

An Fleghes Hager-Na Yu Canjeons



January 2011 – 2.0 A New Year

Ugly Children

Happy New Year! As I type this I am aware that it is half a year since I last wrote what was supposed to be a semi-regular eFanzine. Anyway I started this project with the purpose of writing more and initially I did, with two issues in 2010. I then put *An Fleghes* aside at the tail end of last year to celebrate my 40th birthday, and to concentrate on publishing [Head!#10](#) (available now from [eFanzines](#)). Then there was Christmas and a lot of work problems. So by the end of the year the vague bi-monthly schedule I wanted had gone, let alone the monthly one I aspired to. But, as they say, each New Year is a new beginning. Anyway, I've decided to take some of the partly completed Issue 3 I'd already written and fold into it a reflective review of the year. So sit back, pour yourself a drink and have a read.

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Ugly Children Review of the Year

During December I've been thinking of the past year a lot. Work events in the last month have overtaken my fannish life and it is easy to get everything out of skew. My job is being "withdrawn from the organisation I work for" but I am being offered two redeployment options elsewhere. It is not a certainty that I will get them; there is a small likelihood that come February I will be unemployed. This has somewhat tinged my Christmas with anxiety, but when I look beyond that 2010 was actually a damn good year!

On the fanzine front, Christina and I put out two copies of *Head!* this year (despite not

being listed on the Nova Ballot at Nottingham as having existed) and I started this ezine inspired by Steve Green and Chris Garcia's ezines. Corflu Cobalt brought a much needed shot of life into the rather moribund UK fanzine scene seeing more issues at that one convention than the past three Novacons. Even Lilian Edwards who has proclaimed at several points over the last couple of years that we would never see another paper fanzine from her managed to pub her ish.

Corflu in Winchester was one of the three conventions we managed to get to this year; the others being Novacon 40 and the Eastercon Odyssey 2010. All were good conventions in their own way. We only stopped by at Eastercon for a couple of days and spent a lot of time just chatting to fans and trying to cram as much fannish fun into our short stay. As such the rather lightweight programme didn't annoy me as much as it would have if I had been there for the whole weekend.

Novacon is still fresh in my memory, and was probably the best of the series for quite a number of years. I like the Nottingham hotel, even if it is a bugger of a journey from Cornwall. It was quite something to see so many old fans and guests there who had not been at conventions for many a year. Beer seemed very much at the forefront of Novacon for me with the beer tasting, an elitist pub-crawl (with Randy Byers, Lennart Uhlin, Pat and Mike Meara, Rob Jackson and Christina Lake) and nipping off to the pub across the road for a quick pint during the obligatory fire alarm all gave the con a rosy feeling. Thoroughly enjoyed the hard SF panel with Iain Banks,

Geoff Ryman and Charlie Stross, and listening to Brian Aldiss was just mind-blowing. Thoroughly looking forward to next year's!

Corflu re-energised my love for fanzines (and krautrock via Alun Harries). I'm looking forward to the next time I can visit a Corflu in the States although I think this year's out given my job uncertainty. The con helped me reconnect with a number of American fans I'd lost contact with and served as a great precursor to our US trip to Seattle and San Francisco (our first North American trip for ten years). Randy Byers, Spike and Tom, and Pete Binfield and his lovely family made what always looked on paper like a good holiday better than any I have enjoyed in such a long while.

During the year I've continued to enjoy Pete Weston's [Relapse](#) and the continuing dominance of brilliant writing and editing that goes into every Banana Wings. My favourite zine of the year was a perzine put out by Mark Plummer listing his 100 favourite songs. I started writing a loc but gave up, sorry Mark, but have decided to reply with my own list – I'm currently 20 tracks in, expect the full list sometime/real soon now/when hell freezes over.

This year I seem to have purchased fewer new albums than I normally would have. I think this is largely due to my Grateful Dead project whereby I replaced my box of live gig tapes with electronic copies (from archive.org). This took up any number of months (and a lot of my iPod memory), but is all done now. It did renew my enthusiasm for the Dead but took away valuable listening time for new music.

