

This Here...

“...didn't make any sense...” (E Cohen)

EGOTORIAL

WHAT BOILS MY PISS?

I had first thought to subtitle this here 'Egotorial' simply "Annoyances", but this morning while also dealing with the not unexpected hangover, not *quite* as severe as might be since I got to bed at an earlier hour than is often the case (9:45pm vs a more whiskey-fueled something ending in "am") I realized that I have a squalid swearsy reputation to uphold, and the above question surfaced in the working braincell, likely remembered from a Gary Delaney one-liner, itself possibly prompted by me watching stand-up clips of his excellent missus on the YoobToob last night (as you do).

This follows on somewhat from last issue's discussion of retirement plans, since although I genuinely mostly enjoy my job for its occasional moments of happiness (see 'Indulge Me'), and the good feeling I get after ferrying one of my little old lady regulars to the shops and back (which I refer to as "karma rides" since they're not typically exactly lucrative), there's plenty enough to have the arse with on a daily basis which makes the prospect of not doing this anymore an attractive one.

Despite the subtitle, and the resultant expectation of a "Why I Hate My Job" extended moan of the type you'd expect (and have previously suffered) in here, in the interests of both fairness and accuracy I should ameliorate the *miseriae* a bit before it starts.

Some of this has undoubtedly been alluded to, if not stated outright, in 'Taxi Tales' columns for *Vibrator* (as always,



thanks again for that opportunity, **Grah**) but it must be said that I'm generally happy with my employer, Lucky Cab, who I've now been with for almost 7 years, the longest time for any one job I've managed in what's now coming up to 29 years in the States. The advantage of working for a small company is that everyone pretty much knows everyone else, and apart from the statistically inevitable presence of some utter excuses for human beings, there's a general comity and sense of community which prevails. It's not a firm governed by some invisible and distant corporate hand, and that helps. As much as we like to moan about almost everything, the fact remains that us 'umble toilers are treated remarkably

well under the owner's direction. Uniquely among the cab companies in the Meadows, Lucky kept up our health insurance during the pandemic, brought in a system where we accrue sick pay hours, and us (permanent) shift employees get semi-annual bonuses and vacation pay - a thoroughly better deal than any of the other lot.

The only piss-boiling element would be that

Lucky is, I think, the only company that works the previous industry standard of 12-hour shifts now, but of course we accept this by working there. It is what it is.

The real pain in the arse bits of the job are what you have to deal with when out and about, including but not limited to clownish driving from other road users, annoying passengers (a less prevalent problem than many might assume) and for me personally the increasingly prevalent stench of weed, which I seem to have developed a possibly psychosomatic allergy to. Having said that we accept the long work week, it's still at least somewhat cause for the arse

that I can't get as much done (in terms of fanac and other non-work endeavors) as I might like. Other than *This Here...* and *BEAM* (and of course *The Incomplete Register* and FAAN award admin duties) I've got several projects I'd love to be able to have at and have discussed these, albeit cursorily, with potential collaborators to keep some semblance of a flame alive. There's also plenty of stuff to do around the house, mostly at the moment concerning Jen's workspace for her ebay store, which (being the garage) has reduced egress to the extent that I'm tripping over and knocking over any and all impediments in that area.

That, and we can't get to either of the ladders socked away in there, and I need to replace some awkward lightbulbs in the kitchen.

But yeah, all things considered, I suppose I can really quite readily continue to my usual 'Egotorial' signoff...

It's all good.

June 2022

RADIO WINSTON

RUBY SOHO

I'd be fairly confident in stating that most of us music fans have go-to slices, and in my case at least that doesn't just border on obsession but fully accepts its embrace. Some of these obsessions are temporary, others are longer-lasting, and for meself the latter lot (as some of you may well know) includes primarily 'Gimme Shelter' (almost exclusively in cover versions), 'The Man Who Sold the World' (just about any version, even Lulu's, but I'll punt Midge Ure's go over the more well-known cover by Nirvana) and **M Strummer** favorite 'Song of a Baker' in absolutely any version at all (so far).

What might turn out to be temporary (but equally might not) is mad love for 'Ruby Soho', the [1995 slice by Rancid](#), which captured, well, *something* so well that it's been covered quite a bit.

[Songfacts](#) describes it as "mysterious", which is a bit tabloid if you ask me, such mystery as may exist deriving from whether 'Ruby' is biographical, autobiographical or just representatively made up.

In one sense this is a good ole "story song" with at least peripheral plot points (arguably, I'm sure) in common with Cyndi Lauper's 'Time After Time' and particularly the Eurythmics 'Would I Lie to You?' (nicely gender-reversed). Ruby is the girlfriend/hanger-on of a punk rock headliner, but is basically sidelined by his inevitably peripatetic lifestyle, and ends up a transient part of his existence as he moves on, "destination unknown" applying equally to them both.

I'll contend here that Rancid's original likely meets John Peel's definition of a "perfect song" in which fuck-all could be added or taken away to improve it. And yet there are many cover versions of a slice that clearly captured some kind of zeitgeist, a lot of which are markedly different from the original. I think a lot of this has to do with the cadence and chord structure which I'd define as essentially fuckin' perfect, surviving even a semi-faithful but slightly thrashier go by the [Dollyrots](#), contrasted heavily by an acoustic turn from [The Sensitives](#) (which is frankly quite fantastic). I'm not going to promote the somewhat vapid go by Vampire Weekend, but you can have a look at that one if you like.

Seriously, as the dear old Killer **Jerry Kaufman** has determined, searching the YoobToob gets better results than a mere Google, and a look at "Ruby Soho cover" yields much, and I reckon there's going to be enough links in here as it is.

It'll be zero surprise that I rediscovered this'un because (here he is yet again) [Jimmy Cliff covered it](#) on the superb 2012 'Rebirth' set (along with 'Hard Rain' and other fab slices as previously documented), his typically smooth and godlike pure vocal contrasting with a lot of other efforts - and the other thing on that slice I clocked was the drum track which seemed to have been fully lifted from the attempts to remake Desmond Dekker classics in a more "modern" style on the album 'Black and Dekker'.

As an aside (and an excuse for a grrrl photo), the wrestler Dori Prange (a Rancid fan) was in WWE as "Ruby Riott" for a while, but when she left for AEW, and (typically) WWE asserted ownership of the "Ruby Riott" name, she became "Ruby Soho", and uses the original slice as her entrance music.

And as another aside, the clip at the beginning of the original is, wonderfully, '[Give Me Power](#)' by the Stingers.

Aside 3 (and final), Ruby herself never appears in the Rancid video. Therein, perhaps, lies the mystery...



CORFLUX

STEP UP, FANZINE FANS



As the marital partner of She Who Is The Pangloss Bookkeeper, I'm aware of what's arriving in terms of memberships and such, which quite honestly has in the last several months (since she took over the clerical duties from the get-better-soon-mate Hal O'Brien) has been adjacent to fuck all.

It's DoBFO, but likely necessary to point out that this event, like any other, doesn't get sorted for shirt buttons, and the laggardly last-minute bits of the fanzine Faniverse don't always help - and laggardly I well know, from the distribution of receipt of FAAn award ballots.

Thus I encourage you all to beetle off to corflu.org and at the very least punt a supporting membership (if you're financially able) which will have the desirable effect of having the organizing team less subject to bumhole palpitations about how much this is potentially going to cost them.

That having been said, the participation and generosity of this community overall is fuckin' legendary, but some better timeliness wouldn't go amiss, and while you're at it have a gander at Corflu Craic in Belfast next spring an'all...

FAANWANK

CONSTITUENCY

The often perspicacious Jerry Kaufman notes (locs) - and I DoBFO paraphrase, that if the readership of *Alexiad* could be arsed to vote in the FAAns, that title would have high standing in the results, though I'm not quite so sure about the Killer's suggestion that George Price would snag the letterhack award.

I've mentioned on several if not many previous occasions that I'm personally a bit annoyed about the apparent consistent refusal of that corner of the fanzine Faniverse to engage with the awards at all, yet it's never in my knowledge been the case that there's been any Taral-style

bitching about apparent exclusion, just what seems like consistent disinterest, with Joseph Major doing pretty much o to publicize the FAAns, yet always being willing to publish any letters from me mentioning them, which have all appeared to meet with resounding ignoral.

I genuinely don't want this to seem like I'm picking on the Majors, but the fact remains that *Alexiad* (a zine I will happily admit to generally admiring and enjoying, and even occasionally loccing) stands alone and aloof from the fray that is a set of dedicated awards for actual fuckin' fanzines, something you might think that they'd be involved with.

I can fully go along with the thought that Joe and Lisa might be award-averse, and in any case (as also pointed out in here and elsewhere) get their 'boo off continued and engaged reader response which is both consistent and admirable, yet remains in many ways a bubble, and we all know how much I like to prick bubbles where I can.

I've somewhat strongly hinted on several occasions that I'd love to hear from Joe as to why he ignores the FAAn awards so resolutely, and having had no direct response, I'll ask again baldly. Is it a reluctance to self-promote, or is it a simple belief that the FAAns may be gimmicked in some way or another? I'm just guessing.

