

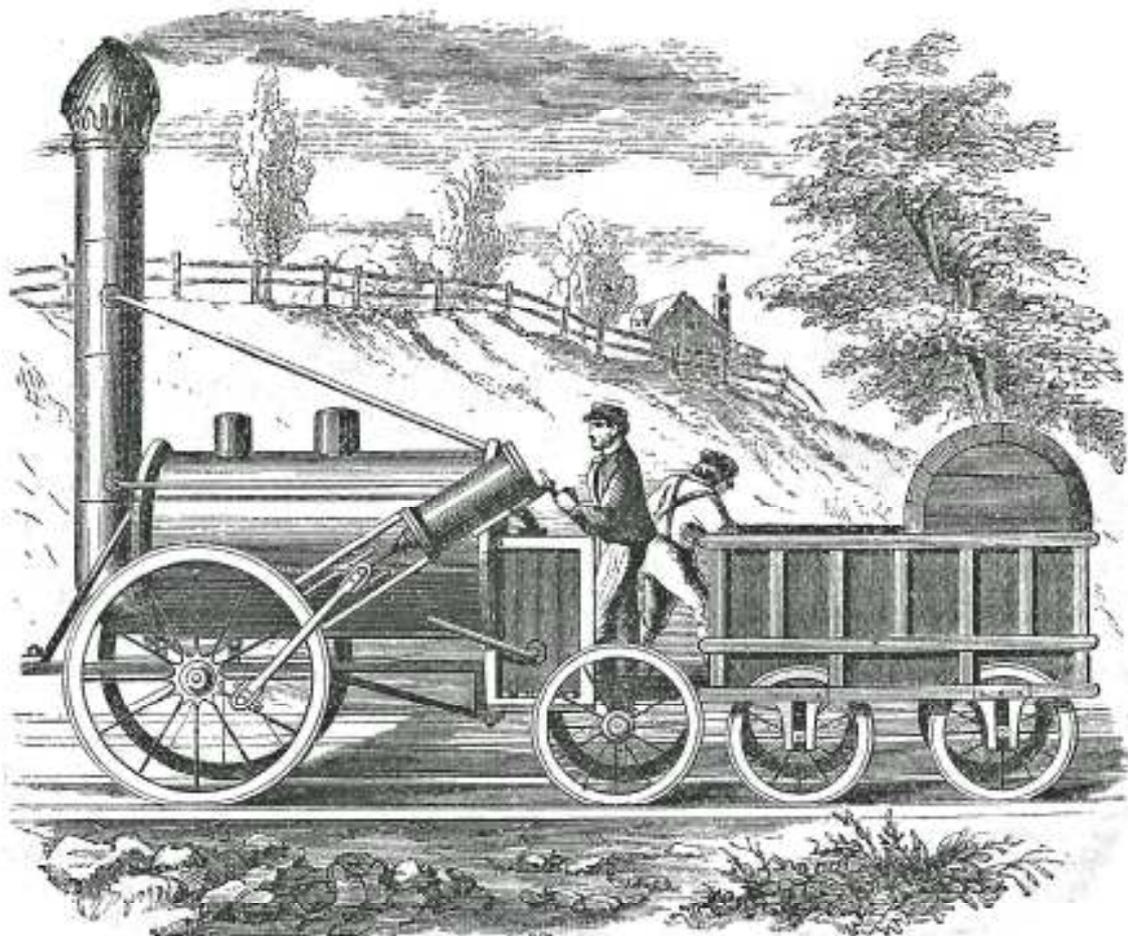
VIBRATOR
FAAn Award Best
Personalzine 2015
Nova Award
Best Fanzine 2014

NEBRASKA
VIBRATOR 2.0.15

BRITISH
16
EDITION

April 2015

HISTORY OF ENGINEERING: FIGURE 3 STEPHENSON'S "VIBRATOR"



"Pat": THE SPEED IS NOT YET ADEQUATE! CAN YOU INCREASE THE PRESSURE, STOKER?
"Graham": THE ENGINES MIGHT BLOW AT ANY MINUTE, CAPTAIN!

Ooby dooby, Oooby dooby, Oooby dooby doo. A new Vibrator blows in the wind like Roy Orbison's ghost, twisting and twirling like that dream catcher you hang up in your bedroom or those irritating wind-chimes you hang outside your back door, it's always the back door isn't it so that guests will bump their heads against it when they go out to smoke on your patio. But they will at least set up a sequence of chimes which will pass down through the ages as self-igniting superstrings, unless they are made of bamboo that is. Then they will just clack irritatingly, a bit like a lot of fans of Facebook. To everyone just back from Corflu I pass on my condolences, for those looking forward to going to Eastercon I pass on only my scorn.

Words words words, see what's become of me. I was a bit miffed at Corflu when several people sidled up to me and without even offering to buy me a drink, said they liked Vibrator but it didn't have enough of my own writing in it. They sort of implied that this was why I would never win a fan writing award. Stung by this I have done a word count of the first 12 issues of Vibrator (available as a combined volume on Lulu) and find that during that first twelve months I wrote 40,000 words of original material. That used to be almost a novel in the good old pulp days. Now I'm not saying quantity is everything (although I'd like to see someone who can match it) but I'm also saying that most of it was readable, and some of it even witty and amusing, and a bit of it thoughtful and provocative. But I guess you have to read the stuff to appreciate it, and obviously not enough people do. I don't know what I can do about that except become Notorious by starting WWII, or assassinating Justin Bieber, and I wouldn't even know where to begin in either case. Of course we may have to draw a distinction in best fan-writing between best writing in fanzines and best writing about fans; I did another quick tally and found only 8,000 words of my own material directly involved fans and fandom, still *only* 8,000 words isn't that bad, surely? Okay, I have never written a solid 8,000 word article about modern sf or the place of fandom in the world today, but then who amongst those who have been given fan writing accolades have? But in the end I cannot force people to like me or my writings, far less accept me force-feeding my stuff every month down their throats as if I'm priming geese to make fois gras, and may just antagonize them by asking them to do so. Just think of me wilting slowly here in Harringay becoming more and more morose and embittered every time award season comes around.

This is Vibrator 15, produced by Graham Charnock at 45 Kimberley Gardens, London, N4 1LD, UK, and is due for publication at the end of April, possibly even May 1st. Thanks to Alison Scott for the cover. Write to me at graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. By the time it is published we may have a new government, you lucky folks.

WHAT DID YOU DO AT CORFLU 32, DADDY?

Well, I was fairly confident that I was finally going to win a FAAn award. It was a moment I had been working towards all my life, after all, well at least since I had met Claire Brialey in a toilet in Austin (Don't get the wrong idea, it was where Pat Virzi stored the beer) and asked her what it took to produce an award winning fanzine. "Well," she said, looking at me as if I was a small dog who wanted to be patted, "You have to create three hundred paper copies and mail them out to three hundred people at least four times a year. It helps if you include photos of you in skimpy underwear. And you have to be witty and intelligent or at least have a husband who is witty and intelligent who can do it for you." Well, there was an initial problem, I didn't have a husband, but I eventually worked out what Claire was trying to say, in a sort of non-gender way. I didn't believe her then and I don't believe her now, especially about the husband bit. As I found at the time Claire was giving me this sage advice we were interrupted by The Virzi herself who tried to sell, or even give us, tokens which would enable us to redeem our souls in a later life (or something like that). I fell into a deep profound conversation with The Virzi about the trials of cattle wrestling which resulted with her telling me in no uncertain and Monty Pythons terms that she hadn't expected a Spanish Inquisition. It

taught me if nothing else that Corflu organizers can be a bit tetchy if you catch them off guard. This is a tip for Ian Sorensen, who came up to me and reduced me to tears by describing how he had just dribbled a piss stain down his trousers and how it was all my fault.

MEANWHILE THE CORFLU

What should I say. We arrived in Newcastle on Wednesday after traversing the country with the minimum of pee-breaks and not running over any dogs or urchins, and after Lurch, the concierge, had led us in and parked our car, we met up with Harry & Pat Bell who promptly invited us to join them next day for coffee in their new home in an improbably named and distant place called Gateshead

That evening, having met up with Uncle Johnny, Audrey, and Rob Jackson, a meal was in the offing so we retired to the Rani, an Indian Restaurant which inconveniently was about fifty yards from the hotel's entrance. Most of the restaurants we ended up going to over the weekend seemed to conform to that principle. I think the furthest Pat and I went was to the Cafe Rouge on Grey Street one lunchtime. Well, the exercise was good.

And so to bed. Or at least in my case a long lie down whilst I watched dust devils dance upon my bedroom floor. Yes, folks, that is how damaged I am.

The next morning must have dawned and my carefully kept diary notes tell me it was Thursday. Time to go out and see Pat and Harry's new home. Pat and I decided it would be quite a nice idea to go out there on the bus. Gateshead buses are the best in the world. Not only do they take London swipe cards but they cruise the streets constantly announcing where they are and instructing you when and how to get off. "Under no circumstances get up while the bus is in motion". I actually found many local inhabitants ignored these instructions and were happy enough to rise from their seat, "Whilst the bus was in motion" and the driver didn't even seem to mind. I am writing about this to Gateshead council and hope they will take my comments seriously and maybe reprimand their staff or even dismiss them, leaving them with no means to feed their children under this cruel and vindictive government.

