



**November 2015**



## THE VINYL SOLUTION ISSUE

Hello. It's my birthday. Or at least it was on the 18<sup>th</sup> November. I have difficulty with birthdays in that I can never remember how old I am. When I phone up credit card companies for verification they always ask me how old I am. I don't know. I genuinely don't know. I often have to ask Pat if she is within earshot, then the person on the other end of the phone tells me that she (it's invariably a she) can't accept someone else telling me how old I am. For God's sake, it's not as if they must not deal with thousands of geriatrics every day. So I often give a wrong answer and am refused credit. I know how old I would like to be, but it never seems to correspond to my actual age. I know how old I feel, which of course is about forty years younger than my actual age, if only I knew it.

Anyway pip-toodle-oo and welcome to another issue of Vibrator, the fanzine you wish wasn't. We are here constantly looking over your shoulder and reporting your every movement, except if you are in a public toilet.

Join us, why don't you? Contribute to our merry adventures with your comments, help promulgate my peculiar view on fandom. There is no entry fee. I am Graham Charnock at [graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk). Deadline for the next issue is, oh, sometime towards the end of the month, let's say, 31 December.

### **ANOTHER DAY. ANOTHER ATROCITY**

Why Paris, why France? It is a contributor to a fairly toothless alliance pitted against IS in Syria, for sure, but I think it goes deeper than that. France has an under-class of Muslims and Islamists, largely incorporated into society as Nationals, who live in what are in effect ghettos in the major cities. Whether it is true or not, their sons and daughters perceive themselves as underprivileged and oppressed. Many are young and disaffected and rebellious. It's no surprise that IS and other militant Islamic bodies may seek to recruit them as sympathizers and Third Column foot-soldiers. Like the UK, France operates \*restrictive\* gun control procedures, but the open borders of the European Union countries may make it quite easy for organizations to supply them with powerful weapons and explosives that are not available on their home territory. That, to my mind, is a crucial point. No matter how angry you feel you cannot commit major mayhem without that sort of backup and support and of course organization, which thanks to the Internet is easy to construct. What lessons can we learn and what steps can we take? Perhaps re-

establish border controls with rigorous checks for weapons and explosives. Perhaps redirect internet surveillance away from porn sites and copyright-protection agencies, to improving models for intercepting terrorist data. Obviously dropping a nuclear weapon on Syria, as some people have advocated, is merely the most rabid expression of disgust. Putting troops on the ground in Syria is not an avenue any Western governments currently want to go down having shipped home soldiers in body bags after recent adventures, although this may change if the level of Militant Grand Events escalates; but, truth to tell, it may be the only real answer and we may have to, quite literally, bite the bullet.

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## **CITIZEN KALE by Roy Kettle**

I saw a recipe in the paper for kale crisps. I didn't even know they were a thing but apparently they are. As a late adopter of many things - but only of those things I actually do adopt - I thought it was time to give these a try. In the event, they were very tasty. And crisper than I'd expected.

We buy most of our veg and some fruit at the local greengrocers. They're really nice people and sell a lot of veg that's grown locally and a great selection of British apples, though they rarely do local oranges or bananas but their time will come. They had in some nice looking bunches of black kale. I've bought kale there before and occasionally it's had a bit of whitefly which quickly disappears after I whack the bunch against a wall, but these bunches looked fine. Just right for kale crisps as it turned out.

"It's got another name," said Jim, the greengrocer. "Calavalavo, I think."

"Cavolo nero," I said. Kathleen had told me that only a couple of hours previously so it was still there. "Nero for black," I guessed authoritatively, but didn't try to translate Cavolo in case it meant curly or cabbage or was a village in Tuscany.

"Cavaloreno," said Jim.

"Cavolo nero," I said. "Black kale."

"Calvonora," he said.

I had a lot of sympathy. Anyone nearby when I try to pronounce "vocabulary" is in for a treat.

"I'll have a bunch of cavolo nero then, please."

I didn't tell him what I wanted it for as he's resolutely old-fashioned and still hasn't forgiven me for mentioning Jamie Oliver in the same sentence as his beloved celeriac.

Veg packed away in my bag, I went to the gym which is only a couple of hundred yards. As usual, I rented a locker. I always rent an odd number as they're the top

ones. I have to bend down and forward in an awkward way to get at my stuff if I've dropped it into an even numbered subterranean locker and occasionally I feel my back go.

My shopping and clothes went into the locker and I went off to undertake the mysteries of the gym.

Coming back sweaty and a bit tired to an empty changing room, I opened up the locker. A swarm of whitefly boiled out. A swarm of angry whitefly, not happy at having been sealed in with my socks for an hour.

I tried swatting at them with my towel but the only ones I managed to kill were those that had stuck to my sweaty skin and I squashed them with tissues. I looked like I'd got a light case of leprosy. Obviously I wasn't going to solve the problem with wild towel manipulation or soggy tissues. Getting out quickly and leaving it all to someone else was the only answer.

