of this is the Farey / Plummer document *The Kerosene Papers*. Could this have been any more homemade? The interoffice envelope itself must have taken hours of thought and preparation, not to mention the document itself, beautifully printed in replica, the contents arcane and obscure and of value to only those in the know. A finer fannish document has never been published.

[[Er - thanks, but a bit OTT shurely?...]]

I like that the apa discussion has gone on to take a wider view. Apas have been essential to fanzine fandom. There are some fanzine fans that you can find nowhere else. Which is part of the problem.

[[See also my above comment re votes for eg fanwriter. There's undoubtedly reams of stuff in apas which is unseen by many...]]

I laughed all the way through **David Hodson's** 'Old Sod.' I could see the sputtering spittle and red face as I was reading.

In regards 'Anorak,' have you ever seen "The Station Agent", a Peter Dinklage vehicle? This is a most excellent movie in which nothing goes boom. It's a quiet movie about friendship. Joe Bob sez check it out. It's streaming on Amazon Prime.

[[I shall endeavor to do so...]]

I'm so very happy that **Mike Glycer** used my memorial to Bruce Townley rather than yourself! I'm not sure **Rich Coad** would have written his fine memoir of that complicated fanboy, otherwise. Thank you, **Rich**.

[[It's almost inevitable that my recollection of a month or so ago seems dim and distant, but I think Rich offered his memoriam independently of our to-and-fro with Glycer about the publication of yours. In terms of timing, it made much more sense to get your fine piece in File770, where in any event it undoubtedly reached a wider audience, I'm sure. With a tinge of sadness, I may have observed that Rich has taken up position as the official obituarist for this here unjunction of undertakers, but I do agree that it's an honor to be able to publish him...]]

From: daverabban@gmail.com

December 25

Dave Cockfield writes:

I am amazed at how you maintain the quality every month. Terrific as usual. I can be more effusive if you like but it will cost you.

Food and drink preferences I can relate to. I'm a fat fucker because I indulge in both regularly.

FOOD:- What would be my last meal as a condemned man? I have to assume a three course meal.

Starter. Black Pudding with tinned tomatoes cooked with chilli powder and toast. A large glass of Shiraz.

Main. Three fried eggs and chips. A large glass of champagne.

Dessert. Creme Brûlée. A glass of Sauvignon Blanc. Followed of course by black coffee with a selection of cheeses and biscuits and a bottle of Laphroig single malt whisky.

I could then happily go to to the electric chair.

DRINK:- I like cask ale. In particular Pale Ales. Plus of course single malt whisky. I could probably just say that any alcohol would do in a pinch but I draw the line at Milk Stout.

Made the mistake of watching 'Dr. Who' with Ncuti Gatwa on Xmas Day. Woke twee tosh.

[[Not entirely tosh as such, but we thought it was all a bit pointless...]]

Followed by 'Wallace and Gromit' which is clever but not very funny.

Looking forward to 'Vera' at 9pm. A frumpy middle aged fat female detective in the North East. Heaven.

Thankfully rescued earlier by 'Lioness' season 2. Written, produced, directed, and starring Taylor Sheridan. That guy is pure testosterone on two legs. Naturally an American. Redneck to the core.

I also enjoyed 'Agatha All Along'. A woke/LGBTQ Marvel comic sequel to WandaVision.

Some naff stuff in the early episodes but this was cleverly plotted, well acted, and great stuff for any Marvel comic fan of the Scarlet Witch and Young Avengers. The woke stuff was a natural progression of the story and for once avoided preaching. The lead actress has deservedly been nominated for a Golden Globe.

From: eli.cohen@mindspring.com

December 25

Eli Cohen writes:

I guess the loc on *Beam* will have to wait (I'm sure the *Beam* editors will understand; it's not like I have a lot of free time for fanac — I am, after all, retired).

Your discussion of Kentucky bourbon gives me an excuse to discourse on my very close relationship to famous science fiction writer Harry Harrison. See, my wife's cousin Diane, who lives in Kentucky, was a cousin of Joan Harrison, Harry's wife, which made Harry and me, um, er, very close relatives -- I mean, his wife's aunt was married to my wife's uncle, which made us, um, er... Well, the one time I met him, at a con, we tried to figure out how we were related, and he said we were "mishpocha" (the Yiddish word for "family"). So there. We were just in Kentucky this November to celebrate Diane's 80th birthday, and among the guests was Moira Harrison, Harry's daughter. As to the bourbon, on a previous visit, Diane and Roger (her husband, who, sadly, passed away this year) took us to (among other bourbon places) the Buffalo Trace distillery, which was marvellous.