We arrived at Pat and Harry's palatial mansion (you won't believe what 50k can buy you in Gateshead) and were invited in and not even instructed to remove our shoes, although Pat later forbade us to spill any coffee on her new carpet, not that any of us intended to do so. After a brief tour (which didn't include their portable pond) we settled down in the lounge. Johnny fell asleep because he was Johnny, but we prodded him occasionally, because he was Johnny. Harry produced some drawings by his father which proved only that his father was a much better artist than Harry, although possibly limited by the supply of media during wartime. I produced my guitar and sang a few folk songs based on the supply and demand difficulties of the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Or perhaps I just imagined that. Maybe it was Brian Parker.

Back at the hotel that afternoon we spent a lot of time sitting around in the Redwood Bar waiting for interesting people to arrive. Eventually one appeared in the shape and holy form of Steve Stiles. Elaine was with him but at least she didn't appear to be suffering from the after-effects of reading Existentialists on the Plane. (There's an idea for a movie). Steve seemed a bit jet-lagged and his room wasn't ready for occupation yet, so he merely sat there and said "Phew" every ten seconds or so. I didn't know whether this was an artistic or other affection or merely a symptom of sleeplessness, but I found it very off-putting at the time. Maybe it is just everybody's natural reaction upon having to talk to me. Phew!

In due course a lot of interesting people arrived, but I generally ran away from them. I even hung around Ian Sorensen for several hours but he refused to look me in the eye. I can take a hint.

The main event scheduled for committee members that afternoon/evening was programme book stapling and gusset stuffing. Most members of the committee apart from Pat and Harry Bell managed to participate in this. Eventually despite major stapler malfunction which entailed Rob Jackson hammering staples into copies with a hammer (I kid you not), the task was done.

On Friday I had to get up early enough to appear on the first programme item of the day, so I thought I'd take the opportunity to catch breakfast. The hotel's supposed four star breakfast was one of the three disappointments of my con. They had run out of eggs which took ten minutes to replace. By that time my taste for eggs was gone, having been over-ridden by an overdone sausage, raw tomatoes and tinned mushroom. Still the coffee was adequate. Someone later told me you could order scrambled or even poached eggs, but by then it was far too late.

Nigel Rowe had originally been scheduled to chair my panel but came up with some excuse about his travel plans being delayed, so we had to make do with Doug Bell. Doug was great, much prettier than Nigel, and only had to rely on copious notes and cribs to ask such simple questions as *And then what*. I learnt from him when it came to doing my MC presentation at the Banquet, not that it really did me any good. Frank Lunney described me as a scared rabbit in the headlights on that occasion, but more of that later. As an introductory panel to the convention I think it performed its function, with Spike providing the balance to my crazed ramblings.

For the Meet the Committee feature at the opening ceremony Pat dressed up in a skirt, and a hat with fruit on it, which reminded me of why I loved her. No, I've forgotten already. We all dressed up in costumes and hats of similar silliness and photos exist to tell the story much better than I can here. Well, it seemed we finally had a convention and there was no way out of it now for any of us, although I thought I once did see Claire Brialey running for the exit screaming "Kill me now, please!"

GERI SULLIVAN

What can I say. I met her. She was larger than life and overwhelming on oh so many levels. We went for a meal with her at the Italian Restaurant, again opposite the hotel entrance, but I didn't get much chance to talk to her. I was sitting opposite Ted White who insisted on telling me at great detail about his career in a t-shirt wholesalers in the late '90s. I remember that much but not more. Ted's anecdotes go into total and overwhelming detail so in the end they are often not so much anecdotes as entire life-histories. If you have several hours to spare in your life and are willing just to nod occasionally I'm sure they are gripping, but I was tired and overwrought that night and finally had to tell him to simply shut up. I wasn't pleased with that. And I was less pleased when he didn't shut up but simply started again. So I told him again. Then he started again. Then I told him again. I seemed to have been trapped in some kind of anecdotal timewarp where nothing I could do could stop the outpourings. Eventually he seemed to get the message and I relaxed enough to try and take in other conversations, but by that time the bill was on the table.

UNEXPECTED ARRIVALS

Well Ian Williams wasn't exactly unexpected since I had been influential in persuading him to give it a try this year. It was nice to see him, and nice to see him evidently enjoying himself amongst his old chums like Kev Williams, although not so much Harry Bell. Alan Rispin was someone I guess I must have met before although I didn't remember much about it. He too was amiable, a good and engaging conversationalist, and held interesting political views on town planning and development, especially with regard to the former town council office we found ourselves chatting in, having served for twenty years as a Liberal Councillor. Jim Barker from nearby Falkirk was as unexpected as a swallow in Spring, and it was nice to see him too. I'd like to see him doing more fan-art but since cartooning is what keeps body and soul together for him, I feel guilty about asking him for pieces, especially having read his snippets from *Client From Hell* which often outlines the gyrations people

go through to ask someone to do something for free which they expect to use professionally. Rest assured, Jim, if you read this there will be no taint of professionalism on anything you might like to send me for Vibrator.

All in all I have many pleasant memories of Corflu 32, and some not so pleasant. I pleaded a headache on Saturday night and instead of going out for a meal, wandered around the quayside looking for snack food. Eventually found a Tesco Convenience store which was open and bought an assortment of fruit and nuts. I imagined other people wining and dining and carousing in merry company, and went back to my hotel and cried. I was disappointed that Avedon didn't enter more into the spirit of being a GoH, and disappointed that Martin Hoare (despite having months of notice) couldn't get it together enough to adequately stream and record video.

For this convention, I'd deliberately chosen a role in Publications that I thought would leave me free to enjoy the con when it happened and not worry about it. But it seems it is not in my character not to worry. Oh well.

REMAKE, REMODEL

Interesting to see The Philadelphia Story and its remake High Society, almost back to back. For a start the original Dexter character who intervenes in his ex-wife's remarriage (played by Cary Grant) was a debauched drunk whose wife didn't understand him. In the remake the character (Bing Crosby) is equally misunderstood, but because he is a hideous jazz musician; no trace of alcohol on *his* breath. One of the remake's major failings is casting Grace Kelly, a woman of minimal acting abilities, in the role Katherine Hepburn inhabited in the original. The main principle of the plot is that the main female role is an unforgiving iceberg character, something that Hepburn pulls off superbly with its transitions to ultimate remorse and self-awareness, but which the bland emotionless Kelly is simply not up to; neither is Bing Crosby capable of striking any sparks off her. You never believe there is still a torrid emotional bind between them, of the like Hepburn and Cary Grant generate. Casting difficulties also arise in posing Frank Sinatra in the James Stewart role as a reporter sent to spy on the wedding event; he is not even a tenth of the actor of Stewart's calibre and runs through Stewart's lines as if by rote without any of Stewart's wryness and acuity or humour. The most irksome diversion from the original though is how the characters burst into song intermittently, because it is, after all, a musical. There are many original lines of dialogue transposed from one film to another, but the characterizations hardly support them in the remake, and they do not resonate the way they do in the original. Grace Kelly is so often left expressing self-doubt with a simple sad puppy face; whereas Hepburn smoulders with real angst. What would Grace Kelly have gone on to if she hadn't been killed in that accident. Well, I like to think she would have become a better actress, but perhaps by that stage of her life she was perhaps more interested in an eventless future as one of the supremely rich. It never worked for Diana either. It also totally cuts out the sub-plot which involves the editor of Spy Magazine in a scandal which in fact precipitated the whole plot in the original story.

If any of you have suggestions for remakes or *reboots* which are better than the original, I would be interested to hear them.

AS FOR PEOPLE WHO COMPLAIN THERE IS NOT ENOUGH CRITICISM IN THIS JOURNAL

The Numbness of the Lambs

Comparative Narration: Two Conversations

George R.R. Martin posted this latest GoT excerpt on his blog.

Ser Harrold studied her face. “You are comely enough, I grant you. When Lady Anya first told me of this match, I was afraid that you might look like your father.”

“Little pointy beard and all?” Alayne laughed.

“I never meant... “

“I hope you joust better than you talk.”

For a moment he looked shocked. But as the song was ending, he burst into a laugh. “No one told me you were clever.”

He has good teeth, she thought, straight and white. And when he smiles, he has the nicest dimples. She ran one finger down his cheek. “Should we ever wed, you’ll have to send Saffron back to her father. I’ll be all the spice you’ll want.”

He grinned. “I will hold you to that promise, my lady. Until that day, may I wear your favor in the tourney?”

“You may not. It is promised to... another.” She was not sure who as yet, but she knew she would find someone.

Graham Greene from *The End of the Affair*, published in 1951.

Quite suddenly I lost my temper. I believe I was annoyed chiefly by his complacency, the sense that nothing intellectual could ever trouble him, the assumption of an intimate knowledge of somebody he had only known for a few hours or days, whom we had known for years. I said, 'She was nothing of the sort.'

'Bendrix,' Henry said sharply.