The whitefly had largely stopped flying around and had settled on some of the locker doors. I moved all my clothes and the vegetables to a different part of the gym where there were fewer whitefly and fastened my empty locker. Getting dressed quickly, and hoping that no-one came in, I combed a few whitefly out of my hair and left without seeing anyone.

At the desk, I gave back my locker key but said nothing. Once, I'd mentioned a sticky mess I'd found on the changing room floor and then felt incredibly guilty because I assumed they'd think it was me anyway and blame me after I was gone. Think how much they'd blame me if it really was my fault. By not saying anything, I didn't feel too guilty. I knew they had a cleaner because I sometimes met him. It was his job. I was keeping someone in work.

Two days later I was back at the gym and the changing room was free of whitefly. No-one at the registration desk had looked at me accusingly. Bill, the strange older very right wing man who I sometimes see in the changing room was there. He has a disconcerting habit of standing naked in front of you when you're sitting down. As he is usually talking bollocks, this works for him.

"They need to do something about the insects," he said.

"What insects?" I asked innocently, but thought "Oh God, Oh God, I'm going to get the cleaner sacked."

"The spiders," he said. "There were some in the library when I went to read the papers this morning. It's the bloody council." Bill is obsessed by the bloody council which apparently fails to do anything with his council tax other than annoy him. I've given up arguing with him about it.

"Spiders aren't insects," I said with relief and total authority. "They're - they're - " And suddenly I couldn't quite recall exactly what they were. "They're just spiders."

Bill looked at me knowingly. He knew I didn't know. I said goodbye.

Before going home, I popped into the greengrocers to get some potatoes.

On the window, I saw a piece of paper. Jim saw me glance at it.

“I put the name there to remind me so I can tell customers who ask for the black kale.”

The piece of paper said “Covolo Nera.”

“Cavolo Nero,” I muttered. Jim didn’t hear me.

Cassie, who works there did,

“I told him,” she said. “But he wouldn’t listen.”

I decided not to say anything. Life really is too short to worry about the correct Italian name for black kale, I thought.

Another customer came in and asked for black kale.

Hurriedly, I picked up my potatoes and left.

--Roy Kettle

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## **LLOYD PENNEY**

Issue 2.0.20 of Vibrator was coming up for me to respond to, and suddenly 2.0.21 arrives, too. I’d prefer to do a loc for each issue, but time only allows for so much, so here’s a loc on both.

2.0.20...A fannish pubnight is a good thing to have. We have a few of them here, but already, we’re having a schism that means one small group who wants a better restaurant to gather in instead of a comfortable little bar. Sigh...well, not the first time, and we’re also not the first local pubnight to have that kind of schism. C’est la vie. Another recurring pain.

Let’s hear it for libidinous perverts! They make the world go ‘round, and give us someone to gossip and complain about in the con suite. Reading crap? You’ve got to read the crap to appreciate the good stuff much more. I am sure Joseph Nicholas is looking forward to the big Paris global warming/air pollution summit, and for the first time in a decade, the worldwide community won’t get short shrift from the Canadian delegation. We’ve had a wholesale change in government, and the new Liberal government, under Justin Trudeau, will treat the subject with all the importance it should have.

Emotionally intelligent trousers. Well, that sounds like Professor Elemental. Look him up, steampunk rapper, slightly mad, but provider of a good time for lots of people around the world now. Nic, any opinions on the Uber controversy? (Ah, a

look ahead at the next issue. Never mind...) We're dealing with Uber in Toronto, and it's all going to come to a head soon.

2.0.21...We didn't have any Hallowe'en parties to go to, but we did dress up in our fineries to go to a big dinner at Casa Loma. A marvelous time was had by all. Indeed, even we see here that Hallowe'en is mostly an American phenomenon, meant to tell advertisers when to start advertising for Christmas. And, American Thanksgiving be damned, just gets in the way of the Christmas insanity.

Barack Obama is probably disappointed and frustrated with constant attacks from the biggest bunch of insane politicians cunningly disguised as the Republican Party, so he is having fun with kids in the Oval Office, and his wit is unblunted, taking great shots at the Republicans. I won't go further with insane American politics, for I won't say anything that hasn't already been said.

Fandom is getting old? What's this 'getting' bit? It's already there, and telling kids to get off their lawns. In Toronto, I barely recognize what passes for fandom now, but there are other fandoms taking up our time, and frankly, giving us a lot more for our time and effort. There have been times recently where gafiation would be a welcome relief.

The job hunt is on again, and my recent employer may be in trouble with the government, so this should be good for a laugh. Let's watch 'em squirm as they try to explain why they let me go, and failed to tell me why. While I look, weekends can start early, and our own First Thursday is tonight. Many thanks for this, and I will try to keep up.

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### **TARAL WAYNE DOESN'T LIKE STEPHEN KING EITHER**

Let us begin this loc with my admission that I have from time to time posted pictures of my cat, Sailor, on Facebook ... as she was dying. Then posted her post-mortem photo. That should be unsympathetic enough for even the most hard-nosed Brit. And this one... not your usual posed photo, you must admit. But don't worry. She wasn't loaded. I keep the catnip safely locked away.



