

This Here...

"...a small round of applause..." (D Langford)

EGOTORIAL

MOJO (SLIGHT RETURN)...

Well, there *does* appear to have been a bit of an uptick in enthusiasm round here, although I've more or less come to a decision on a related issue which I'll tell you about further down.

DoBFO much ta to the venerable pinch-hitters over the last couple of ishes: **W^m Breiding, Claire Brialey, Rich Coad, Roy Kettle, Perry Middlemiss and Joseph Nicholas**, all purveyors of high-quality fanwriting, and as I have ruefully observed, ishes #94 and #95 could be considered *so* much better for having close to fuck all me in them. I suppose, then, it's tuff titty as normal service is indeed more or less resumed and I can return to topics such as the serious consideration of whether knobbability is a factor in whether politicians get elected or not (I can hear **C Fishlifter** wailing in agony from here), having reduced dear old Uncle Johnny to despair many years ago by suggesting that this may have been the case with Benazir Bhutto...

Anyway, here I sit at the "fanzine computer", tapping away at this here catch of anglers, also entertaining thoughts of the work needed to get *BEAM XIX* sorted in time for Corflu* as well as having a pending APA-V deadline on the 15th and (by the time you read this) having recorded the FAAn Award ballots and got the *TIR* Results issue ready...

Back, though to the knobbability question, upon which I would actually like to editorialize. It seems to me there's

some inequity in the dispensation of what we might kindly refer to as compliments upon the desirability of any given female form, in the sense that blokes shouldn't be doing that. Fair enough, I *do* actually get that a lot of the "compliments" gobbled out will be expressed crudely, along the lines of "Oo yeah I'd slip that a length" which might conceivably be interpreted as demeaning. I'd contend, though, that the same standard may not apply if someone who falls into a category (or gender, even) other than "bloke" makes a similar comment.

I can't imagine, though, Sandi Toksvig yelling "Tits oot for the lasses" (or the equivalent in Danish) probably because she's more refined than that, but it doesn't seem implausible

that a more aggressive sort of lesbian (or bisexual, of course) might do so after a few bevies.

That might be as equally unwanted to the recipient of the suggestion as the similar comment from a bloke would be, but I have my doubts that it would be called out so stridently.

Anyway, enough of that, let me make an observation about my own situation here, which is that I've become reluctant to leave the house lately for anything other

than a nearby errand like nipping to the post office to drop off **Jen's** latest eBay sales or getting beer supplies and/or vape refills. Nor do I feel much like socializing. There's a worry these days that Vegas might be the next Minneapolis and it's quite possible I could get swept up in that madness. Perhaps this too shall pass, but I'm feeling like Corflu Pickled could be my last public appearance for a while.

Note above, though, that I mentioned "vape refills". Yes, I've moved on from actual smokes and haven't had one in over two weeks now, although still craving one at any given waking moment.



* Which it won't be, sorry...

Vaping is supposedly “better” (for certain values ect), at least in terms of not adding to the crud clogging my arteries, and may indeed serve as a bridge to abandoning nicotine altogether. We’ll find out...

It’s all good.

February 2026

TAFFNESSABOUTS

THE RACE IS ON!

The candidates are Lisa Hertel and **Kat Templeton**, the latter of whom has already got my vote...



KAT 4 TAFF

Links:

Online voting: <https://taff.org.uk/vote.php>

Mikołaj Kowalewski (European TAFF Administrator):

EUTAFF@gmail.com

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Sarah Gulde (American TAFF Administrator):

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taff.org.uk

CORFLUX

VANDOO BID UPDATE / PICKLED BYOB

Murray Moore writes:

On Feb. 17 **Murray** and **Suzle & Jerry** will have visited the Vancouver hotel which the Corflu Vandoo bid proposes to be the hotel for Corflu in 2027.

The membership of the 2027 bid committee has grown.

Garth Spencer and **R Graeme Cameron** have joined as the committee’s Vancouver Experts. **Jerry Kaufman** is researching Vancouver attractions appealing to the sensibilities of Corflu attendees.

Jeanne Bowman and **Mary Ellen Moore** are no longer Con Suite staff. Corflu VanDoo can not have the traditional hotel suite stocked with food and drink supplied by the committee, because all such food and drink would have to be purchased from the hotel. Corflu Vandoo however will have an equivalent of a con suite for its members, a room adjacent to the hotel’s bar.

The bid committee members live in Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States.

Corflu VanDoo Bid Committee (as of January 24, 2026):

Bid Chair, Murray Moore (CA)

Agents: Canada, United States, Alan Rosenthal (U.S.); U.K., Rob Jackson (U.K)

Discord, Claire Brialey (U.K.)

Hotel Contract & Liaison, Suzle (U.S.)

Offsite Attractions Research: Jerry Kaufman (U.S.)

Program, Tom Becker (U.S.)

Progress Reports, Roman Orszanski (AU)

Tech, Tommy Ferguson (U.K); Microphone, Doug Bell (U.K.)

Treasurer, Alan Rosenthal (U.S.)

Vancouver Experts: Graeme Cameron (CA), Garth Spencer (CA)

Website, Bill Burns (U.S.)

Without Portfolio: Jeanne Bowman (U.S.), Mary Ellen Moore (CA)

FAAn Awards Admin (*NOT a committee position*), Nic Farey

On Mar. 1 the members of Corflu Pickled (Santa Rosa, CA) will decide the location of Corflu in 2027.

Nic writes:

It may seem an unwelcome trend that, as **John D. Berry** remarked on the Corflu Discord (re: Picked arrangements), “I trust that we can bring in our own wine and beer? Otherwise it’s gonna be a sad sort of British-style con.”

Leaving aside the denigration there, the answer to the BYOB question is yes, but not exactly. **Spike** notes that there are wine glasses and a fridge in the rooms, so the form seems to be that you can pour in the room and then bring your glass down to the hospitality area, otherwise drinks must be purchased from the hotel bar. This rather suggests that the corridors of the hotel may become a seething mass of attendees dashing to and fro to acquire proper fortification.

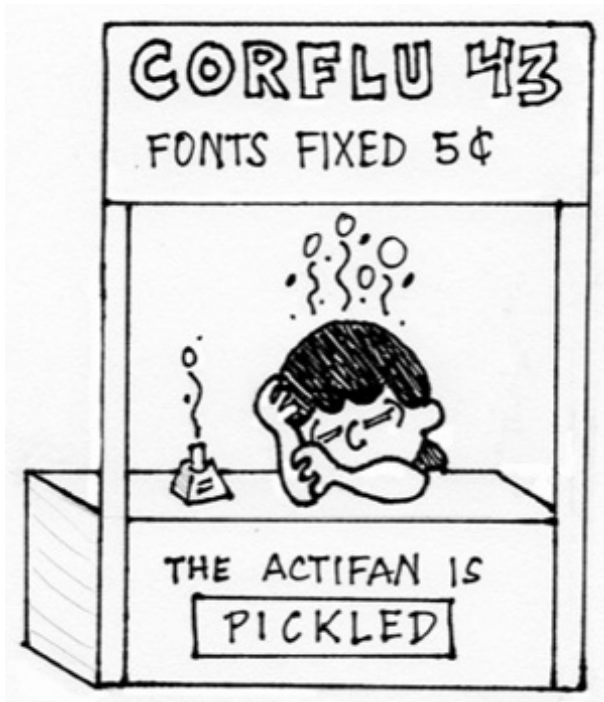
The similar VanDoo situation will make three in a row “sad sort of British-style con(s)”, then? Since I’m more than half expecting that any 2028 bid will likely come from the UK, mainland Yoorp or perhaps even Scandinavia, that could extend the run to four. Brits are, of course, used to this arrangement.

For meself (and see also ‘Egotorial’) I’m not expecting to attend VanDoo in person. It’s all a bit up in the air, but at this time fershure I’m reluctant to cross any national borders for

fairly DoBFO reasons, but perhaps more crucially my Green Card is up for renewal this year (by September) and we don't honestly know what might happen with that, given the current circumstances, ey?...

PR4 for Pickled is out and can be found here : <https://corflu.org/Corflu43/CorfluPickledPR4.pdf>

Rich Coad notes that no t-shirts are to be had, since CafePress got antsy about possible intellectual property violations with **Lucy Huntzinger's** cool logo. If you ask me it's fair use/parody but what do I know ey?...



HEALTH DIARY

ARE WE THERE YET?

I read something the other day which feasibly suggested that any headline (or here, subheading if you want to be pedantic) that is phased as a question can generally be answered with the word "No". And so it is.

I return today (January 27th) from a followup visit to Dr Peters & Lee since there are still concerns about the left side surgery wound which has a hematoma. The Doc isn't too worried about this, though (and thus, neither am I) since it isn't painful and can be expected to go away in time. They did do a swift scan of the area to determine that blood isn't being fed into it, which it isn't, so that's all good. Keep doing the heat pad three times a day, I am told, and we'll see you in three weeks.

The rather more drastic news is that there are blockages in my lower legs (beyond the range of the bypass, DoBFO) which will likely have to be attended to ere long. I'd confidently suggest that two words you don't particularly

want to hear in the same sentence are "needle" and "groin", but this is what I have to look forward to, it seems.

After the initial coo er gosh post-surgery of being pain free below the waist, I've now reverted to having swollen legs and feet and in fact *more* pains in more places than previously.

Trigger alert for those not already squeamish out, I suppose. So the needle enters the leg artery from the groin age area and is basically shoved down the tube with two purposes: one to drill through the crud blocking things up, and secondly to potentially insert stents to keep the way open. I'll be seeing Dr Peters & Lee next on the 17th (as I write), so update to follow...

Then it got fucked up (though not to Crump-like levels) in some part because I did it. I scheduled the requested Doppler scan with Steinberg imaging and duly showed up on the 11th at 3:30pm. "Are you here to make an appointment?" asks the front desk. "No, I've got a 3:30". Or not, as it turns out, since I've DoBFO misread their scheduling for an appointment on the 11th of fuckin' March. Bollocks. "Would you like me to see if there's one sooner?" Well, yes, ta, and that turns out to be the same day as my Dr Peters & Lee appointment (today, as I write), which does make me wonder why that slot didn't get offered in the original online scheduling, but ey...

So the vascular doc gets rescheduled for *next* week by which time we're presuming he'll have had a chance to give it a proper shufti.

In more general wailing, and I swear I can hear my dentures gnashing from here, although perhaps they'd just like to be let out of the box once in a while, my sleep pattern is well knackered. I've noted previously that daytime napping has been *de rigeur* of late, but even though I'm tired and yawning of an evening, it seems I can expect to toss and turn for a couple of hours before giving up and getting back up at some point between 11pm and 1am, trying (and often sadly failing) to get in a bit of fanac during that window. Last night was particularly dreadful, but the night before that I'd actually slept well for a change. Go figure...

TV GUIDE

SADDER THAN COCKFIELD?

Having been well down in the fuckin' dumps of late, for telly viewing I tend to fall back on old favorites for sobbing in front of the box of an afternoon or evening. Now that **Jen's** at work looking after the grandson on the weekdays, I'm prevented from clocking any stuff that we both want to watch, and I'm often too brain-dead by the time she gets home to want to actually pay attention to new things.

Thus, 'The Night Manager', 'Fallout', 'The Lincoln Lawyer' and doubtless more I've forgot or are upcoming (like season 2 of 'Paradise') remain on the waitlist for now while the streamer is playing classic 'Perry Mason', or recently 'The Outer Limits' 1990s remake/reboot.



Now the latter of those, even playing in the background while I sometimes pay scant attention, is rather a joy, not least for the big and even medium-sized genre names who pop up in various episodes, not least 'Star Trek' past and future alumni (eg Michelle Forbes and Amanda Plummer as the leads in "A Stitch in Time"). Michael Dorn ("The Voyage Home" - no relation) and Wil Wheaton (with Robert Patrick in "The Light Brigade") turn up, as does the venerable Leonard Nimoy in "I, Robot" - no relation to the Asimov stories, but rather based upon the Eando Binder Adam Link story, here co-directed by Adam Nimoy, also having played a different character in the original series' 1964 Outer Limits adaptation. Rabbit holes ahoy!

Other Famous Names include Beau Bridges and his old man Lloyd perhaps inevitably playing father and son in the first season opener "The Sandkings", Bruce Davison, Josh Brolin, Annette O'Toole, Nicole de Boer (with Robert Patrick in an earlier appearance for his character), Dwight Schulz, Alan Ruck, Mark Hamill, Matt Frewer, Clint Howard, Neil Patrick Harris, Clancy Brown, Brent Spiner, David Hyde Pierce, the always sublime Victor Garber, Howie Mandel, Kim Cattrall, and a fuckin' load of ect ect as you're thinking "Well, that was DoBFO shameless filler ey?" so well done you...

