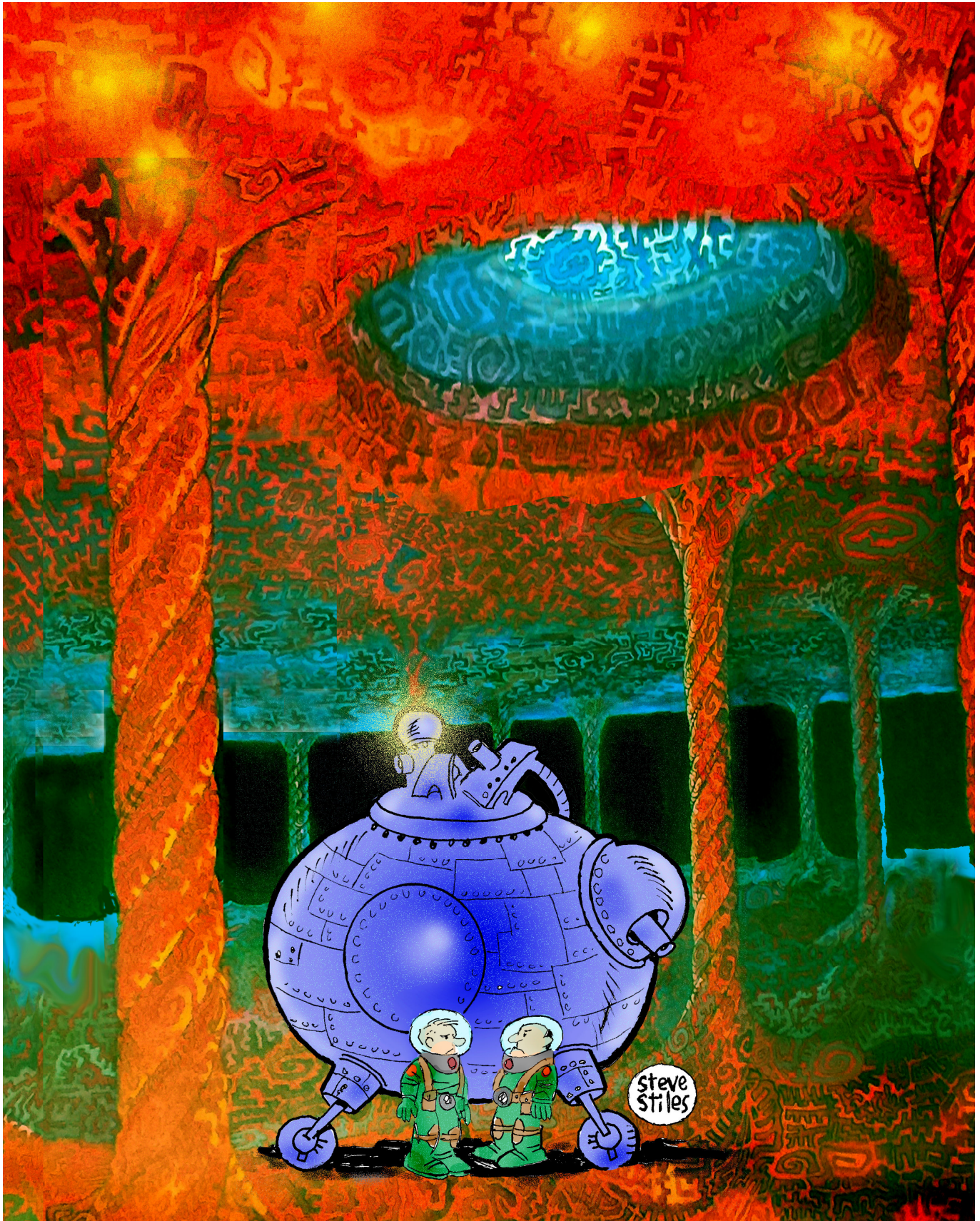


VIBRATOR 49 - THE LOC ISSUE

July 2018



"I don't know. I thought *you* had the keys."

THE VIBRATORIAL

Suddenly summer is here. Time to pour a Gin & Tonic and write that lost promised article, Donald Trump: The Story so Fart. Perhaps not. As I write peat fires are burning all across Saddleworth Moor and the response is to hire the army to beat the flames down with flails which only oxygenate the fires moor... er...more. When will they ever learn? Elsewhere in Fantasyville the World Cup is capitivating everyone, except Ian Williams, with its stunning lack of goals and solid five or six strong defensive back lines. It seems any country with sparkling effective front line goal-scorers stands a chance of winning so England stand a good chance. I'm going down Ladbrokes today with my five pounds.

Harlan Ellison has died. So far the most significant thing about him seems to be that he is the only sf writer that people refer to by his first name rather than his last, although Silverbob does manage to combine the best of both worlds.