My own opinion about Steven King is that his popularity explains a great deal about American culture. Who is the archetypical Steven King hero? He (rarely she) is from somewhere that feels like either New England (where King lives) or Southern California (the center of modern American civilization). He has a job that doesn't involve any physical labour, or any intellectual weight lifting. He may even be a writer! What mainly distinguishes the Steven King hero, though, is that he possesses about as much real knowledge of anything as a potato. He can barely operate a television remote without a few choice cuss words, and a sour remark on the growing tendency of machines to dominate mankind. Clearly, he distrusts technology. He suspects it of having diabolical ramifications, if it is not the outright gift of unthinkable monstrosities abiding in the underworld, who are intent on infiltrating ours. Invariably, this will play out in a bloody climax, with soul-destroying consequences.

Is this not pretty much how most of the American public regards knowledge of *any* kind, particularly when it's of a *scientific* nature? It's not that Steven King isn't smart ... but you don't have to be stupid to know nothing in America. In fact, it is a generally beneficial, particularly if you seek employment at Fox News, on talk-radio, in professional league team sports, in banking or in government.

Thus I find Steven King protagonists impossible to empathize with, and quickly arrive at a point where I wish their souls to be devoured as speedily as possible, so that I can throw the book down the trash chute with a clear conscience.

I was once quite adept at the Astral Pole manoeuvre. Many of those who witnessed me perform it in 1980 have since recovered their eyesight. At the time, you see, I was wearing a lime green mini and bright red underwear that seared the wallpaper in the hall outside the program room I performed in. Since then, however, I have forgotten the steps. Worse, due to Myasthenia Gravis, the effort would overwhelm me. I would end on the floor from exhaustion before I got halfway through. It's a pity, because I'm probably as limber as ever, and I used to enjoy doing things (like push-ups) that people consistently refused to believe I could

do. Appearances can be very deceiving. Alas, I have finally caught up with my appearance of dissolution and decay.

If Britain gave up its nuclear deterrent, France would never let you hear the end of it. The entire nation would have busy cards drawn up, "The Third World Power" and then condescendingly refer to Korea, Israel, India and Pakistan as up-and-comers.

In Toronto, Vietnamese restaurants were all over the place from the 1990s... in fact, they seem to have driven most of the Chinese places out of business, because it became rather hard to find a greasy chopstick with the inescapable Daily Special of fried rice, Chop Suey and sweet and sour chicken balls. For a Chinese meal you had to go to a place with tablecloths and waiters who weren't the owner's own family, where the cheapest thing on the menu that wasn't an appetizer or bowl of rice was never under \$15. Strangely, after more than 20 years of rule, Vietnamese places are beginning to be crowded out by Korean or Tibetan restaurants, so when I want a hearty bowl of Phở or Satay, I'm out of luck. I have to put up with some abominable called Bim Bap or some such ... or Mo-Mo. How can you possibly order something called Mo-Mo with a straight face?

The real problem with fanart is that, these days, more people will see it at a small convention in Taos, New Mexico than will ever see it in a fanzine. And as far as viewing goes, the Internet is like comparing a scrawl in a toilet stall to a featured display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The whole business of being a fan artist feels increasingly pointless to me. Instead, I just post stuff on-line where it will usually at least draw a few comments.

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## **MILT STEVENS IS DEPRESSINGLY FATALISTIC ABOUT GUNS**

In Vibrator #21, you notice that people in the United States do a lot of shooting. They even do a lot of shooting at each other. Some of these incidents are described as massacres. That's true, but that isn't all we do. We also cut people, bludgeon people, and even blow them up with pressure cookers. We probably are on the hostile side. It may come from watching old John Wayne movies.

In theory, I agree the United States would be a better place with fewer guns. However, I know it's never going to happen. At the moment, there are over 50,000,000 guns in the United States. It would take you centuries to round up most of them. At any point in this process, the bad guys and the crazy guys are always going to have the remaining guns. Count on it.

Then there is the matter of enforcing a no guns policy. We currently have laws against illegal drugs and illegal aliens. At the same time, we have lots of illegal drugs and lots of illegal aliens. If the government can't keep out tons of cocaine and millions of people, how is it going to keep out millions of itty-bitty guns.

After every massacre, President Obama calls for anti-gun legislation. Unfortunately, he is a dead duck president. He has the moral power of a cigar store Indian. Nobody pays any attention to him.

In general, our government is neither loved nor trusted. There is a quite general perception that our government does more to us than for us. Many people have observed that our government doesn't seem to love or trust us. You have to go through a metal detector to enter a federal building. The government obviously thinks we would blow them up if we could. Would you expect us to turn our guns over to them.

It should be fairly obvious why people are always posting cute photos of cats. It takes too much work to get cute photos of alligators.