Oh, and Ryan Reynolds!

A couple of appearances by Teryl Rothery (typecast, it seems, as different scientist or doctor characters) also causes one to note that, as a Canadian co-production, every actor who's ever been in any iteration of 'Stargate' will turn up at some point, leading to the conclusion that the entire population of Canada has, in fact, appeared in some iteration of 'Stargate'...

The one new show we have been diligent about following is 'Starfleet Academy' (which the spellcheck elf wishes to render as "Starlet Academy", which has been well good so far, although I thought this week's episode "Ko'Zeine" was a bit meh, but perhaps after the previous week's all-action "Come, Let's Away" did give us a bit of a breather. Most people seem to be well goshwow over Holly Hunter's turn as ship captain and academy chancellor, half-Lanthanite Nahla Ake, and much play is given to the fact that she's only 4 foot 6 or thereabouts, yet dominates any scene she's in.



There's quite a few "half this, half that" characters, perhaps most notably cadet master Lura Thok, played with proper vigor by Gina Yashere, who is a Klingon/Jem'Hadar mix, a combination that's been derided for churlish reasons like (a) the Jem'Hadar being a race created by the Dominion and (b) we never saw any females of the species in 'Deep Space Nine'. To which the DoBFO answer is "It's the 32nd century - stuff has happened since then"...

It's also encouraging to note that in the interim centuries the population of the galaxy has been fucking like rabbits with whatever or whomever might have been handy at the time with no speciesist animus, we must guess.

Carry over characters from 'Discovery' include Oded Fehr as the admiral-in-charge, and, most happily, Tig Notaro reprising Jett Reno, now an academy instructor. We also get the now 900-year-old holographic doctor (Robert Picardo), and what's presumably a bit of stunt/fanboy casting: Stephen Colbert (voice) as the "digital dean" making announcements over the PA.

And oh yeah, Paul Giamatti (half Klingon, half Tellarite) is dead good as the recurring villain, but you's expect that, wouldn't you?

Liking it so far, and waiting for Tilly...

RADIO WINSTON

APA TO LOOP

BY KEV WILLIAMS

Your invitation some time ago, to write something for 'Radio Winston' has been on my mind. Perhaps it's not surprising that a lot of fans are as much music fans as SF fans and likewise have collections of both. I was reminded of your suggestion with **Rich Coad's** contribution to #94 about the best decade for music. I'm not getting into that myself, much as I'd like to, but being a child of the 60's (I was 14 when the

first Beatles record was released) – my opinion is pre-determined.

I wanted to tell one specific story of a direct link between Fannish activity and music. I'm sure that there are many such, but this one stems from a period of high activity in British fandom. Early 70s through to the late 80s, British fandom was extremely productive. Groups such as the Brummies, the Rats, the Gannets, the Mads, the Surrey limp-wrists, and the Scottish/ Glasgow groups very active, pubbing their ish, and organising and running conventions.

APAs had sprung up where short contributions from a collection of fans would be collated and sent out by an editor. They mostly withered pretty quickly, there was OMPA/ROMPA by Ian Maule and FEAPA by Chris Priest and Simon Bostok's APA-UK. Few of them got beyond a handful of issues.

In 1983, the Gannett-run Silicon (an early small fan convention) was in rude health, with the seventh con well-attended, with some 60 fans. An APA panel discussion took place – stimulated by Gannet Mike Hamilton's failed attempts to persuade the Gannets to revive Gannet-Scrapbook (unkindly pronounced by some as Gannet's Crap-book), a fan group APA which had achieved the heady heights of 7 issues between 1972 and 79. Greg Pickersgill, seething (as was his wont) with frustration at the lassitude on display, heard himself saying: *"Well Christ, if you're going to have a bloody APA, somebody better organise it... I'll do it"* (Little thinking that anyone would take the idea seriously).

Enthusiasm there was in the beery atmosphere, and the smart-arsed name of FRANK'S APA (geddit?) applied, with of course Greg as 'Frank'. Stringent rules were deployed regarding, length, deadlines, frequency and regularity, to be enforced – with violence, if necessary, by Frank. To his and UK-fandom in general's amazement, 35 signed up and two months(!) later Frank's APA Mailing 1 crashed onto the doormats of 16 fans. Mailing 3 was out with 32 contributions 6 months later! Such fecundity had not been seen for some time. In the year that followed its initiation at Silicon 7 an astonishing TEN issues made it out. The likes of the Doreys, Harveys, Pardoes, Hansen, Whiteoak, Bell, Wells, Williams' (Ian and me), Pickersgills, Rob Jackson, Jimmy Robertson, Alun Harries, Dave Bridges, Steve Higgins, Jarrold, Abi Frost, Langford, Anne Warren, Roz Kaveney, Paul Kincaid, Martin Tudor, Glen Warminger, Rog Peyton. Alan Dorey became 'Frank' from issue 11 in late '84 and it continued until 1986 when it changed to "Pieces of Eight".

LOOP

In June 1985, FRANK'S TAPE LOOP, was initiated by Alun Harries, as there had been much dialogue in the APA about music. The idea was to share C60 or C90 cassettes of whatever took your fancy. You did not have to be a member of Frank's APA and the procedure was to send a compilation tape to Alun, with track-listing and ideally some notes as to what and why. Alun would then send a tape out to someone else on the membership for enjoyment and comment. It was to be held for a maximum of one month before being returned and sent to another member! Many of the Franks alumni joined in the fun.

You've probably spotted the flaw in this. Tapes were carefully compiled (I did two), sent out and never heard

from again. Alun dutifully sent tapes out and they rarely / never re-appeared. I do remember getting one from Peter-Fred Thompson, which had a fantastic track by Sinatra called 'What's New', which I'd never heard. So, I got something out of it. Frank's Tape Loop rapidly foundered, but I always liked the general idea. Who doesn't love making mix-tapes and sharing them?

Fast-forward to 1997. I had been living and working in the US for 4 years, and having returned wanted to re-establish connections – and at Harry Bell's inebriated retirement party, arguments raged regarding the eclecticism of the then music scene and preferences were stoutly defended.

So, LOOPE-DE-VILLE (later just THE LOOP) was established – populated initially almost totally by Gannets: Harry, Dave Cockfield, John Barfoot, Ian Bambro and myself. I didn't want to fall into the same problem that Frank's Tape Loop had – so I wanted to follow the precise format

of FRANK'S APA. I insisted that each member submit the appropriate number of copies to me (the Loopmeister) as the central coordinator – and a mixed issue sent back.

For those that didn't have the technology, I did the copying using my son Mike's snazzy mini hi-fi system, which had a neat little function – you could copy tapes at high speed: about 5 mins for a C90 cassette. This was the enabler that an effective Loop needed! It worked! The tapes were sent out with a booklet for all the track listings and subsequent mailings included a second booklet of commentary! Once we all got the hang of the new-fangled email – the commentary moved online.



I'm sinfully proud to say that the Loop is still running today (2026 has us on Issue 65). We switched to CDs from Loop 12 in 2002. And so, it has gone forward. Members often do a bit of graphic presentation, creating discs worth keeping. The contents comprise almost anything: cover versions, soundtracks, railway music, blues, orchestral, live music, Xmas bonuses, shazamed tracks, jazz bonuses, recent faves, old faves, reflections of personal preferences, record collections or anything that you fancy at the time. It's a wonderful source of new musical inspiration. Plenty to hate, be indifferent to, curious about, or like.

Loopers have come and gone, with membership as low as 5 and up to 12 for any one issue. There has been a preponderance of SF Fans. In addition, to the aforesaid Gannets, folk who have contributed over the past 29 years include: Alun Harries, Graham Charnock, Mike Meara, Dave Wood, Dave Hutchinson and Neil Jones.

Now here's where your *This Here...* readership might get interested.

For Loop 50 in 2019, we decided to do a 'Desert Island Discs'.

For your American readers: this is a very long running (83 years) BBC Radio show, featuring just about every celebrity, scientist, author, musician, writer, campaigner, philosopher, politician etc; telling their life story through their musical choices. But there are Strict Rules!

The idea: You have been castaway on a deserted Desert Island alone, with no prospect of rescue.

1. Washed up on the shore is a functioning record player, eight discs, three books and a luxury item.
2. Assuming you could control fate, what would your choices be for these items.
3. In order for the fates to grant your wish - you have to justify each selection and tell the story of your life in music.

The format:

- 1) A total of the 8 tracks ONLY with notes justifying the choices as representative of your life in music You must make the tough choices of the key 8 tracks that define your life in music. This is where the challenge and fun lies!
- 2) If you want you can also list the three books and reasons why. (The BBC radio format says you must take the Bible and the Complete Works of Shakespeare and one other - but we didn't bother with that!)
- 3) Let us also know your luxury and the reason why.
- 4) The literal format should also be considered. You are on a Desert Island - with no prospect of rescue. So, should you choose 'favourites', or should you choose items that you've always wanted to appreciate but have never given the time (all of Wagner's symphonies, eight hour long Fela Kuti

tracks, studying quantum mechanics, reading Proust etc), since you now have plenty of time, it might be appropriate to nod in that direction.

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If any of your readers are interested in doing this for themselves, you can listen to John Peel's Desert Island Discs from 1990 here:

https://youtu.be/kleEifBNHLo?si=hl8calA_yr_fhuvi

After many years thinking about this, I agonisingly edited a very long list down to the required 8. Here are Kevin Williams Desert Island Discs...

Where to begin? Well, I was trained as a scientist, and am an organised soul, and I wanted to make sure that my selections covered most aspects of my life, interests and preferences. I came up with: Family, Identity (European, British, Celtic), Places (The North, USA, Eastern Europe), Culture: Words (Books, Poetry), Films, Art, Photography and Music (Pop, Jazz, Blues, Roots, Indie, Folk, Classical, Soundtracks), Science (Chemistry, Life Origins, Planetary). Phew!

So, from this and much, much agonising and long discussions on long walks, here they are:

1) And your bird can sing - The Beatles (1966): The band that changed everything. But so much of their work has had the edges worn off by sheer familiarity, I chose this track not often heard and so a bit less familiar - but showing signs of the new direction, they were about to take and is brilliant!



2) Just - Radiohead (1995): The second greatest band ever IMHO, with a fantastic piece of indie rock & roll. The guitar piece at the end is amazing.

3) At the Castle Gate - from Palléase and Mélisande by Sibelius (1905): I had to have a classical track, and this is better known as the theme to the TV programme - 'The Sky at Night' - which I have watched since Patrick Moore was thin, and represents my life-long interest in astronomy and planetary science. I also love the far north and Sibelius was Finnish.

4) Savage Earth Heart/Jerusalem - The Waterboys (Live Glastonbury 1986): I wanted a track to represent the many live gigs I've been to - and this - by another of my favourite bands, who I've seen live probably more than any other, is a stonker.

5) Seven Days of Falling - Esbjorn Svensson Trio (2003): I had to have a jazz track - my brother started playing jazz records when he was 16 and I was 8. So, I had a very young education in the form. I have a particular like for all things Scandinavian and for the coolness of Scandi jazz, and this is just sublime.

6) I Cover the Waterfront - John Lee Hooker & Van Morrison (1991): I had to have a blues track. The first LP I bought was 'Blues Greats' Chess Compilation in 1963. This track features two of my favourite proponents of the form.

7) Epitaph - Quiet Lions (2019): This is my lad Mike's band - and one of his songs (he's the main songwriter/singer) from their debut LP (yes, Vinyl!). They did a neat acoustic session for another track from the album: <https://youtu.be/RnCzEBopgA8>

8) Water Dances: Stroking, Gliding, Synchronising - Michael Nyman Band (1990): This is Sue's and my song. We both love the modern classical orchestral rhythmic minimalism of Nyman (his most famous tune is "The Piano"). We have many fond memories of listening to his music on long car journeys right from when we first got together in 1977. We saw him doing this live in Bristol in 2017, in one of the most breath-taking concerts I can recall.

You can listen to my selections here:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1AmW9nF4DST4jC1lyzCKKX?si=8a7362f04cd248c8>

Books: These are chosen because I want to know more about the subjects while on the Desert Island:

1) Science - A 4000-year history - Patricia Far

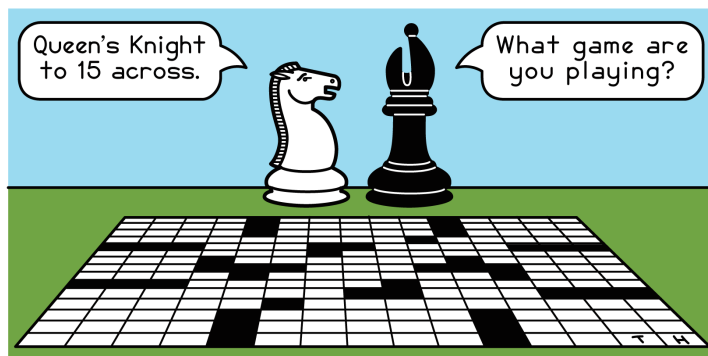
2) The Good Book - A.C. Grayling: a secular alternative to the bible drawing on non-religious philosophy

3) The Harville Book of 20th Century Poetry in English: I've always like poetry but am sadly ignorant of most.

