

This Here...

"...never really grew on me..." (P Skelton)

EGOTORIAL

GRUMPY OLD MAN

Bollocks to January, seriously.

This isn't just because it's *cold* in the Meadows, albeit for values of "cold" which many would find risible. A lot of people seem to think that Las Vegas temperatures are consistently somewhere in the range of "surface of the sun" to "six inches above the surface of the sun", but the fact is that the valley floor is 3,000 feet (whatever that is in French money) above sea level, practically "high desert", and it gets down around freezing of a night this time of year - in any case those of us acclimated to the desert will deem anything under 70F to be proper jacket and extra blanket weather. Conversely, though, when it gets up to 120-ish in July and August, we deride the collapsing dwellers of more temperate zones for their lack of fortitude. It's what you're used to, innit?

I mentioned lastish that I'd got a load of stuff to get done this month, what with the expiry of my DoT medical (that's every two years) and my Taxi Driver permit (annual) as well as my regular driver's license, or so I thought. One of the things I need to renew the TA permit is a DMV printout showing that I haven't been a naughty boy (i.e. there's zero points on it), and Jen prints that out at home via the wonders of the interweb machine. Typically while I'm asleep (I'm off to kip at 5pm, remember?) she nabs my driver's license from my wallet to get the driver number, and notices what I failed to, which is that the fucker expires in 2024, not this year. Cue amounts of "how daft am I?" self-loathing and annoyance, ameliorated by a tad of "one less thing".



I've also initiated the Social Security application to start getting my retirement benefit next month, and waiting for that to work its way through the bureaucracy. I learn off a nice spec call from the advice person at Optum Health (my provider) that, despite having health insurance off work, I should also apply for my Medicare Part A (I understand none of this crooked system, of course) for coverage of shortfalls, or something, so that's something *else* to have at.

I know I can't tap whatever the smallish UK state pension is going to be until age 66 - at least at the moment, since the fuckin' Tories seem to be after raising the age again since it's not currently at sufficiently "are you dead yet?" levels.

There's also a company pension from Scholl(UK) that I paid into for 12 years or so, and I also need to have a word there to find out what dosh is available, either as a lump sum or income stream. It's all a massive pain in the arse.

Let's add to that a bit of unwelcome icing in the form of a health issue which explains a lot about my sour mood (and constant tiredness). I'm going to remain vague about this for

now since there's uncertainty about what exactly is going on, and we'll know more in a month or so, at which time I might feel more comfortable about clueing anybody and everybody in. Honestly, I debated with myself about even punting this paragraph, and I'm still not actually sure who won.

I've sent an event booking request to our first choice for Cor41u hotel, the Orleans, but haven't heard anything yet after a couple of weeks, so a follow-up phone call will be in order, and we do have a Plan B if they come back with budget-busting numbers (or simply aren't interested).

Oh, and the hearing aids got sent back as my right ear got painful with wearing them, but they did serve the purpose of getting me through my DoT (which includes a hearing test).

The clever ones among you may have properly deduced that my 65th birthday is imminent - tomorrow, in fact, as thish goes out. Despite having previous for some seriously debilitating parties and Lucullan troughs for the occasion, I've never truly been that big on the birthday thing (Relaxacon 60 notwithstanding), and despite this being a milestone number, I suppose, I'm really just not in the fuckin' mood.

Jen is being massively solicitous, utter treasure that she is, and wifely entreaty while we were up the shops yesterday persuades me that I *must* have cake, so a chocolate cake with chocolate icing rests upon the kitchen table awaiting my attention. Some beloved Indian nosebag may also be evident at dinner this evening.

It's all good.

January 2023

TAFFNESSABOUNDS



You're getting what will be a boilerplate noodge here that TAFF voting is open until April 11 (the Tuesday after the UK Eastercon) and this here unofficial ANZAPA outpost supports **S&ra Bond**.

All the gubbins you need is here:
<https://taff.org.uk>

RADIO WINSTON

RICO RODRIGUEZ

I must be well overdue to annoy **Leigh Edmonds** with some Jamaican stuff, so let's have a gander at someone considered one of the there-at-the-time originators of ska.

What's a bit peculiar in that respect, though, is that Rico left Jamaica in 1961 for London (arguably when ska was really getting going on the island) and farted around in a few reggae bands for a while. It's arguable enough that he only really got some actual notice with the 1969 ska/rocksteady set 'Brixton Cat' which was credited to "Joe's All Stars" - "Joe" being producer and songwriter Joe Mansano. The slice '[Rico's Torpedo](#)' is a fine demonstration of his typical laid-back style. This is said to be the *only* roots reggae album ever released on Blue Note records.

The next milestone, I suppose, would have to be 'The Man from Wareika' (1976) done under contract to Chris Blackwell at Island records, for which Rico returned to Jamaica to

record. It's a horn-heavy set, but notably enough has the legendary rhythm section of Sly & Robbie on duty. Here's '[Ramble](#)' off that set.

You might very well think that this clued in those about to be spearheading the 2-Tone ska revival that if they wanted a 'bone man, look no further - the general public's awareness of Rico could be pinned on the Specials and their 1979 cover of Dandy Livingstone's 'A Message to You, Rudy', but he'd been on Top of the Pops seven months earlier, having been employed by the Members to contribute to '[Offshore Banking Business](#)'.

A couple of albums on the 2-Tone label followed. but in 1982, again really inexplicably, Rico retired from performance and returned to Jamaica. This self-imposed "retirement" lasted five years, and in 1987 he was back out with the Heart Beat band, Jazz Jamaica (from 1992-95) and Linton Kwesi Johnson.

1994-2006 saw the release of nine albums, ten if you count Island's 1995 'Roots to the Bone', basically an updated version of 'Man From Wareika'. He also played with Jools Holland's Rhythm and Blues Orchestra until 2012, as well as touring and performing with his own band, and getting solidly revered as a proper legend.

Andy Hooper, for one, credits me with near omniscience about Jamaican music, but of course that isn't true at all, proven by the observation that I always seem to find something I didn't know when researching these columns, which are typically mostly done, or at least started, from memory alone. Examples here would be that I didn't know (or had perhaps forgotten) that Rico was born in Havana, Cuba (in 1934!!), before the family moved to Kingston when he was well young. The other bit of croggle was something I



definitely didn't know, or at least had got wrong. I knew Rico had been taught trombone by the legendary Don Drummond, who I had always assumed was of the previous generation of Jamaican brass players, but it turns out that he was only two years older after all.

I'll leave you with a top favorite slice, originally put out as the B-Side of the 'Ramble' single in 1977. There's a long tradition of cover versions from Jamaican bands, often of movie themes, dating back to the Skatalites and beyond. Nobody else, though, had the balls to turn a John Williams classic into '[Ska Wars](#)', ey?...

FAANWANK

DEFENESTRATION

Let's talk about windows, as in voting periods, inspired in part by **Killer Kaufman** (locs) and pre-empted to an extent by **Mark Plummer** in the same venue.

Why does the FAAn award voting period need to be two months or more? Excellent question, to which the answer is "Well, it doesn't". The Hugos have an expansive window, which makes sense because there are 27,486 categories (approx.) and one presumes that voters might need a minute to assess the contenders properly and talk amongst themselves, which they generally do.

TAFF also has a months-long window, and *that* makes sense because a big part and parcel of running is creating a campaign and having some fun with it, and the calendar typically includes some salient conventions, particularly Eastercon in the UK.

Mark Plummer wonders (locs) whether a short voting window of a week or two might concentrate the minds of FAAn voters, and there's definitely something to that - a shorter voting period would make the admin's job easier in part by not having to issue nags and reminders, which however do get results, typically with a ballot surge just before the deadline. The nags seem to be necessary because, as Mark also points out, the announcement of the start of voting in early January will tend to make people think "Oh well, I've got ages", and then forget about it - so the admin has to chivvy them up.

The psephologist (**C Brialey**) is interested in the distribution of ballots received, and in fact she asked me for that data last year, which ended up being subject to a bit of guesswork since I didn't record dates of receipt of mailed paper ballots, which, while much smaller in number than emailed ones, aren't completely insignificant. This year I'm being more diligent about that. A side note there is that (DoBFO) effectively anonymous ballots arrive by this method. That's not to say that the votes are inevitably questionable, but anonymity makes it impossible to query intent (see voting summary in the 2022 results issue of *TIR*).

It won't surprise anyone, I'm sure, that a plurality of ballots arrive in the final week or so of voting.

Why, then, is the window defined as it is?

The start date is predicated on the awards being given for work published in the previous calendar year, so once we're into January, the contenders are known. The end date is meant to be sufficiently ahead of the dates of the sponsoring Corflu that the organizers can (if they choose to, and some don't) put together whatever the physical form of the awards is going to be: trophy, certificate, whatever...

Also in theory, a couple months is a decent amount of time for voters to check out stuff they might be less familiar with, or perhaps confirm their reflexive choices by having a re-read to make sure. In practice, mind, a fair amount of voting is, let's call it "tribal", but in what we might call the **Tony Berry** principle of fanzine awards, there's really nothing inherently wrong with that, even though accusations of ballot-stuffing might occur. Them as are arsed to vote will determine the outcome. This has clear echoes of **John Hertz's** interminable (and tedious) Fan Hugo arguments, except that there are no barriers to voting in the FAAns, financial or otherwise.

While being fully aware of the so-called "tribalism" at play, something I've also described as the Balkanization which exists in the subset of the Fanzine Faniverse as much as it does in fandom as a whole, I retain an undoubtedly naive and perhaps certainly unrealistic hope that the fanzine community can recognize its fundamentally common aims rather than engage in derision and exclusion *for its own sake*. That's an important distinction when it comes to review and criticism, which ought to be a healthy thing in which we consider the actual craft (or lack thereof) rather than the personalities involved, although admittedly the two are often inextricable from each other.

Returning to the points about the timeline, one thing I've been leery (and aware) of is "baby duck syndrome", which is the tendency to follow the last thing that crossed your line of sight. Whether intentionally or not, a fanzine issued in the middle of the FAAn voting period, while not qualifying for the previous year, if there has been an ish out in that prior year will make potential voters think about it. It's for this reason that I've always avoided punting an ish of *BEAM* during that time. To avoid any possible "baby duck" effects it might make more sense to close voting at, say, the end of January. Opinions welcomed as always on that and anything else. And I didn't even mention the "Lichtman maneuver"...

Conversely, although this is something that's been rarely done, a couple months of voting window also allows for campaigning. While Gaiman-style shameless self-promotion is considered rather "not done" (as is self-voting, but people do it anyway), I've never had any problem with individuals advocating on behalf of stuff they especially liked and think others might wish to consider those individuals or titles.

Those who might be engaged enough to do that, however, might be focused by having, say, four weeks in which to do it...

GET YER BALLOTS IN!

