

# This Here...

*"...almost entirely beyond me." (M Strummer)*

## EGOTORIAL

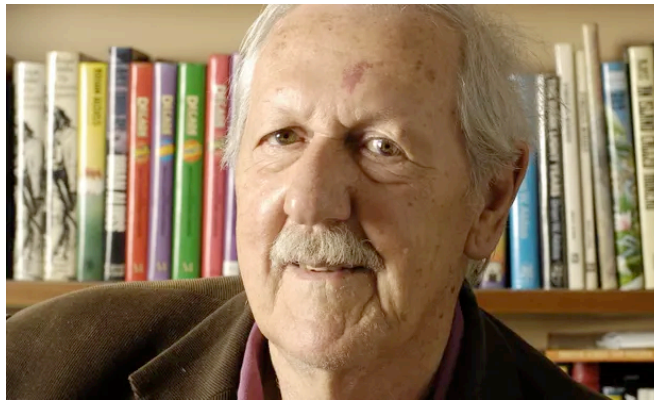
### THE LAMPS OF HIS FACE

Errata: nobody (yet, as I write) commented upon the obvious cockup lastish, the 'Egotorial' dateline of January 2020. BOACAs or indeed AOACAs will recall this as a typical early-in-the-year ballsup which most often happened when we were writing checks/cheques. Oops.

Secondly, thanks to all who felt able to make a contribution to Jen's GoFundMe for the dental bill in what we know are very trying times. Between those who bunged in via the GoFundMe itself, and others who preferred to donate by other means (avoiding the commission cut) we've reached the goal! Given that supposedly 97% of these fundraisers don't manage that, we're all gobsmacked, grateful and quite humbled by it all (not to say relieved that the sofa cushions won't need to be searched again in the immediate future, because all we usually find is dog hair). "Thanks!" seems such an inadequate response...

This here Egotorial might be a bit of a departure, since I expect that by now you're used to me giving the life story update(s) speckled with the occasional taxi tale, and it's certainly arguable that this could have been a column/article in its own right rather than presented as typical upfront meanderings, but still...

Inspired to no small extent by **John Nielsen Hall's** *Vita Transplantare*, accurately summarized by **John D Berry** as the "VT Review of TV, Movies, & Gratuitous Apostrophes" and **Perry Middlemiss' Perryscope** with its extensive review of the lad's reading and watching, I thought I'd regale ye with comments on some current reading of my own which *isn't*



Erle Stanley Gardner (though don't worry, he hasn't been sidelined by any means).

There's piles on the shelves (insert your own anal problem joke here) of stuff we scooped up from a local used bookstore closing down at quite fuckin' ridiculous prices (on the last day being "as much as you can carry for \$5", or something - and I can carry a *lot*) which, given my fairly recent happy habit of adjourning to the living room to read for a bit before dinner and an hour of telly, I am delving into.

This week's grab was the St. Martin's Griffin 2001 edition of Aldiss' 'Supertoys Last All Summer Long' a collection issued to cash in on the release of Spielberg's movie 'A.I.' for which it was the inspiration. I'd been a

pretty avid reader of Aldiss' output in my yoof, typically for me preferring the shorter form work rather than the lengthier chunks of 'Helliconia', for example. Thus I was already familiar with the original 'Supertoys' story, though hadn't previously clocked the sequel pieces 'Supertoys When Winter Comes' and 'Supertoys in Other Seasons', at which point the DoBFO memo arrives noting

that I actually hadn't read or re-read any Aldiss in a *lot* of years.

The "yoof" timeline (after having a wearisome think) means that Aldiss was one of the earliest sf writers I read, and certainly the first British one I was buying collections of (notwithstanding my concurrent dedication to Carnell's *New Writings in SF*, which of course also featured many Brit authors), remembering 'Space, Time and Nathaniel' and 'The Moment of Eclipse' in particular. At that time (in my mid/late teens) my viewpoints hadn't been politicized, so, although it may have made a subliminal impression, I hadn't clocked that to a significant extent Aldiss was doing anti-

capitalist satire while incorporating what can be, I suppose, superficially “British” tropes of disasters and dystopias couched in a more literary presentation than the at the time abundance of Merkan whizz-bang adventure. There’s *many* exceptions to that generalization, naturally, but the lazy critical analysis of the time would habitually describe American sf as more “exciting” than the fuckin’ miserable British version, for values of “exciting” which amounted to steely-eyed and rock-jawed heroes in spacesuits slapping down unfeasibly slimy and often reptilian alien hordes - in retrospect it seems that writers like Aldiss (and the godlike Ballard) were *already* presaging the so-called “New Wave”, even early in their careers.

My yoof-absent but now present cynicism, however, notes a distressing tendency to employ disappear-up-the-arse cleverness which makes some passages virtually unreadable - and this is coming from someone who really liked ‘Report on Probability A’. I also noticed a habit of establishing some piece of futuristic *something* by “simply naming it”, a major criticism leveled at Van Vogt by that miserable old fraud Damon Knight, though with Van the plot proceeds so apace that you don’t have time to mull over the supposed weaknesses of it. Aldiss’ namings are, though, inevitably cutesier than Van’s spikier and implied more functional things.

Erle Stanley Gardner will step in to cleanse the palate, no doubt...

It’s all good.

February 2021

## RADIO WINSTON

### SKIFFLE

RIPs unfortunately provide hooks, and I was minded by the recent off-the-twig news of Animals guitarist Hilton Valentine that he was, not atypically of his generation, a player who started in a skiffle band.

Now I started off as I usually do with a cursory attempt at research [koff - Wikipedia - koff] and was a tad startled to discover the paucity of scholarly discourse on the genre. So, as usual, I’m making shit up as I go along.

British lads of the 1950s chafing at postwar austerity came to realize that you could sort out a band with little more than a cheap Spanish guitar, a tea chest bass and a washboard, and as might be considered typical of popular music of any era, being up on stage

and cranking out just about anything with a semblance of competence was a way to get at the birds and, hopefully, get the end wet.

We’ll look at the one slice which is claimed to have started the “skiffle craze”, ‘Rock Island Line’, in its 1955 very uptempo Lonnie Donegan version. The skiffle practitioners had apparently discovered American folk music (one wonders *how*, but I’d suspect GIs had something to do with it), and infused it with a quintessentially British irreverence for the source material. Here’s Donegan’s rendition, incidentally the first ever British recording to go gold. The first half of this video is Lonnie gobbing off at tedious length, the actual *song* part is, what, a gnat’s cock over a minute?

<https://bit.ly/3pFdqRI>

The provenance of the slice itself isn’t particularly simple. It’s commonly cited that Donegan lifted from Leadbelly’s 1937 recording which is incorrectly cited as “the original” which it totally isn’t. The first known recording (that I can find, anyway) was done by Kelly Pace (or Price) and some other Arkansas prison inmates in 1934, and bears all the hallmarks of a chain gang semi-spiritual, containing as it does the typical underlying melancholy of that form in its utter purity:

<https://bit.ly/37v95KY>

It *might* also be worth noting that the knowledgable George Melly did a version in 1951 with a fairly standard jazz lineup, and just about every fucker from then until now has had a go at it, including but not at all limited to George Harrison (with Paul Simon), Johnny Cash and even Ringo, all but Cash arguably diluting the power of the meaning. Mind you, for a recent version, I’d suggest that the one from The Reverend Payton’s Big Damn Band (who are consistently fuckin-A) has excellent spirit:

<https://bit.ly/3qF7cCW>

It does occur to me that there are parallels to be drawn with the original DIY aspects of skiffle in the ‘50s and punk in the ‘70s, as elucidated so well by the classic “three chords” *Sniffin’ Glue* cover. This isn’t limited to the facts that the skiffle players (actual double bass in many instances eg Donegan’s band) were almost obliged to disguise their actual musicianship, as were some of the punks (Mick Jones comes inexorably to mind) in the interests of keeping it all at street level. In both cases the musicians quite quickly abandoned the pretense of being actually shit (except for the Pistols and Wreckless Eric), and it was



only a minute before you got to see the skiffle players actually *playing* with skill, and in the latter era, for the example that apart from Mick also immediately comes to mind, Steve Diggle and John Maher in particular from the Buzzcocks.

The 'Rock Island Line' slice, by the way, if it's not immediately obvious, is about smuggling pig iron disguised as livestock (!). Fanzine comparisons may abound, there, ey?...

## FAANWANK IN BRIEF (2)

### NAG & THE MISSING

**Nag** : By the time the nextish of *This Here...* emerges, the voting period for the FAAn awards will be over (voting deadline is **March 12**). I do of course reserve the right to badger you all separately from this nag, and remind you that if it becomes apparent that not enough people give a stuff, the discussion about whether to consign the FAAns to the same bin as the Novas will perhaps rightfully resume. To say that this isn't something I care to preside over is a massive understatement - though I don't necessarily expect participation to reach the heights of my previous go, if we can't do better than the last two years, then well, ey?...

**Missing** : Given the "incompleatness" of *The Incompleat Register*, it would be well helpful if those voting for anything not specifically listed to credit the faneds, writers or artists they're commending in the case of a zine (or indeed a zine cover) that it's not a given I may have seen or received, or can even find. Ta...