Luxury: An acoustic guitar and a Blues/Beatles chord book. I can barely entertain myself - but it'd be nice to be able to entertain others if I'm ever rescued!

I'm sure that there will be many *This Here...* readers who'd like to share their Desert Island Discs.

GIVE US A CLUE



Lastish:

The three clues were all wordplay pointing to favorite authors...

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

"Noddy (Holder), Jim (Lea), Don (Powell) and Dave (Hill)" = SLADE + "grand" = K, yielding SLADEK

"Everything in Shakespeare. (7)"

"Everything" = ALL (embedded) in "Shakespeare" = BARD, yielding BALLARD

"E's missing Joseph Nicholas, for example (7)." "Joseph Nicholas, for example" = GARDENER with an E missing yields (Erle Stanley) GARDNER

Alan Rosenthal replies immediately with his 3/3.

Eli Cohen is 2/3 again, describing GARDNER as "far-fetched", and re: "Everything in Shakespeare", writes: "This is a puzzlement. It is probably coincidental that WILLIAM has 7 letters, and includes in it the letters "all", as in "everything", but I can't think of anything else..."

Thish's efforts - the first clue defines the theme...

"A pronounced first letter is followed by four silent for the line (5)"

"As a skeptic, how one might approach a trivia contest? (11)"

"Sounds like a snotty country (5)"

"Thematically ending with Watford's No. 7 getting a pome (6)"

ANORAK

DEPARTMENT OF MAD IDEAS

Let's mosey back to the 1970s, smack dab in the middle of the Cold War between the US and USSR when they were madly competing to get a technological nose in front of just about anything. If the Commies had some development on the go, the Yanks had to try and better it, no matter how mad the idea might have been.

The idea of a jet-propelled train topped up first in 1966 when the New York Central Railroad conceived the M-497, christened the "Black Beetle", by bolting a couple of surplus booster engines off the Convair B-36 "Peacemaker" bomber (which no doubt **Leigh Edmonds** can supply copious detail on) onto a Budd rail diesel car.



This arrangement set a speed record of a gnat's cock under 184mph in testing. This mostly wasn't really intended to be an in-service engine since the idea was to stress-test the effect of high speed on regular tracks. In any case, the NYCR was about to merge with hated rival Pennsylvania Railroad which was at the time dedicated to developing what would become the Metroliner and didn't need what may well have been seen as a daft side project, and the actually quite useful info gained ended up being ignored after the merger went through.

The engines were taken off and the locomotive went in service at Penn Central. The engines themselves went on a snow-blower experiment which was fairly swiftly canned since their power was such that a load of the track bed gravel tended to get blown away along with the snow, such was their oomph.

Amid cold war technological frenzy the Soviets took note, and in 1970 came up with their SVL (High Speed Laboratory Railcar) as their answer. Again, aircraft engines were used, the equivalent of those used to power regional planes. The

test run achieved honkin' acceleration and a speed of about 160mph, although the theorists and analysts pored over the results and determined a *potential* top tend of 224mph. The rest of the engineering held up incredibly well. This big bastard was heavy as fuck, about 55 metric tonnes of which 8 were kerosene fuel. So bogies, wheels and the superstructure of the base loco had to be seriously beefed up, and everything worked! The track, though, couldn't take such high speeds. Plans were being proposed for something called the "troika express", linking far-flung bits of the Soviet Union at massive speeds, but that was kiboshed by the fact that just about all the track could only tolerate a maximum speed of a comparatively very weedy 86mph. Putting an SVL network into actual service couldn't be done without a major upgrade of the entire network - the existing infrastructure basically just couldn't handle it.

So what really was an engineering marvel ends up abandoned and rusting (and is still there somewhere outside of St. Petersburg, I think).



There is, however, a memorial to the project at the factory in Tver.



HONEST, A PLAYLIST

BY GARY MATTINGLY (WHO CAN'T REMEMBER MUCH)

I can't remember the first song I fell in love with. I can't remember the first single I bought. I had 45s as early as 6 or 7 years old. I can't remember the first album I bought. One of the early albums was "The In Sound From Way Out"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hU8gVDxmUc>

I don't know every lyric to any song, although there are a few I know most of the lyrics, since I sang them publicly when I was between the ages of 6 to 9, like "The Witch Doctor",

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L95bykOhsVw>

"Purple People Eater",

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67tKNesJjTI>

"He" (Righteous Brothers), etc.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGt5zscYAdk>

Hm, there are some others I sang, just can't remember the titles at the moment. Yes, at parties I like to change the music as the party progresses. Admittedly, it drives most people out of the room, since they want to talk, but I want to listen to music. I don't know if there is any song I'd rather not listen to anymore. At any particular moment in the day, I might not feel like listening to a particular song, but that definitely changes over time. Usually, I don't listen to "Deck of Cards" by Wink Martindale, but every once in a while, it is okay.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gmp3TF1DFZ8>

I can't remember any song that changed my life. I can think of no song I like that I tell people that I secretly hate. There are lots of songs I like that other people hate. That's okay. I like the songs. Songs that make me cry, gee, one of them is probably "Dad Gave My Dog Away" by T. Texas Tyler.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcMRpQpB7t4>

That brings to mind other songs I remember from that general period. I remember some of their lyrics. Many of them are now probably socially incorrect, like "Please, Mr. Custer"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fe0q8Lq3L2Q>

"The Battle of New Orleans"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjXM6x_0KZk

"My Boomerang Won't Come Back"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_prtbj4MtDU

Songs to play at my funeral:

Astor Piazzolla's milonga "La muerte del angel" played by Jorge Oraison

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agX1DldqVeU>

and Vivaldi - Concerto for two cellos in G minor, RV 531

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BbpNukE8yY>

Possibly J.S. Bach: Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007 played by Janos Starker, or one of the other cello suites for unaccompanied cello.

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

Maybe something by Thelonious Monk, like "Don't Blame Me"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KshrtLXBdl8>

or "Round Midnight"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yg7aZpIXRI>

Hm, the album "Underground", one of the first Monk albums I listened to.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_Fp4znXvOg

Admittedly, it would be entertaining to play "Salt Peanuts" - Dizzy Gillespie with Charlie Parker

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg1Wl-NmZWg>

THE OLD SOD

BY DAVID HODSON

Every now and then I do something Really Fucking Stupid!

You know the sort of thing; running a Corflu or talking Rob Jackson into the idea that Nic and Jen should stand for the Corflu 50, although, to be fair, Rob actually broached that very idea to Tommy Ferguson and me before I got to put it to him after having discussed it with Tommy. Either great minds really do think alike, or Rob isn't as deaf as he makes out...

This year's flavour of Really Fucking Stupid is several fold:

Easily the simplest task so far of this year's version of Really Fucking Stupid has been co-ordinating with Chris Garcia for a special issue of *Drink Tank* to appear that will publish a dual language revised edition of a history of German science fiction fandom written by Udo Klotz. Hopefully this will be out in time for Metropolcon in July (Chris has free time to work on it up until May and Udo is busily writing now) and the piece is a very important contribution to fannish history, as I hope you'll all realise when you have it open on your tablets or laptops or whatever in the fullness of time.

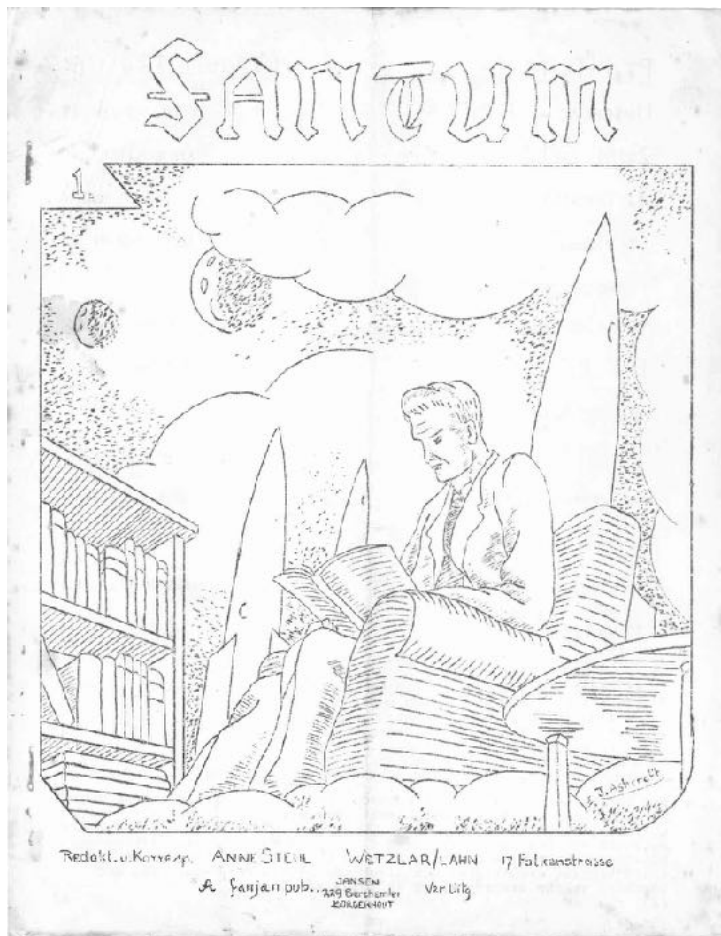
Udo has also been able to put Rob Hansen and myself in touch with Jürgen vom Scheidt, who joined fandom in Germany in 1956 and features in an article written by Rob about the links between British and German fandoms from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Rob's article is part of Really Fucking Stupid part two:

After being asked to be on a programme item about fanzines in Germany, it seemed like a cracking idea to actually publish a fucking fanzine, so that's what I'll be doing. Again, it's going to be dual language and, at this early point, besides Rob's piece, will feature an extract from Udo's longer piece in Drink Tank exclusively about German fanzine publishing. There are other ideas flying backwards and forwards between me and "them", "them" and "them", and my malfunctioning synapses, but hopefully it'll all work out in the wash. Provisionally titled "There's Supposed To Be A Zeppelin Park 'Round 'Ere Somewhere...", offers of contributions are welcome.

Really Fucking Stupid part three is the Really Fucking Stupid part:

A couple of years ago, after I attended the first Metropolcon, Rob sent me the link for Fantum #1 on fanac.org - [Fantum01.pdf](#). Edited by Anne Steul, it's regarded as the first German fanzine ever produced by a single fan and I find it quite fascinating. It has reprints from Brit and U.S. zines of the time of articles by John Brunner, Bob Linden, and Wilson Tucker; heaps of illos by ATom reprinted from Hyphen and Orion, and a letter from Robert Bloch.



Now there's absolutely no reason for me to do this, but I'm putting together a sort of hybrid/facsimile translation of it tracking down the original sources for the reprinted articles

and running the German articles and editorial through both Microsoft and Adobe's translation software and reading them, and it's a fascinating process. I'm astounded by the tone of Ms. Steul's editorial; it's the same kind of clarion call that so many embryonic fanzines carry in their first issues: "Here I am, let's talk...I don't care what about!" It also means I'm playing with technology that I haven't looked at in years; in November I was offered a year's subscription to the entire Adobe suite in the black Friday sales and thought it looked a good deal, so why not. I've never used the full versions of Acrobat before and, although I see it getting lots of criticism from long-time users, it really does seem so much easier to use than many of the alternatives on the market. Maybe my attitudes will change as I delve deeper into the different bits of software, but, so far, all it's doing is reinforcing my view that no one piece of software can ever do all the jobs one may require and my hard drives are always destined to be a hotch-potch mosaic of sometimes contradictory resources.

I'll make sure I send the fix-up of Fantum #1 I finally produce to Joe, Edie, and Mark in case it's of use or interest to anyone.

I was going to rattle on about Metropolcon for quite a bit longer; encouraging you to attend if you're in the U.S. and happen to be planning European trips this year, but yesterday bought some awful news.

Alun Harries, who I've known for nearly 42-years it suddenly occurred to me, was found dead in his home having suffered an apparent fall. I'm pretty sure I first met Alun at the old One Tun at the end of 1984, but we met properly for the first time in a Frank's APA meeting at Yorcon III in April 1985.

