

The Drink Tank 205



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That cover is from Genevieve! I've only scratched the surface on the items she let me scan (I've got at least five more cover pieces and who knows how many filler illos!) and I'm always glad to have her stuff!

***Punk Lions
article and photos by
James Bacon***

I know people like cats, I like Dogs.

In saying that, there is something awesome about real cats, as opposed to imaginary ones like Garfield, Bill, Felix and the Cheshire or the annoying ones that keep people as pets.

Lions, now these animals are cats. They don't screw around, they are big heavy hunters, stronger than an Ox, they are just killing machines, nothing else, they are not friendly, do not think that tamed ones in a petting zoo, or on a Telly are anything like the real thing, born free my arse. Men who live and work in the woodland and veldt know that these creatures are not to be messed with, they are hunters, predators, killers.

But nothing beats the Punk Lions.

I am in Thanda Game Reserve in Northern Zulu Land. About 200

miles north of Durban. It's a huge reserve, at over sixty square miles and it encompasses a wonderful variety of habitats. Sparse woodland, dense woodland, open savannah, rocky outcrops and mountains. The land is managed, some was originally farmland, some was just as it is.

I have had another unique and enlightening experience at Thanda, while here celebrating my wedding anniversary, its a dream to return here, and to be honest, I am grateful to the reservation team, who look after and facilitate our booking. My wife who dated a ranger in a private lodge in the Kruger in her younger days, and being a native of South Africa, has been on literally hundreds of game drives, confesses that Thanda is a whole world apart in her experience. I am a novice, yet appreciate and understand this advice. My friends know when I am in Dublin, I only take them to the best Pubs, pubs where magic happens, that's Thanda.



The Lodge and accompanying Villas are situated on the side of a mountain, surrounded by vegetation, one can only make out the roofs from a distance. The Lodge so well appointed, there is a Library, Bar and a watering Hole where in the dark animals drink. Superlative and exciting meals, Springbok wrap, Kudo Kebab, Crocodile cappaccio, all cooked to perfection.

It gives a balance to the rawness of nature. I am not stupid enough to think that I am in the safety of a Zoo, this is the wild. Animals will behave as they like, they are wild, strong beasts. The most feared are the Buffalo, as



out the dark blobs as Rhinos, or trees in shade, or large rocks, but here the Tracker had spotted these magnificent armoured beasts, that after a drive, we were soon with. Impressive is an understatement.

At the wheel of this rugged, yet very smooth and comfortable vehicle is Truman. When

they are so unpredictable, unreadable and can turn very quickly and somehow look like domesticated cattle, but are far from it.

We are on-board a Landrover, there is a seating cage on the back, for nine people, and in the front, at the wheel we have our Guide Truman, and perched on a special seat on the front bumper, we have our tracker Wineth.

Wineth has the eyes of an eagle, he spotted the pride of Lions at a distance of over a mile, what a spot that was, as we sat soon afterwards next to the said same pride, only metres away as they stretched and laid about in the warm morning sun. Then a day later, he made out Rhino at over two miles away with just his eyes. As I squinted through binoculars across a valley, I could barely make

we arrived he greeted us naturally, remembering us from our last visit, and remembering places we were. A specific place, a year ago, maybe some 200+ drives ago, he remembered that we had spotted Leopard, and not prompted, not suggested, he had to remind me that we were near to the same place, and you know, we were.

I love Truman's competence, confidence and yet he has such a composed and relaxed attitude. His eye is always on the detail, his desire is to please the customer as much as possible, yet he is like a friend imparting information in such an easy going, clear way, a born communicator and educator, while having that edge that people of responsibility require, the sharpness and quickness to react. A maturity that one can only admire

and an ear that listens. Of course, it is his natural charm and charisma at work here, but it permeates across his team. Truman is now head Ranger, he has no shortage of work, but he also takes out a landrover, while having the responsibilities of care of the animals, helping with their management and the management of the reserve, and even managing the reserves large fleet of vehicles.

We were so happy to hear that he was promoted, as was our last tracker Musi, now himself also a guide who we also greeted. That alone gives a particular perception, a good one, its always nice to see people finding success.

After settling in we soon had our first Game Drive. We are loaded up, a nice family from Switzerland were with us, and the landrover wound its way away from the lodge and out into what really is wilderness. Very soon we are seeing a variety of antelope, Kudo, Nyala, Impala.