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**IAN WILLIAMS USES THE \*C\* WORD HERE. DELICATE READERS SHOULD MOVE ALONG.**

So, another Vibrator to loc. Just for a change I'll get one in early rather than leaving it to the last minute. But don't worry, the low standard I have set myself will remain unchanged.

Oooo, you mention cats! How can I resist that? You obviously get sick of receiving cute cat posts seemingly because a lot of them aren't cute except to their owners. Well, I make no such claims for my cats. All, bar one, are bog-standard moggies: a black and white female that looks like millions of other black and white cats; a smallish grey female that looks like every other grey cat in the world, a rather unprepossessing male with patches of black and patches of white and a sad-looking expression due to an operation on his eyelids to remove ingrowing lashes; a ginger and white male; a slender dark tortoiseshell female. Really, you wouldn't look at any of them twice but I love them just the same. Mind you I do have Aelfric a handsome pedigree British short-hair with an odd sort of creamy and tabbyish soft coat, a beautiful flat blue-eyed face with a playful and affectionate nature.

You get the occasional cat post from me (and others) because you're on my friends list along with cat people and lefties (politically that is, not as opposed to which hand you use), just as they get bits about stuff which interests people in sf fandom and they get politics and cats, and any other crap which engages my attention like Cuffs the recent and very good BBC cop drama. They focus on whichever aspect interests them just as I do with the stuff I get. My commenting today seems to be a series of: Fuck Britain first! They're a bunch of racist cunts. In response to several pieces of their propaganda shared by people who should know better.

So it's nothing personal. You just gotta take the wuff with the smooth (yes, doggy joke, but I couldn't think of a feline equivalent).

Hey, at lunchtime today I re-homed a friendly grey female I'd been fostering in my bedroom for a week or so to a nice couple from Blaydon -Harry Bell knows where that is.

Graham West's tribute to his father was an excellent and moving piece which revealed so much about D that I never knew and made me wish I'd known him better. Mind you, I believe it must be at least a quarter of a century since I last saw and spoke to him so that's hardly surprising. But it revealed so many different facets of his life and personality that I have no doubt were very new to many other people, not just myself.

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### **DAVID REDD HAS BEEN BUSY WITH HIS ECUMENICAL MATTERS**

Has to be fast-turnaround or lose it; still busy after launching our Church Guide produced with my best fanzine layout and prose ... i.e. not exactly "best", but people have been very kind. Next, got to renew the church electricity supply contract from details increasingly complex and jargon-ridden - just nationalise the lot, Jeremy; you know it makes sense.

Your nod to Halloween invited my grumps straight off (although nice graphic, Steve). Surely, sending children out to meet strangers on the night when all evil walks the earth could explain why USA-global society is now where it is? Don't get me started.

More fun to have another Barcon 3 report; collect the set. And a funeral report (thank you for Graham's speech) which read well but I wish it hadn't been necessary. Ah, mention of Leeds luminati incl. Simon Ounsley, active I hope, the to me \*the\* Michael Ashley, he of Nova and Sally Romania and brother Graham, Mike Ford surely he of Black Hole c.1980 ... never met any of them, having begun not meeting them in 1998 when I began my long tradition of missing Corflu. Good epitaph: "D always got his round in." Indeed he did, whether with alcohol or with ink. Despite Nic's enlightening best efforts, a rather sobering issue again.

*(You remind me again, Dave, how like Vibrator is to a parish newsletter or, worse, one of those generic Christmas missives you receive from your friends telling you all the jolly interesting (not!) things they have been up to in the previous year. Do you get LoC's from the readers of your parish newsletter? Do you have to cajole them into contributing the occasional article on jam-making, or wife-swapping in the local community or do they all ignore you with the supreme indifference exercised by most of my mailing list?)* David Redd can be found at [dave\\_redd@hotmail.com](mailto:dave_redd@hotmail.com)

## **PHILIP TURNER COMPLAINS I DIDN'T USE HIS LOC FOR VIBRATOR 20. HE'S RIGHT**

*(Vibrator 20)*

Your foot allows you to be welcomed into the FAAF Club, whose members describe themselves as Fit As A Fiddle -- but one with 3 broken strings.

Congrats on making people think the Hairy Adam Blight cover was for real. Pseudo-authenticity is a much striven-for goal and achieving it is always something special. And J. Nicholas' claim that there is no evidence that human activity isn't the sole cause of global warming merits only "epic fail" status, according to someone who is still waiting to be asked what sort of climate he'd like. (warmer would be nice)

In case Marion Linwood is still wondering, the clue is in "the end" and the "my" is misleading. And in case Paul Skelton is really bovvered, one of the Canadian football teams based in Alberta is called the Edmonton Eskimos, so it's not a sin to utter the E-word. (And they may be seen on BT Sport if you're signed up). Further, fossil fuels will last at least for another 200 years, which gives the boffins lots of time to perfect the clean and abundant fusion-powered electricity, which we were promised back in the 1970s. Although, things do seem to have gone ominously quiet on that front.