[[I'm suitably envious. Buffalo Trace has become a firm favorite round here...]]

Re TV Guide: Agree with you on 'Matlock' and 'Elsbeth'! (Which we watch Thursday nights on plain old network CBS.) I especially like the humor in 'Elsbeth' — I mean, you gotta love a police procedural episode about a murder on the set of a police procedural series!

You ask "how many is too many?" -- I'd say the answer is subjective, but certainly any uncountable number (like, say, aleph-one) should be a contender, if not an actual cardinal sin...

From: fabficbks@aol.com

December 26

Bob Jennings writes:

So far as your immigration status goes, I suspect you are safe. Even if the regs were deliberately changed and somehow juggled around to withstand the legal challenges, you would be perfectly OK for years to come. Caligula Trump will start on the easy stuff first: the illegal aliens that are easy to catch. That will take lots of time and money, then he will try to cross reference duplicate social security numbers and grab off more people. His base of support will insist he work thru all the clearly illegal squatters before he turns his attention elsewhere.

[[Rationally, that is likely true...]]

But make no mistake about it, the Trump voters want immigration at all levels stopped, and that includes asylum seekers, green card people, right down to legal foreign residents. Sometime within the first two years in office I look for Tiny Hands Trump and his cadre of ass kissers to propose

a total ban on all immigration under the guise of some kind of manufactured national security fright wing.

It's good that you are making careful plans for your upcoming trip, but geeze, I dunno. Telling people you might visit across the pond about possible food allergies to head off potential problems seems like a reasonable posting, but then I notice you continue on with a list of the specific kinds of whiskeys and specific brands you prefer to drink, including those you never want to drink. Really? This is the kind of behavior one might expect from Caligula Trump before one of his imperial state visits. Do you want to dictate the menu too? Ambrosia or Soma, m' Lord? Flaming fillet of Yak or braised breast of hummingbird? What will you do if someone invites you to their place and slams down a rusty six-pack of Old Gutter Spout or whatever the local deep cut bargain bin swill happens to be?

[[The only real menu diktat in my case is "no red meat". As far as drink goes, I find it easy to decline an undesirable offering. This relates to an adjacent topic which came up in convo round here the other day when we were talking about the relatively minuscule nature of many UK dwellings (eg my Grandfather's old two-up two-down terrace house on Verulam Road, Hitchin with no inside toilet) which mean that people typically don't entertain "at home" except for occasions such as Xmas. It was posited that Brits would view the prospect of just having people over for drinks with astonishment and the comment "That's what the pub is for!"...]]

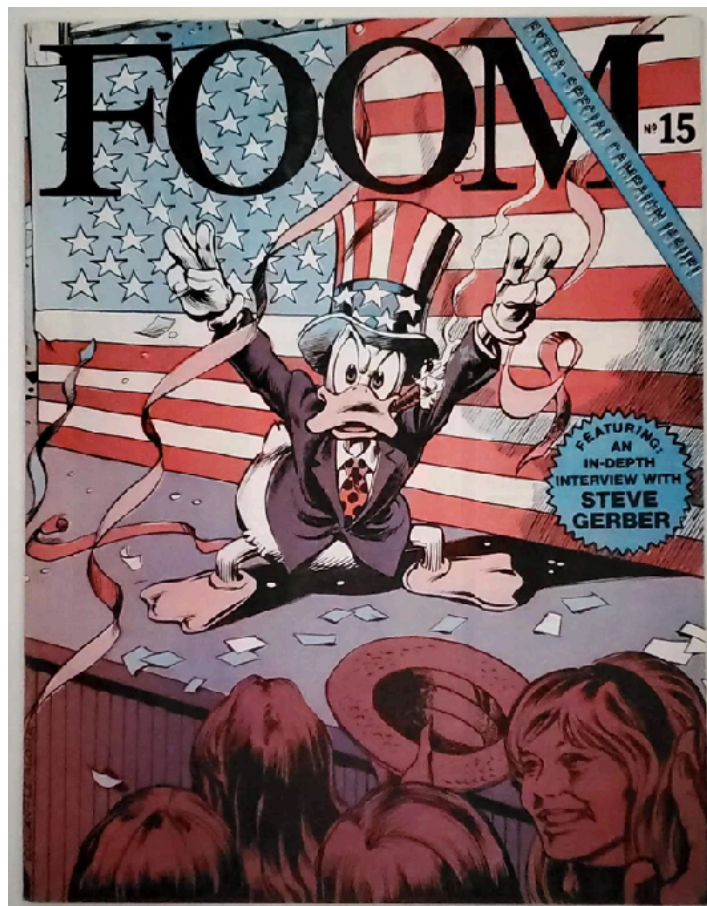
Second and third guessing the recent Presidential election results seems to be a national pastime, altho I was slightly surprised that UK resident **David Hodson** would devote so much of his column space to the subject.