Truman informs us that there was a kill recently, that morning they had come across a Zebra Carcass, and a foal both killed by the Lions. The Pride had had its fill and was already gone, but the two young male Lions who had been cast out of the pride, some weeks beforehand were still in the vicinity, dining on this opportunistic feast.

It was explained that the Lions

are cast out to fend for themselves, but that they hadn't eaten in a long time, failing in exploits of hunting, and their ribs were showing well. Truman had no idea how the actual kill had gone down, if they had helped, or had just come upon the scene. Once the females and the large Male had their fill, what was left was theirs, and they were not going to let this good fortune go to waste and are sitting guarding, despite their lazy disposition, no animal in the reserve would take them both on.

As we approached the carcass, we saw that the foal was gone, no more, and the white ribs of the Zebra were pointing skyward, with muscle and some flesh still intact, and a good bit of meat still to be had. The low cloud cover was hampering the Vultures, Truman reckoned. Not far away, lying panting hard, were two young male lions, lolling in the high grass.

I was struck that they had over eaten, Truman confirmed this, noting that as they lied on their side, or rolled on their back, breathing very quickly, they were actually helping the digestive system. Their stomachs were visibly full, distended even, and they were not at all bothered by our presence.

As long as we stay calm, quiet and seated we are fine, should we shout, or stand up and break the profile of the vehicle, then we would be in trouble, but should the worst

happen, Truman is always ready, his rifle in its holder across the length of the dash board and his long brass bullets in their small holder on his belt, but it is not a ballistic device that is his best weapon, his best weapon is his intuition, his experience, he can read the animals like a book.

For instance, later we see Lions yawning, he says they will soon be moving on, and they do.

We watch these animals, we are not far away, about five metres, and the animals are not at all bothered by us, as the loll in the grass. I am struck by their looks. Now and again, they stretch a little, one slowly yawns, offering a magnificent set of teeth and a jaw that is fearsome to us in close proximity, no doubt that this animal, even as a juvenile is indeed worthy of the title, King of the Jungle.

Truman points out circular markings, on their underside, a pattern that helps younger lions to camouflage themselves, and that still lingers, like some forgotten bad tattoo. Their manes have only started, but is quite prominent down

the line of their Spine, giving them a Mohawk hair style, young punks that they are.

As I look on, I see the correlation. The music was in demise as I came to heavy metal in my teen years, but I knew punks, and what punk meant, these young potentially rebellious aggressive and carefree animals were suddenly a feline version of what I remembered of punk. Stuffing themselves until they couldn't eat anymore, with no idea where the next meal will be coming from, thrown out of the family, before they can threaten the old patriarch, no fear of any other creature or animal, and as we saw later vehicle, as they caused a road block and forced vehicles to go through the scrub to get around them, indignantly refusing to move.



The road was comfortable, so they lied down, they have no predators now in this reserve, and live for the now. They are the new on the reserve and they will eventually beat the old. It is inevitable, so we are told, when that fight comes, it will be harsh, but despite the natural way of things, the reserve has plans to extend the Lion count by extending the reserve by some 3,000 hectares, about another 24 square miles.

The Lions are reluctant to leave the carcass, although it is warm about 24 degrees celsius, the meal is in the shade and the cloud has kept off the worst of the sun, so they will protect the body from any other lesser predators and continue to eat as they can. Hyena, jackal, wild dogs would all take some if they could, but they won't even go near if they can scent lions.

A juvenile like this can eat 45 lbs of meat in one sitting, a Lioness more, and a full grown male, some 66lbs. The

Lions roll over on their back, lazing splay legged, staying near this veritable feast.

Truman tells us that young males work together, they form a coalition, and four can take down an old elephant or Buffalo, or baby Rhino. Despite their lazyness, there is no lack of bravery to the animals, and Truman tells us how 12 – 15 Lions in a large pride would be able to take down a 2,000 lbs juvenile rhino. White Rhino get to two and half tons, a baby is nearly 100lbs, but even so, a Juvenile,

is no mean feat, and this lads will go for it, just under a tonne in weight.