<https://efanzines.com/TIR/Incompleat2020.pdf>

## GERMAN FRUITCAKE\*

From a recent foray into **R Graeme Cameron's** weekly BCSFA gabfest (invitation only, I am privileged), **Garth Spencer** posited that sf fans in general were averse to the literary aspect of writing, whereas the literary fans were likewise averse to the supposedly science-based bent of most sf - and I'm sure he'll correct me if I haven't got that exactly right as a statement of his.

Now I'll reflexively go to the Alexandre Dumas quote: "All generalizations are dangerous, even this one", but here I think that, while not necessarily an overt "Mr. Finger has put his bollocks on it" moment, there is an amount of truth in Garth's assertion that bears further analysis.

In ways that I think are consistent with Garth's sense of sf and its history, he sometimes seems locked into a vision of fans and fanac from prehistory, and to be fair to him he's not at all alone in this. It's easy enough to look back at Gernsbackian times when the "Buck Rogers stuff" was highly derided by the purveyors and critics of "real" writing, a time when Garth's assertion certainly holds water.

This was really just the typical reaction from the literati toward any type of popular fiction, an attitude that seems to prevail and prevail - I can't help but recall the quacking little squat Martin Amis denying up and down that his 1991 novel 'Time's Arrow' was remotely sf, oh no, despite the *very* skiffy conceit of reverse chronology, not to mention his own acknowledgement in an afterword of a debt to Vonnegut's (inevitably far superior) 'Slaughterhouse Five'.

It's perhaps particularly the case that non-American sf authors gravitated toward the "soft" sciences, perhaps early and most notably my beloved J.G. Ballard, and the tag of "inner space" and strong elements of psychology took the forefront, in those works replacing the "thud and blunder" of the likes of E.E. Smith. Which, of course (qv Dumas) is not to state that neither American nor non-American writing in the genre were in lockstep oneness.

A crucial turning-point in the whole mess is the 1967 publication in *New Worlds* of Pamela Zoline's 'The Heat Death of the Universe' (and I'm assuming familiarity with this) which was regarded either as a unique work of utter genius or as utter fuckin' tosh. I do incline to the former view, and refer m'learned friends to my 'Egotorial' observation that I liked Aldiss' 'Report on Probability A' as well.

Now latterly there's been pushback from reactionary elements who claim to long for the days when much sf was a parade of sparkling misogyny and thinly-disguised racism and not subject to having to engage in "correctness". The difference between then and now is that in what we might call less enlightened times the prevalence and influence of those who'd now be deemed woefully unwoke was in charge (eg Campbell), whereas the current recidivists are deliberately being as "unwoke" as they can.

Now I don't agree at all with all this cancel culture bollocks, since history is there to be learned from, not obviated because it makes some people uncomfortable. I *also* don't agree with the neanderthal pronouncements of anyone who claims that if it were only 1950 again (or 1850 or 1750 for all I know) then all would be well.

Ah, that went off-topic a bit. OK...

I suspect the point I *may* have had in mind is that there's a continuing anti-literary faction within sf just as much as there's an anti-sf cadre on the other side. So perhaps Garth has a point, certainly an arguable contention, though I'd like to think that it's a fuck of a lot blurrier these days than it may have been long, long ago, and that's all for the better.

"Don't mention the war" (B Fawltly)

\* Given my awful penchant for silly and/or willfully obscure article titles, and noting that Garth himself will be undoubtedly expounding on this in his own pages, the topic is, of course, "stollen" [falls off chair]...



# FOOTY

BY DAVID HODSON

On Sunday February 7<sup>th</sup>, the wily old dog fought back and bit the upstart pretender in the ass...twice!

Mere hours after Pep Guardiola's Manchester City went to Anfield and bent an increasingly tetchy Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool over the table for a 4-1 spanking, Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowski led the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to a comprehensive 31-9 victory over Patrick Mahomes' Kansas City Chiefs in the 2021 Superbowl. After months of being told that Klopp's Liverpool are the team of the future and Guardiola will soon be moving on from City to a new project, the Anfield club were exposed as the likely one-season wonders they were always destined to be; Klopp just doesn't have the insight, nor Liverpool the financial resources, to fight off Guardiola and City, Jose Mourinho at Spurs, and Carlo Ancelotti at Everton, all managers who have won multiples of more trophies than Klopp, all together before even taking into account Manchester United, Chelsea, Arsenal, and this year's pretenders Leicester City. The beautiful symmetry of this victory and Brady's boxing of the ears of wunderkind Mahomes was a joy to behold over 14 or so hours of a wintry London Sunday afternoon into the wee, small hours of Monday morning. Obviously, I watched Countryfile in the interval...

Don't worry, I'm not about to start waffling on about the tactical intricacies of a differently shaped ballgame because, as per usual, it's the events around the sport that reveal more than events on the grass, or astroturf in the case of the NFL.

Late January brought further evidence of the toxicity that seems to have a stranglehold on all forms of social media. On Saturday January 30<sup>th</sup>, Manchester United drew 0-0 with Arsenal in London, which seemed to provide a reason for an unspecified number of twats to start abusing Marcus Rashford, the Manchester United forward who, as previously reported, has taken the Johnson government to task for child hunger and poverty and been awarded an MBE (one of the ranks of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire; a British order of chivalry rewarding contributions to the arts and sciences, work with charitable and welfare organisations, and public service outside the civil service, awarded by the monarch of the day) for same (<https://bbc.in/3pFyyYd>). The abuse, ostensibly for "not concentrating on his day job" of scoring goals for Manchester United, was of a racist nature. Ian Wright, the ex-Crystal Palace, Arsenal, and England striker that I hated when he played for Arsenal, but would have loved to see wearing a Spurs shirt, said on BBC's Match of the Day: "It seems to be a fact if a black player plays poorly - or they think they did - they come with all the emojis and whatever." Former Spurs, Newcastle, and England Midfielder Jermaine Jenas, an

under-rated player who was beset with injuries throughout his career but is now carving out a new niche as a widely used BBC pundit and presenter, echoed Wright's sentiments and said: "The platforms (Instagram and Twitter, in this case), I need them to show me these people and say they're doing everything they can to bring some justice. For those asking why we are still taking the knee, there you go."

Rashford wasn't the only one to receive abuse on social media. Controversial referee Mike Dean, following a pig of a performance in Southampton's 9(nine)-0 loss to Manchester United at Old Trafford, which saw two Southampton players sent off, reported members of his family receiving abusive messages, including death threats, to the police (<https://bbc.in/3pEW2gb>). Southampton have requested that Dean not officiate any more of their games (<https://bbc.in/37tVgME>), and it's hardly a surprise that Graham Scott, responsible for the pig's ear of a penalty decision in the Spurs-Newcastle game earlier in the season that I have waxed lyrical about previously, was the VAR official that recommended the sending off of Southampton defender Jan Bednarek in the game for a foul that had already incurred a penalty kick. Southampton has also requested that Lee Mason not referee any more of their games either after another controversial defeat against Aston Villa. Earlier in January, Wolves manager Nuno Espirito Santo was fined £25,000 by the FA for also criticising Mason after his side's defeat by Burnley. For many years, the convention was for managers to bite their tongues about poor refereeing decisions. In the 1970s, it was a widely held belief that Welsh referee Clive Thomas would never allow a London side to win any game he officiated. I really can't be bothered researching Thomas' statistics in games involving London teams, I have a deadline to hit for this column, a new Nikon Z5 mirrorless digital camera to play with and learn how to use, a drawing monitor to hook-up to the computer, and my landlord is due tomorrow morning to finish fixing the leak in the bathroom, so time is precious, but suffice to say Thomas shared a penchant for the theatrical with Mike Dean; they both think (thought? I assume Clive Thomas is dead by now) they are (were?) more important than the teams and the games they were refereeing and I know I never saw Thomas referee a Spurs win. Modern managers, whose jobs hang by a thread at the best of times and who bear responsibility for businesses that turnover increasingly large sums of money, are starting to refuse to follow the old, be-tweeded, white guy code of being stiff upper-lipped good sports and who can blame them? Commentators like Ian Darke will openly say, as he did whilst commentating for BT Sport on Spurs' 4-1 victory over Austrian side Wolfsberger in the Europa League this past Thursday (February 18<sup>th</sup>), that the referee is "evening up" decisions after mistakenly penalising a side with an earlier decision, and co-commentator Jermaine Jenas (it's not only the Beeb that rate JJ highly) will say nothing to

contradict him because the players already know and acknowledge whatever bias most referees carry into games. Speaking of social media outrage, remember that tackle by Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford that ended Liverpool centre-back Virgil Van Dijk's season back in October and resulted in Pickford receiving death threats? I know I mentioned it at the time. Well, this weekend sees the return fixture at Anfield and it's not like The Guardian aren't building the game up in the best boxing match traditions with the two main protagonists, managers Jurgen Klopp and Carlo Ancelotti, sandwiching 1960s Batman TV show style graphics (just missing the \*Zap\*'s and \*Pow\*'s) on their Saturday February 20th back page. I can't wait to see this one kick-off in more ways than one.