Amongst the CDs I most highly prized this year were The [Phantom Band's](#) *Checkmate Savage* (reviewed in #1 of this zine), the [Soundcarriers](#) second album *Celeste, Goodbye Falkenberg* by [Race Horses](#) (see below) and [Joanna Newsom's](#) *Have One On Me*. Although not contemporary, I did spend 3 weeks in November trying to decipher the meaning behind [Neutral Milk Hotel's](#) cult album *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*. I didn't get very far; more intelligent people have been discussing it heatedly since its release in 1998. I might write about my thoughts on this piece of music some day...

I've not kept a comprehensive list of books, comics, films, TV programmes, video games I've consumed over the year so to wrap up this review I'm just going to list some of the highlights off the top of my head of what I recall reading/playing/watching during the last year:

Books: *Yellow Blue Tibia* by Adam Roberts, *Anathem* by Neal Stephenson, *The Angel's Game* by Carlos Ruiz, Zafón, *The Millennium Trilogy* by Stieg Larsson

Films: *Inception*, *Monsters*, *The Searchers 2.0*, *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World*, *Centurion*

Video Games: *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*, *Red Dead Redemption*, *Bioshock II*

Comics: *The Boys*, *Charles Burns X'ed Out*, *Paul Levitz* back on *Legion of Super-Heroes*

TV: *Mad Men*, *Misfits*, *Sherlock*, that time travelling thing with *Amy Pond* in it.

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Charnock for TAFF!

Roll up, roll up, roll up – it's TAFF time again! Right folks this age old fannish tradition is back and this year it is a real interesting race to send one lucky winner stateside. This year there are four (yes FOUR!) good candidates – John Coxon, Graham Charnock, Liam Provan and Paul Treadaway.

Graham buttered me up nicely at Novacon where it seems [I can be bought off with flattery](#), but that's not the reason I'm throwing my weight behind him. I've been a long time admirer of his writing (and when I can get a hold of them, copies of his older zines; I managed to get my hands on my first copy of Graham and Pat's *Wrinkled Shrew* this year). You may know him from his [Astral Leauge Albums](#), his excellent [Cartledge World](#) website, his musical work with Mike Moorcock or even being that fun drunk guy at cons who isn't Tobes. Anyway I like him and he's my first choice.

However, the MOST important thing is please support TAFF, and get your votes in to the current administrators Steve Green or Anne and Brian Gray by the 12 March 2011. Full details on the [TAFF website](#) and yes you can pay by PayPal! Fan Funds are a damn good cause and deserve support – they are one of the many positive reasons that mark SF Fandom as being different from any other type of fandom I have been involved with. Vote early, vote often.



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Bude

One of the highlights of the last year was re-visiting [Bude](#) in North Cornwall. Christina and I first stayed there eight years ago while we were still living in Bristol. We'd just bought a tent and were eager to try it out and settled on Bude after a bit of internet research. The only problem was the weather forecast – heavy rain, possibly clearing on Sunday. Despite that we persevered and drove down on Friday afternoon. I remember it was as the car climbed over Dartmoor that the heavens opened, things were looking grim.

We spent our first afternoon in Bude inside our tent at the [Upper Lynestone](#) campsite watching the rain plummet down outside. Eventually when we thought it eased off enough we braved the walk down the hill to the town. Rather sodden we stopped at the first pub we came to, the Brendon Arms for food and drink. We stayed there until closing time drinking pints of St Austell's Tinnars ale, and trying not to think about the weather.