TV GUIDE

THE WAITING GAME

We're on hold with most of our regular watches, although 'ST: Discovery' and 'Picard' season 3 will be starting about when this goes out (I think). 'The Equalizer' isn't back until late February, but we've been happily meandering on with 'Leverage: Redemption' and 'Quantum Leap', the former of which is still as strong as ever, maybe even stronger, and the latter getting more interesting as it goes along.

We're also filling in with 'Suspicion' (Apple tv), a British thriller adapted from the Israeli original 'False Flag' by the same lot who made 'The Americans', which of itself ought to be enough to recommend a look. A fair few familiar faces in this, including Elizabeth Henstridge and Noah Emmerich (in leading roles), and a supporting cast that includes Mandip Gill (Yaz from *Doctor Who*), the almost ubiquitous Robert

Glenister and Uma Thurman, in case you wondered where she'd been hiding.

A small coterie of Brits get nicked on suspicion of involvement in the kidnapping of the son of the nominee for US Ambassador to the UK (Thurman) who may have secrets. Emmerich plays the American agent sent to London to theoretically liaise with the investigation (typecast as a cop/agent again, but he's a right arsehole in this), and it's all a bit confusing (deliberately reflecting the reactions of those arrested, all of whom have a bit of personal dodginess about them which may or may not be tangentially related to the kidnapping). We're about halfway through the 8 episodes as I write, and well engaged in it because we definitely want to know how it turns out.

Update: having binged the rest, I can only say it's *very* twisty...

A quick note that we've started on 'Poker Face', a new 10-episode series streaming on Peacock, starring Natasha Lyonne and helmed by Rian Johnson, the 'Knives Out' bloke. Imagine that someone (well, Johnson apparently) decided that a "murder mystery of the week" format should be a mashup of 'Columbo' and 'The Fugitive', and that the main character has the uncanny ability to know when someone is lying. The first four episodes dropped on January 26 and the rest follow weekly. The critics love it, and so do we...

MOVIE NIGHT

THE NICE GUYS

Actual movie-watching has been a bit subdued in favor of episodic TV, even though I've had a fair moan that there hasn't been much in the way of our go-to shows. As cream crackered as I often am, I'll tend to favor movies that (a) aren't as fuckin' long as (random pick) 'The Irishman', which I would like to clock at some point and (b) require not overmuch in the way of brane, simpleton that I am, being prone to approving noises like "Oo! Thing go bang!" or "Oo! Person fall off tall building and go splat!".

With those strictures in mind I clocked 2016's 'The Nice Guys', written (and directed, here) by Shane Black whose substantial previous includes one of my all-time favs 'The Long Kiss Goodnight'. Probably not *too* much of a spoiler to note that both instances of "Oo!" above are covered.

A "neo-noir buddy action comedy", sez Wikipedia, and that's accurate enough, although there's a serious reason for what's going on. The initially reluctant buddies (aren't they always?) are portrayed by Russell Crowe and Ryan Gosling, who have a fine chemistry, assisted mightily by Gosling's character's precocious daughter (Australian actress Angourie Rice).

The setting of 1977 Los Angeles is used to full advantage, and the plot, which starts out as a simple (ahem, not really)



missing person case but ends up in good old capitalist/corporate conspiracy territory. Put like that, I suppose it does sound a bit yawny same-old, but well worth a shufti for the top-notch performances of the cast, including Kim Basinger in a supporting but crucial role, in case you wondered where *she* had been.

Crowe has been an actor I could take or leave most of the time, but he doesn't miss a beat here in a somewhat laid-back characterization which allows Gosling to be the OTT annoying one.

This is another effort where the critics and I seemed to agree that it's pretty fuckin' good, and had been posited as ripe for sequels, although it ended up not making quite enough dosh. Somewhere out there in development hell is the inevitable 'Nice Girls' version, which you'd probably imagine Sandra Bullock being tapped for, but ey, this'un's a good enough watch as it is - hardly epic goshwow, but nor is it a waste of your valuable time...



FOOTY

BY DAVID HODSON

It's been a miserable start to 2023 in North London. A cold snap in December has been followed by another one in January and there's nothing worse than being freezing cold whilst your football team is losing. The only saving grace is that I can no longer afford to attend live games, so I sit and nestle under a heated throw whilst watching the unravelling of Tottenham's season on the idiot box in the corner.

Except that the situation isn't that straightforward.

Spurs first game after the World Cup was the 2-2 draw away to Brentford after being 2-0 down, which is a better result than it's given credit for being; Brentford at home don't tend to get beaten. This was followed by a 2-0 home defeat by Aston Villa, which was disappointing but could be excused given injuries to Brazilian forward Richarlison, Uruguayan midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur, and Swedish forward Dejan Kulusevski had stripped the team bare. Add to that Argentine World Cup winning centre-back Cristian Romero being allowed extra rest time after the tournament and the result, if not the performance of those still standing, could be overlooked. Next up came a 4-0 away win against Crystal Palace, a victory that many Spurs fans hoped gave a better indication of the future. No such luck. Arsenal, the one team that can never be allowed to win at the Tottenham Hotspur stadium, did exactly that 2-0, and then Manchester City came back from 2-0 down to win 4-2 at the Manchester Etihad Stadium. Monday's (Feb 23rd) 1-0 away win against Fulham showed the team was getting back on track as the injuries cleared up and players got back to match fitness, but improvements still need to be made and the team has no chance to redeem itself against the Woolwich Wanderers this season as they stage an unlikely title challenge.

Further sporting depression was inflicted on me today (Friday Jan 27th) when, hoping for a cricketing pick-me-up, I watched the first one-day international between England and South Africa in Bloemfontein fully expecting the reigning world champions in the 50-over format to blow an under-par African team away. England seemed to be coasting as they stood at 146 runs for no wicket in response to South Africa's 298 total, only to collapse to a 27-run defeat. Not the World Cup warm-up I wanted or needed.

Maybe I should give up on this sports stuff...

After missing the January First Thursday Fan meet on the 5th at the Bishop's Finger in Farringdon due to a train strike (I could have got there easily enough using buses and tube trains, but it would have been a bloody nightmare getting home half pissed in the freezing cold), it was a pleasure to catch up with most of the same crowd and several notable others at the relaunch of Geoff Ryman's 253 website on the

11th at the Crypt On The Green in Clerkenwell. A few pints were poured on top of the wine already lining my stomach in The Three Kings pub afterwards, so January wasn't a complete fannish desert. Plane tickets for Belfast at the end of March have been booked, train tickets for Birmingham a week later are loaded onto the phone app in preparation for Eastercon, and I'm guessing I should turn my attention to booking up for Novacon. Getting back into all this fandom stuff don't half drain the bank account.



GEOFF RYMAN invites you
and a partner to the relaunch of
THE 253 WEBSITE
on Wednesday
11 January 2023
6:30pm-9pm

Venue:
Crypt on the Green
Inspire St James Church
Clerkenwell
Clerkenwell Close
London EC1R 0EA

Since the end of the Covid lockdowns, my life has taken a few surreal turns. About a year before Covid struck, I was fighting with the Department for Work and Pensions about Universal Credit and other benefits as well as trying to sort out the shitshow Enfield Council had made of my Council Tax bill, all whilst also dealing with hospitals and doctors, neurologists and dieticians, physiotherapists and nephrologists. The bottom line is I'm unable to work due to a variety of issues that come under the umbrella of Post-Sepsis Syndrome. Anyone who has developed long covid has my sympathy, it's a similar autoimmune response. The worst thing I suffer from is neuropathy in my feet and lower legs, which has in turn affected my mobility, which in turn has piled the weight on my frame. Stopping smoking due to scarred lungs is a positive I guess, I could do without the digestive problems though; I adored onions, mushrooms, garlic, and a variety of other things that used to add flavour to my meals.

Covid was both a blessing and curse to me personally. I was one of the people told to "shield", so once or possibly twice a week I would go out grocery shopping and that was my social whirl. I would walk around the block once a day to get some exercise, but because all those hospitals, benefits

offices, doctor's surgeries, and other venues of bureaucratic torture, had shut down for the duration there wasn't much to do. I started to realise how to control the worst of the lower limb pain and breathlessness because the exercise I was taking was much more regimented. I had a year and some to discover how far I could walk or how much other physical effort I could put in before suffering any painful consequences. I pretty much have the situation under control now, and I also have a diary of the period to use as evidence of the issues I've learned to control should any over-officious benefits assessor decide to pay attention to me. The downside of the period was, as it was for most people, isolation and a feeling of climbing the walls. There are only so many books one can read in sequence without something else to introduce some variety into the routine.

In that period just before covid, I had met a young woman called Anna, who worked for AgeUK Enfield. Most people in the UK who know of it assume it's a big national charity, but most AgeUK branches are small, local charities. The national organisation acts as a marketing and fundraising umbrella. The main gripe from the local charities is that the national lot don't actually redistribute very much of the money they raise down the pyramid to the regional bodies. A lot of other large charities in Britain work the same way; the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK are now largely retail organisations with area and regional management pyramids, company cars, bonus structures for the various levels of management, yadda, yadda, yadda. It's enough to make anyone who looks at the situation for too long very, very cynical.

Anna helped me get the situation with Enfield Council resolved and pointed me towards other areas of information so I could sort out the issues with the Department for Work and Pensions, so, by the end of all the lockdowns, with life starting to open up again, I was able to relax and decide what I wanted to do next. Writing this column for Nic had bought me back into the bubble of fandom, so I was obviously going to end up back at conventions and pub meets eventually, but I've never been a FIAWOL advocate; it's a thing that adds flavour to life, it shouldn't be life itself (to be fair, it's more than that really but ultimately still less than a way of life).

In the last year, I've helped the local library bid for and get the finance to set up a "maker space", a dedicated crafting facility for library members, which doubles up as a coding club for local schoolchildren. It's had its frustrations; I costed in four Windows laptops and a desktop system to run more memory and processor intensive applications on and for podcasting. Another employee of the library service, obviously seeing someone with a budget that would allow him to order the toys he wants to play with, decided to change the spec of some things – the desktop PC has become a top of the range Apple system because "that's what the

creatives use”; the approximately £500 3D printer that was budgeted for has become a £1500 free-standing monster that includes built-in specialist software for printing dentures and no one seems able to tell me who actually ordered the bloody thing. A friend of mine who worked in the oil business for years until he was able to retire at the age of fifty-one, which was all of thirty-one years ago, because his “pension couldn’t get any better at that point” continually reminds me that most money invested in public services is ultimately wasted. I can’t say I agree with that point of view, but I can see why people with hardboiled private sector experience may feel that way.

The connection with the library came about because AgeUK Enfield run a monthly “Tea & Chatter” group there and Anna invited me along when it was re-introduced after the lockdowns ended (note: I never say when covid ended because it hasn’t ended and it should be obvious to most sensible people that it will never end. We now have a second virus in continuous circulation that will require seasonal vaccinations and everyone should do their best to avoid, but, just like the ‘flu, we’re all undoubtedly going to have five or six doses of it in our life-times (I mean the real ‘flu, not a bad cold)). Anna was basically checking up on people she’d fallen out of contact with whilst the offices were shut down and seeing who had survived; several hadn’t.

