



VIBRATOR

This may prove to be the latest issue of VIBRATOR, the cheap economy size fanzine from Graham Charnock at 45 Kimberley Gardens, London N4 1LD. Yes I've moved on since the last issue and so has the complexity of London Post Codes. This issue like all previous issues is dedicated to people with extensive liver damage and its eventual outcome, death, which Malcolm de Chazal so aptly described as "the bowel movement of the soul evacuating the body by intense pressure on the spiritual anus."

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NIGHTS AT THE CINEMA 1: NAZIS AT THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

The film is a fine and enduring legacy to the talents of West Coast fan and bit-part actor Jim Young, who died following its completion. His robot Hitler is one of the most believable characters in the film. Possibly the only believable character, which he plays stoically as a head in a glass dome with a tube up his nose, thus inducing more sympathy than the rest of the cast put together which is systematically sliced, slashed and diced like they didn't deserve it.

Classic dialogue:

Woman vomits after person's brain is ripped from their head and smashed.

Evil Scientist : "What's wrong with you. You were never squeamish."

Woman: "I'm pregnant."

SO WHO HAS BEEN GETTING ON MY TITS LATELY?

Well, there is ANDY HOOPER. Firstly in an issue of FLAG he deconstructed fandom in Arnie Katz fashion into significant periods and movements. Was I disappointed to find myself ignored as a focal point fan with respect to my own particular era despite being involved with a number of seminal fanzines, and fannish movements, in favour of the likes of Joseph Nicholas whose petty and vitriolic little articles picking on sub-standard fanzines fooled none of us who were around at the time? Bloody right, I was. Then, in response to one of my peevish posts on Facebook about suddenly coming across posts and comments by people I had never heard of and didn't particularly like, Andy Hooper remarked that I probably didn't like people before I joined Facebook. While this is undeniably true I wonder what he is basing this opinion on. Surely it's nothing personal, like my less than charitable public remarks about his Corflu dramas? He still publishes me in his fanzine, Chunga, for instance, but perhaps he is just characteristically fair-minded and open-hearted, (except that he thinks I characteristically dislike people). I was originally using 'Like' of course in the Facebook sense where it takes on its own fantasy meaning, and you have to 'like' people to befriend them, and then commit yourself to 'like' their comments. There is no easy button to press to dislike something; you have to get off your fat virtual arse and actually say something, which sometimes seems to go against the Facebook grain. I admit there is far too much unquestioning friendliness going

about on Facebook for my taste, and if I can do my bit to balance it I'm more than willing to do more work on my reputation for being Mr Grumpy than I already have.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW!

Bloody Hell, dead a lot of them. ROB HOLDSTOCK, JOHN BROSANAN, JOHN PIGGOT, TERRY HUGHES, MIKE GLICKSOHN, BOB SHAW, KEN BULMER. I'm talking about my old readers of course. Of course a lot of people are dead who refused to have anything to do with me, like JOHN BRUNNER. And those who are not dead have mostly turned up on Facebook, which is the next best thing, but let's not dwell on them. What of the living or at least the not-quite-dead. There's BRIAN PARKER for instance. Whoever would have thought he'd come good and end up having two of his paintings exhibited in the annual Cork Street exhibition. Speaking of people who came good, but not in a sexual sense, there is MALCOLM EDWARDS who has become the biggest, richest publisher in the history of science fiction, as well as owning the rights to every novel ever written, but still never manages to win any Hugos. Maybe he should take more time actually editing his existing authors rather than wining and dining potential clients. And my old buddy CHRIST PRIEST who at seventy years old can no longer officially be counted amongst the Guardian's Best New Young Writers, but coins it writing Hollywood Blockbusters. On a lesser scale of achievement (although I would never say that) ALAN DOREY who was only ten years old when my first fanzine came out (which was a few years older at least than ANDY HOOPER) now has his own local radio show. And ROY KETTLE has been honoured with an OBE, something focal point fan GREG PICKERGILL from the same generation never achieved. But you won't find ROY mentioned in any sweeping generalized evaluation of fannish eras and who are counted as the big knobs in such by someone whose critical faculties were so distorted as to dismiss AMFO as a pretty fanzine, cartianly not something FLAG can be accused of. And what of the women? MARY REED, for instance now writes best-selling crime fiction under the unlikely name of MARY REED. And PAT CHARNOCK. . . (I don't actually know what became of her after our painful contested litigious divorce in 1980, when she sued for possession of the fanzines). Meanwhile if anyone knows what has happened to PETER ROBERTS, maybe they would let me know. He was a real fun guy. CHARLES PLATT is still alive, I gather, although he no longer talks to me, even on Facebook, so he may not be alive after all.