I think it boils down to a few simple things. First off, the majority of people would like to do away with immigration into the US, and they would like to see (at minimum) all the illegal immigrants kicked out. The perception is that all these outside people are stealing jobs and depressing wages for native born Americans. This of course ignores all the positive things that immigrants bring into the US melting pot, including doing a lot of the kinds of work that is necessary, work that most native born Americans would really prefer not to do themselves, or how the whole nation was built on immigration starting about 1492 or so.

Second, polls ongoing since the 1920s when women got the right to vote in the US right up to the present day show that the American people do not want a woman president. That includes an overwhelming majority of women as well, who simply do not believe a woman could be as decisive and effective as a man in the job. This of course ignores all the female leaders of hundreds of nations past and present who have had no particular problem handling the duties of their offices.

Third; a majority of people feel that the country is being run by people who think they are smarter than they are, people who don't mind showing off that quality, and they deeply resent the condescending attitude a lot of those elite smart-ass people display. Caligula Trump is crude, boisterous, obnoxious, and insults those high-brow elite people on a frequent and regular basis, which automatically endears him to the majority of people who voted for him. This ignores the fact that intelligent people are necessary to keep the wheels of commerce and government functioning properly, and without expertise and the intelligence to make rational decisions chaos and disaster often result. This will probably be graphically demonstrated shortly after Tiny Hands Trump is inaugurated and starts his promised reign of terror.

Fourth; the ever present nigger in the wood pile---racism and bigotry. The Democrats have consistently tried to expand the privileges and increase public awareness of the problems racial and ethnic minorities have been facing, and that includes the segment of the population whose sexual preferences happen to be different from the perceived norm. A majority of the current voters do not approve of that, particularly the open handed acceptance of what they regard as deviant sexual behavior. Trump and his cadre of candidates stood strong against WOKE programs empowering those deviants, and a majority of voters gave the Trumpers their votes in support of their campaign.



[[My reluctance to engage much in the sordid topic of politics continues to be A Thing (though arguably forays into general philosophy do occur), so I'm not going to engage much with you here, even though I will equally not edit your loc to remove the subject. I must, however, take issue with the use of "majority". According to government figures, there are 161.4 million registered voters in the USA, of whom 154.9m actually voted. The Orange Wankbucket got 77.3m of the votes cast, 49.9% of actual voters, 47.9% of registered voters. If you look at the estimated total population of voting age (262.1m), he's at 29.5%, less than a third. Not even close to any kind of "majority". While I can agree that America is a fundamentally racist country, I abjure the contention that a demonstrable "majority" wants this, that or the other based on voting patterns...]]

Will this country be able to survive four more years of Trump? I guess we are going to find out. My personal suspicious is that will die in office, or be hustled off to a home of the mental insane, so the job will fall to Vance. I think we are all about to discover exactly what that that ancient Chinese curse about living in interesting times really means.

The ongoing discussion about old vs new zines and what's more honest/authentic/fannish is never going to end. I was a proud proponent of the print fanzine for most of my life, but I have pretty much abandoned that stance now. Yes, I have the money to print up and send out genuine toner-on-paper style fanzines, but the costs are outta-****-sight these days, and the postal rates are about to go up yet again come this July. Except for a required dozen print copies of my apazine for SFPA I do pixel zines now, and the people who receive them seem not to mind. The added advantage of doing ezines is that all the color illos actually show up in color, which adds considerably to the impact of the material. But I'm sure the debate will continue on for another few decades, at least.

[[At least now, having been canceled from his flist, I won't have to see any more of D'Ammassa's tosh on the topic...]]

