

This Here...

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EGOTORIAL

A PARTY IN THE TIME OF COVID

BY J L FAREY

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birthday was coming up (no mean feat considering we were having trouble remembering what day of the week it was, and I'd taken to posting trash day on Facebook every Wednesday to help myself and a handful of friends recall when the cans needed to go to the curb) but he planned a surprise for me.

"You'll need to be awake by 11:00 AM on Saturday," he said, "and be ready to go by 12:30." (If it seems that he didn't need to tell me that because, of course, I would be awake by 11:00 AM... No. During the Plague Days, time is an abstract construct.) The only other thing he would tell me is that eating was involved, because if he didn't, I would definitely

have had breakfast, (blood sugar levels and all that) thus ruining the surprise meal.

Before we go any farther, let me say that the awesomeness of my husband is not just because he planned a surprise, but that he managed to KEEP it a surprise and not tell me what it was. You have no idea what a big deal that is. He has many skills, but keeping surprises isn't one of them. This time, though, he was excellent.

June 20, 2020... The big day! I woke up, showered, put on real clothes, including a bra (not something I do most days at home) and shoes. No makeup, because what's the point if you're wearing a mask? We drove off and the Nancy Drew

in me came out. What direction were we heading? We got on the freeway heading west, so I knew we weren't going to Henderson. Then we took the exit for Downtown Las Vegas, which significantly narrowed it down. After finding a parking space on the street, we walked to 7th & Carson, a lovely little restaurant. Nic



walked up to the greeter and told him we had a reservation for four. FOUR! This was my first clue that other actual, real live people would be joining us. How fabulous! But I still had no idea who they were.

We were seated outside on the open patio. Thankfully, there was plenty of shade, and we were the only ones there so our faces were *au naturel*... No masks! A few minutes later, I heard voices and then our mystery guests materialized from behind a wall of greenery. **Jacqueline Monahan** and **John Wesley Hardin**! One of the hardest things I've ever done was staying in my seat and not jumping up to hug them (you know, because of COVID safety stuff). So we gave each

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other Wakanda Forever, arms crossed over the chest from six feet away, virtual hugs. And then we talked and ate and laughed. We all had shrimp cocktail (99 cents! And it was huge!) and finally made our choices from a menu where everything seemed better than the last thing. It was wonderful, and it was over too soon.

About a week after my birthday, (and completely unrelated) reports started coming in that parts of the country were showing virus spikes. Then the Governor of Nevada made mask-wearing mandatory in public places. Things are getting tight again, and we're not going out much, other than Nic going to work and both of us going to the grocery store. So this just goes to show how really awesome my hubby is. He managed to get the four of us out for a grand adventure just before doors began closing again, which makes it even more special.

In my life, I've had 56 birthdays. Most of them were forgettable, a couple were terrible, but a few stand out as unforgettable. One of them was my 51st, when Nic proposed and I got my engagement watch (a story for another day). Another is this one, enjoying good food with great friends in the middle of a global pandemic, and now the added joy of bragging on my husband, who is amazing, and chipping away at his "wretched old arsehole" reputation.

What more could a woman ask for?

July 4 2020

RADIO WINSTON

NINEY THE OBSERVER

This is how it happens: I start on the research for the Pioneers vs Ethiopians vs Melodians piece (with mild trepidation that I might end up including unfeasible quantities of other Jamaican vocal groups of the '60s and



early '70s) when the rabbit hole appears, the bell goes "ding" as Niney's name starts occurring all over the shop.

To add a layer of - er - something, we'd better define "name" here. George Boswell was born in Montego Bay in 1944 (although some sources say 1951), but after his old man did a runner fairly swiftly thereafter, his mum raised him as Winston Holness, likely taking the last name of her new husband. He to'd and fro'd between her gaff and an aunt on the outskirts of Kingston, where he formed a band at school (the Nightingales) and crossed paths with the likes of Lee Perry. After a workshop accident severed a thumb he got the moniker "Niney".

Hanging around the various studios and sound systems got him a foot in the door as a salesman for Leslie Kong and Coxson Dodd ("Even if it's rat shit, an' I tell you it's black pepper you gonna buy it"). He also got friendly with singer Derrick Morgan, who introduced him to *his* brother-in-law Bunny Lee, and Niney ended up doing some recording at Studio One with a bit of local success. He was already working (and lodging) with Max Romeo (with whom he created 'Maccabee Version' (long considered an influential slice), as well as having run some sessions for Joe Gibbs (taking over from Perry) as "the Destroyer" (a nod to "the Upsetter").

Late 1970 saw Niney decide to form his own label "Observer", and come out with the hit 'Blood and Fire', which caused ructions between him, organist Glen Adams and Bob Marley who said he'd basically nicked 'Duppy Conqueror', at least structurally. Fisticuffs ensued, a quick visit to hospital for Niney being the result. The accusation in of itself is quite the larf, since so many riddims got used and reused in different ways, but 'Blood and Fire', if anything, might be 'Duppy Conqueror' massively simplified, if it even nicks it at all. You be the judge:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7rAwluPfa8>

It's arguable that Niney's finest work in the '70s came from his association with Dennis Brown, even though Brown was nominally recording for Joe Gibbs, Niney was at the controls and, not insignificantly, the Soul Syndicate (house band) provided the backing. Just to pick one example of the creativity at work, Brown's 'A So We Stay' had a deejay version cut with Big Youth as MC which became a #1 slice (and also later covered by Jah Woosh).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQUD-CzXIGg>

Niney was (and still is) always up for new and interesting ways to present the reggae and its various evolutions. Of interest to **Andy Hooper** might be his first dub album, 1975's 'Dubbing with the Observer' with King Tubby.

By the turn of the 80s, dancehall had become the big thing, and although, as ever on top of things, Niney had a toe in that pond with Sugar Minott (among others), as well as shepherding early Black Uhuru into existence, he was unfairly seen as belonging to the previous generation of producers (true, but ey...) and ended up taking most of the 80s off and travelling around a bit before returning to Jamaica at the end of that decade and restarting Observer records (with some success) if only just to show that he could be as in it with the new recording technology as he was with the old, despite some justified contempt for newer artists seemingly just being in it for the money and not playing from the heart.

Rumor has it that Niney has been quietly working with Jimmy Cliff on new material, and you can be well sure I'm keeping my ear out for that...

#1 FAAN FA(R)CE

MILLIONS FLEE IN TERROR INDIFFERENCE

Whereas the banner title for this column might suggest a "why oh why" (which almost spells 'YOYO', writes Mrs. Trellis) splurge of mock outrage, that's not the case, sadly for those who might have been expecting the usual strident invective.

Fact is, I am myself indifferent to the '#1 Fan Face' award, at least in the sense that I don't have strong opinions about it one way or another, although it could be said to encapsulate the inherent fun fannish silliness of the annual back-patting exercise. In previous years (as far as I know, and a practise I continued in 2018, and one **John Purcell** intended to follow this year) the gong has been awarded on the basis of an accumulation of votes accruing to an individual across all the award categories. On the 14 occasions it's been given, every recipient has also been a winner in another category, as you rather might mathematically expect.

Question #1, therefore, is whether or not we should even bother with #1FF for 2021? As an accumulator of votes across all categories, faneds would tend to be at an advantage since they'll also presumably get numbers in fanwriter and/or fanartist categories, possibly (likely?) also as loccers. This suggests that those whose fanac occurs largely within a single individual category are likely to get short shrift, although both **Steve Stiles** (2015) and **Dan Steffan** (2013) have got the nod on the basis of fanart alone. Both, however, undoubtedly benefitted from votes in the 'Best Cover' category as well as in 'Fanartist'.

I had previously suggested applying some sort of multiplier to #1FF qualifiers according to the number of categories in which they were represented, but I've completely gone off *that* idea since it exacerbates the division between those who

do a lot of different fanac and those (primarily loccers, I would suggest) who don't.

Question #2 follows, being *if* those who give some tiny amount of fuck think that #1FF should still be awarded, how do we determine the recipient? The lazy default is to retain the 2018 method of aggregation, although there are some options and possible modifications to be applied. Do we, for example, include first-place "bonus points" in our #1FF total or do we exclude them? (Again, I have no firm opinion on this and am willing to be guided by consensus - I can see arguments for both cases.) Another suggestion might be to add #1FF as a category to the ballot, with the possibilities that votes therein for the award are either considered standalone or are added to the cumulative totals.

Interjection: Of course I'm not unaware that most fans think that I'm overanalyzing all this, and find it pretty fuckin' tiresome. That's quite all right, but let me explain a little: All this tosh that I gob out has the intent of *clarifying* and, believe it or not, *simplifying* the process. While the awards themselves might quite rightly be thought of as a bit of a larf, I believe that the *method* by which they're determined should be well-defined and not over-engineered.

Repeal and Replace: So here's a thought: **Michael Dobson's** handing out of his bag of jelly babies to more people than even voted did actually contain some ideas which were, at the time, quite lost in the morass. I considered that the "contributor to the hobby" and "we wuz robbed" orange slices (© **A Hooper**) might perhaps be conflated into a loose equivalent of Eastercon's **Doc Weir** award (for unsung heroes of the Faniverse who contribute in ways less obvious than fanzine fanac, in this case). This does rather go against my long-held contention that the FAAns are specifically fanzine awards (hence my ongoing wariness about "Best Website"), but there is an argument to be made that, for good or ill the FAAns having been for many years associated with Corflu, this could be an admitted Corflu-specific acknowledgement of a contribution which isn't necessarily *directly* tied to fanzine production but is some activity that supports and promotes the hobby by other means. This is something that could be a ballot category, although I'd possibly disfavor that - it seems more like a "Chairperson's award", or determined by a deliberative panel in the same way the Lifetime Achievement Award has been sorted (at least in years when I've been involved with it).

Now I'm going to go off on a little tangent which might concern a *very* few (and yes, I know I said I'd suggest some values/metrics for voter consideration, but that'll wait a minute), and this is something I want to make crystal clear.

Polemic: Although it's not something he ever did himself in his own FAAn awards admin tenure, **Andy Hooper** griped that, in my previous go, that I should have excluded votes for any of my own work, as **Claire Brialey** did when she took on the gig (which I fervently disagreed with at the time,

and still do, but ey - her gig, her rules). Let me preemptively address that. Andy has previously contended that “all votes count, however silly”, and you can’t have it both ways. Given that both he and I produce and have produced collaborative work (eg *Chunga*, *BEAM*), arbitrarily excluding votes for these titles is clearly unfair to the others involved. As administrator, I am self-charged to not publicly advocate or denigrate any contenders, although I won’t be shy about privately saying what I’ve liked, if anyone asks. On the unenforced principle of not self-voting, I don’t suggest anything with my moniker on it.

Andy contended that having an administrator who themselves is up for the cup is effectively an elephant in the room, and that voters would inevitably be influenced by the mere presence of the name of the alleged jiant. I have a somewhat higher opinion of them than that.

The Hoop, as I see it (and if he’s still bothered) has two active options: the first is to continue to maintain that me presumably (according to him) being in contention for a FAAn award isn’t appropriate to my gig as admin, and thus urge any and all to not vote for anything I might be involved with, and that’s fine, although obviously massively unfair to **Ulrika O’Brien**. The second would be to subversively *encourage* votes for my product and thus in some way go toward proving his point. The *inactive* option would be to keep schtum, just vote as he wishes and see how it goes, ey? I recommend the latter.

See also **Claire Brialey**’s loc for more on these topics...