In the mid- to late-80s we'd frequently attend the London Comic Mart, then held at the Central Hall, Westminster, along with Greg Pickersgill, his then-wife Linda (now Krawecki), Rob Hansen and Avedon Carol, and whoever else happened to be in town or around. We always ended up in some pizza place in Charing Cross Road before spending the night in the Royal George pub. Mostly good times!



Anne Steul
(photo courtesy of Rob Hansen)

We really became friends on the UK fandom charabanc to Nolacon II in New Orleans in 1988 and that lasted until I dropped out of all things fannish in the early to mid-1990s. When I reappeared, firstly following the death of Paul Gamble in 2010 and then when Nic asked me to host Jacq Monahan on her UK TAFF trip in 2012, Alun was one of the first people to encourage me to not be a stranger any longer. I appreciated that.

In recent years, we'd seen other pretty regularly at the Bishop's Finger First Thursday pub meetings and on the walking trips organised by Rob Hansen, although last summer was a bit of a wash-out. Alun was also one of the regular visitors to John Harvey in Colchester with me, which I know John appreciated.

In retrospect, I'm so glad I nagged him about coming along to last year's Corflu in Newbury; a great many people got to see him for the first time in years, but also, unknowingly, for a final time. He was on good form.

One of the things I most appreciated about Alun was the ease of conversation; there was never a lull, never a dull moment, and although the conversations were almost never about the deeply philosophical, they were none the less important. There's many a book, or comic, or film, or television series I only encountered because of Alun's say so. We also shared as close to identical views on politics and people as could be possible; I was always reassured when our views coincided on who the "wankers" were. I know Alun was one of the few other people that was warning everyone in fandom about at least one now-outed predator back in the 1980s.

So, Ave Atque Vale, hail and farewell, Alun Harries. I frequently say, when asked if I believe in an afterlife, that I don't in the organised religion sort of way, but I've read so many authors say that the stories they've told were actually whispered over their shoulders by disembodied voices.



Hence, I have this romantic, reassuring notion that one day I'll re-meet all the people I like in a perpetual science fiction convention in a polished wood and brass saloon bar aboard a Mississippi-style paddle steamer hurtling along an endless river as we chase down the dastardly King John. If you're there already Alun, line us up a pint of cooking lager!

LOCO CITATO

*[[**"The Enlightenment view of mankind is a complete myth. It leads us into thinking we're sane and rational creatures most of the time, and we're not."** (J G Ballard) ...]]*

From: absarka_prime@comcast.net

January 24

Curt Phillips writes:

Mark Nelson mentions having visited Bristol Tennessee, which as you know is alarmingly close to where I live, and says that he wishes he'd bought the Uncle Dave Mason cd he spotted there. If he wishes that sufficiently I could easily pop in the Birthplace of Country Music Museum and buy it for him. Offer only good in the US because mailing anything out of the country is becoming painful thanks to ... well, you know. Mark should contact me if he's interested.

*[[**Since Mark resides in Australia, I imagine he'd have to be willing to pay the freight an'all...**]]*

Coincidentally my Grandfather Phillips long ago played banjo with Uncle Dave Mason, quitting just before Mason went off to Nashville or wherever to make it big.

Grandfather stayed behind to marry my Grandmother, so I guess I should be happy that he did, since otherwise there's no telling who my Grandfather might have been.

Glad to hear that your December surgery went well, and that you're feeling at least some better. I have some surgery coming up in February myself. Getting old in the 21st century is not what science fiction led me to expect.

From: cramynotbeiltro@gmail.com

January 24

Marc Ortlieb writes:

Thanks for the latest issue of *This Here...* I'm not really feeling guilty about my lack of response of late but, given our current heatwave, I figured that writing a LoC was more pleasant than trying to attack the mess that my study has become. It's amazing how much dust a pile of books can accumulate over five to ten years.

Sorry to hear of your hospital experiences. I've been lucky enough to have avoided overnight stays in hospital apart from when Michael, our son, was hospitalised with an autoimmune disease and I had to stay with him, on a mattress next to his bed, overnight while Cath was looking after our new born daughter and would do the day shift while I was at work. It was unpleasant enough without my having to cope with medical procedures.

I'm not enough of a television viewer to comment on **Roy Kettle's** column. Apart from watching bits of the recent Ashes series, I've been more or less avoiding the Gogglebox.

Regarding **W^m Breiding's** Honest Playlist, it's an example of how diverse fannish musical taste can be. I've never owned anything by The Turtles and I can't listen to "Happy Together" without thinking of Volman and Kaylan's routine on Zappa's live album which, after much gratuitous talk of sex with groupies culminates in them singing their hot single in the charts "With a Bullet". (Not your bullet list). I'd have difficulty picking the first song I fell in love with. I listened to a lot of music as a youngster - Dad worked for EMI and so we got most of the Beatles' songs very cheap and I will also admit to liking Frankie Laine's cowboy songs like "Cool Water". I even filked that one for an occasion later in my teaching career when the school's water supply started coming out of the taps bright copper blue. If I may derail my train of thought, that also led to a great line from one of my chemistry students. I was demonstrating the fact that glacial acetic acid was a poor conductor of electricity but that it conducted better when diluted. "So how can you explain that?" I asked the class. "You've just added copper," replied one young smart arse.

I've never been in a karaoke bar and so can't think of what I'd like to do, probably something by Tom Petty.

[[Coincidentally, Petty has been on the In My Head rotation of late, with one particular slice showing utter mastery of what can be done with three chords... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4vJM4L2D2U> ...]]

Best Party song, The Small Faces' "Tin Soldier". I blame part of my hearing problem on the way we'd rush to the speakers the moment that one arrived on the party mix. A song I can no longer listen to? Despite my love for virtually everything she ever sang, Melanie's "Brand New Key". It's the one song of hers that others judge her by. A song that I secretly like but that I tell everyone I hate? "Jolene" - either Dolly Parton's version or Miley Cyrus' version. It's not cool to like either Parton or Cyrus. A song that changed my life - well Paul Kantner & Jefferson Starship's "Let's Go Together" got me hooked on Kantner's music and saw me spending lots of money on Airplane/Starship albums. A song that makes me cry: any of Sandy Denny's versions of

"Who Knows Where The Time Goes." A song that I'd like played at my funeral? I can't think of one but was impressed that Ian Gunn had The Bonzos' version of "Jollity Farm" played at his.

[["...not cool to like Parton"? [falls off chair]. As dear old Charnock (G) might remark, although perhaps not in this particular context, "Are you mad?" I might well, at some point, punt my own "honest playlist" in here. As funeral songs go, I've actually had a playlist for quite a while. Big Audio Dynamite's "V. Thirteen" is usually at the top of it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjqSRQoxnhs> ...]]

Perry Middlemiss was far too pessimistic. The Ashes end up as Aust:Eng 4:1 so his 3:1 guess wasn't that far off. Mind you, his pessimism was justified in that he made the mistake of attending half of the Melbourne Test.

I used a variant of **Mark Nelson's** chromosome joke while teaching, except I used the punchline "Take down its genes" which, to my mind sounded more scientific and almost made up for my other biochemistry joke: Q: How do you make a hormone? A: Don't pay her.

[[My own version of that'un is Q: What's the difference between a vitamin and a hormone? A: You can't hear a vitamin...]]

Anyway, thanks for the zine. Today is the slight respite from the heatwave which returns on Tuesday with 44°C predicted for Melbourne. I figure that'll be too hot for even typing LoCs.

From: kevmeveigh65@hotmail.com

January 25

Kev McVeigh writes:

Thanks for sending this despite my shameful lack of response. Hope you're improving health wise.

Anyway, **Mark Plummer** talks about knowing exactly where and when he met various people in random. There are some I can definitely say that about. You, for instance, I met in the kitchen at Cape Hill in 1988. **Mark** I'm less certain of. I think it was in Coventry in late 86. That was when I first met **Claire** and others of that crowd, and I assume **Mark** was there. **Claire** still keeps apologising for that day. **Sandra** I met in May 87 at a BSFA mailing session in Reading.

One of my memorable first encounters was at my first convention, 40 years ago this coming November ffs! I wanted to meet the dearly missed Mr Banks who I knew was present, so I asked the one person I already knew, local bookseller peter pinto. peter is an odd chap but he pointed out two men across the room. "See the guy with the beard* well the guy he's talking to will be able to introduce you." (*yes guy with the beard isn't the best way to identify a fan.)

So off i trot in my naive way and imposed myself. I hadn't yet got used to the badge idea so ignored the bearded one to ask his friend: 'I'm told you can introduce me to Iain Banks?' He shook his head, "I'm sorry no, but he can" indicating the bearded one whose identity you will already have deduced. But that's how John Jarrold introduced me to Iain Banks. A few minutes later **Paul Kincaid** joined us.

I'd offer to write you something about music but would you have heard of most of it? So what else? How i found out what the fine for speeding is in Washington State, and other adventures?

[[You're welcome to guest a 'Radio Winston' column any time you like, mate!...]]

From: fabficbks@aol.com

January 25

Bob Jennings writes:

I'm afraid I've been pretty delinquent sending along comments to your zine for a long time now. Right now seems like a good time to make up for that. It's cold; I've got the heat turned way the hell up, but the weather outside is determined to beat me down as the temps continue to drop like a rock.

In this part of the world are all waiting for the Big Blizzard to hit. This is not like "Waiting For Godot", since Mr. Frosty is definitely going to arrive. It's just a matter of when and how much of the miserable white crap is going to be dumped on us. The US weather service, somehow functioning despite the efforts of the Trump Dictatorship to dismantle every useful part of the federal government, has solemnly declared that we will get between nine and fifteen inches of powdery snow over the hours of Sunday. Local weather prognosticators say it will be more like twelve to twenty, and a few are suggesting, with a chuckle, that there is a chance that the whole arctic front could whiz right by us with

nothing more than a light dusting, dumping all that frozen crap into the Atlantic Ocean instead.

The blizzard was supposed to crank up at daybreak, but as of right now, at 9:00 in the morning, and despite every thing the weather people have said, not a single snow flake has fallen. So, it seems like a good time to make a few random comments on *This Here...* #95, which I read all in one setting.

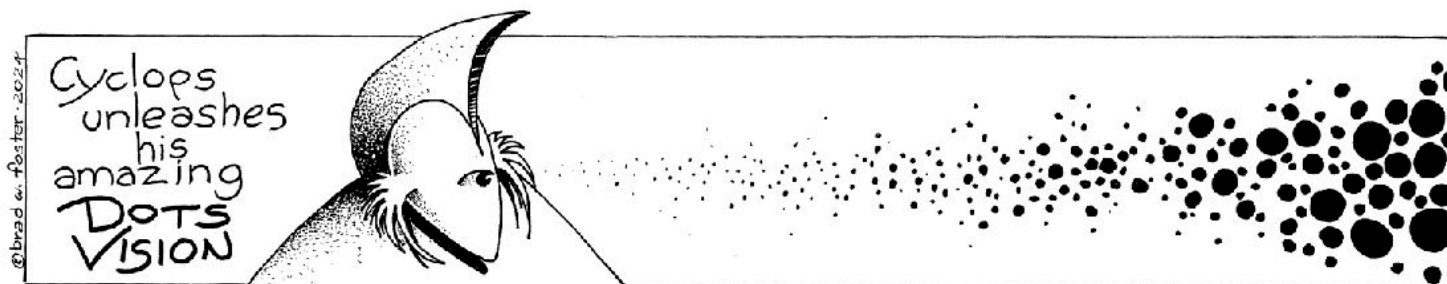
I sympathize with your recent feelings of ennui regarding fanac. I have had some of the same feelings myself, but in my case it has clearly been caused by the death-like grip of winter on this part of the world. The colder and more miserable the weather gets, the less interested I am in doing much of anything except sitting home, reading, and maybe watching a few old movies I never got around to seeing back in the day. I'm not even that hungry despite the cold. I seem to have lost my taste for carbonated flavored soda, which is good, I suppose, considering how expensive that crap is nowadays, but I have also mostly lost interest in snacking while watching various old out of date movies, which is a major change. Go figure. Or not.

I suspect in your case the decline was caused mostly by your ongoing medical issues, which I am pleased to see you have still managed to survive nicely, despite obvious pessimism on your part these past few months. You are still beating the odds and that's cause for celebrating. I believe as you recover the urge to fanac will return. It's difficult to extinguish that flame once it has been ignited.

[[So it seems, and I appreciate those encouraging words...]]