Great quote from **Alison Scott** in her letter—"One of the nice things about winning an award is that you do get to say some things that nobody cares about on a big stage." I'm nabbing that one and adding it to my quote book collection.

Apologies again for the lateness of these brief comments. More free time appears to be opening in the upcoming year, so I should have more time for fanac.

[[No apology necessary...]]

From: gsmattingly@yahoo.com

December 27

Gary Mattingly writes:

'Egotorial' - Sorry you're nervous. Unfortunately, I have no advice but wish you the best.

Obviously I must peruse *The Kerosene Papers*. So much to do. So much to read. So much to peruse. Meanwhile this new series 'Earth Abides' is on the screen. Mixed reviews. Then there's '100 Years of Solitude' to watch, good reviews. And then there are all the movies on my shelves. My goodness . . .

'Corflux' - Trouser press relay race?

'F3S' - I'm sure posting those eating restrictions will come in handy. I'm strictly vegetarian lacto-ovo. I love it when people ask about fish. Fish are not vegetables, nor fruit, nor dairy, so . . . Unfortunately there are times when people can come up with some really awful vegetarian entries into the menu.

'Signs & Symbols' - Nice hourglass. I only have two tattoos, both sigils. I have thought about getting more, a moose, dogs, still pondering. Signs and symbols brings to mind semiotics, medium & modality.

'Health Diary' - Good luck with all of that. I've had a cough, congestion, and a runny nose for several weeks, fortunately no fever. The coughing is annoying and I mentioned it to my doctor. He had me have a chest x-ray. It didn't show any issue with my lungs. "The heart size is within normal limits. No focal infiltrate. Pulmonary vascular pattern is normal. There is no pneumothorax. Costophrenic angles are sharp. Degenerative changes are seen in the spine." Sharp costophrenic angles are a good thing. Degenerative changes in the spine isn't a good thing but I think it more often than not goes along with the aging thing. Fortunately, it isn't debilitating in any way at this point in time. Also had a blood test to check on my iron levels which had been low (below normal) for many months. The only thing I've been doing has been taking iron supplements, with an increase over time. This time the iron levels are within normal levels but I assume I'll need to continue taking the iron supplements. We shall see. Also saw the ophthalmologist for an annual checkup. Still the scar in my left retina. Now one also in my right. She didn't seem too worried about them though. Still not time for cataract surgery. Something possibly in the future. Otherwise, my eyes haven't changed much and still are okay although my vision still sucks and I will continue wearing my hard contacts and using reading glasses.

[[As far as the coughs, congestion ect goes, it does seem like there's been some kind of worldwide lurgy going round this month from which many of us are attempting to recover. My doctors have been upping my supplement schedule so now

I'm scarfing a B-complex vitamin horse pill, additional B-12 and half a handful of vit D on a daily basis. Also trying Lipo Flavonoid which is supposed to ease the tinnitus (to little apparent effect so far)...]]

Movie Night - I saw 'Predestination' in 2015. My database says I gave it 7/10. I must have thought it was okay but don't really remember it that well.

I haven't seen 'Anon'. I've seen 'Oblivion'. I think I thought it was okay but it has been a long time since I saw it. I don't think I've seen 'Deus'.

Of late, I watched 'Alienoid' and 'Alienoid: Return to the Future'. They are okay, Korean SF with Taoist overtone movies. It has quite few jumping and fighting scenes, aliens, all that kind of good stuff. Not great and maybe a little silly but I didn't think I wasted my time.

I also watched 'The Wild Robot' at home. It was entertaining family fare. Nice animation.

At the theater I've seen 'Anora', which was pretty good, 'A Real Pain', good movie but I didn't really walk out of the theater feeling happy about it. Definitely not a happy film. Also saw 'Wicked' which I quite enjoyed, I look forward to 'Wicked Part 2'. 'My Neighbor Totoro', also very enjoyable. Saw it in the past, of course, but nice to see it in the theater. I plan to see the new 'Nosferatu 2024' this weekend.

'Radio Winston' - Boy, that opening bass beat on "Tough Times Don't Last" (Paul Thorn) immediately takes me to "Some Kind of Wonderful" by Grand Funk Railroad. I like the progression of it much more in "Some Kind of Wonderful". I like Paul Thorn and this is a good song but I don't think it will stick in my mind.