Next morning, the rain disappeared to reveal a view of the town from our campsite that was previously obscured by clouds. Walking into town we discovered that slap bang beside the previous evening's pub was a scenic canal that led down to the beautiful Summerlease Beach. As we wandered through Bude's streets we discovered rows of slightly run down hotels alongside the usual mix of surf, pasty, fudge and art shops that are hardwired into the DNA of every Cornish town. The place felt more real than some of the other Cornish holiday resorts – it didn't groan with rowdy stag and hen parties in the way Newquay does, and neither was it full of coach loads of OAPs being bussed into the art galleries like St Ives. Another outstanding feature was the openness of the town; you could see large amounts of the surrounding countryside. A lot of Cornish seaside villages have narrow cobbled lanes which while picturesque can make you feel claustrophobic on a crowded summer's day. Bude has a massive golf course that splits the town into two, and a coastline that you could see stretching away to the North and South for miles. It was love at first sight.

Up until recently, we visited the town on an annual basis, and had briefly considered moving to Bude before we realised that there were few jobs our skills could get us in the largely rural area of North Cornwall. It is also quite remote as is not connected to the rail network and is nowhere near the main A30 route out the county. Over the last two summers though we'd let Bude slip of our radar and returning this year was one of our goals. During the week before this year's trip I wondered if the place would still seem as magical.



So after the familiar trip up the Atlantic Highway over the River Camel, through the sleepy Truckle Valley and on into deep North Cornwall, we soon found the campsite had remained unchanged during the last two years. With our tent pitched we decided to walk the coastal path south to Widemouth Bay. The weather was warm, the sky blue and the twisted geology below the cliffs still as impressive. Widemouth holds a place of special affection in my heart as it is my favourite surfing beach. It is a place where I've never had a bad session, particularly since I've ditched the full surfboard for flippers and bodyboard. Bobbing about in the water waiting on a good wave is even more enjoyable in this bay due to the spectacular scenic headlands that encapsulate it. On this afternoon there were not many surfers out perhaps due to the waves being choppy and all over the shop. As such I was content to sit and sip a cool drink watching the waves break down on the beach.

That evening we ate in The Bencoolan Inn, a real local boozier with decent beer and grub (game pie anyone?) We'd have happily settled in there all night but wanted to wander around town seeing what had changed in the intervening years. Overall it felt that Bude had weathered the recession better than some Cornish towns, there seemed to be fewer closed shops than elsewhere in the county and quite a few buildings look like they'd received new coats of paint. As a bonus for us it looked like *Books by the Sea* hadn't changed hands.

Books by the Sea is a rambling second hand book shop; the sort of place you can happily spend a morning peering through old books

and journals coming away content at not buying anything. It is best not to go in looking for anything in particular as the stock is so eclectic that expecting to find say a second hand Harry Potter you'd be disappointed; you're more likely to stumble across quaint beat-up Edwardian cookbooks full of quirky writing and recipes that you know you'd never make. Over the years I've emptied it of some pretty decent graphic novels, a bunch of mid-seventies Legion of Super Heroes issues I was missing, the occasional SF novel and the odd forteana book. Once we bumped into Pete Weston in Bude, as he and Eileen were in town for the Jazz Festival. We soon found ourselves raving about the shop and its SF selection. This time I picked up Gene Wolf's Shadow of the Torturer for a quid and an AE Low novel (who I only knew about through reading Peter Weston's Relapse). Our star buys were a couple of Red Book holiday guides from either the late fifties or early sixties (both have no publication dates in them that we can find) covering Falmouth & South Cornwall and Penzance & Penwith. I'll never read them fully, but they are fantastic books to dip in and out of, and would make great research resources for writing novel's set in that period.

Laden down with books we walked the coast path north of Bude headed in the direction of GCHQ Bude (yes there is such a place). Its radar dishes dominated the skyline to the north of the town so I'm not sure how secret it is. One of the reasons I like the walking around this part of Cornwall is the path gently rolls; you never feel walking is a struggle and that you could carry on all day. Despite this the scenery is magical, with searing rock spikes

sticking out the water below, giant cliff rock slabs complete with weekend climbers and cracks in the rolling coastline lead to small hard to access beaches.