Let Fred Smith be comforted. I am cool with the general election result. Although, fondness for Dave the Leader would be pushing things as he's all flash and no substance, just like Tony B. Liar. But do I want to line up with Jezzer Corbyn and his mates like Tommo Watson to spit on people who don't agree with me? Not really. Too well brought up, I suppose. Blame the parents.

I can identify with Taxi Nic's weird sleeping habits thanks to BT Sport's penchant for putting re-runs of CFL matches on at stupid o'clock in the morning. Thus I am no stranger to seeing the dawn breaking around me and going back to bed for another couple of hours when another nail-biter is over and the final red flag has been waved -- not in honour of any Toytown Trots in Canada but to signal the end of the proceedings.

Finally, dare I mention that I have pensioned off the comedy Russian-soldier targets in the pistol range in favour of a job lot of comedy Corby Z'Beard targets? Probably not.

*(Vibrator 21)*

Good job Vib 2021 was printed on waterproof paper as the envelope it arrived in was distinctly soggy when I opened it, thanks to Hurricane Nameless. Monstrous front cover. Turned to the back page: who are these Cavendish and why do they deserve an embassy? (one the profofreader missed)

Memo to self: that holiday in Skipton -- forget it. Reached p 17 to find myself unLoCatable. My ramblings about Vib 20 were clearly too boring to include. Must do better.

That was an interesting fact about Donald Trump's personal wealth for Taxi Nic to recall for his customers when Trump becomes President O'Bummer II. The obit for D. West was well-written and informative. D. seems to have been as big a book-omaniac as my late father, who filled two houses with them.

The Ottawa Redblacks beat the Hamilton Tigercats whilst I was reading your zine (but you probably didn't wish to know that); congrats on the neatness of the layout.

Is Taxi Nic planning to include in his list of definitions, the *Vegas Dozen*? Which is ten for you, two for the Mob and one for the judge.

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### **CHUCK CONNOR CATCHES UP WITH VIBRATOR 20**

Many thanks for the V20-v2.0 edition, which finally made it after V21 (I keep feeling there should be some kind of Wernher von Braun reference, but I suspect that's already been done before), and so to LoC.

Not sure what to make of Rich Coad's comments re UK fans and Vietnamese cuisine – mainly as there's at least 3 in Watford (4 if you count the Golden Phoenix) 1 in St Albans and 1 less than ½ a mile away from us here in the veritable boondocks and backwaters of Stevenage. Mind you, from what I read on the front page of the Evening Standard this week, it seems Croydon is more famous for beating up little old ladies than it is for any 'exotic' foodstuffs.

Dan Steffan's comments re the *Sieg Heil* gag (and then worrying about the backlash afterwards) was something that made me smile. I've been discussing various attitudes that generations of friends & their offspring have been exhibiting – most notably regarding the stage version of *The Producers*. Friends who remember watching the original film still found the satire and obvious Brooks humo(u)r amusing. But their darling offspring were horrified at it – finding it distasteful and offensive. True, they had never seen the film, nor I suspect, would they have recognised the whole Busby Berkeley style of *Springtime For Hitler* (*I was born in Dusseldorf / Und that is why they call me Rolf / Don't be a schmuck, be a schmarty / Come and join the Nazi party!*) – but does that make the production any less relevant these days?

But, onwards and upwards - which, of course, would lead me onto John N-H's first LoC. Oddly, unlike John, I never got to see the initial version (I never got to see the second version until after you sent V21) so I'm not entirely sure what's going on – nor how this 'libidinous' comment came about – or even how pejorative it is either.

Was it something that was supposedly only for *In The Bar Eyes Only*?

Pejorative, by definition, seems to infer that the comments were derogatory, disparaging and designed to belittle. Again, not having seen the original source, I only have John N-H's comments – but I'm left with a feeling that this all sounds a

little like Chuck Harris and the ‘round robin’ letters he used to mail out pre-internet days. Derek Pickles became so pissed off with Chuck’s vitriolic comments re myself, that he sent photocopies of the relevant mailings to me. This was, apparently, against the round robin rules, and got him drummed out. Either that or he just told Harris to take him off the mailing list. Never could stand the man before, and even less afterwards, despite old friend Vinç Clarke forever trying to make peace between Harris & myself.

As for libidinous? Don’t see how you could draw that from my piece in V19. The first part was merely an observation regarding the reception areas of the two biggest tourist traps in Singapore – and the other involved scamming young ladies with fraudulent claims of unsullied virginity, or whatever the male equivalent of *virgo intacta* is. None of which involved any personal sexual gratification on my part. Not even eating the fried cavy.

I mean, it was good. But not **that** good.

So I don’t really see how that makes me lustful, carnal, coarse, concupiscent, debauched, fast, hot, impure, incontinent (*seriously? Try Kegel exercises*), lascivious, lecherous, libertine (*wrote for them back in the ‘70s*), loose, obscene, passionate, prurient, salacious, satyric (*not with my legs, dear*), sensual, unchaste and wanton.