"What singer(s) are so identifiable that you know who it is immediately with the first couple of bars of any given slice." Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Tina Turner, Bjork, Tom Waits, Dolly Parton, Bob Wills, Hank Williams, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, Smokey Robinson, Otis Redding, Guy Clark, Johnny Cash, James Brown, Lucinda Williams, Emmylou Harris, Aretha Franklin, Ella Fitzgerald, Cyndi Lauper, David Bowie, Elton John, gee, I'd better stop.

[[Yes...]]

I feel the need to add a Guy Clark link,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFb1lGMvS3I>

Sort of makes me think of Corflu.

'TV Guide' - Haven't watched 'Designated Survivor' or 'The Diplomat'. Of the new stuff, I only watch 'Silo'. I also am watching 'Dune Prophecy'. I've also started watching 'Star Wars Skeleton Crew' which is an okay YA SF, supposedly reminiscent of 'The Goonies'. 'The Goonies' is better.

[[We watched the first episode (or two?) of 'Skeleton Crew' which didn't inspire any desire to go back to it. 'Dune: Prophecy' is all right...]]

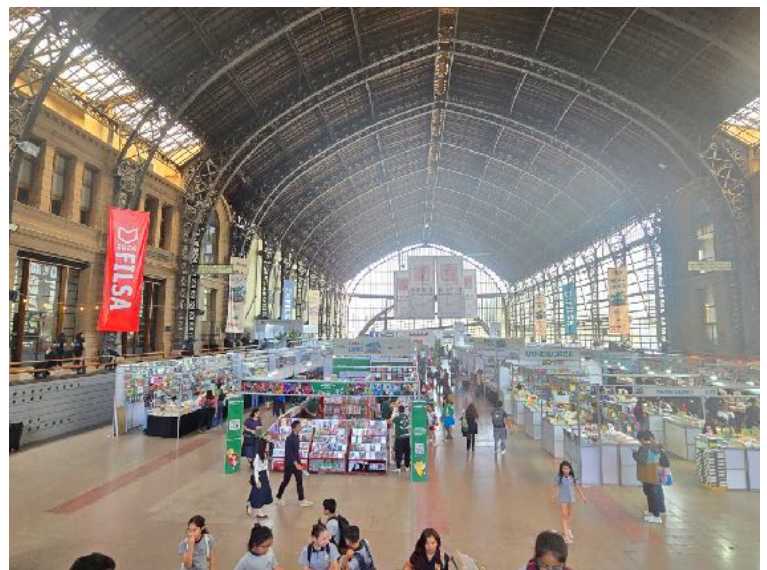
'Anorak' - After looking it up online: They all have different engines, traction motors, generators, and electrical equipment but hard to tell that from the outside. I don't think you can see the battery box covers in these photos, but they are different and they are on the outside., as are longer side grills on the 44s. Headcode boxes are different. Interesting stuff.

'The Old Sod' - I do not like Trump. I'm really not that fond of many / most of his supporters. I don't like RFK Jr. There is so much I don't like of the orange squadron. Of course, now he's talking about taking back Panama, Canada the 51st state, Greenland, closing borders, and I really can't talk to his supporters. Does no good. Of course, they probably say talking to his detractors do no good also. Oh well.

'Loco Citato' -

Steve Green - Everyone's eating habits, vegetarian, meat eater, etc. can be good or bad, lacking or excessive. Two things frequently need to be involved, good genetics and thinking about what one is putting in one's mouth.

Steve Jeffery - How about a book show / sale in a converted train station? See picture below for one in Santiago, Chile.



Gary Mattingly - I'll include a photo of the engine of the train at the End of the World (see end of loc), also the plate on it showing info. It was made in South Africa. Well, actually they have two of the same type of engine.

'Brute!' - I enjoyed reading **Rich Coad's** article about Bruce. It also provided a lot of history I did not know. I met Bruce after he moved to San Francisco. He will be missed. Whereas I am frequently eaten by the wall and become invisible at parties and gatherings, it was pretty hard to not know that Bruce was present.

'Indulge Me' - Nope. Don't recognize Vitina Marcus. Had to look her up on IMDb. I'm sure I've seen her on the various series in which she appeared, since I watched most (probably all) of the episodes.

Enjoyable artwork by **Teddy Harvia** and **Jose Sanchez**. I liked all the photos also.



