



19 COLORADO 38
VIBRATOR 2.0.29

June 2016



I've been radicalized, pretty much behind my back. I think I was asleep when it happened. I used to be happy with my life. I was not political; in fact I often made a point of not being. I never voted and I never supported any party, although my natural instinct veered towards Socialism and even Communism. There are still books on anarchism on my shelves which I bought when I was eighteen.

Then I made the mistake of signing up to Facebook and was immediately presented with the arguments of small-minded people which somehow demanded rebuttal. So I set about rebutting them, convinced I must be engaged in some kind of meaningful dialogue. But it was not to be so. The people I rebutted kept coming back like those brooms Mickey chops up in Fantasia. They always had a rabid answer which seemed to completely ignore my carefully reasoned one. And furthermore it soon became apparent that whenever I posted stuff I thought was key and on the point, I was really only posting it to existing friends who were already disposed to agree with me. This is an ongoing problem. How can I reach people who aren't already disposed to agree with me and with my polemic without making them my friends, which I really don't want to do. Thank you Facebook. Now I have bad dreams which are entirely down to you. I live in fear and trembling when once I just played the latest Neil Young LP and got on with life.

June is here. Tralee Tralay. 'Tis the month of Brexit so expect to see some coverage of it here. My basic view is that it's all about immigration. All other things are generally equal with arguments capable of being discarded on either side due to absence of provable facts. So it all boils down to prejudice, uninformed opinions and wishful thinking, which the UK seems to excel in. Views of Leave supporters based on the racist aspect have no counterpart in the Remain campaign, so the result should shake down pretty easily into a barometer of just how basically racist this country is. Right now (June 10th) I feel like posting a letter to be opened after the referendum saying: I told you so. But we shall see.

Oh, I'm Graham Charnock, by the way, your friendly affable and frequently drunk editor of this acclaimed focal point fanzine, winner of three peer awards in two years. Eat it up. Better than that send me a loc for the next issue. This issue is a bit late going out so you can have another week's leeway. Locs by 6th August 2016.

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WELL ,WE'VE REALLY GONE AND DONE IT THIS TIME, MA

Well, let me say first of all I did not vote. I did not vote, not because I didn't care, but because I refused to be part of what I felt was basically a fraudulent process, being essentially a move by Dave to cover his back against reactionary ultra right wing members of his own party, whom he felt were gunning for him. (Ironically, in the end, it was not his backbenchers he had to fear, but the disaffected majority of the British Public).

When I announced I didn't intend to vote it brought down what I thought was a disproportionate amount of invective upon me; some people claimed I was pissing away an essential Human Right, others claimed I was spineless, exhorting me in a peculiarly Jingoistic way to "Man up!". I explained that in my view the right to vote also carried with it a right to withhold your vote. I would have preferred Dave not to have made it simply a two way split, but to have included an alternative abstention box, or even a box labelled "You are a Cunt, Dave", but he was not sufficiently canny for that.

Well, we know the outcome. What to make of it? As to the result itself, it always seemed to me that there was one element, specifically relevant to the issue of Immigration, that there was one component of the Leave side which had no similar counterpart in the Remain one. And that of course was pure Racism, or Xenophobia if you are too namby pamby to call it that. All other issues seemed 50/50 to me, so I thought the result would be a good barometer of how sick Britain is in these terms.

Various speculation about Future History have been flying about, the most ludicrous to my mind that we could and should hold a second referendum, which would seem to me doubly insulting for the Great British Public. Others are tempted towards the view that since all Boris really wanted to do was become PM and he didn't really care about staying in or leaving the EU, he might if he came into power be tempted to finagle the result and go pleading the EU with his toff cap in his hand and ask them to be kind and please overlook this whole embarrassing affair. Other more modest predictions range from "We're fucked" to "we're doomed".

I've written elsewhere that Facebook has radicalized me. Once I was a humble yokel who knew my place and scorned involvement in any political issue, but then Facebook introduced me to the notion that I could spout my opinions in a public forum and people would mostly agree with me. Of course it didn't go without notice that the people who mostly agreed with me were those I had chosen to be friends in the first place because I felt we might share a similar mindset. When most of them started agreeing with me about the UK and the EU I began to get unsettling sinking feelings. I am not generally a man who courts the agreement of his peers or respects them for doing so, and I was rapidly coming around to the view that if all my friends were agreeing with me, I might either have to change my friends or change my

views. So I wasn't surprised when the result went exactly the different way to that predicted by my friends. Mark Zuckerberg is really the Nemesis of Mankind, the Lord of Chaos.

On a final note it seems to me that the people who were complicit in this event by actually voting, now really have no cause to complain about the outcome if they found themselves on the losing side. If you want to be part of the democratic process that is the cross you have to bear. Of course those who didn't vote because they didn't care either way, also have no cause to complain, and presumably aren't. They may well be right that in the long-run; nothing much will change. The Tories will continue to fleece us in the name of their own self-interests, and Labour will continue to be kicked by the right-wing press no matter who is in charge. Of course all this will now play out in Little England rather than Great Britain. The only people who seem to have any right to complain, to my mind, are those who refused to vote on principle, and thus had this outcome foisted upon them against their wishes. As I've said elsewhere Democracy is all too frequently a system where the minority are enabled to govern the majority.

Well Good Luck the future Kingdom of England and Wales, and good luck to all who haven't abandoned the ship earlier.

AMERICA THE DAMNED by Graham Charnock

The Donner Party

This is the beginning of a series of articles I intend to write upon the subject of Great American Disasters. Whether it will ever come to anything I do not know. The idea is to acquaint myself more thoroughly with American history with a strong slant on how it so often veers towards damnation and away from redemption.

I suspect there is a sickness embedded in the heart of America which makes this happen, perhaps best exemplified by its attitude towards gun control, of lack of it. I can't identify the root cause of it, nor, I suspect, should I try. America's biggest disaster was probably the initial colonization of a continent where warring native tribes had learnt to live in some kind of equilibrium with nature and buffalos roamed the plains blissfully unaware of the carnage that was soon to come.

I have in mind a whole lot of excursions ranging from the Jamestown Settlement, through, in vaguely chronological order, Prohibition, Sacco & Vanzetti, The Charles Lindbergh kidnapping, the Great Wall Street Crash, The Hollywood Witch Hunts, The Atom spies, The Manhattan Project, The Kennedy Assassination, Vietnam and

Watergate, and various psychopaths such as Charles Manson in Hollywood, Jim Jones in Guyana and David Koresh in Waco. Most of the disasters I have researched have been mediated through the media, and some of them, such as the Lindbergh kidnapping, totally constructed through the media.

But to examine the strange disaster of the Donner party in the early Colonial years seems a good place to start since it deals, at least initially, with those first settlers and their aspirations.

Following the initial colonization of the North American continent on the East coast, there was an understandable urge to thrust westwards, to develop and explore new territories which had not previously been claimed and to exploit their possible riches. And so across the Great Plains they went, occasionally stopping off but finding nothing to profit from their pioneering spirit which always saw new opportunities and sought new vistas just across the horizon.