There are Tea & Chatter groups at a couple of other Enfield libraries that I’ve also been either press-ganged or cajoled into attending. I’ve done my history of Pentonville Prison talk at all of them (I helped the then-Governor of the prison, Bob Duncan, to write and publish a booklet about it in the late-90s, so became an accidental expert). All of these groups have, in turn, exposed me to other groups of people undertaking all kinds of disparate activities. The American woman who works for a voluntary services organisation also runs the borough libraries home delivery services, ebook services, and audiobook services (they do like the word “services”; I’m constantly left thinking of the film ‘Personal Services’ and imagine Enfield Council delivering middle-aged dominatrixes to various addresses, who then load innocent Kindles with salacious material: “Get him despunked and collect his late fees,” delivered in best Julie Walters faux upper-class accent), whilst reading John Scalzi novels and running an impromptu art journalling group on the second Friday of every month at Southgate Library (next to the college, starts at 11.00am, for anyone that’s interested). Her husband works in film and television special effects and knows an old schoolfriend of mine who has also worked in the field; he’s intending to start a scratch-build modelling class at the same venue sometime this year, so I could get back into 15mm Laserburn desktop SF skirmishing at some point in the future and put that bloody 3D printer to constructive use.

Another organisation that I’ve become involved with is called JaZanne Arts, a community drama workshop, that’s running a project in a local primary school around the concept of home through the ages. The early weeks have been about establishing commonalities; kids still play hopscotch, they still play rounders (softball), marbles isn’t played the same way it used to be because there aren’t many cast-iron manhole covers around these days and even if there were there would be too much traffic in those once quiet back streets to let them be used. Sharing stories of Victorian tenements and cottages with outdoor toilets and no baths that I and others remember from childhood doesn’t really seem very shocking to children who have fled the Russian invasion of Ukraine or the Turkish oppression of the Kurds. It is slightly disturbing to see a child that has obviously gone through a very recent growth spurt, but is probably having to wait for a single parent to get over the expense of Christmas before she/he can buy new jogging bottoms or a school sweat top. It’s 2023 people, this shit shouldn’t still be happening, and relative poverty is still poverty at the end of the day.

So there you have one paragraph about the weather (I am British after all), one paragraph about football, one paragraph about cricket, one paragraph about SF fandom, and a whole heap of other stuff. I don’t know if normal service will be resumed next month; football seems quite tedious at the moment and, for some reason, those way too short jogging bottoms that are waiting to be replaced have been playing on my mind all week.

LOCO CITATO

[[“I think I’m aware of my flaws and I’ve accepted them. And anyone who doesn’t... can fuck off.” (Sarah Millican)...]]

From: fabficbks@aol.com

December 31

Bob Jennings writes:

This Here... #60 showed up in my email inbox a few hours ago, so I thot I would jump right in and read it immediately. This keeps me from having to do some needed but not urgent household and bookkeeping tasks that I need to get around to real soon now. Just not right now.

My sympathizes for having to go to your local DMV to renew your driver’s license. In Massachusetts the AAA auto club has a deal with the state whereby some AAA offices also function as DMV offices, especially for renewing licenses. An appointment is necessary, but there is no waiting, no parking problems, and high on the list, none of the crap that usually goes with a visit to any DMV office.

[[The DMV here is often actually quite efficient, although I hear about friends waiting half a day, I hear more "I was in and out in 30 minutes", which has typically been my own experience. I compare that to the Maryland MVA who are utter bastards. I subsequently learn that an appointment is now required here - if you don't have one it is an all day effort...]]

I had to get my driver's license renewed back in August and decided I might as well upgrade to the True License level, which means I wouldn't be turned away in the future if I ever decided to take an airplane trip, or enter a federal court house or some other federal location. Not that I anticipate doing any of that, but who the hell knows these days. It turns out I filled in the info on-line, then had to make an appointment either at the DMV, which is over in downtown Worcester, or at the local AAA office, which is a hop, and a short skip over in Auburn, where I had to do some shopping at Walmart and Staples anyway. Except the appointment was two weeks into the future. Oh well.

The other glitch was that I had to present my discharge papers from my army military service. Jeeze, it's been 54 years, and from then to now nobody ever asked to see that paper, until now! I sure didn't have them, but I discovered that the National Archives will provide copies on request. Except their website was three years old and it said they had a six month waiting time to process requests...

By some stroke of luck, or maybe due to some unknown guardian angel or something, the discharge papers arrived a week later, in plenty of time for the examination and license renewal. Despite the vision testing machine being on the blink and having to be completely reset, the bulk of the renewal process went thru rapidly. So I'm good for another four years of driving, with a new photo of a thinner me to use for identification, as needed. I hope your license renewal goes as well.

[[Thank you, but I hope I get more than four years on the renewal...]]

I admit to being surprised that you opted for over the counter drug store hearing aids instead of going to an accredited audiologist and getting your medically approved hearing aids recalibrated and properly adjusted. The logic escapes me. This is your health and well being we are talking about. The mass produced knock-offs no doubt cost a lot less than genuine hearing aids, but that's what the hell

money is for. Money is there to make your life better, more comfortable, more enjoyable, and healthier. It is not there to rack up in some bank account as a sign you're beating the game of life. Skimping on health care issues in the name of bogus economic concerns is one of the dumbest things you can do in life. This seems especially ludicrous since you already had a set of medically approved hearing aids, and all they needed was to be readjusted to deal with whatever changes have taken place in your hearing since your last appointment with the audiologist.

If you are determined to continue this ridiculous, dangerous, and miserly course of action when it comes to your personal health, let me recommend a sure fire money saver: The Little Gem Home Lobotomy Kit. Results guaranteed or your money back. Only \$49.95, shipping costs included, and you can pay with PayPal, money order or credit card. Let me know and I can have the company send a kit out in the mail to you Monday. I will even donate my 20% commission on the kit to your long suffering spouse who is doubtless on the verge of a mental breakdown trying to deal with all your bizarre and incomprehensible health decisions.

[[Ho ho very satirical. I don't agree that hearing loss is a "health issue". Poor hearing (like my equally poor eyesight) is a disability issue, and doesn't otherwise affect my "health" which might be dodgy for other, more valid reasons (eg eating lots of chips, drinking, smoking ect ect). You could, I suppose, argue that my health (or indeed survival) might be at risk by my poor eyesight causing me to wander into traffic and my hearing loss meaning I'm not clocking the bus coming at me. I'd also contend that the money end of things is highly relevant. My health (and that of my lovely spouse) would probably be more

adversely affected by not paying the rent and/or not eating or heating and thus becoming homeless and destitute. While that's not realistically likely to happen next week, few people have the luxury of punting the dosh on other stuff. I could guess that the prescribed hearing aids might cost somewhere in four figures to get fixed (not just recalibrated - they're not working at all), since they're out of warranty and the insurance for an extra year was asking over \$700. With inflation, a replacement pair (sans insurance which won't cover them until I've had the old ones for three years) would probably be \$4,000 or so. Nice of you to offer a donation, though. Better make it 5 grand just in case...]]



I dunno if I agree with your list of really awful Xmas songs list. I don't think all the songs on your list are necessarily that bad, but I vote "Dominick the Christmas Donkey" as the absolute most putrid made-for-Christmas exploitation tune ever written. Like certain other musical abominations, once you hear this piece of mouse manure it stays in your brain for a long, long, LONG time. A few low level curses on you for mentioning it here and starting that endless phonograph in my brain spinning again.

"I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" has been covered by dozens of singers. According to Wikipedia it was originally sung in 1952 by 13 year old Jimmy Boyd and hit #1 on the pop charts almost immediately. It was a huge hit for him, but it was a much bigger money maker for the composer, British song writer Thomas Patrick Connor, who got royalties every time it was recorded, and every single time it was played on the radio, which was a lot.

The Jackson 5 version you despise was apparently the second most popular version of the hit. According to *Billboard* their version sold over a million copies as a single in the US and 200,000+ copies in the UK, so clearly somebody liked their version. (OK, just not you, Mr. "Vegas Grinch" Farey).

An oddity, Spike Jones & His City Slickers recorded their gag version of the song, which did OK but not great, but more interesting is that Jones and his crew did a different version titled "I saw Mommy Screwing Santa Claus". This was not distributed to the general public, but it is posted on YouTube for the curious, along with another variation by Matt Rogers titled "I Saw Mommy Fucking Santa Claus". That version has racked up 562,000 views in the twelve years since it was posted. Gosh, who wudda thunk?

[[Kevin Bloody Wilson's 'Hey Santa Claus' concludes with the throwaway inclusion of "I saw mummy sucking Santa Claus" as well...]]

I started to read the section on Best Of Movies & TV Of The Year, but I didn't make it thru because it turns out that I didn't go to see any new movies in theaters at all this year (and may not see any next year either), and I also don't watch much TV these days. Since some of the TV programs mentioned apparently require paying for cable or streaming services which I do not subscribe to, that means I know nothing about them at all. Doubtless it's my loss, yet oddly enuf I feel I was properly entertained all of this year with DVDs of movies & old TV programs, lots of books, many comics, along with a wealth of OTRadio and music whenever I felt the need to be entertained. Plus, some fanzines too. Not as many zines as I was originally anticipating reading, but enuf to actually cast a vote for the upcoming FAAn awards anyway.

The other thing I noticed before abandoning the effort, is that several people specifically said they didn't watch much

TV or see many movies this year. If you want a comprehensive overview of the year's visual entertainment, perhaps you should seek out fans who are clearly into that. **Guy Lillian**, for example, seems to almost live for the release of new movies, and he keeps well up on TV as well. Get him or other fans who are heavily into that kind of media to contribute to the next Year's Best compilation. The results would probably be more pertinent.

[[Guy is welcome to contribute at any time...]]

In the letter column, I note that you are again hammering on **George Phillies** and the N3F. If you think so little of the club and its president, then why are you devoting so much of your time and zine space talking about him & it? As I have said before, the N3F functions as an organization to provide services to its members. Members can use as many or as few of those services as they want, but all those bureaus and activities and fanzines are made available because there are some club members who do happen to be interested in those activities.

If you personally feel that there are problems with the club and the way it is organized, or the way its bureaus and fanzines function, then you as a member are free to make suggestions and propose changes. You could run for one of the Directorship positions, or just make suggestions for changes to the Directors. All suggestions are given consideration, and a fair number of suggestions for changes have been enacted in the past few years. If you think the club isn't functioning properly then get involved and do something to make it better, instead of spending time and space in *This Here...* bitching & whining about the way the N3F works or its purpose.

[[Conversely, I could argue that I've given the N3F more publicity than it's had in ages. George and I (and also Heath Row) communicate regularly, almost always civilly and cordially, even as I continue to mention George's quirky mindset. It's also the case that I'm meeting your requirement of "suggestions" - I'm just outside the tent pissing in, as the saying goes. The N3F can and will sort itself as it sees fit, but isn't immune from comment, having had such DoBFO soap opera qualities the last year or so. The thought of me running for a Directorship position wins the [falls off chair] title, and it's only January...]]