**Shot in arm for women's sport**  
Emergency funding boost for netball and football

Women's sport has been prioritised in the latest round of emergency government funding for England with millions of pounds in grants being allocated to keep professional competition alive.

A new tranche of the £300m Winter Survival Package will see England netball and the Vitality Super League receive a £2m grants while, in football, the Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship are to receive a combined £2.25m. Women's football clubs at any level have also been encouraged to apply for grant funding on an individual basis. The money comes alongside a commitment by the government to fund 250,000 lateral flow Covid tests with distribution to professional women's sport a priority.

The news will be particularly welcome to the FA, which had been anticipating that any extra funding received would have to be spent on securing testing for players. Now, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport suggests, grant money should be put towards "essential league costs".

Other sports to have new funding confirmed include British Basketball League clubs and Badminton England.

Concomitant with the Winter Survival Package has centred around the fact that, of a £10bn total, only £2bn is made up of "soft" loans, with interest rates of 2% and repayment periods lasting up to 20 years.

"The focus on loans has been a particular cause of concern amongst football clubs in the National League system, where officials had believed they were to be expecting grants only for the government to reject the claim. The latest funding information confirmed that 19 clubs in the National League steps 1 and 2 had applied for loans totalling £1.4m.

On testing, the culture secretary Oliver Dowden said: "We announced to support our national sporting life when we built pipelines for the rollout of tests. Once again, we are doing just that. These free testing kits will help ensure the health and safety of elite athletes in competition remains paramount and more resources can be focused on protecting the future of sports as we recover from the pandemic."

I know for sure I've also mentioned previously that I regard Van Dijk as one of the most over-rated footballers around. One way to judge how good a player may or may not be is the amount of attention paid to them by the Spanish clubs Real Madrid and Barcelona, who will try to "hoover up" as many of the major talents as they can and are generally pretty successful doing it. On top of the traditionally hyper-inflated wages, they can offer sun, sand, and sangria aplenty, plus the occasional opportunity to bed South American dance music divas with Oral Fixations (nudge, nudge, wink, wink...Google it if you need to...). Van Dijk, over the course of his career, has left Groningen in Holland to move to

Glasgow Celtic, then moved on to Southampton, before finally landing at Liverpool. At no point in any of these moves have the two Spanish clubs been quoted as having any interest in Van Dijk, which is hugely surprising. I may not rate him as highly as others do, but there's no denying he's a fine player of a sort. Contrast Van Dijk's situation with that of Aymeric Laporte of Manchester City, who, whilst returning from serious injury, has found chances to play first team football scarce, which has immediately set Real Madrid's nose twitching like Elongated Man's whilst sniffing a clue (<https://bit.ly/37yzJSZ>). There's absolutely no need to watch these pages, Laporte will be going nowhere; he is genuinely too good to be let go.

And yet another hoary old favourite of this column again reared its head on January 31st, when any pretense that Manchester City, Chelsea, Arsenal, or Tottenham were instigators of a European Super League was dropped as The Sun reported that Manchester United and Liverpool, or rather their American owners, were behind a new attempt to set the cash cow up, along with Real Madrid. I really am tired of this story now and wish, just like Scotland in the Union of the United Kingdom, they'd just find a way to fuck off and get on with it. Unlike United and Liverpool, I don't dislike Scotland or the Scottish, but the SNP really are as one-track in their way as John Henry, Fenway Sports, and the Glazier family, and I have a low boredom threshold. As the



chart from The Athletic shows, the prime motivator for any Euro League is money and both Liverpool and United carry unrealistic debt for the size and location of the clubs (yes, I know, I've said it all before) although neither are top of the debt pops (the Chelsea debt is all loans put in by their Russian owner Roman Abramovich; the Spurs debt is stadium building costs, which are accounted for by long-term bonds and loans, the repaying of which may be delayed by the Covid pandemic, but won't depreciate the value of the asset in the long term). I think I said last time out I expected 2021 to pretty much be a re-run of 2020 on the whole!

### What each Premier League club really owes A

Club	Owner Loans (£'m)	Other loans (£'m)	Transfer Creditors (£'m)	Transfer Debtors (£'m)	Cash (£'m)	Football Net Debt (£'m)
1 Chelsea	1,383.4	8.0	136.5	150.0	36.6	1,341.4
2 Tottenham (2020)	0.0	836.0	148.7	25.7	226.0	733.0
3 Man Utd (2021 Q1)	0.0	499.5	141.1	46.8	58.9	534.8
4 Brighton	271.6	8.3	22.7	6.2	0.7	295.7
5 Arsenal	0.0	313.7	76.7	23.5	167.0	199.9
6 Wolves	131.0	0.0	55.8	11.6	28.0	147.2
7 West Ham	54.5	23.8	86.9	16.6	12.5	136.0
8 Liverpool	79.3	49.5	166.4	129.7	37.5	128.0
9 Leicester	35.5	55.7	96.5	54.9	11.5	123.2
10 Newcastle United	112.2	0.5	12.1	48.0	14.0	62.9
11 Fulham	0.3	0.0	80.4	6.5	17.5	56.7
12 Southampton (2020)	0.0	91.3	54.8	11.7	86.7	47.8
13 Crystal Palace	45.4	38.7	16.6	46.8	11.9	42.0
14 Everton (2020)	0.0	58.7	83.4	51.5	56.4	34.1
15 Leeds United	25.6	7.0	13.8	16.3	0.5	29.6
16 Man City	0.0	73.0	137.7	54.0	129.9	26.9
17 Burnley	0.0	60.0	19.1	13.8	41.6	23.7
18 Sheffield United	9.1	0.4	6.4	1.8	1.1	13.0
19 West Brom	0.0	0.0	18.5	12.4	1.3	4.9
20 Aston Villa	0.3	0.0	28.9	13.9	21.9	(6.7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,148.3</b>	<b>2,124.1</b>	<b>1,404.9</b>	<b>741.8</b>	<b>981.4</b>	<b>3,974.1</b>

All figures taken from 2018-19 accounts unless specified

On a completely separate note, February 4<sup>th</sup> marked the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my being taken into hospital and put into an induced coma due to sepsis. A lot of the news programming about Covid can be quite traumatic to me, with all the beeps and burps and other sounds from ICU machines setting off some disturbing memories (although I will acknowledge some crackingly good hallucinations at the time as well; best drugs I've ever been on...). I had a breathing tube in my throat and didn't even know until they took it out, the knowledge presumably kept secret so as not to cause panic. I thought the dialysis machine was an old twin-tub washing machine...

This was the first year where the anniversary passed and I didn't even notice it. Maybe it got lost in the corona virus crowd, as I supplement my normal (prescription) drug regime with Vitamin D supplements and Zinc supplements and follow the advice to actually double-mask, but I don't think so. I was more engaged with thinking about this column and what I was going to say in it and commentating on matches for the Tottenham Hotspur fan group I'm an

admin for on Facebook. Don't get me wrong, I was also thinking about the camera I wanted to buy (the above mentioned Z5), and trying to rescale some plans for a friend to build a model from (still not managed it, but getting there; bloody 18<sup>th</sup> century sailing ships), and doing little bits of the 1,000 piece Marvel Comics jigsaw puzzle another friend gave me, but it has to be said that writing this column for Nic, as much of a chore as it can be to find something to say that people might actually want to read, is also a pleasure. It's also quite informative of human nature in the round: here we are in a global pandemic and all some people seem to care about is abusing each other, or ripping each other off, or trying to chisel as much money out of each other as possible and if it seems that these are the overarching themes of this column to you, then think of the impact they have on me as the same human faults and foibles raise their ugly heads over and over again. Still, at least I give Nic an excuse to publish pictures of Shakira every now and then...



Let's finish on a high note and wish Jimmy Greaves a happy 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. He really was the greatest goal scorer of all time and I might pop the DVD of the 1967 F.A. Cup final in the player and revel in simpler times.

## LOCO CITATO

*[[“If these people could only see into the mind of the viperous Robespierre they had invited into their midst.” (Donald Fagen)...]]*

From: phillies@4liberty.net

January 23

**George Phillies** writes:

[As to] the File 770 fan feud, if [S&a Bond] had said “the loccol of Nic Farey’s gloriously brilliant and surely Nobel-worthy *This Here...*”, thus giving you at least a short and understated part of your earned praise, I might have worked out which zine was meant. Alas, the modern custom of jamming nouns together can be opaque, especially in a less limited context. I concede that the nounjam here was fairly short, but I thought LocCol was the title of the person’s zine, and did not remember a zine called LocCol. I still don’t. NASA used to do noun jams (not sure if they still do), the record holder when last I heard about it being a part of their moon rocket, said part’s name being a string of 27 sequential nouns.

*[[Today’s tincture of pure bollocks : you want us to believe that you’re unable to parse the construction “this here loccol” as referring to a zine you receive and acknowledge every fuckin’ month? The DoBFO memo is on the way. Oh, and shameless flattery gets you o round here...]]*

To avoid further elevating the blood pressure of a fellow fan, I asked him to delete all mention of the N3F from his web site, which he has done.