David M. Shea (who as far as I know remains resolutely offline and won't see this), at the time writing as 'E B Frohvet' spent a fair bit of effort in his fanzine *Twink* and elsewhere denigrating what he described as "the Corflu Cult", and subsequent attempts (by me) to include him in the management of Corflu Valentine in Maryland, his state of residence, were sadly met with statements and actions which served only to prove his contention. Thus I continue to wonder whether this view of Corflu (and by extension, the FAAns) as elitist bollocks still has currency.

With the Admin hat on, it could be considered difficult to know how to proceed, given that I like to think that I've had a history of attempting to widely promote the awards, perhaps to the consternation of those who fit Shea's dismissal. Against hard-line holdouts like *Alexiad*, however, it's arguable that this effort may have gone as far as it can?

The FAAns are certainly susceptible to determined efforts from advocates and acolytes of particular groups, but in a previous instance of one of those groups having tried and failed to secure an actual win it seems, puppy-like, that they've given up, which is not to say that any given "they" couldn't have another go.

A counter-argument that I've punted before is that, given the consistency of names that turn up at the top of the lists, is that the best practitioners of the hobby don't turn to shit overnight and are always going to feature. I'd just like to see more of the undoubtedly worthy get some attention.

Well, Joe?

TV GUIDE

THE ORVILLE : NEW HORIZONS / THE BOYS

Now right there, that's a couple of series that we'd been all agog for the resumption of.

The Orville got kicked off Fox, Seth MacFarlane's clout over there thus implied to be less than it was, either that or the guiding philosophy of Murdochness is to treat them all like shit, perhaps without the preceding phrase of "Pay them well, and..." coined by Lord Gnome. Hulu picked up the show with apparent alacrity and seem to have made available a bit more than 3/6d for the CGI, which gets better as it goes on (3 episodes in, as I write). This is a more serious *Orville*, and that's not a mere denigration of the observation that there's a lot less bodily function and knob jokes. "Dialed back" seems an unfair, but accurate remark - this is now a more genuine ensemble effort (something readers will know I'm a fan of) which is working given the establishment of the returning characters from previous series, who are now, well, let's say less broadly drawn.



MacFarlane himself is less front-and-center of everything (though DoBFO still core), inviting comparisons with Shatner (not to Shatner's credit) and perhaps more relevantly to Anson Mount as Captain Pike in *Strange New Worlds* in that both convey the unusual combination of being both laid-back and yet decisive when it matters. We just clocked the third episode of season 3, 'Mortality Paradox', which, avoiding overt spoilers, I have to say was both complex and riveting with an unexpected (to me anyway) "reveal" of what's been going on which ties beautifully into the series' history, establishing actual canon rather than the impression left by the first season which was of a series of skits, amusing though they mostly were. I note that this episode was written by Cherry Chevapravatdumrong, a long-time MacFarlane collaborator whose work has always been top-notch. What impressed me a fuck of a lot was the final scene where the main characters (mild spoiler) ruminate about immortality (over proper drinks) with deeply philosophical intent, whereas I couldn't help but think that the equivalent coda in an episode of *ST:TOS* would have been a 30-second

throwaway on the bridge with a snide aside at Spock's expense.

And so to *The Boys*. The preamble informs us that we've jumped ahead a year, with Homelander supposedly "under control" (and we all know that won't last) and the Boys themselves pretty much working for the government, with the twist that Wee Hughie is now Billy Butcher's boss.

It's accurate enough to say that again, the series is dominated by the riveting magnificence of Karl Urban as Butcher, as determined an antihero as you'll ever get to see, and now (because this is something I'd notice) having got well past the occasional wobbliness of his accent from the earliest episodes.

It's a tribute to the skill of all involved that the very graphic violence doesn't detract from the twisty plot which, while perhaps fundamentally simple in that it's, well, bad guys vs even badder guys isn't in any way a mere series of splash-panel drag-outs.

Antony Starr (like Urban, a New Zealander), as Homelander is *so* convincing that he made me think of Andy Robinson as Scorpio in 'Dirty Harry', a part Robinson essayed so well that he barely got much more notable work until his stellar turn as Elim Garak in *ST:DS9*. Starr, though, isn't blond-haired in real life though his chiseled features remain recognizable, and I hope he doesn't share Andy's path. He does top work, since Homelander could be portrayed as a fuck of a lot more cartoonish than is the case - he's shown as being pretty much at least as thick as some of the more accurate portrayals of Superman, and despite all his braggadocio is fundamentally as insecure as all get out. It's a tightrope walk which Starr excels at.

Those familiar with the source material may be wondering whether the Black Noir reveal is going to occur, but so far he's had just two very brief appearances.

Trigger warnings must include the very graphic violence, a fuck-ton of misogyny and, from Butcher of course, extensive use of **Claire Brialey's** least favorite word.

I posited to **Jen** just now the idea of making a Billy Butcher t-shirt with a suitably grim image of the man himself adorned by the words 'ELLO CUNTS (actual line from the script), but she's probably talked me out of it. Only probably, mind...



OMPHALOSKEPSIS

PUTTING THE “F” IN “BFF”

It's been highly instructive to read others' takes on the “BFF” topic, and I'm rather envious of the amount of time some people have available to actually *read* anything at all (though, gratefully, that seems to include this here virtual bag of knackers), and I was well struck by comments from **Mark Plummer** and **Steve Jeffery** in particular (locs) about perusal habits, past and present.

Like both of them, back in long-ago days when I was commuting from Stevenage and/or Hitchin to London on a daily basis, either by train or (later, because it was markedly cheaper) bus, this was conducive to having a goodly amount of reading time for fanzines and books, and I was also in the habit of reading for an hour or so before kip of a night - an activity which is presently replaced by watching an hour of tv over dinner, because it's not like I have any extended evening hours of leisure. At the arse end of my UK years, having been banned from driving, I also had time on the two bus rides (shades of a typical **Martin Tudor** commute) required to get to work (from Hitchin) after the offices had moved from St. John Street (south of the Angel, Islington) to the outskirts of Luton which allowed this luxury.

Mark's description of the various methods by which he accesses the fanac (and anything else) resulted in the delivery of a container-load of sheer envy round here, but also the realization that I could not and cannot possibly emulate his dedication or ability.

I've mentioned previously that it will likely take me all of the six months between issues to get through that effiest of BFFs, *Portable Storage*, since the reading of said tome occurs while seated upon the lav of an early morn, also occupied with often extensive squirrel-chasing, groans and Goon Show style straining noises (or impressive splashing noises, depending upon how much hot sauce I slathered on the previous night's nosebag).

It would undoubtedly be churlish to dismiss *PS7* as a set of reading lists, a series of advertisements for particular works, since the enthusiasm of the various contributors to this ostensibly “sercon” issue (part 2) is drippingly redolent. I'm coming away with the certain feeling that here is a set of recommendations for my hoped-for retirement perusal, all eloquently argued for.

As Mark observes of *Bixelstrasse*, similarly to all excellent BFFs, *Portable Storage* can be dipped in and out of, and there is much goodness within.

I probably won't loc, though. Is that paradoxical?...

FOOTY

BY DAVID HODSON

There's a column I've been trying to write for Nic for *BEAM* for a couple of years now, but I just haven't been able to bend it to my will. I recently got in contact with another old friend (non-fannish) and had to fill them in with developments over the last few years since last we'd compared notes and, lo and behold, I was able to break the back of a large part of the column in that email. It doesn't read the way I would have liked it to for *BEAM*, and I came to the conclusion that the column I originally envisaged was probably beyond my abilities. But, it sort of got me hooked on a theme, so I give you the first three paragraphs of that email (which is all I really feel comfortable sharing here) and we'll see if the rest of the column goes the way I hope it does:

In late February 2016, I “came to” or “woke up” in the Intensive Care Unit of North Middlesex University Hospital. To cut a long story short, I had been placed in an induced coma nearly a month before due to developing sepsis. I had seemingly caught flu, developed a chest infection and pneumonia, and the chest infection had developed into sepsis. I've been told my family were called to the hospital twice whilst I was comatose because it was thought unlikely I would live through the night. When I did come to I was unable to speak because I had had a tracheostomy performed and had a breathing tube keeping me alive; I couldn't move because I had been losing 3% of my body weight a day for all the time I was out and my arms and legs looked like pipe-cleaners; I had a central line inserted through the artery in my neck to monitor my heart; and I was hooked up to a dialysis machine because my kidneys had shut down due to the sepsis. Despite all that, the worst part at the time was being tied down because when I was awake and delirious I kept trying to remove the feeding tube that was up my nose and that I was convinced was tiny metallic fishes on a silver chain that kept wriggling loose of the chain and swimming around in my sinuses.

