

# This Here...

*"...really irritating..." (J Nicholas)*

## EGOTORIAL

### LOST, STOLEN OR STRAYED...

I'm having what's more or less a fairly comprehensive fanac block, which seems to encompass not only writing, but just about everything involved in fanzine production, requiring a heroic effort of will (honest guv) to get *anything* done, including this well fuckin' sorry paragraph. That's why this is likely going to be rather thin.

And now, the news...

It's all good.

January 2026

## NEWS

## ROUNDUP

### TAFFNESSABOUNDS

There will be a race, given that I'm aware of two candidates so far. There may, of course, be others...

Nominations remain open until 23:59 Pacific time, February 1<sup>st</sup> 2026. As a reminder of the form, candidates will need three North American and two European nominators for a total of five, an up to 101-word platform and the deposit of a \$20 bond with the fund.

One friend has already chucked their hat in the ring, and I shall therefore immediately exhort you all to vote **KAT TEMPLETON** for TAFF when voting opens...

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### CORFLU PICKLED DEADLINE REMINDER

Your **HOTEL ROOM BOOKING** needs to be done by **JANUARY 27**, so get that sorted if you haven't already!

Links:

<https://corflu.org/>

[Corflu43/](#)

[CorfluPickledPR3.pdf](#)

[https://](https://www.facebook.com/groups/corflu)

[www.facebook.com/groups/corflu](https://www.facebook.com/groups/corflu)

<https://corflu.org/>



### FAAN AWARDS VOTING DEADLINE

You should have all received a copy of *The Incomplete Register 2025*

FAAn Awards voters' guide. If not, it's available at efanzines, or you can email me and ask for a copy (address at the end of the zine as usual).

This is the only chance I've got (in this here gaze of raccoons, anyway) to remind you to vote, since the deadline to receive ballots is 23:59 Pacific time on Valentines' Day, February 14<sup>th</sup>. That's not even three weeks from now, so get to it, ey?

# HEALTH DIARY

## GIMME BACK MY BULLETS

Yeah, six weeks or so of ketchup required, so given current inabilities, here's the bullet points:

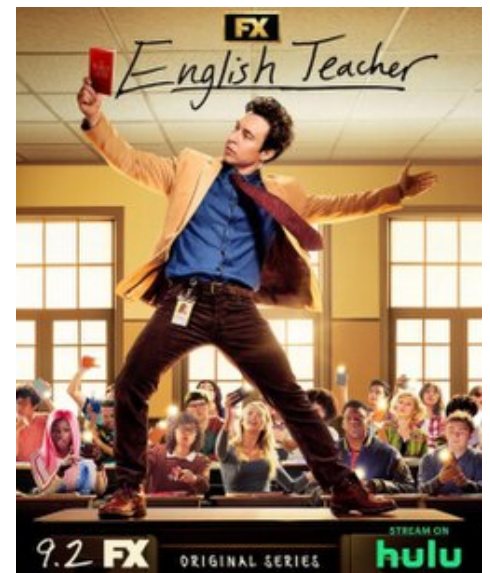
- December 11<sup>th</sup>, surgery scheduled. Check in to Sunrise hospital.
- Dr Handsome (so named because he resembles James Booth) delays surgery two days, apparently unaware that my white cell count is already elevated because leukemia. More nil by mouth.
- Noonish on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Fuckin' starving, wheeled off to be cut up.
- Come to about 9pm. Nurse Ratched refuses me even a sip of water, despite my entreaties that I am as dry as a witch's tit. No sleep. Frequent blood testing ect and a blood pressure cuff that activates every 15 minutes.
- Sleep continues to elude in the ICU. It transpires (later) that the fuckin' bed is actually broken, which doesn't help.
- Much concern about farts, which in this case would be a good sign. The surgery involves shoving your guts out of the way then shoving them back afterwards to gradually resume their previous configuration on their own. Farts and any actual bowel movement are indications that this is happening. I will spare you the - er - blow by blow account.
- Moved out of ICU to a regular room, and, later, twice more to different rooms. These shifts seem to be timed so that you miss meals, which is annoying, but (a) I don't have much appetite and (b) the nosebag is generally awful.
- December 18<sup>th</sup>, and I am released with instructions basically saying "don't do anything and take your pills".
- One bullet to ~~rule them all~~ cover the next several weeks, almost until now: pills, little appetite, low energy and a lot of sleep. I've lost about 20 lbs and, it seems, an inch in height.
- Lots of follow ups with both my PCP and the vascular surgeon. Bit of a problem with one of the wounds, but it's being taken care of.
- Distressingly, leg pain (left) has returned. This may not be good. Up until now it's been coo er gosh pain free and look, I can walk quite well (for a change)...
- Amazingly, though, my white blood cell count is now actually NORMAL! Go figure...

# TV GUIDE

## BY ROY KETTLE

After reading reviews and getting recommendations from friends I like to do a bit of vetting of TV shows before I decide to watch them, and usually by checking them out on IMDb but not simply relying on the overall average scores. The IMDb algorithm chooses four or so user comments in some way and displays them, though it's easy enough to check out any of comments. I can't quite figure out why particular comments are shown because sometimes users who give high scores and very favourable views are displayed for a show with a poor average and other times you get a "I don't know why this show has such a great rating as it's crap". It's almost as if it's random... But I find those chosen to be shown often help steer me towards a decent programme and avoid a poor one. I'm not sure how the IMDb algorithm would know what I like so I suspect it's not focussed on my particular tastes and might actually be random but I'm pleased to be able to use it. Maybe everyone gets the same recommendations, though that seems unlikely, or it relates to what I look at on IMDb, though that doesn't seem to be it. It might be the same way that my searching for information about a town in Iceland on a browser recently to help me find a particular novel set there ended up with my getting heaps of emails from Trip Advisor (which I hadn't looked at) asking when I wanted to book my trip and if I needed Ideas for Reykjavik (attack it, seems to be the current view from the US leadership). I knew that Hotel Borg was a particular setting for the plot and now I know more about Hotel Borg than anyone could possibly want. Except what novel it was in.

The last show I picked out from IMDb, following a suggestion online, was English Teacher on Disney which gets a decent 7.4 average, many episodes rated higher than that and five selected user comments which rate it 9 or 10. It turns out that those user comments are accurate as far as I'm concerned. It's a very entertaining comedy set in an American high school with likeable characters and seemingly realistic and complex interactions between the teachers (I mean, I don't know much about American schools but teachers



are teachers) though more simplified ones between the students who largely have to fit into their stylized but very still varied characters though the show is none the worse for it. The main character is a gay teacher, played by Brian Jordan Alvarez (who's also the creator and main writer) who talks and acts refreshingly honestly about everything the students might be interested in (often to the despair of the principal well played by Enrico Colantoni, who I mainly remember from *Galaxy Quest*, and spends most of his time, to the frustration of Alvarez, trying to stick to a set of bureaucratic rules that he can never entirely explain). The main other characters who are Alvarez's colleagues and friends avoid being stereotypes - for instance, the non-PC right wing alpha male gym teacher (well played by Markie Hillridge) is actually a good guy who helps out Alvarez a lot. There's plenty of good original jokes, entertaining stories and views that seem unlikely in a country controlled by Trump (though it is set in Austin which probably explains it). I liked it as much as *Community*, though it never really reached, or tried to achieve, the occasional levels of surrealism and bizarreness that some of the episodes of *Community* hit. Very current story telling, and highly recommended for both seasons, and had the added advantage of just being long enough for me to exercise on the static bike in front of the tv. I see it's now been dropped because of accusations of sexual assault against Alvarez.