The explorers Lewis and Clark famously organized an expedition in May 1804 which was ostensibly an admirably organized attempt to further general knowledge but its secret agenda as always was trade, and they were concerned also to survey and try out and establish new routes to resources towards this end. They were notably obsessed with finding water routes. It was in a sense an adventure with very little disaster actually involved. One of their party died of a ruptured appendix and Lewis himself was accidentally shot by one of his followers, but not fatally. Their only adverse reaction with an indigenous tribe was when the Blackfeet tried to steal some of their rifles and two members of the tribe were shot, and fatally.

But they showed that crossing the continent was possible, and thus spurred on many groups of settlers.

The Donner Party was a group of settlers from Ohio who were not devoted as many were to developing the mid-west. Their aim was to reach the West Coast, although they must have had little idea of the geography they would encounter. Such expeditions were not always adequately provisioned and were usually beset by delays and problems and hence the party found themselves holed up eventually in the high and inhospitable Sierra Nevada in the winter of 1846.

Expecting to find food on the way they found none, or were unskilled and unable to benefit from what was undoubtedly around them, and ultimately found themselves in starvation circumstances. There were 87 members in the original party. People knew of their plight (letters home?) and rescue expeditions endeavoured to find them, but after four months only 48 survived, mostly because they had eaten the well-preserved flesh of their compatriots who had died along the way.

It sort of foreshadowed, but not in an American disaster way, the group of football players who fell to Earth in the Andes and had no recourse but to eat their

dead brethren before they were saved. Or when the crew of the shipwrecked Mignonette in 1884 ate the unfortunate cabin boy.

I am not suggesting the tribulations of the Donner party give any particularly American insight into the human condition, certainly not cannibalism in its modern manifestation as evidenced through Zombie movies and psychotics running amok on bath salts. That is an entirely different kind of American Horror. The only point is that in extreme circumstances anywhere, humans will go to extreme lengths to survive.

Well, maybe it *is* a general metaphor.

Death in Pennsylvania

It would be an understatement to say the Amish are big in Pennsylvania. Lancaster County is the site of many major Amish settlements, many of them dedicated to Amish tourism, where you can go on buggy rides and experience other attractions and tours. It's known as PA Dutch Country. The Dutch element can be misleading, being derived from Deutsch, without any Netherlands connection. Most of the communities today were, in fact, derived from early German-speaking settlers primarily from South-western Germany. The communities are tight-knit and protective about their culture and heritage, famously eschewing modern contrivances and conveniences. Well, we've all seen Witness. In this as in other insider communities there are always people who live there who will always be outsiders. One such was Charles Roberts.

Charles Roberts was born in 1973. In 1985, when he would have been 12, Reagan was sworn in for his second term as US President, Wrestlemania made its debut at Madison Square Gardens, and the Unabomber sent an explosive device to UC Berkeley. Meanwhile forty-one tornadoes hit in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and Ontario, killing 76. while Richard Ramirez, the serial killer known as the Night Stalker, was captured in Los Angeles. It was a turbulent year with bombs going off everywhere. The constant reporting of such atrocities, such as the killing of Leon Klinghoffer on a cruise ship might even have been seen as desensitizing for an observer. I mention 1985 because in that year Charles Roberts claimed, at the age of 12, he had sexually abused some young female relatives, between the ages of three and five (a claim later, interestingly, refuted by the relatives involved).

There is no evidence that Roberts felt any animosity towards the Amish in particular. He worked as a dishwasher at Good 'N Plenty Restaurant in the evocatively named Smoketown in Lancaster County. And later he held down a job as a commercial milk tank driver. In 2006 he had been married for ten years. His wife reported it was a happy marriage. But something lurked and bred in Roberts's

psyche causing him to have recurring bad dreams and fears he might once again repeat his previous transgressions (which may of course have been completely in his mind).

In 2006 California executed Clarence Ray Allen (death by lethal injection) sentenced to death in 1982 for arranging the murders of three people. Jennifer San Marco killed 8 people before committing suicide at a postal facility in Goleta, California. San Marco had worked at the facility previously, but had been let go due to her erratic behaviour.

On October 2nd, 2006, Roberts packed a holdall with a selection of bizarre tools and guns, including a Springfield XD 9×19mm handgun, a Browning 12 gauge shotgun, a Ruger .30-06 bolt-action rifle, and about 600 rounds of ammunition. And, also, which many people saw as significant, a tube of KY Jelly. He left some notes for his wife, referring to the death of their only child just briefly after she had been born, and describing himself as full of self-loathing and hatred. He then drove out to a local Amish school, and barricaded himself inside with ten young girls, having first let the boys in the class and their teacher go free.

State troopers were soon alerted but Roberts refused to have any truck with them. Eventually after shots were heard they stormed the building and found Roberts had clinically despatched three of the girls, leaving two who would later die in hospital. Then he shot himself. Had the police not stormed the building he would no doubt have killed the remaining five girls.

His wife, family and relatives, as so often in these cases, simply refused to understand how the man they claimed was a gentle, caring husband could have done such things, but the truth is that he probably managed to hide his inner torments from them so effectively for so long because of his internal strategies.

A significant component of this story, not to be understated. is the Amish response to the tragedy, They were quick to forgive him. They believe everything is ordained by God. Maybe this is not an American Tragedy but a message of hope. If you believe in such things.

Retail Reflections by Simon Ounsley

(EDITOR: I reacquainted myself with Simon Ounsley at D. West's wake and was pleased to do so. He has been away from fandom for far too long in my view. He was a seminal Leeds fan and a big part in me and Pat appearing as fan GoHs at an early Yorcon. I owe him a lot, and he is generally a Nice Guy. I am pleased to feature his retail ramblings here).

It's a bugger about BHS folding. Where are old fogeys like me supposed to shop? I'm still getting PTSD from C&A and I can't see M&S surviving for long. I'm told they do business on sale days but at other times you just plod through hollow halls of abandoned chinos. Perhaps they could share the space with something else. There'd be plenty of room for a Prince tribute concert or certainly an EU referendum husting. You could even have a 20-20 cricket international without concussing more than the odd shopper.

Meanwhile, in the shops that remain, it seems to me that you pay too much or too little for clothes. I'm not paying sixty quid for a shirt from Next but step into Primark and they thrust something floppy with false pockets into your arms and give you a fiver to take it away. The sensible middle is getting squeezed out.

Town is a strange place in general these days. I used to love browsing for books and records but now I only venture into Waterstones to check that the Costa coffee is exactly the same as it is at the other five outlets in town. (It is.) HMV is just as weird. It used to be a bustling metropolis. They had to hire special assistants to come to the aid of old people who had ventured in to buy CDs for their relatives and were in danger of dying of culture shock. Last year, I went in for a DVD and the cashier insisted I stay for a chat and a cup of tea. He was lonely and needed the company.

Yet here in Leeds they are building yet more shopping developments. What is going to go in them? Surely not yet more expensive or suspiciously cheap clothes shops? Not more Costa coffees. Certainly not more HMV or book shops. So what then?

I have a theory they're going to be used for therapy. Therapy of a special kind.