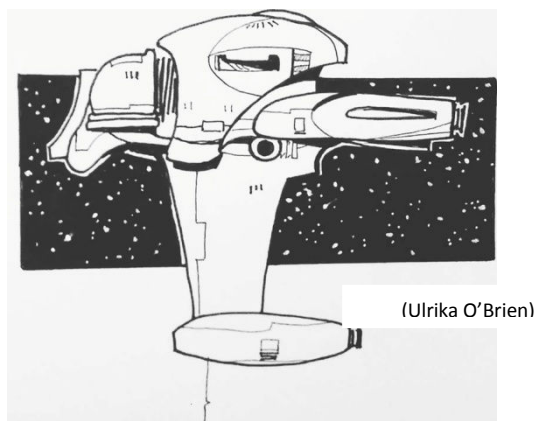
I hate summer. The kids next door have a football and choose every non-school moment to be out in their garden pumping it against the nearest wall. Occasionally some of them pretend to be Neymar and fall over screaming and kicking to no real effect. They also have a trampoline, so most mornings the creaking resembles a bunch of whores working out in a Texas motel.

So why are we all gathered here, silping an insurgent fizz? With Vibrator 48 I sort of promised that would be an end to it all. Most people took that as an excuse not to write letters of comment, but a few fool-hardy souls nevertheless did so. I kind of made a promise to publish this feedback and this is it. Gives me an excuse too to publish another fine cover from my House Artist Steve Stiles, and another episode of life as a Las Vegas taxi diver from my mate Nic Farey.

So what have the rest of you been doing with your lives so far? Write and let me know and I can't guarantee there won't be a fiftieth issue.

I am Graham Charnock. I live at 45 Kimberley Gardens, London N4 1LD. My email address is graham@cartiledgworld.co.uk

If you think I am giving out my telephone number, you are mad.



Okay Just time for one last BRIEF episode of AMERICA THE DAMNED

THIS TIME IT'S THE FATTY ARBUCKLE STORY

“On September 5, 1921, Roscoe Conkling Arbuckle, known as “Fatty”, a known comedian, actor, director and screen writer, and two others rented three rooms in the St. Francis Hotel. Rooms 1219 and 1221 were for them, and room 1220 was to be used for a party room. That evening, the three men, Arbuckle, Lowell Sherman and Fred Fischbach, had invited several women to the party. During the party one of the guests, Virginia Rappe, an aspiring actress, was found seriously ill in room 1219, the room in which Arbuckle was to stay. After being called, Arthur Beardslee, the hotel doctor, concluded that her condition was a result of intoxication. Allegedly, during the party, Rappe made several drunkenly statements such as, “Arbuckle did it” and “He hurt me”. Rappe died four days later after being examined. It was determined that Rappe had died from a ruptured bladder. After this news was released, the public went wild with rumors about how Arbuckle was involved. One report had stated that while raping her, Arbuckle’s weight had caused Rappe’s bladder to rupture. Virginia Rappe had had many abortions in the past and was believed to have had one a few days before the party. Any trauma in the abdominal area could have caused the rupture.”

Bladder rupture can usually only be caused by the trauma associated with a significant physical injury. These days it is likely to be a car crash or some similar incident. It is unlikely rape can cause bladder rupture, no matter what the weight of the assailant, and also unlikely that a history of abortions can have been responsible. Part of the mythology attached to this story (none of it provable, of course) is that a foreign object, possibly a bottle, was inserted into Rappe’s vagina during the course of the rape/sexual play, and this could certainly have cause a bladder rupture.

But Arbuckle, being a star capable of earning vast money for his studio, had the best lawyers, and walked free, and Rappes first hand-testimony testimony was dismissed in the face of Fatty’s Godlike stardom. I’m sure Rappe was considered, especially due to her sexual history, to be ‘no better than she deserved to be.’

Fortunately there aren’t too many ‘me toos’ today related to bladder rupture, but there are enough of them associated with the sexual behaviour of Hollywood moguls.

THE LAST EVER VIBRATOR LETTER COLUMN

FRED SMITH

Many thanks, as usual, for the latest (Last?) Vibrator but – surely not! I can understand that four years of monthly pubbing have taken their toll but you will be sorely missed! Thanks, by the way, for including me in your list of regular loccers! I notice that this is a

larger than usual ish which as well as having more of your stuff also includes more “outside” contributions making this a definite genzine.

Nice cover again on Steve’s “things lurking outside the door” theme although maybe not quite as good as some others he has done for you in the past. Not in any way to be considered as criticism and I hope Steve is keeping as well as can be expected (to voice an inadequate cliché).

Of your contributors, Andrew Darlington writes pleasantly about the steffish ads that have appeared recently on television. He could also have recalled the little robots who praised instant mashed potatoes while falling about laughing at the old ways of washing, peeling and mashing spuds. Highly amusing.

