

By the bushy beard of Bonnie Prince Billy 'tis a zine by that one-time-contender Doug Bell. Hastily thrown together this is a Heart of Darkness-like hell-ride to the dank corrupt centre of Kernow TruFandom. Come closer dear friend, come closer and let me reveal deep, dark cosmic truths...

Unreliable Narrator



#2 - Random Love

April 22, 2013

With an almighty slug, the bottle of aquavit is empty. I chuck it into the corner of the room with all the others. Surprisingly this one doesn't break, not this time, but it does make a strange half-grinding-half-screeching sound due to the clashing glass-on-glass action.

Wiping the spit, drool and alcohol away from my mouth with the back of my grimy shirt sleeve, I finally decide to stop procrastinating and wade once more Canute-like back into the mighty cleansing sea that is fanzine production.

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The Lost Notebooks

Over the last couple of years I've been to a fair few conventions. I've amassed a stockpile of notes in a variety of books, scraps of paper and iPad files, all full of my stream of consciousness thoughts on those illustrious fannish gatherings. Most of these random jottings are made while strung out on lack of sleep, and were birthed imperfectly into the world in various states of sobriety, not to mention legibility. Due to this process, and the way one convention tends to merge into another, some of these notes I do not know from whence they came or the context they were made in, some I recall perfectly, whilst others are completely lost to me. Herein I present for your amusement, amazement, befuddlement and bewilderbeast a window into my fragile egg-shell mind...

Lennart's "Fake" African Relationship

This was, I think, the drunken theory I had that Lennart Uhlin is perpetrating the myth of a long distance relationship with a lady somewhere in the back of beyond in Africa purely to get out of doing that one-shot joint zine I keep banging on about whenever we get

together. Someday it's gonna happen. Lennart, embrace the zine! Or else I may have to fly to Botswana with a Gestetner in my hold luggage and a hektograph tray in my hand luggage.

Screaming Japanese Psych

Scrawled badly onto coffee stained iPad paper. If I'm honest, a lot of my random convention notes I scribble away relate to music. I can place this one as sometime after I devoured Julian Cope's **Japrocksampler** (Christmas 2007) but have no idea how it related to the rest of the convention notes it lurks beside like that filthy tramp that waits beside the ladies toilets at Porth Beach. It's a safe bet that it refers to either Les Rallizes Denudes heavy feedback guitar solos or the screaming at the start Geino Yamahiogumi's **Osorezan/Do No Kenbai** album.

Is it possible to get drunk on Faust?

Was gonna be the title of my **Corflu Cobalt** con report, mostly as I spent too long that weekend discussing krautrock with Alun Harries in an incoherent ramshackle manner.

Rob Jackson but not Rob Jackson

This was a thoroughly deeply intellectual and critical conversation I had with Clarrie Maguire at Novacon about small press comics legend Rob Jackson, not to be confused with **Inca** editing fan-legend Rob Jackson. Rob is responsible for what I think is the greatest single comics panel ever, also **Inca**.

Blepp, THE END OF HORROE, Milk man, Hex Enduction Hour Notes made during a reading by Nick Walters at this year's Microcon. I think Horroe is supposed to be Horror. If it isn't I'm fucked if I know what I was going on about.

Gerry Webb's Rolls Royce Reversing/Tetris Luggage

A popular Sunday afternoon Novacon programme item.

*The most awesome comics panel ever,
not involving Matter-Eater Lad*



The day began, as so many of my days do, with tea and muffins at London's exclusive Explorer's Club...

Optimus Prime's R2D2 Butt-Plugs

A bad, bad, bad and unfortunately deeply true discussion I had with Clarrie Maguire about fan-fiction at Novacon. Usually these sorta sick conversation topics come up I pin the blame on Clarrie, but on this occasion I think the fault lies with me. I'll still blame her of course as she *is* a bad influence on me anyway...