*Fallout*, on Prime, was recommended in a number of reviews and by several friends whose views I respect and on IMDb, though I'd never heard of the video game it's based on, which came out between 1997 and 2018. My video gaming pretty much stopped with *Prince of Persia* in 1989 and *Myst* in 1993. This is easily my favourite programme at the moment. I had to catch up with season 1 and am currently up to date with what's been released of season 2. I should imagine that everyone reading this has a good idea of what it's about and probably watches it if they have Prime. It's got a pretty good team behind it, created by Graham Wagner (*Baskets* and *Silicon Valley*) and Geneva Robertson-Dworet (*Captain Marvel*) and produced by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy (with *Westworld* only one of their SF creations)

The series is set after the devastating nuclear war of 2077 between the United States and China, in an alternate history, past and future, with huge advances in nuclear technology, a retrofuturistic past society and resource wars. The story is set in different time periods and locations range from complex fallout bunkers known as Vaults to the fascinating nuclear wasteland above them. People in the Vaults are still the unwitting subjects of sociological and psychological experiments run by Vault-Tec and other American corporations. More than 200 years after the war, Lucy (played endearingly like a female *Candide* by Ella Purnell) leaves her home in Vault 33 to look for her father (Kyle MacLachlan!) in a devastated Los Angeles and latterly Las

Vegas (maybe the giant cockroaches are familiar to Nic), kidnapped by, and eventually grudgingly accompanied by, an ancient grotesque ghoul who had been a famous Hollywood cowboy actor and now lived as a gunslinging bounty hunter, Cooper Howard, kept alive only by drugs and sometimes human flesh (and wonderfully played by Walton Goggins in bizarre prosthetics, his lack of a nose is difficult to look away from), and interacting with Maximus, a knight - wearing terrific power armour - of the Brotherhood of Steel. They each have their own agendas, though Lucy's quest is the simplest and she pursues it largely cheerfully against ridiculous odds. Matt Berry has an amusing role as various robot Mr Handys, especially "Snip Snip", a Mr. Handy turned organ harvester.



The scripts are complex, fascinating, gripping, satirical, funny and ridiculously entertaining science fiction and the sets and action are wonderful, combining steampunk (especially the Brotherhood airships), ancient imagery (decaying adverts, left over tech, and codes of behaviour from the past as far back as the Romans) and accompanied by a knockout soundtrack. On the other hand, depending on your tastes, it's *\*very\** gory and violent. Even better than *Mad Max*, though there are post apocalypse similarities.

On a somewhat different note, we've both been watching Alec Guinness as Smiley in a couple of the old serials based on John Le Carre's novels (*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and *Smiley's People*) with both serials available on BBC iPlayer. *Tinker, Tailor* is set in the early 70s, significantly in London, which is darker and more miserable than I remember it, and all the better for it. Great performances by a top cast, especially Guinness, Ian Richardson, Ian Bannen and Beryl Reid. Even better than the excellent film with Gary Oldman as Smiley and a differently high class cast, largely because it has more time over 7 parts to show the machinations and consequences of the world of spying. I enjoyed *Smiley's People* as well, though not as much.

Back briefly to IMDb, despite what I've said, and despite a weedy 4.9 overall rating and poor user reviews and a poor Guardian review, we watched what turned out to be a very entertaining Sky Atlantic series, *Amadeus*, with outstanding





performances by Will Sharpe as Mozart, Paul Bettany (a reliably good actor) as two ages of Salieri, Rory Kinnear as Emperor Joseph and Gabrielle Creevy as Constanze Mozart. A series which expands and builds on the play by Peter Shaffer and works differently from, but for us, as well as, the very enjoyable film. So much for relying on IMDb and reviews.

## RADIO WINSTON

### WM BREIDING'S HONEST PLAYLIST

*[[Shamelessly stolen from the regular feature in the Grauniad...]]*

Nic wrote a couple of days before deadline and asked me to respond to the following questions for this "honest playlist." Of course I didn't see this as a simple questionnaire. I saw each category as an essay in itself and that was how I began my approach. A couple of days' notice is probably not long enough for me to write a finished essay, though. The main category I had chosen was "song that makes me cry." Which is a category of exposure and one that may be more fully explored someday.

#### The first song I fell in love with

That would be a 45rpm of "La Bamba" by Richie Valens. Probably 1964 when I was eight. The single was from my sister's collection, who was seventeen. She had one of those portable turntables with its own speaker. I used to set it on the window sill of our finished attic (her bedroom) and put it on repeat at top volume and go down to the yard below and play. I'm sure I annoyed the neighbors but no one ever complained. I was in heaven.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BycLmWI97Nc>

#### The first single I bought

That was Bob Dylan's "I Want You." But it was as a gift for my brother Sutton. The first single I bought for myself was the Turtles' "Happy Together." I maintain the brilliance of the Turtles. They may have been considered bubblegum pop (later more accurately categorized "Sunshine Pop") but their albums were as beautifully produced and thoughtfully arranged as the Beatles or the Beach Boys (and just as weird). They remain one of my favorite bands.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSw8an1u3rc>

#### The song I do at karaoke

I don't do karaoke. But if I did I would choose "The Summer Wind" by Frank Sinatra. I adore late career Sinatra. He sounds so beautifully tired and resigned to the vagaries of life.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tY8mf\\_0m2xA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tY8mf_0m2xA)

#### The song I inexplicably know every lyric to

None. I know lots of lines from lots of songs and sing them incessantly aloud all day long, over and over, much to Gail's annoyance. (I am awed when I think about how many lyrics singers must memorize!)

#### The best song to play at a party

Depends on the party. I was at a party once where a mix of Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen was playing in the background and it was absolutely tone perfect. If it's a mixed crowd with an open floor I'd take the Gary Mattingly approach and act as a DJ and have it ever changing.

#### The song I can no longer listen to

I don't know if there is one. Certainly there are songs that can be difficult to listen to because of painful associations (generally music obsessed on with certain ex-girlfriends). Otherwise, there are songs like the Beatles' "Hey Jude" or Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" or James Taylor's version of "Handyman" that I'd rather never have to grimace my way through ever again.

#### The song I secretly like but tell everyone I hate

This is completely antithetical to how I listen to music. If I love something I am no longer embarrassed to admit it. I phrase it like that because I once hid the fact that I loved the Allman Brothers. Until my friend Jeff found out. He said, "Are you nuts? The Allman Brothers are one of the great Southern Rock bands of all time!" And then he promptly gifted me a copy of "The Best of the Allman Brothers." So yeah, I love, love, love "Believe" by Cher and proud to admit it!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZXRv4MezEw>

#### The song that changed my life

Oh jeez. Can such a song exist? There are certainly artists who became integral and necessary to certain periods of my life. I'd say Mike Oldfield saved my life a few times in my late teens but didn't change it. In my mid-to-late twenties Echo and the Bunnymen slayed me. Will Sargent's searing guitar work and Ian McCulloch's evocative boo-hoo lyrics and vocals went straight into the depths of me and remain embedded for life but did not change me. Certainly (in my case) pop music has been transformative to my interior throughout my life. But to say any song or artist changed my life is giving too much freight.

#### The song that gets me up in the morning

I assume this means something that gets you moving and peps you up for the coming day. I don't listen to music in the mornings so it's moot. But if you're looking for an upbeat optimistic smart love song to start your day I'd choose Rhett Miller's "Four-Eyed Girl."