'She could put blinkers on any man,' I said, 'even on a priest. She's only deceived you, father, as she deceived her husband and me. She was a consummate liar.'

'She never pretended to be what she wasn't'

'I wasn't her only lover.'

'Stop it,' Henry said. 'You've no right...'

'Let him alone,' Father Crompton said. 'Let the poor man rave.'

'Don't give me your professional pity, father. Keep it for your penitents.'

'You can't dictate to me whom I'm to pity, Mr Bendrix.'

'Any man could have her.'

I longed to believe what I said, for then there would be nothing to miss or regret. I would no longer be tied to her wherever she was. I would be free.

'And you can't teach me anything about penitence, Mr Bendrix. I've had twenty five years of the Confessional. There's nothing we can do some of the saints haven't done before us.'

'I've got nothing to repent except failure. Go back to your own people, father, back to your bloody little box and your beads.'

'You'll find me there any time you want me.'

'Me want you, father? Father, I don't want to be rude, but I'm no Sarah. No Sarah.'

I couldn't get through the tough skin of his complacency. I pushed my chair back and said, 'You're wrong, father. This isn't anything subtle like pain. I'm not in pain, I'm in hate. I hate Sarah because she was a little tart, I hate Henry because she stuck to him, and I hate you and your imaginary God because you took her away from all of us.'

This is why I no longer read science fiction/fantasy.

One is writing to formula and speckled with clichés, where the characters are interchangeable. The other is intense and passionate emotional polemic which supports real character and focuses on the essential dilemma of the novel. Which do you really prefer? Well I prefer someone who can actually write over someone who programmes zombie text on his computer at so many words per hour to fill up 900 pages that go round and round forever. One is the chaff you spread to fatten chickens up; the other is a meal you cook for a respected guest. One is a paparazzi photo of Jody Price; the other is a classical study by Rubens. Sometimes there is nothing wrong with being a literary snob, you know..

WHAT IS TO BE DONE ABOUT THE FAAn AWARDS?

Traditionally these awards, given annually at Corflu, have been decided by a simple process of peers voting on the fanactivity of one another. Some people have identified a problem with the declining number of voters, perhaps seeing this as trivializing the value of the awards (although it seems to me a recognition by ten peers is as valid as by fifty peers). It is typically the lot of FAAn award administrators to bemoan this process without offering any practical solutions. Now several people, with perhaps Andy Hooper most notably in the forefront, have suggested one solution: a preliminary list of nominees selected by voters (a la Hugos) from which a non-plussed or confused public could simply select and choose, as if ordering a quarter pounder with cheese and French fries (or a chicken sandwich if you prefer it). This is certainly a suggestion which bears consideration and discussion. I'm all in favour of spreading the egoboo in this fashion, but my own view is that it would add another bureaucratic level of *who decides what* to the process, and there might always be some disgruntled fan (probably me) who doesn't see why his fanzine should be excluded from such a list (especially if it were my fanzine). Another opportunity for generating bad feeling, in other words. I see the essential problem as publicizing the awards and generating enthusiasm as far in advance as possible. I would prefer to see someone respected for their knowledge and views, possibly even Andy Hooper himself, writing a pre-emptive and unbiased roundup of fanactivity well in advance of the event, just to remind people of who might have their hat in the ring, without actually stipulating the level of hatness. Your contributions to this debate are of course welcomed and will be published here promptly over the next few months.

AS FOR LOCS, DAVE COCKFIELD GOT IN FIRST WITH HIS POST-CON REFLECTIONS

I really enjoyed seeing you and Pat at Corflu. Thanks for giving me your excellent fanzine.

Please ignore any innuendo. It will be as excruciatingly deliberate as the spelling errors which are not. Just the result of a poor education.

Tynecon III was my 2nd but Corflu was my 1st, much like your Vibrator although I see that you are engaging it for the 14th time during a 2nd lease of life. Vibrators come in weird and varied forms to titillate even the most jaded libido. After 30 years of abstinence from fanzine Fandom yours has succeeded in hitting the "G" spot persuading me to take mouse in hand to respond.

I've obviously come late, especially concerning the listing of artists held on cd. It would take me weeks just contemplating how to list mine. Alphabetically, Stylistically, or even by Quality, Quantity, or the Weight (Band?). It is probably easier to say, or even lie about the fact, that I have never owned anything that could be manipulated to reproduce the vibrations of a bunch of wankers like U2. It is not that I don't like the group or their musical machinations. Okay yes it is. I just was never turned on by them. Give me Paloma Faith any day as she invariably succeeds in hitting my button. It sounds like Joseph Nicholas is interested in music much more to my taste although I only have about 6 garlic bulbs, sorry albums. I still haven't succumbed to wearing skirts or dresses yet but if I manage to reduce my fat bum through regular exercise that could well happen.

It was both sad and gratifying to read your piece about Bob Shaw. In the 70's I took Midge Reitan, the Chicago fan who sadly passed away in 2010, to Grasmere for a weekend. We had arranged to have a day out with Bob and Sadie in Ulverston but unfortunately there had been a death in the family and Bob called to cancel. It was disappointing for Midge but there was nothing to do but get on with enjoying the countryside and immersing ourselves in the history of local celebrities. However Wordsworth didn't quite quell the atmosphere of doom and gloom. It would have taken a visit from Grasmere regular Thomas de Quincy to do that.

Then, "out of the blue" as they say, Bob rang the hotel on our last night to let me know that he and Sadie were on route. We had a very pleasant, and drunken, evening quaffing wine and beer. It was so enjoyable that when we finally noticed that the bar had officially closed his velvet tongue persuaded the night porter to briefly open the bar to pour us three rounds of drinks. They were purchased on my room number of course.



Photo: Dave Cockfield

Many years later I and two friends visited Bob and Sadie on our way back to London from Scotland. They insisted that we break our journey by staying for the weekend. Both were wonderful hosts. While Sadie prepared dinner Bob took us to the beach to hunt jellyfish armed with only a single shot air pistol. No trophy to hang on the sitting room wall on that occasion much to Sadie's satisfaction. Bob proudly showed us his workroom for producing stained glassware, items of which he had pointed out for sale in a local shop window earlier. Thankfully the shop was closed as they were a bit pricey for me after a three week tour of the highlands. That night we drank vast quantities of scotch, both mine and his. When I finally crashed out in his daughter's bed, the lucky girl was absent at the time, I emptied money from my pockets onto a side table. Unbeknownst (is that a real word in the right context?) to me, Bob popped his head in the door early the next morning and filched a fiver to pay the milkman. I never knew until a letter arrived weeks later with a fiver and an abject apology. Because the money was in view he had assumed it was his daughter's.

I read all of Bob's books and enjoyed them all although I did upset him once for suggesting that he avoid three book contracts. This was because in my opinion it invariably led to a great first book, then a short story collection, followed by a relatively poor novel by his standards that he had to hurriedly finish with a deadline looming. Fortunately a few pints accompanied by scotch mollified him.

Both of the Shaws are greatly missed.

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PAUL SKELTON TYPICALLY TAKES ME TO TASK ON A SIMPLE TYPO... OR WAS IT...

Curious...You write that your regular loccers are "what makes this fanzine what it is, or what it isn't." Presumably the latter in the case of *Vibrator 2.0.14*, given that you also quote your deadline as being "...a few days in advance of..." April 1st, which by a major coincidence, would be about the exact moment *Vibrator 2.0.13* was launched at Corflu. So whilst my *Vibrator* ship may have come in at Corflu, it also happens to be a boat I have already missed.

Missed by quite some margin actually, as Cas came down with dreaded lurgy shortly after we got back home again. You might wonder what this has to do with the additional delay in this LoC. Well the fact is that here at Castle Skelton we are an equal opportunity household with full gender parity. So we split our tasks equally along easily identifiable lines. I handle all things to do with science fiction, and fandom (eg. Reading SF, fanzines and writing LoCs), whilst Cas is responsible for all things mundane (ie. Everything else). Well obviously, being a naturally caring new-age guy, I've had to abandon this strict demarcation and pitch in on the household tasks front, such as actually putting dirty dishes and cutlery into the dishwasher instead of leaving them on the kitchen work-surface by the sink after which, equally obviously, I've had to lie down and recover for a bit...which just seems to eat up the day. Who knows where the time goes? I get so fatigued, it's like I've had to dig all night...but that's just the way things happen in my life. But seriously...

Ian Williams CD listing puzzles me, unless he was simply pulling stuff up from memory as each item occurred to him. Obviously a better memory than mine. I'd have had to go to the racks and, being anal, would have listed them in alphabetical order by artist, which is obviously how I file them, enabling me to find what I want to play fairly quickly or even not find it at all if I then discover I've only got it on vinyl. Alternatively of course I could simply have tried sneaking a few into the previous paragraph, as I know you will have realised. I do notice though that he doesn't have

anything by the (according to Mike Harding) legendary Lancashire Blues singers Blind Lemon Clegg or Whistling Willie Ramsbotham (“He had a lot of problems, that boy!”)