*[[A slightly different perspective on the alleged “feud” in which other remarks have accused Burns (for it is he, and I wonder why you don’t actually say so) of yanking N3F from efanzines for cancel culture intent and/or reasons of alleged pique dating back several years, whereas you’ve agreed there’s not much point in him continuing to, however cursorily, maintain what’s ended up being an inaccurate set of links because you haven’t exactly been diligent in sending updates, have you? I’m even more convinced now that you’ve never really understood how efanzines works...]]*

Of course, if I had proofread the email list, **Burns** would not have had conniptions, and all would be calm.

*[[Invoking the eleventh commandment is a bit of a last resort, inmit? There has been pushback from others (N3F members) who may not have been as alert (or as public) as Bill Burns but nevertheless excoriate you, so “calm”? Er, no (see below)...]]*

With respect to some of those social sites, one of which is currently out of action for repairs, the only member comment I had was that he had no difficulty finding stfnal

areas on these sites in which no politics was mentioned. Since you mentioned him, the eponymous Mr. Day has had certain fannish activities that attracted to himself a certain modest amount of attention, such as the activities being denounced in the pages of *The Guardian* (which I read every day), which might tend to lead to his being messaged by people who affect to be to his right. I was also sent, by another member, a list of left and far left social media sites that have STFnal parts, and we will be looking for members there, too.

*[[“I read The Guardian, me!” is a risible defense for anything. Anyway, I could conjecture that you’re in line for a UFC championship, which in this case has nothing to do with mixed martial arts fighting, but rather a recognition of Utter Fuckin’ Cluelessness, which remains the kindest possible interpretation I can put on your actions, invoking Hanlon’s razor: “Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity”. As far as comments from within the N3F itself, which you attempt to portray as being neutral or even supportive, we need look no further than David Speakman, an almost 40-year member and previous officeholder of the club, who had recently been awarded a life membership, announced in the January ish of TNFF. On January 27, in both the original FBF thread and on File770, Speakman writes:*

“After almost 40 years, I have ended my association with N3F – the world’s oldest national group of science fiction aficionados.

I discovered the group has decided to recruit membership from the ranks of Parler and Gab – both havens for extreme alt-right fanatics, including those who attacked and planned assassinations in Congress on Jan. 6. The decision by N3F to recruit from these groups happened *after* Jan 6. This is appalling to me.

I do not want to be associated with any group that actively courts members from Parler or Gab.

On a more personal note, I will not be associated with any group that actively seeks to add to its ranks from any haven for neo-Nazis and anti-gay extremists who not only think my marriage should be dissolved, but see my husband’s and my very existence as an error that needs a final solution.

So, an almost 40-year association with N3F ends with this.

I am a tolerant person by nature. But I have zero tolerance for Nazis or any hate-enabling groups that give safe haven to those who promote genocide or violence against minorities.

No.”

*That says more than I ever could, and one thinks it ought to give you pause, George. See also ‘Indulge Me’ for other developments...]]*

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From: orangemike@gmail.com

January 23

Mike Lowrey writes:

Re: TAFFnicity - my fear is that the UK and EU will not be letting Yanks in by the time of the scheduled Corflu, Novacon and [chronologically adjacent] Swecon, and that if I set myself up to take my 2020 TAFF trip in November 2021, I might end up with another bunch of "refunds" that won't be usable before they expire.

*[[I've subsequently learned that a fellow Watford FC fan (Suren Vis) will be taking a trip out here in October from the UK, so it isn't unreasonable to think that one in the other direction might be feasible, though I understand your trepidation. Part of the point is, I suppose, how long do we all think that your TAFF trip could be reasonably delayed, and there's no firm answer at the moment, although I'm not liking the seemingly interminable "left hanging" status of your trip...]]*

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From:  
leighedmonds01@gmail.com

January 25

Leigh Edmonds writes:

[A]fter the events of the past test cricket series we don't talk about cricket in this household. I was busy at the time and did not listen to the final session of the fourth test, convinced that it would be a draw. Only the next morning did I learn that the Indians had won, perhaps it was just as well that I didn't listen.

For once I found your 'Radio Winston' interesting and listenable, so thanks for that. Eruca Sativa is a group I would never have heard about otherwise and I enjoyed that version of 'Gimme Shelter' which has excellent bass playing and drumming too. After that I found one of their live concerts on YouTube and enjoyed it too. I don't know that they will make it onto my permanent playlist but it's been an interesting excursion.

Between issues 37 and 38 Valma and I have upped stumps and moved, from a comfy little retirement village villa with next to no storage space to a much bigger house with lots of storage space (but whether or not it is enough for all our kipple has yet to be discerned). They say that moving is the

next most stressful thing after dying (or is that a death in the family?) I don't know that I would go that far but I can attest that it is very tiring and confusing. The tiring part comes in the process of getting everything moved from one place to another and the confusing part comes when you try to make sense of all the boxes of stuff piled up in your garage. I'm working on the latter problem which may be, so I keep telling people, all sorted out by 2027.

*[[The top end of stressful life occurrences is still: Marriage/ Divorce, bereavement, moving...]]*

I note that the fact we have moved is not really relevant to the progress of your 'focal point' fanzine but I raise it because my brain seems to have fallen out of the back of the moving van somewhere between here and our old place. It is probably even now crawling its way back to my skull along the gutters of the road. Perhaps it will have returned in time for the next issue. Let's bloody well hope so.

I mention the absence of my brain because I'm having trouble in putting together all the input about what makes

up a 'focal point' fanzine. I see that you have picked up on my idea of 'popularity' as being a key part of the idea but left out the other part of that thought, 'among the fans who count'. That bit is ironic, of course, but is part of the formula that I would unpack if I had the brain for it. In the discussion there somewhere is the idea that fans associated with a focal point fanzine are 'elitist', but I'd reckon that that view is one held by people who are not part of that group - but wouldn't mind if they were. I don't consider myself elitist because I happen to like *This Here ...*, as I liked *Vibrator* before it. It just so happens that the way **Graham Charnock** and you think and write is attractive to me so I want to be part of what's going on. Many of the fanzines I see on efanazines seem worthy, thoughtful, and so on, but they simply don't engage my

imagination as *This Here ...* does. Other fans with other interests will find that other fanzines (or modes of fannish communication) engage them. But there seems to have been a small group of fans who think more or less as you and I do and we've created a community with shared values which are focused by *This Here ...*





*[[Mr. Finger has put his bollocks on it. I'm not so sure about the "shared values" bit, because that doesn't necessarily hold up in areas such as musical taste, for example (DoBFO), but it seemingly does in the concept that "us lot" have a shared commitment to keeping this end of the Faniverse going...]]*

It does seem to me that the keys to a focal point fanzine are that it comes in at no more than around twenty pages and is published frequently. In this way it keeps its readers interested and it is never too long that it can't be read in one sitting. Other worthy and perhaps better (whatever that means) fanzines; *SF Commentary*, *Beam*, *Banana Wings* and *Portable Storage* to name only four, are too big, fat and slow to capture and hold a fannish imagination. *Banana Wings*, in particular, has the same spirit as *This Here ...* but is too infrequent (particularly under the current circumstances) to hold that imagination for long enough to make it a focal point.

I suppose that one might say that a focal point fanzine reflects and perhaps amplifies the zeitgeist for a group of fans who are attuned to the kind of thing that a particular faned offers at a particular time. There might be some more impressive fanzines around at the moment but, so far as I am aware, none of them capture that spirit and reflects it back to us in the way that *This Here ...* does. Sorry sport, you're stuck with it, for the time being.

*[[I'm going to agree with the general aspects of your analysis, Leigh, if not all the specifics...]]*

**David Hodson's** column on footy was, as often happens, about more than that. The theme this time seemed to be the face-off between the virus and big business sport. It seems to me that a lot of people aren't taking this virus as seriously as they should be and seem to think that it won't mind if we let our guard drop now and again. The trouble is that the virus is almost everywhere and it will blossom if it is given half a chance. The reason it hasn't done so well in Australia is because the authorities, in particular the State governments, have taken it seriously and the general populace has gone along with what they said. Here in Ballarat it would be almost impossible to catch the virus but still, with a few exceptions, everyone wears their masks, uses the hand sanitizer and keeps social distancing. Which may be the reason why you'd have to work at it to get the virus here. The easiest way would be to go to one of the quarantine hotels where those who have flown into the country are stacked for a couple of weeks, because there seem to be a few cases reported every week there.

**David** mentioned the current fuss around the Australian Open tennis that is going to start in a couple of weeks. I haven't been following this because tennis doesn't interest me very much, but I get the impression that most of the people who have found themselves sealed in their hotel

rooms for two weeks are upset because they didn't think that Australians are as serious about keeping the virus under control as they are now learning we are. There is a school of thought that says there is probably little danger of the virus escaping from the bubble around the Open but we remember that about 700 people died when a tiny leak developed in the bubble around quarantine hotels in Melbourne in the middle of the year. Ask people like **Perry Middlemiss** what it was like to live through that severe lock-down in Melbourne to get that outbreak under control again.

A couple of your loccers mention apas. I think that many of our number were members of FAPA at some stage or another and most of us didn't stay long. If memory serves me FAPA was established as a way in which fans could distribute their fanzines, more or less in the way that we use **Bill Burns'** efanzines today. It still had that feeling when I was a member for a short time in the late 1960s or early 1970s and lacked the sense of fannish closeness that other apas such as SAPS and APA-45 had. It would be a pity for the fannish tradition of FAPA to die out but I guess it is inevitable.