### The song that makes me cry

The song that consistently brings me to tears every time I hear it is "Martha" by the Chicago band Frisbie. This is a song about suicide. And one of the most beautiful songs I've ever listened to. It's a fact that four of my good friends have committed suicide. And I've considered it myself. This is a song written for someone who is considering suicide by someone who has already attempted it and survived. I'm tearing up just writing this. A sensitive subject.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6vn5H0GKF4>

### The song I'd like played at my funeral

My immediate response to this was "something by Mike Oldfield." Maybe "Mount Teidi." But that seems a bit farfetched. Second response was "Cycles" by Frank Sinatra. So let's settle for that. It might make some people cry. But that's okay. It's a reminder and acceptance of the cycles of our lives. It's a song from my childhood, one that my mom listened to. When I rediscovered it in the 1980s I burst into tears. Yeah. It's just the way I roll.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFi1GVRZISg>

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

## GIVE US A CLUE

Lastish:

The three clues were themed as "near misses", each with a different interpretation...

"Theme Cretan adjusts for a bad boy (9)"

Definition: "a bad boy"

Wordplay: Theme, near miss = MIS + Cretan "adjusts" (anagram indicator) yielding MISCREANT

"Game in which the theme would count for something (10)"

Definition: "Game"

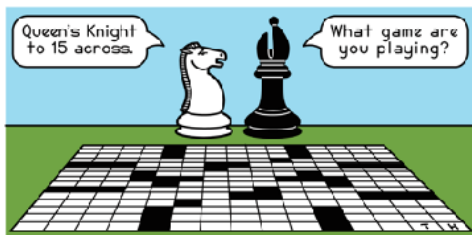
Wordplay: In which a near miss counts for something = HORSESHOES

"State fitting the theme (7)"

Definition: (US) State

Wordplay: Near Miss(issippi), the only seven letter state which fits is ALABAMA

Alan Rosenthal is first in with his usual 3/3, correctly determined.



"These were fun!", he says.

Eli Cohen turns in a typical 2/3, overthinking the third clue to come up with INDIANA instead. Re: HORSESHOES, he writes: "this, by the way, was Linda's suggestion, so she should get the credit if it's correct".

Thish's efforts: favorite authors of mine...

"Noddy, Jim, Don and Dave - grand! (6)"

"Everything in Shakespeare. (7)"

"E's missing Joseph Nicholas, for example (7)."

## ANORAK

Recently prompted, and because, you know, just some nice photos of ScotRail snow ploughs...







## THE OLD SOD

BY DAVID HODSON

I recently had a brief exchange with Rich Coad on Facebook about the upcoming Corflu Pickled (43, to us number likers). I had intended to attend; I've never been to California, and I would like to add it to my travels at some point, but...

TRUMP!

Rich took me to task (as much as Rich can take anyone to task; he's generally too happy and smiley to be fierce) for not wanting to attend an event in one of the most liberal areas of the most liberal state of the union for fear of Trump and his goons. Let's get something straight: I could give a fuck about Trump or his jackbooted enablers, I know from quite extensive studies that once the orange shit-stain dies his complete cadre of Nazi arseholes will rapidly dry up, blow away, and disintegrate just like nearly every other personality cult in modern history. My only hope is that someone has the spine to get the survivors of the blowback they will suffer into a court on charges of treason and that the executions will be live on television.

(Is he really advocating execution for treason? And is he really advocating transmitting the executions live on television?)

Yes! He fuckin' well is!! On both counts!!!

I spent nearly ten years working in the UK prison education service and the Probation Service, mostly working with high-risk offenders of one kind or another. I already knew from my own family's various naughty members that there isn't really any honour among thieves, but working with even more hardcore scumbags showed me how little most of them value other people's honesty. Any empathy, compassion, or attempts to genuinely help most hardened offenders isn't regarded positively, it's regarded as either weakness or naivety to be taken advantage of.

The UK media has been reporting an epidemic of stabbings and killings, mostly in the bigger cities and mostly young adult on young adult. There are other demographic factors, and these factors are frequently given as extenuating influences, but they really aren't; although there can be cultural reasons why certain crimes are more prevalent within certain communities. Remember that Ned Polsky book I mentioned a few columns back: *Hustlers, Beats, and Others*; read it, it goes into how cultural factors influence the types of crimes certain members of particular communities commit.

One of the things that struck me in my time working in these fields was how little offenders were frightened of or deterred by the prospect of any punishment should they be caught and convicted, be it prison or whatever. The main impression I was left with was how most of the offenders were more concerned about looking "bad", meaning looking foolish, or unfashionable, or somehow less than those around them. Image really is everything in these circles, which probably explains the obsessions with trainers, brand names, particular clothes, particular types of music, etc. Taken to the extreme, it's no longer good enough to go out armed with a kitchen knife or equivalent, now you need a "zombie knife" or, like the recent incident in Glasgow, a fucking great machete when you go wandering the streets looking to even some imagined score. (Kitchen knives have never been a good weapon of choice; they tend to slip in the hand when stabbing something/one and frequently cut the insides of the fingers of the stabber leaving behind plenty of DNA evidence for collection. A good hunting knife with a substantial quillon to stop the hand slipping forward onto the blade as it meets resistance is always a good idea, although a knife with a solid "D-guard" is better as it also provides extra pulling power when fighting against the suction of a human body and can also be used as improvised brass knuckles if needs be).

Since having the above blinding revelation, I've held the view that the most effective deterrent to violent youth crime

is probably a return to a rather more ritualised form of capital punishment. Once the authorities and the courts have determined that an offender has committed murder (or some other heinous crime like multiple rapes, or modern slavery with extreme cruelty, etc) and have verified that there is absolutely no doubt about the offender's guilt, (s)he would be entered into a yearly lottery where, for example, six such offenders are selected for execution by hanging live on every television channel in the nation, absolutely no exceptions allowed.

The sight of half-a-dozen scumbags, dressed in crappy prison issue sweatsuits with crappy prison issue slippery things on their feet, shitting and pissing themselves as their necks snap and all the muscles in their bodies relax and let go of whatever fluids they are holding in would probably be the most terrifying prospect any young scumbag could imagine...

That's my theory...)

The reason I don't feel particularly happy with the idea of visiting the U.S. at the moment is immigration. As I said to Rich, I would like to revisit New Orleans at some point in the post-Trump future, when, hopefully, the mass MAGA insanity has passed, and I'm really not interested in taking the risk of being stopped by U.S. immigration, refused entry, and then packed off back to blighty on the next available flight at my own expense; it would basically fuck any future visit even post-Trump because, regardless of the regime in charge, one of the first questions you are asked is "Have you ever been refused entry to the United States before?" And should your answer be "yes", then the niceties of the political circumstances at the time of refusal don't really count for much.

The other thing that occurred to me was that most 'Muricans don't realise that it's always been harder for a foreigner to enter the United States than it has been for them to visit Europe. Back in 1988, I entered the U.S. through JFK in New York with a bright, new, shiny, passport complete with a multiple indefinite entry visa obtained for me by American Express when I booked my flights. My then partner entered at the same time off the same Pan Am flight with her trusty old six or seven year old passport complete with multiple indefinite entry visa and was held on to for a couple of hours whilst immigration checked out the entry stamps her passport contained for Morocco and Turkey, neither of which were exactly public enemy number one at the time.

Of course, things changed after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, it would be naïve to think they hadn't or wouldn't, and I know that the vast majority of people that I've met in fandom don't share the views I'm about to describe, but a lot of 'Muricans do seem to exhibit a particularly indiscriminate form of xenophobia. Lots has been written and said about the horrors of Jim Crow America, about Sundown towns

America, about lynchings and slavery and all the other baggage of the (not only) confederacy, but modern white 'Murica does also seem to have a problem with foreign white culture as well, especially any nation with a longer history than the U.S., which is just about everyone really. The current behaviour of a sizable minority of white people in general, not just the clichéd "rednecks", in the United States seems to point towards a morally debilitating inferiority complex which, as is so often the case, manifests itself as a form of "righteous" anger and, I suspect, that contributed to Trump getting elected not just once, but twice. Let's not legitimise the various conspiracy theories that he didn't win all the swing states, that Elon Musk hacked the voting machines for him; millions of white fuckwits really did vote for this scumbag.