Funnily, the Impala have marking on their tails and hind legs, which make out the letter M and are referred to as fast food. We wonder if this is for McDonald's, but am told that when its dinner time, the animal is on its back, and the M becomes W for Wimpey, a hugely popular burger restaurant throughout South Africa.

Warned that one has to be careful when one touches a Lion, the blood and guts that they go through,



with their paws and strong jaws, mean that they are not actually the most hygienic animals from a human perspective. They will after all eat raw meat, the worst of it as well, that's been in the open for a number of days, as I saw.

These are just some of the cats that inhabit Thanda, Truman

reckons they have about ten Leopards, and one has been seen recently with a cub. There can be no accuracy with these animals, they will come and go as they please, the electric high fencing is no match for their climbing skills. Truman estimates that the reason they have more than one would expect is that there is good hunting to be had in Thanda, and this effects the size of an animals range. I query that these animals can just leave, and he describes in detail the technique's that Leopards use, to avoid the electric wire.

On our last visit we saw Leopard, and on this one we see Cheetah, two males, the only in the reserve, also in coalition, these fellas are much smaller than the lions, but bigger in height than most dogs. When we see them, one has stomach full, perhaps a hare or rabbit or fowl, and is just relaxing, the other is edgy, wanting to get on with finding something to kill. At around 100lbs, (60kg)



these animals are not as slight as one might imagine, although they can and will get heavier. There are many a dog that is bigger, an English Mastif can weigh in at 200lbs, and I have played with some Newfoundlanders that were fairly heavy at 160lbs, they just are in a different league. These animals are like a formula one car, they don't actually look suited to slow moving they are streamlined chasing machines, quick, very quick movements, that just put dogs in the h'appeney place.

At night, Wineth luckily picks out a caracal also known as an African Lynx, this is quite close in looks to a domestic cat, but is considerably larger

at about 30lbs, as the light catches the animal, it freezes, knowing it is exposed, limiting movement to hamper whatever can see it, but to us it is clear. These animals are the bane of farmers we have earlier met. As I sit at one stage on a sofa adorned with the pelt of one such animal, it is explained what type of hunter they are, preying of course on the lambs and sheep of the farms. Farms that to be honest are not that far removed from what I know at home, in Ireland, in actual fact as soon as we had climbed to 1800 metres, and the rain was upon us, the country side could have been many a county in the homeland.

Sheep, have good bits to eat, the finer choicer cuts, and of course a caracal will go for these, and enjoy them, with the lamb still alive in many cases, and its a hardening factor for farmers, when they have to put down such an animal, partially eaten around the tender hind legs. Qualms evaporate in such a harsh environment, and a .303 or snare seems quite acceptable. Here on the range, they dine on fowl and small game, like hares.

Yet it is these Lions which captivate so much I look on enjoying their leisurely attitude. They are not as experienced or regal as the fully grown male, not so confident yet. The big cats always are popular and Truman knows that we can sit and watch these all day, its exciting, although too easy

to remember that these animals which were once used a variety of sports, including in the 1800's baiting (fighting against dogs) in England, and are fearsomely strong and in a moment, would easily clamp on a humans neck and squeeze, twist and kill.

A fully grown Lion is some 500lbs in weight, I don't ask Truman about these lads, but they must be at least 250 lbs if not more. They have a scruffy look to their mane under their chins, like youths trying to grow a beard badly. They just seem to say, make my day and are wonderful to watch.

Soon though we are on our way, to look at other wonderful animals, Giraffe, wildebeest, buffalo and we soon encounter a number of youngsters, in the Elephant herd. Not quite so fearsome, the Elephant, but equally as dangerous, and solid in a Volvo FH16 sort of way.

But I wouldn't mess with the punks.