Yes see, there's a little stationery shop in Oakwood, a suburb near where I live, and the guy who works there – I assume he owns the shop – is always standing behind the counter listening to Classic FM and leafing through a stationery catalogue. He has a sign in the window which reads "If it's stationery, we shift it." I have a couple of theories about this shop. 1) He decided to open the shop *purely* so he could display that sign (which he thought up one evening over a sweet sherry and found amusing) and/or 2) He makes no money out of the shop (I don't see how

he can because I never see anyone else in there and let's face it you can get most of the stationery you need from – dare I say it? - supermarkets) but he runs it as a therapeutic hobby, being remarkably – possibly unnaturally – fond of stationery.

So, there being such a long wait for cognitive behavioural therapy at the moment, perhaps the plan is to introduce what we might call 'retail therapy', whereby those in need of therapeutic relaxation stand in massive new emporiums in central Leeds, leafing through stationery catalogues and listening to Classic FM. If D West were still with us, I would ask him to draw a picture of this: vast numbers of little men behind an infinite row of checkout desks in the cavernous vaults of the shopping malls of Leeds, stationery strewn in Escher-like patterns around them.

Perhaps the time is passing when we really need shops to buy things, but we still need the comforting retail rituals to help us leave them behind. When the doors of BHS finally close, we will hold an all-night vigil and mumble the sad litany of our loss: BHS, Comet, Woolworths, Zavvi, C&A... and then we will wander deserted streets, bemoaning the lack of a reliable source of underwear and socks, finally returning home to the cold, unforgiving, faceless embrace of Amazon. --- Simon Ounsley

LETTER COLUMN

(EDITOR: It's not often I get the chance to introduce someone new to these sacred halls of correspondence, far less a real woman. Jennifer (ne Ailee) first burst into our consciousness when she married legendary Las Vegas fan and long term Vibrator columnist Nic Farey. She is an established professional writer in her own right. Here, she kind of suggests fandom is a sort of closed shop but I hope this will convince her, and you, it is not and we are generally inclusive. Ladies and Gentlemen may I introduce...)

JENNIFER FAREY

"I sent you the latest Vibrator," Nic said. "You should write a LOC."

I've never written a LOC before. In fact, I'm relatively new to the world of fanzines, having only become aware of their existence after I became aware of my husband's existence. One thing I've gleaned from the zines I've read over that last few years is that most of the people involved know each other. It's a small community of readers and writers sharing in a wink-wink-nudge-nudge volley of in-jokes and you-had-to-be-there comments. I haven't been there yet (although we planned to attend Chiflu, finances prohibited it. We're shooting for Los Angeles in 2017...we can drive there!) so do I really have anything salient to share? Then I got

to the end of Vibrator 2.0.28 and read this: *Send me a letter by the end of June and you too can be part of this magical phantasmagorical process.* That clinched it. How could I pass up the chance to have a phantasmagasm?

Upon first glance of the grand cover by Steve Stiles, I thought, “Oh look, it’s summer in Vegas. And there goes the Gay Pride parade down the Strip.” Just goes to show that good art elicits unique reactions in each person. Thanks to Sandra Bond and Murray Moore, I got a nice little taste of Chiflu, whetting the appetite for next year. I wonder, being that it’s in the Los Angeles area, will it be called LAflu? Like a French disease? Though it will be my first fan con, I’m no stranger to writing-focused conferences, having gone to at least one every year for the past seven years. So, in the absence of a Corflu story to share, allow me to share what I can.

The first writers’ conference I attended was fairly traumatic. There I was, excited about pitching my newly-completed manuscript to editors and agents, certain that one of them would recognize its genius. Turns out, they recognized how much more I needed to learn and spoke the truth, some gently, and some in a why-are-you-wasting-my-time manner. I’ll admit, I shed tears. I went to my room, binged on chocolate which gave me a raging headache, and shed more tears. Still, I count that conference a success because it provided the foundation for many professional relationships and allowed me to meet the woman that would end up being my best buddy and occasional co-author. Dark clouds with silver linings.

Flash forward five years. Another conference, but by then, I had an agent, I had publishing contracts, and I had about four books in print. The other authors were now my peers, the editors and agents were professional colleagues, and even though making small talk during a four day conference is excruciating for an introvert like myself, I was much more comfortable. At these conferences, meals are prime networking time. One night at dinner, I sat with authors and industry folk at a round table which seated about twelve. Things were going well. I was managing to have a conversation with an editor from a house I respected and hadn’t spit or knocked over my water glass or done anything else as embarrassing. When the woman next to me asked for the butter plate, I got it for her, even though it was in the middle of the table and I had to reach over my dinner plate to reach it. It wasn’t until I settled back down in my chair that I realized half of my freshly buttered roll was stuck to the underside of my ample bosom. Apparently, I had reached through my plate, not over it. My dinner mates were polite enough not to mention it but, in an attempt to act like it was no big deal, I overcompensated and said far too loudly, “Hey, there’s a roll stuck on my boob!”

If you ever start thinking you’ve arrived, there are humbling moments in life that will set you straight. This was one of those moments.

So, when we get to LAflu (or whatever it’s called) don’t pay any attention to me if rolls are served at the meal. Unless, of course, you’ve always wanted to see a

woman with buttered bread stuck to a body part. In that case, it might be your lucky day.

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IAN WILLIAMS

"So I am stuck in my little room in my own little mind trying to scrape together something meaningful and from internalised obsessions and preoccupations."

We may have more in common than either of us realise, Graham.

Though you couldn't tell from the content of much of this issue. That I don't begin my comments until p.12 might indicate such.

Taral pins down why I've never been a fan of Elvis. By trying to be something to everybody he lost what was special about him.

Collect and keep. SF books, CDs, stamps, rescued animals, etc. The first three are harmless, the fourth is not the best idea for the animals. But I stopped the collect and keep frame of mind when I got married at 40, moved into my wife's small flat, and had to get rid of the majority of my collection of SF and comics.

But specifically on CDs. Anyone with a passion can build up a sizeable collection and quite cheaply these days especially with the vast numbers of reissues available. Inevitably tastes change and what was wonderful one year is no longer quite so wonderful further down the line. Besides, how much music can you listen to in your lifetime? There are some artists I go back to frequently and some I know I'll never listen to again. So why keep it when you also have a digital copy (in the unlikely event you change your mind) and can make a little cash selling on Amazon or Ebay. This what I have done and still do, albeit in smaller numbers, along with graphic novels and DVDs. Stopping being a collector is enormously freeing.

I could add my sixpennuth to the fish coating debate but I've had my chips and think the subject has been battered and deep fried to death.

Sorry (again) about Pat's misadventures in A&E and hope she's not had any more trouble with her breathing.

Could have sworn I'd written a loc on the last ish. Oh well, it was probably shite as usual.

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MILT STEVENS

The Steve Stiles cover on Vibrator #28 has an interesting contrast in design. The robots are very square and the ruins are very unsquare in a couple of senses of the word. The distinct colors of the robots also contrasts with the kluged together color of the ruins.