Pace Fred Smith. You have to remember that I am a musical ignoramus and by what you describe as “carefully worked out variations from the original melody” and by what I describe as “mannered and artificial” we are simply describing a different response to exactly the same thing. My credentials as an MI can be confirmed by all the guitar-playing readers of *Vibrator* in that they prefer the Spotnicks to both the Ventures and the Shadows whereas I, who couldn’t carry a tune even if given a bucket, preferred the latter two.

Nor do I actually want the “lots of Glenn Miller” offered by Robert Lichtman. I only actually like the famous numbers, partly I suppose from early exposure to them coupled with falling platonically in love with June Allyson whilst watching *The Glenn Miller Story* in my very much younger days. So I will close with a few final words...end, finis, terminus, amen and ‘over and out’

Paul Skelton can be found at paulskelton2@gmail.com

MEANWHILE NIC FAREY TEARS HIMSELF AWAY FROM HIS ARDUOUS TAXI-DRIVING DUTIES TO CONTRIBUTE THIS:

Being an obvious clerihow connoisseur meself, I feel constrained to observe that Meara's efforts do seem to suffer from what used to be called "Hooper's disease", and unfortunate tendency to exhibit the kind of convoluted cleverness which disappears up it's own arse - a condition that nice Mr. Hooper seems to have largely excised.

Michael Q. Meara*
Could express himself clearer.
We expect there's no chance
That this might happen in France.

*(Note to sub: check middle initial)

MILT STEVENS THINKS PEOPLE AREN'T INTERESTED IN SF ANYMORE. HE MAY BE RIGHT.

It seems that *Vibrator* #13 has disappeared somewhere in the ether. However, *Vibrator* #14 has arrived. It contains a number of comments on Star Trek. The name seems familiar.

Every year, the LASFS stages a convention in Los Angeles titled Loscon. It’s a general SF con which has been occurring since 1975. In 2016, the theme of the con will be Star Trek in honor of the 50th anniversary of the show’s beginning. That’s actually a reasonable idea. The show had a tremendous impact on the field, and it’s a good topic for conversation. Still, I feel a little uneasy about the idea.

Everybody seems to agree that science fiction conventions should try to attract new people. At the same time, there is the assumption that new attendees couldn’t possibly be interested in science fiction. At last year’s Loscon, one third of the programs (21 out of 63) were on costuming. While I may be a total reactionary, I suspect there may still be a few people who are interested in science fiction.

I first encountered Star Trek at Tricon in Cleveland in 1966. The producers of the show had sent some actresses in interesting costumes to the con as a promotion. That got at least a little of my attention. At the time the premier episode was going to be shown, I was in the bar with Poul and Karen Anderson. Karen wanted to go see what this new TV show was like. I already knew that the idea of SF on television would never work out.

I was overseas in the Navy when the show actually appeared. Each episode of the show was summarized in Yandro, so I knew what it was like. I watched the actual show in re-runs when I got back to the United States in March 1967.

Star Trek had some similarities to naval practices. The bridge on the Enterprise looked like a CIC (Combat Information Center) with view screens instead of status boards. Flight deck personnel do wear jerseys of different colors. Red was for ordinance handlers. It's grunt work but not really any more dangerous than anything else on a flight deck. Since I had the nuclear weapons authenticators, I only worked on the flight deck during nuclear weapons drills. My jersey was white, so I was a nuke spook.

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PHILIP TURNER LIKES LOOKING AT BACKSIDES

FYI, my first experience of V2014 was the backside as the mag was folded inside in. I liked the cover when I unfolded it. A distinctly early MAD influence. And I soon became suitably clued up by the fan clerihews.

I agree with J N-H on the Star Trek follow-ups. My dad used to enjoy watching Captain Picard struggling to tug his jersey down in TNG, and Captain Quack of Voyager was always good for a laugh. But DS9 was very watchable and something to take a bit more seriously. Apart from the Bajorans and their wormhole aliens, of course.

The Prisoner: iconic but risible.

The humble baked bean, food-bank customers will be overjoyed to learn, can be jazzed up enormously by adding red kidney beans, chopped tomatoes, bits of cooked sausage and a dash of Uncle Joe's hot pepper sauce. The meal is cheap, filling, tasty and there's lots of it, and it's easily achievable by applying the lost art of cooking. And remembering that you are allowed to open more than one tin at a time.

Isn't it a bit too nanny-stateish to make jagged edges a criminal offence?

Damn! I have to start paying Council Tax again this month. I'd better dash off and start saving.

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AND HERE'S A LOC FROM OLD AUNTY MARION LINWOOD

Many thanks for Vibrator - Old Granny Charnock's remedies are gems of wisdom.

My Granny Annie had sayings of a more mundane nature expressing the ancient wisdom of Old Dinton in Wiltshire where my "Baker" ancestors lived for 400 years. Instead of telling my brothers to wear a scarf and not loose their gloves she would use all her weather forecasting skills to utter 'Ne'er cast a clout till May be out'. Getting boys to do what they are told is quite a skill – maybe Granny Charnock had lost the plot.

If you come across the old Wiltshire recipe for darkening hair I'd like to know what you mix with rosemary tisane to get that effect unless it's something too disgustingly rural for this townie.

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TAXI-ONOMY – Confessions of a Taxi Driver Part 3 by Nic Farey

Every trade has its jargon, and of course the taxi lark is no exception, so I thought I'd present a handy-dandy guide to some of it.

However, that deservedly multiple award-winning Grah is probably expecting stuff more like ribald and/or salacious anecdotes, so I'll start with one from the other night, hoping it's not too much of a risk to Uncle Johnny's excitement level.

When I'm working one of the radio cabs, we have four specific stands we stage at (that calls are dispatched from). One of these (the "130") moves to different places depending on the hour, but overnight it's at the Commercial Center, home to fabled Indian restaurant Namaste, wherein we dined with Mearas, Burnses and Doc Rob before the last Vegas Corflu, but also to the world-famous Green Door swingers club, Badlands gay bar, and also Hawks' Gym, advertised as a "gentlemens' spa" (translation: gay bathhouse).

So I'm sitting there on the nut, and a bandit pulls up in front of me and adjacent to Hawks. The driver, a chap of the Oriental persuasion, hops out and does it quick on his toes over to me, so I wind down the window.

"Where is bath house?", he asks.

I nod over at Hawks. "That's it there. Hawks gym and spa."

"Ah, fankyou!", he says, taking a step back towards his cab, before turning back to me and inclining his head in the direction of his vehicle and passenger, adding rather superfluously: "He want gay sex!"

OK, maybe you had to be there, but it cracked *me* up.

Partial glossary:

Back-loading : When the doorman skips the nut cab for a fare and waves up one further back in line. (See also "Front-loading"). This happens for nefarious reasons, but also one legitimate one, needing a five-pack. The recognized sign for this is the doorman raising his arms over his head in a roof shape.

Bandit : A cab/driver from a competing firm. They are naturally the scum of the Earth. A couple of companies are considered to be inveterate long-haulers, a couple others drive like every trip is a 'Fast & Furious' outtake.

Coffee Break : Distress call code, usually meaning the passenger is problematic. The procedure is that three or four others cabs (ideally including a Road Supervisor) will converge on the location for safety in numbers. Needless to say, we're not supposed to start a punch-up or anything like that, the idea is usually to get the fare out of the cab and lock the doors. We also have a panic button which calls Metro (LVPD) and the TA cops.

Five-pack : By State law, the maximum number of passengers allowed in a cab is 5, but most only carry 4. Some firms have 5-capacity vans, we have Crown Victorias which are crap.

Friendly : One of ours (i.e. a Yellow, Checker or Star cab/driver).

Front-Loading : Cutting in line and taking a fare away from a cab ahead of you. Needless to say this is rather frowned-upon by the cab whose ride you just nicked. However, at hotel stands the doormen control and manage what punters they put where, and are known to give preferential treatment, often based on whether they'll get a backhander for doing it, or in more practical terms whether the driver on the nut might (illegally) refuse the fare. This happens when you drop at a hotel, and although there might be cabs waiting in line, the doorman shoves the fare in your cab rather than call the next one up.

High-flagging : Carrying a fare with the meter not running. The terms dates back to ancient times when cabs actually had a "flag" that was cranked down to start the meter. These days we have orange lights (known as "cheater lights") which go off when the meter starts.

Long-hauling : By law, taxi drivers in Nevada are supposed to convey by the shortest distance route (unless the passenger directs otherwise). To pad the meter, quite a few will offer the "quicker" trip (usually via the interstate and highway), which might actually *be* a couple of minutes faster when the Strip is jammed up, but packs it on the meter. For example, I've personally heard from passengers quite amazed that their trip to the airport from Circus Circus (north Strip) is about \$17, when they paid \$35 or more in the opposite direction. They're usually a bit miffed when I tell them that airport to Circus Circus ought to be about the same.

Nut : First position on a stand.

Stand codes : If I hadn't mentioned this before, you can't flag down a taxi on the street in Las Vegas (which sounds odd, but is really a very useful safety regulation). We work off various stands (hotels, airport etc), and they all have numbered codes which is a fuck of a lot to remember. A significant proportion of our cabs are on what we call the "Elite" radio dispatch system, and crafty bandits get themselves radio scanners so they can hear the calls and try to nick the rides, which the bastards frequently succeed in doing. The codes are supposed to make it harder for them to clock what's going on.