Talking about old LPs and vinyl reminds me to haul another few boxes of stuff over to the Salvation Army store in my area. I managed to acquire three thousand old LPs when I bought out a comic store contents. The store was owned by a friend who died a few years back. His wife wanted nothing, as in absolutely nothing to do with any of that stuff, so I had to take the LPs along with everything else. I can't blame her, really. The store had been slowly bleeding money for years up until he died in his early sixties. His wife had been

supporting the family, while she and the kid were getting WIC vouchers and free medical from the state.

There may have been some decent stuff in the mix, but there was nothing I noticed that stood out. I set up at an indoor flea market for a year and sold the LPs off at a buck each or six for \$5. That cleared about a third of the accumulation out. But the flea market closed, and trying to sell records on-line is a time consuming, thankless, and mostly profitless enterprise, so boxes of the things just sat around taking up space. I finally conned a local radio station into take nine boxes of the things for their annual record sale money raiser, but I've still got plenty left. I will have to take your word that there is a revival of interest in vinyl LPs, but probably not for the stuff I'm stuck with. The Salvation Army store will take up to four boxes at a time, but no more than that, which implies that they are also having trouble turning the stuff into money. It's too bad, but, the reality is that there are a lot more LPs and vinyl singles out there than are people who collect the material.

Comic characters you might like to take to a bar to have conversations with? Can't say as I ever really thot about it. I gave up drinking any kind of alcohol for the new century, and never liked bars even before that. How about Chinese dinner for good food and stimulating conversation? I could go for that. How about Axel Pressbutton and Mr. Monster for guests? That should lead to some really interesting conversation, at least before we were all kicked out of the place. Maybe Adam Strange and Ambush Bug? The conversation might be even shorter than the previous match-up. How many Chinese restaurants are there in this town? OK, how about Cerebus the Aardvark and Little Annie Fanny? Too esoteric? Then how about Fritz the Cat and Dr. Radium? Daffy Duck and Dick Tracy? We may be out of Chinese restaurants. Probably just as well.

From: srjeffery@aol.com

January 2

Steve Jeffery writes:

Best wishes to **Jerry Kaufman** if he takes up that idea of reissuing Delany's *The Straits of Messina*. I have the Serconia Press edition of this on my own shelves. A fair number of SRD's non-fiction critical works are reappearing in paperback and/or Kindle editions, and I've tagged a few of these on my Amazon wish list. I even found a copy of *The Jewel Hinged Jaw* on Kindle for a very silly price (around £2.99 if I remember) a year or so ago so that was a bit of a no-brainer.

We - and especially Vikki - are big fans of Swedish C&W duo First Aid Kit and *Palomino* duly went into Vikki's Christmas stocking this year, along with the new one by Redcar (the new incarnation of Héloïse Letissier after Christine and the

Queens / Chris) with both being on heavy rotation in the office CD player over the last few days. These have been added to the growing stack of CDs from these two building up in the office (including FAK's Choen tribute *Who By Fire*), along with The Dixie Chicks, Eddie Reader, Florence and Belly.

[[Maybe I should start to farm out 'Radio Winston' columns a la 'Grauniad' to other people's playlists...]]

In reply to me, **Gary Mattingly** mentions Tal Wilkenfeld, bass player in Jeff Beck's band. A favourite moment comes from a recording of a gig they did either at Ronnie Scott's or St Lukes (I forget which) in which Beck looks across at Tal, does something completely outrageous on his guitar (which I'm still not convinced is technically possible) and Tal's eyes widen and she completely cracks up, all without missing a note. The interplay between the two all the way through is a joy to watch.

Still on bass players, I will add a note to Gail Greenwood, former bass player with Belly and L7. I saw Belly when I was working in Philadelphia (which may be the same time I met Nic, completely unexpectedly, at Philcon and he hijacked my hotel room). Vikki and I caught them later at Shepherd's Bush Empire in London where Gail bounced and stomped around the stage in big boots and a huge Rickenbacker slung even lower than Hooky in New Order like a true rock and roll star.

[[True story about the Philcon, that, and as I recall you related it in more detail in a loc to Banana Wings (or possibly even an article) all them years ago. 1994 or '95, I think...]]

I am torn between liking Bonnie Raitt and sometimes wanting to be Bonnie Raitt (it's the red hair and the sense of effortless cool as well as her proficiency on slide guitar, something I have never mastered). I would add Joan Armtrading to that list as someone who knows her way round a blues lick or two.

Sax players - Barbara Thompson, who we sadly lost earlier last year. I have a couple of albums of her own band Paraphernalia, and with jazz composer Neil Ardley (*Kaleidoscope of Rainbows, Harmony of the Spheres*)

Some lovely artwork by **Ulrika** again this issue. I think I saw the one with Christmas trees in the snow on p.14 as a work-in-progress on Facebook. I'm very tempted to dig out my paints from the spare room and find a few tutorials on YouTube.

[[And I'd be more than happy to have a gander at anything you come up with mate...]]

Oh gosh, Wendy Padbury. I think I had tea with her once, when I was about 12 or 13 and she was going out with one of my cousins.

From: leighedmonds01@gmail.com

January 2

Leigh Edmonds writes:

Did I miss something in a previous issue of *This Here ...* which led **Kim Huett** to ponder on the two fictional characters he would invite to a bar? *[[Yes...]]* His decision on who to invite suggested to me that he frequents a different class of bar to the ones that I liked to inhabit when I inhabited such places. Something nice and quiet with a steady flow of grog is more my line, I still have very fond memories of the bar at the Victoria in Little Collins Street where I spent a few conventions. However, since I have to invite fictional characters I shuffled through my memories of some of my favourite sfnal stories and realized that the characterization was so weak that I'd be inviting cardboard cutouts rather than real people.

Having exhausted that line of possibilities, and realizing that all I know about the comic universe is what I see in Marvel and DC movies, I gave up and thought about the characters I'd seen on the screen. This occupied a few minutes mentally crossing out a great many characters I'd seen. My problem is that there are a few I quite like but I can't remember their names, but most of the ones that appeal to me are the quite and violent types who are probably deep thinkers and good conversationalists, but you wouldn't know it from the way they behave a lot of the time.

Eventually I hit on the idea of inviting Doctor Who who is, for the most part, quite an intelligent person who would have many interesting, and incredible, stories to tell. My favourite Doctor so far had been Peter Capaldi, he seems rather excitable but in a cheeky kind of way. Finally I settled on Peter Davison as the other Doctor who, like Capaldi, also seemed rather cheeky but in a more reserved and English kind of way. The other advantage of spending time in a bar with those two is that I could probably talk one (or both of them) into taking me back to watch a day's play to see Bradman batting at the height of his powers. (American readers can substitute their favourite baseball player from the 1930s if they so desire.)

[[I don't think I could possibly limit choices to two of the Doctors. My favorite has always been Patrick Troughton, but there's too many fine picks for the other...]]

Having thought that thought, and being rather old these days, made me think that I'd probably enjoy going to the bar frequented by the brothers Seigfreid and Tristan in *All*

Creatures Great and Small. There are some rather cosy bar scenes in that series.

Christmas and New Year here in Mount Clear was much quieter than your holiday period. We had nobody over and didn't visit anyone so those days were as quiet as any other day of the week. I went to the trouble and expense of buying a caramel mudcake from the Cheesecake Shop and we put up a few decorations, which soon fell down. Unlike you I didn't attempt anything too taxing apart from working on our financial records for the accountant. Oh yes, and I made some potato salad.



The other thing we did was binge watch 'The Mandalorian' which we really enjoyed. This turns my mind to your contributors writing about their favourite screen entertainments for the year. Somehow we seem to have missed almost all of the ones that people wrote about except for *Glass Onion* and *Andor*. *Glass Onion* was maybe the most annoying movie I've watched in the past decade, I kept watching in the hope that it would become worthwhile soon, but it never did. As for *Andor*, we started watching it because everyone said it was so good but, by the end of the second episode, our snoring was so loud that we wouldn't have been able to hear the dialog had we been awake.

[[I observed meself that it took a couple of episodes to get into 'Andor', since I wasn't that familiar with all the backstory. It was good once I did, though...]]

Oh yes, we also watched *Wednesday* which Valma quite liked but I got bored with after a episode or two. We did watch two or three of the *Die Hard* movies, having been told that they were Christmas movies and those are the kinds of movies one is supposed to watch over the holiday period.

[[Next time you need to clock 'The Long Kiss Goodnight'...]]

My thanks to friend **Hodson** for his recap of what happened at Qatar. As I mentioned last time, the event was something that I managed to ignore almost entirely. He didn't really need to mention that Pele had recently died, it was all over the local media here too. Also mentioned was that some footy (soccer) head man had said that every country in the world should now name a stadium, or at least a grand stand, after him. Well, I suppose there is some small grandstand out in the middle of the bush that could use a new name - Nyah West comes to mind but I don't remember if it actually has a grandstand. No disrespect to Pele but some disrespect to whoever made the suggestion. On the other hand,

naming one of the huge stands at the Melbourne Cricket Ground after Warnie, that was a great idea even though it is likely that nobody in Argentina knows who Shane Warne was.

[[I'm with you on naming stands for local honorees. Watford FC has stands named after Graham Taylor (our finest manager) and Sir Elton John (former club owner and honorary life president), and Ann Swanson (the Family stand) who was instrumental in making us "the original family club"...]]

I liked **Gary Mattingly's** observation that some tasks have a higher pleasure factor than others. Personally I would put hiking and working in the garden on the same pleasure level, but that's just me. They both involve interacting with nature, which is not so high on my list of priorities as it probably is on Gary's. Don't get me wrong, I quite like nature at what one might call a theoretical level and our back garden looks quite pleasant now that the warm weather has arrived. However, a couple of people come every second week to mow the lawn and tidy it up so I can enjoy it at that level without getting my hands dirty. If it were up to me to do the work we'd have had concrete and painted it green instead. The trouble with nature is that it never stops and you can bet that where you've pulled the weeds out one week there will be more growing there a week or two later that also have to be pulled out. On the other hand, when I've finished writing something or making a scale model it stays just as I left it when it was completed. That is a much more satisfactory state of affairs

Two or three short notes to conclude. You will recall that **Perry, Irwin, Carey** and friends had invited me to go to the MCG and partake in the second day of the Test Match against South Africa. I had declined because I'm not keen on catching covid but, as it turned out, I was mightily relieved because the temperature that day was in the high 30s and if the virus hadn't got me heat exhaustion might well have. As it was I sat at home in air conditioned comfort listening to the match (if that's the word I'm looking for) and watching a bit on the box.

[[I actually got to ask Irwin how his day was on the sprawling New Year's Eve Zoom set up by Alison Scott. Pretty fair, by his account. We're both looking forward to the Ashes this year...]]