MORE RESPONSES TO THE KEROSENE PAPERS

[[Editorial note: Since the lastish some physical copies have now appeared in the UK, and a pdf version has been acquired and distributed...]]

Garth Spencer : "For one mad moment I thought I might reconstruct the biography 'Cow is Giving Kerosene' from *The Kerosene Papers*. Fortunately I laid down and got better before committing myself." *[[I suggest to Garth that there may at least be a fanzine article he could write about the attempt...]]*

Heath Row : "It's a nifty, mystifying packet..."

Mark Plummer relates an encounter with **Rob Hansen** :

"I wanted to ask you about something that came in the post," he said, and extracted a familiar looking sheaf of papers from his pocket. "Did you get one of these? It doesn't say who it's from and there's no return address on the plastic envelope it came in."

"Um, did it by any chance come in some kind of internal brown envelope?" **Rob** conceded that he hadn't looked at that.

S&ra Bond : "...extremely fucking funny, as I think the saying goes."

W^m Breiding : "A finer fannish document has never been published."

Dave Cockfield : "WTF? Literally mind blowing. Thankfully a bottle of Champagne, another of Clement and three large glasses of Oloroso sherry protected my fragile brain cells."

Curt Phillips : "Well I cannot deny; this is certainly something."

Teddy Harvia : "[This] arrived and it made me wonder, the sensorial traditional goal of all fanzine editors. I was particularly amused by the statement that the alleged original of the trouser press reference was torn. What a ripper."

WAHF

Doug Bell re Corflu 42 stuff ; **W^m Breiding** previous to his loc ; **Graham James** ; **Perry Middlemiss** ; **Pat Murphy** ; **George Phillis** : For what seems like the fiftieth time, parroting "trooper, medicos, paradox". One imagines him staggering through some dystopian ruins repeating these words for eternity... ; **Nigel Rowe** with seasons greetings ; **Garth Spencer**, separately re APA-V and also with holiday best wishes ;

FANZINES RECEIVED

With gratitude as always...

THE TYPO KING #92 (Bob Jennings) - A bit of argybargy again as the Word doc doesn't show the illos again. Some to-and-fro with **Bob** reveals that he's using an ancient version of Word which doesn't "do" pdfs, but manages to get a mate to create one for me (and perhaps others?) Which is all good. I identify with the tale of hearing loss, though **Bob** has a lot more aggro getting hearing aids than I did. A typical and interesting miscellany, and a few locs (hello **Lloyd**). I am not alone in wondering if there'll be another *Fadeaway* - **Ray Palm** also asks...

CAPTAIN FLASHBACK #72 (Andy Hooper) - "Yes, six years of monthly cultural debris. Your indulgence has been prodigious.", says the covering note. It is, indeed, to marvel and applaud. It only remains to observe that I can only engage with two pages out of the 11 (the locs - hello **Lloyd**) since the rest is the "Horror Host of the Month" (*Crematia Mortem*) and apa mailing comments. To be fair, of course, readers of this here candle of anteaters may react in much the same way to trains, crossword clues and any other niche interests. "I am more or less retired from the Corflu fundraising game", sez **Andy** in a loc response to **Michael Dobson**. A shame, but massive thanks from many Corflu organizers (including me) for all the prior efforts...

THE STF AMATEUR #15 (Heath Row) - December's 36pp from the Faniverse's premier apahack. This'un bundles five of **Heath's** apazines in a more well-organized manner than you might think, leading them off with an entertaining cover by Joe Pearson, letters of comment (wot, no **Lloyd**?) and again a call for submissions to promote evolution into "a proper genzine", something I might suggest deserves to happen...

[[At this point I feel obliged to note that the first three arrivals this month are all apazines...]]

MY BACK PAGES #31 (Rich Lynch) - Sorry I haven't had time for a proper dekko, but what I have clocked suggests the usual entertaining **Lynch** compilation...

[[These next three arrived right on the wire, so no chance to delve into them yet...]]

ORNITHOPTER MkVa (Leigh Edmonds)

CAPTAIN FLASHBACK #73 (Andy Hooper)

PERRYSCOPE 49 (Perry Middlemiss)

INDULGE ME

✘ **THAT IS TOO MANY!** : **Teddy Harvia**, referring to the appearance of *three* "Chat" cartoons in #81. I am sternly informed that I'm now on rations. A day later the artist, having been apparently persuaded by Chat himself, rescinds this limitation and thus I am now loaded for - er - cat...