[**Roy Kettle's**] comments on "English Teacher" make it sound pretty good, but since it's a Disney product that means it costs money to view over the web on any platform, something I am disinclined to do; especially since I have access to plenty of other visual entertainment for F*R*E*E. It's not that I'm cheap when it comes to paying for web content, it's more like I'm *miserly*. Scrooge Mc Duck is a pitiful amateur compared to me when it comes to figuring out ways to use the internet for amusement value without paying a penny for the material. Right now "English Teacher" is locked behind paywalls, but I'll keep an eye on the situation. Things can change. Sometimes they can change very suddenly.

William Breiding's comments on music were interesting. Clearly every person is going to have his or her own play list



of popular tunes that affected them for better or worse for assorted reasons, or sometimes for no particular reason at all.

The only category I could fill in unequally *[sic]* would be song(s) I absolutely hate. The number one song I absolutely loathe is "Maggie May" by Rod Stewart. It's not bad music, and I didn't mind listening to it the first thousand or so times I heard it. But then I got really tired of hearing it, to the point that I now absolutely hate the song and never want to hear it ever again. So I make sure I don't/won't by turning the radio off or changing the station immediately whenever "Maggie May" starts to play. Another tune I always leap to cancel is "Kung Fu Fighting" by Carl Davis. Yuck!!

[[For me the shitlist definitely includes "Smooth" (Santana ft. Rob Thomas) which I liked a great deal until it was played to fuckin' death...]]

David Hodson's column this time round is sure to spark controversy. I sympathize with his view of vicious criminals and their total amoral mental outlook, clearly linked with their violent behavior, but I sincerely doubt that televising public executions would actually be a deterrent to the bad guys.

Career criminals generally have an internal system of checks and balances that allows certain behaviors and includes barriers that they will not willingly cross except in extraordinary circumstances, and killing people is one of the strongest barriers. In this country career criminals have a saying---"don't pull the crime if you can't do the time", which means there is always the risk that committing any kind of crime will lead to being arrested and having to spend time in prison. Being in prison is not fun, anywhere, and nobody wants to spend any time behind bars.

[[Can confirm...]]

The penalty for murder is very sharp. Juries are notoriously reluctant to hand down a death sentence for anybody, no matter how blatant or brutal the murder(s) may have been, but the alternative is life imprisonment. Nobody wants to do jail time, and being stuck in prison for the rest of your natural life is one risk that most rational career criminals are not willing to take unless the potential rewards are enormous.

On the other hand, amateurs, newbies, the violent hot heads, the genuinely insane, and sadistic losers have no problem killing innocent people, and they do. These are the kind of people that should be executed, for the simple reason that they have willingly violated the ultimate taboo of a civilized society, namely, that murder is absolutely unacceptable under any conditions. The other group of killers, people who lose their temper in a violent confrontation and kill somebody by accident or in a fit or rage, never intended to kill anyone in the first place, so they are not going to be intimidated by the threat of execution.

But I don't believe that increasing the rate of executions will have a detrimental effect on the crime rate. People who are not rational career criminals simply don't think that they will ever get caught, or that if they do get arrested that they will actually suffer much for anything they do. They believe they are unique, that the world owes them, and everything will somehow work to their benefit because they are special.

Just to be clear one more time, I don't believe that executions have any detrimental effect on the kind of people who commit murders. But I do think people who commit murders should be executed, because they have violated the ultimate taboo of a civilized society, and therefore those individuals have forfeited their right to exist in society at any level.

On David's other points, I wish I were as confident as he is that once Caligula Trump is gone that the entire MAGA cult will dissolve away. I don't think that is going to happen. There is indeed a solid Trump Cult of people who adore the man and believe he is god-like in his wisdom, but the political background that created Trump has been working in this country for a long time, and Trump is simply the crowning jewel of that process and its program of bigotry, racism, and malicious spite.

If Trump had not been anointed as the American Fuehrer another Republican politician would have taken his place. I suspect this substitute would have been much more restrained in his efforts to twist and bend the American constitution to his will, but once Trump has demonstrated how easy it is to thwart the laws and enact every single principle and idea he ever wanted, you can be sure that those who follow in his footsteps will all be using that same playbook. And the unfortunate reality is that there are plenty of people willing to elect these kinds of people to the halls of Congress and to the office of President. We are far from free of this mono-maniac or his legacy, and I sincerely fear for the future of my nation's democracy.

[[There's a raft of analysis, none of which is news to the likes of me, that capitalism itself is fundamentally anti-democratic...]]

And on that depressing note, I also see that the snow has started to fall. Big Blizzard snow dump here we come.

From: drl@ansible.co.uk

January 26

Dave Langford writes:

Thanks as always for exciting news updates. All sympathy about your being riddled with health bullet points; but a small round of applause for the mighty achievement of having the right number of white blood cells. Elsewhere, I was especially pleased that there seems to be a contested TAFF race, since I'd heard only about one candidate. Here,

the bloody SF bloody Encyclopedia chugs bloody on, as does *Ansible* -- though how I'm going to mail the print copies of the February issue I don't know, because the only convenient pillar-box was brutally eviscerated by officialdom a few days ago. See attached splatter horror photo.

From: jabberwocky2000@hotmail.com

January 26

Brad Foster writes:

Locked into the house now with a couple inches of ice all around, so not going to be going anywhere for a while, might as well catch up on emails!

Understand the hard push to get things done these days. Aside from whatever personal things might be getting to us (and your recent medical misadventures as outlined here are more than enough reason to have lost a bit of the "going to buckle down and churn out more pages" energy, as we watch the country around us going madder and madder, getting kind of numb each day, wondering what fresh hell we will have to wake up to and process, while still trying to go about our own lives. Hang in there.

[[I'm sure I'd feel a lot better if I wasn't obsessively reading the news, that's fershure, but old habits...]]

I mean, think about it: this new ish may be a bit thinner in page count than "the usual", but it -does- have pages, and you -did- get it completed and out into the world. You can't keep a good faned down!

[[Once again I must express much ta to the bench for coming through...]]

Thought that I might have fun coming up with my own answers to the "honest playlist" list of questions. Then realized that my answers to most all of them were just variations on "Don't know, can't remember, or don't have one". So shall spare you having to slog through that...

Thanks for noting that the only reason I have not had any contributions in *BEAM* for a while is that it is now only using art that is commissioned. That definitely explains it.

[[Really it's always been that way...]]

But, still a home here in *This Here...* it seems, so I can continue to feel like I am doing -something- to contribute to all of this, and thus two new fillos are attached for your consideration and possible future use. The fanzine fillo is a rapidly dying thing, but will see how long we can stretch out that slow death!

Onward into 2026---



From: leighedmonds01@gmail.com

January 27

Leigh Edmonds writes:

I'm sorry read about your blockage, fanacwise. I hope it's not too painful and that the swelling reduces soon.

I hope that you are recovering from your several and various ailments. I did not enjoy reading that your innards had been scooped out and then shoved back in again, but then I'm squeamish that way and like people's insides to stay inside. This came to mind again while reading various comments about horror movies in your letter column. I avoid all horror movies. The blood and guts ones because of what I just wrote in relation to your operation. I don't like the slow burn psychological ones because I don't like getting stressed for no good reason, and I don't like the

sudden surprise ones because of an embarrassment many years since while watching *Count Yorga: Vampire* with a friend.

Your stand-in writers were good and you should keep them around. **Roy Kettle**'s reviews were interesting and well written but I don't subscribe to Prime so will have to miss *Fallout*. Tell you what I did do, I subscribed to Britbox after giving up on Disney. They were offering a special of \$75 for a year so I couldn't resist. I now have several decades of old British murder mysteries to catch up on. I started with *Morse*, which I'd heard about but never watched. However he turned out to be a miserable old bugger so I moved on to *Midsomer Murders* and *Vera*. Living in Britain must be very dangerous and depressing

[[Interesting that you're an outlier in not liking 'Morse', although having said that I might now be inundated with other correspondents agreeing with you. I liked the series a great deal meself. Perhaps that's partly because I'm a big fan of John Thaw, but then again I also enjoyed the prequel series 'Endeavour'...]]

William Breiding's go at 'Radio Winston' was something of a disappointment, lacking anything much to whinge about. Echo and the Bunnymen eh? A band that I quite liked but didn't really enjoy listening to. My favourite band from that decade is The Saints and here is my favourite track from their album (*I'm Stranded*). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x77Usuw2_24. I could probably give you answers to all the questions **William** answered, but that would be tedious and take up too much of both our times. So I won't start.

[[Thank you...]]

I'm a bit like **Dave Hodson**, I won't be venturing to the US any time soon because I don't feel inclined to spending

several thousand dollars and enduring 14 hours in a hurtling metal tube only to be sent directly home again. While I have a moral objection to the way hypercapitalism operates in the US I've been able to overcome it in the past to visit good friends and see nice aeroplanes, but no longer. (I wonder if that sentence has just assured my being banned from the US during the current regime.)

Why does **Mark P** remind me of a Halifax Mk.III? Because, to me, it looks like a very British bomber, big, purposeful and effective. I can sort of imagine him flying over Hamburg about to drop his load of incendiaries and apologizing, "Sorry about this chaps. I have to do this, it's for your own good. You'll see".

And, why has **Mark N** suggested that I should take over the FAAn awards? Fans not members of ANZAPA will perhaps not be aware that last year I devised a fiendishly complex system for voting in the annual ANZAPOPoll. In theory it was quite simple but proved to be more than a little complex when it came to voting. I blame it on my dentist. I thought up the entire thing during a long session of root canal work and it made perfect sense by the time she had finished. There's a lesson there, something about dentists and fanatic.

I'm enjoying seeing **Brad Foster's** work in your pages. As nicely drawn and witty as always. Elegant I'm tempted to say, but I don't know if **Brad** likes being elegant.



From: jakaufman@aol.com

January 30

Jerry Kaufman writes:

I'm glad to see another issue, though this time I won't assume any significant improvement in your health. It does not sound like you'll be running any marathons in the near (or distant) future.

[[Quite so...]]

Thanks to **Roy Kettle** for providing the 'TV Guide' this issue. Someday I'll try out *Fallout* as I like SF (no surprise there) and Walton Goggins. I first clocked him in a short-lived and

quite funny half-hour called *The Unicorn* in which he played a widower with a business and two daughters who discovers he's a hot property among single women in his age bracket.

Roy likes Enrico Colantoni in *English Teacher* but hasn't seen him in anything else. Around here we know him for being the father of Veronica Mars in the series of the same name (and the local sheriff), a good bad guy in *Person of Interest* and a photographer in a comedy series about a fashion magazine (*Just Shoot Me!*) I'll unreservedly recommend the first two, while saying about the third that we liked it. He's also the lead alien in *Galaxy Quest*.

William Breiding's ambivalent answers to most of the questions for the Honest Playlist are pretty similar to the answers I would have given. I remember lots of songs from my childhood and teen years; maybe the song that I first "fell in love with" might have been "A Very Merry Unbirthday" from *Alice in Wonderland*. Or maybe it was "Venus in Furs," which I heard on a new station in Cleveland on the car radio when I was in my first year of college. There are a couple of songs that bring me to tears, but at the moment I can't remember what they are.

Does **Dave Hodson** think seeing hangings live on tv will deter offenders? I'm not sure about that, but I am sure that a large segment of the population (US or UK) will find them entertaining, just as mobs in both countries used to attend hangings in person as diversions.

Mark Plummer talks about meeting many of your readers, but not me. I suppose this is because I didn't have anything in the issue he's responding to. On my part, I'm not sure when I first met Mark or Claire. Was it a Corflu, a Worldcon, or somewhere else. I'm sure, though, it wasn't at Mexicon 3 in Birmingham, despite both of us being in attendance.

Mark Nelson suggests we vote on who the next FAAN Awards Administrator should be. I'm not sure anyone would want to have themselves voted in to a position they never contemplated, as it would be Work (sic). It might even be Thankless Work (more sic). I did not know that **Dr. Edmonds** (I am assuming that Leigh Edmonds is meant) is trained as a pollster. I thought he was a historian.

Thanks to **Gary Mattingly**, I now know what "Ristretto" is, and have found three places in Western Washington named "Ristretto Coffee" or variations. None of the three are in Seattle, however. I will have to search further, as I'm assuming Starbucks does not offer it.

Am I the only person who comments at all on your "Ageless Beauty" photos?

[[No, but you do usually only comment in passing (at 125mph)...]]

From: srjeffery@aol.com

February 1

Steve Jeffery writes:

It occurs to me that for some of us, letter and loc writing nowadays may be not so much offering our comments on the contents of a fanzine as reassuring people that we are still - just about - in the land of the living, in which case... "Hi".