By late afternoon we arrived back at the campsite and after a rest it was into the car for a quick journey to Widemouth Bay for a session in the water for me. The tide was extremely low and there was strong left to right longshore drift. The waves were choppy and about 5ft, so not ideal conditions, but with a bit of perseverance there were good waves out there if you waited. Unfortunately constantly fighting against the undertow was knackered but still it was a real pleasure to get into the sea again, as the waves wiped away the stiffness from the morning's walking and shopping.

Saturday night and we ended up in the lounge at The Falcon Hotel, an enormous large coaching house situated canal-side, again another nostalgia trip. As usual a wedding reception was going on in one of the nearby function rooms. Stuffed with food and drink we finished up back at our tent sitting outside watching the skies. You could hear fun from the bars back down in town, but it sounded so far away. The sky was dark, and with not many streetlights around and clear weather conditions we could watch shooting stars and satellites track across the sky all night, while listening to the distant rumble of wave on rock about a field away. Yes the place still had the old magic.

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24 fps: Monsters

The last film of 2010 turned out to be one of my favourites of the year - Gareth Edwards's [Monsters](#). Staring Whitney Able and Scoot McNairy (both of whom were unknown to me) this is essentially a road movie with giant monsters thrown into the mix. The plot is simple a photojournalist is given the task of escorting his boss's daughter home from Mexico to the States through an infected zone filled with giant alien monsters.

The main protagonists have a nice chemistry mixing slacker, almost semi-improvised dialogue with quite understated performances. Much emphasis is placed on atmosphere rather than action, whether it is a train ride, street vendors or going up the river Apocalypse Now style. The film reads like Before Sunrise meets Godzilla with a dash of Roadside Picnic thrown in to the mix.



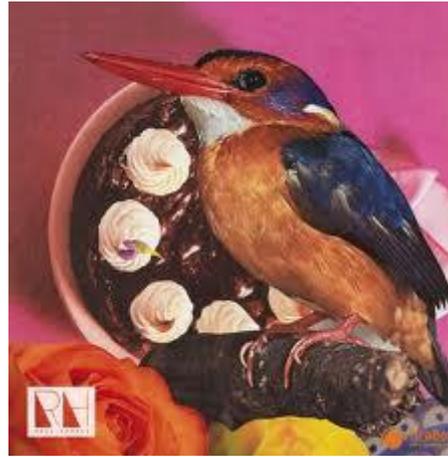
The press has made much of the film's production. Edwards shot this guerrilla style in Central America on a budget that [IMDB](#) estimates at \$800,000, a tiny fraction of any big effects movie. He then filled in the creatures and much of the signage via

computer himself (as he had previously worked in the SFX industry). The creatures are spectacular considering the resources available, and mostly kept in the background. I've heard some response in the Kermode and Mayo podcast from listeners who felt cheated by the movie as for the most part monsters are absent from the screen. I feel they are in fact missing the point of the film. It is largely about how the world copes and absorbs extraordinary events making the bizarre and earth-shattering mundane. Mostly people react to the concept of alien creatures as an everyday inconvenience. However the more I think about the film, the more I realise it has other reading too. It could also be about American Immigration policy, a critique on modern imperialist warfare or about the inefficiencies of disaster relief efforts. Whatever subtext you want to read into it, it is a well made science fiction road movie with giant monsters, and that is good enough for me.

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Future Sounds: Race Horses – Goodbye Falkenberg

I'm always partial to a bit of Welsh psychedelia, whether it is the psych-folk welsh language stuff included on [Finders Keepers Welsh Rare Beat](#) compilations or the modern rock sounds of the Super Furry Animals. So it comes as no surprise that the debut album of young psych-popsters Race Horses is a hit.