“It’s not at all stressful being a Watford FC fan” (John, age 25)

FOOTY

BY DAVID HODSON

FANS, FANDOMS AND TOXICITY

I was actually a little peeved when *This Here... # 30* popped through the slot of my email inbox without the slightest

warning of its imminent arrival from any of the Fareys of this parish. I had this snazzy title all lined up, which I’ve used anyway, and was desperate to parade my unearthly prescience, my witchlike foresight, to such an extent that I’m sure someone would have accused me of being some kind of fascist or the like (no, I don’t get the connection either). My ire was eventually extinguished as I perused the email that arrived mere seconds after Nic’s offering me 20% off Model Society’s online course “Mastering One Light Artistic Nudes.” It’s all **Paul Di Filippo**’s fault, honest Guv!

Mentioning Paul means that before I launch into this issue’s rant, I have an excuse to point out to those that actually read this column that the legend that is Peter Crouch, as eulogised last time out, now has his own Saturday evening BBC1 television show: “Peter Crouch: Save Our Summer”, which debuted on June 6th at 9pm. Also featuring radio presenter Maya Jama [*photo, p6, because layout - Ed...*], who can rock boot cut double-denim in a way that only a teenager from the 1970’s can appreciate, can block my titles anytime, and is probably better known as the British national treasure Stormzy’s ex in certain circles, and Alex Horne and The Horne Section, a hit and miss musical comedy act slightly superior to The Barron Knights, it’s at least good fun in a non-challenging way. It also goes a long way to proving that Crouch is a universally popular member of the pro-footballer fraternity.

So, what was going to bring out my latent, mutant foresight powers?

This:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-53187158>

On the evening of June 25th, Chelsea beat Manchester City 2-1 at Stamford Bridge, and, as a consequence, Liverpool won their first title of the Premier League era. That’s where the fun ended (or started, depending upon your point of view). Have a look at the photos in the above report. In the middle of a pandemic, in one of the country’s most severely affected areas, thousands of imbeciles decided to go celebrate a sports club winning a competition. Looking at the evidence of the pictures, very few people wore masks, very few people social distanced, some of these cockwombles even dragged their children along, also sans masks and definitely unable to be kept at distance from the pissheads around them. And as if that wasn’t enough, the same fuckwits went and did it again the following evening:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-53191406>

This time, in a heroic attempt to prove that the best part of them ran down their mother’s thighs, someone even fired a red flare at the Liver Building, causing a minor fire that the local fire brigade had to attend to, because the building is owned by the same people as Liverpool’s city rivals, Everton.

Just to prove I really am able to see into the future, let's examine a screenshot from May 9th of a conversation I had with Nic on his facebook page:



David Hodson "The police also talk about fans flouting restrictions when football restarts and that this is a concern for the authorities, but I believe we would have more control over supporters playing at our own grounds.

"After all, Liverpool were emphatic their fans would be sensible and listen to club instructions when their own mayor came out against a return to football. If Liverpool wholeheartedly believe this when they are 25 points clear and on the brink of a first title for 30 years, I'm sure all other fans would follow suit."

I will say this now, so it's on record: The Premier League should be voided, the season should be declared null and void. The minute Liverpool are given or win the title, there will be 40,000 pissed up Liverpool fans outside Anfield, singing and dancing, regardless of what the club says about responsible behaviour. If any other club was top of the league, it might just get away with it, but not Liverpool, or their fans - fans that have been involved in two in stadium disasters, have attacked a rival team coach going to Anfield, and have tried to make similar attacks a regular tactic to intimidate opposition teams.

Two to three weeks after Liverpool are given or win the title and the celebrations that every football fan knows will happen up there, there will be a spike in infections on Merseyside and a subsequent spike in deaths. At that point, the Government that allowed it, the Premier League and Football Association that organise it, and Liverpool Football Club, who live in complete denial about the nature of their fanbase, should all be held legally culpable, with three of the organisations eradicated from existence and executives prosecuted.

Like · Reply · 5w · Edited



Nic Farey Yeah pretty much what I thought too...

Like · Reply · 5w



Ivan Sinha every word in that statement is true you've just neglected the fact that lfc fans will then will then start a campaign to get compensation from the government

I don't know Ivan Sinha, but I do know the powers of foresight are strong in this one.

Around this time my newsfeed on facebook and my SFnal email news sources started carrying another wave of commentary on a Zack Snyder cut of the 2017 cinematic turkey *Justice League*. Now, I don't need to teach anyone reading this sage publication how to suck pickled eggs. We all know Snyder was due to direct *Justice League*, in fact shot most of the scenes if I understand correctly, then dropped off the project prior to completion at which point Joss Whedon stepped in and finished the movie. Rumours have persisted ever since of a "Snyder cut" of the movie and a certain cadre of whinging and whining comicbook fandom have taken to social media to harangue for its release. The truth is there was no Snyder cut, Whedon came in and created the film from footage that existed and extra footage that he shot, but now Warner Brothers and HBO have agreed to allow Snyder to edit the movie into a two-part serial to be shown on HBO Max (or whatever it'll be called that week). Snyder will shot extra special effects footage but, again as I understand it, will

not have access to the actors for any re-shooting. Even so, it's another \$25million that is to be spent on the project. Basically, Warner Brothers lost their nerve in the face of a toxic and quite threatening campaign by a bunch of keyboard warriors who seem to regard Snyder as some kind of auteur. Anyone who wants to know the types of pig's ears that can be made by auteurs should discuss *The Final Programme* and Robert Fuest with Michael Moorcock.

I'm no fan of Snyder or most of his movies. I can just about watch *Watchmen*, despite he's changing of the graphic novel's ending, because it's so well cast; the actors really do fit the roles perfectly, but, in keeping with discussing pork, I was always taught that you can put lipstick on a pig, but it don't make it a beauty. Of course, in Snyder's case that's actually removing the lipstick, blusher, and any foundation and then flaying the top 3 layers of skin off the living victim and expecting a more enticing outcome and I'm by no means the only film fan who feels that way about him and his work. The frightening part of this story is the sense of entitlement on the part of Zack Snyder's "fans", something that has sort of been replicated by *Game Of Thrones* fans after the disastrous final season, with some demanding in the immediate aftermath that it be completely redone by new showrunners. At least HBO's executives showed a little spine and resisted the outcry, unlike the puddles of jelly at Warner Brothers. There is definitely a point at which being a fan can, in the hands of the right (wrong) kind of personality, tip over into toxicity and self-entitlement. Liverpool and their fans have always claimed "it means more" to them to win the title than it does to any other club, which is utter rot of course, but that's the publicity put out by the Liverpool Echo's football column week-in, week-out. It's the same mentality that casts the city in the light of heroic rebels against the hegemony of the Thatcher government of the 80's when, in truth, Derek Hatton was as big a chancer as any member of the Tory party before, during, or since the period. Also inevitably, anyone who disagrees with Zack Snyder's fans, or Liverpool's fans, is just being "salty", or has a chip on their shoulder, or couldn't possibly understand. We're "soulless".

I realise that most of the people reading this column (okay, I'll stop kidding myself, most of the people that will glimpse at this column) live in either Britain or 'Merica, neither of whom have covered themselves in glory at government level dealing with the Covid-19 crisis. I also realise that in the days around June 25th, British beaches at Bournemouth, Brighton, Weston-Super-Mare, Clacton, and others were ram packed with halfwits as temperatures hit the high 30's in a mini-heatwave. Earlier on the 25th, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council had to instigate emergency measures on their beaches at Bournemouth under pressure from an influx of half-a-million pig ignorant tubs of lard that wanted to baste themselves with factor-50 and enact the human equivalent of a tray bake. So, I'm also aware that at least one



person will probably pop his head above the parapet and claim any spike in infections can't ALL be blamed on Liverpool fans (today on Sesame Street, we're going to learn how to spell "dis-in-gen-u-ous"), but, unlike a heatwave in Britain, the Liverpool fans reaction was all too predictable. I also stand by my assertion that any other club winning the title wouldn't have had thousands of fans on the streets. There are always a few idiots in any group, of course, and there would have been a couple of hundred maximum in Manchester, or London, or... There isn't anywhere else with a potential title winning side actually (fuck off with that Leicester nonsense, we'll all be long dead and this column long forgotten before we see the likes of that again)...But Liverpool, which as a city doesn't seem to even regard itself as part of the United Kingdom, is the only club where this level of fan reaction could be guaranteed.

Football in the U.K. is as corrupt and incompetent as the country's central government. The only reason the season was resumed was because the television companies wanted huge wedges of the over-inflated money that they paid for an over-hyped product back if they didn't have matches to show. Although lip service has been paid to player health and safety by the footballing authorities, they have paid no heed to the safety of football fans or, probably more importantly in this case, the people they may encounter in the days and weeks after going on an orgiastic celebratory binge. I'll be quite honest, I couldn't care less if 40,000 meatheaded Liverpool fans die of Covid-19, but when I see innocent children dragged into the scenes outside Anfield when they really have no concept of the potential danger

they face or I think of the potential workmates, grandparents, shop workers, postal workers, police officers, and doctors and nurses that may have to encounter these prats and risk their health as a consequence, I do find myself worrying. At the very least, I hope social services in the north-west are looking at all the photos and trying to identify children that might be better served in different, more responsible homes.

In the light of football actually being played I guess I should discuss some of the games and issues being raised. I'd really prefer not to because, bluntly, most of the games have been shite, but I did promise Nic some kind of commentary so...

As a Spurs fan, I wrote off this season long ago when it became obvious that last season's run to the Champions League final was just papering over the cracks of a disjointed and stale squad. I firmly believe Jose Mourinho will turn things around. He doesn't suffer from Mauricio Pochettino's sentimental attachment to sub-standard youth prospects or under-performing senior favourites and a big clear out will happen in the summer transfer window. It's just painful to watch in the short term. Of course, any transition isn't helped when VAR, the Video Assistant Referee, is used as ineptly as it was in the 3-1 defeat away to Sheffield United, with a Spurs equaliser at 1-0 marked off due to an accidental handball in the build-up to Harry Kane's goal. The fact that the accidental handball came as a result of a foul on Lucas Moura that wasn't given as the referee played an advantage, and then couldn't be given as a free-kick retrospectively because the advantage just didn't unfold shows the mess the current implementation of VAR and the handball rules in general are in.

Nic is sweating blood about Watford's survival prospects at the top level, but, just as I said to him last season, I can assure him they will be safe. The Norwich City, Aston Villa, and Bournemouth sides that reside in the relegation spots as of writing just aren't good enough to escape the drop down to the Championship and two or three scrambled points here and there will see Watford survive.

The lack of supporters due to games being played behind closed doors actually affords the opportunity to study some of the players and tactics in greater detail. Some teams aren't quite clicking with the rush of blood to the head brought on by a partisan crowd missing, Nic's Watford being one of them. A during the match facebook exchange with Nic whilst the fixture against Southampton was being played came out of realising how distracting the background crowd can be, clothed in replica shirts and the like as they are, to some players when hitting passes across the width of the pitch. It had never really occurred to me that, during my football attending heyday, we were all standing on the

terraces and replica shirts weren't as ubiquitous so the background can't have held the same level of colour and distraction for the players.

Manchester United fans and pundits are going crazy for Bruno Fernandes, who joined the club from Sporting Lisbon in January. He has made an impressive start at Old Trafford with five goals in eight games since his transfer, but for many the jury is still out as even in the games he played before the Covid-19 shutdown a very artificial atmosphere prevailed, and less than spectacular spells at Italian clubs Udinese and Sampdoria prior to his move to Portugal might raise questions about his big game temperament. He seems a little too spindly to me.