That said, absence from the 'Loco Citato' column of *This Here...* over the last several issues has been more down to the fact that I have been stuck in Development Hell at work for the last few months, in a version of Dilbert Cubicle Land although without actual cubicles, as a bunch of tables, keyboards and monitors randomly arranged in a large room (although pleasing supplied with free snacks) while we work on a drop-everything-else-you-were-doing crash project. Or up until last Wednesday afternoon when the boss comes in to tell us just as we are finishing the last few tests that the specs we have been given are wrong and we need to stop what we are doing and start all over again. I've already put off a much overdue retirement for this - I had hoped to be gone by the middle of last year - and I'm not sure how much longer I am willing or able to spin this out.

[...]

I've managed to avoid Prime so far apart from a couple of orders in which Amazon sidetracked Vikki or me into ticking the wrong delivery option (largely by hiding the 'Free Standard' option we want) and I've had to cancel the subscription before the grace period expires. To be honest I'm not even sure if there is a grace period anymore. If there is, though, I might be tempted to take advantage when I have a free week or two (ha) to investigate *Fallout* which sounds wonderfully bonkers. Although - along with millions of others - probably not *Melania* (for which I note IMDb have flagged *Mercy* and *Send Help* under the heading "more like this").

The BBC have rerun both *Tinker, Tailor...* and *Smiley's People* recently as a reminder of how well they used to do this sort of thing (along with series like *Edge of Darkness*) before it became obligatory to have the word *Celebrity* in the title of every show. (Snooker seems to have survived, but I don't know for how much longer). This has pretty much driven us into watching archaeological history programs (although to be honest I don't need much driving to watch Prof. Alice Roberts).

[[And having Googled her I can (DoBFO) see why...]]

Can't remember the first song I fell in love with, although possibly the first song I remember listening to would be either *Inchworm* or possibly *Thumbelina* from Danny Kaye's lp of Hans Christian Anderson songs. I would probably have been about six or seven. The next album I clearly remember would be an lp with the "Time Machine" episode of *Supercar*.

First single I bought with my own money would either have been *Ride a White Swan* by T Rex or *Black Night* by Deep Purple. Similarly I can remember whether I bought the Faces *A Nod's as Good as Wink..* or Deep Purple's *Machine Head* first as my first foray into album buying, or both at the same time.

[[I may have previously noted that the first single I bought with my own money was "Lola" (The Kinks) and the first album was 'Led Zeppelin III'...]]

The song that makes me cry. *Who Knows Where the Time Goes* by Sandy Denny / Fairport Convention.

Every time. But it became a close run thing later on with Emmylou Harris' *Boulder to Birmingham* once I'd abandoned my early prejudice about country music being only "yeehaw", rhinestones and big hats. One a similar vein, one album I could not listen to for a long time was John Martyn's *Grace and Danger*, following a messy break up with an early girlfriend. Martyn - and collaborator and producer Phil Collins - were going through their own divorces at the time and it all got a bit much.

Richard and Linda Thompson were probably going through their own acrimonious break up around the same time, although that went off in the other direction into vicious personal infighting and bitterness on the lp 'Shoot Out the

Lights' and in the notorious "breakup tour from hell" rather than maudlin love songs.

'The Old Sod'. Vikki was watching a program recently about knife crime, knife purchases available from online retailers and knife amnesty hand-ins. Truly terrifying.

Mark Plummer wonders when the two of us first met. I'm almost certain it must have been at a Novacon. Our first convention was *Mexicon III* but about the only person we would have known there would have been Greg (and at the time Linda) Pickersgill, since they introduced us to the existence of this weird thing called sf fandom, conventions and the BSFA. Our first Novacon would probably have been in 1988 or 1989. This is slightly muddled by the fact that fencyclopedia informs me that Novacon 18 (1988, at the Royal Angus, with Gary Kilworth as GoH) predated *Mexicon III*. Not the first time (or I suspect the last) that my



memory of events is at variance with documented sources. I'd have to venture into the spare room to check which of the Novacon special editions and memorabilia we have, but these days it's so crammed with books, suitcases, guitars, old computers and boxes that it might be weeks of months before I found the way back out, much less anything I went in there to find in the first place.

[[That 1988 Novacon also marked the handing out of Arrows of Desire #1...]]

Not sure (re **Brad Foster**) when I first heard Mahavishnu Orchestra. I suspect it must have been on a BBC *In Concert* broadcast (did they ever do a *Whistle Test*?) I do remember thinking "what the hell is this?" and being seriously impressed by John McLaughlin's speed, off the wall licks and double necked guitar. (Jan Ackerman's jazz inspired playing with Focus was another favourite from about that time). As a consequence, *Birds of Fire* and the curiously titled *Inner Mounting Flame* made their way into my collection. (I briefly owned a McLaughlin/Santana album when they were both in their Sri Chinmoy devotee days but it never gelled.) More recently I found bargain a 5 CD set of Mahavishnu albums on Amazon. (Also later another CD set of 5 early Jeff Beck albums, including *Blow By Blow* and *Wired*, which I already had on vinyl.)

Oh good grief. That's a throwback to the past (or one of the many "classic" (?) retread TV channels lurking on FreeView) from **Mark Nelson**. It's a good thing he didn't mention keeping an eye out for Mrs Slocombe's pussy.

And before I get sidetracked into *Keeping Up Appearances* or 'Allo 'Allo, I think I'd better leave it here.



From: nelsonmark07@gmail.com

February 2

Mark Nelson writes:

For most of my adult life I haven't bothered with New Year Resolutions. At one extreme they are so trivial that it requires no effort of my will to keep them going across one year. What's the point?

At the other extreme... at the other extreme I've learnt that I don't have the strength of character to see a more challenging resolution through to the end of the year.

A case in point. Before this year the last NYR I made was about sixteen years ago. I resolved that I would go for a run every day. The year started off well. But at some point there was a first day in which I did not run. And once that first day achievement was reached it became easier and easier to find reasons not to run. Until the ambition to run came to a halt. This failure is one reason, perhaps the main reason, why I've never made another NYR.

But I now realise I was being too harsh in viewing it as a failure. Perhaps if I'd thought of it as being a partial success I would have tried again. In retrospect, aiming to run every day was always destined to fail. What I should have learnt from this "failure" / partial success is that it is better to have a less ambitious goal. Perhaps in the first year aim to go for a run 50-times.

This year I made a New Year's Resolution. I resolved that I would write more locs for *This Here...* than I did in 2025. I know that you're thinking that I am setting a low bar. But let's finish 2026 with a success by setting an easy target. Not every issue. (This is the first time I've managed to loc consecutive issues.) There are several reasons why I wrote you a few locs last year. One reason that I can trot out is **Perry Middlemiss**, though that doesn't apply once he took off for his extended vacation. I see that he has announced his latest issue with the words "Here it is at last, and yes, it is rather large". I understand that's what the bishop said to the actress. Am I alone in wishing that he continues to make such references to the size of his fanzine throughout 2026?

I see that you are supporting **Kat Templeton** for TAFF. It is right and proper that you support a friend. But what would you do if a second friend threw their hat into the ring? Or is it the case that when it comes to fan funds you support the first cab to leave the taxi-rank?

[[It's a fair question. I more often recall races where I had no idea about any of the candidates, and thus tended to go by who their nominators were - as I likely mentioned at the time, some would be people whose opinions I have a lot of time for, whereas others might be considered disqualifying. In other cases I've voted "No Preference"...]]

I haven't watched 'Fallout' as we don't subscribe to any streaming services. However, I believe that I have seen a few clips from it on YouTube... there can't be many TV shows that have a gun-slinger with no nose. I've also not seen the famous 1979 TV adaptation of 'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy'. I was considered too young to watch it and perhaps it was shown too late for a school night. I do remember seeing it advertised. I watched and enjoyed the 2011 movie when it was released.

This was a few years before I read the novel. I mention this because a common criticism of the movie, perhaps made by those who had a strong memory of the TV series was that it would not make sense to anyone who had not read the novel.

I don't know the complete lyric to any song, but I know one line from many songs. My wife finds it amusing when I tell her about a song of which I only know one line. (Exception. I know the lyrics to a number of nursery rhymes, some of which are often sung).

I have thought about buying 'Tubular Bells', but have not found the right moment. Being four years old when it was released I can claim that it was a bit before I was interested in music. (Though I've never had any interest in progressive rock, if you think that's the best descriptor). I know it became super famous as a consequence of the opening theme being used as the soundtrack to 'The Exorcist'. Aside from a couple of clips I've never watched 'The Exorcist'. (See previous loc about my dislike of horror movies!)

As I type this I am listening to the original recording on YouTube and I'm thinking, "yes, I must buy this".

[[I remember listening to the live 1973 radio broadcast round at the house of my cousin Anna and her husband Tony (the original Barty), so I'd have been fifteen...]]

"The song I'd like played at my funeral" always seems to me a funny category. Why are you restricted to one song? I won't be having "Bye Bye Baby" by the Bay City Rollers, thank you very much.

"Amazing Grace" has always been my favourite hymn. I think the Thelonious Monk version of "Abide With Me" is very appropriate - and only 55 seconds long. Finally, after the conclusion of formal proceedings I'd like "Dead Man Blues" by Jelly Roll Morton and His Red Hot Peppers (my favourite piano player, my favourite musician, and my favourite band when I started listening to Jazz).

I hope I've not been giving this topic too much thought?

[[D] John Peel's funeral playlist became well-known, in nos small part because it concluded with his favorite song: "Teenage Kicks" by the Undertones. Contemporary reportage from the NME : <https://www.nme.com/news/music/john-peel-29-1362014> ...]]

When I lived in Leeds there were several streets in postcode LS6 that strived to be recognised as the most burgled street in England (perhaps even the UK). There were a couple of reasons for their high burglary rate. Firstly, they were streets in which 100% of the houses, or as near to 100% as makes no difference, were student occupied. This meant that outside of teaching periods not only was one house unoccupied, the whole street was unoccupied.

Secondly, once you know how to enter a house it is easy to re-enter it. (The landlords did not bother spending their

income improving security.) Thirdly, although students might not be cashed up they were insured up. Consequently, any nifty electronic gear that was taken would swiftly be replaced. And you already know how to enter the property...

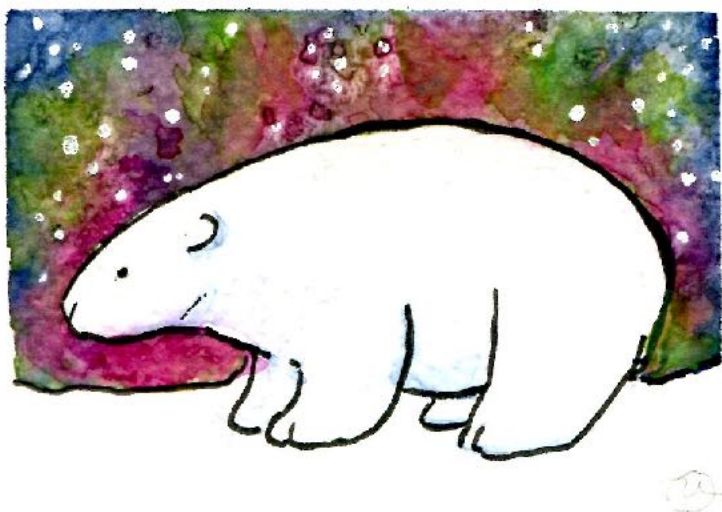
When I was a doctoral student I lived in Armley. By way of contrast to the notorious streets of LS6 this had a very low burglary rate.

One reason for this was that the houses, at least in the area I lived in, were the classic 2-up 2-down Victorian design. There was no backyard: the back wall of your house being the back wall of the corresponding house in the street parallel. There was no side passage. The sides of your house were the sides of the adjacent houses. (Unless you lived at the start or the end of the street). The only way into a house was through its front. That makes breaking and entering a dicey proposition, particularly given the twitching of curtains during daylight hours.

However, the oft stated reason for the low burglary rate in Armley was the "fact" that this was the region of Leeds where most of the professionals lived. You don't burgle your own patch. So perhaps amongst the professionals there was "honour amongst thieves"?

What remedy would **David Hodson** provide to the family of an individual who has been publicly executed when it's been discovered that the conviction "with absolutely no doubt about the offender's guilt" was wrong? In the US I believe a workable suggestion would be to allow, after conviction but before execution, an appeal to the State Governor.

If the Governor does not believe that there is "absolutely no doubt" then they can commute the sentence to life imprisonment. If the Governor approves the execution and the sentence is later found to be flawed I suggest that Governor's life be forfeit.



As a Jazz fan since just before my 11th birthday I would like to visit New Orleans. It's the only thing that I would have in my "bucket list" if I had such a list.