Emma Newman fork candles

Can't remember why my brain mashed up Emma Newman's reading at Microcon with the classic Two Ronnies comedy sketch.

Operating Theatre, dissecting fanac, fan-writing, 80s fanzines (sic). The panel is dead, long live the new flesh.

Ah this one was easy. These were my notes from last year's Novacon, where late at night I got into a fairly serious fanwriting/fanzine editing conversation with Jim Mowatt and Mike Meara. I remember this was one of those conversations that seemed of great import at the time but the fine detail are now lost in the mists of time. I think I may have unwittingly called for (i.e. drunkenly) a new wave of KTF at some point in the discussion. Anyway, at some point I was so struck with the sercon nature of the conversation given the lateness of the hour and and I started having these thoughts that we had been doing panels wrong for all these year. We don't need a stage, moderators, a PA system etc, what we really need is a small bunch of literate, panel members who've had a few beers, and have them give a free-ranging passionate open-ended debate about fannish matters while set in one of those old fashioned medical school lecture theatres you see in period horror movies. We the audience can then sit in a circle looking down on the BNFs entertaining us and dispensing their pearls of wisdom. Now I've put some time and distance between myself and this idea I not so sure this is possible, or at least all that different from what panels are anyway. But we could probably get ahold of an old fashioned operating theatre for a trial run at Loncon. Whose with me?



Beef Curtains at the Corflu Banquet

Was also a possible title for the unwritten **Corflu Cobalt** conrep. I remember that one all too well, Alun Harries...I'm looking at you.

Malcolm sprinkling chocolate on a convention as a metaphor for something really profound.

Could be any convention in the last twenty year but it surely must related to fellow Aberdeen University Science Fiction alumus Malcolm Hutchison and his enormous suitcase of chocolate he travels with to every convention.

Bellis, Garbage. Trash Virginia Wolf.

Novacon again. I think Bellis was either preaching at me about the bastardisation of proper English by creeping Americanisms or he's joined a reformed Brit-pop band for their new album **Trash Virginia Wolf**. The jury is still out.

Random Graham Charnock

I cannot remember for the life of me the context, location or convention. I'm wondering if it pertains to a random passing Graham Charnock who had just happened to wander into my eye-line, or a Random Graham Charnock Generator Table a bit like the Random Monster Generator Tables we used to use in **Dungeons and Dragons**. Roll a D20 and if you get a critical you get an exclusive eyes-only performance of the entire **Astral League** series of albums.

Bruce Hornsby's Psychedelic Accordion

This came to me when travelling to Heathrow for last year's Eastercon. I was listening to an early-90s Dead gig and thought it would either be a very poor fanzine name or a very good jam band name.

The Ancestor who eats everything

I have utterly no idea on this one, possibly Alun Harries related?

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KlangForum

Back sometime around about this time last year I was on that there Facebook thing when I noticed Randy Byers, Esq. had posted some entry to his wall about the Top 100 Science Fiction songs/albums ever. I've dabbled with music, guitars, synths and music criticism before, and naturally being a science fiction fan I was drawn towards this list. The first thing I noticed was that the list was full of the same old culprits you get in any list of science fiction music. I was a bit...underwhelmed.

This got me thinking as to why? One thing missing was the the lack of hard speculative composition techniques, so I posted something on Randy's Facebook feed saying I was thinking of writing something about this for a zine. One quick exchange of messages later and I'm signed up for writing an article about this for the mighty **Chunga**. So back in November my article **Space Age Bachelor Pad Music** saw print thanks to Messrs juarez, Hooper and Byers, which I take as a real honour as **Chunga** is one of my favourite zines of all time.

I thought this was all over but Randy and Carl both emailed me about interesting music they'd discovered in the months after publication, which kept me thinking about some of the stuff I'd been writing about rather than just dropping the subject as done. During this discussion

I though it'd be a great idea to set up a music blog. Like the cowardly fat kid at fight in a school playground, Randy kept on egging me on...just in this case it involved domain names and buying webspace rather than bloody noses, I hope.