www.thanda.com



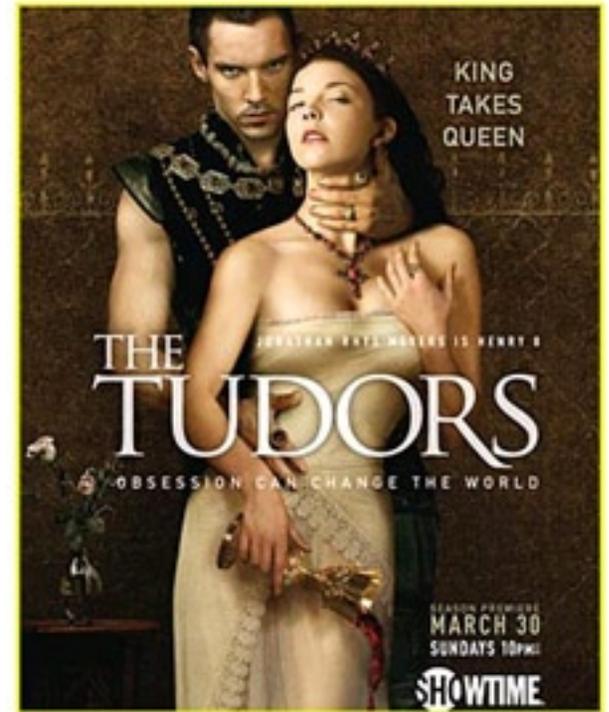
art by Genevieve

Kristina Kopnisky is one of my favourite FanEds. She's done a few wonderful issues of Consonant Enigma and she's appeared here a few times. And now, we get something about The Tudors!

Regarding Henry

The Tudors. The Baywatch of the historical reenactment and period costume set. They all claim to detest it but it is obvious by their knowledge that they all watch it. Why wouldn't they watch? It is one of the most visually lush costume dramas on the air today. I think they are off their mark in hating it though. My confession? I really like the Tudors. I don't view it as a documentary. I view it as alternative history soap opera with a grand budget. I expect an episode to deliver on 3 points: A) Jonathan Rhys-Meyers to be moody, B) drama to rival any high school clique, and C) opulent costumes in a pseudo historical setting. The Tudors for me is the equivalent of a Stephen King novel, it should be quick, enjoyable and not require too much analyses..

The creative team makes no pretense of the Tudors being a documentary. The head costumer has said that her goal is to make them look like rockstars dressed in period silhouettes. Kudos to her, as far as I can tell she hit her mark. JRM



almost consistently looks like he could walk onto the set of an Obsession commercial without changing wardrobe. The women look lovely. Well, except I would be lying if I said I liked the "B" bling dog collar that Anne Boleyn is often sporting. See, I am as guilty as the next in snarking about the series. That is another part of what makes watching it so much fun. The script is fantastic for a soap. There is sex, innuendo, mud slinging, tragedy and a little intrigue. Micahel Hirst has said this about the historical accuracy of the show," Showtime commissioned me to write an entertainment, a soap opera, and not history ... And we wanted people to watch it." As anyone

who knows their history, and has watched the show, can tell you the timeline of events is either manipulated to fit the show story arc or completely fabricated.

Now I know some cry out that it is misleading to portray the Tudors in this way. I would argue that it has helped spur interest in the time period. Much the way that Twilight has helped revive the flagging interest in vampires. Sure there has been a surge of faire playtrons showing up at their local

fest in outfits lifted directly from the series. But I ask faire actors this, isn't that much better than watching the age old cluster of Fredrick's of Ren Faire and little house on the prairie patrons. In my eyes it shows some consideration for the period, no matter how misguided. Chances are that some local costumers have been able to benefit from the trend as well. It would be safe to hazard a guess that the show has served as free advertisement for many faires in the time it has been

on.

My suggestion to the mavens that like to carp is that they own up to the fact that they regularly watch the show. It's okay. Harmless guilty pleasures are good for you. Prepare your plate of decadent nibbles, pop open that bottle of wine, have your handwork ready in case you feel so inclined, sit back and enjoy Bay...um... The Tudors. You deserve the break after all those hours of researching your chosen time period.



Tudor Kids from Carolyn Ngyuen

You know Taral Wayne, so why should I write a little introduction? I mean, you'll see his name enough when they announce the Hugo Nominations and he's on the Best Fan Writer and Best Fan Artist list!

RECENT EXCAVATIONS TURN TOLKIEN OVER IN

GRAVE

That headline ought to make you sit up and take notice.

What I mean, writing more honesty, is that recent fossil finds in the Soviet Union¹ would have Tolkien turning in his grave if he knew what implications arose concerning artist's impressions of the Nazgul.