If it also means I enjoy a full and active sex life – without the aid of any ‘little blue pills’ or ‘beer goggles’ – then even at our ages, in that respect, both Den and I are ‘guilty as charged’. True, we don’t bang like shithouse doors in a gale any more – but our tribe has always had a very strong oral tradition, which helps to pass the time during the long winter nights.

It’s a bit like Jim Mowatt, in his **All The Madmen #1**, reprinting/reporting your own In The Bar postings re a fart by fart account of you breaking wind and the apparent disappointment when you didn’t actually shit yourself. Do I take that to indicate the ITB membership is just a bunch of decrepit old Coprophiles, or that it was just a slow day and those posts helped to move the conversation along?

As for the sheer perverse and more outré? I’d refer you to a recent discovery (by me anyway), via a blogger with the byline of Mr Fab, who heads up the Music For Maniacs blog. There you can learn about Jonathan Niehaus – aka Zoojay. He’s a prolific songwriter and musician who’s apparently released six albums about his love of huskies. As in physically shagging the poor creatures. Maybe it’s their cute faces, or the appeal of the breed’s heterochromatic tendencies? Thankfully I’m not inclined to follow the links and download any of the material, but a quick Google generated enough entries to indicate the validity of Mr Niehaus’ existence, and his predilection. Puts a whole new meaning to “Man’s best friend” I suppose.

To move on to more general topics. I’ve never been one to define my tastes in music by type. Back in the early 1970s, Rob Cox had painted “You never know what you like until you hear it” over the studio door when he was running Reel Time

Records. It's something I've always believed in, even before our brief association. That, and making sure you own the recording medium **before** recording the session.

Mind you, I'm in the process of dumping around 170 DVDs of mp3/flac/ogg/ape files onto a couple of 2.5" portable hard drives (one for use, one for backup) and trying to sort them out – along with cataloging the CD & vinyl collections. But it's not helped by wasting several hours one Saturday trying to track down a full version of ***I Just Wanna Make Love To You*** that appears on the vinyl version of Mungo Jerry's ***Electronically Tested*** album. Subsequent CD versions are not the same as someone edited around 2 minutes or more from the vinyl 9-minute performance. Or that one of those DVDs contains 50 Alice Cooper albums (I still only like his Flush the Fashion, but you never know), or that another contains the remains of what appears to be rare and private pressings of Italian film soundtracks from the 60s & 70s – salvaged from oblivion when someone discovered an abandoned Italian library up in Northern Italy somewhere, recorded and posted on a now-long-dead blog... There's also hillbilly 78s, Hawaiian 78s, a dozen or so albums of Zoila Augusta Chavarri del Castillo (Yma Sumac to you), found sound work from the likes of Biting Tongues or Barkmarket, Goth stuff, Lindy hop (find a good copy of ***Hellzapoppin'*** for Martha Raye doing the original version of ***Watch The Birdie***) – to me there is no point in just confining yourself to any particular boundaries, because so much will be gone before you've had a chance to know if you like it or not.

Okay, so some of the more modern classical material verges on the Artsy – I'm more Tavener than Cage – Turnage, Thomas Ades (and not just for the oral sex in ***Powder Her Face***) – most of which are classified as minimalist, but certainly not in the 'traditional' sense. It's like Monk at the piano – knowing what to leave out can be more demanding than just smacking all the keys and producing the same 'interpretation' as everyone else. "There are no wrong notes; some are just more right than others."

Every time I hear something new I try and hear the beauty within the piece – yes, even things like ***Hamburger Lady*** which, I have to admit, doesn't seem to have any redeeming qualities at all IMHO, even though I can listen to Nine Inch Nails/Trent Reznor, Marilyn Manson, Jim Thirlwell (PragVec & early Foetus – Vibrations and later, Off The Wheel) without much difficulty. However, Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV remain just on the boundary edges.

I even recognised the Alvin Stardust quote at the end of Steve Jeffery's letter "I really love my cu-cu-cu-ca-chew!"

One final comment re the second slice of Navy cake – er, sorry! – John N-H. I've never had the desire or need to go cottaging (cue Jules and Sandy/Round the Horne piano joke "Jules is a dab hand at the cottage upright, Mr Horne!") but I've known elderly friends in the past who had undergone the joys of the old 'Edison medicine' – electroshock conversion therapy – during the 1960s. Curiously, it wasn't until 2001

that the US Surgeon General (at the time David Stacher) finally issued a report stating that "there is no valid scientific evidence that sexual orientation can be changed."

Enough from me for now – LoC on V21 to follow shortly. I'm off to see if Netflix has any Lassie box sets....

Chuck Connor can be found at [chuck.connor@gmx.co.uk](mailto:chuck.connor@gmx.co.uk)

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**FRED SMITH IS ANOTHER ONE WHO MISSED OUT ON COMMENTING ON V20, SO AGAIN YOU GET TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE.**

*(Vibrator 20)*

The writings by Rich Coad, Dan Steffan and Murray Moore on Prolog entertaining, especially the accompanying photos, but, personally, I would like more details about the various characters involved; for example Ulrika O'Brien is to me only a name I've come across from time to time in various zines. and some of the others much the same. Of course I do know Dan Steffan from his wonderful artwork and unforgettably appropriate (for an SF fan) name!