On the other hand Graham James’s piece about generations, etc. raises more questions. Who, for example, is he and for that matter who is Simon Ounsley? So Graham is a “child of the Sixties” he says in spite of having been born in 1950. Fair enough. By the end of the Sixties he would have been twenty but, of course, labelling an era like that is misleading. Maybe it meant something in London but up here it was just a label. As for the music of the time it was, as ever, 90% crap. I know, I know. People tend to have a certain affection for crap music of their adolescence. The tunes he mentions I don’t recognise but I’m of a slightly different generation. I found the Fifties pretty good, especially towards the end, and enjoyed the beginning of the Sixties although not aware of much difference. The Seventies by the way, were pretty awful. Rampant inflation, strikes, power cuts, three-day-weeks, (in addition to crap music!). Graham also mentions “Yorcon 1”. When was that? And he talks about something called “The Astral Leauge’s (sic) Golden Greats”. What is it and is that the way it’s spelled?

While fascinated by your “Greek Odyssey” the thought occurs that only the young could withstand the rigours of a coach journey of that length. So what age were you at the time? It’s certainly not something I would have undertaken – at any age! Your “Battering Rams of Space” story I at first assumed was a plot you had invented based on the Amazing cover but on looking it up (Feb 1941 by Leo Morey) I see that there was actually a story of that title in that issue. So, did you pinch the whole story or just the title and daft idea? (just kidding!). Fun, anyway.

Taral Wayne’s long article seems rather strange to me. True Confessions in a fanzine yet! I suppose he derives some relief by unburdening himself of all this stuff but for the rest of us....? The thought occurs to me that his mother must be black since she would have been “the first person he ever saw”! Or am I reading it wrong?

In the letter section our faithful Robert Lichtman does his usual comprehensive review (of V47) describing the previous ish so well that we have no trouble identifying the things commented on, unlike some others who can be obscure in their remarks. (You know who I mean!). Robert mentions that, for him, Chuck Berry and Fats Domino “pretty much defined rock/r&b”. I would agree up to a point but have to consider Louis Jordan (and his Tympany Five) as the progenitors of rhythm and blues. Think “Let the Good Times Roll” and many others.

That's about all. I did print out this in duplex, i.e. on both sides of 20 A4 sheets, stapled and Lo: a complete, readable zine! Look forward to seeing that all-loc ish you might produce. Hopefully!

LLOYD PENNEY

Ah, thank you for Vibrator 2.0.48! Ah, damn, it's the last one. Oh, well, you get a letter of comment anyway. Every good fanzine deserves comment. But, you'll get something from me instead.

I'll wager that you will take a break, and return later on with another title. Or join up with Pat on Raucous Caucus. I've got that on the table beside me, and I've got to respond to that asap.

After the tale of the toilet door, it does make me wonder what will happen at Corflu 35 in Toronto this year. I suppose something might, anything is possible, I might even find out about it after it happens. I do intend to be there, and the website finally has me there as member #45. Not a popular number these days...

I don't remember a McDonald's across from Kings Cross Station, but I guess I wasn't looking for one. Yvonne and I were there in 2016, waiting for our train up to Newark and eventually Lincoln. We hope to return to the UK in 2019, and I hope to meet up with plenty of people then

I am not much on fanfic either, but your repro of an Amazing Stories cover reminds me that Amazing is being revived as an actual magazine and paying market. Also, the managing editor of Amazing is Ira Nayman, local fan and author here in Toronto.

Tara's story of Ten Stories is fun to read, about a time in Toronto fandom before my own, but it also reminded me that yesterday (March 19) was the seventh anniversary of the passing of Mike Glicksohn, and we remembered him at our Third Monday pub night. At least some of us remember.

My loc...already, plans for our return to London in 2019 are afoot. More time, more money, less luggage, cheaper hotels...we should do alright, and find the Pret a Manger where we can. The Great Canadian Bake-Off is currently advertising for willing victims, ready to be raked over the proverbial coals if their custards are a little too runny. We may not have had any Christmas or New Year's parties to go to, but we were invited to a St. Patrick's party, just a few days ago, and we had ourselves a fine time.

And so, this is the arse-end of the second run of Vibrator. Rest, catch your breath, make some liquor disappear, and consider the third run. When shall we see Vibrator 3.0.1? Take your time... Instead of that take some pride in a fine run of 48 issues, and hook some laurels around your ears. Thank you for all of those issues, and I do hope to see some more.

JOHN PURCELL

Sooner or later all good and bad things must come to an end, as such is the case with fanzines. I think Vibrator lands somewhere in the middle of good and bad taste, but it has always been a solid, entertaining fanzine. You've done well, laddie, and I'm glad you have stuck with it for so long. Four years worth of monthly issues is a heavy duty commitment. By now you probably feel like you should be committed, but that's another story. Good on you for pubbing the zine. You naturally have the right to call it quits when you desire, so think of these past four years as a grand experiment and we mere readers your poor benighted subjects, the victims of your efforts.