Still, the potential silver lining of the situation, if I'm correct in my assessments, is that when Trump dies, preferably sooner rather than later, not only will his enablers shrivel up and blow away, but we might also see the biggest mass suicide in recorded history as millions of MAGAs off themselves either in disappointment at the unexpected mortality of their hero or to fly in on his coattails to the heaven they imagine he must be entering. Do I feel guilty for wishing millions of asshats dead? Not in the fuckin' slightest! I've got a few Tories and Reformers to add to the piles of bodies. Pass me that quick lime there, son!

In conclusion, I'm sorry I won't be in California, I hope I will be able to visit at some point in the future, I hope everyone that attends Corflu Pickled has a wonderful, spiffin', and, mostly, safe time. I might well see you all in Canada...

## LOCO CITATO

*[[“Any fool can criticize, condemn and complain - and most fools do.” (Dale Carnegie) ...]]*

*[[Upfront apologies to Mark Plummer, whose loc went missing lastish due to brain failure round here. Here it is now...]]*

From: mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

December 24

**Mark Plummer** writes:

I've been thinking about this and have concluded it's not that remarkable that we can't identify a point of origin for our friendship. I couldn't tell you precisely when I first met **Noel Collyer**, **Jim de Liscard** and **Dop**, people I've known since the mid-1980s and still see all the time, although (fortunately) I can recall when I first met **Claire** and, as it so happens, **Meike**.

I know everybody who's named somewhere in *This Here...* #93 and have met nearly all of them – the only exceptions are

**Mikołaj Kowalewski, Gary Hubbard, Heath Row and Mark Nelson** – but there are relatively few where I can say definitely where and when I met them. When I can it's often because they were people I was aware of – through fanzines typically – but didn't meet until much later. **Rob Jackson**, for instance, was drifting out of fandom at about the point I arrived, something I can only hope was coincidental. I later saw him mentioned in various places and acquired and read copies of *Maya*, but otherwise he was as one with Tyre, Nineveh and Walter Gillings. I didn't actually meet him until **Pete Weston, Claire** and I were waiting for a connecting flight at Houston airport on our way to the Austin Corflu in 2007 and **Rob** turned up with **Graham Charnock**. I know I first met **Brad Foster** at the Spokane Worldcon in 2015 after he'd been sending us artwork for the best part of 20 years. I'm not actually sure that I met **Leigh Edmonds** at Aussiecon 3 in 1999 although I did see him there, and that's certainly where I met **Bruce Gillespie** – technically a couple of days before – and I was rather pleased with myself for being able to point out **Perry Middlemiss** to an Australian fan.

But when did I first meet you, or **Dave Hodson**, or **Sandra**, or **Steve Jeffery**? Nope, sorry, no idea. Actually, I agree with you that in your case it likely was at a London BSFA meeting or a First Thursday. That 1986 *Star Trek* convention at the Birmingham Metropole, now the Hilton that's hosted several recent Eastercons and will do so again next year, was likely where I first became aware of you because you were one of the organisers. I don't recall that we met, though, and if we did it was only fleeting. And I don't claim you collaborated in the looting of David Gerrold's drinks cabinet. It was the last night and Gerrold, the guest of honour, had (rather rashly, I thought) invited everybody to a party in his room. I don't remember much about it, beyond being lectured by some earnest bloke about why it was all wrong that they'd named the first space shuttle *Enterprise* because that one wasn't capable of spaceflight. At some point, probably well after midnight, we were all told that David wanted to go to bed now so could we all push off and on the way out **John Waggott** and I grabbed a couple of bottles from the courtesy drinks cabinet. A little embarrassing in retrospect as obviously somebody got the bill for that, probably the convention and maybe even you. But what can I say? We were young.

John figures in quite a few of my early fan stories, stories I've been mentally digging out these last few days after his

sudden and unexpected death on Thursday. He was only 61, about three months younger than me. He is of course somebody else who I can recall meeting with some considerable precision, and I guess that's the other exception case: where the circumstances of the meeting are fundamentally memorable, irrespective of who the other person was. In John's case it was early February 1985, probably Sunday 10<sup>th</sup>, about nine o'clock in the evening. The actual date is extrapolated; I think it was just after the February One Tun and that would have been on the 7<sup>th</sup>. John had moved to London probably on the Saturday but I was away that weekend and didn't get back until Sunday evening when I discovered he'd moved into my shared room. I knew nothing about fandom at that point, or at least nothing beyond the vague awareness that I think many people have, that there are these things called sci-fi conventions where everybody dresses up as characters from *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who*. But John knew about fandom, and

even about the One Tun, and so we went along in March. I've been going ever since, every time when I don't have a conflicting engagement so probably hitting around 10 or 11 out of 13 meetings every year, around 400 times in total, I guess, so it's really not surprising that I can't recall who I met when.

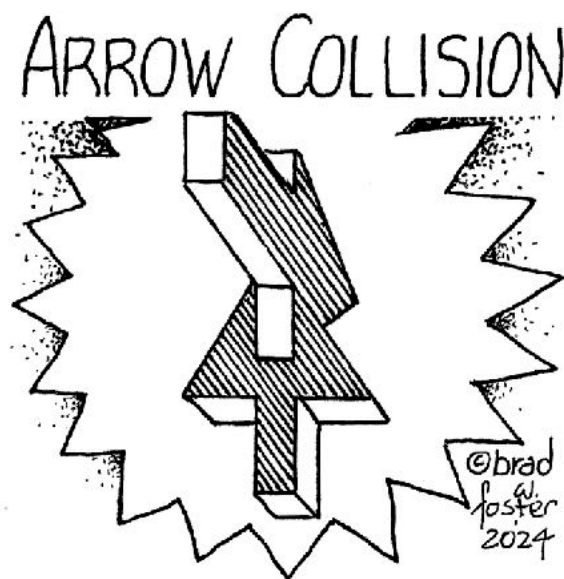
People like the aforementioned **Dave Hodson**. I was certainly aware of him from the One Tun in the mid-1980s and also Eastercons, Mexicons, Novacons, and those same BSFA meetings where I probably met you. We did speak briefly once or twice

although honestly I used to find him quite intimidating back then. I think I spoke to him a little when he resurfaced in the 2010s around the time of **Jacq Monahan's** TAFF trip but I only really got to know him in the 2020s when I recall specifically bumping into him just off the train on the way to Judith Hanna's funeral. It's peculiar in a way because we have a lot of shared history albeit we don't exactly feature simultaneously. We experienced a lot of the same things from two different directions, as it were.

So what's the date of that photo of me? I'm assuming that for some reason I'm lying down behind a tech desk, probably at a Novacon. I'd guess late 1990s? I remember that shirt.

*[[Sounds about right...]]*

But anyway, back to The Old Sod, the '?' between **Alice** and **Tommy** is Meg MacDonald, vice chair of Glasgow 2024 and chair of the bid for Glasgow in 2034. Dave is absolutely right





about the surprisingly dispersed layout of the rooms in the Novacon. Some of those located in the outer spiral arm of the Palace Hotel may not be in Buxton at all, or even Derbyshire. The rooms are also highly variable, and supplied with a wide range of often mismatched furniture that's not always proportional to the number of intended occupants. Some even have the old round-pin power sockets that were generally discontinued sometime around the reign of George III. A friend theorises that there's a sweet spot for booking at the Palace, a point when they've sold out of regular rooms so you can get an executive upgrade for free. The trick though is not to leave it so late that they've sold out entirely. Not that it really helps if we're talking accessibility.