It was another month before I was well enough to be discharged from hospital, on April 1st 2016, after a month of slowly being built back up by physiotherapists, nutritionists, and others. Being well enough to be discharged from hospital does not mean being well; over the last six years I've had to see various specialists at multiple hospitals to investigate ongoing problems and, although developing sepsis was the start of these problems at the current level, the likelihood is that some of the issues were already there in some form or another. For example, I always had a minor dairy intolerance, but it was not significant. I could drink milk in tea and coffee, I could eat dairy in reasonable quantities, it played up if I had too much in too short a time,

so I could eat one cheese sandwich (and I love cheese), but if I ate two I would be uncomfortable for an hour or so until the cheese had passed through the first part of my digestive system (the stomach) into the intestines. These days a lot of dairy products will leave me in agony for hours and sometimes days, so I have to be very careful with the things I eat. The seriousness of my illness had taken a minor ailment and turned the dial up to eleven on it. I can no longer eat garlic or onions or mushrooms or various other foods that I would previously have eaten on a daily basis. It's called irritable bowel syndrome, I have some medication that helps alleviate the symptoms, I take a daily probiotic which also helps, but the main way of dealing with it is to control my diet.

The other problems I have been left with since the illness include: Neuropathy in my feet and lower legs, basically constant nerve pain like having permanent pins and needles and electric shocks along the length of my lower legs. Some days my feet are completely numb as if the nerves have shut down, most days are like above, really bad days are constant pain which no painkillers touch. The only medications for nerve pain are things like anti-psychotics or anti-epileptics which have been shown to close down nerve pathways, but these don't work in the majority of cases and I'm one in which they don't. They also have hideous effects on your digestive system, so not good alongside irritable bowel syndrome. I have stage three kidney disease after my kidneys shutting down due to the sepsis. I have thyroid damage so have to take a daily dose of Levothyroxine.

Now, when I was in the hospital recovering, speaking to doctors and nurses and nephrologists and what seemed like Uncle Tom Cobley 'n' all, a recurring proposition was put to me: that all the years prior to my illness, I had actually been ridiculously fit and healthy, even though I took minimal care of myself. Don't get me wrong, I ate reasonably well because I can cook to a reasonable level, I also didn't drink like I once did because I wasn't working in the alcohol driven book trade anymore or running a student union bar, but I never went anywhere near a gym and I still smoked, although I could still go scrambling 30 or 40 metres up the road to catch a bus if need be with minimal "puffiness" after the mad dash whilst in my mid-fifties. The more I thought about it, the more reasonable the proposition seemed. I come from a family of builders and the like; my dad was still doing heavy lifting jobs up into his 70s when the cancer finally overtook him, one of my grandfathers fell off a roof in his late 60s whilst still working as a roofer, only suffered a broken ankle, and made a full recovery to survive well into his eighties. These amongst other examples tended to suggest I have a pretty damned fine genetic heritage. The problem is: how do you measure such things? Two people may discuss health problems with each other, but there's no guarantee they are using compatible frames of reference; one person's headache can be another person's migraine.

Danny Wallace was an English footballer with Southampton, Manchester United, and England in the 1980s and early 90s. Wallace was widely accepted to be one of the fittest and fastest attacking players in the old Division One (the Premier League before the marketing boys got at it), but his fitness and form appeared to collapse completely as he approached his thirties and he tumbled down the leagues to Birmingham City and, finally, Wycombe Wanderers by the mid-90s. In 1996, the reason for his medical and fitness problems came to light when Wallace was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Wallace now runs a foundation to aid fellow sufferers. Contrast that story with Gareth Bale, who, early in his Spurs career and before he became the superstar he is now, was accused of being a bit of a hypochondriac for not just playing through minor injuries. It could be argued that the reputation has stuck with him and played a part in his fall from grace with Real Madrid supporters as he became less and less willing to put his body on the line as he entered his thirties, but, at the end of the day, why should he risk potential injury and long-term complications in pursuit of what is, ultimately, a job of work? I have minor arthritis in my lower back. Could it have been caused by lifting heavy boxes of books and comics in my twenties and thirties? I know that none of my employers back in the dark days of the 1980s bothered to hire trainers to demonstrate proper manual handling techniques to their staff. Looking back through the annals of footballing history, the stories of people like Tommy Smith, a Liverpool defender through the 1960s and 70s who ended up with replacement hips, knees, and an elbow and was wheelchair bound until his death in 2019 suffering from Alzheimer's disease, or Jeff Astle (pictured), who choked to death in 2002 whilst suffering from a degenerative brain disease that has been linked to heading a football, especially the very heavy leather balls used in the 1960s and 70s, absolutely litter the obituaries. Astle, and captain of the Spurs double-winning side of 1960/61 Danny Blanchflower, who died in 1993, have both been found to have suffered from chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a disease previously associated primarily with boxers.



Nic likes to send me little emails through the month to make sure I haven't missed a newspaper or website column that might be important. His most recent one was to make sure I saw a column by a writer that I actually follow quite religiously, despite the website he writes for having degenerated into absolute clickbait pap over the last few years: John Nicholson at football365. This time, Nicholson, who could best be described as an agent provocateur, was doing a fine imitation of a starving man cutting off his own leg to eat: [What is the future of football journalism? High brow? Low brow? No brows at all?](#)



Nicholson is generally bemoaning not just the quality of football (I'd personally go as far to say all sports) journalism, but also the quantity and the dubious sources from which stories spring. Long gone are the days when someone like Brian Glanville at The Sunday Times could also claim a C.V. that included writing for That Was The Week That Was, as well as over twenty novels, well over half-a-dozen short story collections, a couple of plays, and endless columns of social commentary. The only thing I could ever find to hold against Glanville personally was being a lifelong Arsenal supporter; he really was too good for them. Another wonderful journalist and author that I'm sure I've mentioned before is Hunter Davies, who not only produced the seminal *The Glory Game*, a behind the scenes look at Tottenham Hotspur in the early 1970s, but has also ghost written political biographies, produced a column for the *New Statesman*, published children's literature, and is also a damned fine music journalist.

If ever there was a prime example that proves Nicholson's assertion that "if there's more money in stupid, then stupid we shall get" it's Neil Custis of The Sun newspaper, who is so unbelievably dense that he's an easy target even for football365: [Manchester United set for a bottom-half finish! Or maybe fifth! It's SuperCustis v Supercomputer.](#)

Custis is a Manchester United fan and his recent columns in The Sun have bemoaned the slump he sees the club being in: "They may even be going backwards if you consider the players who have left, like Paul Pogba, Nemanja Matic, Edinson Cavani, Juan Mata and Jesse Lingard" and "indeed, if the season began tomorrow and squads stayed as they are,

United could quite easily finish bottom half." But, as football365 rightly points out, he's writing rubbish: "Even with the caveats, it's just not true is it? United were absolutely awful for long periods last season and finished sixth with a nine-point cushion to the bottom half. United haven't finished in the bottom half of the top flight since 1989/90, and none of the 'Big Six' have done it since the 'Big Six' was a thing."

And I guess this is where my question above - how do you measure such things? - comes into play. For several years I've argued that, despite what the Sky Sports and BT Sports pundits may say, that the quality of the Premier League is actually at an all-time low and that the old chestnut about every team being able to beat every other team on its day is so out of date that it wouldn't so much roast on an open fire as explode in a cloud of desiccated dust. Manchester City are indeed a very good side and Pep Guardiola is the most innovative coach in the world, but even the much lauded Jürgen Klopp is nothing more than a remarkably efficient organiser who is made to look better than he is by the paucity of quality in the rest of the league. The speed with which Antonio Conte was able to turn around a fundamentally flawed Tottenham side last season and qualify for Champions League football next season is also a colossal indictment of the Premier League and I fully expect Spurs to perform above expectations next season if only because the most basic mistakes will be remorselessly drilled out of them on the training ground.

All of which probably explains why I needed the rest from football that this summer is providing; one can only be sold a pup so many times.

LOCO CITATO

["When you do something noble and beautiful and nobody noticed, do not be sad. For the sun every morning is a beautiful spectacle and yet most of the audience still sleeps." (attributed to John Lennon, but see WAHF)...

From: phillies@4liberty.net

May 27

George Phillies writes:

As good news, I did some years ago switch over from employer health insurance to Medicare. The transition was smooth and painless. May yours do as well.

[Chyrons:] A local station was covering the Girl Scout cookie campaign, and lagging sales.

Cut to chyron "New Scout sales technique".

Video out of sync with chyron.

Next story was on Iraq.

Video shows image of soldiers, heavily armed and body armored, one kicking in a house door.

[[falls off chair...]]

From: jakaufman@aol.com

May 28 *[[My own take exactly...]]*

Jerry Kaufman writes:

Haven't been in the mood to write letters recently, but the urge has returned. It's good to know you have plans for the next several years, but the zeitgeist feels uncertain to the point of chaos, so you'll have to be flexible about changes. Good luck, and I hope the changes are minimal.

[[Ta for that Killer. We're at least positive about the fact that we have a tentative plan at all to be honest...]]

I tried out the songs you list for the Havalinas, though my first attempt to look them up (not working from the *This Here...* PDF, but from Google) only returned links to Javelins. Working from within Youtube gave me the right results, and I'd say I would have been a fan if I'd heard them back in the day. Now my response is, "Nice, but now I'll forget all about them."

I'm looking forward to seeing Moshe at Corflu, but we'll also see him at Chicon. With careful planning, we may even have a meal with him (and probably others) there. I'm not sure if Moshe has actually read a fanzine in the past forty years; so far as I recall, he's never responded to anything we've published since we moved to Seattle.