ANOTHER DAY ANOTHER WAR

Lord knows we've all lived through enough of them, eh? Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, even unacknowledged ones like Northern Ireland. Once when I was much younger than I am today I got into an argument with the son of a military family. He had been seconded from some academy to a residential course I was attending under the aegis of the County Courts, by whom I was employed at the time. He was very upset about the recent deaths of some British troops waylaid and slaughtered at a Northern Ireland checkpoint. I sympathised with him, and told him so, but also that my sympathy was somehow circumscribed by the fact that these were people who had joined the Army and committed to what they would probably be asked to do knowing the risks. Soldiers go to war and soldiers die, that's what soldiers do. He was very angry and I thought for one moment he would hit me. Well, hundreds of British soldiers killed in too many wars, and here we go again, people use it as an excuse for not lending military support to suppressed people even in a cause that most people would describe as worthy. No more British dead they say. Well, tell you what, I bet servicemen, of any stripe, serving overseas never bleat as much about putting their lives on the line to help someone, half as much as liberals wailing and whingeing in their homelands. No more British dead? Why not, if they have joined the Army knowing the consequences? And can maybe save and protect a proportionately larger number of people under threat from ruthless military dictatorships. Please feel free to send me shit in the post if you disagree with this. I'm used to being Mr Unpopular.

On this day in History, Joachim Wenz invented the doodle. This was a day in prehistory in a cave in Altamira, so it didn't do him much good, and in fact he starved to death during one of the not infrequent ice ages, after inviting his in-laws around for a pot roast that didn't in fact exist. They were understandably annoyed and threatened to cut him out of their will, but died before the codicil could be ratified. Later one of his ancestors sold the principle to Google. Ironically none of the Google Doodles celebrated his death or even his life. Shame really.

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BORN TOO LATE

Was it Freddie Mercury who sang "Who wants to live forever?" Well, I guess he may have had some inside view on that. But the undeniable truth is that living forever, or immortality as we call it, is infinitely attractive not only to sf types who have read endless scenarios on the subject. Charles Platt for instance so obviously feared death he signed up with a cult that promised to cut your head off upon death and cryogenically freeze it, until such a time some meaningful data might be recovered from your cold dead conscience. Now we all know this idea is crap, but apparently Charles fell for it, even going to far as to sign up such luminaries as Timothy Leary for the process and offering to act as an intermediary to detach Tim's head when the moment came. I imagine Charles would have let someone else hold the scalpel, but who knows.

Like anyone else who cannot imagine life without themselves I find the idea attractive but obviously as an aspirational fantasy since I am not actually mad. But lately I've seen so many reports on this subject which have given me pause for thought. As far as I can see it, the scale of medical research into this subject and general allied disciplines has proceeded at such a pace over the last few years, I can only see it continue to rise at an exponential rate.

I've already touched in this fanzine on the fact that our community health services seem very well co-ordinated in running pre-emptive health checks on the likes of older people like me, and statistics reveal the life expectation of people (at least in fairly wealthy Western democracies) is increasing gradually. Where is all this going and when will it end, if ever? More money is being invested in medical research than in almost any other area of scientific research and development except perhaps in arms technology. The irony there is too obvious for me to dwell on it. With people talking of building organs to order to replace failing ones (and perhaps even printing them to order on 3D printers) I can't help feeling that for many people now living, like my granddaughter Eloise, aged only two and a half years old, the prospect of living forever might well be in view. Of course how society and government deal with the implications of this will be interesting to see. Some sf writers have even constructed their own scenarios about this, but we all know sf writers are not particularly good at predicting the way the future will actually work out. For me, of course, and I think like many people reading this, I was born just too late to get a shot at this. But I have at least been privileged to live long enough to experience many booms in the development of science and technology, which have made my life more fun if nothing else.

WITHER, IAIN BANKS

I came across an old bag of goodies from Novacon 40, and amongst it was a pamphlet by Iain Banks, *The Spheres*, something which he acknowledges was excised from a draft of *Transition*. *The Spheres* is an example of all I find bad about Banks, and writing in general. It's sloppy, it leaps from premise to premise and exhibits obvious examples of an improvisational style of random association writing. Nothing inherently wrong with that, of course, as a preliminary technique except I think it needs a level of self-editing Banks is not capable of. Basically, it's overwritten. Banks' way of working, I imagine, was to start a riff off the top of his head and

then go back and paint in detail, often overloading it so it becomes turgid and impenetrable. Again, that's not bad in itself for a starting point. But there is no evidence that Banks tried to tris or to edit it down and craft it. Everything remains off the top of his head and sometime⁴s it sparks, but most times sometimes it is mundane and clichéd, and often sometimes just plain bad:

'Kner sat in his small hotel room, eyes widening, the angle his back described against the bed-head gradually increasing as he sat up.'