Vox Day : Coffee break. Every time.

LLOYD PENNEY FANCIES GOING UP AGAINST PAUL (THE LOCMAN) SKELTON

The buzz is overseas again. Many thanks for Vibrator 2.0.14. Once I marvel at the young lady on the front cover, who is obviously shaken, but not stirred (Maybe her last name is Martini!), I will delve into the guts of it.

Congrats on the FAAn Award! Ah, I remember them well. I even voted on them this year. May they continue to wave, and to all those who sail in them.

I always did like the ST series over the decades, but even with the original not being very good in this day and age, but still very good given its competition in the late 60s, I still think that TNG was the best, for it set the look of the following movies and series, with the exception of Enterprise. I do think it's time to bring in another series, but also bring in SF writers to write for it.

Congrats to Paul Skelton on Best Letterhack! I shall be launching my latest campaign to win that title back, which consists of...writing lots of letters in...a letter-writing campaign...

The cartoon on the final page...well, yes, let's have the panel, but who'd be sitting in the audience? Yes, I simply had to ask that question. I expect answers in the next exciting issue!

Lloyd Penny can be found at penneys@bell.net

R-LAURRAINE TUTIHASI IS ALARMED ABOUT HER TYRES

Congratulations on winning an award from Novacon!

We bought a new car in January, but there isn't much of a story associated with it. Last fall we decided our Toyota Prius was getting a bit long in the tooth. It was almost thirteen years old.

Neither of us had kept a car that long before. I looked up some information online and decided that

the choice was between another Prius and a Honda Civic Hybrid. We took a Civic out on a test drive when we were in LA last November. We liked it quite well. Back in Tucson we visited a Toyota dealership, but I found serious objections to the current Prius. I didn't have clear seeing from the front; the left support column got in my way, and I had to crane my neck. We tried a Civic again and decided on it. We ordered a car and took delivery in early January. It took a while to get used to all the new features available. It also took time to get used to things that were different from the Toyota. So far we're getting better mileage than we used to get on our Prius. There's just one occasional problem. There's a sensor that's supposed to track tyre pressure. It's been set off three times with nothing wrong with the tyres. We'll mention it when we take the car in for service. I don't consider it to be a serious problem.

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R-Laurraine Tutihasi can be found at laurraine@mac.com

FRED SMITH SEEMS TO LIKE EVERYTHING, EVEN CATS.

Thanks once again. Should make your deadline if it really is 30th April and publishing date NOT 1st April (as per backside!).

That's a great "eternal triangle" cover Steve has drawn this time. Highly appropriate for a "Startling" type zine. Noted that the babe is dressed like a showgirl while the bum has space helmet, Buck Rogers type rocket backpack and is armed not only with blaster but sword! Just the thing for dealing with a bem!

Like your "I before E except after C" examples. Weird! If I don't watch it I can be pedantic too, a failing of old age. Not very impressed with your Granny's legacy "Love of C & W music" and the collection of Authentic but assume you're kidding.

Brian Fortey (I like cats too!) says that "everything is an acquired taste" but "everything? Friend of mine opines that our taste in popular music depends on what we heard as adolescents. Some truth in that but taste also develops to the extent that we can look back and wonder why we ever liked something and, of course, as Brian says we can also acquire a taste for the new. I'm not about to argue again (De gustibus and all that!) but can only express (aghast) disbelief when John Nielson-Hall asserts that The Tornados' "Telstar" is "the greatest instrumental record of all time"! Really? The greatest? Of all time?

Star Trek I regarded at the time as typical TV rubbish and I was particularly upset by what they did to Fredric Brown's "Arena", reducing it to a flat Kirk versus Monster hand-to-tentacle combat, missing all the unique features of Brown's story. Likewise, when I saw the first *Star Wars* movie my immediate reaction was that the movie makers have discovered Thirties space opera. Happily, SF on the big screen has moved on although the makers of *Star Wars* don't seem to have noticed. It's a bit like the *Lensmen* series: when "Galactic Patrol" was published in the Thirties it was a classic *of its time* but the sequels became repetitive and, ultimately, boring.

When Robert Lichtman (usual great letter!) talks about his parents' books it prompts me to say that no, my parents didn't have many books that I remember but about the earliest would probably be Rudyard Kipling's "Just So Stories" which my mother read to me and was then my own first reading. Re. Playback.fm, I did try it but find *Deezer* (the French outfit) better. They seem to be able to come up with the most obscure tunes you can hit them with. Quality of some of these old records is not always very good but what can you expect for free!

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(EDITOR: I bought a job lot of 250 7" singles on ebay, Fred, and went through them selecting some of the more curious and arcane items (and there were many). I couldn't find one that hadn't been posted on Youtube. I recently bought an LP in a charity shop: "Eddie Leyton on the Hi-Fi Organ - No

Blues on this Cruise" thinking there was no way this stuff would be on Youtube. But of course it was. That will never stop me buying and owning this stuff, however, because there is a definite magic in possessing the actual artefact.)

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL IS STILL STUCK ON APACHE

Not the version I was referring to in my last, but perhaps the most widely heard version was by the International Bongo Band in 1973. I say this because it was then sampled by all sorts of folk from the eighties onwards. You can hear bits of it in records by The Sugarhill Gang, Fatboy Slim, Grandmaster Flash, MC Hammer, M.I.A. and Rage Against The Machine, and lots of other folks besides. Another Fascinating Fact: Cliff Richard actually plays the opening drum on the original Shadows cut. The American release of the Shadows single is now pretty rare- it was released on Capitol but outsold by Jorgen Ingmann's version. If you can find a clean Capitol example of the release of the tune it could be worth \$1000- or it might not.

I tend to agree with Ian Williams about U2, although it is years since they made a decent record and the very sight of Bono playing at International Peacemaker makes me want to hide behind the sofa. But think back to when the Joshua Tree album came out and that deep rumble of organ and guitar fading in on Where The Streets Have No Name. Tell me that wasn't bloody brilliant. It certainly was. Not sure about The Unforgettable Fire but once upon a time I could recite the lyrics from Stay Faraway So Close off of Zooropa.

I cant say that there would be very much overlap between Ian's record collection and my own. Not enough electronics/ techno, too much Jazz and Folk, while my own collection is pretty deficient in anything from Africa, although I have a few obscure Ghanaian and Ethiopian tracks, and some cuts by King Sunny Ade. But Ian surely didn't need to list all that and I have noted your prohibition on anyone else doing so. So I wont.

I am enjoying Nic's taxi driver tales. I thought to myself that the only Vegas taxi drivers making money are the ones with Rob Jackson in the back. Ask him.

John Nielsen-Hall can be found at johnsila32@gmail.com

MURRAY MOORE CANNOT RECOGNIZE D. WEST'S CARICATURES. THAT'S GOING TO ANNOY HIM.

VIBRATOR 2.0.14 with its glorious black-and-white, very Stiles-ish, cover, has been shimmering, a mirage, receding every day atop my pile of fanzines-to-read, ever since you did not give me a copy during Corflu. But I understand: you being husband of the con chair kept you busy. Or if you *did*give me my copy, let's pretend you didn't, eh? I like the mirage metaphor.

D. West's four Corflu panellists on the back page (which was the second page I read, for the record) gave me pause as I mentally fumbled 'Who is the bloke on the right? He's familiar...' It is you, not now, but in 20 years, (more) elderly. Or perhaps, Rob Hansen, now?

Filing Toenails? Not a band name, yet?

From the gold -formerly the blue- couch I can see a tiny part of our nearby plaza. Our side of the street (north), our street, neighbours' houses on the south side of our street, a glimpse of the back side of the plaza.

Our plaza is a better than average plaza. The big money retailers are in malls. But we are lucky in that the owner of our plaza is spending big bucks, replacing all of the paving, like that. Among the plaza's shopping/service options are two banks, liquor store, beer store, drug store, hardware store, dentist, veterinarian, jeweller, bistro restaurant, laundromat, party store with Canada Post outlet, bakery, accountant, greasy pizza, and more.

You can have your lungs x-rayed and buy Baskin-Robbins ice cream: be aware, not in the same location. The party store has a selection of remaindered books, including a variety of U.K. imports. Today, in fact, I bought, for less than \$4 each, three trade paperbacks, two of them *The Fractal Prince* (Rajaniemi) and *The Ill-Made Knight* (Cameron), both Orion editions. Gollancz SF Masterworks volumes turn up, too. A middle-price-range grocery store just opened in a new building. If the plaza is x distance distant from our house then I walk or bike $6x$ to my doctor's office. And a non-expensive mall is $8x$ distant.

I can walk to a hospital in half an hour, useful as an indication of distance, you are thinking, but would Murray walk to a hospital? I walked to a clinic in that hospital for therapy after the surgery on my right hand to correct my contracting tendons (Dupuytren's Contracture). And Canada's only chain bookseller has an outlet $1x$ further beyond that hospital.