✘ **AGELESS BEAUTY (1)** : It seems like a nicely seasonal gift to the **Killer** to include an actual North American in the lists rather than load up with more lovely Brits from whom he will flee, or as he would have it, stroll past indifferently (apace). To that end, here's **Teryl Rothery**...



✘ **F3S EXTRA** : I hear from Capital One travel (via which I booked flights to the UK) that the schedule has changed, apparently resulting in missing the return connection in Seattle. They promise that I shall be contacted by a rep, which at the time of writing (December 22nd) hasn't occurred yet. Hopefully soon to be resolved. A day later I phone them meself after getting a *different* schedule change in the email and after 1 hour and 6 minutes on the dog and several unsuccessful tries by the (very nice) rep at rebooking,

we have a new schedule, outbound via LAX and the return layover in Detroit. I dutifully go in and reassign the seating. Apparently my equanimity and patience during this lengthy process earns me a \$50 credit!...

✘ **TERRIBLE SCIENCE "JOKE" FOR ELI** : I'm asked if I have any jokes about sodium. Thinking about it, the answer is "Na". I'll get me coat...

✘ **QUOTABLE** : Grace Dent in the *Grauniad*, accurately, I might guess, describes "...hip Thai eating spots run by earnest boys called Crispin who serve kipper curry to other earnest boys called Crispin."...

✘ **ANORAK EXTRA** : A new "high speed" service is inaugurated from Paris to Berlin. With an average speed of 96mph, as the article says, "is not particularly "high speed" by the standards of French TGV services", but does shave five hours off the previous travel time. <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2024/dec/24/paris-to-berlin-by-train-faster-service-via-strasbourg...>



Compare with the new that the Brightline high speed rail from Cali to Vegas is expected to get under construction soon...



✘ **PISSUPS EXTRA** : I am massively gratified that, as **Martin Tudor** applies himself to emails and messaging about the pre-Easter con Brum get-together, the first to reply in the affirmative is **Chris Murphy**, whom I once described (to his delight) as "one of the finest of men", which he apparently still is...

✘ **AGELESS BEAUTY (2)** : In one of the ‘Red Dwarf’ episode prologue bits, Holly notes that the ship passed a planet shaped like **Felicity Kendal**’s (legendary) bum. “We flew around that one a few times”...



✘ **HEADLINE OF THE WEEK** : Reported by **S&ra Bond**, from *The Economist*, as it turns out: “Britain has seen an alarming rise in poetry sales” (to which she has contributed, of course). What’s actually “alarming” about this apparently remains unrevealed...

✘ **SPACE STUFF** : The Parker solar probe is on its errand (and incidentally now counts as the fastest ever man-made object). <https://www.cnn.com/2024/12/23/science/parker-solar-probe-sun-close-approach/index.html> . Since it’s unmanned, we probably won’t need rescue services...



✘ **FAANWANK** : *The Incomplete Register 2024* FAAn Award voters’ guide will be out in a week or so...

✘ **NULL-A BIOLOGY** : The Aristotelian view of the world is typically expressed in either/or black/ white terms, contrary to the grayscale “Null-A” logic expressed by Van Vogt in that series of novels. It occurred to me recently that while the basic premise of A holds for well-defined object (eg something is either a horse or it isn’t) this leads to the lazy imposition of A values on things which aren’t always demonstrably one or the other. Such is the case, I would contend with wet and dry farts, where there’s a definite gradation between the conditions. Now it is arguable that a fart which isn’t fully dry must be wet at least to some extent, but it’s shurely more useful to recognize the level of wetness within the range that is not-dry. To this end, or indeed out of that end, I envisage the use of something like a paint sample chart as follows.



- 1 - Just a skidmark, probably
- 2 - Clean-up in the pub toilets
- 3 - Send out for more trousers
- 4 - Issue gas masks. Call ambulance

You’re welcome...

✘ **NEXTISH** : January 25th probably...

Chat

In French, my name means cat.



I'd tell you the word in Spanish, but I *gato* go.

MIRANDA

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**"Well I headed south on 35 hell bent for vinyl
I hadn't never had her up past 55 before
Well somethin' 'bout that little red line always
looked so final
Buddy you'd be surprised how fast a Chevrolet truck
can go"**