And sometimes tortuous and clumsy:

"He might have been, just a little, trying to impress her, he supposed. He had shown her more of his lenses and their associated equipment than he might have shown a male reporter, both because he would not have been hoping to secure a luncheon date with a male reporter, and also because he would not have expected a mere girl to notice very much that he had not specifically pointed out to her."

It's frankly careless drunken writing. I recognize that because I write similar stuff myself, but when I sober up I feel embarrassed and throw it in the bin.

The shame is the rambling shambolic first half of *The Spheres* improves marginally when it metamorphoses into another iteration of the hero who after being absorbed into a sphere emerges into a more overtly dreamscape view of a Mediterranean travelogue told in a more engaging first person. Banks is quite good at this, but doesn't write enough of it in my view.

I would guess from my reading that a lot of Bank's visions originated in the fever dreams of an alcoholic. Because I recognize them so intensely myself.

It is sad when someone who is a mainstay of a profession in which we all have a shared interest dies, but we should never allow natural sentiment to cloud our critical responses.

CIRCULAR WALKS FROM SUPERMARKET CARPARKS 1. SAINSBURYS CAMBERWELL (SE22 8BE)

Distance One Mile. Time half an hour, without stopping for a Chinese takeaway.

Park up in the north east corner of the car park (Sect. A-B near the modern breeze-block and red-brick rendered Toddlers' Club) And walk up through a small but nicely modelled garden onto Champion Hill. Turn left and climb up the hill, and cut across the busy road right into Abridge Road. Soon you will find yourself in the heart of the Dog Kennel Hill Community Housing Estate. Mark at the architectural majesty of these brick-built hives.

To the left, a distinctive set of steps with modern wrought-iron railings leads to the northern estates. But continue to the Community Centre, a modern hexagonal clapboard structure fronted by a rather derelict semi-circular amphitheatre (from which point incidentally you are afforded spectacular downhill views southwards to a bank of elms in a communal garden).

Continue into Bulmer Road, turning right and following the road down until it meets Quorn Road. Follow Quorn Road (a visit to the estates on the left hand side reveal unexpected vistas of the Lewisham-Link railway line).

Eventually you will emerge onto Champion Hill once more, opposite the Wong-Hoo Chinese takeaway. Marvel at its splendid neo-nineties architecture. Here you can turn directly north through a patch of scrub laughingly described as a recreation ground and rejoin the high ground of the Sainsburys Carpark. Discerning walkers, however, will make time for a small diversion, turning left and then immediately right past the plaster gnome shop into Albert Street, where the bleak, pokey thirties terrace buildings have almost no redeeming features except several nicely proportioned and distinctive number plaques (numbers 6 & 7 will benefit from a close scrutiny). The tiny front gardens, however display on a good day impressively organized ranks of green wheelie bins.

Carrying on down the street you will pass, via a short footpath, into a more modern pseudo-vernacular estate of modest maisonettes. There is little of distinction here, but all the doors are highly-lacquered. Look out for splendid views of the Dulwich Hamlet F.C. ground on the right, with its spectacular floodlighting gantries and the distinctive low-level radio-wave antenna. You may proceed from here ever eastwards, but you will find no escape across the playing fields to the rear of Kings College Hospital which lay securely fenced off. Turn back and follow the left curve of Abbotsbury Road and you will find yourself miraculously back into the main access of the Sainsburys Carpark. Enjoy a visit to the community Recycling Centre while you are here but, remember, no cardboard.

VIBRATOR BACKSIDE

NOW WE COME TO SAY GOODBYE

Typically in the old Vibrator this area was used to list Fanzines received in Trade. It's heartening that I still receive hard copy fanzines these days, even though BILL BURNS' efanzine site has largely deterred a lot of people from going down this route. And yet you keep giving him awards, As if to celebrate this pernicious effect. I am personally sad about this development. Bill is a nice bloke (who has never produced a fanzine in his own right, by the way) but he has made it far too easy for people to post unconsidered and unedited crap. The name Drink Tank springs to mind. I won't comment on how such a shabby, badly edited and put together fanzine could ever win a Hugo. Perhaps the category should be buried, eh, Milt? I am going to borrow an idea from a young and upcoming fan I much admire, ANDY HOOPER, and make this a predominantly print only fanzine. Hell it's only six pages and with no fancy text colour and photos like Mike Meara incorporates into his very pretty fanzine Amfo. I will take this opportunity to say that BANANA WINGS is the best over fanzine of its generation I have received lately (see what I did Claire) and only surpassed by the vast majesty of CHUNGA, produced by Randy Byers, carl juarez, and some other bloke.

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Printed Paper Second Class

If you liked this fanzine and want to receive another issue, please let me know. Same goes if you didn't like it. There are no boxes to tick here like on Facebook; you will have to work to register your response. If you don't you may not get another issue, depending on my whim. That may just suit you dandy, mind you.

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**A Shrew Production
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