[[An ideal Corflu 50 delegate, then? (falls off chair again)...]]

Thoughtful letter from **Justin Busch**, though he left out *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Ben Franklin's successful 18th Century annual fanzine, the source of so many interlineations. Early newspapers, despite their lack of reference to fantasy or science fiction, often resembled perzines more than anything else.

If all the people who read and responded to *Alexiad* (many of whom respond only to that worthy) were to vote in the FAANs, it would rank high in the results, and George Price would win Best Letterhack.

Thanks to **William Breiding** for his compliment to me regarding my "measure of reasoned clarity." That's what I aim for, though I usually delete such from my letters, as I always think I've skipped steps in the "reasoned" element and bungled the "clarity."

[[I believe we share a propensity to think out loud, though admittedly I'd say that I probably do that more than you. In a lot of ways that's a vital component round here, along with the ability to revise stances and opinions as further information and other, differing (and well-argued) opinions become available. I've got no truck at all with people who

come in with "But that's not what you said in 1997" as if that were a fixed result in thought - which frankly it might be in some cases, but it ain't necessarily so...]]

I certainly don't vote for myself (or Suzle) or my own fanzines in fan polls like the FAAN Awards, but I have no qualms about voting for our contributors. They deserve the egoboo, which is one reason we publish them.

I have sympathy for **William Breiding** when he hopes for response to *Portable Storage*. We never get responses from more than a small fraction of the copies we send. (We sent a lot more PDFs of last issue than print copies, so the small response is not surprising, but this was true when we mailed nearly all. Though I should say that the letters we do get are all fabulous.) We've carried people on our mailing list for the past fifty years because we consider them lifelong friends and in hopes we've amused them all along. (See note above about Moshe Feder.)

My "award" to **Eli Cohen** was both a leg-pull and an appreciation of his return to active ~~du~~ fan activity. In all seriousness, Eli is funny. See how he works on running gags, for instance. (I imagine I'll never hear the end of it.)

I also imagine I'll never hear the end of your joke about me and British women that you find attractive in their later years, either. Have fun with that.

[[Oh, I am...]]

Perhaps the Nebula Conference needs a little wiggle room in their Code of Conduct, like "elderly white writers will get stern talking-tos on first offence." But I don't consider it my place to overrule a Black woman who was on the panel and was herself shocked and offended, or to tell the conference organizers how to interpret and implement their policy.

[[Fair point there an'all, but I'd give more weight to Delaney's response, which shows that groups of people defined by ethnicity or whatever aren't at all as homogenous as lazy policymaking would prefer them to be...]]

From: mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

May 28

Mark Plummer writes:

I admit I do sometimes hanker after an earlier, simpler age, especially if I can disregard some of the less pleasant aspects of the era. For the first Hugos in 1953, a 'Novel' was anything the publisher described as such while a 'Short story of Novelette' was 'any fictional writing too short to qualify [as a novel]'. 'Professional magazine' and 'Fan magazine' went entirely undefined, presumably because everybody knew into which category any given publication fell. Although I wonder, were there no edge cases back then? Or

were fans simply less inclined to dissect the rules, seeking that loophole in the definition that means they can also nominate bookends, pumice stone, and West Germany in the fanzine category?

[[“...less inclined to dissect the rules” I suspect may be key here. Old-school values of not needing definitions of categories because, well, everyone knew what they meant have been thoroughly overtaken, and I have the impression there’s a substantial cohort of what we might have once termed “fakefans” who are really only interested in rule-making and rules lawyering...]]

I rather like **Justin Busch’s** “temporally distinct”, even if it perhaps doesn’t stand up to legal scrutiny.

“[D]esigned to be, or as if it were intended to be, printed” is I think more problematic. As you say, *Lulzine* is an obvious example of something that fails the test, something that should be within the enclosure but isn’t. **Alison Scott’s** *Dante’s Cardigan* is another, and maybe **John Coxon’s** *Procrastination* although that also comes in a ‘printable’ PDF format too. *Banana Wings* exists in various states. As well as the print edition there’s a portrait PDF, essentially the larval state of the print, and a landscape PDF which could be printed although it’s not designed to be and I don’t see why anybody would want to. And then there are epub and mobi versions which really aren’t intended to be printed and I’d be amazed if anybody does. If there’s a definitive version it’s the print one as that’s what we’re aiming for and everything else is an adaptation of that, but does it mean *Banana Wings* is or isn’t a fanzine depending on how you experience it?

The whole “designed to be, or as if it were intended to be, printed” is interesting. As best I recall, the earliest e-fanzines I saw in the 1990s – before the advent of efanazines.com – were unformatted emails, although in at least some cases there were also formatted equivalents available. Following the launch of efanazines.com, most people did indeed produce PDF fanzines “designed to be, or as if it were intended to be, printed” with the arguable exception of the use of colour at a time when I suspect few people had ready access to affordable colour printing. However, it’s my general sense that few people were actually printing them. Rather I suspect most people were reading them on a desktop computer with the kind of screen that lent itself to

landscape design rather than portrait although few fanzine editors took account of that.

[[I’ll fully agree that the ‘designed to be printed’ test has significant weaknesses. For the purposes of the FAAn awards, I DoBFO consider ‘Lulzine’ as the first example that comes to mind of something that isn’t designed to be printed at all, but is a fanzine. Rather than the completely laissez-faire approach that Hooper generally took in his admin stint, I am, I suppose, less lenient in aspects of both categorization of publications, and indeed whether something is a “fanzine” for award purposes or whether it is, in fact, West Germany. To that extent the admin gig (in my definition, anyway) is a bit more than a mere clerical function. This could be summed up, perhaps brutally, as “If the Admin (er - me at the moment) says it’s a fanzine, then it

is, and if not, then not”. This is shurely a vital part of admin responsibility - and I might perhaps unnecessarily add that (as you’re well aware) these decisions are not taken on a whim, or without consultation, but in the end someone has to make those calls...]]

Things have obviously moved on. These days I read *This Here...* on an iPad. The screen is a little smaller than a piece of letter-sized paper and so ideally I’d prefer a slightly bigger screen or a slightly larger font, but it’s perfectly readable as it is and the way in which I turn the page isn’t that dissimilar from the way I’d turn the page on its print forebear. It is, I assume, ‘designed to be, or as if it were intended to be, printed’ but actually that’s largely coincidental.

Thinking about it, right now I have the following reading on the go. **Rob**

Hansen’s *Bixelstrasse* is on my iPhone. It’s quite long, nearly 200k words, but there are lots of short episodes so it’s conducive to reading another bit during a short bus ride or any other time where I find myself with a few minutes to kill. On my iPad I’ve just finished *This Here...* On my Kindle I have *Silverview*, the last novel from John Le Carré, and by my bedside, a paper copy of *The Return of Hyper Comics*. In each case, the right reading mechanism for the work, at least for me. And the more I think about it, the more I think the printable design test is wrong, because I could experience a fanzine such as *Lulzine* (or *Dante’s Cardigan* or *Procrastination*) on phone or tablet or desktop, and truthfully the former is probably the best for me, and it seems wrong to deny its fanzine status because of it.



I should add though that as a reader I don't especially buy the idea that *Galactic Journey* is, as you put it, 'structurally fanzine-like'. I'd call it a group blog. It may have more planning behind it than other blogs, and it seems to me that that's what **Alison** is describing, but there's nothing about it that as a result makes it more fanzine-like as an experience for the reader. I would however stress here that I'm also not saying that it in any way makes it inferior as an experience. It is quite possibly the best way to do what it's trying to do. I'm also not denying its status as a fanzine within the Hugo definitions. As Alison says – and both **Claire** and I have said this before too – a new name for the Hugo category would have made more sense.

[[Having had a gander over there (more prompted by this loc than anything else) I must agree that I don't think 'Galactic Journey' is "fanzine-like" at all, except in perhaps the most peripheral of ways. I also thought it was fairly useless in its presentation in that it seemed to undoubtedly thick me that finding anything that might well have been of interest was nigh on impossible, and I'll steel myself for the upcoming lecture from the whizz-bang types who will assure me that I've Got It All Wrong, but I drew an immediate comparison with the football website 'Football365' which is very amenable to browsing and alighting on articles, editorial comment, letters etc which are of specific interest. That is as "fanzine-like" as anything. I'm also a bit surprised that the conceit of arriving from 55 years ago (while rather charming) has legs...]]

Changing the subject, I don't think I'll take up your challenge to produce "a Plummer-style analysis" of the success chances of female candidates in fan funds. You may recall that Ted White wrote a piece about this in Ken Forman's and Arnie Katz's *Crifanac* #6 in 1998, suggesting that male fans 'vote with their gonads'. Not that I'm claiming any copyright on a Plummer-style analysis, mind.

Good long letter from **William Breiding**. I guess I might feel differently if 'big fat fanzines' were dropping through my letterbox and into my inbox on a daily basis but they're not. I typically read over a hundred books a year and I figure I can find room in that for a couple of issues of *Portable Storage*, especially as I like the material he assembles.