John Neilsen-Hall in answer to my rhetorical question as to who makes music if not musicians says "composers, writers and record producers" Well the first named are certainly musicians but I'm doubtful about the others. By "writers" I assume John means lyricists (not necessarily musicians) and record producers while spreading it to the public don't actually "make" music. And what composers write - dots on paper- is not music until somebody plays it. I'm not quite sure what John means by "musicianship" unless it's technical ability possibly combined with grandstanding! Certainly. some fall into that trap (the tendency to "show off") but that doesn't detract from the desirability of adequate technique, not just mechanical but also expressive.

As for John's challenge that I don't seem willing to define what I think jazz is about, well, not just what I think, jazz is basically improvisation, instant composition by the player "on the hoof" as it were. There are two (possibly more) ways of doing this: one is to take an existing tune (often a standard) and play it with variations and/or embellishments, as someone like Louis Armstrong might. The other is to discard the melody completely and construct something entirely different on the chord sequence as Charlie Parker did, for example, on his recording of George Gershwin's "Embraceable You". There were two "takes" of this, neither of them bore any resemblance to Gershwin's melody - or to each other, for that matter! Some purists will sniffily assert that it's not real jazz if it's written down but I don't buy that. Arrangers for bands like Ellington's and Basie's generally left space for individual soloists to express their own ideas, so they were jazz bands in fact.

Improvisation, by the way, has a long and honourable tradition. It's said that some of Bach's improvisations were better than his written work

In your reply, Graham, to John about fans' "crap reading" your assertion that "only a fan reads crap" (meaning a fan of any genre) is really too wide. I'm sure there are many "general" readers who also read crap at times. And what do you mean by "elevated forms of fiction". We also mustn't forget Sturgeon's Law.

Steve Jeffery mentions his "bad habit of playing where my fingers want to go rather than what's in my head". This happens to me too, at times. At the piano my fingers will start moving so I follow them to see where they are going. Sometimes I do surprise myself when I produce a nice turn of phrase but not often. As it happens jazz has been called "The sound of surprise", a rather good description coined years ago by one critic.

Robert Lichtman in his letter tells why he dropped out of the SFPA apa (because the size and frequency of mailings was too difficult to keep up with). This is why I had to drop out of FAPA all those years ago, not so much on account of the frequency as the sheer *size*. I didn't even have time to read the mailings let alone comment on them! Robert also talks about the sensors on new cars that make it easier to park in tight spaces. On older cars, such as my 2007 Peugeot, it's sometimes necessary to park "by ear", i.e. the sound of hitting the car in front or behind! Gently does it and no damage!

The Barcon 3 reports by Pat and Claire make it sound like a good, boozy, time was had by all.

That's about all, I guess, except thanks for the obituary for Don West which is very good. I suppose that his partner, Hazel, was Mal Ashworth's widow (?).

*(Vibrator 21)*

What happened? Did I miss the deadline with my comments for V20? Or did you just decide to cut down the size of your next ish from 40 pages to 24 and my poor loc was crowded out? Sad am I.

Actually, apart from the reduction in page count, the type also seems smaller somehow making the zine even harder to read for these dull eyes. I even had to use a magnifying glass, which reminded me of James White who, when reading a speech (through very thick beer-bottom specs) also had to use a glass. Probably as a result of hand setting type for *Slant*, he once declared (in *Hyphen*, I think) "The eyes have had it"! So, anything you could do to ease the eye-strain would be much appreciated.

I don't have much else to say this time except that I was glad to see more of you and I agree and enthuse over your piece on gun control. The full weight of the law descending on that 15-year-old fantasist did seem over the top and, in the U.S., the kid would have probably killed half his classmates.

Enjoyed too your account of Barcon and your trip oop north to the wilds of Yorkshire for Don West's funeral. It was interesting to read the tribute by his son and enlightening for me since I didn't know much about him. I liked his artwork and cartoons but always wondered why he didn't seem to have a first name, only the initial 'D'. It's only now that I've discovered that his first name was 'Donald' but why did he not use it in his fan persona?

Fred Smith can be found at **f.smith50@ntlworld.com**

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### **JOHN NIELSEN-HALL**

Not a lot to say about this ish. I think , understandably, you are a bit more subdued than usual in this one- there's a lack of your usual combative editorial comments in the LocCol, which is a discrete entity this time around. I dont think that works so well.