It is news to me that Australia may become a non-smoking country. Tobacco is still sold and consumed here and I can't foresee a time when it isn't. So feel free to come on that account. You will, of course, find that smoking (tobacco anyhow) has become a rather unfashionable practice and you won't be able to do it in almost all public places, and certainly not in our home. I gave up the habit in 1975 and I so rarely smell tobacco smoke in the streets that it is remarkable when I do. When I occasionally smell weed

smoke in the street that is remarkable for a different, and more envious, reason.

[[It remains a big annoyance that while tobacco smoke is more generally reviled, people seem willing to put up with the pong of weed which I can't stand. Paradoxically that does make me sympathize with non-(tobacco)-smokers...]]

I noticed that you have listed nine fanzines received this issue. On closer examination I see that four of them are also in the latest ANZAPA mailing, which exceeded 600 pages this time. It's about time that I got on with that so you'll excuse me if I shoot through now.

From: perry@middlemiss.org

January 2

Perry Middlemiss writes:

As you might recall from the dim distant past, **Leigh Edmonds** attempted to get himself invited along to the annual gathering of fans on Day Two of the Boxing Day Test Match at the MCG - in these very pages. You might also recall that we did invite Leigh, but he declined for some rather good reasons. Well, the gathering went ahead without him on December 27 as **Carey Handfield, Irwin Hirsh, Mark Loney** and myself got together to watch Australia play South Africa at the G - **Justin Ackroyd** joined us later.

[[See reply to Leigh above - I did get a brief verbal trip report off Irwin...]]

Leigh probably made a rather wise choice as the weather was bloody hot that day, hitting 37C at one point. Luckily we found a coolish spot undercover with a good view down the pitch, from about fine leg for cricket fielding position aficionados.

Not a bad day was had, despite the heat: a couple of beers were consumed mid-afternoon, and the Aussies ground the South Africans into the dirt. All good in the end. This Test lasted four days; rather better than the two days in Brisbane, but still not quite what we would have hoped for.

Is Australia becoming a non-smoking country? Yeah, pretty much. I think the percentage of adults who smoke is now in the very low teens and it's banned pretty much everywhere indoors. Oh, and by the way, the flight from LA to Sydney or Melbourne is a lazy 14 hours or thereabouts, so you'd need to be well fixed up for that. It's pretty much got to the point that everyone my age and older has given up.

[[I think it's getting to be the case everywhere. Even Las Vegas has completely non-smoking properties now (most notably perhaps Park MGM, formerly the Monte Carlo), although this is still a town where it's not so curtailed as it is elsewhere. I'm stubbornly clinging to my status as likely the Last (tobacco) Smoking Fan...]]

From: jakaufman@aol.com

January 5

Jerry Kaufman writes:

Good to hear that your Waifs and Strays party was fun. Our lot had a Christmas Day feast at our favorite local Chinese restaurant (followed by apple pie at **Andy Hooper** and **Carrie Root**'s place; Suzle and I hosted a small Boxing Day gathering; and Carrie and Andy hosted a New Year's Eve party. All were small and enjoyable.

We'll vote soon in the TAFF race, though I feel no urgency as we have months to go before the deadline. I thought of waiting until Eastercon, as we expect to attend, just so we can confuse the bookkeeping, but no... that's not nice.

[[You have inspired thish's 'FAAnWank' column...]]

I thought about my favorites among our 2022 viewing, but never got around to setting thoughts to screen. Despite the large amount of tv we watch, I couldn't remember much of it. If I had, I'd probably come with more as I wrote. *The Flight Attendant* was good, and I liked how the second season played with the idea of Cassie's hallucinatory dialogs with the murder victim in the first season, changing them to dialogs with different version of herself.

[[Agreed...]]

One show that we started watching only days before the end of 2022 is *Three Pines*. It's based on a series of murder mysteries by Louise Penny, and based in Quebec. Led by humble and sympathetic Inspector Gamache, a Montreal homicide squad keeps returning to the village of Three Pines. I really liked the sensitivity of the stories, and the way village characters are in multiple episodes. There's also a story line about a missing, probably murdered Indigenous woman and how her loss affects her family and the investigators. (This story line also features in another show I like, *Alaska Daily*.)

[[The one I egregiously forgot to mention was 'Inside Man' starring David Tennant and Stanley Tucci...]]

Kim Huett would like to go to a bar with Wolverine and the Tick. Would Deadpool do as a substitute for the Tick? I've read recently that there's another Deadpool sequel in the works, and Wolverine will feature in it. So there you have two "interesting" characters together. If filming is already complete, Kim won't be able to visit the set, but I'm sure they'll do a publicity tour together when the movie is released.

[[I see your point, but I think what Kim might have been going for was a more unlikely pairing...]]

I could swear someone in the letter column referred to Charles Addams' cartoons as "comic strips," and I had a whole lecture about the difference between single panel cartoons and strips, especially as the concepts apply to Addams' work. The relevant bits, anyway, are that Addams gave names to few of his recurring characters, much less

stories. I think much of what we assume about them comes from the television show, not the original cartoons.

For your Ageless Beauty portfolio, I give you Annie Potts.



From: mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

January 6

Mark Plummer writes:

A distinctly odd moment at work yesterday. I was entering the date onto one of our office computer systems, 05/01/2023 as express it in our peculiar little old world way, and I realised that it felt strongly and indefinably wrong. This wasn't that new year thing when it takes a while to break the habit of the previous year, the way that the first couple of weeks of cheques in 1993 would inevitably be dated 1992 and so on. Not just a, 'No, wait, oh, yeah, it is 2023 now' kind of thought but rather the notion that it couldn't possibly be 2023, that it was of an order with writing the year as 2087 or 3164 or whatever. I still have no idea why 2023 seemed impossible, something out of a science fiction novel rather than this year's calendar.

[[Some berk on FBF claimed that 2023 was the setting for 'Zardoz', so we should be prepared to dress in red nappies. Actual research reveals the year as 2293, so that's a relief innit? Mind you, this now leads us to consider images of well-known fans in the Sean Connery outfit (cringe!) or, more pleasantly, Charlotte Rampling (phwoar!)...]]

Still, 2023 is where we are – even if I'm resisting the powerful urge to double-check that – and *This Here...* is now sixty,

good god. You'll overtake us in a year and a half unless we really accelerate. Congratulations on your longevity and regularity. And thanks also for the "thank god, I thought it was only me" moment in the Egotorial of #60. I wouldn't describe it as "blind panic with an icing of self-loathing" personally, but I know I always go into a Christmas and New Year break with a tremendous sense of possibility and each year I am surprised anew when it quickly evaporates in the face of reality. Adding the bank holidays to my existing four-day working week means it's usually possible for me to get the best part of two weeks off work without hitting the leave allowance too hard and it always feels like it's going to be two weeks with nothing much to do, and so two weeks during which many things could be done. I've no idea why I persist in this belief as I know that as soon as the holiday starts it becomes two weeks during which many things need to be done, leaving virtually no time for the aspirational discretionary activity such as, well, writing to you about *This Here...* #58 and #59.

[[This Here... reaching sixty is pretty fuckin' mind-blowing innit? Almost as bonkers as me turning 65, which I genuinely can't wrap me 'ead around...]]

Not that I can easily describe what we did over the festive break. The day itself is very low key in the Shirley Road Fan Household, honed to a minimalist perfection with no visitors and no extravagant catering. We followed up with a couple of days with Claire's parents visiting us, and then a couple of days with us visiting my mother, and after all that we didn't even stray within range of a Zoom camera for New Year's Eve. We didn't quite fill the bottles-and-cans recycling bin to its brim.

[[I made sure to put our recycling bin out on December 22nd (Thursday is trash day round here) even though it wasn't full - I generally only need to avail Republic Services of access to that one every two weeks - anticipating a decent load from 'Waifs & Strays' in particular. And so it came to pass...]]

Like you, I've already voted in TAFF as this time around there's no advantage in delaying and some small risk that if I were to leave it I'd somehow forget. I don't usually vote immediately. I don't always immediately know who I'm placing first, and when I do and when there are more than two candidates there's usually some personal flex in the placing and I know that second-and-subsequent choices are sometimes important. I allow for the possibility that some often lesser-known (to me) candidate might impress or dissuade me during the voting period. Now, I suppose it is theoretically possible that **Sandra** will reveal herself in the next few months as the secret pen behind Richard Bergeron's more toxic TAFF Wars polemics or as a notorious torturer of

orphan puppies. I am however prepared to take a chance that that won't happen.

[[Very brave of you...]]

While I am committed to Sandra, I will happily give a second place to Mikołaj Kowalewski who I think is even less likely to be the secret pen behind Richard Bergeron's more toxic TAFF Wars polemics although I say that because I don't believe he was even born in the mid-eighties whereas Sandra was at least in her early teens. I admit that I know little about Mikołaj, but he has a perfectly respectable slate of nominators – unlike you, I do know all of them to some degree and a few quite well – and I figure they know what they're talking about. I've said before, possibly even in the pages of *This Here...*, that there's a certain fuzziness about what counts as "well-known and active fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean" in Today's Soulless Fandom (T Carr, 1974) and so I think it's perfectly possible to meet the purpose of TAFF as set out on the ballot while still being relatively or entirely unknown within some sections of the fannish community. So yes, I'm happy to vote Mikołaj second and under other circumstances might vote him first, but sorry, not this time.

[[I don't think there's any point in voting a second place when there's only two candidates, is there, unless there's some kind of arcane sums involved which make that meaningful, or, conceivably, you might prefer 'Hold Over Funds' to the other candidate...]]

I can confirm, by the way, that 11 April is the Tuesday after the Easter weekend. If only you had access to a huge global information resource on the computer on which you composed *This Here...* you could have checked it for yourself. Sadly, such resources remain in the far-off science fictional future. It is quite a long voting window given that presumably relatively few potential voters need three-and-a-half months to make up their mind. If only we had access to some electronic mechanism to cast votes rather than having to consign them to an increasingly unreliable postal system... But seriously, while the likes of the Hugos need a months-long voting window if you're going to have informed voters – I wonder how many people genuinely use the voting window in the FAAns to familiarise themselves with the contenders? – I suspect that with TAFF and other similar ballots it's driven by force of habit. You could say that there's a chance to build momentum and the profile of the fund through campaigning, and for candidates to expose themselves as the secret pen behind Richard Bergeron's more toxic TAFF Wars polemics, but would we actually have any lesser participation if we gave people seven days to cast their

votes? Would the sense of urgency even help? The Eastercon is a significant voting opportunity, I admit.

[[Ho ho, very satirical. I simply couldn't be arsed to check about the closing date, and as it turns out my blithe assumption was correct. You've also (see the Killer's loc above) mentioned voting windows, a topic I'm gobbing off on in 'FaanWank' thish...]]

You do remind me that back in #59 you said, it's "typically been considered a bit naughty to announce a candidacy while the nominating period is still on" and my first thought was, really, has it? It seems to me that if somebody has said they're going to run and if they're content to have the information made public then there's surely no problem with making it so. It might discourage other potential candidates ("I'm not running against xxx") but it might similarly encourage them ("God, somebody had better stand against xxx"). I'm sure I've seen candidates going public during the nominating period in the past. I mentioned this to Claire and she said that it *is* frowned upon so what would I know? I am in the backwaters of today's fandom (T Carr, 1974).