However the dentist we frequent is 10 minutes distant by car at 100 kph. That's another benefit of our location: one of the region's major highways, the Queen Elizabeth Way, is on the far side from us of our plaza.

The attraction of Terry Pratchett's writing eludes me, too. I read the first Discworld book, *The Colour of Magic*, finishing it without interest in more. Subsequent to Pratchett's death our younger son, who had a Pratchett-reading period, gave me *Mort* to read. *Mort*, Dennis told me, is better. Now I have read two Discworld novels and my conclusion that I have read sufficient Pratchett fiction is affirmed. "D. West can be found at 16 Rockville Drive, Embsay, Skipton, BD23 6BX." But will he open the door, or peer through a window and disappear?

(EDITOR I didn't give anybody a copy of 14 at Corflu but I took about 70 copies and left them piled up as freebies. Most of them disappeared. I'm surprised you don't recognize D's portrayal of the eminent Dr Rob Jackson, Murray, even more surprised that you would mistake his decrepitude for mine. "Filing Toenails" - not a band, but I hear Marty Cantor has already called dibs on it as a title for his next fanzine. Both my sons grew up reading Pratchett, but soon grew out of it, which to me is a measure of his writing. Its constant appeal to people who have grown to maturity, and especially their championing of it as Great Literature, continues to baffle me. Although some of us still eat the same breakfast cereal every day. Eldest son now reads Kafka and Thomas Pynchon and is working his way through Proust.)

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THEODORE BEALE STREET BLUES

In fairness (?) to the much-loathed Theodore Beale, I thought I'd better go to the source material and bought a copy of *THE IRRATIONAL ATHEIST* from Amazon.

After reading only the first nine pages I was struck by the fact that they alone were so full of unsupported contentions, misattribution or simple misapprehension of peoples' motives, misapplied assumptions and un-called for self-justifications and lines like **Researchers have shown that...** that frankly I quickly lost the will to live. But I persevered.

Its so called **factual** basis seems to consist of very selective processing and interpretation of statistics. Many examples are listed on the back cover. Every one of them mistakes or misinterprets the writers' original reasoning or puts words in the mouths of his protagonists which simply do not exist. I have highlighted some of my immediate concerns upon reading such drivel:

"More than 93% of all the wars in human history had no relation to religion."

(Ed. Define a war. Define a conflict. Define a minor civil disturbance.e Carefully select whatever statistic applies to each definition. Proceed to Go, but do not claim anything except a diploma in Idiocy.)

“The Spanish Inquisition had no jurisdiction over professing Jews, Muslims, or atheists, and executed fewer people on an annual basis than the state of Texas.”

*(Ed. The Spanish Inquisition was instigated in 1478 and not abolished until 1834. One source quotes 2,000 to 5,000 people actually executed. Over the span of the Spanish Inquisition this probably does equate with how many people Texas executes every year, but it does show how statistics can be manipulated to try and *prove* a point, doesn't it?)*

“Atheists are 3.84 times more likely to be imprisoned than Christians.”

“Red” state crime is primarily committed in *blue* countries”

(Ed: I don't even know what this latter statement means.)

“Sexually abused girls are 55 times more likely to commit suicide than girls raised Catholic.”

(Ed: What this has to do with atheism is never developed, although we are presumably supposed to believe that sexually abused girls are all atheist and that Catholic Girls are not sexually abused; it does however significantly reflect Beale's belief as an evangelistic Christian, that suicide is somehow a crime, and, along with atheism, equally morally reprehensible.)

“In the twentieth century, atheistic regimes killed three times more people in peacetime than those killed in all the wars and individual crimes combined.”

“(Ed. “athetistic regimes”? Typically, Beale is keen on attributing mass crimes to bogeys he calls regimes, most of which appear to be totally figments of his own mind).

But let's address just one statistical issue Beale dissects:

In an attempt to refute a particular argument of Richard Dawkins, he invents a concept called *atheist-run* countries (I don't know a single country whose population is 100% atheist. David Cameron is a Christian. Does that make Great Britain Christian-run?) and he seems to think that pointing out that such entities, even if they existed, have destroyed a great many churches and other religious institutions somehow negates Dawkins' contention that atheists would not destroy *iconic* religious sites, that is sites whose destruction would represent a direct political attack on the religion they represented. Two different arguments conflated into one for Beale's convenience. This is one example of addled polemical thinking I could pick out from a book that hosts hundreds of them. Virtually every statistic he pulls out of his hat to support his contentions proves susceptible to the same malaise of sloppy thinking.

For someone who parades and vaunts his own intelligence and intellectuality this book really does him no favours and reveals the true textures of the Emperor's New Clothes. It reads like a piece of clumsy sophomore term-work and if I was grading it as such I'd give it a C minus. Must do better with perhaps a note in the margin “Read the text, you dumbfuck!”. Don't read this book, or you will be in danger of damaging whoever or whatever you hurl it at. Merely touching it now evokes for me the distasteful odour of someone else's shit. Like many a real life puppy, Beale will roll over and do tricks and then expect you to pat him on the head and tell him what a clever boy he is. But, beware, this puppy is full of worms.

I KNOW I CAN ALWAYS RELY ON ROBERT LICHTMAN TO WRAP UP AN ISSUE

Lovely Real Cover by Steve Stiles on *Vibrator* 2.0.14. Thanks to you sending me a hard copy of this issue in the Corflu Care Package that arrived the other day, I have two versions of this cover to stare at: the A4-sized one in the package and the one I printed from the PDF you previously sent that I printed out. Because of Acrobat's auto-adjusting for American paper, the latter is rather smaller. They both look great, though. If only enough Hugo voters saw it, surely they would rise up as a movement and award him his long-delayed and well-deserved rocket this fall in far-of exotic Spokane.

Reading the details of "Old Granny Charnock's Remedies," I'm very relieved that the only one of these afflictions I've suffered even a little bit was smog deprivation (I grew up in Southern California during the peak smog years) – and that the cure prevalent in California is to take a quick trip to the deep heart of Los Angeles, breathe deeply, have lunch at Canter's Deli, and drive home again. It's so effective that it only rarely needs to be repeated, and the only part of it I miss is that lunch. (Typically a half-sandwich of pastrami and a steaming bowl of matzo ball soup, with a chocolate egg cream on the side to wash it all down.)

Like D. West, "I suppose I started losing touch with current music sometime around 1970." I've had a number of periods of doing so. The first was in 1971, coincidental to my moving to Tennessee and living in the woods. My battery-operated transistor radio had difficulty picking up much in the way of music stations, and the ones it did pick up were either resolutely Top Forty or, more often, strictly country. After a while I figured out a way to improve its performance. I had scored a long roll of thin copper wire someone left in the free store – and putting it in my jacket pocket I climbed about thirty feet up an obliging oak tree, tied the end of it securely to a branch, and then climbed back down unfurling and spreading the wire from one side to another of me, coiling around each major branch but with some slack to hopefully prevent it breaking when strong winds whipped the tree. Back on the ground, I brought the roll of wire into the school bus in which we were living, unwound another four or five feet, and then cut it. To that end I attached a spare roach clip (of the cheap type bought at Radio Shack) and clipped that to the radio. And turned it on. What a revelation! Many more stations came in, but they were still mostly Top Forty or country, but that was only during the day. At night it was a whole other story, as the AM "skip" phenomenon kicked in and suddenly we were receiving great radio stations out of places like Chicago and even Mexico ("The Mighty 690" with Wolfman Jack the deejay!). But then the Big Revelation hit home – that most of the music happening at that time simply didn't grab me. As I put it then, "How many times can you listen to 'Sweet Home Alabama' or 'Rambling Man' before you want to throw up?" So, rather parallel to having cable TV with hundreds of channels available, in fact there was really nothing much to listen to.

D's comments hit home with me time and again: "Thirty seconds of Chuck Berry is worth more than the entire output of Jimi Hendrix." And commenting on Bob Dylan: "He may be very worthy and meaningful and so on (or, alternatively, he may just be full of crap) but I prefer something more direct. Such as Jerry Lee Lewis. Or Little Richard. Or a bunch of others who are even less critically respectable. Popular music isn't really about being clever – it's about gut reaction." Yes, exactly, and that's why, as he also says, "teenage music is always likely to linger on" – and those three artists in particular, at least for me. (I would add Fats Domino to the list as well.)

I got back into music to some extent in the early '80s, coincident with leaving the Farm and finding myself back in the Bay Area where there was decent (or at least different) music on the radio. I had periods of interest in groups like the B52s and Pearl Harbor and the Explosions (and some others whose names have long escaped me), but they passed as I got more involved in raising my kids and having full-time employment. And for the most part, they haven't come back. So a lot of my music listening is at that playback.fm website I mentioned last time around, where I can live in my musical

past forever. I suppose this makes me sound really retro and probably I am, but I don't have either time or guidance as to what's worth listening to – and I don't want to get into buying CDs or downloading things, so it would have to be someone pointing me to a decent radio station I can listen to in my car.