What conceivable connection is there between Professor Tolkien, fossils, and artist impressions of Nazgul, you cry. (Assume for the sake of this article, that you *are* curious, and we'll get this over with a minimum of pain.) Picture a typical Hildebrand painting. You know how the Hildebrandts paint. The colours are mainly pastel, hands and feet look acromegalic, the lighting seems to be coming from about six different directions at once, and the shadows underfoot seem to be made of rubber, or some other limp but solid substance. Yet the overall effect isn't

bad, and sometimes even great. Now think of the Hildebrandts' rendering of the fight between Eowyn, and the Lord of the Nazgul. They *have* painted this scene. Though it's a little stiff, and rather cheerfully sunny, the Nazgul is suitably menacing, arrayed all in black, and mounted on a warty, foul breathed, and leather winged pteranodon of monstrous proportions. Chilling!

But this is what they found in Russia... a small pterosaur, related to the larger pteranodon, called by the discoverer A.G. Sharov of the Soviet Academy of Science, *Sordes pilosus*.

Translated into Laymanese this means "hairy devil". The fine grained Upper Jurassic lake deposits preserved the unmistakable imprint of a thick coat of fur! Reasoning from metabolic rates, and body sizes, it seems probably that all pterosaurs were furred, not just *Sordes*. Other fossil species have been described as showing traces of fur also, but too indistinctly to prove the case, until Sharov presented his "hairy devil" to the world. Most species being marine flyers, preying on fish, would have benefited by light coloured plumage, so as to be invisible against the brilliant dazzle of the sky. Modern albatrosses and seagulls are snow-white.

Imagine, then, a corrected picture of Eowyn's fight with the Nazgul King. She stands valiant and

armored like a knight. The Nazgul swoops down on a snow-white furry kite...

That's all wrong! The picture isn't either sinister or menacing, as the Nazgul steed should be. It's positively cuddly! How beautiful to see the Ringwraiths take to the sky, and bob in the balmy breeze...

Tom Bombadil would love it.

(Footnotes)

¹ As Russia was in the late 70's.



Letter Graded Mail

sent to garcia@computerhistory.org
by my Loyal readers

***Let us start with Taral Wayne,
who sent this a while back and I
dropped the ball!***

Loc to Drink Tank 197, Jan 09

Bat Manuel?

Oh, you mean from the TV show. I saw part of one of those and had conniptions, it was so unlike the animated series. Just as one minor detail -- in the cartoon the character of Bat Manuel isn't Hispanic, and he's called Der Fleidermaus. He's also an abject coward who runs at the slightest hint of danger, so that American Maid despises him. I don't know how that part ran in the TV series... Also, giving the Tick a face seemed to make him too much like a stupid person, instead of stupidity personified. In general, the show seemed to lack the inspired nuttiness of the original.

***Yup, Batmanuel was more or less
Der Fleidermaus from the cartoon.
Sadly, American Maid wasn't in the
Live Action either...***

I've read all three books in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy and while I'm not sure how completely satisfying they were, the books are at least strikingly original. In the third book God himself is overthrown and shown to be an



art from Kate Kelton

impotent, and insane sham, who has been imprisoned for eons by a power mad archangel. That may in fact have more to do with why they won't make the third film than box office receipts. The Christian community would probably firebomb theaters that dared to show it. (The Catholic Church does everything it can do to discourage the public from reading the books.) My impression of the first movie was that it was faithful to the book... but somehow flat. I can't put my finger on why. Maybe a second viewing will bring it more to life, but that's not often the case.

***The Golden Compass improves
with further viewings, it does.
Still not a great film.***

I haven't watched the second *Chronicles of Narnia* entry yet. I have a "pre-viewed" copy I got from Blockbuster in a buy-two-get-one-free deal though. Given my low esteem for the first film, I'm not highly enthusiastic about seeing this one. "The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe" is probably one of those seminal kid's books that is best read when you are ten. I was twenty-five. I found the religious allegory irritating, and the fantasy element to be much like a bowl of Fruit Loops when you want a bracing

kingdom has just as much need for as does Belgium or Cuba? Contributing to the insubstantial feel of Narnia, the plot seemed to rush from wardrobe to the ultimate war between Good and Evil with not very much between.

Maybe it needed to be twenty minutes longer, and a bit more care given to details?

“Gee Edward, we don’t hardly seem to be cold at all.”

“Maybe its the divine protection of Aslan?”

“Well I jolly well wish Aslan would whip up some hot soup then!” (He laughs.)