Now Dave's got me wondering whether I too should revisit some of those old Mike Moorcock books. For decades I did little if any rereading, always rationalising that there were too many books as yet unread, but that's more recently given way to a different rationalisation, that there's really no point in keeping books if you're never going to entertain the idea of rereading them. And Moorcock's on my mind because – see how things loop around – my old mate John was a huge fan, accumulating multiple editions of Moorcockiana, a very Waggottish thing to do. He even acquired a box-set consisting bafflingly of, I think, the third book out of four different series.

And just briefly because I know it's now a resolved issue, personally I'm not unhappy with the idea of a TAFF race going to Eurocon rather than Eastercon so long as the Eurocon wants and is prepared to look after a TAFF delegate. I understand that is the case with Metropolcon. I do though feel that a race should be to a designated convention and I'm quite strongly against the idea of allowing candidates to pick their destination because it then makes the race at least partially about the destinations rather than purely about the candidates. A related question is what will happen with westbound races. At the moment 2027's OK because that would be to Montreal. But 2029 will likely see the Worldcon in Dublin and most Worldcon bids after that are from outside North America. And, while it's not unprecedented to send people to the NASFiC, the Seattle Worldcon voted to retire that. It does still need to be ratified in Los Angeles next year and even then it doesn't mean there won't be a NASFiC, but simply that it won't happen under the aegis of WSFS. All of which will I'm sure put you into an Edmondsesque snooze and, sure, it's hardly thrilling, but it does potentially make things complicated for TAFF.

*[[I was surprised to learn that, until S&ra, a TAFF delegate hadn't ever had the NASFiC as a destination...]]*

I will now go away to contemplate just why **Leigh Edmonds** thinks I'm like a Mk III Halifax bomber and indeed why you're like a Hawker Typhoon. I note that according to Wikipedia the latter had 'several design problems ... and it

never completely satisfied [the] requirement'. It was also a single-seater, which is to say a chair you could fall off of.

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From: jabberwocky2000@hotmail.com

December 31

**Brad Foster** writes:

Came into the year with a new *This Here...* so seems appropriate on the last day of the year to go out with a new issue.

Three new pieces attached for your consideration and possible use in 2026. Thanks for continuing to give my doodles a home. Otherwise, they would just sit in the drawer, feeling lonely.

I see you are working on the 19th issue of *BEAM*. I believe I have not had a contribution in that fine pub since back around issue 14, Almost like the editors over there have had enough of me as they could take, and no longer wished to have my sad little drawings darken their fine publication. But, that's okay, I can take subtle criticism.... Yeah... I'm fine....

*[[Now there's a fine example of a fanartist being the "precious species" I once described. BEAM has not usually featured random artwork. Like the articles therein, it's almost always been specifically commissioned, including loccol fillos. So don't take it personally, ey?...]]*

I find I link up with **Perry Middlemiss'** view on the kind of "horror" movies he prefers. I too have no taste for the hack and slash ones, the "let's come up with yet more different ways to show a body being destroyed" kind of thing. Ads show up for the latest horror piece and my first thought is often "That's another one I won't have to bother with trying to see." I get my fill of those kind now by watching YouTube videos of people who review the things, showing clips of this or that as they point out how silly it all is, so I get to keep up a bit with what is going on, while approaching it from my own snarky viewpoint.

Caught my eye where **Rich Coad** noted how many sixties rockers would cover songs from the twenties, reintroducing that material to a new generation, most of whom probably never realized how old the original source was. Indeed, just last week I was listening about to Traffic's "John Barleycorn Must Die" lp (though, in full disclosure, mostly for Steve Winwood's "Glad" piece). The album features their cover of the title piece and, on looking it up online now, I see the writer credit there is "Traditional, arranged by Winwood".)

I know I enjoyed listening to music growing up, had likes and dislikes, but it wasn't until heard "Birds of Fire" from the Mahavishnu Orchestra in 1973 that I went "Oh, wow, music can be more than happy little tunes on the radio". And

look at that, I was 18 years old at the time, right on the button for making that, for me, the best decade for music!

**Rob Jackson** makes note of the lack of a tail showing in my diagram of the elusive Configurable Squirrel. I can let him and other sharp-eyed readers know that that is not the result of a lazy cartoonist not paying attention to details, but that it is indeed there, but was simply drawn behind the main body, and thus you cannot see it from the front view.

**Bruce Gillespie** mentions that in the process of dealing with issues of pain, his weight has gone back up. I feel the pain—not the actual pain, but the pain of returning weight. After working hard to try to peel some of the blubber back, I managed to get 30 pounds off over a year or so. Then multiple surgeries, “other” health events, and I know find that 20 of those have returned. I am in better shape because of all the walking, which is good, but tired of this gut preceding me everywhere. Sigh

Allow me to offer my own personal favorite bad science joke to **Eli Cohen** (though he has probably heard it before): “Never trust atoms. They make up everything.”

(I did a little full color toon version of that some time back. If I can find it, I’ll add it to this loc)



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From: perry@middlemiss.org

**Perry Middlemiss** writes:

Many thanks for this and other issues which I may have seemingly ignored. I didn’t really ignore them, I just had other stuff going on.

Some of that other stuff is mentioned in this ish, namely **Archbishop Gillespie** suggesting that I’ve been “climbing

mountains in South America”. That’s close to the truth but I do have to explain that I set out to do nothing of the sort. Planes, trains and automobiles were my preferred modes of transport. Climbing a flight of stairs at around 3500m (about 11500ft) above sea level is about all I could cope with. Yes, I’m overweight, and yes, I’m unfit, so it was pleasing to see that the slim, hiking cohort of our tour group suffered and struggled as well. You have to get your pleasures where you can, especially when you are doubled over trying to suck in whatever oxygen you can find. I survived to tell the tale. And that was a victory of sorts.

You have my sympathies regarding the prospect of trying to finish three fanzines at once. I’ve been there and wonder if we’re putting way too much pressure on ourselves when all these publication dates come together. Some friends of mine, and my wife (be careful how you parse that start of this sentence), tell me not to worry about getting my fanzine out “on time”, noting that the deadlines are self-inflicted and can be changed at any time. But, I attempt to explain, that ignores the real reason why I do this thing. That is, to keep busy. It’s just that, sometimes, we get a bit too busy. Anyway, good luck with the publication schedule coming up.

*[[I more or less managed 2/3, and it was a struggle...]]*

I’m writing this watching the last day of the last Test of the 2025/26 Ashes cricket series. The series hasn’t worked out as well as I had hoped. My pre-series prediction of 3-1 to Australia won’t be met one way or the other, but close. None of this 5-0 nonsense.

I also hope the New Year of 2026 will be better for you and Jen. Just try to stay away from those people in the white coats.

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From: jakauffman@aol.com.com

January 11

**Jerry Kaufman** writes:

I was surprised that you were able to publish this issue after your medical travails, but glad you did. It means you’re certainly on the mend.

*[[No it doesn’t, actually...]]*

I’m also glad that TAFF continues to attract new candidates, and hopeful that at least one more candidate will come forward so that **Kat Templeton** is not lonely in the race. Best of luck to her and any opponents she may have.

To **Claire Brialey** I say that I’ve printed out your newest *Incomplete Register* and two extra ballots. I’m sure we’ll be able to get our votes in, and that we may even have a chance to look at zines we don’t already read.

**Perry Middlemiss** writes about four horror movies, two of which I haven’t watched. I did view *Frankenstein* on Netflix

as I've enjoyed everything of del Toro's I've seen. Despite some of his choices in rewriting the original book, and a little too long and grisly dwelling on Frankenstein's process of building the creature, I enjoyed del Toro's visualizations and the way he included details often left out of other films. The other movie I saw, this time on Prime, was *Sinners*, which I also liked. One thing that struck me was how the vampire and his followers played and sang music identified with the Scots-Irish culture of the Appalachian mountains, while the human characters played music identified with mainly Southern Black culture. Obviously, this was a Plan.

