



“This isn’t the Future, this is the lousy stinking Now!” -- Homer J Simpson

“I’m starting to like the cut of this man’s gibberish.” -- Gen. Five Star, *The Tick*

Down the Loccol

As promised four days ago, it’s time to play catch-up with feedback on issues #18 and #19 of *The FFix*, beginning with belated comments on the first of those.



- David Flint: “I was amused by your comments on being less than sober at cons, and the Charlie Sheen comment; I might have to start using that comparison myself, though I’ll struggle to ever be as quotable, I fear. As you may be able to personally attest, I’ve been known to overly enjoy myself at festivals and social gatherings of serious media professionals from time to time, though only occasionally in a wholly disgraceful manner, and thankfully never quite as badly as a fellow hack (I won’t name names, but he’s the scourge of a certain annual party...). But some people seem to frown on a good time, especially if they are not having one.

“I have a DVD of *Skyline* sat here waiting to be watched. Are you suggesting it won’t be a fulfilling experience?”

- Lloyd Penney: “I’ve been to a few conventions where there was an evening talk show, usually hosted by one of the GoHs, and coherency, or rather lack thereof, was most of the entertainment, so I wouldn’t worry about it. An extra pint or another glass of wine usually loosens the tongue, but also a few leetle grey cells, too.”

Intriguingly, I’ve just been asked to front yet another chatshow item, at Novacon 41, although I note programme chief Richard Standage is planning to schedule it earlier in the evening, rather than after a lengthy and surprisingly well-stocked launch party. Wise move.

“Because of finances, we cut out out-of-town cons, and we’re going to local cons only. I must find some work soon, or you won’t see me anywhere. Worst thing about this decision, not everyone understands.”

- Markus Thierstein: “Our resident film fanatic (that would be formidable Barbara Jane) ticked through your list in *The FFix #18*, and came up with four films she'd seen, three she meant to but missed, and for the rest, er, I shall not render her comments in print, let's just say that your respective film preferences appear to be fairly complementary.”

If I was having to fork out nearly seven quid per ticket, I dare say I'd target my cinema-going more strategically, but last year's sessions worked out at less than £1.25 apiece, which allowed me plenty of room to take a few chances.

- Brad Foster: “Wow, saw the 19th issue online, and now there is an actual front cover! In a year or so you'll be publishing square-bound print editions, just wait and see!”

Actually, Brad, *The FFix #10* (March 2010) also had a traditional cover; it's something I tend to reserve for the more substantial issues. As for going hardcopy, my finances would have to improve dramatically for that to be even a distant possibility.

On the other hand, I still have a largish stock of duplicator supplies and (touchwood) a working Gestetner, so a more low-tech return to the world of dead tree publishing isn't entirely out of the question.



- John Teehan: “Saw the most recent *FFix* at eFanzines. Haven't finished it yet, but I enjoyed the ‘Dead Air’ piece and have to say that while I'm looking forward to the new *Torchwood* season in the making, I'm mildly worried that the decision to take them out of Cardiff means they're pandering to a segment of the international audience (read: the US) who think Wales is something Captain Ahab hunts. I've been wrong before, though.”



- Joseph Nicholas: “*If the BBC -- the only UK network financially able to ignore the demands of commercialism -- stops taking chances on new projects, or refuses them an opportunity to gather their audience, we'll all be a great deal poorer*’, you say of the decision to axe *Outcasts*. (Ironically, it's become clear from the sixth episode that despite creator Ben Richards' claim that *Outcasts* is not about ‘little green men and fearsome creatures’, the planet's indigenous -- possibly shape-shifting, certainly human-mimicking -- hominids are about to put in a direct appearance, probably in tandem with the arrival of bad guy Julius Berger's back-up forces on the last transport from Earth, setting everything up for a cliff-hanging finale which (unless the German and South African co-funders take on the full costs) will never be resolved.)