The majority of tracks in this album are short and snappy pop tunes with good strong sing-along melodies, a half way house between The Coral and the much rockier aforementioned Super Furry Animals. In fact the little electronic bleeps, sound effects and percussion brighten up the music in much the same way as it does on [SFA's](#) records. *Goodbye Falkenberg* contains some nice restrained guitar work that is finely balanced with good complimentary keyboard lines. Race Horses' pure pop sensibilities break down towards the end of the record into more experimental territory, which includes searing guitar work on *Intergalactic Space Rebellion* and *Marged Wedi Bingo*. When you throw in some faux-60's Edwardian psyche elements, you end up with an intriguing mix that keeps you guessing which way the album is going to turn next. At home whether singing in English or Welsh, the lyrics are simple but full of witty asides and clever wordplay. I like this a lot - buy a copy now.

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Locs

First up is **Gary Wilkinson** who I caught up with recently at Novacon for the first time in years.

"I definitely agree with you regarding Neil Marshall as a director who punches above his weight. I noticed the other day he's part of the so called 'splat pack', lumped in with Eli 'Hostel' Roth and the writers and directors of the Saw series but I think he's a much more of an intelligent film maker than that. The Descent is probably one of the best horror films of recent years. And Dog Soldiers was fantastic (though I'm always a sucker for anything that is squadies versus monsters - probably going back to UNIT days of Dr Who). If he ever gets his 3D film made, Burst, I'll be seeing it on the name alone.

Oh and do check out Spartacus: Blood and Sand.... it's completely ridiculous but probably one of the best things I've seen in ages."

I've never been tempted by Eli Roth's movies, too much reliance on torture and splatter to get the story told. I much prefer Neil Marshall as his films have a lot more narrative drive to them. On the whole I also like directors who have to rely on little resources and lots of imagination, which is probably why I really liked Monsters. Next **Jerry Kaufman**:

"I finally got around to downloading these first two issues of your zine - They're

formatted for viewing on-screen, but I printed them. The formatting is rather odd for on-paper, of course. But that's my hang-up.

I liked the cover art on each. I've only read Kerouac's *On the Road* and some of *Some of the Dharma* (sections were published in *Tricycle Magazine* years ago), but I'm very fond of the idea of the *Beats and City Lights Books*. (It's about time I took *Howl* from the shelf and read it aloud once again.)

Centurion just opened here very recently, but it may be gone again. I'll have to look for it in a video rental shop. I'll also have to remember to search for the *Phantom Band* and the *Hand* to give them a trial.

I've heard bits and pieces of new stuff but nothing that stands out enough to recommend to you. Cyndi Lauper singing blues is fun but mostly sent me back to my vinyl to find the song *Mother Earth*, which I first heard by a band of that name, fronted by Tracy Nelson. *Arcade Fire's* new album is good but hasn't yet impressed me the way it has numerous critics. So it goes."

Just got *The Suburbs* in the big pile of CDs I got for Christmas and not had more than a brief listen to it. Will report back when I've had a chance to digest it more, but my general impression is that it is a lot less symphonic and distinctive than the first two albums. Onwards to **Lloyd Penny**...

"Another issue of *An Fleghes Hager-Na Yu Canjeons* thank you. Says issue 2 inside, but 1.1 on the cover. I'll go with 2, and correct it afterwards.

I used to live close to Seattle, in Victoria on Vancouver Island, and life there was so different from where I'd grown up, in southern Ontario. I'd like nothing better than to return to the Pacific Northwest, but these days, I'd need a serious lottery win. I want to go to Seattle to hang with the *Chunga* folks, and see the SF museum, among other things. *St. George Spirits* seems to be a popular place with the *BArea* fans; I think they sponsor some fannish events, and *Chris Garcia* has written about that distillery many times. We were at the *Worldcon* in 2006 in Anaheim, and I've been in *SoCal* a few times, and I still want to go back.

John Purcell is right, this zine is small and tight like a *Garciazine*, but seeing that *Chris* can produce *Drink Tanks* at the rate of two a week or so, maybe you can keep quality over quantity. *Chris* keeps his frenetic pace going, although he is starting to slow down a little bit. *Drink Tanks* in bulk are great, but only if you have the desire to flood fanzine fandom.