[[Claire is Right...]]

We may have spoken about this before, but in case not I think you're right to eschew a definition of 'fanzine' in the FAAn Awards in favour of 'we know one when we see one'. I don't think the awards need a legalistic definition, not least because any such almost always includes where it should exclude and vice versa, and fans are the kind of people who delight in exploiting that.

I don't have much common ground with your top-five TV contributors. We have seen nine-tenths of *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*, the product of an accidental free trial to Amazon Prime that ran out at just the wrong moment, so I'll reserve judgment for the moment. **Cuddles** praises 'The Bones of St. Nicholas', the Christmas episode of *Inside No.9*. I thought it was OK, probably a middling episode for the show as whole. If you don't know it, it's an anthology 30-minute drama, often in a dark or horror mode and with a bit of a *Tales of the Unexpected* vibe. Each episode is set in something that can be referred to as 'number 9', usually a property. Unlike Cuddles, I can't claim to have been with it from the start although we did go back to the start when we started to watch. Slightly unfortunately, the show attained a high point with its second episode, the almost entirely dialogue-free 'A Quiet Night In'. Utterly brilliant, and it's never been quite as good since.

Anyway, here's a top-five for you. Five subtitled shows we watched last year:

- *Dark* (German original, three seasons, 2017-20): a spectacularly convoluted plot that starts as a missing children drama in what was then the near-future of 2019 and evolves into a looping time travel extravaganza. It does conclude neatly in its final series although I think by then it's become so tangled that it's difficult to follow. Excellent first two seasons and worth persevering with s3 to get to that conclusion.
- *Babylon Berlin* (German original, four seasons, 2017-22): for some reason I had the idea that the setting of this show was a kind of fantastic alternative Berlin, but no, it's a conventional noir drama in the later days of the German Weimar republic. Good soundtrack, including at one point Bryan Ferry performing a period-adjusted version of 'Dance Away'. We've only seen the first two seasons so far.
- *Biblia Koshodō no Jiken Techō* (Japanese original, one season, 2013): translates as something like *Biblia Used Bookstore Casebook*, it's a series of mysteries based around a secondhand bookshop. Mostly very gentle stuff, with the first story being derived from a signed book where the positions of the signature and the dedicatee have been reversed. What can it all mean?
- *Midnight Diner* (Japanese original, five seasons, 2009-19): an anthology series set in a small Japanese diner that's open from midnight to 7AM. The stories of some of the many visitors to the diner, each episode concluding with an explanation of one of the dishes served and how it's prepared. We're only two seasons in.
- *Borgen* (Danish original, four seasons, 2010-13 and 2022): a political drama about a woman who becomes prime minister of Denmark, seen both from the perspective of the politicians and the journalists who report on them. Shades of *The West Wing* on a smaller scale. Recently revived nine years on, and we decided it was worth re-watching the first three series as a prompt for the fourth which we're currently half-way through.

Can't contribute anything or say much about your contributors to the best films of 2022 so here's a top-five 'things'. Well, not a top-five necessarily, just five good things in 2022:

- Marina Hyde's columns in *The Guardian*: she joins **Dave Hodson** in the select group of people who can write about football and I'll still read it. Her political columns are best, though. You've got to love

somebody who can describe Liz Truss as “a community centre asset stripper ... crossbred with a Live-Laugh-Love decal”. She is also responsible for there being an entry in the index of *The Bedside Guardian 2022*:

Johnson, Boris

...

Self-pitying bollocks 59

- Verdant brewery: based in Penryn, just up the road from Christina and Doug in Falmouth, they churn out a bewildering selection of beers of a kind that I imagine drives brown-beer-with-twigs-in purists berserk. The product often has a juicy quality that we refer to as ‘Verdant’. We know what it means.
- Anzapa: that rare thing, an APA that’s thriving in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Huge bi-monthly mailings thanks to its initially Covid-driven all digital format. I can’t claim to read it all, and what I do read isn’t all good, but there are some fine contributors.
- Cornish Kern: from the same dairy that make the better-known and more widely available Yarg. It’s a gouda-style cheese, yellow and creamy. Supreme Champion of the World Cheese Awards 2017.
- Zoom: it’s hardly new, I know, and arguably less essential now that we are at least acting as if we’re post-Covid in this country, but it means I still get to see and talk to people I wouldn’t see as frequently otherwise or possible not at all, whether they’re in Walthamstow, Falmouth, Newcastle, Seattle or Las Vegas.



[[100% with you re: Marina Hyde who is a delight...]]

As previously mentioned and as you doubtless realise, I never got around to saying anything about #58 and #59 and while I have a sense that there were a number of things I wanted to say I fear they haven’t survived the last month or two. I did want to thank you for including **William Breiding’s** obituary of Justin Busch. As I think you know, despite the earlier prompting and enthusing from such as yourself and William, I only connected with Justin in 2022. I sent him some fanzines, he sent some back to us – a complete run of *Far Journeys* to that point – and we later swapped a

couple of letters. His most recent issue and letter were on my desk when I learned of his death. William’s first para is instructive. I doubtless read **Guy Lillian’s** review in *The Zine Dump*, but I have no memory of it and so unsurprisingly I can’t say it moved me in the way it so clearly moved William. I suppose the appearance of somebody such as Justin, not an old-timer returning to the form but somebody entering the fanzine field for the first time in the 2020s, just seemed so *unlikely*. In our earliest publishing days we would read other people’s reviews and letter columns, seeking out

likely fanzine recipients. While we have added new names to our mailing list in the last few years it’s now more likely to be people we met at conventions, people like **Eli Cohen** at the Dublin Worldcon in 2019. So thanks to William for making that contact, and to you for promoting Justin’s work. What a shame we barely got to know him.

[[I wrote to Justin (via Erin) while he was in hospital and attempted to describe how, despite only having been in touch with him for a bit over a year, (long enough, luckily, to commission his excellent article for BEAM 17) it felt like he was an “old friend”. Erin reported back that he liked that. I was also massively grateful to W^m for writing the obit (which I asked him to do). I’m well aware of my own failings in memorializing - even if it’s someone I’ve known extremely well I just can’t ever seem to get it right, at least not to my own satisfaction...]]

From: paulskelton2@gmail.com

January 7

Paul Skelton writes:

Ah, *This Here...*, The journal of **Ulrika’s** brilliantly colourful fillos. Don’t you have something to do with this as well, Nic? Ah, yes, some incidental writing which we shall doubtless come to later. Yes, I see some reference to Harry Warner’s LoCs which implied they had little reference to the issue in question. I think this a base canard as his LoCs always had some sort of connection to the specific issue, just not general boxes to be ticked. I know my own LoCs tend to follow a similar pattern, so I could hardly quibble with this.

Not even with the obscure connection to **John Hertz’s** reference to a supporting membership in a Worldcon (50 US dollars) being equivalent to 5/7 a bottle of Talisker. There are of course various varieties of Talisker. Currently these are commonly Talisker Storm and Talisker Ten. I prefer the latter, and it is currently my malt whisky of choice. Now of

course the price varies depending if it's on special offer, but if not, £48 is something I've seen currently quoted. 5/7 of that is still over £34, which is a ludicrous amount of money to pay to say that you like something. I have of course being paying only £30 per bottle (owing to various supermarkets' competition), but that is still silly money when it comes to Hugo voting.

But Talisker goes back much further than that for me. Back in the dim and distant past I was made redundant from Cantrell & Cochrane (Northern) Ltd, a subsidiary of Schweppes. I determined to see this as a moving forward and asked the assistant MD for a bottle of Chasse Spleen (which the directors drank at their boardroom meetings). Granted this I decided to "celebrate" further with some seriously boss malt whiskies. I went to Kendal Milne's in Manchester (part of the Harrods group) and asked for a couple of bottles of their oldest and strongest malts. Their oldest was a Macallan, which never really grew on me. The strongest was a 105 proof Talisker (about 60% alcohol). Initially I, familiar with standard whiskies, could not understand why anyone would pay over the odds for this but, by the time I'd finished the bottle, I couldn't understand why they'd drink anything else.

Clearly the answer would be that they couldn't afford it.

But that is all by the by. I just want to thank you for anchoring me within fandom whilst my own creative impulses are minimally active.

[[Like Judi Dench's 'M' in the James Bond movies, I prefer bourbon (or a nice rye). You seem to peripherally concur with S&ra Bond who has stated her preference for a FAAn award over a Hugo, except in your case it's a Talisker over even voting in the latter. How many, I wonder, would also nod sagely at your choice? Good to hear from you mate...]]

[[On January 28, Skel adds: ...]]

Ignoring my earlier response, which was effectively my 'Harry Warner' LoC (though given that it was but a single page I guess to be pedantic it would be my 'Harry Warner ½ LoC.), which was really meant to catch the tide lest your zine sailed without me. I was also feeling constrained not to mention Fan Matters or even the Footie, which you once suggested was the only bit I read.

So, dragging these within my sphere of response I can at least add something germane. I agree wholeheartedly with your remarks about **Sandra Bond** anent TAFF. I only ever vote in this on the rare occasion when there is a candidate with whom I am familiar. Both Cas and I will be casting our votes this year, even braving the online system, having made arrangements to send our cash fee/donation directly to Claire Brialey. Should really have already have done so, but we have been rather busy with essential home improvements/repairs lately.

As to the Footie, I was rather hoping France would triumph in the final. This was purely on the basis that England could then console themselves that they had only been beaten by the eventual winners, and then only by the narrowest of margins, and even in that not having had the rub of the refereeing green.

Let's face it, when you support England you take what scraps you can get.

OK, still not a mega-response, but now I feel somewhat less guilty.

From: kim.huett@gmail.com

January 11

Kim Huett writes:

I can see why you would choose John Constantine and depending on who else was there could make for an interesting evening indeed. I'll have to pass though, as my tonsils have become so sensitive that I start coughing if the air conditioning is too cold and I do believe Constantine is one of those tobacco junkies I therefore need to avoid like the plague.

[[As am I, of course...]]

From: dave_redd@hotmail.com

January 16

David Redd writes:

An unusual Radio Winston this time – no links! Not surprising really. Actually my niece's family wouldn't need a link to "Grandma got run over by a reindeer" because they've been indelibly imprinted with it for years. Just don't mention it to them or the Pavlovian reflex to sing will kick in. I must confess that reading the Christmas Top 40 chart of mostly seasonal streaming is an annual guilty pleasure; this year I genuinely delighted in seeing Bing Crosby still soldiering on at #39. But I'm the sort of person who was glad to find the cd "Vera Lynn 100", as a charity-shop curiosity of course.