So just a couple of weeks ago I launched Klangforum.co.uk where I hope to continue writing some of my thoughts on science fiction music, alongside regular music/gig reviews, and putting some of my own music up there too as I've been dabbling in electronic music under the pseudonym of *interlac*. There's examples on KlangForum.

I've kept the launch low key so far, as I don't have much content up there currently, mostly due to trying to get our trip to Corflu organised, this fanzine done and getting the garden planted up too. After returning from Oregon I'm planning at least one update a week.

One of the things I've enjoyed most about this is learning new stuff again. I've been feeling stuck in a rut at work and looking for a challenge. I've found a visual theme that I liked but it doesn't quite work for me, so I've been poking under the WordPress hood messing around with CSS and PHP. At last something I need to think hard about. I'm also not quite sure about writing factual or opinion based pieces...I can do a fannish drunken anecdote quite well, I think, but actual real content I'm not sure about. So I'm hoping writing a weekly column will help me grow a bit as a writer too.

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Various POVs

Back in the day, *Unreliable Narrator #1* brought a healthy bit of response. I remember it clearly, we'd just given the Bosch a bloody nose, and for a while there it looked like those contraptions those chaps in the Royal Flying Corps would catch on. Seriously though it was only back in May 2012 that #1 came out, not that long ago. I mean, it wasn't like I've been so late between issues that there was enough time for whole new species of sentient lizard creatures to evolve, build complex social structures, invent space flight and lead holy wars against the nearby neighbouring planet entirely populated by gnarly two-headed dog people. It might seem that long, but let me set the facts straight - It. Was. Only. Last. Year.

Anyway, some kindly souls wrote me, but before we get onto the meat of the Locs I'd like mention something about my address policy. When Christina and I started putting PDFs of *Head!* online a number of letter writers asked that we don't put their contact details in the loccol. For *Unreliable Narrator* I've decided to carry this policy forward. I figure the SF zine community is small enough that everyone knows everyone, or probably more accurately knows someone who knows someone. If you don't and really want to get in contact with one of the reprobates who've sent in a loc just drop me a line. And now, onwards, ever onwards ...

Graham Charnock

I am sitting here waiting for the replacement window salesman to call. Well, I'm not waiting for him as such. Pat will have to deal with him, since she's the one that wants replacement windows. I just want a carpet in the dining room. Well I don't just want a carpet in the dining; I want World Peace, of course, and an end to suffering for sad doe-eyed orphans in third world countries. And I sort of want David Cameron to die suddenly and painlessly from a heart attack. So I thought I'd read your new fanzine. Keep going on the agricultural sf novel; I'm trying to recall if anyone has tried that before. Perhaps Philip Jose Farmer tried one. I've more interested though in your musical noodlings. Any chance of you slipping me a mix-tape sometime? Maybe we could collaborate. I could send you some unfinished Ableton tracks for you to noodle over. I missed Lloyd Penney's original comment about meeting me so it's nice to be reminded of it by Mr. Plummer. I can't actually recall meeting Lloyd myself (sorry Lloyd) but he obviously didn't think much of me if he voted accordingly* for Liam.*

You will perhaps be unaware (if you have been busy or distracted elsewhere) that John Coxon's comments on fanzine fandom being an elitist clique were not regarded sympathetically by some members of a certain listgroup. Not by me, I hasten to add, since I maintain all fanzines must inevitably develop their own elitist cliques. It's called a mailing list. I think John's comment was something along the lines of he had to produce a fanzine just so he could be part of the fanzine producer's clique, but of course we all know there are other ways to do it, attending Corflu, loccing, or even, in the good old days, sending someone a return postage stamp, although of course electronic fanzines have rendered the latter unnecessary. Probably another reason why the Post Office is going broke.

Best regards and I look forward to more of this stuff.

I do hope that after all this while you've manage to get replacement windows and aren't still sitting in the cold. Also that they'll keep out the warlike sentient lizards.