Hmm. I don't think I like the sound of that. Maybe it *IS* a good idea you've called it quits.

I do recall that bathroom tub filled with booze at Corflu Quire in Austin. You and Claire weren't in there at the times I was, but obviously you two had frequented that little room at some point over the weekend. Early Friday afternoon of that Corflu I was in there with Ted White - not for the same reasons as you and Claire, and definitely not involved in the same conversation - digging through the bathtub looking for something to drink (this is a custom of American conventions: fill a bathtub on the consuite with a big stash of ice over a lot of cans and bottles of beers and soft drinks and let thirsty fans have their choice of a chilled beverage) when the telephone rang. (Okay, this is another feature of some American hotels: putting a telephone in the loo. Stay with me here.) Ted and I looked at each other. "Should we answer that?" I asked Ted, who just shrugged. So I did.

It was Corflu Quire chairperson extraordinaire Pat Virzi calling from the Austin airport. "What's up, Pat?" I asked.

"Is Earl there?" she asked. I knew that she had gone off to the airport to fetch Earl Kemp, whose flight was due in about 2:30 Friday afternoon. "I've been here for about twenty minutes and don't see him anywhere. His plane arrived on time, but he's nowhere to be found."

"Hang on. Let me check....No, he's not," I answered after looking around the consuite.

"Well, if he calls tell him I'm at the airport waiting for him," and Pat gave me her cellphone number.

"Will do," I said and hung up.

Not even five minutes later I ran into Earl in the consuite. "What are you doing here?" I asked him. "Pat's at the airport right now waiting for you."

Earl smiled innocently. "Oh. I was able to catch an earlier flight and then took the shuttle here," he explained, and went off to the bathroom to get a drink.

I hated to do it, but I called Pat, who answered at the first ring. "Earl's here," I told her, sharing Earl's story. There was a moment's pause, and I could hear her fuming. To the end of my days, I will never forget the next thing Pat said:

"I'm gonna kill him!"

ROBERT LICHTMAN

As you write in "All Things Must Pass," you hit upon the idea of successfully maintaining a monthly fanzine by "establishing a coterie of regular loccers and commentators whom I could rely upon to sustain the monthly schedule even when there was a dearth of my own or other outside contributions. I was lucky, I guess, in that this seemed to work. People obviously found some satisfaction in writing a comment or two and then finding it published within a few weeks, rather than having to wait years between irregular issues, which has often been the standard in fandom (come on, we all know who you are)."

Well, yeah, me – but as one of those certified old fans and tired who publishes irregularly, my other energies are best utilized by establishing a habit of commenting on every issue of whatever frequent fanzine is currently at bat. If I treat it the same as an apa deadline – and I have some of those – then, as you say, I responded to every issue. But if someone had told me back at the end of 2013 that the editor of the next frequent fanzine that would follow the demise of Arnie Katz's *fanstuff* (on which I also responded to every issue) would be you – and that said editor would carry on publication for nearly three years longer than Arnie managed, producing hundreds of more pages – I wouldn't have believed it. You would have seemed an unlikely prospect. And yet, here we are at the end of your 4-year run totaling nearly 1,100 pages, and what I feel most strongly is thanks and congratulations for managing it splendidly for so long.

Steve Stiles's beautifully creepy cover on *Vibrator* 2.0.48 (no, Lloyd, you are not the only one – I still catalog 'em that way) is a fitting end to a long series of his covers to grace your issues. You didn't begin having cover art until the twelfth issue, and that cover was by Steve. My careful research, involving painstakingly making my way through the hard copies of every issue – a heavy stack! – reveals that Steve has provided fifteen of the 37 covers you've published. No one else even comes close.

Claire Brialey remembers seeing you at the 2003 Eastercon and writes: "I think he had a *Vibrator* out then too, although not like these modern ones." Her memory is good – you actually had two issues out in April 2003: #7, the "special counselling issue," and #8, "the bits that wouldn't fit into *Vibrator* 7." I only have photocopies of these issues, which were provided to me by Randy Byers, who was that year's TAFF winner and to whom you must have handed copies at Seacon '03. Those were revival issues, since you'd published the first half dozen from 1975 through 1977. Of those I have only half, missing the first two and the fifth (hint, hint); I think the others reached me via that nice Mr. Pickersgill's Memory Hole fanzine redistribution service. I had to restrain myself from rereading

them instead of continuing my cover research – must go back to them sometime!

Andrew Darlington wonders “What deluded agency persuaded its clients of the need to connect with a youthful demographic via that newfangled Rap fad?” and goes on to complain that “All our SF revelations reduced to the service of commercial merchandising...!” On his first point, substitute “rock” for “rap” and there are scores of examples to be found in a search for “rock music in tv commercials.” One that amuses me is the Ronettes’ “Be My Baby” as background music in a Cialis commercial. And science fiction is also well-represented in commercials, my favorite being one called “Sci-Fi Convention” for Mercury Insurance (I’d give a link but Graham frowns on my doing so). As for your comment, Graham, I for one would welcome a CGI commercial starring Audrey Hepburn for chocolates.