On the same evening that Sheffield United beat Spurs, newly crowned Premier League champions Liverpool were tonked 4-0 away to previous champions Manchester City. Many pundits have proclaimed Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk the "best centre-back in the world", but the truth is he isn't even the best centre-back in England. The major injury to Manchester City's Aymeric Laporte at the start of the season, compounded by the need to switch midfield enforcer and general Fernandinho back into his position to cover, hamstrung (no pun intended, honest guv) City's title defence at the first hurdle. Don't expect City to go into another season with less than adequate defensive reinforcements. Van Dijk is undoubtedly a very good centre-back and comfortable on the ball, but he is still effectively a reactive defender, relying on blocking passes and shots and his pace to outrun attackers, whereas Laporte is very much a Guardiola defender: progressive, stepping up into the midfield space to cut out balls to opposition forwards and frequently instigating Manchester City attacks with his passing quality. There is a reason why Guardiola passed on buying Van Dijk from Southampton when he had the chance and instead picked up Laporte from Athletic Bilbao for close on £20million less on the transfer fee and lower wages.

Test cricket returns to England this coming Wednesday, July 8th, as the hosts take on the West Indies at Southampton at the start of a three test series. It'll be interesting to see how the lack of spectators affects the game, it's certainly reduced the pace and intensity of many of the Premier League games played since the restart. Of course, cricket is a much more tactical and considered game than thud and blunder football and the likelihood is the match will seem very like a regional county game or the 5th day of a dead rubber test. I doubt very much I'll be writing about pissed-up crowds of non-social distancing arseholes outside the Ageas Bowl or any of the other venues over the summer. If we followed Ellen Ripley's advice, I wouldn't be writing about them outside Anfield again either!

LOCO CITATO

From: podmogul@cox.net

June 6

Alan White writes:

Thank you sir, I'm sure I will doubly enjoy this issue as well. It has arrived at a most auspicious moment where we might hand over our zines, like shameful spies on a bridge somewhere in Eastern Europe.

[[Alan's missive was happily accompanied by the pdf of Skyliner #9, a surreptitious handover indeed...]]

From: robjackson60@gmail.com

June 6

Rob Jackson writes:

I was a bit shocked to find mine was the lead letter, though perhaps that is just because I was first rather than either the longest (a booby prize which **Chuck Connor** wins hands down this time round, by commenting on about 5 issues, including, mysteriously, issue 30) or the best. I'm not going to tempt fate by picking out any one particular correspondent.

[[Yep, first up Doc, as you were again thish, but I decided to promote that nice Alan White from the WAHFs so you wouldn't have to endure the ignominy again...]]

Coral is so quick on the uptake it's scary. I had the page with my loc on screen. She came into the study and within



about 5 seconds spotted her name on screen and my list of ingredients for the painkilling turmeric mix. "You forgot the olive oil!" That's the fatty ingredient which helps dissolve the active ingredients in the turmeric and pepper. So it is my bounden duty to put you right.

Thanks for continuing to MC the FAAn Award debate. Just for the record, I continue to be quite content with the general direction of thought. Though if a genzine needs to have 80% external content, I think *Inca* would fail - it is quite often around 55/45 others/me. Actually, so would *Banana Wings* - but its co-editors are so articulate that no-one would complain if there was an issue which was in effect a paired Fishlifter personalzine.

[[Mark Plummer got me thinking more about the perzine/genzine "metric" - see my comments on his loc...]]

I was quite contented, though, with your comment that *Inca* has no definite focus except for being centred around stuff that attracts me as an editor.

Currently I am a bit of a magpie, happily scavenging where I can find stuff, or picking up any juicy morsels others are kind enough to throw my way. I do not do nearly as much active touting for material as I should. The hyperassertive, pushy *Maya* days are long gone.

* * *

From: srjeffery@aol.com

June 7 & 13

Steve Jeffery writes:

Thanks for issues 28 through 30 of *This Here*.... TH#29 seems unaccountably to have gone AWOL, at least as far as my Downloads folder is concerned and may have to be hunted down and returned to base camp efanzines.com. (When I can persuade the corporate installed internet filter on the work laptop that efanzines isn't a forbidden content site. Or maybe it knows something I don't. Perhaps you shouldn't do such swears editorials in future. But where's the fun in that.)

Or I could just go look in my AOL inbox again, where I've probably just misfiled it.

Going back to #28, Indeed a TERF is a thing though you really wish it weren't. I though we were over the era of "No Irish, No coloureds" notices in café and boarding house windows, but we just seem to have moved the goalposts to a different and defenceless minority.

But no, I didn't recognise h/t either until Ulrika explained it in her loc in #29. That said, it's not one I've come across before outside the pages of *This Here*. Nor did I know JFGI (but I will snaffle that one, thanks) as a more modern version of RTFM (Read the Fucking Manual). Google does rather lends itself to little email advisories such as 'Google is Your

Friend' or 'Ask Uncle Google' (why not Auntie? I wonder) although I haven't got to the point where they are ubiquitous enough to be left just as acronyms. (Although you'd think a company where an email like "If you put the DRB as a new PBI in TFS we can add it to the SRS and run it through TM before handing over to the IOQ" makes perfect sense should be able to cope with a couple more handy acronyms.

[[I didn't know JFGI either (or most of the other txtspk abbreviations - I think I was already wore out around the time of TANSTAAFL) but it's a handy one, being something that I noted I do tend to expect (some) readers will do, if they can be bothered...]]

I have also done the blank screen and swears audio thing while trying to set up a cheap Bluetooth headset for online video calls for work. Cue much random clicking of buttons and icons on screen and cussing about "the bloody thing isn't working" when I get a voice back in one ear, "Steve, we can hear you...".

Two days later I looked in the box and found some instructions.

I definitely need one of those what day is it clocks from the picture in #28. There are times when I have no idea what day of the week it is any longer. Admittedly, this isn't helped by the fact that that I allow work to spill over into weekends, and indeed I just got back a quizzical "Can this wait until Monday" email after firing off a technical question to the development team this morning.

[[Jen and meself have concocted an all-purpose phrase for the general confusion: "What time is it? What day is it? Where is the dog?"...]]

I thought I recognised that riff. ...Stuart Maconie and Mark Riley are playing Traffic's 'Mr Fantasy' on Radio 6 as I type. I may have to post that up on Radio Winston sometime. They played 'Long Shot Kick de Bucket' by The Pioneers yesterday (it took us a while to remember who it was, and I confess I had to resort to James Wragg's invaluable little "Now Playing On..." website - jameswragg.com), so I'm looking forward to your planned piece on The Pioneers, The Ethiopians and The Melodians.

[[As I write (on June 20th), I'm not sure that particular column will get done this time, as research-heavy as it needs to be and possibly subject to bloat since I started to wonder whether I should include the Heptones as well...]]

[You'll be pleased to note that a little Windows Defender pop up has announced that *This Here*... does not have a virus. It should, however, still observe responsible social distancing.]

I'm still trying to disentangle "Fifth Saturday on the previous Thursday", later moved to Fridays when I got my days off changed to Friday and Saturday", which has the same disconcerting effect on my sense of time as waking to Radio 4 announcer introducing "last Sunday's Farming

Today this Week" at 6.30 am on a Saturday morning. (As if even the concept of 6.30 on a Saturday morning wasn't disconcerting enough. Bloody dawn chorus.)

[[The party planning did get a bit wacky, definitely. In bygone days, the Vegrants (prop. A Katz) had socials on the first and third Saturdays of the month (and perhaps still do), so we came up with the idea of having a bash at ours whenever there was a fifth Saturday in the month, four times a year or so. Since I started doing the taxi gig, I was first on a Saturday-Wednesday schedule, so any partying would have to be done on a Thursday, although we stuck to the "whenever there's a fifth Saturday in the month" schedule. This did indeed get moved up to Fridays when I got my days off changed...]]

Thank you, **Leigh Edmonds**, for your kind comments on both the FAAN Letterhack Award and on the part of my letter in TH#28 about the experience of being in lockdown, though I feel I should pick you up for your comment at the end about "Jerry Kaufman and I came equal first of the losers." Having seen how sensitive the ranking is to the position of just one or two votes either way, I can say that while it is obviously nice to be Topp, just seeing your name in that list among other people you admire (and in my case, rather blatantly copy) and voted for yourself is always a buzz. So, no losers. A lucky First among Equals perhaps, or perhaps a case of 'Muggin's turn'.

[[Totally agree. There aren't often that many runaway wins (although dedicated psephologists (C Brialey) may know better), especially when the voter total is low. As you say, there aren't any "losers" - it's all about the 'boo...]]

"Write shorter letters". Where's the fun in that? The truth is I am probably incapable of such brevity. Even my work emails turn in to short essays (this is not actually a good thing when you need to explain something concisely and clearly).

As for lockdown, I am rather taking to it, at least as far as work goes. I still work far too long hours, though, as the laptop is always there, from the moment I get up to the close of day, rather than shut away in an office locker at the far end of an hour and a bit bus journey and walk into work and left there when I come home. Despite that I am so not missing the daily commute and I'm rather hoping the experience of working remotely from home might set a precedent for more fluid work arrangements when we ease lockdown restrictions. Vikki, I think, rather likes this new arrangement. At least I'm home for mealtimes, which was always an issue when my arrival home was dependent on

late or cancelled buses, the traffic on the A40, and (more than once) two large lorries playing Mexican stand-off in the middle of the toll bridge at Swinford, neither willing, nor able, to back down to let the other pass.

Like **David Cockfield**, we started to watch the first episode of the BBC adaptation of Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses* rather on spec but got hooked into watching the whole thing which despite a few inconsistencies worked rather well. I rather liked the idea of having a different version of Britain with a different history and religion rather than just a straight inversion. The main difference from *Romeo and Juliet* was that in Shakespeare Juliet was the brighter and less naive of the pair. That part, and Sephy's apparent inability to see what was going on around her, didn't work so well and started to annoy me after a while.

[TH...30]

I just want to say that I love **Ulrika's** wonderfully cute vampire squid illo on page 4.



We were watching a David Attenborough program on the ocean deeps during the week that had images of creatures just as weird and strange as this. Can't remember when I first saw a film clip of an actual vampire squid. Certainly long enough ago that I remember it being recorded to a VHS cassette, probably in the 1990s. Unfortunately we no longer have that tape, but the VHS box still works as we proved the other weekend by running through a pile of old music tapes (Jeff Beck at Ronnie Scott's, Page and Plant, Muse, Arcade Fire)

[[I'm not sure where else anyone would find "actual vampire squid" and "Jeff Beck" in the same paragraph. Maybe a Lester Bangs review?...]]

So in response to your comment to **David Redd**, I'm typing this into AOL on one screen with the PDF of TH30 on the other. This is only possible because I'm using the laptop from work which has a docking station for an additional monitor. At least one of my colleagues has worked out how to connect three monitors using the additional HDMI port, but this - like a lot of things to do with computer hardware - is a bit beyond me. Plus we only have a couple of old knackered 15 inch (non widescreen) VGA monitors, which are not much use to man or beast ("nor beast"?), these days. Where was I? Oh yes. Locs. I don't actually like writing in the margins of fanzines, so often I'll scribble comments onto post it notes [doesn't that look funny when you write it down - and 'Post Its' looks even odder] or on the back of whatever I might be using as a bookmark: a bus ticket, Co-op till receipt, or the literal back of an envelope. (I hope **Chuck**

Connor noticed and appreciated the entirely gratuitous use of the Oxford comma back there.) Unfortunately, given that my miniscrawl handwriting is something that would have challenged even the late and much-missed Steve Sneyd, it is often indecipherable by the time I get round to actually responding,

I know that Adobe Reader allows you to add and save comments and markups (and even signatures) to a PDF file, and that would seem a natural solution but I haven't really taken to it. Possibly because I switch between reading issues of TH at the computer and on the tablet, and a lot of the time scrolling, never mind annotating, a PDF file proves a serious challenge for my ancient bargain bin Android 4 tablet.

So most of the time I just end up winging it. Like this.

The other answer to Dave Redd's question of course is that you fire up a blank page on the computer, write "Dear <insert name>, Many thanks for the copy of <insert title>", and then stare at the page waiting for inspiration to strike. After 10 minutes or so, give up and wander out into the back garden for a cigarette where you compose the perfect opening sentence in your head. Finish cigarette and come back upstairs and sit yourself in front of the computer to type it out - and realise you have completely forgotten it and so clumsily and painfully mistype your way though something that seems woefully mangled and ill-formed by comparison.