**Fred Lerner** is right about the discipline that is imposed by apa deadlines and (though he doesn't say it) minac. It forces us to do something to keep in touch with the apa and to stop getting thrown off the membership roster. I get the impression that a few apazines turn into genzines or perzines as their editors begin distributing a few copies outside the apa and that mailing list gradually expands. I know that the perzine/genzine that I produced that I liked the most was *Ornithopter* which started off as a SAPSzine and gradually grew to larger proportions. I see that it only took one issue of *Perryscope* for it to grow beyond the bounds of ANZAPA.

*[[I for one am glad it did, and I also agree with the aspect of the discipline of creating product, such as with this here effort. I definitely appreciated that discipline in doing my monthly 'taxi tales' columns for Vibrator, even though a few of them might have been tired rote, as indeed might well be the case with bits of this fish wrap - I think that with a purpose of getting a zine out with such frequency, the quality is inevitably going to vary, and that will come across in a sense of tiredness in some issues, although in general I still feel very engaged about it all. The retirement by G Charnock of his SexToy title did leave me with a "fanac gap", something I could now be credibly accused of overcompensating for...]]*

Meanwhile, the spate of 500 page ANZAPA mailings continues. One reason is probably because it is now a PDF only apa so members don't feel constrained in how much they write. There is also that most of the members are now retired and have more time they can spend in writing but that is balanced by the way in which so many of them are

doing interesting things and write about them so well. Of the 500 pages I'd say that around 300 are unmissable reading which deserves lengthy mailing comments. Many of the members are veteran Australian fans little known beyond our shores these days including Gary Mason (28 pages in the most recent mailing), Jack Herman (18), Eric Lindsay (17), David Grigg (18), Marc Ortlieb (20) and some you might have heard of, Roman Orszanski (14). Christina Lake (12) Bruce Gillespie (32). Kim Huett (32), Claire and Mark (29). Perry Middlemiss (36) and on it goes. Not all of it is great fan writing but a lot of it is, thought a lot of it is also very particular to a time and place so it wouldn't survive well out of its natural environment. Which is true of a lot of apa writing I guess. So, finding the most recent mailing lurking in your in-box every couple of months is like finding a box of chocolates there. I'd recommend it to others except that the membership roster is all but full and you need stamina and dedication to keep up.

Speaking of which, the looming ANZAPA deadline is less than two weeks away so I'd best stop doing this and get on with doing that.

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From: daverabban@gmail.com

January 25

**Dave Cockfield** writes:

Wow! *TH...* is arriving faster than Barry Allen in a weekly tv show.

Very welcome of course as an aid to mental health in these troubled time.

I'm just not sure whether it helps relieve or crucify the brain cells.

As usual **Dave Hodson** was on the money, quite literally. Football should be in lockdown with everything else. If games are not played Clubs still have to pay exorbitant contracted wages (not the £3,200 a month Government furlough payment they had hoped for), plus they will lose advertising and tv money. Hence the games.

I read *TH...38* whilst watching Cheltenham lose against a full strength Man city side in the last 10 minutes. I love my football but these televised games without crowds are soulless.

Steve Bruce is one of the great old fashioned managers you bring in to stop a club crashing onto the rocks. He tends to succeed but then never gets the support to build good teams. I loved him as manager of Sunderland but I think that he let personal issues destroy him.

Our prolific goal scorer Darren Bent suddenly became a damp squib and there was obvious animosity between manager and player who was eventually transferred. It

emerged that Bent was porking Bruce's daughter, Amy, Something Bruce was not happy about.

Was it a racial thing or more likely that Bent was an arrogant git. Newspapers featured Bent and Amy leaving after a night in a hotel. He gave the "thumbs up" sign behind her back to show what a nice considerate person he is.

You also printed the magic words, "egg and chips"

When I'm waiting to be hung drawn and quartered at Her Majesty's convenience for unspeakable crimes my last meal will be 4 XL fried eggs with soft oozing yellow yokes and crispy well-cooked medium fries.

*[[I'd start there meself, but I'd expand that to include all the proper elements of a full English, which, if my last meal occurs within the Merkan system would be a good larf because black pudding is technically illegal here. There used to be this tiny hole in the wall caff just around the corner from Scholl's factory & offices on St' John Street (which ran south from the Angel) in the Smoke, where we often assembled for fried breakfast and lunch, the only difference between the two being that breakfast went with fried bread, and lunch with chips...]]*

It set me thinking about other favourite foods. That is obviously number one followed by:-

Toasted Cheese and Onion sarnies / Black Pudding with chilli infused canned tomatoes / Banana and cold custard / Smoked salmon and scrambled eggs / Shrimp madras and garlic Naan / Smoked haddock and mash / Hot beef chilli / Crispy streaky bacon, eggs, sourdough toast / and finally but not least, a McDonalds Double sausage, egg, and cheese McMuffin.

*[[I'm not at all sure about that last one...]]*

The other words to catch my attention in *TH...38* were Erle Stanley Gardner.

I read tons of stuff in all genres but love Dashiell Hammett, Ellery Queen, and Cornell Woolrich. I liked the Raymond Burr series of Perry Mason in my youth so thanks to lockdown decided to read the books. Weirdly I started with the Bertha Cool and Donald Lam series which are fantastic. I then eventually read 'The Case of the Lucky Legs' and thought I have to read more.

I quickly picked up a few copies. The PAN editions have particularly great covers.

I also watched the new tv series. It was almost great. Done as a period piece about the creation of Perry Mason leading into the first novel.

Much of it was excellent but as is often the case these day Political correctness and modern social conscience rear there misguided heads.





It was implied that Della Street was a lesbian. I had no problem with that but I think that it spoiled the ambiguity of the ongoing relationship between Perry and Della.

Worst of all Paul Drake was no longer a rakish womaniser who wanted to bed every dame he came into contact with. He had become a put upon and racially abused Black policeman.

He had a loving wife that he had to protect so maintained the status quo and compromised his honesty. This was very well done in the series but he wasn't the Paul Drake I wanted.

I would have been very happy if they had kept the character from the books but had him played by a Black actor. I did still enjoy the series though, even more than the Burr originals.

I've now collected about 20 books and have read 5. They are well written, fast paced, and extremely clever. Dare I say intelligent? I think so.

*[[At a guess I now have 40-ish of the Perry Mason novels (about half the total). As I mentioned to you at the birthday pissup, I'd just picked a Cool & Lam off the shelf to read the day I got your letter, and it contains some superb turns of phrase. I'll be going into the canonicity of the TV miniseries in more depth in BEAM 16, but I took the notice of Della's sexuality as more that she could have been bisexual rather than lesbian, so as not to conflict with the Burr series depiction - although within the novels they're clearly affectionate up to and including an amount of physical demonstration of such, but there's never any suggestion that this was consummated in more plunging ways, so either interpretation could be seen as valid. The reimagining of Paul Drake is a whole other bag of ferrets, though, but I didn't reflexively dislike it at all, quite the opposite...]]*

I generally agree with your comments about WW84. Did you notice that it is essentially a reworking of 1937's *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* with the wonderful Roland Young. George McWhirter Fotheringay a much better name than Maxwell Lord for the bumbling misguided idiot who is not really a villain.

*[[The movie took very little of the persona of Max Lord from the comics, although he went through a few different incarnations there, but was always a chancer...]]*

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From: jkaufman@aol.com

January 28

**Jerry Kaufman** writes:

I checked out the Eruca Sativa links, and followed more featuring Lula Bertoldi (including her solo cover of 'Heart-Shaped Box') and liked them a whole bunch. I admit I mostly looked at covers of English language songs, though 'Fuero a Mas Alla' didn't need English to win my ears. I'd love to share with you a Spanish-language rap number from a few years ago, but I can't remember the right title or performer's name - I think the title was, in Spanish, something to do with fire. You may know what I mean.

*[[I don't, nor am I about to do a search for anything containing the word "fuego"...]]*

Fanzines and their audiences are split up into a number of small slices, and maybe some of the zines function as focal points for one slice. For example, *Alexiad* gets LoCs from readers that apparently read few or no other zines, judging from the zines I see. You get response from the Usual Suspects, plus **Dave Cockfield**. *Portable Storage* gets comments from many of those Usuals, plus APA-50 survivors and **William [Breiding]**'s long-time friends. The

N3F zines I've looked at hear mainly from N3F members who also participate in fanzines outside of that club (**John Purcell** and **Lloyd Penney**). I don't think it's an essential concept. But it generates content.