Yes, time we talked about Aslan. The books establish pretty clearly that Aslan is a metaphor for Christ... but one that’s more huggable. The movie skirts around the whole business of being Son of God, leaving Aslan to be pretty much just a talking lion. It seemed all wrong, that the moment the children saw Aslan they fell in love with him. What more could he mean to them than the satyrs, talking animals, and other creatures they met in Narnia? I don’t recall that this odd attachment to a talking lion, one wonder

among many, was ever explained. It would only make sense if they knew Aslan was Jesus in a fur coat, but I don’t see how they could have. It only becomes obvious at the end, when the plot hits you over the head with Aslan’s

sacrifice.

I don’t buy it. Genre fiction CAN’T have religious overtones!

But I suppose it was Disney, and Disney was only interested in making a fat profit

by imitating the success of Peter Jackson’s Lord of the Rings trilogy. (Or maybe the popularity of the Harry Potter series.) It’s like Suits to think that you can copy the costumes and sets and nothing of the soul of a story, and no-one will spot the difference. I won’t be broken up if Disney never makes the third in the series. Clearly Disney was only demonstrating one of its lesser virtues by following a trend. It showed. ***They’ll make it eventually. Right now is a good time to make big films (gate receipts are up, largely because of the weak economy, which is why more folks were going to the movies during the Depression than at any other time in history).***

Had Bay Area TV even been on the air around Toronto, I doubt I would have been a fan of Creature Features. Monster movies never appealed to me. Oddly, long before I knew anything about Forrest J. Ackerman the



Art from Braw W. Foster

fan and “sci-fi” personality, I knew him as Mr. Monster. A couple of my friends who were also ten or twelve thought Famous Monsters of Film Land was way cool, and had stacks of them. I couldn’t see the attraction of guys in obviously rubber suits, myself, although I did have a soft spot for a good ghost story. Alas, there weren’t many of them. Most attempts reverted to plastic skeletons and bloody-face masks before the second murder. My choice in magazines at that age was Car-Toons and Hot Rod Cartoons. Cars were cooler than monsters any day, yeah!

I wish Famous Monsters would finally release the Best of book that Forry was talking about for years. There are folks who have the material and were given permissions yet never produced the thing!

You don’t see babes dating Frankenstein’s monster, but you do see them next to some cat in a t-bucket, cuddled on his tuck’n’roll!

Pity I never owned a car...
Now that’s a good point, though those of us who grew up on Mexican Wrestler and Monster movies know that gorgeous women only date men in masks who also wear suits, fight crime and have serious laboratories in their basements!

And what zine would be complete

without a Lloyd Penney-style LoC from Lloyd Penney!

Dear Chris:

None of us can keep up with you! All of a sudden, three more issues to write about. Here’s some quick comments on issues 202, 203 and 204 of The Drink Tank.

Well, I took a little time off, so no y’all should be rested up!

202...You’re wanting an article about the Higgs boson. the so-called God particle? I know of it, but not enough to write an article. I have read articles about this elusive particle on the CBC and BBC websites. Matter is made of so many different particles, and according to mathematical models, this sought-after particle should exist. No proof yet, but the search continues, and this big hadron collider that is still being repaired should reveal the boson, if it doesn’t create a black hole in the meantime...

I sent an eMail to CERN hoping they’ll forward it to someone nutty enough to send me one. I’m always looking for good stories.

I have heard so many American government officials say they do not resort to propaganda on television and radio. Of course, no one believes that, especially those of us who are not American,



for we see American propaganda every day. It's called the mass media, CNN, MSNBC, Fox, the old networks, and they blare their message around the world. If nothing else, they have taught the world to take what they say with a 5-pound grain of salt. Many regimes have produced propaganda films, though...I think we know who they were...

It's hard to call news, even FOXNews, propaganda, It's close, but not quite there yet!

I used to record my favourite songs off the radio with my cassette recorder, and play them for myself whenever I wanted. Perhaps I anticipated the iPod? I knew which stations would play which songs, so on a quiet day, I'd wait for the station to rotate their play list, and catch the sing I wanted. Those songs may not be my favourites any more, but I downloaded RealPlayer software to my PDA, and have downloaded about 60 mp3s to the PDA's SD card, and I listen at my leisure.