Graham James wonders “When did decade-talk start to dominate?” I haven’t been able to find a definitive answer to that, but it seems to me (and from my research, plus common knowledge) that naming decades has always been around. The earliest example of that I can find is the “Gay Nineties,” followed by the “Roaring Twenties.” Both of those represented periods of time when hedonism and decadence were prominent, although these were qualities that were largely enjoyed by people who were in what we now call the One Percent – by and large many if not most people lived in poverty, maintaining the norm that had prevailed throughout history (and continues). Wikipedia has this to say: “The term Gay Nineties itself began to be used in the 1920s in the United States and is believed to have been created by the artist Richard V. Culter, who first released a series of drawings in *Life* magazine entitled ‘the Gay Nineties’ and later published a book of drawings with the same name. The phrase has nothing to do with the modern usage of the term gay to refer to homosexuality.” I haven’t been able to find information on the coining of “Roaring Twenties.”

As for myself, I was born during the early part of WW2 – and as far as I can figure, was conceived very close to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I guess that makes me a “war baby,” as the “Baby Boom” didn’t start until 1946 with the return home of thousands of men who were off fighting in Europe and in the Pacific. I grew up in the ‘40s and ‘50s, somehow not thinking at the time of those decades having names (how unprecocious of me!), but can lay a claim to being “a child of the sixties,” as Grajam does, having “come of age” early in the decade and, in fact, having moved to the San Francisco Bay Area just in time to catch the initial wave of activity in the Haight-Ashbury and elsewhere in the region. That period was followed by the ‘70s, rightfully named the “Me Decade” as the “do your own thing” part of the ‘60s counter-culture ethos translated into the greater culture, but badly. Looking over what I’ve written, I find that I actually think more in terms of generations than decades – but I don’t think about them very much. I digress, but not without the thought that the fannish equivalent of this obsession about Named Decades would be the periodic debate about Numbered Fandoms – and for that I would turn the mike over to Arnie Katz and run. (Has anyone heard from him lately?)

I enjoyed reading your Greek Odyssey, and was quite taken with how you remember events by their hats: “I don’t remember much of the experience on the ferry...although I

have photographs of Pat in a silly straw hat.” I’m unable to figure out just what about that hat – which looks very good on Pat – is silly. What got my attention about this is that it triggered a memory of your reaction back in 2007 to my giving Carol a hat – as memorialized in the short video, “Carol Gets A Hat,” that you made and which is still available on You Tube (without the need for a link, even, it being the top result of a search within the site).

There’s something of a history, perhaps even a tradition, of science fiction authors writing stories based on a piece of artwork (cover or otherwise) shown to them by an editor. Your “Battering Rams of Space” fits well into this scenario, and unlike most fan fiction in fanzines, which I don’t read, I found myself enjoying it a lot. And how clever it was of you to invent time travel and be able to go back and place this story in the February 1941 *Amazing Stories* – probably a story in itself.

Most likely not ten comments on Taral’s “Ten Stories That Should Not Be Told”:

“There were those days when I realized that the family poodle was trying to hump me as I watched cartoons, and in those moments I sincerely wanted a Daisy air rifle for Christmas...” Would he have shot the poodle to stop its unwanted advances? Inquiring minds want to know. That aside, this illuminates a definite difference between me and Taral: I never wanted an air rifle (which I knew of as a “b-b gun”) at any age. I had some friends who owned them and waved them around in acting out their vision of a western or gangster movie, which I found not just unpleasant but scary.

“My first sight of an actual black man was a sensational event to me. I think I may have only been three or four at the time.” I have no direct memory of my first sighting, but my mother found the event so adorable (later, definitely not when it happened) that she told me about it from time to time for many years, making it a great false memory. I was around the same age as Taral, and my mother had taken me in the high-sided wooden coaster wagon she used for grocery shopping to the A&P supermarket. There was a black man doing his shopping, and upon noticing him I exclaimed loudly, “Mommy, mommy, that man has a dirty face.” She was very embarrassed and immediately shut me up. There’s nothing in her telling of the story about whether the black man noticed and/or received an apology.

“I would do very nearly anything for pizza when I was younger.” It’s a sign of Taral’s and my age difference that when I was younger there were no pizza places in Los Angeles, at least not that I was aware of. I don’t recall even being aware of pizza’s existence at all. It wasn’t until I moved to the Bay Area early in 1965 and then to San Francisco from Oakland near the end of the year that I was made conscious of pizza parlors by Grania Davis. We were living near each other in the Mission district when Grania told me of what she called “the great Mission Street pizza wars.” It seemed that there was enough competition between the pizza establishments that each would run specials in hopes of luring customers from the others. Grania had fine-tuned knowledge of these specials: Monday night a couple dollars off at one place, Wednesday night two pizzas for the price of one plus a dollar at another, and so on. Since she didn’t drive at

the time, I was enlisted in her pizza quests – a task I relished along with the great taste of this new-to-me food.