**Rich Coad** writes about music of the 1920s and 1930s as recorded by Paramount Records, a label I don't remember knowing about. But I do know about the Fleischer Studio's use of Cab Calloway's music and his rotoscoped dancing. Back in the mid-1970s, when I lived in Manhattan, Chris Couch invited me to a class he was taking, a history of animation taught by Leonard Maltin. The one I attended with Chris was on the Fleischer Studio's output and innovations, like "Out of the Inkwell," in which Koko the Clown oozed out of an inkwell to cavort across a drawing board and around a live-action room; the Betty Boop cartoons in which a ghost or witch embodied Calloway; Popeye cartoons using three-dimensional sets; and Superman cartoons that looked quite different from the rest of the studio's product.

**Suzle** cares for the indoor plants, while I do the outdoor yard stuff (but we have Mr. Kim do the heavy duty work). Still, what I do doesn't really qualify as gardening except on rare occasions when I actually plant a baby bush or bury a few bulbs. Reading about **Joseph Nicholas'** work and pleasure is close enough for me.

I hope **Dave Hodson's** back stops hurting.

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From: nelsonmark07@gmail.com

January 11

**Mark Nelson** writes:

In December I was in Sydney in the lift on the ground level of Myer, formerly known as Grace Brothers. A young lady entered and asked me if I knew on what level she could find suits for men. What I wanted to say was:

Ground floor: perfumery  
Stationery and leather goods  
Wigs and haberdashery  
Kitchenware and food  
Going up  
First floor: telephones  
Gents' ready-made suits  
Shirts, socks, ties, hats

Underwear and shoes

Going up

Second floor: carpets

Travel goods and beddings

Materials and soft furnishing

Restaurant and teas

Going down

However, she didn't look old enough to appreciate the reference. And I thought at best she'd give me a funny look. Discretion being the better part of valour and all that, I kept mum on the lyrics to 'Are You Being Served'. Instead I pointed out that there was a description inside the lift that provided the required information. Did I let the side down?

Following up on one of **Claire Brialey's** comments. If you ever think of stepping down from running the FAAn awards I can think of no better person to become the new administrator than **Dr Edmonds**. Still, directly anointing him would miss a trick.

Wouldn't be better to have a new category in the FAAn awards the year you decided was your last? The new category would be: "Who should be the next FAAn administrator"?

Upon further reflection, it seems a bit pedestrian to have such a category. A far better use of **Dr Edmonds'** skills as a pollster would be to ask him to come up with an appropriately scientifically designed poll to determine the new administrator.

*[[Interesting idea. Currently I am engaged as FAAn Award admin through 2027, having been asked to continue by Murray Moore with the presumption that his bid for Corflu 44 will be ratified. That will be 7 years running in the gig, 8 in total, only exceeded by Andy Hooper who served on 9 occasions, albeit over a period of 16 years. After that, who knows?...]]*

I'm not a fan of horror movies because I don't like being scared. However, I answer the question "are horror movies only scary if you don't know what is going to happen?" with the word NO. I've seen 'Alien' many times. But I still find it scary to watch, particularly if I've turned off the lights and closed the curtains.

I don't know "what is the best decade for the popular music heard in America". However, if I could only buy Jazz records recorded in one decade then I would pick the 1950s.

Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world **Rich Coad** picks Bristol, Tennessee. A gin joint that I've visited. One year an American student came all the way to Wollongong to study for a Masters degree in Mathematics. She ended up taking a one-year project with me. When I went to the states to visit my brother, who was working on secondment in Indianapolis at the time, I arranged to visit



Kala. She lived near the college that she attended. I don't need to state where the college was located \Idiots

I returned from my trip to Bristol with the two CD set 'The BRISTOL SESSIONS: Historic Recordings from Bristol, Tennessee'. Must be fifteen plus years since I listened to this. I must put it on again. The CD contains "Single Girl, Married Girl" but neither "The Singing Brakeman" nor "Country Blues". It does include Jimmy Rodgers performing "Sleep, Baby, Sleep" and six of the thirty-five tracks were recorded by The Carter Family.

I learnt the name De Ford Bailey reading 'The Devil's Music: A History of the Blues', an excellent book written for a BBC series that was before my time. I don't know what else he recorded, but I like his "Pan American Blues" (mentioned in the book). The book contains the following passage about his appearances on the Grand Ole Opry:

They claimed to treat him as a mascot, but for him that meant "I wasn't getting but four or five dollars a night, and they kept me standing at the back".

Regarding fanatical collectors of rare 78s a documentary I saw on the TV many years ago is 'Desperate Man Blues' which is about Joe E. Bussard of Frederick, Maryland who amassed "what is reckoned to be the finest collection of early, roots music in the US". One number that I particularly enjoy on the accompanying CD is Jimmy Murphy's "We Live A Long Time To Get Old" (1955) which Bussard considered to be the last country record ever made! Staying on the theme of country music, on the same CD I also really like Uncle Dave Macon's "Whoop 'Em Up Cindy". The shop I bought 'The Bristol Sessions' from, the Birthplace of Country Music Museum, had a wider collection, including a Uncle Dave Macon CD which I wish I'd bought. I see that the 'Desperate Man Blues' CD contains a number by The Carter Family - "John Hardy was a Desperate Little Man". Probably should add this to the pile of CDs to listen to!

Returning to **Rich's** article. I had not appreciated that the recording of acoustic blues artists did not start until after improvement in recording technology in the mid 1920s. As alluded to earlier, I'm primarily a jazz fan so the importance of Paramount for Charley Patton had escaped me. However, a few months before I became a Jazz fan I became a fan of boogie-woogie and blues piano. Volumes one and seventeen of the famous twenty-one volume Magpie Records series on blues piano, famous to those people who know about it, was devoted to recordings made by Paramount from 1929--1930 and 1927--1932 respectively. Another two LPs I'll have to relisten to!

I carefully read through **David Hodson's** contribution, but couldn't think of anything uplifting to say in reply. Then it hit me. Just repeat the title of the Jimmy Murphy number: We Live A Long Time To Get Old.

I'm sufficiently old to remember, even as an undergraduate, buying cheese and cold cuts from the deli and fruit and vegetables from Leeds market in ounces and pounds. For many years I measured my weight in pounds and stones. However, I am sufficiently young that **Bruce Gillespie** recounting that he has "lost 22 lb in a few weeks" now means nothing to me. However, I do remember that 1 lb is 454 g so that I can estimate that 22lb is approximately 11 kg. I don't ever remember learning the conversion at school, so how do I know it? I have a few recipe books that give the weights in lb and oz, the most noticeable being one on making risottos.

I can report that the only Ramones album that I have (on CD) is 'Rocket to Russia'. I've got no idea why I bought this... but enjoyed it tremendously.

As a final PS to **Rich's** article I find that I must voice my disagreement with him that "the best decade for the popular music heard in America" was "the period between 1927 and 1937". My reasoning is not a dislike of the music recorded in this period. Rather it is the observation that there are ten years in a decade.

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From: eli.cohen@mindspring.com

January 15

**Eli Cohen** writes:

'Movie Night': We saw Golden Globe winner 'Hamnet' yesterday, in an actual movie theater! It was very good (though, to be fair, Tom Stoppard is a lot funnier when it comes to Shakespeare). The movie was deeply moving and Jessie Buckley (who plays Shakespeare's wife) was extraordinary (well deserved the Golden Globe she won for the role). It was a total coincidence that we got home in time to watch two episodes of 'Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators'...