*[[ "...the Usual Suspects plus Dave Cockfield" is a total falls off chair phrasing, not to mention possibly a great name for a rock band, or possibly a 'Sultans of Swing' style throwback combo. I'm curious as to the composition of the group you term "usual suspects" (which presumably includes your good self), but I also nod at your note that Portable Storage's loccol includes "long time friends" of the esteemed editor, which I'd suggest is clearly also the case with This Here... and Banana Wings to name but two, in that responses appear from those who are rarely if ever seen in the loccols (or contributor lists) of other fanzines. I'll also agree that there's a fairly clear Alexiad "bubble", perhaps more demonstrable with that title than perhaps some others, but in my view that's not any kind of implied criticism, adding that I'm not suggesting you're saying that it is... ]]*

If I were more attentive to American sports, I could compare **Dave Hodson's** report on British footy's Covid response to ours. But I'm more interested in the difference between "sport" and "sports." I wonder if "sport" implies one big area of interest to the British, while "sports" implies lots of different activities with little relationship to one another, except that they are usually physical. Or if there's really no difference between the two terms.

*[[I suspect the difference is merely cultural, as Brits (and Europeans in general?) use the singular whereas Merkans favor the plural, qv and conversely "math" and "maths"...]]*

While I'd agree with **Joseph Major** that "those who write and sell and publish it now have different priorities and interests," I don't agree that this is a gafiation from "us." The field may have moved from what interests Joseph, but I still find it engaging, and so do thousands of readers. The biggest difference is that the readers of today are, obviously, younger than "us." (I make the assumption that your readers are mostly over 50 - maybe over 60, even. That's how I conceive of "us" in that sentence before this parenthetical remark.)

*[[The readership is a Bell curve of age, I'm sure - I'm aware of some over 70 and perhaps even one or two under 40 (J Coxon)...]]*

That technicolor squirrel is amazing.

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From: perry@middlemiss.org

February 1

**Perry Middlemiss** writes:

I appreciate **Leigh Edmonds** thinking that I might be rather inventive when it comes to swearing, but I fear that is rather far from the truth. A solid, working-class, country swearer, me. But not of the farmer variety. While I did grow up in a small Australian country town (well under a thousand people) my father was the local Pharmacist, so I was a "town" boy not a farm lad.

I do suspect that **Leigh** is right in that farmers would tend to have a lot of opportunity to swear at a variety of objects, both animate and inanimate, though the bulk of the impressive swearing I heard when young was of the variety that utilised repetitious "fuck"s and an array of zoological precursors for the word "shit": bat, rat, ape, dog, bull, and shark being the most popular. Not overly creative swearing but certainly enthusiastic.

*[[Recalling the differences between my first jobs over here (coding, basically) and later, construction, I was wont to observe that they similarly involved wrestling with the recalcitrance of inanimate materials, except in the latter you said "motherfucker" a lot more. On scatological themes, I recall the derisory imprecation "whale shit" from a Dirty Harry movie, the unstated implication being that there ain't anything any lower...]]*

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From: portablezine@gmail.com

February 2

**William Breiding** writes:

It has been bugging me enough - I've been going over it in my head too much - that I decided I needed to rebut **Leigh Edmonds'** statement that faneds are compilers rather than editors. While there is some basic truth in this observation, I think the difference between a good fanzine and a mediocre fanzine is that one edits and the other compiles. I think this has always been true. Looking only at what I consider to be our best contemporary genzines, I have to believe they are *editors* - **Robert Lichtman, Andy Hooper & Carl Juarez, Bruce Gillespie, Nic Farey & Ulrika O'Brien, The Fishlifters, Robert Jennings**, among others - and not compilers.



*[[I reply to W<sup>m</sup>, noting that The Mighty Rob<sup>t</sup> is pretty much retired, as is Hooper, at least apparently from genzines, garnering this response: "Yes, I fear Mr. Lichtman is now retired, it's true, but he is still "contemporary". Andy? He has at least one, if not two more *Chungas* up his sleeve. He may retire after that, but let's hope he slows these obsessive in-depth articles in *Captain Flashback* and lends his prodigious talents to a new genzine." ...]]*

Editing happens on two levels in fanzines, I think. 1) is a hands-on approach, blue penciling as you go, working with the writer to make a better piece, and 2) is creating an atmosphere that lends itself to making the writer want to strive to produce only good-to-excellent writing, which likely needs only copy-editing. The letter column is entirely different. Leigh says that Bruce Gillespie does not edit his letters. I wonder about that statement, having had passing conversations with Bruce about creating lively letter columns. I edit letters for clarity and will always remove incendiary or rude comments, unlike some other fan editors. I shorten some letters, with others, I let them sprawl. I had a chance to edit a Leigh Edmonds article but chose not to, though my fingers were itching to do so, because it was an excerpt from a larger piece of writing, so it wasn't my place to go in and possibly alter the reading experience from the original.

*[[Good points as always, and I can only note that in my estimation Ulrika is a (1) and I am more of a (2) in your categorization, which apparently makes for excellent synergy, although I might suggest that any faned has to have elements of (2), whereas (1) is more an expression of editorial technique/mechanics. Your thoughtfulness about the implied mechanics of editing a fanzine is almost unique amongst both contemporary and historical practitioners...]]*

I think there is little more to say about focal points. Though I will say the idea that a focal point was a gathering of all fandom was probably obsolete by the 1950s, after which it was trimmed to various mailing lists, just like your diagram done showed and telled.

*[[Wholly agree. You could certainly have a "focal point" fanzine when the fanzine Faniverse consisted of three people (possibly a slight underestimate), but not now...]]*

I hear it was yer birthday. Hope you had a good time. You old blue collar intellectual, you.

*[[falls off chair...]]*

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From: srjeffery@aol.com

February 7

Steve Jeffery writes:

*This Here... 38* has been sitting in the Downloads folder for a week or more while real life (or a covid constrained version of same) took over.

And then Storm [Constantine] died. I'm not going to say too much about that, but it took a while for that sink in. Vikki's and my early memories of sf and fandom are inextricably linked to Storm even though our interests diverged and we drifted apart over the last ten years or so.

*[[Fond memories meself - I got Storm as a guest at one of the Star Trek cons I ran (The first I actually chaired, I think) early in her career, solely on the basis of personal acquaintance at a Novacon, and I well recall her being quite gobsmacked (and highly pleased) that we forked over a per diem for food & drink. That may even have been the first con she guested at. Storm also contributed a piece for Arrows of Desire ('Love, Lust and Like' issue). We also got out of touch after I decamped to these shores, sadly...]]*

No real comments this time I'm afraid, but this is to say thanks, and wish both you and Jen well.

I can, though, throw my twopenn'orth in your defense in response to Leigh's comment that fan editors don't really edit but compile, since you have replied to a couple of locs I've sent you querying a misspelling or a misattribution.

*[[It seems fairly fuckin' fundamental to me that locs should be properly represented - it's easy enough to edit for grammar, spelin & that (although it may have been noticed that I'll preserve English spellings in locs from that isle, since that seems, I dunno, "proper" - it's something I've done (and occasionally specifically mentioned) since AoD days). I haven't actually clocked whether other faneds do this, so it's obviously a trivial concern. But yeah...]]*

Still continuing with the *Battlestar Galactica* rerun on BBC2, which is now midway into season three, although we've had to fill in a couple of episodes from my box set when they failed to record on the Freeview box. My box set only includes seasons 1-3 (and the DVD of the spin off *Razor*, which I can't remember if I've watched or not) so if the BBC rerun continues past this point and into season 4 I may have to hit Amazon for backup. In the meantime, there's always *The Expanse*, which I bought a three season box set for Xmas but still haven't broken the shrink wrap.

*[[I gave The Expanse a go because many people whose opinions I value were ga-ga over it, but couldn't even get through the first episode...]]*

Now that *Spiral* has finished (on a completely incongruous happy ending, when by all rights just about everyone in the French police force and judicial system should have been suspended long ago for corruption and gross misconduct), Vikki has started to fill our Freeview box with back episodes of *Waking the Dead*, another cold-case/forensics series after we lost patience with *Silent Witness*. To say WTD is uneven is sort of like saying the Rocky Mountains are a bit bumpy. You get one episode which has a reasonably gripping plot and then another at which you are shouting at the TV in the first five minutes because everyone is behaving like a complete

dick because that is the only way the plot can be made to work. Idiot plotting, I think they call it, when the plot is (a) written by an idiot and (b) only works if everyone else is made to behave like an idiot. The third, unspoken, criteria is that viewer is treated as an idiot as well, but I've usually lost it well before then.

*[[The term was apparently originated by James Blish, and taken up with alacrity by Roger Ebert, who said: "The Idiot Plot, of course, is any plot that would be resolved in five minutes if everyone in the story were not an idiot." Good summation here: <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/IdiotPlot> ...]]*

\* \* \*

From: mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

February 12

**Mark Plummer** writes:

I don't know whether this means that you're failing at your focal pointiness, Nic, but while I did skim through TH...38 on receipt about three weeks ago I only read it properly today. Good stuff, as always. What follows is likely more than usually fragmentary and may well duplicate some of the things I said when we last spoke a couple of weeks ago.

I clicked through on some of your music links and agree that the version of 'Gimme Shelter' is impressive, although I don't have much else to say about it. Greg Pickersgill recently remarked in an email that he finds it surprisingly hard to write about music, and I feel much the same way. I like a lot of stuff, can wheel out the factual detail, and can even talk about some of it from a technical perspective and to a limited degree. But writing about the music itself is almost entirely beyond me.