This is a shorter than usual letter of comment, which I blame on not having anything further to say about *Star Trek* and kind of glazing over discussions of What Dress To Wear, comments on musical groups, and – oh, yes! – Ian Williams's exhaustive list of his CDs and his commentary thereupon. Also, I never knew Terry Pratchett and somehow also never read any of his many published works, so my own "When Writers Die" article would have to be about someone else. Not sure who, since most of the writers I actually know are still alive. But in the fullness of time....

(EDITOR: As you know, I've been to San Francisco many times, but I must admit I always felt short-changed because I never experienced any fog, which after all is one of the things SF is known for. I did experience one welcome bout of rain which even our local guide Bruce Townley was unable to guide us away from, in fact he insisted we get off the bus we were riding several stops early so we experience the full joy.)

JERRY KAUFMAN BOLDLY GOES WHERE NONE HAVE EVER GONE BEFORE

You're using US States and their license plate slogans for your title logo each issue, if I remember correctly - I hope you're able to get through all the states and Canadian provinces, as well as Australian states before you stop publishing. Does Britain have different plates designs for each shire? (Or county, or what-have-you.)

Another fine Steve Stiles concoction on your front cover. It's an incentive to vote in the Hugos this year (again).

I'm running out of chat on music, not least because you have forbidden us readers to list all our CD collection. Could I list all my vinyl instead? Of course, there's nothing really stopping me from listing anything I want - you could always edit out the lists. If only I had my music in a spreadsheet to make it easy. Without that, I'd have to haul everything down into this basement office in order to copy down the information. Too much work.

I'm also not going to discuss my personal toenail grooming regimen.

In your piece on Granny's remedies, is "pedantism" the knowledge of foot care? I guess this because the root "ped" means foot in one of those long-dead yet still with us ancient languages. Hittite, perhaps, or Aromatic.

I have not tried my hand at clerihews. Well, to be honest, four of my fingers are willing enough, but my thumb is opposed. (Stolen from Walt Willis.)

After listing his CD collection, Ian Williams writes about books. I have just finished reading a wizard book about books, entitled *A Pound of Paper*, by John Baxter. It's either a memoir disguised as a tutorial on book collecting, or a book about book collecting disguised as a memoir. Either way, it's a very enjoyable reading experience. John makes lots of digressions (about Australian fandom, Hollywood, Parisian food, and other topics) and tells lots of funny stories about himself and the people he has met in Australia, New York, Paris, and London.

At the time *Star Trek* first aired, I was a teenager and very enthusiastic about the show - in particular the first season and some of the second. Those shows were the most original, and felt the most like the pulp stories I'd read (not in the original magazines, but in library copies of the Groff Conklin and August Derleth anthologies). Parts of the second season and all of the third were the shows that visited planets just like the Old West or Nazi Germany or crime-riddled Chicago, and I turned up my nose at them. Nowadays, I can barely stand to watch any of them - they look no better than *Plan Nine from Outer Space*.

Mike Meara ran photos (or, as he calls them, phoots) from Tynecon I, and I was quite taken with the shot of you and Pat at the disco. Rock stars!

(EDITOR: UK car number plates are uniformly standard and boring, although I agree it would be nice to have personalized County plates and you may see a Photoshopped one heading up an issue Real Soon. Pat has a spreadsheet of her music which she prints out and takes with her whenever we visit exotic locations where rare records might be found (like San Francisco) I have 'A Pound of Paper' on my shelves (the book, not actually a ream of A4) but have never finished reading it, telling myself it is something I will complete when I am next holed up perhaps in hospital waiting for some terminal disease to carry me away. I remember those Star Trek shows which transported the cast into already established genre settings. It seemed to me at the time a cheap way to use existing sets and the script writers never pushed the scenarios beyond their bounds. I feel much the same way about current Dr Who episodes where they try much the same trick, importing Daleks into Wild West settings and so on.)

Jerry Kaufman can be found at JKaufman@aol.com

AND HERE IAN MAULE RESPONDED TO EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL BY FINALLY SENDING ME A LOC

Thanks for holding the presses to allow me time to get a late loc on Issue 14 to you.

I really don't know what is happening to the printed copies that you send me every month. I certainly don't throw them away unopened, or even opened so I can only assume that our local postman is getting fat on a monthly diet of Vibrators. Hmm, yummy.

I think we all have ambitions when we're young and sometimes not so young. Running a bookshop specialising in Science Fiction was an ambition of mine, and Janice, at one time, but the thought of the work involved and general sloth soon put paid to any plans in that direction. Early in the days of the World Wide Web one of my commuter friends and I thought it might be a good idea to set up a web design company. For once sloth didn't take hold and we actually got as far as registering Broadweb.co.uk and advertising our services through all the usual on-line listings that were around back then. We did get a few enquiries trickling through, but at the end of the day they all came to nothing. I remember doing an outline site for a small company and sending them details of where they could look at it on-line and comment. Nothing happened for some time and when I finally contacted them to get some sort of reaction the reply was along the lines of, "We know nothing about the web, was that a link you sent us?"

As I say, it was very early in the days of companies having an on-line presence. How times have changed.

I'll gloss over all the comments about music because, as you know, my musical tastes haven't moved beyond YES and the progressive rock of the seventies. Actually that's not strictly true. I did discover almost by accident Blackmore's Night and their blend of Renaissance and rock. I was so impressed with their sound that I actually bought all their CDs (and then of course ripped them) rather than making do with the poor quality audio I'd extracted from Youtube videos.

I really will gloss over anything to do with cats.

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JACK CALVERT ALSO RESPONDED TO A LAST MINUTE CALL

I missed a couple of issues there, not that I didn't enjoy them, but first I was stunned into agraphia for a while by your calling me your favorite West Coast correspondent. "But what about that nice Mister Lichtman from up the hill, who writes long, frequent letters that are coherent, cogent, and interesting?" I spluttered. And it isn't easy to splutter a sentence like that, even after years of study at Thog's Masterclass. But now I'm somewhat recovered. There were also a couple of weeks in there when I had a defective finger, and that reduced my typing skill from lousy to totally dreadful. That is also cleared. I am sorry that I missed loccing number 11: you put enough hooks in to pull up a loc in the form of a philosophical tome big enough to choke a whale, and obscure enough to puzzle Professor Heidegger. Not that I'm up to writing such a thing.

But what I'm doing here [now I remember] is loccing number 14. Great covers, front and back. And an interesting variety of letters in between, which gives Vibrator the feel of old time fanzine goodness. I have to agree that Star Trek is bad science fiction. That said, I compare it in my memory to Lost in Space, which was so truly awful that it was painful to watch. (And, I wonder if anyone else is annoyed by the ST title. A "trek" is a walk.)

Like Robert, I had books around the house while I was growing up, not necessarily good books, but that's likely what got me into a lifelong reading habit. One book we had was a nice copy of 'The Three Musketeers'. I remember reading that long long ago and admiring the illustrations. Recently I tried rereading it and realized that it is pulp fiction. We also had an extensive set of Little Leather Library books. I remember reading Poe stories, among others, in those. Those stories have held up a lot better on re-reading.

I came pretty late to the Terry Pratchett books: somehow I had got the idea that I wouldn't like them, but when I tried them, I found that I did, though I'm not moved to try to read them all. I was sorry to see him go.

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ANOTHER DEATH IN THE FAMILY

Every so often someone in the Great Fannish Family passes whose death demands comment. Art Widner, who died aged 97 on 17th April was one of those. We all knew Art had health problems, but I for one was stupid enough to believe he could, if not overcome them, still endure them for some considerable time and stay with us perhaps eternally for us selfishly to enjoy. Apparently Art knew better. I was first made aware of Art at Pat Virzi's Quire when Geri Sullivan showed me a photobook of nude male models, featuring Art. He was a fine figure of a man. I got a chance to talk to him at length at Corflu Silver. He was in confessional mode and we talked about alcoholism. I seemed to remember me remarking to him that I thought he was handling it much better than I was. He was at *Our* Corflu Cobalt in Winchester and I remember sitting next to him in the restaurant when he attempted to remove a malfunctioning hearing aid with a safety pin. We all winced. Later, he fell over in the car park and seriously damaged his leg, but Dr Jackson was at least on hand to patch him up. We met again at Sunnyvale. I had acne rosacea and he latched onto it as a badge of recognition, a stigmata of our mutual condition, pointing at his own face as a fellow sufferer. He was at Portland Corflu with his Artcar replete with aboriginal motifs, but I didn't get much opportunity to talk to him then, for which I am eternally sorry. He struck me as a man who always made the most of his opportunities to mix and mingle. It wasn't in his nature to close himself off to anyone, even young upstarts like me. I wish I could be more like him in that respect. And certainly I wish I could die with as few enemies as he seems to have had. I remember my immediate thought on hearing of his death was that if someone like Art could eventually die, we all have to seriously reconsider our own mortality.

Rich Coad must have been the last fan to see Art before he died and I'm glad to print here his appreciation of the man.

ART WIDNER by Rich Coad

Art Widner died on the night of April 17, 2014, just two and a half years shy of the one hundredth birthday we all hoped and expected would be the cause for another Ditto and celebration on the southern Mendocino County coast. Alan Rosenthal had arranged just such a fete for Art's ninetieth birthday in 2007. Unfortunately I was only able to be a Supporting Member of the "con" due to a long-planned vacation in Hawaii which couldn't be rescheduled. I was looking forward to a reprise in 2017 and, who knows, maybe we will still do something to remember Art at that time. He surely won't be forgotten by those who knew him.