This method, I find, also works for book reviews and apa comments.

Vikki then comes up and types out an entire eight page apa contribution in one half hour sitting.

From: johnsila32@gmail.com

June 7

John Nielsen Hall writes:

I don't know if it has made it to your desert fastness yet, but in a spirit of innovation and to cheer the masses during lockdown, you can now get Peanut Butter flavoured Marmite. At least, you can over here. I haven't tried it myself, as I have never been that fussed on Peanut Butter, and I tend to resent the way manufacturers of comestibles these days mess with the basic concept of products that people have bought for years. I mean, Mars Bars have become inedible.

[[I did see the peanut butter and Marmite combo on the inevitable FBE, but haven't seen it over here yet. It's one of those

things that I'd rather make meself in the proportions I like and not someone else's idea of what they should be. I'm not fond of peanut butter desserts or candies, the only way I eat it is on toast with (regular) butter and Marmite. Speaking of which, last trip to the International Market I got an upside-down squeeze jar, supposedly containing a bit more than the usual glass one. Fuckin' thing's not lasted as long as the other one would have, seems to me...]]

Got to get going with the next VT, though it seems it may be a game with diminishing returns, since only you and **Keith Freeman** (I think) loded the last ish, and I have upset **Pat Charnock** again. Perhaps instead of this farting around, I really should get on with a serious fanzine, the successor to *Motorway Dreamer*, but I really don't know what to do with it.

[[You know I've been enjoying Vita Transplantare, and I wouldn't stress much if you only get a couple of locs, as quick as they're coming out - I'd have guessed you're getting feedback ITB? Maybe not? A Motorway Dreamer sequel would be well-received round here an'all...]]

No footy. Oh Goody!

[[Oh dear, it's back...]]

From: chuck.connor@gmx.co.uk

June 7

Chuck Connor writes:

West Ham Irons – West Ham were originally founded on 29 June 1895, and played as Thames Ironworks (aka The Irons) until 5 July 1900, when they changed their name to West Ham United. And I thought you were a football fan?

[[Sorry, I've been following Watford FC since 1881...]]

The expression 'Iron' as in Iron Hoof was also prominent in Thank U Very Much by the Scaffold – "Thank you very much for the Aintree Iron" – a reference to Brian Epstein when he was the Beatles manager and Mike McCartney was in the Scaffold. Mike wrote the song.

[[Not according to McCartney himself. It's been suggested by others that the phrase either refers to the iron railings at the racecourse, or a pub on the corner of a part of the city which when viewed from above is shaped like an iron...]]



From: jakaufman@aol.com

June 9

Jerry Kaufman writes:

Yes, just keep them coming. This one was low and inside, so I swung and missed.

I'm sorry we missed your Fifth Saturday, but we were both feeling rather blue and inert that day. We're better now.

I think your plan for the FAAN Awards is coming along nicely.

Your answer to **Leigh Edmonds'** idea about little, middle, and big fanzine categories is right. I can certainly think of zines that started as "ensmalled" but soon expanded through middle-sized and then blew up into big genzines. I can also think of large zines that that included small half-numbered issues in their runs.

[[Quite so. Page count isn't even a good indicator, since it depends on font size and formatting - you may have noticed that, for example, the text in BEAM #15 was a little more compressed than in previous issues, which reduced the page count (and the printing cost). To continue with personal examples, BEAM #1 had 26 pages (a count equalled by This Here... #27) whereas the last three issues (13-15) have been 76, 68 and 64 pp respectively. There's no simple way to draw the lines, especially to define what falls in the "middle"...]]

Chuck Connor, in his long letter, doubts that "many reading this will actually remember Mae Strelkov." Well, Chuck, I not only remember her but met her on one of her trips to the US. I was part of the group that raised money to bring her here. (The group was started and spearheaded by Susan Wood.) I don't recall anyone decrying her fanzine efforts, though if Chuck remembers such, I won't argue. Most of the people I knew were impressed by her efforts in hekto (considering that she had to make her own jelly), her use of color, and her folksy, eccentric opinions and obsessions.

Your backpage photo of Eve Graham is of her at age 77? Hard to believe - so I'm guessing either the photo or the woman has had a lot of work done to it.

[[The photo was taken from the webpage with details of her 2020 tour dates (now in abeyance, of course). Draw your own conclusions...]]

From: mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

June 13

Mark Plummer writes:

I know it's been at least 14 minutes since *TH...#30* arrived here and so I probably have at most 17 minutes to get in a reply before *TH...#31* lands. I'd better not hang around.

Skipping to somewhere near the end, you "ask how other correspondents put their locs together."

I was for many years a dedicated printer of efanazines. I can't recall when and why I stopped, but I think a lot of it was that I became increasingly conscious of just how much paper we have in this house combined with the reality that I was unlikely to re-read many of the fanzines in question. Truthfully -- and I'm not putting *TH...* in this category -- there were a few that I was diligently printing with no real intention of reading them once. Getting an iPad helped too, as it allowed me to more easily read fanzines electronically, in something approaching the paper experience.

So now I open *This Here...* in the books app on the iPad. I almost certainly skim it immediately, but try to maintain a discipline of not reading it until I'm in a position to write to you fairly soon afterwards, because the reality is that if I don't act quickly I probably won't act at all and indeed will have forgotten what I was going to say. I don't make notes.

Then at some point I'll move to my desktop PC and write from there, referring back to the fanzine on the PC and relying on my memory with the prompt of re-skimming the fanzine for what I wanted to say.

I know this is imperfect.

[[I don't have any comment or value judgement on people's different loccing methods, but I'm finding everyone's methods interesting...]]

So what did I want to say? Well, your FAAn Plaan seems mostly sensible, I think. I do wonder about the whole special publication thing, whether there are really enough such publications to justify a category. Last year there certainly were, especially thanks to all the volumes coming out from Dave's TAFF ebooks, but this year? I mean, I know we're not even half way through yet, but still.

[[There's more than you might think, for example Tommy Ferguson did two for his Corflu 50 visit. If there is a criticism of the category, it might be that there'll be a prohibitive favorite for the award in any given year - Jacq Monahan's 'Same Planet, Different World' TAFF Trip report and Dan Steffan's 'The Mota Reader' both come immediately to mind of recent times. This year it's likely to be the final ish of 'Outworlds' (with an accompanying addendum) being put together by Jeanne Bowman, Rich Coad and Pat Virzi...]]

My only real question, and I think this is only about phraseology, concerns your explication of the "80/20 principle". You say that "a genzine will have 80% or so of its content provided by multiple contributors other than the editor(s) whereas with a perzine the reverse would be observable." So if it's (roughly) 80% or more external contributors it's a genzine and if it's (roughly) 80% or more editor-written it's a perzine. And if it's somewhere in between? I make Banana Wings #76 about 75% external which I accept may be close enough to count as "80% or so" but I suspect there have been other issues where the external

content is lower despite it being unquestionably a genzine. I think what you mean is that if it's no more than 20% or so external contributors it's a perzine and otherwise it's a genzine. I know, picky picky. I should say, by the way, that aside from this I think the 80/20 principle is a reasonable way of doing it.

[[And that, ladeez and ge'men, is the memo from the Department of the Blindingly Fuckin' Obvious that I needed to get. I've noticed (and have been attempting to correct) my tendency to invoke zero-sum arguments, when the realities aren't always that straightforward, and I'm also somewhat influenced by (believe it or not!) G Gordon Liddy, a bloke whom I disagreed with politically but admired his intellect, him having had the benefit of a Jesuit education. Liddy's contention, particularly with slogans, was to state that the opposite of any given statement has to make actual sense for the cardinal contention to be valid - this is why I avoid using descriptors such as "pro-life" or "pro-choice", since their direct opposites ("anti-"...) are farcical.

That might seem off on a bit of a tangent, but it's been an almost given part of my stylistic laziness that I'll use both reductio and what we might call "the implication of opposites" more than I should. Thus, by (correctly, I would suggest) defining a perzine by the Pareto metric to be 80% or so by the editor (excluding locs), that should not have implied (or have been stated) that a genzine is therefore 80% other contributors. Other faneds have also queried 80/20 as the genzine contributor split without realizing what I now have (thanks to you), that the perzine definition is the "valid" one, and there's a blurry bit between that and something with material by divers hands. So, simply enough, rather than slap a dodgy number on it, the definition of a genzine for categorization purposes is pretty much "not a perzine". It's an overdone and dreary comparison, but "Like porn, we know what it is when we see it". I'll probably expand on this in future columns (as millions more flee, no doubt), but I've already mentioned the more subjective qualities of intent and content as category definers...]]

I think you're right in classing *Lulzine* as a fanzine rather than a website because it does have distinct issues, even if it doesn't exist in a form that transferable to a print copy if you're so minded.

[[This also isn't either/or, I would now argue. Lulzine could be voted for as a website (on the basis of its design, presentation, whatever values voters might apply) but also as a fanzine, presumably on the basis of content. What I wouldn't like to see is voters picking one category for it at the exclusion of the other. I happen to agree with you that it's a fanzine, and it's in that category that I'd be considering it for my own ballot, since I'm not fond of the "website" category anyway. Others may differ...]]

And a very minor observation. I think it's entirely likely that there are loads of unpublished Rotsler cartoons out there. We never received any, but it's my understanding he was given to sending out batches of the things and logically some of those ended up with people who didn't publish any more but who eventually passed them on -- or indeed may yet do so.

[[On that basis it's quite feasible that some long-lost work could be voted on as "first published" in the qualifying year. It would be clunky (and unseemly) to modify the qualifying description to "first publication by someone not actually dead"...]]

I also like that proposed voting model, allowing you to place something first and then three things equal second; or, and as you say, effectively ranking three things equal first by not awarding a first place. That seems to best fit what I'd like to be able to do in voting. You could have designed it for my benefit.

[[Your approval is gratefully noted. It's something of a compromise solution but, as you say, does provide voter options in between a fully-ranked ballot and a fully unranked one...]]

What else? You note the recent death of Steve Priest of Sweet. They were very much my band back in the day -- I was nine years old when "Block Buster!" came out -- and I remember Priest's appearance and manner as, er, striking although I can't claim it was in any way inspirational.

Mostly I thought I would say something about him here after I accidentally liked and then couldn't work out how to unlike a comment on the Guardian obituary where somebody felt moved to remark "Who?"

The big news here, in a very localised way, is that our local bar has started serving draft beer in two-pint growlers, delivered straight to the door. A small edge back towards normality.

From: fabficbks@aol.com

June 13

Bob Jennings writes:

Sorry I missed sending along a few thots about the previous two issues, but things have been very busy around here. It's an ill wind indeed that blows nobody good. Mail order book selling in the time of the plague has been very good for me. My weekly unit sales volume has more than tripled and the sales continue to go up. I am busier now than I have been since the last century, literally on the go from 8:00 in the morning until ten o'clock in the evening when I haul myself to bed at so I can get up the next morning at 6:30 in order to be the very first person in line at the Post Office when it opens at 8:00. Free time has disappeared from my life, and so has all that time I had hoped could be devoted to fanac.

The lady who opens the post office each morning is the only human being I come in contact with the entire day. The warehouse where I have my book inventory housed is mostly shut down, but even when things were popping I rarely encountered another person there anyway. Every now and then I have to buy gas, and food, otherwise being isolated has been remarkably easy.

It's hard to complain when so much merchandise is turning into money, but it sure keeps me hopping. I have no time for much of anything these days, and even my cherished two hours of reading time each night has disappeared in the rush to keep things going. To make matters even more interesting, ebay has been offering a ton of free listings to prop up their business, and I can hardly say no to offers like that.