Sprechen Sie Focal Point Fanzine? Nein? I'm surprised you aren't more aware of the idea. It's been kicked around for ages, particularly in the more fannish fanzines. As far as I know, the concept came along with the idea of numbered fandoms. I think it was Jack Speer who proposed the idea of numbered fandoms after reading Toynbee's *A Study of History*. According to Toynbee, a civilization is defined by the Universal State and the Universal Church. This idea sort of works around the Mediterranean but not so well elsewhere.

With numbered fandoms, a Fandom is a civilization. The focal point fanzine replaces the Universal State and the Universal Church. If you continue with this line of thinking, you may find that the Number One Fan Face is God, but never mind. Fans in those days were nothing if not grandiose. The focal point fanzine defines the Fandom. The decline of the focal point fanzine signals an interregnum in which trufen shelter in apas for defense against barbarian invaders.

The system broke down when someone (probably Harlan Ellison) proclaimed False Seventh Fandom, and all fandom was engulfed in war. This was several years before Richard Bergeron became the Anti-Christ. Hmm, I suppose that would mean the Fannish Rapture was when trufen were sucked out of fanzine fanac to run cons. Thinking along these lines can really screw with your brains.

When I think of focal point fanzines I think of zines like Cry of the Nameless or Science Fiction Review. Cry of the Nameless was a fannish zine with a huge letter column. It seemed like, everybody in fandom wrote to the Cry letter column. Science Fiction Review was a sercon zine where most of the pros wrote to the letter column and made fools of themselves. I still think of Dean Koontz as an utter twit from those days. In the current era, I think File 770 is about as close to being a focal point fanzine as anything we have. Everybody seems to pay at least some attention to File 770. Unfortunately, most of the people who post there seem to be internet barbarians.

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LLOYD PENNEY

I have Vibrator 2.0.28 with me here, and I hope it's not too late to get something into 29. Still at home, still not working, but gotta do something when no jobs show up in your search.

I have read others referring to your zine as a focal point zine, so the original joke has become truth. I suspect it is a focal point for some fans at the heart of the interest; the rest of us will still enjoy it. By the way, congrats on all the FAAn Awards!

I had given a little thought to going to Chicago for ChiFlu...the money for such a trip is never there, and what money we have been able to save will be taking us to England in August. Ah, a Corflu subculture. Is that why there's not more people there?

Murray Moore must be pleased that the Toronto Blue Jays are doing much better now than they were at the beginning of this season. They were doing very poorly, but it looks like a handful of players finally shifted out of neutral, and the baseballs are sailing over the fences.

Local...I was never a fan of Elvis', I never built models, either balsa or plastic, because I seemed to have no talent for them, and my parents wouldn't let me have a record player, but I did have a few vinyl records I had hope to be able to play one day...I still have them, but I don't think I was ever able to play them more than two or three times. Maybe some collector's value in those bits of vinyl?

Local...There are so many people who read SF voraciously, but because they weren't able or willing to purchase a membership at Worldcon, they cannot vote on what's the best. As much as I'd like to see that, I also understand the temptation to stuff the ballot box for a particular nominee with inexpensive votes. (Puppy style?) Worldcons and the fandom surrounding them have passed me by.

I am hoping there might be a decent chippy close to where we will be staying in London and Lincoln. When in Rome, eat as the Romans do...make mine crispy haddock, please!

My own loc...computer problems are mostly solved, but I don't get much signal from our local hub. I may need to get a wifi booster, but there are various kinds, and I am trying to find someone who knows about them, and which kind would be best for our situation.

We all have far too much need for a doctor or hospital these days. Let's all compare hospital stays, doctor horror stories, and the costs of our prescriptions. I wish we could all drop 40 year off our assorted ages, push the reset button, and get into fun fannish trouble all over again.

Just slipped onto the second page, so I might as well fold it up. Done, after all. Many thanks, stay warm and healthy, and see you with more buzzing in my IN box.

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STEVE JEFFERY

Congratulations on the FAAN Award. If you don't want people to vote for you next year, you may have to become Administrator. "Nervous Tic", which you use to describe your need to write and publish in this issue's colophon, would also make a great name for a perzine, even if you are being crowded to the edges of the first and last pages by letters and other contributors. You have spawned a fanzine which seems to have a mind of its own (kids nowadays..) and you may have to start another perzine (*Nervous Tic?*) to give you space to write. Soon you'll have a publishing empire, and chances for FAAN awards in multiple categories. Perhaps you should throw yourself off your yacht now before it's too late. Or just clear some more space on the mantelpiece.

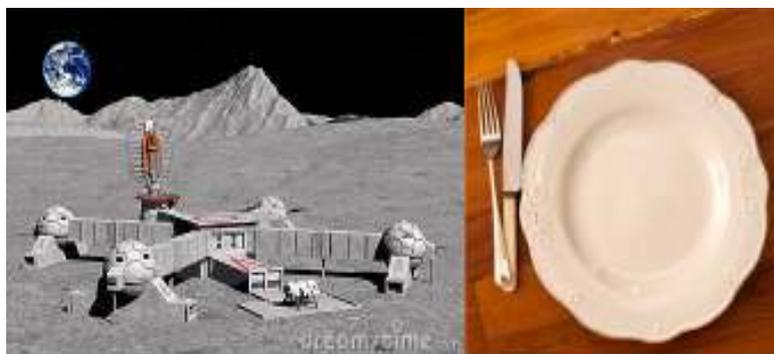
Thanks for sending Vibrator 28. Another strange Steve Stiles cover for this one almost as unsettling in it's own way as his cover for the last issue (which I notice several people commented on in the letters column)

At first glance though I mistook the coloured marching robots for a line of jelly babies (must get my eyes tested), which would probably have been just as weird and disturbing an image.

(EDITOR: I think they are supposed to be rainbow gay robots, Steve, or at least robots who support LGBT issues. But who can tell? Possibly only Steve.)

All I know about baseball is that one person throws a ball at another one who tries to knock it away with a stick before it hits the person behind him in the face (which might be why he's dressed as a cage fighter) and then everyone else runs round in circles. (Lewis Carroll probably explained it better in the Caucus Race.) So it really doesn't help when Murray Moore tries to make up new rules, especially when he uses a bunch of words like first base and home plate that have no meaning to me. Perhaps it would have helped more with diagrams and little arrows. Or maybe not.

(EDITOR: This may make it plainer, Steve:



FIRST BASE

HOME PLATE

I'm pretty sure I knew punk as a word before it appropriated by the likes of the Damned and the Sex Pistols. In fact I'm pretty sure Rael, the central character of Genesis' *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*, was described as a "street punk" in 1974, two to three years before the Damned's *New Rose* and the Pistols' *Anarchy in the UK*. I also had a vague idea it also had a secondary sexual connotation as well as being a small-time hoodlum. (If you leave the hyphen out of that last phrase, as I nearly did, it could also be read as 'a small time-hoodlum', which suggests a completely different and more scientific context. Or Terry Gilliam's *Time Bandits*.)