The 'why' of fanzine production is probably rooted in 'because that's what fans do', with almost everybody currently involved dating back to the era when that was indeed what fans did. Although that doesn't answer why I still do it. Because I like it, I guess. I like the process of creation of the artefact and when that in turn inspires others to create something, whether that's a letter or anything else.

PS: is something designed to be printed if it has 21 pages?

[[Yes...]]

From: portablezine@gmail.com

May 30

W^m Breiding writes:

I appease myself knowing I have done something noble.

I was startled when I saw the cover of the only album by the Havalinas embedded in the Winston Radio *[[sic]]* column. Indeed, you are probably correct in suspecting few have heard of Tim Scott or his short lived band. I first discovered Tim Scott (McConnell) when I ran across his 1985 album *The High Lonesome Sound* in the cheapo-bin for a buck. Tim Scott has always been acoustic and a radically good guitar player. He has a wide melancholy streak, and a beautiful way with a vocal melody that makes me ache.

The thing about The Havalinas is that while they were an acoustic trio, they were a kickass rock band through and through. Much in the same way that the acoustic trio The Violent Femmes were a thorough-going punk band. Forget about the Havalinas gypsy-rock misnomer based on their fancy-boy rave costuming: pure fucking bullshit. My favorite songs from that album were "High Hopes", which I have been known to sing along with at the top of my lungs, and "There Was This Mother", which is another a story song, so you should revisit it. When I heard about Springsteen covering "High Hopes" I was both amused and irate, since I find Springsteen to be the height of cheesiness. When I listened to his version I couldn't believe how he dumbed it down and generally fumbled the vocals and sapped all the energy of of it. But at least Tim got some royalties. I was blessed to have seen the Havalinas live, headlining a show at Slim's in San Francisco. (Owned by Boz Scaggs, and was one of the two the best medium-sized live venues for about 20 years. The other being The Great American Music Hall. The third being the Paradise Lounge.)

[[I'm familiar with the whole album, including 'There Was This Mother', of course, but refrained from an entire track listing in the column - if readers enjoyed the examples given, then they'll almost certainly be into the lot. I envy you for having clocked them live...]]

I hadn't known about Ledfoot. So I checked him out. Aside from Tim's ridiculously tattooed body and ragged face he still sounds as beautifully melancholy as ever. I liked it.

From: eli.cohen@mindspring.com

May 31

Eli Cohen writes:

I like the idea of a fanzine as a conversation between the editor and a few hundred friends -- you could almost retitile your Egotorials "I Must Be Talking To My Friends" (but then

you'd get in trouble with the Archbishop).

I also like **Justin Busch's** use of "temporally distinct" in his definition of a fanzine, so much better than "immutable" -- as was pointed out in an *Octothorpe* recently, no podcast can be "immutable", since all you have to do is turn down the sound to mute it. Though he then adds printability as a critical criterion. I confess to a bias in favor of printed matter, that is, something readable, being important to something being a "fanzine" (or even just a magazine -- which apparently comes from a word for "store", hence things like a "gun magazine"; I just had a vision of a gun fanzine as a bullet clip with raygun illos on it), vs. performance art (as in podcasts, or even the Live SpanInq and similar shows), which just don't seem like fanzines to me, even with transcripts. Blogs, of course, bring up a whole other set of issues (not that I think a blog can publish an issue, mind you).

[[I think we're stuck with the terminology that blogs, tweets and similar are said to be "published" and this shows the probable futility of attempting to strictly define what we mean by "fanzine"...]]

And here we have yet another crossword clue: "Short firm bird valued correspondent (5)". I'm just stumped. I had a theory -- that "short firm" meant a shortened version of "firm", as in "business firm", as in "company", i.e. "Co", and "bird" might be "hen", yielding "Cohen", a 5 letter word, and a very flattering answer; but then "valued correspondent" didn't make any sense, as "valued" seemed to have little correspondence to the "snidely sod" I'd just been called. So I have no idea... Perhaps I'm simply mistaking a British compliment for a slur (one must be very careful these days about slurred speech).

[[Oh, stop pretending to be "stumped". The solution is, of course, 'COHEN', derived as you correctly surmise, and it's a rather ridiculous assumption that snidely sods cannot be valued. They are round here. You could have got "Headless relic with an expression of surprise receives 14th letter, the snidely sod (3,5)" which translates as 'ELIC' + 'OH' + 'EN'...]]

Well, anyway, I quite enjoyed *This Here...#53*. Thank you for keeping me on your mailing list, as difficult as it is to keep up this correspondence while I try to work my way through the Hugo Packet.



From: srjeffery@aol.com

June 2

Steve Jeffery writes:

"A fancast is, you see, something quite different, as a quick peruse of the Internet will show." writes **Alison Scott**. So, being completely out of touch with a lot of social (or more often anti-social) media aspects the modern world, I did a quick peruse.

Yeah. A fancast would appear to be rather a different thing to a fan podcast. Although, I

suspect, if the fancasters were themselves sf fans and/or the topic of discussion related to sf/fandom, then there might be some overlap. I'm speaking from a position of almost total ignorance on the subject *[["almost total"?, and why just "on this subject"? Ed.]]* since not having to commute for the last two years has pretty much put paid to my mp3 player podcast habit and the only sf podcasts I'm remotely familiar with are the Coode Street podcast and Writers Drinking Coffee, in which a bunch of sf authors, editors and fans discuss books and writing. Although when has that ever stopped anyone?

In reply to **William Breiding's** comment about me, I do know Farah, so I wasn't just following your editorial lead on this. I did go back and read both sides of the argument. And maybe Farah just doesn't like Joss Whedon (though I don't remember her dissing *Buffy* on the same grounds). "I saw what I was watching and left" does give the strong impression that this was more than not just being that impressed with the show. It's not how I would choose to phrase switching off from *Doctor Who* or almost anything with the word 'Celebrity' in the title. (Why is there not a *Nonentity Bakeoff*?). Why not "it wasn't my sort of thing" or "It didn't grab me" if it was just an artistic judgement or a reflection of personal taste.

There's just something about that phrase "for what it was" that implies more of a moral or political than an artistic judgement. And I'm still not quite sure what it was.

But **William** has a point that your argument did tend to the emotive, if not dismissive, and was hard to untangle just what the issue was without wasting half a day going back to re-read the original comments. I did think hard about whether I even wanted to open and get involved in that particular can of worms and in retrospect I rather wish I hadn't. We have very different views on fannish arguments and if I really want to get involved in an argumentative stand off then I've always got the development team and QA engineers at work.

[[That's a Finger/Bollocks curve apex there mate. Again, I have to keep some powder dry for loc responses in the hopefully soon-come BEAM 17, but your point here about "wasting half a day" on perusing the original exchange is spot-on in that this shouldn't have been necessary, if the piece had been better written...]]

I know it's hardly your style, but perhaps you should have sat on it for a bit longer. Or maybe I'm just a wimp who doesn't enjoy confrontation and controversy.

I suspect you'd have to be both a fanzine editor and a regular loccer to fully judge whether sending out, or being sent, Big Fat Fanzines is seen as a welcome gift or a burden, with an onus on some form of proportionate response. With a three page perzine, you might get away with a short thank you note, perhaps accompanied by a one or two sentence comment if something grabs you, but with a BFF that doesn't feel (at least me) anywhere near a proportionate response, and so there is an implied burden (and it is often a burden because I am both someone for whom writing does not come easily and also a World Class Procrastinator) of coming up with a substantial letter of comment that can take a day (or more likely several) to craft. And there's always that worry that the longer you leave it, the more chance another issue will overtake you in the meantime. (The schedule of TH... falls exactly in that awkward cusp, btw.)

[[Excellent points all...]]

I also know that if I were wearing the editorial shoes then I wouldn't have the patience to wait weeks or even months for the responses to come trickling back. This is something email (and now instant messaging) has done to us (or at least me). If I send someone an email message then I want a response, or at least an acknowledgment, almost instantly.

Wm. obviously has a lot more patience than me.

[[Referring to the email cover quote, Steve adds: "Not in our house they don't. The bloody birds outside see to that."...]]

From: dave_redd@hotmail.com

David Redd writes:

I wish you well with the retirement plan, and hope it all works out.

Will stay quiet about the cost of living and instead try to keep smiling. The big news this weekend was Wales qualifying for the World Cup in Qatar, unfortunately putting out Ukraine in the process, and **Dave Hodson** could undoubtedly comment better than I on that. Oh, and our Prime Minister survived a no-confidence vote not very resoundingly, but that's only of local interest I suppose,

unlike the World Cup. In Wales, the round ball game now has more supporters than rugby, a new survey claims.

[[Lovely old couple in the cab this week originally from South Shields but now (and for many years) living in Canada. He was strictly a rugby league man (St. Helens) and I thus had occasion to relate Graham James' conversion from round ball to oblong...]]

Incidentally, a couple of Radio Wales DJs have decided the summer lacks any British sport worth following (so there go cricket and tennis) and therefore they have "adopted" two Australian Football teams to chat about. At least it's a fairly harmless way of filling their Saturday evening slot. File under "pointless eccentricity" and move on.