[[Meanwhile I'm snoozing on a cab stand somewhere...]]

It is amazing how much things have changed and how fast they continue to change. I used to check the internet news services a couple or three times a day. Now, something dramatic, unique, absolutely remarkable happens every two hours or so. One of the most dramatic shifts I can recall came a few weeks back. On Thursday evening all the experts agreed that the only people who needed to wear a facemask in public were people who were suffering from colds or other illness. Friday morning, **everybody** should be wearing a mask, starting immediately!!!

Never has the ineptitude and stupidity of Caligula Trump been more in evidence. Unable to comprehend anything beyond his own obsessive narcissism, he believes the entire coronavirus epidemic was designed specifically to politically embarrass him. As of this date 2,025,000 US citizens have been officially diagnosed with COVID-19, and over 115,000 have died from the disease, figures that most medical experts believe are on the low side. You have to wonder how many of those lives could have been saved if there had been a real President in the White House instead of a lying, incompetent boob. I hope the voters remember their friends and families who have died when the election comes around in November, and then vote as tho their lives depended on it; because this time, it really does.

It was good to hear that you are surviving the plague and are in good health. I'm also glad to hear you are gainfully employed again and bringing in the buckos. The slow reopening process here in Massachusetts has been pretty orderly. This state has consistently been in the third or fourth tier with the most coronavirus cases and deaths in the country, so people around here take this menace very seriously. Everybody wears a face mask, and at least tries to keep social distancing (altho in places like grocery stores that is difficult, to say the least).

[[The re-employment actually means bringing in a lot less "buckos" than I was drawing on Unemployment, thanks to the \$600 a week COVID bonus. Nevada state rules are that if

you've been offered a job (or offered your job back) but refuse it, Unemployment is notified and you're cut off, so no choice really. We were getting an hourly wage (unheard of in the taxi industry) also because of a Govt program, but that ran out this week, so it now remains to be seen whether I can claim due to loss of earnings. Needless to say the dosh coming in at the moment isn't enough to live on, but we sensibly socked away the stimulus money...]]

We had Phase One reopening recently, and the first thing I did was get a haircut. I was beginning to feel like one of those hermit characters you see in magazine cartoons. Barber/beauty/salon/nail places are allowed to serve customers by appointment only. I got my haircut at six in the evening. The barber was booked up from 7:00 in the morning until 9:00 that nite, but he said he wasn't complaining; he was just happy some money was finally coming in. Getting a haircut while holding a mask over your face by hand is a unique experience. The barber, by the way, had on a respirator. All the equipment was completely sanitized between customers, another new state regulation.

Everybody has to make an appointment and sign in when they arrive, and the state is theoretically supposed to inspect the ledgers to make sure they don't take any walk-in people. I elected for a real close buzz cut. I'm not trying to impress anybody, and I do not think this plague is going to disappear any time soon. With a super short cut I won't have to see the barber again for a couple of months, at least. The fewer people I come in contact with, the better. As I said before, I'm 76 years old, soon to be 77, and that's the high risk age group for dropping dead if I get COVID-19, so the fewer face-to-face encounters I have with people the better.

[[In fairly dire need of a trim meself...]]

The next thing I did was hit the laundromat. The dry cleaning/laundromat place was only going to be open from Noon to 2:00 that Sunday, but I decided I would be one of their very first customers. I almost was. My car was second in the parking lot, and shortly after the surprised attendant opened, the place filled with seven other people, all of them oldsters like myself. No problem keeping social distancing there. After loading the washers we all exited to the sunny outdoors to wait till the cycle finished up. I noted that everyone kept their face masks on even outside.

It is clear that things are never going back to the way they used to be for the human race. As it currently stands there are tons O'people unemployed in the USA, vast numbers that even tinkering with the monthly unemployment stats cannot disguise. It is like we are spiraling down toward a repeat of the Great Depression of the early 1930s, with 20 or 30% of the work force unemployed right now, and frankly, I don't know if the various state reopening plans are going to change that much.

A considerable number of businesses are going to go kaput or will be so radically changed that they might as well be

classified as something entirely new. Theaters, for example, both the movie and the live varieties, will likely never recover. Concerts and sporting events may manage to continue on, due to the fact that these types of events are mainly frequented by younger people who either have already caught the virus and survived, or believe they are never going to catch it. The portent for disaster exists in either case.

Restaurants of all types also seem like a highly endangered industry. I don't know about you, but I am not interested in sitting in close proximity to anyone until a proven reliable vaccine has been developed, and that event appears to not be something that will happen soon.

[[Restaurants here are operating at reduced capacity to allow for distancing. Some have closed permanently because their margins tend to be slim, and they can't realistically continue under those conditions...]]

Retail stores of every variety are going to undergo a shift in focus. Lots of people have suddenly been forced to order a lot of their necessities on-line, and many of them are not going to immediately shift back to in-person visits to shops and stores. This will directly affect both the manufacturing and the supply chains that service retail establishments, which will invariably have a major ripple effect thru the rest of the economy.

Economic pundits are suggesting an immediate loss of 15% of the nation's gross national product and a six year recovery period. I think they are being very optimistic.

As of right now 115,000 people have definitely died from the virus in the US, and almost everyone who is not a Republican politician agrees that the true number is much higher. I suspect the death total by the time the November election rolls around will be a quarter of a million people. How many of those lives could have been saved if the nation had enjoyed effective, mature leadership? It is useless to speculate, because what we had was Caligula Trump and his Christian Fascist cronies running the country, and both the ever rising death count and the shattered economy are ample evidence of their callous incompetence. I hope and pray that the voters will turn those monsters out of office come the November election.

[[Quarter mil by November is an undercount fershure. Current projections suggest we'll top 200,000 around the beginning of August...]]

The news changes constantly, and the newest apex of public outrage in early June is the brutal murder of a black man in Minneapolis during what was supposed to be a routine investigation

and arrest. Kneeling on a man's neck and slowly strangling him to death definitely constitutes police brutality, and sad to say, there has been quite a lot of police brutality both obvious and overt in this new century.

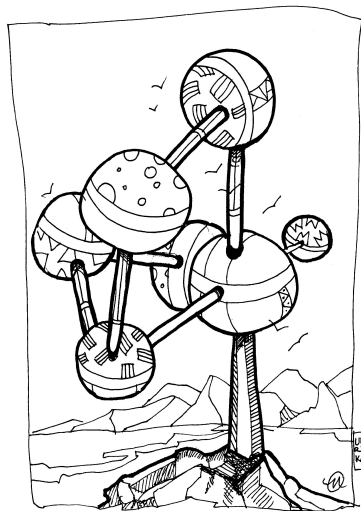
Someone made a point on one of the network news streams a few years back that the defense department shoveling off tons of surplus military hardware to local police departments was having a dehumanizing effect on the local forces. These are not simple rifles and pistols. No, they are handing over sophisticated highly lethal weapons specifically designed to efficiently kill heavily armed enemy opponents. Do the local police need mobile armored tanks, or battle armor with built in simultaneous rapid fire deployment devices capable of destroying a modern building in less than three minutes? I don't think so, and when local police get these kinds of toys they are not only tempted to use them, but their mind set shifts from the time honored "protect and serve" motto, to "slam the law-breaking scumbags any way possible." This has led to a lot of police violations of basic human rights of both suspects and innocent bystanders.

Here's another thot on that matter. If it were not for modern cell phones and other recording devices capable of immediately taking clear focus pictures of events, would the police even be held responsible for this new wave of heavy handed tactics? Not to mention YouTube and social media where those photos and videos could be posted for immediate viewing.. I doubt it, and even in the face of all the photographic evidence being logged, as well as the scores of actual eye witness accounts, it seems to me that it is going to be very difficult to change the mind-set of a goodly number of police officers. Can it be done? I hope so. It seems to me we are about forty or fifty years overdue to rectify this situation.

Well, enuf of the real world. I personally have had enuf of the year 2020, and wish it would just please rush to its conclusion without any more horrific surprises. Yeah, I know, more delusional thinking.

[[They don't call him "Cheerful Bob" for nothing. Oh, wait...]]

Your discussion of the upcoming FAAn ballots was mostly sensible and reasonable. My only (very tiny) cravat would be the definition of genzine/ perzine. A problem might be that genzines can shift to perzines on an issue by issue basis and back again due to circumstances beyond the editor/ publisher's control. If the assorted people who promised to send in material come thru then the genzine is indeed 80% multiple contributors and 20% editorial content. However, if, as I can personally attest, people don't come thru on time, then you can wind up with an issue that is 80%



editor written and 20% material from other folk. Or sometimes the stuff the editor writes takes up most of the fanzine. This has happened to my fanzine *Fadeaway* because I have written some very long articles that took up most of the issue. Then, getting really technical, if 80% of a fanzine's issue happens to be made up of letters sent in by readers, does that turn a perzine into a genzine?

[[The metric excludes locs, but see my reply to Mark Plummer above...]]

Not that I think this is going to be much of a problem. I think if a fanzine editor decides s/he is producing a genzine, then that's the category it ought to be listed in. If the individual thinks s/he is producing a perzine, then even if 95% of issues suddenly become short articles and con reports, that the mag should still be categorized with the perzines. And even without your pithy comments, yes, I'm sure I am completely over-thinking the situation.

[[I also agree that a faned's self-categorization of their ish is definitive...]]

Not sure I would consider photography as fanart. While it's nice to see photos in some situations, I don't think with today's self focusing/mostly automatic cameras that there is any great artistic creativity going into most photos. Manipulative photoshopped material might barely qualify, but not straight photography. If you believe there is a whole lot of photo work being embodied in fanzines these days (I don't), then create a separate category for photo work specifically, otherwise please leave the fanart category for genuine artists.

[[As many people, I suspect, would disagree with you on photography than might agree. Artists work in different media. Now I admittedly can't think of any photographers I might give a voting nod to since the sad losses of both Dave Romm and Al Johnston, but Alan White is one who incorporates photography in his work, and Craig Smith's photoshopping is well-known and admired...]]

I look forward to your comments on getting more publicity for the awards. The main problem with the whole business is that way too few people vote, and I'm convinced quite a lot of people in the hobby don't know the FAAn Awards even exist. Getting the word out and increasing fan participation across the entire breath of the hobby seems more important to me than fiddling with the category definitions (alho, giving the eternal fan fascination with nitpicking everything, I suppose this is a superfluous consideration).

Lettercol comments about music were of interest, but didn't dent my pre-established mind set. People like what they like musically for purely personal reasons. In past days I was always willing to try out new and different types of music, but I am much less inclined to do that now that I'm an old coot. At least until things calm down a little I'm restricting

such moments as I can allocate for music listening to the types of music that I know and appreciate. Exploring the outer rim of experimental sound patterns is not something I'm prepared to bother with these days.

I seem to be running really long, so I'll hold additional thots for the next *This Here...* issue which should be out, what, day after tomorrow? Wednesday nite? Sometime very soon, I'm sure.

From: dave_redd@hotmail.com

June 13

David Redd writes:

Radio Winston. You'll gather that for me it all went wrong somewhere in the 80s, when CDs and rap came in, and the universality of hip-hop these days doesn't extend to Redstock Lane. I've found the last four decades a let-down after the brief punk/post-punk promise faded out. (High point of "promise": the Specials' "Ghost Town"?) The early-80s flowering for me included our aforementioned Rezillos, Positive Noise, Comsat Angels, biggies like the Human League, one-offs from say the Cherry Boys or whoever. All welcome after a decade of Wurzels, Wombles, Laurel & Hardy, Sex Pistols and Smurfs. There goes my street cred again, but never had much anyway. Post 80s "likes" have included Pulp, Alisha's Attic, Lleuwen... but basically I'm on the old vinyl.