Only three...that's not too many.

Lloyd Penney writes: "Around our home, when Dolt 45 comes on the screen, on goes the Mute button. A video Mute would help, too." This is our practice, too, and I'm the one doing the muting. But a video Mute would not help, Lloyd, since how would you know when you could unmute to hear other voices.

Hey, Nic, unlike most of your footnotes that have been helpful in decoding Taxi Driver Speak for me and others not clued in (and for which one final cumulative thanks), I actually already knew what "upsell" is all about. I've never done it myself, but I've experienced efforts on the part of sales people over the years to upsell *me* – something to which I never succumb unless there's something to be said for the alternate offering that warrants the additional outlay (not being an "affluent retiree"). As far as any efforts on the part of cab drivers here to upsell me, I don't allow them to happen. The rare occasions when I do use cabs are entirely centered around having to leave my car for service: a ride home from dropping it off, a ride back later when the work was done. I know the most direct way, even taking traffic into consideration, and direct the driver accordingly. I do make up for this, at least in part, by being a generous tipper – rounding up to the nearest dollar above twenty percent.

Thanks again, Graham, for making the last four years of fanzine fandom all the more enjoyable!

PAUL SKELTON

Bloody Hell! First we get *Banana Wings* the personalzine, and now comes *Vibrator* the genzine. Don't let them ever try to tell you that SF fanzine fandom does not prepare you for major social and sociological upheaval. Future Shock? Pah, we spit on Future Shock! My first thought was, Bloody Hell! Maybe you should have folded sooner, and definitely more often, if the end result was to be a genzine of such magnificent substance...quite possibly the best of the year. But of course if we had been given more genzines, then we'd have had less personalzines, and *Vibrator* (described, albeit in its protean incarnation, by Rich Coad in *Spicy Rat Tails* 4 as "the best personalzine since *Waste Paper*") has been carrying that particular banner brilliantly for so many issues now. I will miss it, but do look forward to issue 3.0.1, whenever you deem the time appropriate. In the meantime of course I should address the specifics of this 'final' issue.

First though I should point out that my memory isn't really as good as the Rich Coad quote might imply. I am on a 're-reading old fanzines' kick and the file-drawer I chose began with *Spaceways*, *the Spanish Inquisition*, *Speculation*, and then Rich's zine, which last raises the question of whether you frequently holidayed on Greek islands in the '70s,

given that your LoC therein begins “No news of London fandom for you I’m afraid since I’ve been away for three weeks of nude sunbathing with Malcolm Edwards on a remote Greek island.”, or has perverse fortune twisted the space-time continuum, spanning the intervening 40+ years to juxtapose two references to the same holiday for me in relatively quick succession? Your LoC makes no mention of Chris, Rosie, Christine or Pat, and your article makes no mention of nude sunbathing, but cephalopods pickled in ouzo are common to both, as are “regular gifts of food from the family who rented us their villa”. Of course if it was indeed the same holiday then that raises another question – was it octopus tentacles pickled in ouzo (as per the LoC) or was it the squid you mention here? As Robert Lichtman put it, “enquiring minds want to know”!

By the way, I was delighted to see you deliberately preserve Claire’s ‘diskard uterly’ phrase as, coming from a Hugo-winning fanwriter, it offers hope to all the wrest of us whose speeling or poorfreeding is hopless.

Fred Smith’s statement that, in the USA, “the seemingly ready sale of *machine guns* is criminal” is actually contra to the justification in the US Constitution that requires no gun control. This is all about the need for an armed militia to preserve the fragile newly-formed nation. If you are arming a militia for such a purpose you need it to be as powerfully armed as possible in purely military terms. In fact the corollary of that is that currently, for the Constitutionally-stated need, there is zero argument for flintlocks, or even modern pistols, standard rifles, and shotguns...everybody should really have their own tank, flamethrower or ideally, tactical nukes so that when Putin invades the patriotic militiamen can melt away into the forests and from there take out Moscow. It could be of course that the framers of the US Constitution did not exactly have their finger on the pulse of future technological development.

I wonder if the root vegetable’s ‘non-standard appearance’, to which Joseph refers, included the ‘two-stemmed’ variety of carrots and parsnips, which cropped (?) up from time-to-time and often seemed to have a very stubby third stem, and looked to us kids delightfully rude. I definitely don’t seem to have noticed many of those in the supermarkets of late. Then again, of course, I haven’t particularly been looking (honest, guv!).