My loc...the two *Corflus* I attended were the most recent one in Las Vegas, and the last one in Toronto. Meanwhile, the last *Seattle Corflu* was full of programming and other good things to keep everyone busy, and I

think I would have liked that more. The 14th *Gatehouse Gazette* has just emerged, and as I read more and more about the editors of the steampunk zines, I find that most of them are fans to one extent or another, but haven't found much to interest them, not until the steampunk concept came along, and took fandom by storm. There are now steampunk conventions popping up everywhere, including here in Toronto.

To you and *Steve Green*...now that *David Cameron* has decided to take paternity leave, who gets to run the government? Will the head of the *LibDems* take over, and steer the government away from where *Cameron* was going? Now to see how strong the coalition government really is.

I watched a few *World Cup* games...they were shown almost continuously on the *CBC* here. It gave us a new word...*vuvuzela*, which will probably be banned from most *Premier League* games, I gather. I wonder if it's worth testing the hearing of all *World Cup* players, to see if they suffered any hearing loss after more than a month of being subjected to the constant blare of *vuvuzelas*."

I'm definitely taking my time producing these zines, so please don't expect quantity from me! Last but no means least **Steve Green**:

“Still can't decide whether *An Fleghes* sounds more like a sneeze or a Tourettes tick, but the fanzine itself remains most welcome.

Predator 2 "the best film of the franchise"? Are you insane, sir? (Don't bother answering: anyone who describes me as a "fannish hero", however tongue in cheek, is already on his way to the funny farm.) Next thing, you'll be telling me *The Godfather Part III* is the highpoint of the trilogy.

As for *Valentine's Day*, it's a perfectly passable ensemble romcom and -- unlike, say, *Leap Year* or *Bride Wars* -- left me adequately entertained, rather than consumed with a desire to hunt down those responsible and bury them in the Nevada desert. The best new comedies so far this year have been *Greenberg* and *L'arnacoeur*, although *Hot Tub Time Machine* has its moments (in many ways, it's this year's *The Hangover*).

Yes, Seattle's Science Fiction Museum is a blast, and among the treasured memories of my TAFF trip last year. And I see Spike dragged you off to Hangar One at Alameda (my own tour was sandwiched between visits to a saki distillery and a winery -- I began to wonder if living up to the legendary drinking habits of British SF fans would kill me in the process)."

I wouldn't dream of mentioning *The Godfather Part III*. Still think despite recent claims from

various critics about *Toy Story* that the best movie trilogy is *Evil Dead*, but as they say that is just my opinion...

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This Month...

Well there are a couple of big thing on the go for me this month -- firstly trying to keep a clear head and not go insane until I find out if I am going to still be employed.

On top I'd like to get back to writing music -- currently trying to decide if I should sign up for the [February Album Writing Month](#) where the aim is to write 14 songs in 28 days. The attraction is that even if I don't make it up to the full fourteen, I've only written one song in the past three years, so any increase is an improvement. Still it may be too much commitment and I keep putting the decision off. I have signed up to Wordpress Postaweek initiative as my [blog](#) has been moribund for the past 6 months. I figure I can do at least one post a week.

Just currently finishing reading China Miéville's *The City and The City*, and digesting Charles Burn's *X'ed Out*.

Looking forward to the return of *Being Human* to the TV, and hoping for more *Dirk Gently* at some time. Enjoyed watching *Gainsbourg* and *Wall-E* over the festive period, and, well, the *Christmas Dr Who Special* was the *Christmas Dr Who Special* if you know what I mean. Anyway, that's yer lot, I'm out of here...

This issue of *An Fleghes Hager-Na Yu Canjeons* has been brought to you by the numbers 5 and 23 and by the letters aaargh!

Cover photo -- Cornish coastline between Widemouth Bay and Bude.

Thanks as ever to the godlike **Bill Burns** for hosting this ugly child on **efanzines.com**.

Any comments, abuse, etc drop me a line at doug_bell@tiscali.co.uk or follow me on Twitter or Facebook as @dhunterbell.

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