I miss the days when I'd call in a request and then wait with the record button held, releasing it at exactly the

As John Purcell says, no one likes to shovel the weather, but it happens. I read the BBC reports on Britain's record snowfalls...you can sympathize, because they aren't used to that kind of snow, but not



sympathize too much, because I live where I can receive much, much more than that. Last year was a record snowfall for Toronto, around 7 feet if I recall; I can only imagine what would happen if Britain got anything like that.

Yeah, I have no sympathies either considering we had only 304 sunny days last year!

203...M is back in California? Thought there were the folks in Finland. Gotta be at home, I guess. Hope everyone happy, and especially, healthy; if not now, then real soon now.

They move around far too much. Finland, Chicago and California have been their recent homes. Somehow, they've got immigration wrapped around their fingers.

I've never been to a Potlatch, but all kinds of good reports come out of it. If you a true literary type (my own credentials are faded), and you love the printed SF word, this is the convention for you.

While I've seldom been accused of being a literary type, it did seem like the kind of con I could have loved.

I wish I could get to more Boston conventions. Only twice have I been in Massachusetts for conventions...once for one of the early Smofcons in Lowell, and for Noreascon 3. (Couldn't afford N4 in 2004...wish we could have.) I would still like to get to a Boskone, one fine day...

The only Boston con I was ever at was a Media con in 1994. I really wanna make a Boskone, and Arisia sounds like good stuff too!

I've heard so much about Neal Stephenson's Anathem, I must get myself a copy, and see what the fuss is about. The PBS station in Buffalo bills themselves as being from Buffalo/Toronto, because it's always strapped for cash. The educational channel here, TVOntario, does a low-key pledge break, and the money rolls in, so PBS Buffalo/Toronto wants a piece of that. We used to make fun of the Buffalo pledge breaks...Please! We need your money! We're desperate!, and high-volume begging like that three times an hour.

I don't watch much public television (and none since my buddy Ken was let go from KTEH) but pledge drives make me CRAZY!!!

204...Can't say much about the Oscars this year, seeing the only award-winning movie I saw was Wall-E. I was a little surprised that Slumdog Millionaire won 8 Oscars, but thought that other movies might take a few more than they did. I guess I am more interested in our own awards season, with the Hugos, FAAns and Auroras coming up soon. Good luck to us all; let's take home some hardware.

You go ahead and knock Corflu Zed over and have the best time possible, and please do send me any Claims Departments you've got. I just got off the Locus website, looks like Philip Jose Farmer has passed away. Another name from our SF youth is gone. C'est la vie. Thanks for more Tanks, and keep 'em coming.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

Yeah, the Farmer thing bugged me a lot (especially since I have just bought his last book) and I'm writing a longish piece for a future Claims Department about it. I can't wait for CorFlu (I leave on Friday morning) and I'm hoping that it'll be as much fun as the other two I've been to. I keep waiting for the Hugo list to come out because I really want to start working on the Handicapping the Hugos issue!



Cinequest is over and it was probably the best one ever for me. One of the things they had was a contest for the Best Twitter Review, which I entered often

The shorts were amazing, and now I give you my ten favourite short films at Cinequest this year in my Twitter review form, meaning less than 140 characters! Taken completely out of context, they seem even weirder!

10) **Odd Shoe** is another brilliant English short film that stands up well even to heavier shorts like Wasp and The Field.

9) **Songs from the Shed** A tough film, gorgeous, slightly ponderous, but there's a lot there visually and musi-

cally.

8) **Slow** = Kurt Kuenne = Awesome Crowd Pleasers = Fantastic Fun!

7) **Ridge Co. Requiem** might be the most beautiful film in Cinequest this year. Gorgeous HDCam shooting combined with Combines.

6) If you like boats getting hit by cars, you'll love **Drag Kings**

5) **Glory at Sea**- A short

journey into fantasy, grief and recovery. Exceptional Magical Realism.

4) **Las Gaffas (The Glasses)**= Rosencrantz -y- Guildenstern son muertos!

3) **Dan & A Van** does for Lesbian gang-bang porn what O Brother Where Art Thou did for Bluegrass

2) I'm thinking that the best actor for comedy shorts goes to the guy from **The Story of Sputnik**

1) **Instead of Abracadabra** is GOB from Arrested Development translated into Swedish and mixed with an American Indy sensibility.