Some random jottings on your pictures. The Havalinas cover itself persuaded me you might have a point about them, so I ventured to YouTube, but my ancient Anglophile ears couldn't decode the story-song lyrics clearly enough. Oh well, had fun trying. Lots of Ageless Beauty this issue, notably Gillian Gilbert filling the Joan Bakewell slot for pop-pickers. This month's personal **Ulrika** choice: page 10, possibly because it nudged my thoughts, erroneously no doubt, towards Tove Jansson. And finally, liked that short-lived bench plaque, not that I condone such language in my own life, but its brief existence was worthwhile.

[[I strongly suspect that Ulrika will be pleased by the Tove Jansson reference...]]

From: daverabban@gmail.com

June 11

Dave Cockfield writes:

Thanks for [the] fanzine. Loved it but still can't seem to motivate myself to create a loc.

Life very up and down lately. Third time lucky hopefully.

You are probably disappointed that Watford have been relegated. My mate Matt is a season ticket holder of many years and thinks that it is wonderful. He sees it as a chance for the team to be rejuvenated.

June 8 There is of course light at the end of the tunnel.

[[I'm with Matt. While it's oft-stated that the Premier League is the most-watched league in the world, it's also noted that the EFL Championship division is actually the most exciting. While some gung-ho Hornets fans aver that we'll be headed straight back to the Prem, there's a more level-headed contingent (including me) suggesting that a couple of years of rebuild wouldn't hurt, and hoping that the Pozzos are less trigger-happy with Rob Edwards at the helm. It would be a shame to end up in the "yo-yo club" group with Fulham and Norwich...]]

Sunderland were promoted so our teams will be playing each other next season.

At the moment two 0-0 draws guaranteed unless money is spent on a few new players.

[[We've got some useful lads coming through the academy as well - next season's squad is going to look a bit younger. As far as predicting 0-0, the Northeast has typically been a bit of a killing ground for us, and we generally expect not to come away with anything from visits there...]]

From: kim.huett@gmail.com

June 14

Kim Huett writes:

Ah, I see. How careless of me to not understand that you just work here and nothing which happens in your fanzine is your fault. I stand corrected but also think you may have missed your true calling.

Somebody with your unique talents should be working in hotel management as most hotel chains are in sore need of managers keen to be devoid of responsibility.

Having myself worked in three different hotel kitchens I can assure you with absolute certainty that hotel chains are made of dumb. But then anybody working in the arse of an establishment cannot help but see the shit which passes through. Anyway, the problem with hotel chains is that they're great big animals with the brain located so far away from the rest of the body that there's no useful connect between the two. Now you're probably thinking that this describes all bureaucracies but that assumes all bureaucracies are the same.

However, again due to my broad work experience, I can assure you that in fact this is not true. You see most large bureaucracies have varying degrees of devolved authority that allow for empire building and other fun games.

Hotels on the other hand do not require any sort of useful authority to be devolved to the staff of individual hotels. The industry worked out every aspect of how a hotel should be run more than a century ago and even allowing for technological innovation hotels have continued to be run in much the same way ever since. In his book, 'Down and Out in Paris and London', George Orwell describes working as a plongeur in a Paris Hotel back in the early 1930s and there is next to nothing in his description of hotel life which feels alien to me.

[[Had to look up "plongeur", which does sound very oo-er, to discover (to save others the trouble) that it's French for "diver", but is also used to describe a dishwasher...]]

So while it's true that hotels are full of managers, in fact hotels have managers like dogs have fleas, these managers

are graced with minimal authority. In fact their job is little more than that of traffic cop. The how and why and for whom of their jobs have been decided for them and so all that's required is they position themselves correctly and keep everything moving according to head office commandments.

Consequently anything resembling initiative or deviation from the rules are verboten. This ensures any ambitious or creative individuals tend to move on. What hotels are consequently left with are systems than run smooth as silk until something unexpected happens at which point clear and immediate fail happens.

You doubt me, you doubt hard, I can feel it in my bones, so let me lay before you a story I recently told in ANZAPA.

[[On the contrary, I don't doubt it all all, having occasion to have had quite a bit of convo (translation: "listening to moaning") with various front-of-house people in the course of my employ...]]

The third hotel I worked at relied on a fingerprint ID system to monitor the comings and goings of the staff. I never used it myself because despite three different attempts by the security officer he was never able to get the system to recognise my thumb print. He claimed it was my fault for having big thumbs. Luckily I was employed as permanent staff so it didn't really matter if management didn't have an electronic record of my starting and finishing times.

This was apparently not true in every case. According to a story told to me by one of the restaurant managers after we had both left the employ of this particular hotel a flaw was discovered with the fingerprint ID system. Well, not exactly with the technology itself but rather how it was employed and the amount of trust placed in it.

The story goes that after I left a number of university students were hired on a casual basis as kitchenhands. Apparently one of these students discovered he could cheat the system without anybody noticing. On those days he was rostered to work an evening shift he would visit the hotel in the morning and sign on via the electronic ID system before attending his university classes (the university was a short walk from the hotel). He could do this unobserved because the machine used to sign on and off from was located in a hallway just behind the reception area. It was located there, despite not being in the line of sight of anybody, because this one machine was suppose to service all hotel employees. Consequently head office had decreed that it be located in this central location for maximum efficiency. And because so many staff worked there in so many different areas nobody had any idea who was suppose to be there at any given moment outside of their own section. So of course once when this bloke wandered in and signed on early no questions were asked. The only staff who might realise something was wrong worked in the kitchen and as none of them could see through walls this bloke was unlikely to be caught in the act. Then once the miscreant had finished

classes for the day he could return to the hotel and begin his actual shift without anybody being aware that he had already racked up 6-8 hours of paid employment.

Part of the reason that his system remained undetected was due to the roster for the kitchen being separate from the ID system. Whoever happened to be head chef (they went through three head chefs in the five months I worked there) would use a spreadsheet to create the roster each week. This roster would be printed out and stuck up on the wall for all the kitchen staff to read but wouldn't be sent to head office because it was never meant to be an accurate representation of hours worked. Individual shifts would be changed all the time at short notice due to changing circumstances. Head office thus relied exclusively on the data sent to them by the electronic ID system to calculate wages and leave entitlements.

That nobody at head office noticed the unusual number of hours this student was racking up is hardly surprising either as the hotel had been struggling with staff shortages in the kitchen. As part of the refurbishment new senior kitchen and dining room managers had been imported from Sydney and restaurant opening hours increased. The attitude of the new managers and the changed opening hours resulted in a steady stream of resignations by existing staff. This didn't slow even after management began hiring new staff either. The problem was that applicants would be told at the interview that they would be expected to work 45 hours per week as permanent staff but once they started it would quickly become obvious that due to staff shortages they would be required to work 50-60 hours. New hires would decide they could do better elsewhere and most would be gone before the first week ended. Consequently nobody at head office was going to think it unusual if certain staff members appeared to be working very long hours.

In fact, according to the story I was told, the only reason this dodge was discovered was because after the bloke finished uni for the year, resigned his job, and returned to India, head office queried the unusually large amount of holiday and sick pay he had accumulated. At which point the head chef realised there was a discrepancy. Nobody had noticed this before due to the weekly wage reports head office sent out not being broken down into individual staff members. Instead the abnormally high number of hours this bloke racked up was obscured by the fact all the kitchenhand hours were lumped together. Moreover I was told by one of the floor managers that nobody bothered to look at the weekly reports anyway, not unless there was an actual query from head office.



Anyway, according to my source the head chef told head office everything was correct because there was no way to tell how many hours were valid and how many weren't. In the end it was just less trouble to overpay this bloke than admit something had gone wrong. I doubt the chef in question particularly cared anyway as he was about to move to Perth. And since all the kitchen casuals knew what their team mate was up to I imagine they were all in on the scam to one degree or another and probably still are.

Why fanzine? Well I occasionally give concentrated, if not necessarily serious, thought to a particular topic. Having done so I like to turn said thought into printed matter as that allows for extra detail and elegant turns of phrase. Besides which it's easier to admire an entire idea when in such form. And if I'm going to do that I might as well share it with an audience I think might find it of some interest.

[[Good philosophy...]]

Consequently I've been knocking out 20 to 30 pages every two months, at least half of which is my own writings. I'm sure I'll give up doing so once I've run out of things to write about.

For the record I thought DC fans nicknamed Superman the big blue boyscout? Which if you think about it makes more sense than calling him a schoolboy as schoolboy is a rather vague term whereas boyscout lends itself to a more specific image.

[[And, for the record, you're right. The fans apparently coined the "big blue boyscout" moniker. "Schoolboy" comes from a line from Oliver Queen in Frank Miller's 'Dark Knight', which was what I evidently remembered...]]

I wonder if **Dave Hodson** will suffer any blowback for not mentioning 'A League of Their Own' in his list of baseball movies? Have you seen that one Dave? You really should.

As I understand it the push for nobody to be eligible in more than one celebratory butt plug category kicked off way back in 1967 when some people became enraged by Jack Gaughan being nominated in both the pro and fan artist categories. Why knew that fan-art could cause so much trouble?