In TV news, we've watched, and much enjoyed, the three seasons of 'The Diplomat' available, so thank you for that recommendation. I must confess, what with Allison Janney and Bradley Whitford in it, and 'West Wing' writer/producer Debora Cahn writing/producing it, I kept expecting Martin Sheen to pop up; maybe next season...

I guess I'll welcome in the new year with another bad science joke:

What is the fastest way to determine the sex of a chromosome?

Pull down its genes.

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From: garyhubbard969@gmail.com

January 15

**Gary Hubbard** writes:

A few words in passing about *TH*...93.

The article about double-decker train carriages was interesting. I've always imagined myself something of a train aficionado, but I never heard of double decker rolling stock. Must have been a gas riding in one, zooming along and surveying the countryside from an elevated position. Best if there was a club car.

The street I grew up on was bordered on one end by railroad tracks. There was a ditch at the end of it, then a berm with the tracks on top. On the other side was a hedgerow and the May V. Smith schoolyard, where we used to play. Trains went by frequently day and night, disrupting classes when kids would rise from their seats and glue themselves to the windows to watch the passing locomotives. When they passed, we would reluctantly return to our seats and stare at the asbestos ceiling tiles while the teacher fruitlessly tried to bang fractions into our heads.

I've always liked train travel... mostly. There have been some bad trips, of course. Like that time on the City of New Orleans between Carbondale and Chicago when the air conditioning broke down and it was miserably hot, making for a pretty uncomfortable journey. However, also on that trip I met a black guy who remarked that I resembled a Civil Rights lawyer he knew. Flattering, but no.

That sort of thing happens to me all the time. I remember a couple coming up to me – when I was working at K-Mart - thought I looked like Fonzie from *Happy Days*. That was a long time ago, obviously, but since then I've been mistaken for an Episcopalian minister, the mayor of Portage (a town that butts onto Kalamazoo), and various and sundry others. I just have that kind of face, I guess. There was even a girl - when I was in SCA - who said I resembled her gynecologist. But she hated him, so there was no basis for traction there.

Air travel, on the other hand, I've never cared for at all. I've always found it uncomfortable (unlike on a train, where you can resort to the club car) and cramped. There was that time in '96' when I flew to San Francisco with Bess to Corflu. I found myself in the middle seat, jammed between her and a woman of size. I don't know what was wrong with the cabin pressure, but I was gasping for air and my sinuses ached all the way from Chicago to Frisco.

**Leigh Edmonds** remarked about how quaint it was that I still had a land line.

Well, a while back, AT+T came by, took away my landline and replaced it with a couple of flip phones, one for Bess and one for me. That solved one problem, none of the scammers who used to make our phone ring all the time, know our new numbers. But then new problems arose. Our new phones didn't know each others' numbers either. So, until we got that sorted out, we couldn't talk to each other. We used to have voice mail, until we got locked out of that, so I went down the the AT+T store, where they fixed it by assigning me a new password, which I promptly forgot, so I've just decided to stop dealing with it. It's a little embarrassing, I'll admit, for such a big science fiction fan to have so much trouble with the future, but that's how it is.

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From: 236 S. Coronado St #409, Las Angeles CA 90057

(Dated) January 10

**John Hertz** writes:

Maybe my using a Wm. F. Buckley Jr., postage stamp will annoy you even further. Since my high-school band went on strike when the director refused to have any part of "Pomp and Circumstance", insisting on the Grand March from 'Aida', so that we paraded through Graduation to immeasurable repetitions of "More", maybe given recent history I should sing of myself "No one else could annoy you more".

I think that **Kat Templeton** would be jes' fine for TAFF. I

like choices and shall await the ballot.

Applause for the fanart of H.M. Bateman, **Brad Foster**, **Teddy Harvia**, **Lucy Huntzinger** (a Corflu XLIII logograph?). Where's **O'Brien**? Swell 1993 and 2025 photos of **Joseph Nicholas**' back garden.

I think the best decade for U.S. popular music must be the 1930s, which brings in Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland, Coleman Hawkins, Billie Holiday, Kate Smith; or the 1940s, which brings us Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Frank Sinatra, Sarah Vaughan, Hank Williams. Admittedly there's much to be said for the 1920s with Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith.

[...]

Instead of Paul Thomas Anderson, I'll take Poul Anderson. His first novel 'Brain Wave' was brilliant. At Lunacon XXXVIII he told us "I'll teach you how to pronounce my name." We abated our breath. He said "AN-der-son".

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January 21

**Gary Mattingly** writes:

'Egotorial': Considering all you have going on, it seems entirely reasonable to ask for help. And yeah, I'd like to know if you survived.

'TAFKNess Abounds': **Kat Templeton** sounds like an entirely reasonable (Hm, second time I've used that) candidate for TAFK. Also sounds good to me.

'Corflux': And a new PR dropped today, 19 January.

'Faanwank': I plan to vote for the FAAN awards, just have to get it done in a timely manner. I should try to read more fanzines. I have time management issues. Too many things I want to do.

'Health Diary': Sorry to hear about your back. You mustn't do that. I'm glad your surgery went well, but sorry to hear that it took a lot out of you. I really haven't had major surgery in a long, long time. I did have that tooth extracted. Don't think that counts. I had this fatty lump (not my head) removed. That was pretty minor, so probably also doesn't count. If I'm lucky, I will not be able to recount some future major surgery (either it won't happen or I'll die before having any such encounter).

'Movie Night': I haven't seen '28 Years Later'. I haven't seen any of those 28.... movies. I do have them all on disc (well, except for the one that just came out). Hopefully I'll eventually watch them all. I did see and enjoy 'Weapons', and yes, can't really tell it is a horror movie until the second half. I also have seen the new 'Frankenstein'. Great sets and I agree that it wasn't that scary. I disliked that some scenes were very, very dimly lit and I couldn't always make out what was happening. Seems a number of newer movies have those dimly lit sets. I saw 'Sinners' also and agree that of the three it is the closest to being a horror movie. Plus I really liked the music scenes. Actually I liked the music scenes more than the horror parts. I'll have to go back over 2025 to see what new horror movies I may have seen in addition to these. I did watch 'Thirst' but that was released in 2009. I liked it a lot but I think I've liked all of the movies directed by Park Chan-wook that I've seen. Definitely 'Oldboy' and 'Handmaiden' are excellent films by him.

So that I consistently bother people in a usual manner, since last issue of *This Here...*, I've watched 'Escape from the 21st Century' directed by Yang Li. It is sort of dopey, but I was entertained. Interesting graphics added to my enjoyment; 'Sentimental Value' directed by Joachim Trier, which I thought was good. Definitely a character study and very emotional; 'Sirat' directed by Oliver Laxe, which I thought was good, but definitely not a happy film. Some reviewers haven't liked it and likened it to Monty Python because of the people who were blown up in the film. This film is not a

comedy, by the way; 'Troll 2' directed by Roar Uthaug, which was okay and kept me entertained. It isn't a great movie, but was fun to watch for me; 'Hamnet' directed by Chloé Zhao, which I also thought was very good. Of course the story is all conjecture but still was very enjoyable. Definitely some emotional scenes; 'Ip Man 2' directed by Wilson Yip and starring Donnie Yen, which I thought was good. Again, not a great movie, nor, IMO, as good as the first 'Ip Man', but still enjoyable for me; 'All That's Left of You' (2025) directed by Cherien Dabis, which is a very good, but also depressing movie. It is a transgenerational movie about a Palestinian family and their point of view about the incursions of the Israeli military. The Israel military and soldiers are not portrayed in a good light in this movie, not at all.