I've known Art, or at least known of Art, for very nearly as long as I've been in fandom. I believe it was at the Oakland Westercon in 1975 that Jerry Kaufman introduced me to Lynn Kuehl and Cheryl Cline. They had a dittoed fanzine called "Brick and Board Journal" which, it turned out, they had produced for college credit. The story they told was of taking an English course with a professor who was a long time science fiction fan.

He told the class of various activities of SF fans, including producing fanzines, and Lynn and Cheryl approached the prof with an idea of doing a fanzine in lieu of a term paper. He readily agreed. Need I say that the professor was none other than Art Widner. At the time Art was gafiated. He'd been inactive in fandom for several decades, but the enthusiasm displayed by Lynn and Cheryl was contagious and it was not too long before Art was back in the thick of things, reviving his excellent fanzine, Yhos, after a lull of only about 34 years.

I'm not sure when or where exactly I first met Art. It was certainly in this late 1970s period, and probably at a party hosted by Lynn and Cheryl out in Concord, CA. However it happened, it didn't take long, probably less than an hour, to realize that Art, despite being nearly forty years older than me, was very much One Of Us.

I had met, via The Elves, Gnomes, and Little Men Marching and Chowder Society, several fans with claims to a First Fandom blazer before I ever met Art. Aubrey McDermott, who wrote for The Comet, was famous for continually backdating his entry into fandom whenever somebody with a prior claim to him reappeared. He also loved to regale us with tales of the fabulous SF pulps available during the Depression for only a quarter.

"But," he would say with an ominous gaze around the room, "who had a quarter?" He would pause, look around again, and ask plaintively, "Who had a quarter?" There was J. Ben Stark, who hosted Little Men's meetings at his house in Kensington, with a basement full of SF imported from the UK and available for only a modest markup. And Alva Rogers, who was always easy to talk to and someone I regret not getting to know better, since I've become quite an admirer of his artwork. All nice enough fellows, if a bit quirky, but nobody who felt like a friend, more like an acquaintance.

Art, on the other hand, who described himself as a "moldy fig" because he liked Dixieland Jazz and disliked BeBop, seemed to fit in effortlessly with the group of us punk rock fans known informally as Bay Area Punk Fandom. There was always a twinkle in Art's eyes at parties and he was happy to share a smoke and a drink with anybody. At parties he rarely talked of the old days but was as ready and able to talk about any contemporary topic as anyone else.

It was only on rare occasions that I was reminded that Art really had been around in the world for such a long time. One time we were talking about baseball and I mentioned how much I'd enjoyed going to see the Red Sox play at Fenway Park just prior to the 2004 Worldcon in Boston. "Ah," said Art, "I was always a Braves fan." Now, I knew that Art had grown up in Boston, so, I wondered, why was he a fan of a team from Milwaukee? Suddenly it dawned on me that Art was referring to the Boston Braves, from before the move to Milwaukee in 1953, which was three years before I was born. I don't know if his support continued after that move and the later move to Atlanta.

Another time the subject of great movies came up and I mentioned "The Wizard of Oz". "Oh, I hate that movie," Art exclaimed. "A total travesty!" Now that took me aback as it's one of the most generally loved films that I can think of. Naturally I had to have an explanation for this dislike and it turned out that the twenty-two year old Art Widner, a big fan of L. Frank Baum's Oz books, had gone to see the Judy Garland musical when it was first released, anticipating a straight adaptation of the book, which, of course, it wasn't. We definitely disagreed about that film but found common ground watching "Young Frankenstein" when he visited some time ago.

I began to see Art more often than the occasional party or convention when Stacy and I moved to Santa Rosa in 2007. Art lived in Gualala, just across the Sonoma County/Mendocino County border. It is not a huge distance as the crow flies but the roads between Santa Rosa and Gualala were not built by crows and had to follow the contours of the land which, especially in a several mile stretch between the mouth of the Russian River at Jenner, and the southern limits of Russian exploration of the West Coast at Fort Ross, means following the coast with large drops to the ocean on one side and steep hills that require numerous curves and switchbacks to negotiate. It's a beautiful drive in good weather for any passenger in a car. The driver can't really pay too much attention to the gorgeous ocean view or they're likely to end up in it. So Art would make fairly frequent jaunts down to Santa Rosa, either to see his doctors at Kaiser Medical Center, or to stock up on supplies at Costco, and then spend the night at our place so he didn't have to drive the treacherous route after dark or when he was tired. He'd arrive in his art car which was a sight to behold. It was a Volvo station wagon that his grand-daughter had won in a raffle at her job in Australia. The car was fully re-painted in the style of Aboriginal paintings, with texture that raised some of the paint as much as a centimeter from the body of the car. Art regularly drove it to an art car gathering held in Seattle well into his nineties. The car also gave away Art's political leanings with placards in the windows advising people to forget the Alamo and Pearl Harbor and remember Lincoln Savings and Loan. A tad obscure, perhaps, but as 2008 proved once again, those bankers just cannot be trusted. I wonder if Art's distrust of bankers may have been inspired by the Oz books he liked so much and which have been interpreted as an allegory of monetary policy.

The last time Art stayed with us was last December. He was to meet with doctors and then we'd go out to eat. Art arrived late, which was not unusual, but he'd missed his appointment through no fault of his own. The art car had blown a tire in Jenner and it took quite a while to get that taken care of. We went out for a good Indian meal and, although there was a bit of gauntness in his face, Art seemed quite well for his age. He wasn't, though. He told us that his cancer had invaded his spine and that he sometimes had some severe pain. We offered sympathy and prescription pain-killers, which he declined. This was the first time I thought that Art probably would not reach 100. Just a few months earlier, in September, Stacy, Alan Rosenthal, Jeanne Bowman, Art, and I had gone tide-pooling at a beach a few miles north of Gualala. Art, with his hiking stick, left the four of us in the dust on the trail to and from the beach. Okay, he needed to rest once in a while, but he was just a few days shy of turning 97. On the drive back from the beach Art pointed out a hotel and restaurant named Saint Orres, "That's the best restaurant I've ever been to", he told us.

As it turned out, I saw Art the afternoon of the day he died. Stacy and I had a long weekend getaway planned at Saint Orres, and of course we wanted to take Art for a meal at his favorite restaurant. We'd anticipated seeing Art in February, for his rescheduled doctor's appointment, but that day turned out to be one of the rare days when we had a storm, so once again Art missed his appointment. I'd e-mailed him to let him know that we were coming but had no reply. This wasn't unusual - Art frequently didn't respond to e-mail and often didn't hear his phone - so we just dropped by his house on the way to the hotel. The door was open and I stepped in calling his name. I was met by a nurse named Donna who said I could see Art. I had been unaware that he had become so ill; he was in a hospital style bed with a morphine drip to keep the pain at bay; I doubt he knew I was there. Obviously there was no going out to dinner but I made arrangements with Donna to come by and visit again on the Sunday, before we drove home. It was on Saturday morning, as I walked the dog and came within range of the hotel wi-fi, that I learned that Sunday was going to be too late.

Donna told me that Art had only been really ill for about two weeks. I'm glad he didn't suffer for too long, but I sure wish we'd been able to take him to dinner at Saint Orres. I will miss Art. I will remember him always. --- Rich Coad

VIBRATOR BACKSIDE

Well time to wrap another issue up, and even to boldly go whilst doing so, unless Jerry Kaufman pushes the deadline by writing me yet another late letter. I've had no response to any of my pleas for Corflu memoirs, not even from that most needy of people Ian Williams, so sod the lot of you, you were all obviously having too good a time to remember any of it. As for those of you who receive this fanzine regularly because I am such a good guy, but don't bother responding (you know who you are, Rob Jackson, Martin Hoare, Pat Charnock, Andrew Stephenson, Alison Scott, Rob Hansen, John & Eve Harvey,) you should be aware that I am seriously thinking of restricting the number of second-class stamps I buy every month. Pat has babies to feed after all. Even if they are evil little devil babies.

Meanwhile think of this. Man and his achievements and endeavours are so puny, even on a terrestrial scale that it is extreme arrogance for him to assume he has any effect on the climatological balance of the planet. All his mighty engines and burning of fossil fuels are just imagined vanities in his view of his importance e in the scheme of things. Look on my work ye mighty and then decide you have something better to do.

What I basically do with this fanzine, as I think I said at Corflu, is write a few bits about my own views, some political, and some trivial, some sf related, others not, whilst trying to provide enough hooks for people to hang comments on. Does that make this a focal point fanzine? I dunno. There are fanzines out there where the editors certainly give more regard to design and content than I do, Taral's excellent Broken Toys is one, Guy J Lillian 's Challenger is another, and of course the estimable Beam. And Journey Planet, and good old Andy's Flag. Maybe I try to give the arguments more continuity than those, because as David Cameron says, we are all in it together.

Graham Charnock – graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. Deadline for the next issue is May 31st 2015. Jump on board before the raft sinks.