I've not started the novel, still formulating, but please do send me anything you think we could collaborate on musically it'd be fun. Unless you look at [my Blog/SoundCloud](#) and decide that you really don't like my music I have already up there. Then I might have to come around and throw bricks through your new windows.

Mike Meara

I just picked up your new perzine from eFanzines, and greatly enjoyed Mark Plummer's loc therein. He makes a good point, and you have taken it well.

You asked for comments on the Corflu vs Worldcon choice, though I think you've already answered your own question, so what can I add? Let's see:

First, an aside, but I hope Novacon is still in your plans. This is currently the best UK convention for our kind of fans in the absence of Ploktacon, and I can't see one of those happening for a while. You say you miss hanging out with fanzine fans. How much of that do you think you'll get to do at a worldcon (any worldcon), compared to Corflu, which would be (and used to be) described as "the fanzine fans' Worldcon" except that the Worldcon bods won't let us? Trademarks an' that, y'know. Just that bit of po-faced stupidity is enough to make me wish never to go to a Worldcon again. Portland has beer. You like beer, I have reason to believe. Corflu is, like the Hitchhikers Guide, slightly cheaper. And you'll get to see the FAAn awards presented, which are far more important than the Hugos.

We are planning even now to be there too. What more can I say to convince you? Even the prospect of having to fly BA rather than VA shouldn't put you off. (BA fly to Seattle; VA don't.)

That's it. Short zine, short loc.

You won Mike, you mentioned beer and now I'm Portland bound. Either that or it was the promise of those awesome ladies promised by the New Riders of the Purple Sage.

"You see I need me a Portland Woman,
I don't want to be alone tonight,
I want to get me a Portland Woman,
Portland women treat you right,
Portland's gonna be mine tonight."

Nah, you had me at beer.

Eric Mayer

Good to see Unreliable Narrator (Ugly Children v2.) It is a problem that fanzines never want to be what we envision. Usually they become more complicated than we had hoped. I've certainly found that to be the case with my publishing efforts during the past two years. Zines I intended as dead simple for me to crank out suddenly began to make demands. Of course, please understand that I even find juggling things around in a two column format demanding. (Your format looks very good to me) I've sometimes thought of doing a pure text ezine. Sent out in an email. Mary and I have used that format for a bi-monthly newsletter for more than twelve years now.

Like you I am aware of all the great projects I will likely never complete, but I can't say the thought keeps me awake. I am only too aware that most of my great projects would turn into pitiful disasters were I too actually undertake them. That fantasy novel I want to write would

be a non-starter since it would be based on what I loved reading during the sixties and I am entirely ignorant of the past 40 years of sf and fantasy. My desire to finally, finally write a decent computer text adventure would falter on the little detail that tripped up all my past efforts -- I can't program worth shit. And as for finally learning to play guitar...

I don't follow comics but for a few years in the eighties I got interested in them. Keeping up simply became too expensive for me with the financial squeeze I was in at the time. I actually scripted a few issues of a comic for a friend who had a tiny indie company and so got to see the whole process. I was amazed by how much the inker affects the drawing. (No colorist as these were B&W)

I didn't bother to visit the virtual Corflu this year because with dial-up there's truly nothing to see. As far as conventions go, I don't go. I have always hated to travel and after decades of not traveling, and with the new security theater, and my increased age, I have even less desire to travel than I did forty years ago.

Re your comments about that panel discussion. I'm croggled at how anyone could assert that e-zines are a restrictive, insular, closed shop. Aren't they just the opposite? Anyone can afford to make an ezine available to everyone. Exactly the opposite of print zines I would say. Anyway, keep the zines coming.

I think it is still worthwhile trying to get projects off the ground, such as my new blog mentioned above. I take some solace from the words of Samuel Becket...

“All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

I don't know what those mean, but I take solace in them...that, Portland women and aquavit.

Hopefully.