I'm just not into the "bucket list" concept. But if I had a "bucket list" visiting New Orleans would be there. Perhaps by the time it's safe to travel to the US I'll be too old and infirm anyway. But at least in that case I've already identified three songs for the playlist when I kick the bucket. That thought never occurred to me. Is the bucket that you put your wishlist in the same bucket that you kick on your way out?

All we need to do now is to ensure that my wife reads *This Here... 96*.

Should having my wife read *This Here... 96* be the second item in my bucket list?

In ANZAPA **Claire Brialey** sometimes refers to me as "the other Mark". Though, from my perspective, it's **Mark Plummer** who is "the other Mark".

I'm at the opposite end of the spectrum to the other Mark in so many ways. One of these ways is that whilst he has met virtually everyone who was named in *This Here... #95* the only one I've met is **Sandra Bond**. I suppose I'll have an opportunity to gather a few more marks if the Brisbane 28 bid is successful. Though not the **Mark** that counts, since I believe that **Claire** and himself have stated that they wouldn't travel out to Australia in 2028. OTOH, if the bid is unsuccessful it's possible that when I kick the bucket I won't have met more than **Sandra**. (Though I hope to have completed the one task on my bucket list and to ensure that my wife has done the second).

The Other Mark (capital letters are now I think required) makes an interesting point about revisiting what you have already read versus opening books that are unread. Over the years I have reread a small number of favourites, but I'm beginning to think that I should go in for a larger bout of rereading. Else, as **Other Mark** states, why keep all the books you've read? I asked one of my wife's friends that question and she replied that we keep our books as trophies.

There is something in that. I've always admired rows of books on bookcases.

Returning to the loc that you printed last issue, I have to confess that any reference to closing "the curtains" was a figure of speech. In the almost twenty-six years that I've lived in Australia I've never lived in a house with curtains. They may exist, but I haven't been inside one.

Eli Cohen's most recent science joke was...

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

Pull down its genes.

Is it appropriate to add that "Sydney Sweeney Has Great Jeans"?

(I'd never heard of her until the hullabaloo about this advert. No, that's not true. There was an earlier splash (and some to-

do) about her selling her bathwater in a limited-edition soap bar. This was even covered in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, which is a sad reflection on how low it is sunk).

I understand that 'All Creatures Great and Small' has recently been remade. Did they reuse the theme music from the 1978-1980 original?

Perhaps when you reach issue 100 you can provide a list of all the actresses that you've indulged in over the years?

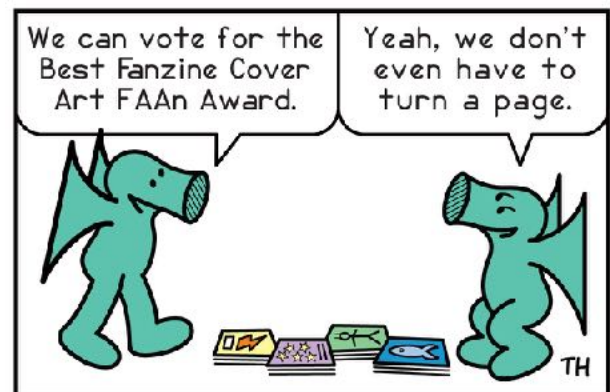
[[It's a thought...]]

As I turn my head to the left I can see that it's bucketing down.

So it's time to close.

PS You have sent me three fanzines in January. You may have published others, but I have received three. This hive of activity has given me an idea.

It's too late for Corflu 43. But perhaps it can be implemented for future conventions? What's the idea? Do you think that fanzine editors who attend Corflu should be tested for the presence of performance enhancing drugs?



Via postcard:

(Received) February 4

Spike writes:

This Here... 94 was a treat.

But **Rich** is wrong. I'm pretty sure that Rog Peyton would not say the 1950s was the pinnacle of music. Rog would pick a Bonnie Tyler decade.

I'm glad the Old Sod got what he wanted from the NHS, and hope it brings him better health with fewer aches and pains. But you might need to rename his column - something like: 'The Nubile Old Sod'.

Please keep **Jos. Nicholas** as a columnist. As a Vegrant you might not be aware that there's interest in gardening out here in wetter climes.

[[Joseph has told me that any future 'Digging for Victory' column would likely depend on response, so we shall see...]]

From: eli.cohen@mindspring.com

February 7

Eli Cohen writes:

Roy Kettle's mention of Myst triggered a nostalgia trip — I started playing computer adventure games with Colossal Cave, the original Adventure, which I and the entire programming department of Vancouver General Hospital played on our DEC PDP-11 computer (my, that was a long time ago!) — "You are trapped in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike"; "Kill dragon" "With what, your bare hands?" ... Of course, I soon had my own home computer, with companies like Infocom churning out new games to play on it, evolving from text adventures to graphic extravaganzas. The Zork series was one of my favorites ("Hello, sailor"). I also fondly remember "Trinity" (which included an appearance by J. Robert Oppenheimer). And who could forget the babelfish in "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"? (I'm referring to the video game, rather than the radio series, novel, film, TV series, song, or any of all the other media with a version of Hitchhiker.) There really were a lot of great adventure games, and "Myst" was certainly near the top. Of course, I also bailed out of video games some time ago, and never got involved with any requiring actual reflexes (as opposed to puzzle solving).

In closing, another bad science joke: What did one tectonic plate say when it bumped into the other? "Sorry! My fault".

From: paulskelton2@gmail.com

February 8

Skel writes:

TH... response...

...which will be brief and to the various points. I'm in between technologies at the moment, with email being on my new Windows 11 laptop, but Word is still only on my no longer supportable Windows 10 machine. I'm uncomfortable with long emails as the reason I started using attached Word documents was that in emails I'd be typing away and suddenly discover that everything had vanished because either my fingers or my shirt cuffs had brushed some mysterious key that had wiped everything out. So, for the time being, succinct is the key word.

Claire speaking on your and her own behalf says I should vote in the fan awards. I didn't last year, and wasn't going to this year either, as I get so few fanzines these days I don't feel sufficiently informed. I mean, as the only 3 genzines I get are *Banana Wings*, *Idea*, and *Inca*, am I voting for best or for only? Actually I believe I got *BEAM*, but that was a long time ago and my memory of it is AWOL. Then I couldn't find an option to save this bugger, not realising that saving in draft was automatic in Windows 11. Mind you, it could have been

automatic in Windows 10 too as I never previously needed it, simply there merely creating an empty email, attaching a document, and sending the bugger.

[[Once again I roll my eyes in despair at the "only [zines] I get" argument, since the point is to vote for what you liked, which would be any and all of what you clocked. Makes it easier to fill out the ballot an'all, don't it? Also, yer three genzines there include loads of writers, artists and loccers, don't they? The previous ish of BEAM, incidentally, was actually 2024 so AWOL memory is understandable...]]

But this issue has special connections. You have medical issues that cause problems with showering and dressing the nether regions. Me too, though mine are less serious. Near the end of last November I ruptured my right Achilles tendon. I went to my GP surgery where the physio said he could refer me, though this could lead to a six week waiting list, whilst if I went into A&E they would give me the urgent attention that would maximise my chances of a complete recovery. There they fixed me up with a temporary solution of a lightweight fibreglass/bandage half-cast which was non-weightbearing and simply pointed my toes downwards at a 30 degree angle to assist recovery. Then an ambulance home with a wheeled walker that required me to push the walker forward then hop after it. I remember hopping... I did it as a kid. Alas, not for the last 70 years, and we all know what happens to muscles not used for 70 years. They don't work. Basically, I pushed the walker forward a step then tried to support myself on the handrests whilst desperately swinging my good leg forward in an attempt to get it back below my centre of gravity before I collapsed. It worked after a fashion. Unfortunately our downstairs toilet was out of commission so this meant I was practically trapped in bed for a fortnight with twice-daily bum-shuffling trips up and down stairs for meals (breakfast was in bed on account of Cas being an absolute angel).

After two weeks it was back in an ambulance to have a Vacoped boot fitted. Foot still tilted down 30 degrees, but now a stonking 2 inch wedged load-bearing heel. Now I could get about the house but with one leg effectively 2 inches longer than the other I couldn't walk very far. Four weeks of this and then they reduced the foot-angle by adding some movement within the boot. At the end of this I did manage to get out about 300 yards to the barbers. In another week I can give the boot full freedom of movement, replace the wedged heel with a slimmer flat sole and, special bonus, even no longer have to wear it in bloody bed. The other connection is that in all this time I have been unable to shower. Head to knee hand soaping and rinsing off with a wet flannel.

[[We can relate, fershure...]]

The third connection isn't really mine, but Cas's. I'm still pre-diabetic but she has now gone over the 48 limit and is now, like **Dave Hodson**, type-2 diabetic. Unlike Dave though she only meets 3 of the 4 required criteria for getting Mounjaro on the NHS, so she's having to pay about £180/month for hers.

[[And again. Jen in particular is experiencing price hikes on her many and varied meds...]]

"So what the fuck happened to 'succinct'?" you are doubtless asking. Succinct sucked, and there's now a further issue making this whole boring response obsolete. Please give me points for trying.

[[DoBFO...]]

From: daverabban@gmail.com

February 16

Dave Cockfield writes:

Keep em comin'. *This Here...* is one of the few things making my life bearable at the moment.

It is like a warm blanket on a cold rainy night and we have experienced quite a few of those here in Old Blighty.

A bacon buttie and a Dalwhinnie 15yr old single malt whisky also have a similar effect.

Some excellent guest writers this time. I also love **Brad Foster**'s art. I recently discovered a couple of comics with his artwork. When I get a chance I'll send some pictures.

Nothing Fannish going on here unfortunately and I've not even met up with the Old Sod in ages.

Been stuck in the flat quite a bit where I have immersed myself in reading and tv.

I have become obsessed with C J Box. His crime/thriller novels have the unique setting of a Game Warden, Joe Pickett, getting involved in murder and mayhem. What makes them great is the characterization. Him, his wife and family, friends, and work colleagues. Linked with a wonderful view of life in Wyoming. The culture and nature playing a big part. 20+ novels that develop like a life history.

In the 90s I loved a tv series called 'Northern Exposure' about a male big city doctor relocated to Cicely, Alaska. It was fun, full of quirky characters including an ex-NASA astronaut. Now I have discovered the 2010s 'Hart of Dixie', about a female big city doctor relocated to Bluebell, Alabama. Quirky characters including an ex-NFL football

player. Compulsive, great fun but definitely more of a modern romcom with much of the humour surrounding the complicated and twisted love lives of the characters.

There is just so much to watch. Top of my current list is 'Landman', 'Tulsa King', 'Fallout', 'Mayor of Kingstown', 'A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms', and of course 'The Lincoln Lawyer'.

[[Several of those are on the list, but we haven't got to them yet. See 'TV Guide'...]]

Am I a sad bastard or what?

PS I forgot to mention Rocky Mountain Oysters that are regularly mentioned as a Wyoming staple in the C J Box novels. Bull Testicles! Have you ever eaten them? Has anyone who gets *This Here...*?

[[Not me pal, since I haven't (knowingly) eaten red meat since 1977, with the occasional exception over here of including ground venison in my chili recipe back in Maryland...]]

From: gsmattingly@yahoo.com

February 19

Gary Mattingly writes:

Hello again, (and in another week or so)

'Egotorial': Gee, I've had a fanac block for, hm, 20+ years.

Glad everything else is good.

'News Roundup': TAFF Vote done. My Corflu Hotel reservation was made a long time

ago. My FAAN Awards nomination was sent in on time.

'Health Diary': Wow. Quite a lot there. I hope the leg pain stops. I hope the good walking continues. Good luck!!

'TV Guide' (**Roy Kettle**): I don't think I've seen 'English Teacher'. I like 'Fallout' also. I've watched all of the episodes. I don't recall watching 'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy' or 'Smiley's People'. I also haven't watched the 'Amadeus' series. I just finished watching the three-episode series 'Agatha Christie's Seven Dials'. It wasn't great and fantastic, but it kept me interested enough to watch all three episodes. Made me wonder if there's going to be a follow-up. I'm still watching 'Knight of the Seven Kingdoms', which I am enjoying. Also watching the new season of 'Will Trent' and 'High Potential', both enjoyable. Also still watching the first season of 'Star Trek: Starfleet Academy'. I watched and enjoyed the 2025 Japanese series 'Queen of Mars' (not to be confused with 'Aelita: Queen of Mars'). I will watch a second season if they have one. I watched the first season of

'Wonder Man'. I wouldn't say it was great, but I was entertained.

[[I haven't even heard of most of the stuff you mention...]]

'Anorak': Nice snow plow photos.