You and your sidekicks have no doubt excellent TV/film recommendations in your roundups, but can't comment due to my lack of viewing. I have at least heard of a few in the lists, e.g. "The Banshees of Inisherin" and "Empire of Light", which do seem worthwhile. Are we in a Golden Age or not? I suppose the highlights of my own limited screen-watching were two films on BBC4 – "Citizen Kane" (at last!) and "Tove" (biopic of T Jansson).

[[I and others I know, especially those of Scandiwegian derivation, might like to check out the Tove Jansson biopic if they haven't already seen it...]]

Belated congratulations to **Ulrika O'Brien** on the Rotsler, and a vote for her cute p.10 pic this time. I also liked seeing the cover of "Sporting Supermen" slipped in among the correspondence. It's the simple pleasures that get me.

[[Dear old Dave Cockfield is always good for old memory jogs like that...]]

Jerry Kaufman also reminds me that while I was still buying I should have picked up "Famous Blue Raincoat". Instead, I still have the 12" 45 of Bird On A Wire/Coming Back To You/First We Take Manhattan, which has certainly resisted downsizing.

From: eli.cohen@mindspring.com

January 16

Eli Cohen writes:

What a perfect way to start off the New Year: *This Here...#60* appearing in my mailbox (I guess my spam filter is broken, or overloaded). And speaking of TV Guide, it's taken me so long to read and loc this issue because of the rabbit hole I fell down:

Re-watching the entire run of 'The West Wing' (provoked by a local station running a marathon of back-to-back episodes). I absolutely love that show. I've torn myself away from the middle of Season 4 to write this -- I hope you appreciate it. The weirdest thing about watching it is the double vision it gives me as I watch the news, and think to myself "What lousy writers!" For example, that whole Kevin McCarthy speaker thing was just so unbelievable, and poorly paced, besides...

[[I can only nod in sage agreement...]]

Anyway. I agree with you about the brilliance of 'Everything, everywhere, all at once.' Best movie, ever, about a tax audit! (This was my friend Bill Wagner's summary of it -- but then, he's an IRS agent.)

Re your remark about your "esteemed (or often merely steamed) co-editor" on *Beam*: when I co-edited my first fanzine, *AKOS*, with Janet Kagan (then Janet Megson) we were listed in the colophon as "editors-in-chafe". I once referred to her in my editorial as my "esteemed typist/co-editor" (Janet did all the final typing, which allowed her the final word in comments) -- she said in the parentheses following this "that's co-editor/typist, and watch it, buster!". Actually, we got along fine -- to quote from her editorial in *AKOS 2*, "(I admit that Eli's existence is a tenuous one, as I threaten to eliminate him about once a week--but so far Ricky has prevented any real mayhem and mutilation by sitting on me. *Don't count on it, Eli!*"). Co-editing is such fun, isn't it? Whoever said two 'eds are better than one?

[[Two 'eds' - ho ho. But yes, I agree that the collaborative process can be highly productive - there's an apex to that

where adversarial aspects actually dovetail with the situation where the individuals are friends as well, but there are also examples of what happens when they're not, or when the balance tips too far in the direction of either too much head-butting or indeed too much love-fest. I believe BEAM gets it right, as, apparently, did AKOS. It's important to be able to disagree, sometimes vehemently, but compartmentalize that so that the underlying comity isn't affected...]]

And speaking of **Ulrika**, lovely illos, as usual, especially the one on p. 19.

Oh no, not another crossword clue! "Conspicuous but also unfit for purpose (7)." This is a puzzlement. All I can think of, and this is just a wild guess, is "notable" as a synonym for "conspicuous", i.e. "not able" meaning "unfit for purpose". Guess I'll have to wait for the next issue to find out. (Must remember to check that spam filter...)

[[Nailed it...]]

From: gsmattingly@yahoo.com

January 16

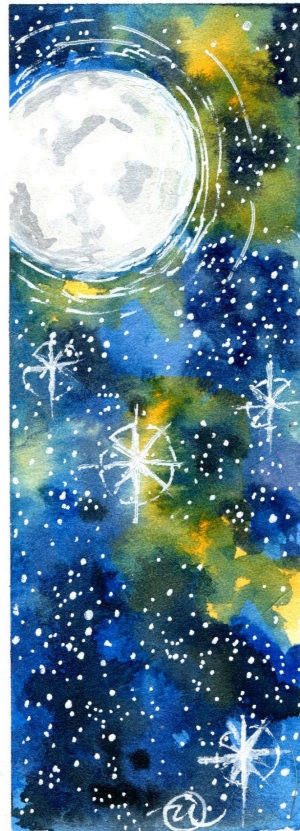
Gary Mattingly writes:

Sorry to read about your issues in December. I have forgotten things which I really should have remembered at various times throughout my life. Some things didn't matter. Some things definitely did. I have to renew my driver's license on my upcoming 71st birthday. Hopefully I do not have to go in. The last time I had to go in, I had to take a vision test which I failed. I then had to go through several weeks getting eye appointments, both with an optometrist and an ophthalmologist. The optometrist prescribed glasses with which I still could not pass the vision test. Finally the ophthalmologist said that my really bad astigmatism which was causing my inability to pass the eye exam could only be resolved with hard contact lenses. I had worn soft contact lenses in the past but had stopped a number of years ago because when I was roller skating at a rink, I got dust between the lens and my eye and caused myself great pain and also a torn retine (left eye). I had to go in and have them basically laser burn my eye so that it formed scar tissue so that it continued to hold together. So there's a scar on that eye and obviously my left eye vision is affected by that scar. I resolved at that time to stop wearing contact lenses. However at this point, the ability to drive far outweighed my issues with contact lenses. So I got hard contacts (RGP, rigid gas permeable) and amazingly enough, I could pass the vision test. My vision still isn't great but I can drive without limitations. Well, obviously I have to wear my contacts. There was an option to only drive in the day time with glasses but I didn't like that option very much at all. Anyway, I hope I can do this year's renewal entirely by mail.

Fortunately I don't have a hearing problem. Well, people question that sometimes but I have taken hearing tests and I can still hear okay. I probably can't hear as well as I did 40 years okay but I think my hearing is okay. I wish you the best with your hearing.

[[I'm "between hearing aids" at the moment, since I returned the last pair because they (well, one of them) were hurting my right ear to the point where that side was too painful to wear. I need to have a look at what else is on offer and might have to up the price point I'm considering. The driver's license became an example of dotage - renewing my Taxi permit last week I needed to have Jen get a DMV printout, which she duly did, and having to grab my current license noticed what I didn't, which was that the expiry isn't until 2024 on my 66th birthday. not this month as I'd surmised. One less thing, for now...]]

I've never taken a dog in for grooming, including our current Cosmo and Pip I have considered it recently but it is more expensive that I had realized and I don't actually think the dogs would necessarily appreciate it that much and I don't honestly think they need it that badly. I'm still thinking about it. I do take them in several times a year to the vet. Once a year they have an annual physical checkup. At that time and at one other time during the year they have vaccine shots. There are a number of them. Dog flu was added a few years ago. They also get a rattlesnake shot that isn't really a vaccine but basically decreases the effects of a rattlesnake bite so that it provides more time for me to get them to a vet to get an expensive antivenin shot. Now fortunately despite hiking fairly frequently in our area the dogs have never been bitten. We have encountered a rattlesnake or two but the dogs obey my command and we go around the rattlesnake. Usually the rattlesnakes we encounter are sunning themselves on the trail and aren't particularly aggressive unless approached. We have to be particularly leery of young rattlesnakes since they can't control how much venom they inject into their victim and thus can be more severe than an adult rattlesnake. You certainly don't want to get near rocks or branches under which rattlesnakes may be hiding. I think last year one hiker jumped up and sat on a large rock and then was bitten by a rattlesnake that was underneath the rock. It pays to think when you're on the trail. Anyway, I also take them in when they get ear infections which can happen once every year or two unfortunately. I also take them in for any unexplained bump or growth that appears, checking for cancer and such things. Now all those vet trips can get expensive but that's



okay. It is important for the dogs and for me to keep them healthy and alive.

[[Lulu doesn't get walked on any kind of trail, mostly because I can't walk very far...]]

Taffnessabounds: As noted in my last LoC, I've already voted for **Sandra** for TAFF. I sent money to **Michael Lowrey** via Paypal. Some weeks later it was returned to me because basically it said he wasn't recognized or something to that effect. I contacted him and he said yeah, he'd been having problems with Paypal and to try again. I did and so far it hasn't been returned. Hopefully it stays that way. I wish Sandra luck!

[[I've written Orange Mike about this to see if my donation was all right or not...]]

And an enjoyable Seasonal Interlude by Sandra and you.

[[I had the idea for it, but the execution is mostly S&ra...]]

Radio Winston: This year I played very little Christmas music at home. I usually play a fair amount but just wasn't up for it this year. I played some Vince Guaraldi Peanuts Christmas music, a Bing Crosby CD of Christmas music and some Vienna Boys Choir and that was about it at home. However in the car I had Sirius XM tuned to one of their numerous Christmas stations and listened to that fairly frequently. I think I've only listened to one of the songs you mentioned in Radio Winston and I probably won't go hunting for the others.

[[Very sensible of you...]]

FaanWank: Thanks for *The Incomplete Register* 2022. Gee, now I have to think about this.

TV Guide: **Marc Ortlieb** - I haven't watched any of those things he mentioned. I'm not familiar with any of them also. **Cuddles?**

Well, as noted I've watched and enjoyed 'Andor' and 'Wednesday'. I also watched and enjoyed to a lesser extent 'House of the Dragon' and 'The Rings of Power'. I have no knowledge of 'The Bones of St. Nicholas'. And on to you, I guess. I watched and enjoyed 'Strange New Worlds'. I'm unfamiliar with 'Slow Horses' and still haven't gotten around to watching 'Flight Attendant'. I've watched a few episodes of 'Leverage: Redemption' but haven't really gotten into it. Whereas I have returned to 'Manifest' which has a new season on Netflix. I was going to swear off that since it probably will never go to any resolution but . . . I also watched the short series of 'Witcher: Blood Origin'. It was okay but I mainly watched all the episodes due to Michelle Yeoh appearing. I watched all of 'Willow' but it really wasn't that great. I also have watched all of the

episodes shown so far for 'National Treasure: Edge of History'. It was okay but also not great. Hm, I've watched one episode of 'Copenhagen Cowboy' and am debating as to whether or not I will watch more. I've watched the two current episodes of Anne Rice's 'Mayfair Witches' and the first episode of 'The Last of Us'. Relative to 'The Last of Us', I'm not a big fan of zombie tv series but this received a number of good reviews. The first episode was okay so I'll watch the second one. Of course, I've watched all the new episodes of 'All Creatures Great and Small'. Also on PBS is 'Vienna Blood'. I actually have gone back and watched the last two seasons. I liked it. I also like 'Astrid' on PBS. It is from France and Astrid has autism and works in the criminal records department for the Paris polis. She helps solve cases. There are several more seasons of this show but they are all currently in French and without English subtitles. Hopefully they will all eventually get broadcast on PBS. I've watched two episodes of 'Interview with a Vampire' and may watch more. TBD.