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(EDITOR: A double dose of our favourite Uncle, John Nielsen-Hall whose loc for No. 27 was received too late for inclusion in that issue. Let that be a lesson to you all)

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL

VIBRATOR 27

You ask if I am claiming to understand financial markets. I suppose I am. At least, I can appreciate and show their relevance, even if their deeper workings are as mysterious to me as particle physics. Did you know that my only professionally published work, now long out of print, was a treatise on the taxation of Lloyds Underwriters? It was a fairly short work, but in it I gave an overview of the history and workings of the insurance market, before getting down to the taxation aspects. I could rehash some of that and probably do the same for stocks and shares, futures, and commodities. But I suspect readers of Vibrator would prefer the little blue pills to aid their slumbers. And none of that helps any of us actually understand what Nathan does for a living, which I suppose to be analogous to a tipster at a race meeting- but I am guessing.

I enjoyed your reminiscences of Wembley. I occasionally indulge in a nostalgia for my school years in Bexley and Sidcup. But nostalgia is bad for you- besides I think that nice Mr Kemp published all I had meaningful to say on the subject back about ten years ago. Likewise I enjoyed Nic as always, and Randy on Prince, whose passing I lament like everyone else, with the possible exception of yourself, though I am grateful we were not subjected to any of your trademark cynicism this time around.

I am sure that the origin of the word Punk is as Ted says, but the first time I saw it applied to music was in Greg Shaw's Bomp sometime in the early 70's. Most of the music referred to in the article was from bands you might describe as Garage Rockers. (That's certainly how I saw them), a lot of one hit wonders, sometimes no hit wonders, for example, The Kingsmen, or Sky Saxon & The Seeds. Certainly at the time I read that article, all this was a purely U S Phenomenon. What passed for British punk music, starting about 75/6 was just high speed three chord thrash.

When I first heard it (I think the first band I heard was The Damned) I didn't associate it with the stuff described in the fanzine. It was after that - possibly a long time after, say around 77- I bought what purported to be a Punk compilation album, I think on Sire, which featured a lot more American bands, like Richard Hell & The Voidoids, Jonathan Richman, and most wonderful of all, The Ramones. I thought then, and still do really, that their stuff was mile's ahead of any British band. Not exclusively though. About this time I use to swap tapes with Rich Coad. The stuff Rich was into, which I supposed to be more West Coast than CBGB's, was way too advanced for me. I remember an outfit called, I think, Electric Loaf. I couldn't bear it, But then again, Rich it was who first exposed me to Devo. So there you go. But when exactly did Dr. Feelgood (who were much earlier than Punk anyway) mutate into " the synthesized rock of the Seventies" (for which I read Eighties.)? As far as I know no line-up of that band ever included a synthesizer, nor can I recall a single track which featured one.

VIBRATOR 28

Nic's column was particularly interesting this month. Not that it isn't at any time, but in this one Nic excelled himself on the economics of the taxi biz in LV. Its very clear about how precarious work is for the driver, but some further investigation of the cab company's numbers might be illuminating. I can understand why they may have put more cabs on the road as tourism continues to grow, but have they overdone it? Assuming they own nearly all of the cabs, they must have a lot tied up in fast depreciating iron, though they maybe lease them all (which implies a need for a tidal wave of cash flow) and does that imply they have to employ more mechanics and body shop people? And can they really have done this in response to the ride share apps? I dont understand the logic of that.

Personally, if I ran a cab company, I'd be emphasising things like Nic is already doing in my advertising. Clean cabs, personal and safe service. With Uber and the rest, the punter doesn't know what they are getting. The company's should be investing in their brand and raising its profile, I should think. That doesn't mean flooding the streets with more cabs necessarily, though you may increase the numbers as business improves. As things stand, it sounds as if at some point there's going to be a crunch , and they may need to take cabs off the road and implement lay-offs. But what do I know?

I sit here pontificating on these things mostly as diversion. Retirement doesn't suit me, I find. But having three days out of every seven taken up with having my blood scrubbed, there's little else I can do but write bollocks in the interim. Oh, and keep on loading CD's on to my hard disk. Which I am still doing. I'm still wading through P. And of course I read fanzines and do my best to respond to them. The majority of this issue was interesting and enjoyable but I haven't got anything to say about it. Collating and proof reading was good this ish, I thought.

FRED SMITH

Very colourful cover this time and Steve has the knack of regularly coming up with something new. Montage, I presume but where did he find robots?

Taral Wayne's memoir about his encounters with balsa wood prompt me to suggest that at age 6 he was just too young to cope with the intricacies of aviation engineering. At about the same age I was sent (by an uncle in America) two model airplane kits which I guessed had been damaged in the post since, apart from plans, the boxes only contained strips and sheets of wood and a few other bits and pieces. Of course I didn't have a clue how to set about building the things. Years later I did manage to construct (from another kit) the skeleton of a Fokker D7 but didn't appreciate that the wings, fuselage and tail had to be covered *before* gluing it all together so that's as far as it got! However, I learned from that and went on to build more model aircraft, some of which actually flew!

Regarding the question of whether a robot vehicle would run over a pedestrian rather than risk the occupants of the car or cause a crash to avoid the pedestrian, surely the same applies to a manually driven vehicle. Hit the jaywalker or swerve to run into a tree or another car? Anyway, in the event of an accident involving a robot driven car, who would the insurance company hold responsible - the driver, the owner, the manufacturer? And how will premiums be affected?

On the fish and chip front Paul Skelton doesn't like batter, not even the crispy kind that (like Cas) I enjoy at times. I wonder, though, if any of you have tried potato fritters i.e. sliced potatoes coated in batter and deep fried till nice and crispy on the outside. These were once served to me by an aunt and I've never forgotten the wonderful taste. Don't know just how she made them and, alas, I've never had them since!

Punk! Philip Turner has it exactly right. The punks didn't want to learn even the basics of music let alone contribute anything worthwhile and I can't understand how the public (the kids?) could put up with the talentless noises that they made. I guess Philip is right too when he says that groups who could actually play latched on to the name and cashed in. The word "punk", though, surely means low-life and inferior if not actually criminal.

Like David Redd modern technology is something I am resisting. I too have separate phone, separate camera, PC, TV, tunnable, cassette deck, CD deck, hi-fi amp and speakers and stoutly resisting the blandishments of Virgin to take out a contract on an iPhone and/or tablet. Who needs that crap? However I would disagree with David when it comes to cassettes. I've discovered that they

deteriorate over time and I've therefore transferred the stuff I want to keep on to CDs.

Nothing much else to say. Enjoyed the two CHIFLU reports and Nic's taxi stuff. Although interested in your updates on your and Pat's health I'm sorry to hear that you've had problems there. Hope there's improvement and that you'll keep us posted!

In the meantime, A' 'Ra Best,

Fred Smith can be found at f.smith50@ntlworld.com

PAUL SKELTON

Sandra Bond's Chiflu report was of course excellent, but unfortunately, having watched most of the UStream videos of it (albeit rarely 'live'), and read all the itb discussion of it which took place afterwards, I'm somewhat Corflued out. One episode though did strike me...

Ted bemoaned aloud that he hadn't been at the 1976 panel to correct various items of misinformation. "Gestetner wax doesn't clog up your mimeograph!" he scornfully told Jon Singer, who (being marooned in 1976) had no reply to make.