Fats Domino is not dead! I played a CD of his the other day and he didn’t sound even slightly dead. Robert and Andrew should not spread these scurrilous rumours. That is of course the great thing about recorded music. Artists who strike a responsive chord will live forever. Of course that’s long been true, for both music and writing, of the authors of the material in question, but now the performers, providing they were recorded, can also achieve immortality. This is a bit like an arbitrary form of time travel. Provided that an artist was recorded, by whatever means, and that recording survives, then that recording will always be available, but beyond that point we cannot go. But that

principle has always been the case. What gets recorded, in any format, generally survives. What doesn't...doesn't.

Now History has always dealt with the big picture. You got what was considered important, because that was what was worth the effort of recording. But you didn't get the everyday context. Now of course, on t'interweb, the everyday context is all pervasive, but that is generally a social context. Before t'interweb, in a certain specific environment, it seems to me that fanzines did this. They also, equally importantly, provided an intellectual context. As I stated back at the beginning of this response, it seems to me that *Vibrator* has carried this particular banner further into the online future than most.

Alternatively you might wish to suggest that I should have stopped drinking a couple of pints ago. Either way, thanks for the journey (and may you live forever).

Lettercol is or not, no Vibrator with be without a few quips from Uncle Nic Farey

THE LAST TAXI

DRIVEN BY NIC FAREY

A LITTLE BOLLOCK ON THE ZIT

Why not start the probable really-last-ever-honest-guv column peripherally and barely allegedly related to taxis with what sounds for all the world like a Jasper Carrott first draft/outtake?

I've written previously and perhaps tediously about the health issues that can plague the professional driver, I'm sure observing that we can quite easily get into Four Yorkshireman style one-upping of ailments much more suited to the pages of *Raucous Caucus*, and in any case a contest which the most gloriously divine of all readers (J, Unc) wins every time, to his effortless chagrin.

Subsequent to prior instalments, I've lost my regular oppo night shift driver Steve, although I've heard I *might* be getting him back due to his dissatisfaction with the 12-12 shift to which he absconded. Steve and I had a good working relationship and we kept our cab pretty much squeaky-clean and nice-smelling, a situation which is now in abeyance. For the first time, I had to write up a complaint about some night driver who tended to leave food waste in the cab - I found a slice of radish tucked in the leather sleeve of the gearshift - as well as appearing to have gobbled out whatever he was eating in several directions (including door and windshield), wiped his or her arse on the windows and tipped his cold coffee out the window and down the door. Actually we'll go

with "his" there, since just about all of our lady drivers are a bit better with the tidy than a lot of the blokes (one of whom, I heard, left his bottle of piss in the cab for the day driver to find).

I documented what the reader (Unc, J) cheerfully described as "suppurating bum" last year, and it's probably salient to observe that not only do we suffer the vagaries of the potentially unwashed and unhygienic oppo drivers (not Steve), the course of the day allows all sorts of possibly diseased and loose-bowelled customers to park their arses in the free pickle as we convey them from drink to gambling to rub 'n' tug. You're sitting on that seat in summer wearing, in my case, ill-fitting carpenter shorts because they need to be long enough to meet standards of decency which often means getting a waist size that requires the clinching of a belt so your todger isn't in danger of nipping out for a look. Nevertheless, everything rides up a bit, and when no-one's looking you try and shift the folds about a bit to exacerbate the friction, really a waste of time since you always end up with a sore spot of some kind, in my case typically on the right one, hence that top title there. And your crack gets sweaty, making you wonder whether the little tree deodorizer would be better stuffed between the cheeks rather than in the other back end, of the cabin and hanging off the in-cab cheater light.

MY ARSE GOT BETTER, BUT THEN MY FOOT FELL OFF

The insurance paid about \$150,000 for my medical bills over the arse trouble, but, because Merka and no NHS, the debt collectors are after me for another \$6,000, going so far as to suggest that the hospital may have to start turning people away if I don't pay the bill. What a fuck-up of a system, innit? I will stress that the standard of care I received was quite all right, especially given that having to deal with someone's infected arse can't be the best of gigs, having to look up the space between the buttocks several times a day to make sure the hole isn't widening.

I realize that having survived a mere 60 years and a bit in this span so far makes me well junior to the aged readership of this organ, and I might be the only scrivener here who has to work a million hours just so there's a tuna sandwich on the table at the end of the day, but given my continued aversion to seeking any kind of medical advice, because it costs money, I accrue all sorts of annoying debilitations. The lovely Famous Author(TM) J L Farey despairs of this, and would have me up the Urgent Care at every minor twinge, but has come to realize and accept that I'm not doing that, and egg & chips for dinner, please.

My feet are a constant source of anguish, but they occasionally get better in between bouts of shredding themselves, exacerbated and assisted by the fact that I now have fingernails because no teeth to bite them any more (see TAFF winner J Purcell fanzine of yore) and so a mild scratching draws blood in a fuckin' minute. "Why don't you, then", cries the sensible brigade, "Get some of that athletes' foot spoo that the nice doctor bloke recommended?". I'm lazy, and it's too much trouble. I'll have an ok day with it here and there, and egg & chips for dinner.