*[[I do find that surprising, given your musical nous in general - you did do what was basically a favs list in a perzine, though, which was how I came to find out that we share at least one favorite slice, 'Song of a Baker', duly later parodied and subsequently (the parody, that is) perhaps mercifully forgotten...]]*

A small detail about your comment to **Steve Jeffery** in the 'focal point' discussion. You say *Attitude* "was ... largely regional to the UK". If any of the triumvirate are reading they will be better placed to comment than I am, but in case not I'll say that it depends on what you mean by "largely". I did see a copy of the mailing list once (granted, this was twenty-five years or so back now) and while it was as best I recall majority British, including a lot of people then receiving few if any fanzines, there were a lot of Americans and other overseas fans too. My sense is that it had a considerable international reach, more than most British fanzines of its day and probably since.

*[[We can split hairs between "largely" and "majority" British all fuckin' day, but I'll contend that for most*

*purposes they're the same thing. This Here... 's mailing list might also be "majority British" (which could be considered a bit odd for a zine based in Merka), but as well as the breadth of the US goes to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Israel, the Czech Republic and fucknose where else some of these people are hiding...]]*

And, god, this is starting to read like apa mailing comments. **Leigh Edmonds** says "I also sometimes wonder if 'editor' is the right word to use for a person in charge of a fanzine". You respond "I do edit" and you will be unsurprised that I chime in and say so do we. The extent varies from trying to fix typos -- and I'm astonished how many people don't seem to do this -- and imposing "house style" on punctuation and UK spelling, through to a degree of fact checking, especially in articles, and some structural stuff largely depending on who it is. And we don't print letters in full, especially if they're fragmentary (like this!) but excerpt hopefully the best bits.

*[[I see your point about 'fragmentary' but then again I'll keep in anything remotely interesting. My position on spelin is stated elsewhere. As I've often observed, Ulrika is much fiercer than me when it comes to the scissors, but that's also good perspective. I've become somewhat more cruel in this respect due to her influence...]]*

Which is only a partial disagreement with **Leigh**, because while some people like you and us do edit it's equally clear that some don't and are effectively compilers. I wonder to what extent digital publication is a factor? With us, it's not that we are paper-only as some people contend, but that *Banana Wings* is print-by-design and we're constrained to a certain weight and thickness to avoid a significant postage bump. That does tend to concentrate the mind. There was a particular fanzine in the relatively early days of the efanzines website where the "editor" just copy/pasted email letters into the fanzine and didn't even bother to remove the extraneous line-breaks.

*[[Formatting is a right fuckin' chore at times, especially when every fuckin' line ends with a paragraph break [koff - Strummer - koff] but given the time constraints I work with, I've got no sympathy at all for anyone else who can't be bothered, since I consider it elementary presentation. Fanzine production is not all joy and rainbows, but it's a solid fact that conscientious faneds are going to work at that presentation as much as they do in determining content. Old habits, I suppose, but I feel I put together any given ish as if it was a print edition. If only we could all be Journey Planet (eg) and not get any locs at all, it'd be a lot easier, but of course much less rewarding...]]*

**Claire** said "We really need to decide ... whether our Christmas rewatching binge this year is going to be *The Bridge* or *Battlestar Galactica*" and I can now confirm that we came down for the former. You mention later that you've not watched any Scandi-noir and while I think it's mostly good I



do really recommend this one. In particular, and hopefully this isn't a spoiler, I like the way that they deal with investigatory dead-ends. A particular individual or subplot may seem to be hugely significant near the start and continuing for several episodes but then it turns out that it isn't, and nobody ever mentions it or them again.

*[[It may startle you slightly (but then again since we've been friends for 134 years, maybe not) that I'll draw a comparison with what I consider to be one of the greatest police shows of all eternity, 'The Sweeney', in which the resolution of any given episode was never guaranteed to be the "good guys" win, and in fact several of the more memorable ones were more demonstrations of human frailty than anything else. I, of course, wanted to be Jack Regan, and I leave it to posterity to decide whether I succeeded or not...]]*

That's a useful clarification about *Lofgeornost* because, yes, I've tended to think of it as an apazine with outside distribution, whereas I should rather think of it as a perzine that's also distributed through an apa. Not that it makes a great deal of difference for most purposes. *Lofgeornost* is a good thing either way. I always feel a little bit smarter through having read an issue.

*[[Agreed on all counts...]]*

**Liam Proven** recalls that time at "Jumbo and Simoné's old place in Croydon, where for some reason, you were preparing rice", and yes, I remember that quite clearly too, hearing your didactic lecture on the right way to do it while James was out of the room, and then James bursting back in and very nearly provoking an Incident by trying to do it the wrong way. I was revisiting parts of *Tits*, *Sausages and Ballet Shoes* myself just the other week, seeking references to the line "Nic Farey stole my bird" for obvious reasons.

*[[I don't think there were any of those in TSBS, but could be wrong as usual. In fact I'm not sure I ever mentioned any of those tales myself, although I may have alluded to the one at the Brighton Worldthing who ended up giving me the crabs. They're still all (mostly) true...]]*

I'd read about the N3F/efanzines spat on File 770 but hadn't seen the Facebook stuff,

largely because -- and as you know -- I'm not on Facebook.

And now I've seen it and, er, gosh. Thing is, I have some sympathy with the N3F in general. Whatever their flaws, they've managed to keep going for 80 years. That's an achievement in itself and surely any organisation that can exist for that long must have something going for it. They've been the butt of jokes for decades but that's often received wisdom. While it's not really the organisation for me, it clearly has some value to somebody so, you know, live and let live.

*[[Longevity of an organisation isn't of itself something to necessarily commend eg KKK. That might seem harsh to put as an example, but George's Libertarian views don't preclude a membership drive anywhere on the basis that there might be a stray sf fan there somewhere who could be persuaded to part with 2/6d...]]*

But I now wonder whether when somebody tries to think positive thoughts about them, it sets off an alarm in N3F HQ, a prompt to them that they need to remind everybody just why they're the endless butt of jokes. **George Phillies** made that call for people to do social media outreach and as you say it's all perfectly reasonable if you remove the examples. I can only conclude they had a meeting beforehand to work

out the best way to take an innocuous message and make it inflammatory.

So there, a letter, albeit entirely living up to its advance warning of being fragmentary. And maybe that's part of why fans don't write letters to fanzines these days, because it's hard to do it well and be all joined up and coherent.

*[[I don't think at all that any given loc has to be "joined up and coherent" in the sense that I think you mean that it should be an essay of itself. Any given ish of This Here..., or anything else might contain several disparate topics, and people might feel emboldened to comment on some or all of them. I used to get locs from Alan Sullivan, for example, which basically went through page by page with individual remarks. Lloyd Penney and Jerry Kaufman seem to me to apply a similar technique, so ey, it's all good innit?...]]*

\*\*\*



For no apparent reason, the girl turned and attacked.

WAHF

**Leybl Botwinik ; Claire Brialey** : "I recently had cause to check out the biographical details for the late (much missed, died far too young) comedian Linda Smith. Because I'm rarely certain about your precise age I couldn't confirm until now that you and she shared a birthday. Although she was born in Erith..." ; **Bill Burns ; Brenda "Brender" Dupont ; Mike Glycer ; John Nielsen Hall** sends the latest *Vita Transplantare* review of books, telly and apostrophes with added **Gary Mattingly**, which I do manage to loc after a week, 'cos the old sod deserves it ; **Kim Huett**, continuing his worthy research into forgotten FAAn award history as well as other tendentious stuff ("100 fanzines to go"). He does mention my own reluctance to embark on similar endeavors - without mentioning me or *This Here...* by name, the old scrote, but I did reply that I *am* looking forward to the essay that's going to result - see 'Indulge Me' ; **Joseph Major** sends the latest *Alexiad*, arriving about 90 seconds after **Dave Hodson's** 'Footy' column, so I haven't had a chance to read it yet... ; **Will Mayo** : "Good reading always. Step lively now!" ; **Bob Jennings ; Perry Middlemiss** delivers *Perryscope 7*, a similar to *VT* review, but in this case a summation of his previous year's consumption of genre and other stuff. I now have even more recommendations to fill my less-than-copious free time, but all welcomed. Bloody good little zine an'all ; **Cathy Palmer-Lister ; Moss Whelan ; Alan White**

INDULGE ME

✘ **FUCKIN-A** : "Fandom requires freedom to travel, freedom of association, freedom of speech, kindness, forbearance and willingness to get along. It requires that we all participate as equals in the conversation. It can be destroyed for individuals and for groups by abuse of these things, and equally surely by lack of them". (**Caroline Mullan**, *Dysprosium* GoH talk, reprinted in *Banana Wings* 59, August 2015)...

✘ **SFC** : **Claire Brialey** opines that me just substituting the 'v' word for the 'c' word is probably no better. Couldn't resist this, though...



✘ **VAX POPULI** : I was a bit previous in telling some people that I had a COVID vaccination scheduled, since I got turned away from the Encore location which was apparently only doing high-tier frontline people (health workers, teachers, police officers), but I got info from another driver that the Cashman Center location *was* taking us lower orders of the "frontline" category, and so I got my first dose (Pfizer) jab on February 10, with the second scheduled for March 3. No major discomfort, bit of a sore arm is all. I was warned that I might experience headaches and fatigue, to which I respond "What's new?". The second dose is supposedly likely to be more debilitating, so I've asked for the following day off, which will give me a three-day weekend to recover from any ill effects...