Having met Jon on several occasions I find it impossible to square Ted's comment with my unshakeable belief that Jon Singer knows EVERYTHING. Plus of course, if ear wax clogs up your ears, it seems extremely unlikely that Gestetner wax would not clog up your Gestetner. It stands to sense, else why would they come with a cleaning kit? My problem however is that I also think that Ted generally knows whereof and what of he speaks. I suppose, given that this was after all back in 1976, it's possible that Jon had not then quite attained omniscience. Yes, that's probably it – now I can sleep nights again.

I was rather taken with several aspects of Milt Stevens' LoC. He is of course correct in that the US always claims officially (and erroneously) to be a classless society but surely the differentiating terms 'blue collar' and 'white collar', referring to jobs/workers originated in the US, and presumably equate very closely to the British 'working class' and 'middle class' concepts...and whilst they may not have had an 'upper class', they always had 'society'. But they don't call it 'class', so that's alright.

Then there's D. W. Griffiths, with his 'humorous' mistresses – Milt's maternal grandmother specialising in irony it would appear...or possibly slapstick (or even more likely slap[stick]-and-tickle) I'm not sure when the term 'hussy' for 'housewife' became obsolete, but depending on if it hadn't then, she either refused to become a hussy by becoming a Hussey or, if it had already acquired its modern meaning, she

became a hussy by not becoming a Hussey. My, but life was complicated in those days.

Here's one (from *Private Eye*) for Nic.



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DAVE COCKFIELD

Congratulations Graham, your Vibrator rules the Faanish world yet again. I don't get many fanzines so I don't have much to compare it with but as far as I'm concerned Vibrator is so good that you definitely deserve the FAAn award, mate.

Happy days with Pat also getting a deserved award.

I found your description of the trip to A&E to be quite harrowing. Thank God, if he exists, that everything worked out okay. I hope that Pat has now fully recovered from the ordeal and it never happens again.

I've only ever visited an A&E once when I drunkenly fell over after consuming 10 pints of Ale and badly scraped the skin off my right forearm. It was painful, very bloody, and hurt like hell.

After waiting for 2 hours for attention I realised that the place was full of drunks with, essentially self-inflicted, minor injuries and that they were unnecessarily filling the place up. In embarrassment I went home and fixed my arm up myself, painfully washing it, covering it in Savlon, and haphazardly wrapping a gauze bandage around it. It healed quite nicely over a few days and I vowed that I would never be so stupid again. About not visiting the A&E unless truly essential, not falling down drunk.

Good CHIFLU report by Sandra. I wish I was there although it sounds as if the number of fans that I know, or have even heard of, would not exceed the fingers on my two hands. I have good memories of visits to Chicago with Kev Williams and Harry Bell trawling the Blues and Jazz clubs. In one we were amazed by a Jazz group

entirely composed of musicians on the Tuba. They were quite unique and actually very good.

I also enjoyed Murray Moore. I have followed the Chicago Cubs for years after becoming enamoured through the wonderful “Shoe” cartoons by Jeff McNally. Like him I dream that one day in the modern era they might win something but that might spoil the magic of them as being the eternal also rans. I never did get to Wrigley Field.

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ROBERT LICHTMAN

I remember your joke back at the beginning about *Vibrator* being a focal point fanzine, and I laughed at your surmises in #28 about what that might mean. One of them – “Was it something that simply became a focus for people’s attention regardless of any issues about its content?” – is the closest, although if the content is unengaging that wouldn’t work. That’s not the case with your fanzine, although for me from time to time I run out of things to say about one of the ongoing topics. You conclude, “I still don’t know, but if anybody has got any answers I’d be pleased to hear them.”

Over the many years there have been focal point fanzines, they’ve had certain characteristics in common: frequency of publication (monthly being a seeming ideal), a welcoming, inclusive attitude on the part of its editor/publisher, and strong interaction between the readers and contributors. *Vibrator* meets all these criteria, and frankly I can’t think of another current fanzine that does. For more on the subject, I commend your attention (and any readers with interest) to the complete run of Arnie Katz’s *fanstuff*, available on efanzines, where this and many other topics of burning interest to those desiring a basic course in Fandom 101 may be explored at length. (It happens to be the fanzine before this one that has a letter by me in every issue. Could I be a focal point!?) Is this suggestion cruel and unusual punishment?

Thanks for printing Sandra’s and Murray’s accounts of their experiences at the Chicago Corflu. In her report, Sandra mentions a new fan, Pablo Vasquez, describing him as being “visibly delighted” at the convention. On the Trufen list, he appeared as a new member after being mentioned by various Corflu attendees, and his mailing address was given with the strong suggestion that he be sent fanzines. I did this, but so far have not had any response. On the other hand, I’ve also had no response from most of the recipients to whom it was sent a couple months before Pablo’s copy, so I’m hopeful that I will eventually hear from him (and the other

readers who haven't yet responded, though with my definitely infrequent publishing schedule I know that great leeway for procrastination exists).

In his paragraph responding to my comments about Elvis Presley, Taral writes that "everyone knew in 1959 that rock was a fad. The next big thing was expected to be Calypso ... I kid you not!" Actually, Harry Belafonte pretty much single-handedly started the Calypso craze in 1957 with an album of that name from which a parade of hit singles emerged beginning with "Day-O (The Banana Boat Song)." A lot of the "craze" wasn't exactly Calypso but passed for same in the unsophisticated '50s. I remember Terry Gilkyson and the Hilltoppers with "Marianne," but not much else. (There were also a lot of covers of Belafonte's songs.)

David Redd is amazed that I walked to school! In my letter I wrote of only one instance of that – when we were living in an apartment briefly in 1951 – but I did it in other venues as well. When very young and living in Cleveland, I walked to school (maybe half a mile) from kindergarten through second grade (after which we moved to L.A.) even in inclement weather short of a blizzard. I had rain gear and rubber boots to facilitate the journey. And later, much later, I enjoyed walking home from high school, especially if accompanied by friends. Yes, I know David's probably got his tongue firmly in cheek in writing "And he's an *American*? The USA must have been very different in those days." But yes, this was not unusual back then.

(EDITOR: My mother used to tell us how she always walked to school every day, through whatever weather conditions, including snow. She often described this as a journey of more than six miles in one direction and then back again. Of course we all used to nod patronizingly and pour her another cup of tea. Years later I actually took a pilgrimage to see the remote steep hill-side croft where she had been brought up. It was at least that far from anything that could be described as a local village where such amenities as a school might be found. I was sorry for doubting her. And the snows in Yorkshire can be pretty vicious.)

Nic's account of how Vegas cab companies deal with competition by adding more cabs and drivers and how he's coping with it was more interesting than he apparently thought it would be. I join Unc in reading beyond his sad figures of how much this would have affected him financially had he not developed various useful coping mechanisms for dealing with it.

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HOPE LEIBOWITZ CATCHES UP ON VIBRATOR 28

Thanks for continuing to send these to me even though I don't always send a LoC! I'm trying to do better. At first I thought the cover was a photograph of the fires in Fort McMurray, Alberta, before I scrolled down. I'm not sure that got much

press coverage in the UK but thousands of people had to evacuate and many houses were destroyed, along with schools, etc. Awful.