'Radio Winston': Well, I'm not sure there is a best period of music for me, but the twenties were certainly excellent. You provide some good information and some great song titles. Now all I have to do is listen to the music on that youtube link you provided. As a side note I have been playing all my albums, slowly, and just picked up the James Brown 'Love Power Peace' three disc album to play. I was amused that the record numbering was Record 1, Side 1; Record 1, Side 6; etc. So I'm assuming this was meant to be played on an automatic player with the records dropping on one another. Oh, the agony. I don't do that. Actually, I've been trying, very slowly, to replace all the vinyl inner and outer sleeves with better sleeves, so the vinyl doesn't get scratched by paper sleeves, and the outside doesn't have issues with the shrink wrap it may have originally come in and remains in good condition. Takes a while to do that though.

'Digging for Victory': I go in cycles with respect to garden. There may be several years that I'm quite into gardening. Then there will be several years during which I have absolutely no, or very little interest in it. I do prefer planting things in the ground, rather than pots, although I will occasionally put things in pots. I find that plants in the ground grow better, stronger, bigger, etc. I like to grow tomatoes and I have grown quite a number of hot peppers, including Carolina Reaper. The problem with hot or very hot peppers is that, more often than not, they require a longer growing season, a longer and hotter growing season. I've also noticed that if they are stressed, somewhat less watering, somewhat hotter days, they produce hotter peppers. At least it seems that way to me. Currently, our back yard is totally overgrown. Part of the yard is overwhelmed by blackberries. I hate blackberries. Well, I like the berries, but the thorny vines that go everywhere are horrid beasts. I've planted other plants that are beastly, particularly the ones that have long underground root runners and proceed to propagate all over the place. I planted a Chinese plant, the name of which I cannot remember, but now it is everywhere in a third of the yard. I hate those types of plants. Now mints, I put in pots. I'm



aware of them going everywhere. I do put a basil plant or three in pots near the back patio so I can go out and quickly gather some for soups, sandwiches, or anything else that comes to mind. I do like basil. I do like mint. We have some thyme by the back door also. I also have a number of very poisonous plants in the back yard. Fortunately, the dogs don't seem at all tempted by them. Gardening can be fun. However, my attention to gardening, or almost anything, waxes and wanes.

'The Old Sod': Sorry to hear about your problems with NHS but glad to hear that it was resolved. Good luck with the diabetes, back problem and weight loss. I'm fortunate that I only see my main doctor about once a year, although they changed my doctor last year since the other one retired, and he was still pretty young. Good for him, I guess. Also, fortunately, I don't have diabetes or any current back problems. I have had some minor short-term back problems in the past, but lasting no more than a month, and that was years ago.

'Loco Citato':

**Rob Jackson:** I was amused when I initially thought about travelling from East to West in Kansas. You first come upon the town of Neal, followed shortly thereafter by the town of Climax, which is immediately followed by Eureka. Um, I was born in Eureka.

**Bruce Gillespie:** Wow, a weight loss of 22 pounds in a few weeks. That's a lot. I have had a terrible time taking off 20 pounds to get back to the 132 level, my lowest in recent years. Currently I'm at 141/142. And you've gone off of coffee. I don't think I've ever drunk 7 cups a day. Now I normally drink a double espresso at the beginning of the day, then a cup from our drip machine, and over the past couple of weeks I've frequently added one cup brewed via pour over. I may try playing with my espresso machine to make a ristretto instead of an espresso. I am also contemplating changing from a dark roast espresso to a light roast espresso, which can supposedly be a bit more finicky, but less bitter. I first encountered ristrettos in my South American travels and it appears in most coffee shops. Whereas in the United States, it hardly appears at all. I find it much tastier, usually.

I hope your surgery went well. My ophthalmologist says I have the beginning of cataracts, but they are not to the point of needing surgery. Also, I have other eye issues, small scars in both eyes, fairly severe astigmatism and some macular degeneration. Tons of fun.

**Brad Foster:** Hm, I seem to have a blue sky account, but haven't visited bsky for ages. Maybe I should check a few things out over there.

We get lots of Medicare emails. We also get a fair number of snail mail postcards and letters from realtors asking if we want to sell our house. Patty, my wife, has no desire to move.

However, our house is probably now worth about 11 times more than what we paid for it 30+ years ago. Startling.

**Joseph Nicholas:** Hm, I can't remember watching 'The Night Manager'. Maybe I will go searching for it on the various streaming platforms I visit. I've watched and continue to watch all of the Star Trek series, except the animated ones.

As I note with some frequency, I'm still fairly healthy and don't take any prescription drugs for the various illnesses that beset many my age. I just checked my blood pressure, 120 systolic over 79 diastolic and pulse of 67. I'd prefer the diastolic be a little lower, but that's in normal range. Oh, I did have one infusion of calcium because I seem to have osteoporosis. The doctor just checked me for that last year and he noticed it. I take daily calcium supplements now and also iron supplements since he also noticed an iron deficiency last year. Of course, today I was up on the roof walking around, taking down Christmas lights. I haven't broken a bone in years. The last bone I broke was over 30 years ago, a finger bone, because I smashed it into a wood beam, because I was angry. Other than that, I think I broke a bone in a foot at least 40 or 50 years ago. I don't remember how.

**Jerry Kaufman:** Okay, now I have to investigate some Patti Smith albums that I don't have. Ah 180g vinyl of Radio Ethiopia is available from Acoustic Sounds. Done.

Gary Mattingly: I think there are people in the US who hold special significance to where they met someone. My problem is both a bad memory and maybe I'm just an uncaring jerk who doesn't hold a lot of things over time as being special.

Lots of people hate 'Avatar', are bored with it, and/or simply find no reason to bother with it. I suppose parts of it for me and many people is the CGI, sort of like dogs and squirrels.

Finished watching the new season of 'Percy Jackson', finished watching all of the current season of 'Miss Scarlet'. Now watching the current season of 'All Creatures Great and Small' and 'Bookish' on PBS. Also watching the new shows, 'A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms' and 'Star Trek: Starfleet Academy', plus the current season of 'Will Trent' and 'High Potential'.

I did read and LoC *Nowhere Fan* 8. Enjoyed it.

I enjoyed the photos throughout the issue and the artwork from H M Bateman, **Brad W Foster**, **Teddy Harvia**, and **Lucy Huntzinger**.

\*\*\*

WAHF

**Bill Burns ; Dave Cockfield ; Cardinal Cox** sends his annual gift of his clippings (oo-er ect) of his columns in *Best of British* magazine, and well worth the read ; **Steve Green ; Teddy Harvia ; George Phillies ; Spike ; Alan Sullivan ; R-Lauraine Tutihasi ;**

## FANZINES RECEIVED

With the usual thanks...

**BOOKS READ 2025** (W<sup>m</sup> Breiding) - ...

**TWO CHAIRS IN PRINT #12** (David Grigg and Perry Middlemiss) - ...

**MOSTLY POINTLESS December 2025** (Alan Sullivan) - ...

**CAPTAIN FLASHBACK #86** (Andy Hooper) - ...

**PERRYSCOPE 56** (Perry Middlemiss) - ...

## INDULGE ME

✕ **AGELESS BEAUTY** : Shurely even the **Killer** might break stride to glance at **Vicki Michelle**?...



## MIRANDA

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Art credits: **Brad W Foster** (pp 8, 10, 13) ; **Teddy Harvia** (pp 5, 16)

✕ **TV GUIDE EXTRA** : Well *I'm* quite excited about the now confirmed 'Blake's 7' reboot...

✕ **NASA NEWS** : February 6<sup>th</sup> is the Artemis moon mission (circumnavigation) launch date. Good luck to the gallant crew!



✕ **NEXTISH** : February 21<sup>st</sup> I reckon, but who knows?...



**"What a big disgrace  
Way you rob up the place  
Rob everything you can find  
Yes, you did and you'll even rob the blind"**