Chris Garcia

Good to see your new zine up on eFanzines! Gotta love it!

I do have to go into The Killing Joke. To me, it's the best thing Alan Moore ever did. Maybe it's that it was my first introduction to a modern Joker. I remember watching Batman (the 1989 movie) and thinking that Nicholson's Joker was lame in comparison. I think my Mom brought it home for me when I was in 7th Grade and that got me into Moore. I hadn't read anything by him at that point knowingly (I had, it turned out, read his Swamp Thing) and to this day, it's still one of my all-time favorite comics. It stands up today, in my eyes, because it

gives us the Joker that we understand now from two Batman films and a couple of cartoon series. The art, to me, is perfect. I remember wishing that all comics looked like that when I was young, and now, they almost do, but none have hit it so much on the head.

I like that Coxon fellow. I, long ago, realised that if I had gotten my first girlfriend pregnant, I'd have a kid almost exactly his age. Made my blood run cold the first time I worked out that math...

Wish I had made it out to Eastercon. I mean, it was AWESOME to be the GoH at Minicon, but there's something I love about Eastercon. His Lordship James Bacon, as always, knew when I needed a contact, and gave me a call allowing me to chat with a bunch of the wonderful folks I missed.

Good issue!

*I've been slowly going off Alan Moore for about the last decade, but his **Swamp Thing** (especially **The Anatomy Lesson**) and **Whatever Happened To The Man of Tomorrow?** remain two of my favourite pieces of comic writing. The art in **The Killing Joke** is perfect, I just found that after re-reading it again after all those years the story felt far flimsy.*

The last word, as ever, goes to Lloyd Penney...

Lloyd Penney

Thank you for an e-copy of Unreliable Narrator 1. Some days, it's difficult to type up anything, and forget the zines, I want to veg and watch the tube. I've had a month or so like that, but I have to get moving, the zines are piling up.

Yes, the enthusiasm flags, and I wonder if I've been doing this for too long. I am thinking of my own zine, but I'd go retro and do it 8.5x11 portrait. I don't think I'd go so retro as to print it on a ditto, but my training long ago was in publication design, among other things, but it has been some time since I have Pubbed My Ish.

No one actually puts every idea they have into the real world, but they try their best. I wanted to write SF, I tried, and I have my share of rejection slips, but the desire to make those ideas real usually get beaten down by the need to work at a job to make a living and pay the bills. Sucks, but what do you do?

As I write, our own local anime conventions is starting up for the year, 20,000 people at a convention centre and three hotels close to the airport. And, we're giving it a skip this year. Too many people, too much we're not fans of, too little money, and not enough time. It's getting tougher to care about any of this. At least there's another convention coming up in July, and we will be there for the Saturday only. We are skipping the Chicago and San Antonio Worldcons so we can have enough money for the London Worldcon, in just over two

years. And that is not certain, either.

Most of fandom is old enough to be John Coxon's parents. (Yvonne says she is old enough to be his grandmother.) On June 2, I turn 53. Yvonne's planning a big birthday bash for herself at another local convention in November, and a higher number than 53. I certainly understand why so many go for e-zines, and while paper would be the best, it's not the best for the wallet. We could discuss websites and podcasts, but this isn't a Worldcon/Hugo business meeting.

I did vote for Liam Proven, always best for the nominators to vote for who you've nominated. My loc...the Ontario Association of Architects position is long gone, and I've several short-term positions since, but my evening job at the Globe and Mail still allows me at least some income. The job hunt goes ever onwards...

I think I'll take it to the page, Doug, and say my thanks. Say hello to Christina for me, and keep the zines coming, when the muse drives you. Otherwise, there's got to be something decent on telly...

That's about it for this one, so let's blow this joint and go get some local hot action, Portland style...

Letters of comment, abuse, opinions etc to doug_bell@tiscali.co.uk

By carrier pigeon you can also find me at 4 West Rise, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 4HJ, UK.

Fin.