Nigel should have given a "tour" of his art - I had no idea there was a Mike Hinge. I knew him a bit and liked him and his art quite a lot.

You are right about Taral, he feels the same people win every year. He really does need to win a Faan award. But even I don't read all of "Broken Toys". Just like Murray, I prefer reading paper fanzines and Taral's are way too long. But I was surprised at the length of V28 - 32 pages. I cannot sit at my computer for too long or I'm in a lot of pain, especially when I get up. And I don't have a working printer, nor the money to buy a new cartridge, sadly.

And as to your "So kill me now", I say that a lot these days. Or "Someone please shoot me". Or "I might as well be dead". But mostly when I'm alone and can't think of anything to do except clean, sort, file and reorganize stuff. Which I do not want to do.

Sandra's con report

The first time I saw Catherine and Colin was on Saturday. Never found out why they arrived so late. So I was surprised to see Sandra's mention of Colin Hinz on Thursday.

And I don't understand the "breaking down" thing with the introductions. Frank introducing Grant - what? Frank knows me, don't quite understand why it "broke down". I met Grant at a Corflu which I thought was only a few years ago but it was 21 years ago! I believe it was in Las Vegas. Of course I knew his name from fanzine art for many years before.

I noticed there was no committee at all, and I was a bit worried about it, but things seemed to go okay.

"...paid homage to Ted White's eyebrows" - laughed out loud. Yes I did. Charles' right eyebrow is a bit out of control, but Ted's are homage worthy. Mine don't seem to grow for which I'm grateful, unlike my chin hair. Ugh. And the \$866 I paid to some place while I was working to get rid of it didn't work. Snarl.

About the trivia contest, I read Art's rules for it in the program book and then I forgot about it, but still, it seemed to make no sense at all. However, at least I got one right in the audience. "The Sun Also Rises" - Answer to Hemingway question. It just came into my head, but I had no idea that was the right answer. Forgot question, maybe first novel he wrote.

The mimeographing panel from the 1976 Worldcon was amazing. All those people I know, and all so young. Gary Farber, the original short fast-talking hyper fan. Or was there another adjective there...

Depression at a con? I'm glad at this Corflu it didn't rear its ugly head, but for me it is the opposite, I'm just about never depressed at cons, just in my boring, everyday life. I had no idea you suffered from it and I hope it gets better if possible. With me it isn't clinical, just circumstances. Loneliness - living alone might sound good to some but seeing one's SO a few times a week or less doesn't quite cut it.

The one con where I was depressed it was obviously due to a serious sugar crash. The plan was to meet people in the lobby for dinner but no one showed up. So instead I had lots and lots of cookies. Bad idea. Never quite figured out what happened with the dinner plan, but Disclave encouraged people to bring lots of homemade cookies (cookie conspiracy it was called if memory serves), and though I might have had a few other things, mainly just cookies for dinner. Dumb.

Murray's con report

The EL written as EI had me confused for awhile. And the train went underground too. I only took it to and from the airport and it was even noisier than the subway in Toronto as it goes around Union station. No talking possible in Chicago but in Toronto only a nasty screech for a few seconds.

I didn't know that Gregg Trend had Parkinson's - damn. More bad news. I hope his e-mail address hasn't changed - I just e-mailed him before I started typing this. But now it is many days later and no reply.

And Murray didn't mention the gigantic matzoh ball in Leah's matzoh ball soup. I'd never seen one even close to that big. The portions at this restaurant (there were things besides deli sandwiches) were enormous, and I was just barely able to finish my huge sandwich. It didn't help that I got to taste some of Alan's interesting pickled tomatoes, plus other things.

And now, as I've been working on this LoC for way too long (rough draft feature in Thunderbird is useful) I think it is time to send it so I can start working on another one!

Hope Leibowitz can be found at **tiki@interlog.com**

SAINSBURY'S ARE LOOKING FOR AN ARTIST TO VOLUNTEER THEIR SKILLS

SAINSBURY'S are looking for a creative and an ambitious artist to voluntarily refurbish our canteen. Gain particular experience in the creative industry whilst making our community a comfortable area for our employees to escape to. We seek to find a diverse artist, so we encourage individuals from all ethnic backgrounds, genders and age groups to apply.

Why not put your skills into action? Sainsbury's is giving you the one opportunity to build your career and develop your reputation through the allocated store in Camden.

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members. The new design should give employees an atmosphere to look forward to and emphasize on the relaxation that we want them to feel here, in our store.

No qualifications or experience is required as we are simply intrigued and excited about the uniqueness you can offer us.

As a leading UK retailer, Sainsbury's is proud to represent diverse communities in which you can be a part of. Happy colleagues offer great service and continued success. Your work will contribute to our success.

Get your work recognised. Share your gift with the heart of Camden. Leave your mark by doing what you love and do best

For further information please call in to Sainsbury's, 17-21 Camden Road NW1 or call 020 7482 3828 ask for Ronnie or Claude

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Try something new today

SO I WROTE

13th May 2016

Dear Sainsburys

I understand you are looking for an ambitious artist to volunteer to refurbish your cafe. My artistic talents are limited (in fact my teacher once said I couldn't paint my way out of a Tesco's) but I am certainly ambitious.

I understand that due to certain government policies limiting the import of horse meat you currently find yourself cash-short so maybe I can suggest a mutually beneficial arrangement whereby I do the work and you in return volunteer to help me install an art-work called 'Foods of the World' in my kitchen. My kitchen is small but I'm sure by extending it into other areas of the house, such as the bathroom, the garden shed, and my daughter's nursery I could provide you with several hundred feet of shelf-space for this purpose. Judging from my own local Sainsburys you seem to have extensive sections dedicated to Polish, Jamaican, Mexican (my children are especially fond of fajitas), and even Irish food which, from my observations, no one ever seems to touch, so I'm sure you could scrape together sufficient overstocks for my project.

I look forward to hearing from either Ronnie or Claude, about my proposals, providing they can take time out from their urgent shelf-stacking activities or attending the two o'clock rumble.

Yours Sincerely, Graham Charnock

(EDITOR: So far no reply. Am I surprised?)

CONFESSIONS OF A LAS VEGAS TAXI DRIVER BY BY NIC FAREY

VIGNETTES

Well, here's a thing, I just broke a nice string of no accidents in the cab (or any vehicle) by being involved in one. I'd just dropped Sharie, one of my personal customers, at her work downtown (Bonneville Transit Center) and was off up round the corner to have a look at the downtown stands to try to find a staging spot. Just around the corner on Bridger there's one of the more stupid arrangements for receiving deliveries at one of the casinos, whereby on a narrowish street the big trucks are required to pretty much block everything while they tentatively back in to the receiving bay. Sharie, by the way, is a lovely lass who lives not far from me, and I'll occasionally get a call from her partner Roberta in the early hours asking "Can you pick up my sweetie at about 5:20?", which I'm more than glad to do, since (a) it can be difficult for anyone to get a reliable ride out of the east side, and (b) tuff-lookin' little dark-skinned women with an overtly-carried sidearm inexplicably make some drivers a bit nervous. Sharie is, of course, a uniformed security guard (ex-military) for the Transit Authority, and rather than making me nervous makes me feel very safe indeed when she's in the cab.