[[I'm wondering whether when I pack up work I'll spend as much time in from of the telly as you seem to do...]]

Waifs & Strays 2022 - Enjoyable photos.

Movie Night: I haven't seen 'The Stranger', 'Maigret', or 'Harvest Time'. I thought both 'Everything Everywhere All At Once' and 'Drive My Car' were excellent and really enjoyed both of them.

I haven't seen the movies 'She Said' nor 'Blonde' reviewed by **Jacq Monahan**. I honestly don't think I'll watch 'She Said' in the near (or maybe even distant) future. 'Blonde' is a maybe. However I have both 'Tár' and 'The Banshees of Inisherin' on the to-be-watched shelves. 'Empire of Light', 'Women Talking' and 'Till' are rather low on my list of films to seek out. I may watch 'Goodnight Oppy' sooner rather than later. Before I watch 'Glass Onion' I plan to watch 'Knives Out' first. That is on the to-be-watched shelves also. I'm not familiar with 'Wrath of Man'. 'Last Night in Soho' and 'Bullet Train' are both also on my to-be-watched shelves. There are some other movies from 2022 on my to-be-watched shelves that I will probably watch sooner, such as 'Northman', 'Nope', 'The Woman King', 'Emily the Criminal', 'Lyle Lyle Crocodile', 'Morbius', 'The Witch Part 2', 'The Batman', 'Top Gun Maverick', 'Incredible But True', 'M3gan' and maybe 'Alienoid'. Of course, there are also various and sundry 2022 films that have not yet been released on physical media, like 'Black Panther Wakanda Forever'. The only 2022 movie I went to see at the theater was 'Avatar The Way of Water' in 3D. Now admittedly there are also several thousand other movies on the to-be-watched shelves that were released before 2022 which are much higher on my list of movies to be viewed. Right now that includes 'The Big Parade', a silent film from 1925, 'Napoleon' from 1927 (which I actually also saw in the theater), 'New From Home', 'Daughters of the Dust', 'Vagabond' (directed

by Agnes Varda), 'La Cienega', 'Enter the Dragon', 'Fists of Fury', Some other movies I plan to watch are viewings of movies I've seen in the past including 'Shadow of a Doubt' and 'Laura'.

[[Informal reader poll: AT which point did your eyes glaze over?...]]

Footy: I think in a prior LoC I already wrote about Qatar and the matches from last year, of which I am only minimally aware. I'm more aware of the controversies than the actual matches. I am sorry to hear about **David Hodson's** cold. I was aware of Pelé's death and of his life, probably not as much as anyone who follows soccer though.

Loco Citato: Your response to me: I haven't watched 'Jurassic World Dominion'. I probably will eventually get around to it. I watch all my films at home by myself. Well, I watch them by myself at theaters too (not counting the other people in the theater who I do not know). Garth Danielson regularly gets people together for movie nights at his home in Minneapolis. I've never been there but they see a wide variety of films. Part of the reason that I wouldn't watch movies at home with other people, for the most part, is that they might actually talk about the movie (or anything else for that matter) during the movie. I don't do that. I might watch movies to the side while also perusing the internet and emails if they are moderately mindless but films in which I am interested, no comments from the gallery please.

[[Similar to Cuddles' "movie rule" for going to the pictures: "NAE WEANS!"...]]

Okay, with respect to 'The Climate Question', I haven't listened to it, as opposed to watching it.

TAFF: Okay, people stand to be candidates. They have a list of "nominators" that they provide. Once on the TAFF ballot, people send in money and vote on the candidates. People aren't nominated per se but rather have people suggest that they run and those and others may appear as nominators. Do I have that right? I actually have never asked anyone to run for TAFF.

Hm, and what does it say on the TAFF ballot? "Nominated by:"

[[Indeed, and you're dead wrong. Candidates are formally nominated (DUFF and GUFF the same), the requirement being three nominators from the "home" end and two from the destination. Those nominators must confirm their intent to the relevant fund administrator(s)...]]

Jerry Kaufman: I have six albums by Leonard Cohen. Jennifer Warnes 'Famous Blue Raincoat' album is one of my favorites though. I bought the 20th anniversary edition of it.

Eli Cohen: - your response - I have '1900' (aka Novocento) by Bertolucci. I watched 'The Conformist' in 2015. I'll have to watch '1900'. I have not read 'Prison Notebooks'. It sounds interesting. Three volumes could take a while.

WAHF: Ooh, a "Vita Transplantare will likely emerge in January". Vita, Vita, reads great, Vita, Vita, can't wait.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JtnEUPvpu>

Indulge Me: Again, I'll look for 'The Climate Question'.

And again I enjoyed the artwork by **Ulrika O'Brien** in the issue and the various and sundry photographs.

From: michelledh@me.com

January 28

Cuddles writes:

TH...60 arrived by email on Hogmanay, so obviously I didn't get to read it straight away. In fact, with the holidays and an early party for Ralph's 60th birthday, I was a bit befuddled (hungover) but I got there in the end!

[[A month-long hangover? I can only stand in awe at your fortitude...]]

It was great to read the TV/movie reviews. **Mark Plummer** mentioned 'Judge John Deed', which I do like but personally, Martin Shaw's 'Inspector George Gently' series is much, much better. It's set in the 60's and is lovingly recreated by the production: costumes, sets, vehicles and crackin' music. 'Strange New Worlds' is probably one of the best of the newer Star Trek shows and a truly fitting homage to the original series. Way better than 'Enterprise' ever was, despite some excellent casting and stories. Anson Mount has certainly made the role of Captain Christopher Pike his own and he is the anchor for the core characters. 'Leverage: Redemption' lacks some of the chemistry of the original series, which is a favourite of ours, but it is still a lot of fun. Sophie and the team are now based in NOLA, with a new hacker and Harry, a dirty corporate lawyer who is looking for Redemption, hence the new title. The jobs are still fun but not quite as polished, perhaps a bit to do with production costs and less team spirit without Nate or Hardison (although he does pop up a few times).

[[Agreed. That's very fair comment, though I might point out that 'Redemption' delves more into character backstories. I still see the show as a proper 'Mission: Impossible' (TV series) update, and you know I'm a massive fan of heist/con jobs in general. Stylistically, of course, they couldn't be more different, with the original 'M:I' taking its cues from the movie 'Topkapi', where in terms of character interaction 'Leverage' has always shown a debt to 'The A-Team'...]]

I've just binge watched 'Lockwood & Co' (Netflix), a new supernatural drama based on the YA books by Jonathan Stroud. It's about three young agents of a psychic detection agency, fighting ghosts in London. 8 episodes (so far) that are well written with welcome touches of humour and the three lead actors are superb. Good production & very vivid SFX makes this show very watchable. Also, hats off to the

fencing trainer & fight co-ordinators - psychic agents are taught to use rapiers to fight off ghosts, who can kill with a touch or 'lock' you into a waking coma - because there are a few good duels.

WAHF

W^m Breiding : "I find myself slipping into slow gafiation. I was happy to see Sue Mason and Pascal Thomas chosen for Corflu 50. I urged Rich [Coad] to consider bringing a Swede to Belfast but he and his smofs made great choices with Sue and Pascal. Unbelievably beautiful autumn/winter weather down here!" ; **George Phillies** with the results (and numbers!) for the N3F Directorate election ; **David M. Shea** actually responding to my loc in *Alexiad*. A very pleasant letter DNQ'd by his request, but I did want to note that I'd heard from him, just like old times... ; **Garth Spencer** (referring to the email cover quote) : "Where can I get the t-shirt?" ;

FANZINES RECEIVED

That's really not too many...

ALEXIAD #126 (Joseph & Lisa Major) - ...

THE OBDURATE EYE #23 (Garth Spencer) - ...

CAPTAIN FLASHBACK #49, #50 (Andy Hooper) - ...

VT 28 (John Nielsen Hall) - The old lad has relocated to Morecambe and is back at it (oo-er missus!). A map, and the tale of travail involved is provided. Nice to have you back, mate...

INDULGE ME

✘ **FOOTY EXTRA** : Of interest perhaps only to **Dave Cockfield**, but I saw a table of Watford's away support numbers, and top of the list, despite being one of the longest trips is Sunderland! The pies must be well good...

✘ **CROSSWORD CLUE FOR ELI** : "Horribly violated, perfect fit. (8)"...

✘ **DOCUMENTARY** : While **Gary Mattingly** is still trying to find 'The Climate Question', I'll mention another series of interest from the Uncut Bicycle Service, imaginatively titled 'The Documentary', exploring [animal sentience](#)...

✘ **MARINA MOMENT** : Since **M Strummer** mentions her (locs), here's a recent quote from the excellent Marina Hyde's column in the *Grauniad* : "...luxury menswear influencer Rishi Sunak is apparently facing a law enforcement probe for removing his seatbelt to film a video for his Insta, as part of the police's ruthless commitment to rooting out trivial wrongdoing so that people mind less when another one of them is revealed to be a rapist."...

✘ **AGELESS BEAUTY (1)** : A ‘Star Trek’ one, and why not? **Nana Visitor**...



✘ **SCIENCE AND NATURE** : From Australia, another reason to perhaps *not* ever visit because of the wildlife, a bloody [big bastard of a cane toad](#) (Have I got the description right enough for the vernacular, lads?)...

✘ **WAHF EXTRA** : A large suspicious package arrives in the mail from **John Hertz**, and just a little fearful I consider returning it unopened, but ultimately don’t. This is what it contains...



MIRANDA

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

Locs & that to: 2657 Rungsted Street, Las Vegas NV 89142, or Email fareynic@gmail.com

Art credits: **Ulrika O’Brien** (pp8, 11, 16, 19) ; **Anne Stokes** (TAFF westbound logo, p2)

✘ **LATEST N3F SHOCK CONTROVERSY** : There isn’t one! Well, John Thiel is still protesting the suspension of rank plagiarist Jeffrey Redmond in the pages of *Origin* by posting photos of him alongside whiny lamentations which inevitably fail to mention his offense. As noted in ‘WAHF’, the results of the N3F elections were revealed (and published in *TNFF*) and in the fictional location of Much-Sniggering-Behind-The-Hand (which does sound like something from ‘The Goodies’, don’t it?) I note that there were six candidates for the five Directorate slots. Thiel came dead last...

✘ **AGELESS BEAUTY (2)** : Because we have to have a Brit who **Jerry Kaufman** will never have heard of (and won’t like anyway), here’s **Caroline Coon**...



✘ **SCENTED CANDLE UPDATE** : Another new “flavor”: ‘Chocolate Cherries’, which will give **Jen** much angst...

✘ **[FALLS OFF CHAIR]** : TIL that ‘Star Trek: The Next Generation’ episode ‘Time’s Arrow, Part 2’ won a Creative Arts Emmy for hairstyling...

✘ **NEXTISH** : 24th or 25th February sounds about right...

“Someday you’ll meet your rocking chair
‘Cause that’s where we’re spinning
There’s no point to want to comb your hair
When it’s grey and thinning”