As you're probably aware, *Outcasts* isn't the only drama to be cancelled by the new BBC 1 controller Danny Cohen: he's also terminated *Zen* and the very popular *Lark Rise to Candleford*, responding to public complaints about the latter by saying that he wants to make way for new series and a new direction for the channel. However, the list of material he's previously commissioned for BBC 3 does not inspire confidence: according to his Wikipedia entry, this constitutes *Blood, Sweat and T-Shirts* and its sequel *Blood, Sweat and Take-Aways*, *The Undercover Princes*, *Britain's Missing Top Model*, *The World's Strictest Parents*, *The Adult Season*,

Russell Howard's Good News, Young Voter's Question Time, Stacey Dooley Investigates, Lip Service, Lee Nelson's Well Good Show, and Being Human. The last-named is obviously several cuts above the others, but the others? Not remotely challenging or thought-provoking.

“Apparently, he thinks that BBC 1 needs more ‘working class comedies’; perhaps he wants a BBC 1 version of Channel 4's *Shameless*. In the meantime, he's reported to have commissioned a new version of *Great Expectations* ... a costume drama: whoop-de-doo. Handsomely-mounted and with several well-known names in its cast, doubtless, but equally doubtless soon to be forgotten. Not that we'll be seeing it any time soon, given that it takes a minimum of two years to bring a drama to the screen -- longer if co-financing and co-production deals are involved -- which makes one wonder what we'll get in the meantime: more populist, no-brain ratings-fodder of the likes of *Casualty, Holby City* and *Waterloo Road*? Adopt that course, and one can foresee a time in the not-too-distant future when the BBC's enemies -- aka the Conservative Party -- are openly questioning why it's making drama at all, when populist no-brain ratings-fodder is better suited to the commercial channels. It is not impossible that a Conservative government could sooner or later be instructing the BBC to abandon drama altogether, and concentrate solely on factual issues, meaning news and documentaries. I like St David of Attenborough and Dr Brian Cox (not to mention Dr Alice Roberts and Professor Iain Stewart) as much as the next man, but quality television ought to consist of more than just them.”

- Gary Wilkinson: “I gave up on *Outcasts* about 20mins into the first episode. I could not take the dialogue being continuous infodumping any more. It's not like you can't do that sort of thing -- someone I know recently described *Inception* as ‘an hour of infodumping followed by putting an hour of that infodump into action’ - you just have to have the writing chops to pull it off.

“I kind of despair at the state of UK television drama and UK tv in general. It's just so bland and risk-averse nowadays and I watch very little of it. There's the odd bit that's watchable (the recent series of *Dr Who* wasn't bad), but for the most part the stuff I've really enjoyed in recent years has been American stuff like *The Wire*. When did the BBC really do anything really ground-breaking? *Our Friends In The North?* *Holding On?* Like over ten years ago. I keep trying (ie. *Outcasts*), but I've not got much hope of things getting any better soon.”