So anyway, I'm stopped on Bridger next to this big-arse semi truck (articulated lorry, to you ex-Europeans over there?), around his back right corner, when he starts to pull forward on a turn to get in the right position to back into the loading bay, and as is the way of these behemoths, the container end gets closer and closer to me. Despite a desperate and extended honk of the horn, his back wheels make contact with the driver's side front corner of the cab and pretty much tear it right the fuck off. Sorry Grah, forgot to take a photo. I had a lot of arse over this, imagine that, not just because it's the first collision or accident I've had in a cab, but also because it's one of the rather nicer vehicles (Ford Fusion) rather than the POS old Impalas I'd been put in the previous couple of days, from which my reader (Unc, J) will rightly infer that I'm *still* waiting for my designated shift cab to get fixed up. Usefully enough, there were a couple of LVPD at the corner, blocking traffic on an adjacent street where a similar truck was doing a similar maneuver, so they were over on their toes pretty quick.

Thankfully, there was no animosity from the truck driver, to which I was happy to react in kind, even though he tried it on. The cops talk to the drivers separately (out of hearing of each other) about what happened, and initially truckie said I must have drove into him, whereas I was actually stationary, as I informed the nice officer. Naturally the cops know, as do I, that the in-cab camera will get downloaded and show what actually happened, so I'm not gonna lie to them. Truck driver then had a bit of a problem remembering whether he was backing up ("I must have been") or not - he was actually going forward. So we get a Lucky Supervisor there to handle the paperwork, TA has to show up to verify my credentials, and then the tow truck since the cab isn't driveable.

The procedure at YCS would have been an automatic send-home and suspension until the incident is reviewed, but the lovely Lucky puts me back out in another cab as soon as I get back to the yard. ("Wasn't your fault.") I was a bit shaken up by it, but y'know, back on the bike and all that. Other drivers (and staff) all knew about the incident, since our procedure is to immediately notify dispatch over the radio, then they co-ordinate the supervisor who's going to attend, call TA and so on. So when I'm back out, more than a few drivers come up to me at the T1 pit, and what's the first words out of all their mouths? "Are you all right Nic?" Famous Author(tm) now known as Jennifer T A Farey suggests that this is because I am generally well-liked, but my own first thought was more like what a collegiate, friendly and so much nicer company Lucky is to work for (even though they have their quirks like any other).

There's a new doorman that they've assigned to swing (overnight) shift at the Aria North valet, a very nice bloke indeed called Joe, who I've got on my contact list (and I'm on his) for potential commission rides (strip clubs, massage parlors ect), with the arrangement that we'll split the money. This kind of deal, derided by some of the

more stiff-arsed as corrupt, is actually standard practice at several properties - there's a regular set of drivers, for example, who stage at the Linq quite often, and we have a similar understanding with the doorman over there. Lest my financially attuned reader (J, Unc) might have a misapprehension that we are coining it here, there are a *lot* of drivers plying the trade these days (about 3,500, as opposed to about 2,200 this time last year and a fuck of a lot less before that), so the side money, like everything else, gets spread thinner and thinner. Anyways, the Aria North valet can be a nice staging spot, since there isn't room for a whole lot of cabs, so you reckon you'll get a ride out in a reasonable amount of time. Joe loaded me a couple of weeks ago with what turned out to be a pair of English blokes, telling me to "come back around, but they'll take care of you". Some of the nicer doormen will tell a driver to "come back around" (ie, skip the line) if the ride you're getting is a particularly short one, like these blokes who were going to the Cosmopolitan, basically around the circle and down the ramp, about a \$5 ride is all. So I took 'em down there, \$5.21 on the meter, and the fare hands over a \$100 bill. "Ah shit," sez I, "You're my first ride of the night, let me see if I can get some change." Bloke gives it about half a second before saying, "Nah, keep it!" "I think you made his day", sez his mate as they get out. "You made my fuckin' YEAR", I wittily riposte. Back up at the Aria, Nice Joe tells me that the guy had just won \$20,000. "Did he take care of you?" "Oh yeah!"

Last week I had the same ride, different guy who handed me a \$25 Aria chip, and "Keep it mate, all for you." Casino chips are as good as money, especially when Nice Joe is happy to exchange them for cash.

The doormen that know me in the spots I tend to regularly stage know that I'll rarely refuse a ride, short or long, drunk or sober, and that I never get irate about getting a short one after waiting for a while, because that's the luck of the draw. A positive attitude like that does increase your chances of getting "come back around" from a doorman who is going to be more inclined to be sympathetic if you're not a dick. Again from Aria, I got three lads going to the Wynn, and was having a decent chat with the one in the front seat who was appreciating my Pandora channel playing over the cab radio, what with some of that there nice modern technology which lets you, after some electronic contortions (for me at least) pair up the phone with the vehicle, also allowing handsfree phone answering, which can be well handy. So I get these herberts to the Wynn, and as I look across to the back seat on the passenger side, the fat fuck back there has generated possibly more puke than I've seen in my entire life (including my own production). It was all over him, the seat, the floor, the door, in the cup holders, the little plastic pockets behind the seat where we stock the advertising mags ect ect and oo-er ect. A lot of drivers will attempt to levy a "cleaning charge" of \$100 or more for such an extensive distribution of spew (or even a less extensive one), and get a bit aggressive if they don't get it. I was remarkably restrained, and got an extra \$15 of the front-seated

gang leader, and I'll take that over a protracted argument over \$100+ and fuck-all any day. "Returning to the yard with a bio", I wearily communicate over the radio, adding "You'll need to switch me out, *this* one isn't getting cleaned up in a minute".

VIBRATOR BACKSIDE

Well here we are again. At the end of the month. No one knows the trouble I see, oh lord. A short while ago I went to an open mike session at something my mate Steve Gilmore runs at Camden Guitars. I was frankly drunk and should have known better but I made a fool of myself by pretending people were interested in me. They were not. Have you ever been in that situation where you think you are being clever, but you are not. Then you will know how I felt.

However I did not kill myself. I remain to talk to you today.

Today we buried Dougal, our beloved cat who died a few weeks ago. Well, I say he died, we had him put down because he was very ill. Well, I say we buried him, in fact we buried his ashes. That struck even me as a bit strange because I thought ashes were meant to be scattered. Anyway, what was also sort of strange was that I'd never known that some Vets when they put your pet down also offer a full crematorium service, and deliver their ashes to you, in this case in a small cardboard tube, in a nice box decorated with messages of universal condolence. I presume we paid for all this, but I haven't asked Pat how much. Some things are beyond such concerns. Anyway, Dougal now has a tree planted on top of him which will flower every Spring.

I also collected my £570 glasses from my Optician. They were expensive but some things are also beyond such concerns. Pat doesn't think so. She thinks I was mad to pay so much.

I am Graham Charnock and you can communicate with me at graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk If you want a letter included in the next issue make sure you get it to me before the end of July, which last time I looked was Sunday 31st.

I'm giving this to Pat to proofread. We're doomed!