[[Fanartists are notorious troublemakers. Mind you, this does raise the question of whether or not someone must be either fan or pro and never the twain... On the writing side, I've published a fair old bit of fanwriting (defined loosely as "because it appeared in a fanzine") from pro authors, thus in my view making them eligible for a "fan" award for those contributions. Similarly with fanart, with perhaps one shining example being Brian Parker's (FAAn Award-

winning) cover for BEAM 13. A print of the original (which was ever-so-slightly modified just for that cover appearance by the amenable Brian) sells for serious money (which we were well pleased to fork out), and don't even ask about originals, so while being undoubtedly professional art it's also considered fanart in, again, the "appeared in a fanzine" context. I'll again relate the tale of a commenter on Brian's FB page who, observing me asking for use of the piece, gobbled off along the lines of "Oh erewego, something for nothing blah blah blah", only to receive a delightful setting-straight off Brian about the fannish economy and how it works. I'll also note that I purchased the original art for the BEAM 15 cover off Sara Felix, who also "gets it", purposefully and delightfully thanking the fanzines which had published her work (in her Fanartist Hugo acceptance speech). We've also personally paid actual money for Ulrika O'Brien originals, yet I'll continue to contend that this, of itself, doesn't make her (or Sara) a wholly "professional" artist. It's an interesting point...]]

And for the special sussuration of **W. Breiding** I will add a little more context to the matter of MidAmericaCon. I would also like to suggest Mr. Breiding not visit the Philippines if he insists on quoting F. Sinatra. Anyway, as your correspondent mentions many inexperienced convention goers did not question the amount Ken Keller charged as they had nothing to compare it to. Regular worldcon attendees on the other hand, most of whom did not fall into the SMOF category, were very aware of the increase given that as recently as 1970 Heicon was charging \$4 for attending memberships. In fact when in 1972 LAcon raised the attending membership to \$8 and added an at door price of \$10 there was much outrage. So it wasn't just that Ken Keller raised the price significantly but that he did so on the back of several recent price increases. As such I don't think it at all surprising that there was widespread discontent among regular worldcon attendees. I think subsequent convention committees realised this as the next significant increase didn't occur until 1982 when Chicon IV raised the attending membership to \$75.

[[I'll have Things To Say in the future about Corflu registration fees...]]

What most sportsball supporters fail to realise, or perhaps only realise at a molecular level, is the importance of loss in sportsball, it is better for us if the team we support is only occasionally, if ever, on top. Sportsball fans should have a relationship to their teams not unlike the one Roman Generals had to the slaves who stood behind them during a Triumph to remind them that they are mortal. This is why I am a supporter of two sportsball teams based on different sides of this planet. That way I can be assured of year round doses of reality.

From: leighedmonds01@gmail.com

June 16

Leigh Edmonds writes:

I was taken aback somewhat to read **William Breiding** writing about my "pontifications" on BFFs. I knew it was not a happy word so I had to get out my dictionary to be sure. The Macquarie Dictionary (which I keep by me for such emergencies) suggests, among options related to the Pope, "to speak in a pompous manner". Putting the word into Google makes it sound even worse; to "express one's opinions in a pompous and dogmatic way". Google offers some other words that are similar, such as "preach" and "lay down the law" which also make me feel uncomfortable. I'd like to think that I haven't been too dogmatic in my comments on BFFs but if I have I apologize.

[[I am slightly startled. I've never personally considered "pontificate" to be pejorative, rather, I consider it to imply thoughtful analysis...]]

Perhaps William used the word because he does not appreciate my comments which relate, at the current moment, to *Portable Storage* and *SF Commentary* in particular. The length of his letter to you on the subject setting out his thoughts on the matter suggests that he has given the whole matter a lot of thought but also that perhaps he would be happier if I had not been quite so vocal in expressing my personal problems with BFFs. I will henceforth utter not one word on the matter except to say that if both **Archbishop Bruce** and William were to issue their fanzines in half their current size but twice as often I would enjoy them much more. Why this should be so is something I will have to work on with my therapist.

[[Again, personally, I've considered your contributions (and those of others) on the topic of BFFs to be revealing and useful...]]

Stepping away from that matter but still reading William's long, interesting and thoughtful letter, I come to his statement that fanzine publishing is an act of creation and, in his world, the act of creation if an act of art. Perhaps I have a lower level of ideals than William because I don't see most fanzines as either acts of creation or works of art. (Perhaps there is a difference here around the understanding of words such as 'creation' and 'making' and/or 'producing') I see fanzines as forms of communication. Now perhaps we could agree that art is about communicating ideas or emotions from one person to another person, or groups of people, but whether or not that is art depends on one's definition of 'art'. When William sent me the most recent issue of *Portable Storage* I thought he was communicating two things to me. The first one was something along the lines of "Here's something that I've made that I would like to share with you". I was delighted with his offering and responded in the appropriate fannish fashion. The second thing he was

communicating was that there were ideas in *Portable Storage* that I might find interesting and enlightening but that communication was only partly achieved because I was unable to get the full level of intellectual and emotional communication because I did not read the entire issue (for reasons yet to be resolved with my therapist).

[[Well, Wm's view of "fanzine as art" might be considered a bit fuckin' grand, but it's as valid as "fanzine as communication" in my book. We could draw a comparison with my own efforts where I've sometimes described BEAM as an "event publication" in the sense that its (in)frequency in some ways implies that you're going to get a big production number (intentionally), whereas This Here... is, I'd suggest, more firmly in the "communication" bit of the Venn diagram that someone might draw up...]]

To summarize then, if fanzines are acts of communication then one that is not fully read and/or appreciated has not been a completely successful form of communication. This might also mean that it is not a completely successful work of art, but if I follow this line of thought any further I will find myself pontificating so much that even I will be put off. So let me pontificate on another thought in this issue; that of what a fanzine is.

I enjoyed **Justin Busch's** long letter which looked at the matter from what I assume to be a cultural analysis point of view. I am willing to accept his analysis with the proviso that I cannot agree with his argument, in the second paragraph of page five, that a person need only call their production a fanzine for it to be so, but that this provides no ground for settling disagreement. I reckon that the solution to that problem lies in the definition that Justin used for what a fanzine is, including the phrase, "created by a self-identified fan". The trick here is what is meant by 'fan'.

There are, according to the academic field of fandom studies, many different kinds of fan but for the purposes of this discussion I think we should be more precise and understand the word 'fan' to mean something like 'in the tradition of science fiction fandom which evolved from the American pulp science fiction magazines of the 1920s and 1930s'. I could pontificate on this at some length because I've had to work out these ideas as part of the theorizations necessary to write a history of fandom in Australia.

So while not disagreeing with Justin's analysis I would like to add that a fanzine needs to be produced in the tradition of science fiction fanzines (originally called fanmags) that can trace its roots back to what is generally



agreed to be the first fanzine, *The Comet*. There has been, and now is, a great deal of amateur publishing that takes many models and ideas from what I would define as a fanzine, so what about them? Fortunately for the way I need to think about these things, the producers of those publications have invented the term 'zine' and I am quite content to lump every thing that is not a 'fanzine' into the 'zine' cupboard.

[[We could here get into the structural vs philosophical aspects. Your argument seems largely based on the structural (though leaving wiggle room), whereas, as noted several times in here, Lulzine is as structurally unlike The Comet as can be (or any other fanzine up until the invention of all this whizz-bang we have available these days), yet is as "fanzine-like" as all fuckin' get-out...]]

Comrade **Hodson's** column on Footy was as well written as ever but so much of it was actually about footy so it may as well have been written in Lithuanian. Still, I know that these are *important matters* that *have* to be written about so I don't begrudge him his indulgences. Having confounded me with the majority of his column he then turned me green with envy when he mentioned that, come the cricket season, he might pop off to Colchester or The Oval or Lords to watch some cricket. Makes me think that I might just pop down to the MCG for a day to take in some of the Boxing Day Test. (Will you be going **Perry**? An invite to the Members would not go amiss.)

For once I liked the music you wrote about. Thanks for that though I doubt I will spend much time thinking about The Havalinas in years to come. Months even.

[[I'll try to put you off more in future, since the thought of you actually liking a 'Radio Winston' column imbues me with horror...]]

'Omphaloskepsis' raises some more interesting questions about fanzines which I will dodge. As for the why? Personally it is partly because of all the groups I've associated with over the years it turns out that fans are most attuned to the way I like to think and associate with people. As a result I have returned to a little corner of current day fandom that is most attuned to my inclinations and where I meet up with some old and cherished friends. But while you and **Archbishop Bruce** don't have anything better to do, I am not in that happy boat.

One things that has been keeping me busy is moving books. You may recall that I previously mentioned that I was bringing our book collection out of our

back shed into the house and that process is now complete. (I'm now working on the kitchen and glassware, but that is a different story.) Having finally got all our books back on shelves, and having got a lot more shelves made, I now find that we are in the unhappy position of having about ten meters of empty book shelves and no books to put on them. This is something of an embarrassment, a science fiction fan with empty bookshelves? Impossible, you say! The simple solution would be to go out and buy more books, and there is a delectable little second hand bookshop in North Ballarat that I could very happily visit for that purpose. However, I can't bring myself to buy more books that I know I will never get around to reading, no matter how tempting they are, so we face a serious quandary. Suggestions from your readership would be read, considered and probably dismissed as impractical.