I only really notice all the bits that are falling off and/or degenerating when I'm not

working or not otherwise occupied (ie fanac). I was always the same way when working construction - you hurt at the end of the day, but while you're at it you don't think about it. And in any case the tinnitus drowns out the complaints. That, and wondering how long I can hold it before having a Jimmy becomes a dire necessity.

All that, and coughing up a couple of pints of phlegm on a daily basis, what with 45 years of dedicated tobacco smoking starting to catch up, I suppose. Having got a couple of warnings last year for smoking in the cab (a definition including, but not limited to, hanging the fag out of the window while driving in a pretense of not really smoking *in* the cab) I am now a good boy in the sense that I'm out of the free pickle to have a puff. It's not so much chain-smoking as binge-smoking, reminding me of the days back at Scholl (UK) doing some work study at the warehouse, where you got a 15 minute morning break during which the smokers would manage to suck down 3 or 4 king size to cover the next several hours of nicotine lack.

BILLBOARD UPDATE

Bill? Bored? Nah, shurely not...

We do amuse ourselves by following the ginormous banner ads, and a couple of recent sources of at least mild amusement for me are first, the declaration that "The New King of Vegas" is, apparently, Matt Goss. Secondly, after a few years of having the same old face photo on his adverts, Calvin Harris (real name: Fred Smith) has a new one, looking as not-especially cheerful as ever, which I mentally caption "That expression when you realize you will never again be ministered to by the cool hand of Taylor Swift with a pot of starters".

ONE LAST ACTUAL TAXI TALE

This week, as if the fates knew I was going to punt some verbiage to Grah, I got a story. If they've got a decent number of checkouts, or even not if the flag light is on, I'll often start my shift at Delano, being the nearest property to the yard, since I don't like driving miles empty. I'd got one or two rides out of there, airport runs (a not fantastic \$13 ride or so, but if you get a few of them quick it's all good). I'm up on the nut and this lass comes out from around the corner, not out of the hotel itself, and I'm thinking this might be a brass, except she's wearing flat shoes and looks a bit older than the usual ones (30s, maybe). She gets in the cab, front seat (we normally don't encourage that, but hey, customer), immediately hands me a \$100 bill and sez "Get the fuck out of here, quick!" I do not need to be told twice. We are mostly the fuck out of there, quick, before I ask where we're going. "My house", she goes, giving me some initial directions (215 and Jones). I get to hear a tirade of complaint that she can't believe she left her phone behind because she was going to call her boyfriend (in London!) but now must buy another phone at some point today, as she's no way going back to get the original. She seems a bit langered, but not excessively so, although the lost phone complaints continue, as well as the startling observation that "I left my underwear too". (I did not request proof.) She

changes her mind about the destination, going one more exit up to Spanish Palms and what's apparently a friend's apartment. I do have to say that she's pleasant to me, not angry or aggressive like some. Maybe the fact she's checking her purse and counting out a bunch of Benjamins (around \$3,000) helps this. She talks her way through the Spanish Palms gate guard, which took a bit of persuasion, and I suspect he gave up to get rid of us, and she directs me round to where her friend's gaff presumably is. There's \$31 and change on the meter, she chucks me \$40, "Keep the change, and you never saw me". "You got it darlin'!", sez I with the almost \$9 change *and* the \$100 in my shirt pocket. Best tip I ever had in over 3 years, beating out the \$100 I got for a \$5 ride from a bloke who apparently had won over \$30,000 at the tables in Aria.

ONE LAST ROBERT LICHTMAN MENTION

--- Nic Farey

VIBRATOR BACKSIDE

This is traditionally the time when I crack open another bottle of vodka, fill my rummer, and drink a health to Vibrator readers and contributors past, present, but sadly not future.

Well, what have we learnt so far? We've managed to avoid a third world war, but have the prospect of a fully armed civil war in the US to look forward to. Well, they deserve it. I hope not too many of my friends get killed. England are still crap at football and especially crap at taking penalties. Harlan Ellison was much-loved and much-hated, all at the same time. Like everyone I have a Harlan story but it is not as good as my Terry Pratchett story so I shall refrain from repeating it.

How about some gratuitous Best Awards. The best Fan artist ever is of course Don West, with Steve Stiles a close runner-up.

The best song-writer is still John Prine, with Warren Zevon a close runner-up. One is dead; and I wouldn't expect the other to live much longer.

The best novel written by Robert Heinlein remains *The Door Into Summer*, although that isn't saying much. It gets the vote because of the cat.

The best all-round sf writer is Kurt Vonnegut. No question.

The best copy-editor and proof reader of all time is Pat Charnock.