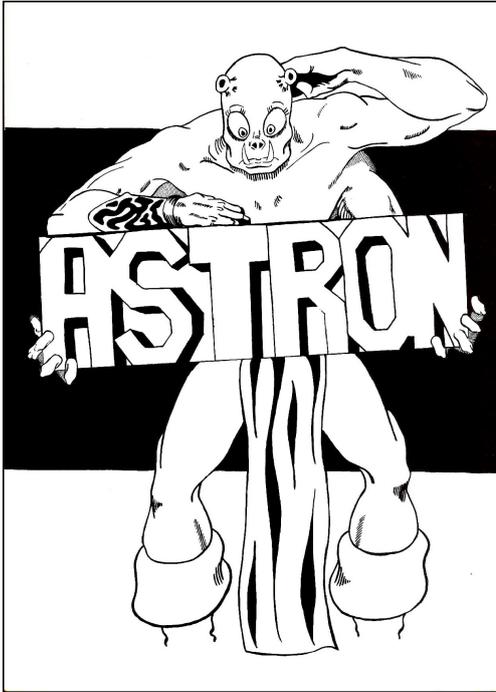


- Lloyd Penney: “I do listen to the BBC, usually Radio 2 or sometimes Radio 4 or 5 Live. I had to look up *The Archers* to see what it was about: a radio soap opera that had its 60th anniversary just a couple of months ago. Definitely not enough to get me to listen. To do all the things I want plus all the things recommended to me, I'd need more than 48 hours a day, and more than 14 days a week. Right now, I really don't know what sf is on television, other than *Doctor Who*. I just don't have the time, and nothing that wanders past me catches my eye.

“Anniversaries... I date my own entry into fandom from December 1977, so that means 33 years for me. I had read about fandom in some of the associated *Star Trek* books, and hoped to meet up with it, and I did in the rather Victorian city of Victoria, British Columbia. It was a *Trek* club, but we must all start somewhere. A great time, and I am still in touch with a couple of the people from there through the miracles of Facebook.”

- Chris Holmes: “It was interesting to read about your entry into organized Fandom and to discover that we were contemporaries! Novacon 8 was my first convention, I even booked a room, which baffled my mother because we only lived in Shirley!”

Which we should perhaps point out would have been a journey of around eight miles on a fairly well-served bus route. I was lucky: my father offered to pick me both evenings.



“I just went upstairs and pulled out the three issues of *Astron* from my collection. It all seems so near and yet so very far away at the same time. I remember being daunted by the fact that I was following that amazing cover by Brian Lewis and agonizing over every line; such a shame really, I could do a lot better today. It didn't help, that when you got Chris Baker to do the third cover, my effort ended up looking very amateur by comparison. Do you remember, I had tried to ‘tart-up’ the art by applying Lettratrone to the box containing the title and your printer had to strip it off because it wouldn't print well?”

Hey, I still like that illustration. Unfortunately, the logo beneath the tone became virtually unreadable when Prontoprint reduced the A3 original to A4 (they gave me a test copy to prove their point, and I counted myself fortunate the staff didn't just go ahead regardless). And in case you've forgotten, I still have one unpublished *Astron* cover of yours in the archives, which has the added complication of being partially in colour.

“Thanks for using ‘Heart of My Heart’ in this latest issue. It was done for a co-worker, who asked for an example of my work, a couple of years ago. It would have made a much better cover to the second issue of *Astron*, but I wasn't capable of doing that level of work back in the spring of 1978.”

“I loved Brian Lewis' art and I actually own the original art for a group of four convention badges he designed. I always hoped that someone would get around to doing a nice, thick art book about him. I even made some enquiries, back in the early 1990s, to see if I could do something to honour his talent but it all came to naught in the end. Maybe now, with the advent of these expensive tomes dedicated to Don Lawrence and Ron Embleton, someone will get around to it.

“Thanks again for using my work and for the trip down memory lane.”

● I also heard from: Paul Birch (“A really nice fluid morning read, almost cosily gossipy in style but with some nice sharp knife twists early on in for good measure.”), Ray Holloway, Gary Farber, Jim Barker, Art Widner (who's experiencing curious problems accessing the eFanzines site), Pete Lyon (“Just got back from a long trip to India, suitably disorientated.”), R-Lauraine Tutihasi, Joel Lane (“I've just read and enjoyed the latest *FF*. Thanks! Special request: could we pleeeez have some horror coverage next time?”), Dave O'Connell, Phill Probert (with welcome news of his new management contract in Edinburgh), Lesley Ward.

This has been the all-feedback *Fortnightly Fix* #21, dated 30 March 2011. Edited by Steve Green. Artwork by Brad Foster (pg.1), Alan White (pg.2), Pete Lyon (pg.3), Chris Holmes (pg.4). My usual thanks to Bill Burns & eFanzines.com, and to all contributors. Letters of comment are welcomed via stevegreen@livejournal.com. *The FFix* is a Gutter Press fanzine.