[[BFF shelf, shurely?...]]

Finally, I read your Egotorial with fascination. I wonder what your Marxist interpretation would be of a society in which the cost of health care was so high that the peasants had to tie themselves to capitalist organizations so they could avoid the fate of having to meet the exorbitant cost of health care from their own resources. Feudal is one word that comes to mind. It reads as though the bloated capitalist bastards have got it all sewn up where you live. Here in the happy slightly-socialist nation of Australia that is not a serious problem and we have other things to concern ourselves with, but we are still grinning after the recent election and don't want to spoil the mood just yet.

[[Ooh that's a hook, but I'll hold the sand for my purported upcoming BEAM article on the future of money...]]

From: perry@middlemiss.org

June 22

Perry Middlemiss writes:

Good luck with Corflu 41. As much as I might like to get to a Corflu, the dates just don't ever line up for me. Maybe one day.

[[Of course it would be a treat to see you at C41 (assuming the bid is ratified). You need to plan better...]]

Ah, yes, the "why?" of fanzines. From my own point of view, the reasons why I produce fanzines are many and varied. The communication aspect is certainly one of them, but maybe not just in the ways some people might think, ie the immediacy of the lettercol. I also like to think I am writing something that will outlive me and, hopefully, be of interest to my children further down the track. That wasn't the case in my early fanzine years back in the 1970s, but it has certainly become more of a reason as I get older. Some of the stuff I write about - the town where I grew up, the schools I

went to and the travels I've done - cover subjects that are too wide or complicated to fully address in a short conversation. I also tend to miss things when I talk about such subjects. But if I set out to write a series of small pieces for my fanzine then I may, just may, be able to cover enough to satisfy me. Whether it will satisfy them in the future I have no way of telling.

[[That's an interesting addition to the "why" debate, which is recording personal memoir for posterity. Both my lads are aware enough that their old man is a foul-mouthed drunken ex-jailbird, and seem to find that (at least for now) mildly amusing. While I haven't punted such deliberate memoir as yerself, I'll frequently tend to chuck in historical context which is often immediately corrected by people who were actually there (eg M Strummer)...]]

Of course, the other standard reasons also apply: egoboo, a retirement project, being part of a community. It all forms a part. As does the fact that I think I feel better about myself when I'm writing and producing fanzines. It exercises a number of mental muscles that used to get a workout when I was in gainful employment and which I felt I was neglecting after I retired. In many ways I need to be doing this sort of thing; rather like going to the gym.

[[Spot-on, that...]]

I tend to agree with you and **Rich Lynch** in that weblogs do not, to me, fall into my definition of a fanzine. *Galactic Journey* is probably as close to a fanzine that a blog can actually get, but there's still a divide not fully crossed. It could well be turned into what you and I would see as a fanzine but potential isn't what we are looking for here.

[[Again...]]

Football: you may have seen some of the reporting on Australia taking the last spot in the upcoming World Cup by firstly beating the UAE, and then overcoming Peru in sudden-death play-offs. The mainstream media coverage here was nothing short of "totally over the top" with some commentators calling for a public holiday to be called and others wanting certain players to be awarded national honours. Spare me. The current Australia team isn't a patch on the one that was around in the early 2000s and I don't think they will feature very well at the Cup. I do wish them well, though I doubt they will get out of the Group stage.

[[Good night, and good luck...]]

WAHF

Leybl Botwinik : "Love your quote" ; **Bill Burns** with some discussion on that cover quote, which although apparently universally attributed to Lennon has no time/place sourcing ; **John Hertz** via postcard: "That 'fansplaining' was in a P.D. If the shoe doesn't fit, don't wear it. Might you, just conceivably, have overreacted?" *[[Er... The shoe is on the*

*hand it fits?...]]; Ian Millsted notices the sale plans for old issues of *Asimov's*, and since he's working on a biography of John Brunner asks if I've got ones with uncollected stories of his in them. As it turned out, I had all the *Asimov's* he was looking for and have happily sent them on for the price of postage...*

FANZINES RECEIVED

Since the lastish. The usual apologies for whatever I've missed, and for the lack of comment on these inevitably fine issues - there have been serious outbreaks of Real Life, and I am apparently even more cream-crackered than usual, having dozed off at several points during *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* last night...

VITA TRANSPLANTARE 27 (John Nielsen Hall) - ...

PERRYSCOPE 23 (Perry Middlemiss) - ...

INDULGE ME

✕ **I HAVE WEIRD FRIENDS : Anthony Moore** (on FBF) notes: "Still can't get over the fact that the word 'gullible' looks like a cat upside down"...

✕ **SCENTED CANDLE UPDATE** : Seems as though Tuscany candle are punting a lot of new ones, and thus I have acquired "Peach Prosecco" which is just now on the go and very nice indeed.....

✕ **CROSSWORD CLUE FOR ELI** : With evil yet educational intent: "Sounds like the Irish resort is finished with an acid guru (3,9)" ...

✕ **LANGUAGE LESSON** : TIL that the German equivalent of "thingamajig" is "dingsbums"...

✕ **CARTOON MUSEUM NEWS** : Coo er gosh, I drool at a share by **Tony Keen** (FBF) that London's Cartoon Museum is punting a 50-year retrospective of Bryan Talbot's 'Luther Arkwright'...



by
BRYAN TALBOT

✕ **TAXI TALE** : Some days I do get to be a bit chuffed with meself. The other week I took this young couple to the airport (Air Canada), and as they were yakking away to each other in obvious good humor and not in English on the way there, it wasn't the most difficult task to deduce that they were French Canadian. We got there, the girl asks me "How much?" to which I

reply "Vingt-neuf". "You speak French!", she exclaims with a tone of some surprise. I come back with "Oui, français un peu, mais, uh, je ne comprends pas Québécois" at which they both (thankfully) burst out laughing. Unusually for either the French or the Canadians, I got a proper tip, and thus gave them the approved farewell of "Au revoir et bon voyage!" an'all, and off they went with big smiles on their faces...

✕ **FOOTY EXTRA** : The host cities for the 2026 World Cup (North America) have been announced, dashing my hopes of seeing a game or two at Allegiant Stadium here in Las Vegas. Mind you, I perked up a bit at the possibility of seeing an actual top game next month when Barcelona play Real Madrid here on what's a goodwill/exhibition tour. That was until I looked at the seat prices, the cheapest being \$247, earning a resounding "fuck off". The last game I went to was at Sam Boyd Stadium with my then workmate Mo, again an exhibition tour. Mexico vs Iceland, both teams having just played in that year's World Cup. Tickets were \$30...

✕ **AGELESS BEAUTY (1)** : Let us, of course, continue to irk the Killer with Brits, some of whom some Brits may actually remember, starting with journalist **Anna Coote**, who was a party to a lawsuit overturning a mostly-ignored British statute that women could not be served at a bar (unless accompanied by a male) but had to be seated at a table and waited upon. The perhaps unsurprising culprit in the refusal was the Fleet Street watering hole El Vinos...



✕ **SCIENCE AND NATURE** : A bumper crop, of sorts. Climate change warming doesn't necessarily fuck up the wildlife - [Pacific rattlesnakes](#) are having a boom. From *Wired* : at the limits of physics, I guess this is, antimatter experiments have "[hybrid](#)" [helium atoms behaving oddly](#) around absolute zero. In paleontology news, it seems that some [dinosaurs may have been warm-blooded](#) after all. The [world's largest living organism](#), or at least a strong contender, is perhaps inevitably found off the west coast of Australia, and one wonders whether it's possibly more sentient than some of their cricketers. I, for one, welcome our potential seagrass masters...

✘ **MORE ESG : Jennifer** (in her ebay reselling endeavors) mostly tends to avoid the purchase of books from estate sales but, bless her cotton socks, she clocked a shelf with another 7 Perry Mason novels on it, which turn out to be book club editions of 1960s stories, none of which (I'm fairly sure) I had. Two quite urgent tasks for the hoped-for extra day off will be to organize and catalog exactly what the fuck I've got - I'm guessing that it must now be over half of the total of 82 Masons that Gardner wrote (two of which were published posthumously in 1972 and 1973)...

✘ **RADIO WINSTON EXTRA** : I have switched up my Pandora channel background listening which plays while I'm toiling at this here virtual bollocks, from any one of the several classic ska stations to Delta blues...

✘ **AGELESS BEAUTY (2)** : Continuing the Brit annoyance, the excellent actress **Amanda Redman**...



✘ **NEXTISH** : Either the weekend of 23rd or 30th July, but depending in part on how *BEAM 17* is shaping up, and also whether we decide to have a "Fifth Saturday on Friday" party - we're due one...

✘ **AGELESS BEAUTY (3)** : One last one whom **Jerry Kaufman** might even recognize and appreciate, before turning tail at learning she was born in Wandsworth: **Lesley-Anne Down**...



How I pictured myself
during the apocalypse



What actually
happened



MIRANDA

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**"Echoes of reggae comin' through my bedroom wall.
Having a party up next door but I'm sittin' here all
alone"**