Got a lot of scribbles around the print of your FAAn piece. I drew little trial voting forms beginning "2pts / 1 pt / 1 pt / 1 pt" or ending with the instruction "Check ONE box for bonus point". No, all too complicated. Good luck. But for clarity "Best Website" fits the bill perfectly. Why am I still worrying about all this when it's not my business? Because the continuing serial has too many cliff-hangers? Because you write entertainingly? Because I have incurable OCD about the wrong things? Because I like to see any democratic process chivvied into becoming fit for purpose, unlike 2016? Meanwhile, distracted by the FAAns, I've let TAFF drop off my radar, sorry.

[[I'll maintain that the topic is your business. It's more accurate to say that the decision on how the awards are structured isn't up to you (or anyone else apart from me and Rob Jackson this go), but the opinions of you and anyone else with a passing interest can and should influence the outcome. I don't think you mean 2016 as the target of a lack of "fit for purpose", though? The interminable ongoing discussions here are, I might suggest, working better at getting to a hopefully continuing format for the FAAns than my previous more clandestine "discussion group" which ended up with some ructions as well as me ceding the admin gig to Mike Dobson. The main reason for that was a fundamental policy disagreement, something that isn't occurring this time. My initial concept for the ballot form

has four slots per category with the first one starred as being the potential recipient of the bonus point...]]

Coronavirus talk here: massive economic hit, must get back to work soon, but still extreme caution in Wales, need for face masks etc. (Is a silk scarf folded over disposable tissue paper an effective 3-layer mask? Apparently yes.) With increasing travel the roadside litter is back; Costa and McDonalds joined by discarded face masks. I don't want their diseases on my verge.

On health, I discovered some 1930s Mexican health precautions in *High Up in Mexico*, a travel book by O A Merritt-Hawkes. An army general's office had a notice: "As an hygienic measure, there is no shaking of hands." How sensible, she thought. Other travel advice came when touring in an army car: "There are two rifles on the floor, and in the pocket are a dozen automatics, loaded. If we are attacked please sit on the floor and shoot, either through the window or by opening the door just a little, a very little. There are no bandits but some of the peasants who have been given land, prefer robbing to ploughing." No wonder Mrs Merritt-Hawkes decided against simply hiring a taxi.

Great letters in *This Here...* include **Chuck Connor's** epic. Briefly, I'll repeat that Mae Strelkov still deserves a fanthology - I recall her later letters in *Busswarble* - and I'm glad to know from Chuck that other fannish folk (e.g. **Shep Kirkbride**, **John D Owen** etc) are still around.

Mark Plummer: 4 hours on Zoom would be beyond me. I tried an hour of a Zoom "coffee morning" last Saturday and that set off the migraine again, rainbow zigzags before the eyes. Goodbye Zoom.

All that and slang notes too. How educational. We did of course have "Hampton Wick" used in full as a cod classic-serial title by TV's Two Ronnies. The radio Goon Show trialled a short-lived character called "Hugh Jampton". And many years ago I noticed the term "Hampton" come sort of full circle, in construction language at least, with the arrival of earthmoving contractor Dick Hampton.

[[From memory only, I recall the Goon Show character as being "Hugh Jumpton". I'll defer to Goons enthusiast Hal O'Brien for a definitive ruling...]]

Don't recall *BEAM 7*, but looked it up after your comment. I did miss a lot of fanac around that time. (Being a pillar of society I was organising church tower repairs, and meanwhile evicting a mother and children from the bungalow I then owned. I rather enjoyed being evil Sir Jasper, relatively amicable though it was. These days both the property and its sale proceeds are long gone.) No comments on "Fiftieth Fandom"? Shame. It raised chuckles here although I'm sure I missed some of the references. Perhaps the percentage of readers very familiar with fandom and Sellar & Yeatman was too small?

BEAM 7 had a mention of H P Lovecraft taking a lady to see his favourite graveyard. That's our boy. Also, I now realise that the contents pages of every *BEAM* have been in colour, not the b&w of my print *BEAM 1*, so my joy seeing "Unusual Suspects" on-screen in full glory is only what everyone else has experienced all along. Typical.

[[The first two issues (which had extensive print runs) were done with color covers and grayscale interior, because they cost a bundle as it was, that first ish being about \$1,000 - I did have a bit of money back then. The efanazines files were always full color. We started back doing small print runs mostly for contributors with (I think) issue 9, again with grayscale interiors. It's taken me a minute to actually realize that the filesize scrunch I'd been doing significantly reduced the quality, whereas whatever eldrich magic Magister Burns invokes doesn't seem to have the same deleterious effects. I finally clocked that I needed to retain the unreduced file, and that's what now gets sent out, including to the printers, of course, who do a fab job in glorious technicolor throughout...]]

From: leighedmonds01@gmail.com

June 14

Leigh Edmonds writes:

This Here ... 30 was a jolly good read with a nice long and convivial letter column. It makes me wonder about this business of defining different kinds of frnz because the front bit of this issue is a perzine and the back half is more like the letter column of a genzine. Despite your dismissal of my suggestion to define fanzines by their page count I still think that if it is good enough for the Hugos it might be good enough for us. It is a simplistic solution, true, but it is also more elegant. As for the question you raise about faneds publishing different sized ishs, there is a simple solution for that too. All somebody (probably you) has to do is add up the number of pages published in a year and divide it by the number of issues. There's no room for argument over definitions there, but perhaps I'm being too simplistic and taking some of the fun out of the debate. (There is, of course, the difficulty that not everyone sees every fanzine that is published - I was alarmed to see 69 fanzines reviewed in the latest *The Fanzine Dump* - but let's not quibble on what could be an elegant solution to the problem.)

[[See my reply to Jerry Kaufman's loc, but to restate the obvious problem, Hugo definitions are by word count, not page count, and a hypothetical zine could (say) double or halve its page count by changing font size, layout, illo size and other factors. I also reject the quite bonkers idea that the loccol somehow defines the nature of the ish. Like any faned, I'm obviously going to be well pleased by a good level of reader response, and while that of itself ought to be a significant factor in a publication's relative "worth" (reader

engagement, as I've said over and over, being our basic currency of 'boo) it doesn't define the body content and intent. Grabbing an example off the zine pile, Fred Lerner's FAPazine Lofgeornost 139 contains less than two pages of Fred and six pages of reader response. Given that APazines generally would be considered to be perzines (as this one is), where does this fit into your philosophy? You might also consider Joe and Lisa Major's Alexiad, which I've always considered a perzine (neither Joe nor Lisa has disputed this yet), although it usually contains contributions from others, in the April 2020 ish (#110) these amount to a little less than four pages out of the 14 of body text (around 28%) with six pages of locs completing the ish. Far from being "simplistic", your page count method is not so much a can of worms as a hovercraft full of eels...]]

Like many people these past few months I've been suffering from the same problem as Jennifer, not knowing what day it is but my other problem is with our cats rather than her dog. The little buggers are still finding new places to hide and new mischief to get up to. We have to keep the toilet paper in cupboards that the little tikes have yet to learn how to open so that they are not turned into piles of ripped up fluff. Recently, however, and without thinking about it, I dumped a new packet of toilet paper rolls in the toilet without hiding it, with the usual results. Just as well the toilet paper shortage is over, this stuff was only good for clogging up the vacuum cleaner.

I know it's Monday because my mobile phone tells me so. It also tells me that we on the east coast of Australia are still living in the am. So that's something else that my mobile is good for. It overcomes, to some extent, the problem of knowing what day of the week and date of the month it is but I really only need to know that when I have to reconnect with the outside world on occasions, which isn't often. The other thing it does is go off every morning to remind me to take my morning pills, which I usually forget otherwise. This has caused some consternation in this household because I am not in the habit of carrying my mobile around with me so if I am in the other end of the house when it goes off Valma hears it in the bedroom before I do. If I happen to have the rotten thing on the recharger as well one has to reach around my chair to turn it off, and it will be some time before Valma stops reminding me about how sore her stubbed toe is as a result of banging into my chair. As a result it might be some time before I forget to take my phone with me as I potter around the house.

This reminds me to comment on David Cockfield's comments about problems caused in his home by water leaking in from upstairs. I'm sure that that kind of thing would add a great deal of stress to this period of enforced isolation and this made me think that perhaps one of the reasons why the isolation has not been particularly stressful here is because we have plenty of room to rattle around in

and not very much intrusion into our privacy from outside, apart from bloody leaf blowers because it's autumn here and some people don't seem able to let leaves lie where they fall. I cannot imagine what it would be like to be stuck in one of the little apartments that they are building in skyscraper blocks in central Melbourne or those rows of little terrace houses that seem so common in British cities. It is understandable why so many people want to get out and do stuff to escape from their little prisons but, from my much more comfortable home, I think it's a bad idea. But it's something we're going to have to live with.

[[Terraced housing is an historical feature of the UK, primarily the homes of working-class families (long before tower blocks). My grandfather lived in what might have been considered a step-up property, the end of terrace house at 14 Verulam Road, Hitchin. No inside toilet or bath, though...]]

While we're on the topic of the plague, the various mentions of face masks makes me wonder about cultural differences. It seems from what your contributors are saying that face masks are considered a highly desirable item of clothing where they are, but not apparently where I live. I got a face mask from somewhere and wore it out one time when I had to pick up a script from the doctor. When I fronted up I was asked why I was wearing a mask, was there something wrong with me. This did not encourage me to use the mask again. Later, when I went to have the COVID test I turned up at the testing center to be given a mask and told to go and wait in the car. After a while somebody dressed in full PPE came and escorted me into the center where they did the test. As I was leaving I was invited to toss my nice new mask into the rubbish bin with the hundreds of used masks already there. Out to do my shopping last week there was nobody in the supermarket wearing a face mask. This just goes to show that we are a hardy and perhaps foolhardy lot in Australia, but it might also be because we don't take the plague very seriously or personally. Some figures I saw today said that in the UK the death rate per million of population was 613, in the US it was 368 and in Australia it was 4. That means that I don't know anyone here who has died of or even contracted the virus so it's just an idea to me, not a physical reality.

[[Starting today (June 26, as I write), public mask-wearing is mandatory in Nevada...]]

The question is, why have we done so much better than our English speaking friends? It can't be the quality of our leaders, who are all clowns. I suspect that at least our clown listened to what the medical experts had to say while others did not. But let's think of happier things.

You ask us to say how we read *This Here ...* I print it out because I find that reading on the page is a different experience to reading on the screen. One is a sort of almost coherent experience in which I read along lines from left to right and from the top of the page to the bottom. On the

screen my reading is much more chaotic and I find it hard to understand what is written very well. The advantage of printing it out is also that I feel free to scribble in the margins about things I might want to comment on, which is something I would *never* do if I'd got a printed copy from you. At the end when I've finished reading, and writing (if the fnz was interesting enough), I throw the printed pages in my recycling box, knowing that I still have the original pdf on my hard drive if I ever need to go back to it. Sometimes I will jump around in composing a letter and cobble together a paragraph based on some of my notations from different parts of the issue, sometimes not. Not today, apparently.

I think I like Radio Winston because it is educational. I've missed out on a great deal of 'popular' music and you are helping me to fill in some of the gaps. Not so successfully this time. For example, I'd never heard of the Australian band Avion (French for 'aeroplane', or 'airplane' if you live in the US, but only a fraction of the quality of the original Airplane) so I looked up 'White Noise' on You Tube and got through a few tracks before I lost interest. To begin I thought I was listening to Icehouse and then, after a couple of tracks, an inferior quality imitation. Since you'd suggested some more music with a link I tried it out too. Not much better. Over produced and lacking edge if you ask me, but that was the 1980s for you.

[[I'm playing the 80s collections Chuck Connor sent as background music while I fanac. It's mostly better than silence (and easy to keep running). Occasionally I'll take a bit more notice of what's playing when it's either actually a bit dire or, in the case of Avion, rather likeable...]]