✘ **FIRST WORLD DOTAGE PROBLEMS** : There's a few (winter) weeks of the year where I'm *not* off to bed in daylight, during which it's a chore to make sure I pull back all four layers of covers before crawling in. Given lack of a bedside lamp, I turn another light on, go pull the corner of the covers, go back and turn the light off and then insert myself correctly...

✘ **OPPOSITES ATTRACT** : I notice a billboard for some bar or other which advertises a "Reverse Happy Hour", and I wonder whether that means the usual prices are doubled and everyone is miserable...

✘ **MENTAL HEALTH** : N3F latest - **George Phillies** has suggested that the organisation may well start issuing a *tenth* zine, a newszine since he's perhaps a bit miffed that his every doings aren't emblazoned in banner headlines all throughout the Faniverse, although currently it's arguable he's found a way to make that happen. I was notified that the N3F had to "urgently" take up a new online domain name and essentially rebuild the website from the ground up, for which task any assistance was begged for. The first inference I thought of was to wonder whether the club had been de-platformed, but as usual the facts (as far as they can be determined) are as convoluted as ever. It first appeared that former member David Speakman either owned the domain name or was involved with webhost GreenGeeks in some way, but as it turns out he was simply the one paying the rent - he was Treasurer of the N3F until, I believe the end of last year, so presumably (although very little of anything N3F is transparent) that was in an official capacity, so I'm as baffled as ever as to why everything needs to be torn up, although there are suggestions that GreenGeeks aren't very good.

In an email discussion thread, wherein I stated that Speakman had been "driven out", this was called out by a member who said it was no such thing, since David (a) did not specifically say that and (b) there had been no formal exclusion carried out. Not only my own head is spinning.



**George** is now variously referring to “the F770 feud” and “the Speakman feud”, but seems to have occasional difficulty in mentioning **Bill Burns’** name, other than falsely characterising his initial email questioning the wisdom of looking for members on some platforms as “an irate note” when in fact its tone was one of incredulity. There’s also some oddly misplaced glee in George’s statement “Fan Feuds are a Holy Hannish [sic] tradition, so we had another one”.

Also of note, George has claimed a net *gain* in membership as a result of all this, quite a few apparently off MeWe. **Mark Plummer’s** loc (see above) wonders whether this is all just a deliberate ploy to maintain the N3F’s reputation, and I do wonder if he might be right. The moniker “National Fascist Fan Federation” has gained a bit of currency that I’ve seen, but ey, they’re in the news, right?...

I’ll add a note here that I emailed David Speakman (address provided by **Bob Jennings**, for which thanks) noting the commentary in the previous ish which leads into this one in which he’s mentioned a bit. No reply as yet...

✘ **OFF THE TWIG** : A month hardly goes by when we don’t note the exit of an old friend or two, and I’ll mention the name of John “Grandad” Philpott, who we only found out recently had joined the choir invisible on December 9. I’d worked with him on at least one convention, and we’d socialized extensively, at least enough for him to have had some Nic Farey stories (all mostly true), but one particular occasion I remember was at a First Thursday at the Wellington in Waterloo. However the discussion came around to “truth in advertising” I can’t remember at all (no surprise), but Grandad, in the matter-of-fact manner he essayed so well, offered the remark: “I want truth in advertising for toilet paper! I’m gonna buy the one that says ‘gives yer arse a good wipe and yer finger don’t go through’”. You almost certainly had to have been there for the full effect, but those present were reduced to helpless larffter for many minutes...

✘ **WORDS OF WISDOM** : Jen was off at the dentist so I was detailed to acquire my own nosebag for dinner, and stopping off (for the first time since they renamed and changed owners) at ‘JJ’s Pizza’ in the same strip mall where I get my smokes, I went for the chicken parmesan sub with fries. Having consumed said scran, I was minded of a comment from my former employer Mike Turner, after we’d just had some spectacularly unremarkable late breakfast sandwiches. “Well, it’ll make a turd”...

✘ **TV GUIDE** : Last night we watched the first episode of the *Equalizer* remake starring the always awesome Queen Latifah, and cor! It’s *very* good indeed, the whole cast is fuckin-A stellar. Queenie becomes “Robyn” rather than Robert McCall, but the character’s backstory is largely a match for the original. I hope the subsequent episodes live

up to the pilot, and there’s every indication that they ought to. Update: episode 2 turns out just as excellent, and (hopefully not *really* a spoiler) plot elements in common with the Edward Woodward incarnation are set up at the end...

✘ **I LIKE TRAINS, ME** : Note to the Grate Aitch, **Harry Bell**, and any other train fans, I have discovered <http://railfandepot.com> and am in traingeek heaven...

✘ **AGELESS BEAUTY** : Since a proposed Buck Rogers remake/reboot is in the works, here’s **Erin Gray**, who probably won’t be in it...

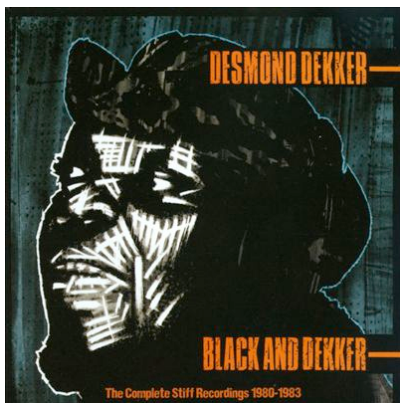


✘ **FAANWANK IN HISTORY** : **Kim Huett** (see also WAHFs) has compiled his research into prehistoric FAAn awards into ‘Some Time Before the Beginning’, a fine contribution for fanhistorical bumf which will, at some point, find its way onto Fanac.org. In the preamble he’s mildly rude about *This Here...*, which I don’t mind at all (some people are *much* more derogatory), but, even as Kim agrees that this is a rather dry topic of limited interest, it was for me a worthwhile read. I’ve noted in the past with reference to eg *Mimosa* that most fanhistorical stuff didn’t interest me since it was usually about people I didn’t know and events I had zero insider or even outsider knowledge of, but I now observe that, most likely due to incidental immersion in some of that there timebinding, I’m familiar enough with *most* of the names to get a great deal out of it, and of course this is also one of my hobby-horse topics. It’s almost an ur-fandom *plus ca change*, and I’ll happily recommend it to the other person who might be interested, and anyone else if only for the memorable phrase “plunged All Fandom into having an opinion”. With **Kim’s** already given permission, I’ll happily forward the file if asked...

✘ **ONLY IN VEGAS?** : Another [falls off chair] billboard advertising testosterone treatment pills, with the memorable tagline “Besties for your testes”. Meanwhile, here’s another advertising fail (screen grab supplied by **David Hodson**)...



✘ **RADIO WINSTON EXTRA** : This really deserves a column all its own, but I’d like to *very* belatedly note the 2013 reissue by the Pressure Drop label of the three albums Desmond Dekker did for Stiff Records between 1980 and 1983, the collection named for the first one of those, ‘Black and Dekker’ (ho ho). Interest in Dekker, a staple of the ‘Spirit of ‘69’ Spy Kids skinheads resurged during the second-wave



ska period, and Stiff thought it would be quite wizzo to re-record DD’s classic slices with a more “modern” uptempo feel. Those three sets pretty much tanked, although one of them did make the top ten in Belgium. Purists eg **Graham James** might cringe, but the redone ‘Israelites’ is my favorite version...

<https://bit.ly/2ZsKIji>

## MIRANDA

*THIS HERE...* is (mostly) written, edited and produced by: **Nic Farey**, published on efanazines.com by the Grace of Burns.

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Art credits: **Julie Faith McMurray** (pp8, 12); “Summers” (p15), supplied by **Paul Di Filippo**

✘ **100 YEARS AGO** : From *This Here* #1 (then sans ellipsis which didn’t appear until #5), December 1999: A [then] recent book review of a history of the Surrealist movement recounted a World War 2 era tale of Max Ernst, who was interned several times in camps in France, and escaped just as many times, trying to make it across to Spain. On this occasion Ernst had made it as far as a train station at the Spanish border, but aroused the suspicions of the guard who demanded to know what the rolled-up items were he was carrying under his coat. Resigned, Ernst began tacking these (his works) up on the peeling walls of the train station, creating total silence from both the guard and the others at the station. Finally the guard directed Ernst to take down the paintings, and addressed him thus: “Sir, you have a tremendous talent, and I greatly admire talent. However, I must send you back to Pau (in France). This train on the right is the train for Pau, the train on the left is the train for Madrid. Here is your passport. Please do not get on the wrong train.” Which is how Max Ernst finally made it into Spain, and speaks volumes for the artistic taste of an unknown crossing guard at a small border town.

✘ **AGELESS BEAUTY EXTRA** : Since there must be Brits, rather crogged to learn that **Annie Nightingale** is now 80 and *still* hosting an eclectic radio show...



**“It’s gonna be rougher, it’s gonna be tougher, And I won’t be the one who’s gonna suffer.”**