'The Old Sod': **David Hodson** - Sorry you won't be at the Santa Rosa Corflu. However, your reasons are entirely understandable. Coming into the US for non-US citizens isn't as easy as the other way around, or so I've been told. And the situation under Trump is even worse. It sucks. He sucks. His followers suck. Unfortunately, I doubt they'll all commit suicide when he dies. One can hope.

[[My own travel trepidations detailed elsewhere do extend, at least slightly, to the Vegas - Santa Rosa flight on Thursday, just because airport...]]

Movies: Gee, no movies section. Since the last time I've seen "Sound of Falling", which I enjoyed, but it is rather long.

"When the Wind Blows" 1986 animated film about the end of the world. I liked it and the music, but had difficulties believing the couple could be so unaware of so much.

"A Poet" (2025). I also enjoyed this Colombian film, although the main character certainly has a lot of problems. There are amusing moments in the film, but usually at his expense. I thought the actor portraying the main character was very good.

At home, I watched "Queen of Chess", a 2026 documentary about Hungarian chess prodigy Judit Polgár. I don't play chess, but I found this interesting. She even beat Garry Kasparov once.

Also at home, I watched "The Lives of Others" (2006), which I thought was very interesting and enjoyable. It is about a Stasi agent in East Germany and a couple he investigates.

And I watched "Your Name" (2016), a Japanese animated film. I thought it was very good and quite enjoyed it.

I definitely do not plan to see "Melania".

[[Not much movie commentary thish either...]]

'Loco Citato':

Mark Plummer: Wow, you have a good memory with respect to meeting people. Or maybe it is just that I have a really bad memory.

[[You've proved that several times over, Gary...]]

Mark Nelson: I, too, have and enjoy 'The Bristol Sessions'. It has also been a while since I last listened to it. Magpie Records Blues piano collection. Gee, now I'll have to go looking for it. Ah, I see it noted here:

http://phlegm.mnsi.net/piano_blues.htm

I see various volumes for sale on EBay, Discogs, etc. I believe they are all used.

Gary Hubbard: Plane travel can be somewhat comfortable in business class. It can be very comfortable in first class. Both are expensive, particularly first class.

AT&T keeps trying to convince us to let them disconnect our landline and give us cell phones. We remain unconvinced. So far, they have not been able to simply do it without our consent. I'm fine with a cell phone. I have Verizon. Patty prefers the landline. She has a cell phone from Verizon also, but rarely uses it.

Enjoyable art by **Brad W. Foster** and **Teddy Harvia**.

And unfortunately, the Artemis launch didn't happen. Hopefully it eventually does.

[[Tentatively now March 7th...]]

WAHF

Jae Leslie Adams, having heard we were unwell, sends a lovely hand-made valentines card which concludes "...and I hope you can read cursive". Yes, we can... ; **W^m Breiding** ; **Rich Coad** remarks on the email cover quote: "Certainly becomes more obvious every day" ; **Kim Huett** has had enough: "After rereading some of my earlier letters and your extremely bigoted responses to them I've decided I would prefer to be completely removed from your mailing list."; **Jay Kinney** ; **Ulrika O'Brien** sends art! (See within)... ; **George Phillies** : "I read your account of your medical issues. Oh, dear me. I shall hope that you continue to improve and continue to contribute to fandom for many years yet." ; **Kevin Trainor** : "Glad to see you and the missus are doing better. Thought about giving you a holler since I was in town last week at Boulder Station but I figured it was still too soon after the surgeries. Maybe next month when I'm in town for NSSAB?" *[[Do let us know, but I'm not much of a one for leaving the house of late...]]* ;

FANZINES RECEIVED

With the usual thanks...

TONOPAH ELUCIDATOR & LITERARY REVIEW #3 (**Kevin Trainor**) - ...

TWO CHAIRS IN PRINT #13 (**David Grigg** and **Perry Middlemiss**) - ...

VANAMONDES (**John Hertz**) - ...

THE OBDURATE EYE #59 (**Garth Spencer**) - ...

INCA 27 (**Rob Jackson**) - ...

LOFGEORNOST #162 (**Fred Lerner**) - ...

CAPTAIN FLASHBACK #87 (**Andy Hooper**) - ...

THE CHATTER BOX 1 (**Leigh Edmonds**) - ...

INDULGE ME

✕ **VALENTINE VERSE** : FBF naturally reports valentine's day memories, and from several years ago here's a charming verse penned by **Jen**:

Roses are red
Violets are not
I love you, despite
All the gas and the snot

She assures me this still applies...

✕ **AGELESS BEAUTY** : Definitely a one for our dear mates **Dave Cockfield**, **Steve Green** and no doubt several others, here's **Caroline Munro**. That blur in the distance is **Killer Kaufman** on his usual gentle 125mph stroll past...



✕ **SERIOUS SCIENCE** : Do you know what a Quantum Encryption and Science Satellite is, ey? You might if you're Canadian, but I definitely didn't until the other day. It's a supposedly unhackable communications satellite which works on the principles of quantum entanglement,

and coo er gosh. Check it out on the Government of Canada website here: <https://www.asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/satellites/qeyssat.asp> ...



✕ **FFS VIGNETTE** : Yes, I *know* we promised a full trip report, but y'know, stuff happens don't it? Here's a vignette to be going on with...

Given that we're used to the desert climate where anything south of 70F (21C in French money) is considered on the nippy side, but it was a bit of a shock to the system how chilly it felt indoors at Fishlifter Mansions (and subsequently elsewhere an'all). It's DoBFO understandable that there's very good reasons of cost as well as being what you're used to, but every time I went out in the back garden for a smoke I was half-expecting to find a gaggle of feral penguins plotting to reclaim their ancestral homelands...

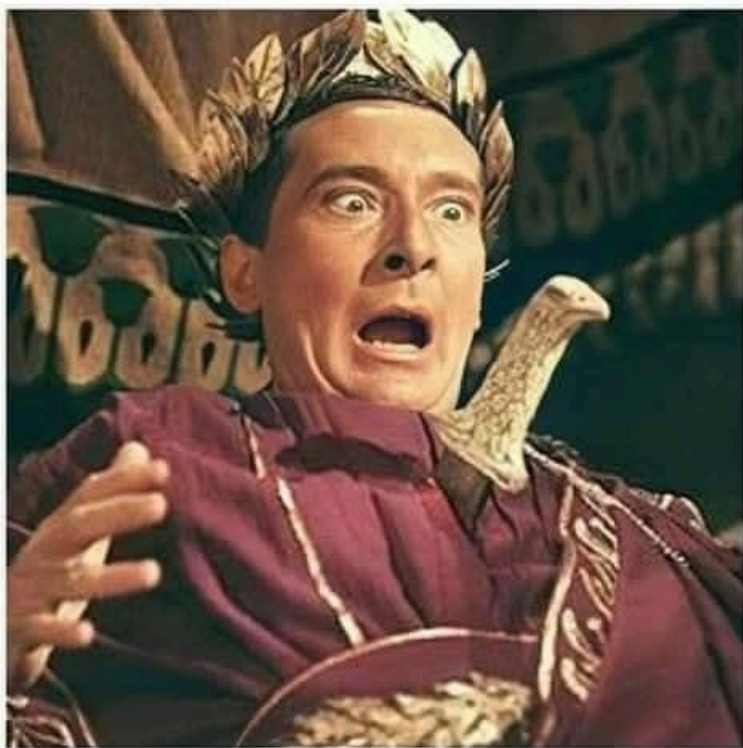
✕ **MOVIE NIGHT IN BRIEF** : We did manage to clock 'The Wrecking Crew' with Dave Bautista and Jason Momoa playing estranged brothers and both, but especially Momoa, having great fun taking the piss out of their images in what's a serviceably entertaining action flick, all the more scenic by being set in Hawaii. Also coo er gosh drool ect, Morena Baccarin. 74% on *Rotten Tomatoes*, and the consensus reads: *The Wrecking Crew* is as brawny and disarmingly charming as its two leading men, smashing through a thin story with colorful pyrotechnics and a satisfying amount of attitude"...

✕ **ARTEMIS LATEST** : Another possible delay in the launch after they found an interrupted helium flow. Story in Saturday's *Grauniad* : www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/21/nasa-artemis-ii-rocket-launch ...

✕ **NEXTISH** : Oh go on then, how about March 28th...

SHAMELESS FILLER

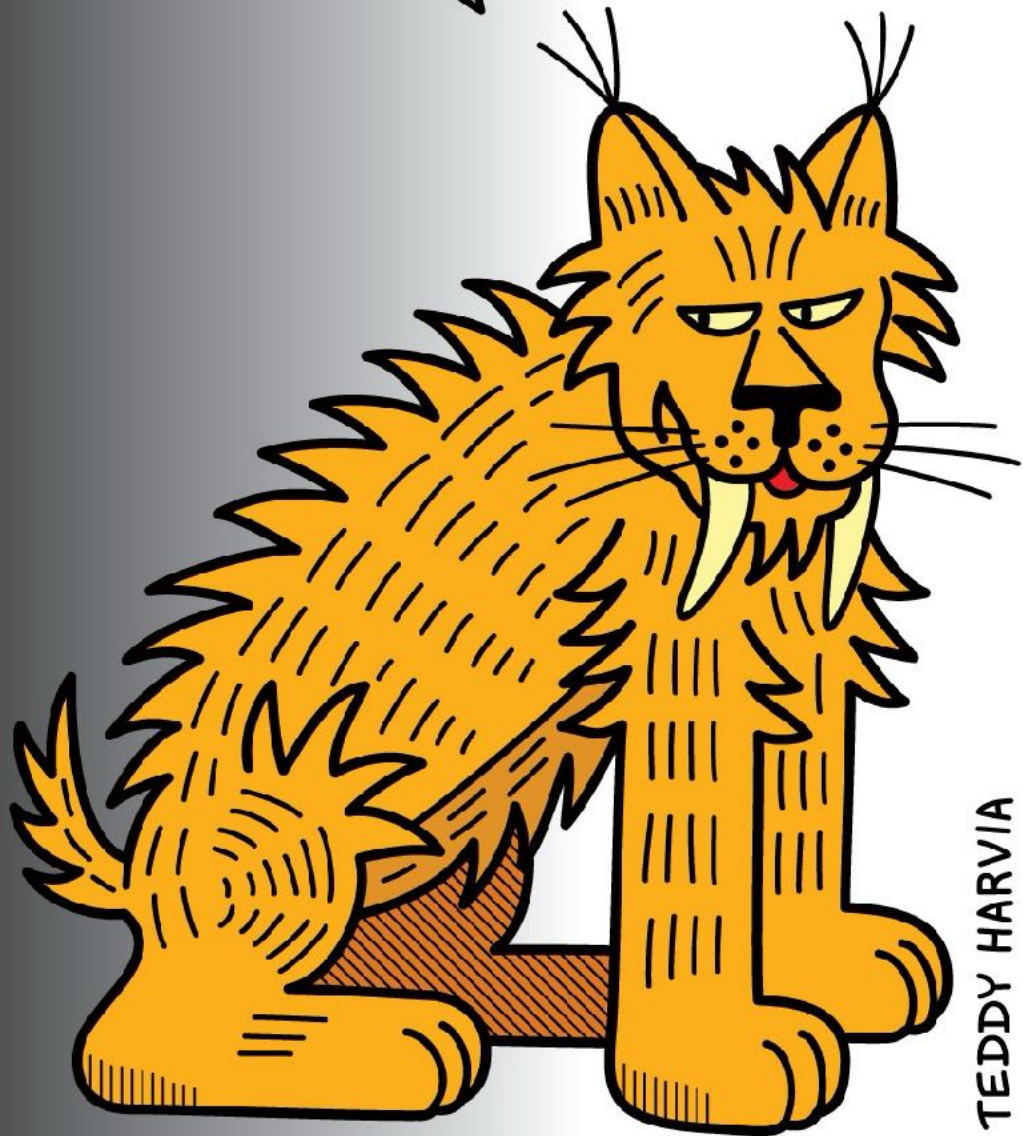
Kenneth Williams' 100th birthday would have been today, February 22nd



Chat

The sabertooth has a melanistic phrase.

In the dark, all cats are black.



MIRANDA

THIS HERE... is for thish somewhat written, edited and produced by: **Nic Farey**, published on efanzines.com by the Grace of Burns and also available by direct email (just ask!).

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Art credits: **J Ashcroft** (*Fantum* cover, p10) ; **Brad W Foster** (pp 13, 18) ; **Teddy Harvia** (pp 7, 16, 20) ; **Lucy Huntzinger** (p3) ; **Ulrika O'Brien** (pp 12, 17, 19, 22)

"Beneath the stars there are the bars that serve the bitter drink.
The barman smiles at me, his wife she gives a secret wink."