Perhaps I wasn't hearing the best music of either offering. **David Redd** reminded us in his letter that even the greatest of artists can't be great all the time. There was certainly a lot of inferior Beatles tracks, particularly on albums like *The Beatles*. This judgement was demonstrated the weekend before last when the ABC classical music station ran a listener poll of their most popular Beethoven music and played bleeding chunks of each of the top 100 over the long weekend. Between 100 and about 40 there was a great deal of music that even the great Beethoven would have liked to have been forgotten and I did not enjoy listening either. Trite, dull and mundane are words that come to mind. So, should we judge artists by the complete output or only by the best of it? And who defines what it best. I'm told that there are people who like Ringo Starr and his music the best of all the Beatles. That can't be right, can it?

[[Takes all sorts...]]

Finally, one of the things I like about you writing about your life is that you've now been living long enough in the US to be comfortable, but you've still retained something of the view of the outsider so that you write about living there in a slightly different way to your native born Americans. Being

a cab driver gives you an even more novel outlook on life I reckon.

[[Having mentioned lastish that I'd pay a dollar to see Leigh in his impressive mask, he sent me this selfie and requested that the \$1 go to TAFE...]]



From: claire.fishlifter@gmail.com

July 2

Claire Brialey writes:

Forgive me, for I have sinned; it's been four issues since my last letter.

[[Ego te absolvo, dei gratia (which a few may remember was my old "S V O'Jay" signoff)...]]

There are reasons for this, including there being far too much of me in #27 and the way that everything seems to take longer during plague time. But those reasons are really excuses which just compound the sin – see also 'I haven't been getting on with my Hugo reading because I've been distracted by steampunk smut, having recently albeit belatedly got into the podcast *Vaginal Fantasy*' – and in any case the only thing about me that's catholic is my taste in reading material. So enough of such frippery and on with the argument.

This is mostly about #30 (*Marmite* and peanut butter? I might have to experiment) in an attempt to pretend to be timely, not least because the pace and scope of events in the past few months makes catching up in detail seem like a conversation from another world. After all, the last time I wrote (24 March) the UK government had just, finally, closed everything down – whereas now they're trying to open things up again (and I ask rhetorically whether, after pubs in

England have been shut for fifteen weeks, any reasonable person would decide that the best approach to all the current risks would be to open them all up on a Saturday while appealing to people's common sense...). In the meantime, it seems that over 54,000 people have died from the plague in the UK – and at least 10,000 more as an indirect result of it – and, bad though some of our current trends might be, it seems that parts of the USA are even worse. By the time you publish again in a few days, anything could have happened. Again.

[[Lightly done toast, a good splod of butter, thinly spread Marmite and a swirl of smooth peanut butter on top. Many a time this was skint dinner, containing most of the food groups except alcohol, but should be had with a large mug of strong tea...]]

So, what with the passage of time an' all, it's quite odd to look back on the discussions about the peculiar adjudication of this year's FAAn award results. Without dwelling for too long on any of that, I do want to pause for long enough to confirm that my calculations – although coming up with some slightly different numbers around the top places – concur with yours in proclaiming **Ulrika O'Brien** unequivocally deserving of the accolade of No.1 Fan Face, and **Andy Hooper** as making it to the top five along with the two of you and me and Mark. Does that mean, though, that it's actually Ulrika's face we should all be getting tattooed on our arses now?

[[No comment! <falls off chair>...]]

As a digression, I have to thank you for the way that arse tattoos are now a weekly feature of our localish fannish chat sessions (**Noel Collyer**, I suspect, thanks you less for this), and as partial recompense I leave you with the story idea of the Arse of Dorian Gray. Tattoo parlours remain closed here for the moment, which is perhaps just as well.

You'll get no argument from me about the categories or the points breakdown that you described for the FAAn awards next year, although I would argue for five rather than four voting slots in each category; share the love, and all that. I'll make up for it by taking you up on the opportunity to comment ahead of the cool kids on your No.1 Fan Face indifference. I suppose I don't have strong opinions about that award either, but I do think it does something interesting and worthwhile which it would be rather a shame to lose.

[[I'll let the Doc make the call on whether he likes five slots or four, I'm not much fussed either way, although as a small practical matter I'm not sure five slots per category would allow the printed ballot to fit on a single page, if that still matters. I'll also note here (for the rest of the readership) that Claire got a preview of this's FAAn Awards column, to which the following chunk refers. Given that I'm inevitably

going to intersperse my own remarks, I've kept this in the loccol rather than transplanting to the column itself...]]

That thing is that it helps to recognise people who Do Fanzine Stuff in a variety of ways – which isn't necessarily something that we should all aspire to, but I admire wide-ranging talent and effort when I see it. I was interested in your comment about there being a division (exacerbated by multipliers) between those who spread their activity about and those who specialise in one type of fanac, because I'd assumed that it takes a pretty determined specialist – who'll already have won their own category by an almost embarrassing margin – to feature heavily in N1FF as usually calculated. I looked back at my figures for the awards presented in 2016; the top ten finishers there give us a range of 1-5 categories (from 8 in total), with a median of 3, a mode of 3, and a mean of 3.8. Adding in the next ten makes it median 3, mode 3, mean 3.05. There was one finisher in the top ten whose votes came from one category, and three more lower down the top twenty; their votes came from the website, letterhack, special publication and fanwriter categories. (The top seven finishers, on my recalculation of this year's results, were even more broadly represented in multiple categories.) That said, I don't now think a multiplier adds anything useful.

[[I totally agree. In fact, as I suggested, a multiplier makes it worse...]]

I also don't think it makes sense to make N1FF a separate voted category, which would probably demonstrate a similar sort of implicit confusion as having a separate 'best fanzine' category did on top of the sub-divisions this year. In the case of N1FF it would be all too easy to forget about voting for 'all-round fanzine excellence' or whatever, and start voting for 'big personality in fanzine fandom'. I'm not saying that all the results would necessarily be different, but I don't see anyone arguing that there's a need for the latter category.

It would also seem to be towards the other end of the spectrum from one of your other suggestions, about a 'services to the hobby' award as in Michael Dobson's wide-ranging approach. I liked that although, accepting your point that the FAAn awards should be focused on fanzine activity, I appreciate it wouldn't really fit. A special committee award might end up being given to the same person each year, or cycling round a few very worthy toilers, or conversely – especially if it starts to accrete Rules and Structure – quite quickly diminish to a 'who hasn't had this yet' Buggins' turn. But it could also acquire a bit more of a connection to the place where a Corflu is held, and indeed lend a bit of focus to the list of thanks and recognition that any Corflu committee will want to announce. I'll be particularly interested to see what other people have to say on this.

[[Those are all persuasive arguments, tending to convince me even more that the awards should be focused on Fanzine activity specifically...]]

Instinctively, I'd keep the N1FF category and keep it as an aggregation of other votes – but perhaps without the first place bonus, which helps to broaden recognition of activity across fields without further privileging those who've already won a specific category. I might be missing a strong argument against it, but I wouldn't count general indifference as that argument!

While I'm here, I'll definitely take the opportunity to comment on your polemic. Up front, I want to say that I would obviously not accuse you, or **Andy Hooper**, or anyone else I've seen administering the awards, of doing anything as FAAn administrators to tilt the results in your favour; that's not what this is about. Personally, however, I couldn't have imagined administering the awards while remaining in contention for them. Perhaps I'm just a more delicate flower than other administrators, but I wasn't at all comfortable with the prospect of people sneering that *of course* we, or I, had won a FAAn award when I was the one counting the votes – and that's 'potentially uncomfortable' for values of 'absolutely fucking furious' (oh yes, I'm a delicate flower, all right). I don't know whether anyone would have said that but I wasn't willing to take the risk.

But that's not the only reason I stepped back. I'd wanted to be able to broaden the voting pool for the awards. I hoped that no one who already attended Corflu or had voted for the FAAn awards before would think that I would be up to anything dodgy – but what sort of impression would it give to other fanzine fans, possibly already half-convinced that Corflu and the FAAns were part of some massive clique for which they didn't have the password, if they were being invited to participate in a process that might lead to the administrator announcing an award for herself? (I failed to broaden the franchise much at all, of course, not least due to my own wilful refusal to be on FBF, which rather undermined my point. But it's the principle of the thing.)

[[I did clock, and understand at least at a brane level, your reasons for being "delicate" there, and as you know I still don't agree with them at least to the extent that I believe all the voters should care about is that ballots received are accurately and fairly counted. As often happens, though, you (and Mark) tend to make me think in more depth about this, and there's yet another blindingly obvious (once it's pointed out) pachyderm on the patio, which immediately prompted me to understand on more of a gut level where you're coming from on this. A quick look at the history of the FAAns (so these numbers might be off by one or two) tells me that Andy Hooper has won (or had a co-editorial share in) 15½ times (including one tie), and Fishlifter Enterprises have scooped 18½ (also including one tie). Given those numbers, then, yeah, it's fuckin' obvious that you might well want to recuse, although I've noted that's not something Andy ever did (as much as he's expressed that he thinks I should), waiting until after his long (and, it must be reiterated, solid)

years of admin to state that he considered many of those wins to have been "a joke". By contrast, while I've usually been in a decent placing some years for my various efforts, I've got two FAAns, the provenance of one of them (for this zine) being somewhat dubious due to category confusion, so I don't really recognize it. With no disrespect to any fanzine category winners this year (the individual categories not being subject to this problem), I've heard from more than one source a grumble that the 2020 fanzine category awards "don't count" in part because of some shoddy sums but mostly because of unclear definitions...]]

Just as significantly, I'd felt awkward in the past about casting votes for the administrator's own fan activity; I still do, in fact. If I gave them a first place vote, did it just look like I was sucking up? If I voted for them lower down, did it feel like a snub? If I didn't vote for them at all, was that because I was ruling them out myself regardless of what they wanted, or was it an even more massive snub? Should I, in fact, vote for them instead of something I enjoyed more, so as not to give them the impression that I thought their fanac was a bit shit? So I preferred not to be that elephant in the room for anyone either, and in this case I know it was appreciated by at least some voters.

[[That's criminally "delicate" in my opinion. Granted, some people may chuck names on the ballot based on some conception of their personal relationships (something else that's going to get addressed in here), but it's shurely better to make value judgements on the actual product? Oh dear, then we have to get into the "art v artist" debate...]]

I agree with you that the FAAn awards administrator, these days, is effectively a Corflu staff position. So when I was discussing this with **Nigel Rowe** for the 2016 Corflu, I made clear the basis on which I'd be doing it so that he could get someone else if he wasn't content with my approach. I'd already discussed with Mark, of course, the need to take *Banana Wings* out of contention on that basis (we both felt that we'd had a lot of recognition and one year of people needing to think a little more about the other options wouldn't hurt anyone) and it was his idea at that stage to step back himself as well. I have no problem with you still disagreeing with me, but I wouldn't do it any differently – and I want people to be clear about my rationale.

I also didn't vote myself when I was the administrator; it didn't seem compatible with being an impartial arbiter of other people's votes (and, like you, helping them if necessary to untangle what the hell they were trying to vote for and how). Having decided never to do it again saves me a massive amount of hassle, for all that I miss far too much the actual counting of votes.

[[That's one way around it. Since you brought this up, nobody asked me about my vote in 2018, or even (as far as I know) alluded to the possibly that I could theoretically have

influenced an outcome by fiddling my own ballot. For the record (and I'll do this again) I recorded my own votes in an email (hence date and time-stamped) before the official ballot was sent out...]]

Your 'instant runoff voting', which **Leigh Edmonds** knows as 'preferential voting', is here called the 'alternative vote' system; at least, it is when used in public life although not when we manage not to get too confused by it in voting for fan funds and Hugo awards. Nick Clegg, sometime Deputy Prime Minister and current FBF apologist, bungled an opportunity to substitute this for the UK's foolish first-past-the-post arrangements when he brought the Liberal Democrats into coalition with the Conservatives in 2010, and so lost a referendum on it the following year when disengaged Brits were easily persuaded by the Tory spin machine that they were too thick to be arsed to understand it. (Little bit of politics.)

Finally on this topic, one brief correction-cum-clarification to a comment you made in #28. It was in 2017 (for activity in 2016) that Murray Moore tried out having a nominating round as well as a voting round for the FAAn awards. I quite agree with your comment that this just compounds the difficulty of getting people to vote, although I did quite like the subtle point that Murray was making in opening the nominating round only to people who had voted the previous year. On the other hand, that is unfortunately likely to entrench bias and old-boyism.

I don't think Mark picked up on your hint in #26 to tell Leigh all about Anzapa. (Funnily enough I've just declined an invitation from **Perry Middlemiss** to chat with him and **David Grigg** about it on their podcast *Two Chairs Talking*, but only because I don't do podcasts. I do listen to a few now, but they're not a medium within my comfort zone for conveying my own views. Even setting aside the sound of my recorded voice – I might never have got over the training course at work where I learned that, under pressure in an interview, I can apparently channel the vocal style of Maggie Thatcher – I don't express myself clearly and well enough in conversation to want my ramblings to be found by someone who doesn't know me but takes exception to something I didn't quite say, never mind being archived somewhere for posterity as an impression of what I'm like. Too vain, that's me. And it probably is a residue

of the work thing, and not commenting on the record...)

[[Maggie Thatcher! <shudders>...]]

I would be quite willing to bang on about it in a fanzine, though, but I note that neither Leigh nor anyone else expressed any further desire for either of us to do so. And I've mentioned Anzapa in passing in *Banana Wings* (although that was perhaps mostly about vampire erections which I'm willing to bet no one wants to recapitulate); I'm not sure what else anyone might want to know, but if you ask it's unfortunately likely that I'll answer, eventually.

Is it very British of me to read that comment from Bill Burns – about *This Here...* hosting discussions without rancour – in the voice of Pontius Pilate (Michael Palin) in *Life of Brian*? It is perhaps quite ableist of me, in any case, so I probably shouldn't mention it.

[[falls off chair again...]]

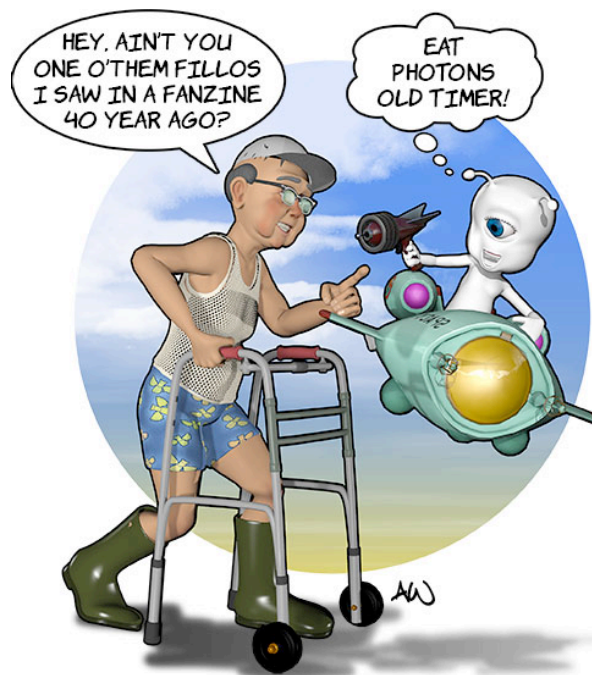
I think that the passage of time, even without the distortions of the plague, has removed the physical resemblance between you and **Kim Huett**. There must be a number of alternate realities in which your paths remained more entwined; perhaps there's a tv series concept resting on a glancing resemblance between two people who, over twenty years later, are working as a kitchen hand in Canberra and a taxi driver in Las Vegas. Sleeper agents, you must be.

[[That's weird enough to be a cult classic, and I triple spellchecked that...]]

Although you and others might have experienced this differently, I find myself unable to ramble on eternally this time; I blame the plague. I splurged all my tv-viewing comments on a slightly badly-timed loc to **John Nielsen Hall**

for *Vita Transplantare*; I'd enthuse instead about the National Theatre at Home stream, but their plays only stay up for a week so I'd just be taunting everyone who's missed them so far. Still, Virtual First Thursday tonight and virtual drinks in Melbourne tomorrow morning (it remains to be seen whether our drinks are also virtual, or at least non-alcoholic, for the latter; let's see where British common sense takes us) so maybe society will prove cheering, even if it's too late for this letter.

In closing I would like to state, again, that I have given up conrunning, again. This time I've been clean since April 2018.



WAHF

Jeanne Bowman ; Bob Jennings sends #62.5 of his SFPazine *The Typo King*, promising a new *Fadeaway* in “a couple of weeks”, which duly arrives and contains a fair review of *This Here...*; **Guy Lillian** sends a pitch for this year’s (virtual) *WOOF*, see below; **Rich Lynch** sends the latest *My Back Pages* (#24); **John Nielsen Hall**, subsequent to his loc, duly provides *Vita Transplantare 6*; **George Phillis** sends approx 3 trillion N3F zines;

INDULGE ME

✓ **CHIRRUP** : I asked Jen to write this’s ‘Egotorial’ because quite honestly I wanted something a bit more positive than what I had to say. The misery wallow, however, occurs below...

✓ **HAPPY PARENTING** : Good wishes from both my lads for Fathers’ Day. Thomas lets me know he’s working from home until at least September, going a bit stir crazy but I’m naturally happy he’s staying safe. Sean sends a lovely photo of his arm and the grandkids, one of whom is properly representing the team...



✓ **DOTAGE** : In a new instance of impending senility, it would have to be notable that I carried two items into the Man Cave, put one down and then attempted to plug the phone charger into the beer can...

✓ **BARKING** : From **Guy Lillian**: “I’m Guy Lillian, and I am to serve as Official Editor for the 2020 collation and distribution of the **WORLD CON ORDER OF FAN-EDITORS ... a/k/a W.O.O.F.**

Accordingly, I have a few announcements.

Pub your ish for *WOOF 2020*, in the 45th year of the annual *Worldcon Apa!*

Con Zealand will be a virtual convention, so it stands to reason that *WOOF 2020* will itself be an online production.

Send me PDFs of your zines.

The e-dress is GHLIII@yahoo.com. Be sure to include an up-to-date e-dress of your own. Our deadline is 12 midnight, U.S. Eastern, on **AUGUST 6, 2020**.

If you can’t avoid hard copy and must send me a physical zine, the address is 1390 Holly Ave., Merritt Island FL 32952. I’ll scan your pages, but please mail extra early.

I’m scheduling this disty for after the *Worldcon* to glean people’s reactions to *ConZealand* and to include the at-convention newszines, Hugo results and whatnot. But write what you wish! Comment on the last *WOOF* mailing. How’s the coronavirus treating you? What’s happened over the past year? Any memories of cons or *WOOFs* past you’d like to share?

Share! It won’t be the same without you.”

✓ **WORKS IN PROGRESS** : Speaking of fanzines, I’ve got a concept going with **Chuck Connor** on a rhyming slang one-off, provisionally titled *Proper Rabbit*. That is, if we ever stop fuckin’ arguing about everything. I retain faint hopes of a ‘Kerosene’ compilation getting done in tandem with **Mark Plummer**, and, no, *BEAM* isn’t getting neglected - #16 is getting in shape for publication later this year...

✓ **EGOTORIAL EXTRA** : Some time ago (on the inevitable FBF) **Gary Mattingly** asked whether anyone else was prone to having occasions of suddenly feeling sad for no apparent or immediate reason. I weighed in with a resounding concur, and christened such an event as a “Mattingly moment”. It’s starting to feel as though the last couple of months have been an ongoing and potentially eternal Mattingly moment, brief interludes of smiley such as Jen’s birthday and Fathers’ Day messages from the boys notwithstanding. What I find most depressing is the feeling of having absolutely no control over shit happening, and in my case (having to go out to work) being unable to hide from it either. Being a news junkie doesn’t help at all, but that’s something so ingrained in me that I’d be having

withdrawal symptoms if I tried to pack it in, not unlike if I implausibly suddenly decided to abjure smoking and drinking.

The reality is, of course, that the majority of people have *never* had any real control over the macro elements of their lives, being subject to the capricious whims of nature, whether those be extreme weather events or nasty little viruses, the relative capabilities or incapacities of those who would rule us (illusions of democracy aside) and the inevitably deleterious hand of ultra-capitalism. We've been allowed the pretense of a little self-determination by the ability to make micro-level decisions in the context of our interactions with each other, but now, during the Plague Days, that small comfort has been taken away and replaced by frustration leading to tribalistic rage - which is *not* to say that boiling anger isn't justified in times when systemic inequalities are brought into sharp focus by the crises piling on (and on).

Humans are predisposed to interaction - we *like* being in groups because that suggests a support system comprising others with which we have *something* in common, whether that's a football team, the fanzine segment of the Faniverse or merely an interest in enjoying food and drink with friends. Those instincts have been bottled up. As good as internetty things like Zoom can be for maintaining social connections of a sort, they might be considered the equivalent of an amphetamine high which leaves you feeling worse after it's done - that's a pretty long-winded way of basically saying "I need a hug", as do we all.

It's perhaps a trite analogy, but obvious to me that if the pressure in the boiler is building up to dangerous levels, you've only got a couple of options: the instinctive one is to open the steam valve a bit (and the pubs opened at 6am in England today, as I write) which carries its own risks since steam may escape in unfortunate ways, or do nothing at all and just let the fucker explode. Boiler experts might suggest that first it'd be a decent idea to actually reduce the fire causing the thing to overpressurize, and longer-term to consider that the boiler is actually rather badly designed in the first place if this keeps happening.

If it's not too much of a strain on the analogy, the US President has decided (and fuck the boiler experts, because he undoubtedly knows boilers better than anyone, being, like, very smart ~~and having fucked a few~~) that the fire isn't hot *enough*. Given that we're already having multiple incidents of literal gun-pointing, suppression of protestors' First Amendment rights by violence and physical confrontations of all sorts since the mere wearing of a mask has been insanely politicized, I genuinely fear worse to come. The prospect of a second civil war is *real*, and I don't consider that a wild statement. Both sides of the political divide are seriously preparing for the eventuality of the White House incumbent losing the election (even perhaps by

a substantial margin) but refusing to leave the office. There are constitutional scenarios by which he could remain in office even if trounced.

It's illustrative (and startling) that Jennifer, a Christian and pretty much a pacifist, has asked me about getting a gun for the house. Just as a precaution...

✓ **RADIO WINSTON EXTRA** : On a lighter note, finally got to disc 2 of the ton of 80s music from **Chuck Connor**, and amused by the existence of a band called "The Bollock Brothers" ...

✓ **POLITICAL** : Dear old Joe Biden isn't the candidate many would have preferred, as "establishment" as they get, but despite (or perhaps because of) the sea-change of tiny orange wankbucket over his predecessor, I tend to think that a more incremental move would get the result. Granted (and false equivalence though this is, *and* any comparisons to a certain German dictator should be generally avoided), we're possibly just looking to replace Hitler with Reinhard Gehlen. Neither of the contenders is as clever as Gehlen was, though...

✓ **THE SWEARY SOUFFLÉ** : *Still* no new cooking show, but I did hear from my old Geordie pal **Roz Grubb** that the Anglesey eggs turned out all right for her...

✓ **AGELESS BEAUTY** : Shurely needing no introduction, **Cyndi Lauper**...



MIRANDA

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**"Remember I told you there will be another festival
again"**