I see your health issues are multiplying. Hiccups, bashed up foot - at least you haven't fallen over recently- or if you have, you have not released the information to the outside world. The Toad dialysis that squats on my life has varied slightly. One day last month, the nursing team arrived for work to find that one of the machines had been disconnected from the wall without the water being turned off, and there was a flood , completely swamping one of the three rooms in the unit and seeping its way into a second. Well they cleaned it up and did what they had to do, but then the floor started to come up, and you know what the NHS is like- an uneven floor? that cannot possibly be permitted. So the worst affected room holding about ten beds has been closed for repairs for ten weeks! Ten weeks to repair a floor! Even I wouldn't take that long. So I, among others, have been shuffled off to other parts of the vast and labyrinthine Churchill hospital. I have come to rest in the Tarver Unit which , I admit, is quite nice though a longer walk from the car park, and I'm not too much into long walks these days. Its quieter and less busy than the Main Unit, and most of my fellow patients, those that are not refugees from the Main Unit like myself anyway, are poor sad souls on long term ( i.e. even longer term than me) treatment. That's quite depressing. In theory, I could get a transplant after next May. Many of those on Tarver, don't have even that slim hope for one reason or another, Diabetes complications being one of those.

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

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## STEVE JEFFREY DOESN'T EAT HARIBO

Steve Stiles' cover looks like an explosion in a Haribo factory.

Does anyone actually eat Haribo, and if so, how? The one time I tried it (Halloween a few years back, when I bought a bag in case a gang of young muggers dared knock on the door and demand candy lest they set fire to the porch or what ever passes for a Trick these days) it was like eating flavoured rubber. Which is probably exactly what it is. Anyway I learned from that mistake that it's best to buy sweets that we like as well, since the neighbours (those with kids anyway) seems to be as unenthusiastic about Halloween as we are, even if they don't do to the extent of turning off the lights and pretending there's nobody in.

Not only do I remember Nigel Kneale's *The Stone Tape* but I heard a rather good radio adaptation of it recently. Again, this was broadcast on Halloween (along with a radio adaptation of *The Ring* - the Japanese horror film, not the opera), but as we were probably catching up on our fix of Nordic Noir on BBC4 at the time, I caught up with it a day after on iPlayer. Ridiculous concept, but well done. As was another BBC radio play a week or two before that, of Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, which actually seemed to make more sense as an audio play, and certainly easier to deal with, than the typographic trickery of the book.

Dave Redd is rightly amused at my fruitless hunt for *Cricketts!* but I think we could turn this on its head and hijack Amazon's recommendation system, inserting spurious but eye-catching non-existent titles into the 'Other people who liked this also bought ...' links. In fact I thought I'd found one of those a little while back when I followed a link to *Rotten Tomatoes* from somewhere for *The Million Eyes of Sumuru*, a hilarious bad 1960s spy film starring Frankie Avalon and Shirley Eaton. And blow me if it didn't turn up on one of the Freeview channels a week or so back. We watched about 10 minutes, which was about all we could take without hurting ourselves laughing.

Some wonderful locs from John Nielsen-Hall and Milt Stevens, on the Quasimodo shoe, and of course, Nic, who seems to have discovered a very drastic way of getting his fares to pay up. And a wonderful tribute to Don from his son Graham.

D and I probably disagreed on practically everything to do with fanzines, fandom and art (apart from the brilliance of his own stuff) but I was really sad and rather shocked to see the news of his death in *Ansible*.

To people like me who only ever encounter Don on paper, that grumpy curmudgeon persona might have been an act, but he played it to the hilt, probably to the amusement of those who knew him well.

But from now I shall probably associate some of his more trenchant comments with the mental image of a man constructing a Dalek out of a baked bean can. Not sure how he'd feel about that. Steve Jeffrey can be found at [\*\*srjeffery@aol.com\*\*](mailto:srjeffery@aol.com)

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## **PAUL SKELTON HAS TRIED SPEED-WRITING**

Just done a spiffy speed-reading course. “The very thing,” they said, “for all those bloody monthly fanzines. We promise you’ll be surprised at just how much you can take in with just the briefest glance at a page.” They weren’t wrong. I’ve just spent about 24 seconds gleaning the gist from what your back-page box claims to be your ‘Halesowen’ issue, though oddly I didn’t find much about Halesowen in it. It is though almost exactly as far due north from your place as is Peterborough, about which I did spot some stuff, so I suppose it’s just another example of your dodgy sense of direction to which I had the need to refer in response to an earlier issue.

I do agree with Robert Lichtman that Pat is a fool to be happy weighing 924 pounds. Also, If Ian Williams wants to become disabled, wouldn’t applying to the Mafia make more sense? Also enjoyed the historical photo of yourself on the back cover (Graham, in West Cavendish, Emsay), though surprised they had colour back then.

This speed-reading is a fucking doddle!

OK, so the speed-reading didn’t work out too well. At least with this issue though I am not dragging myself from my sickbed and dripping snot all over my laptop. When I mentioned, to Taral, my selfless attempt to LoC your previous issue almost from beyond the grave I wrote “...but I expect that nice Mr. Charnock will cut me some slack...” But did you? Did you buggery! Not even WAHFed. Let me tell you Graham, I crawled over broken glass for that half-page.

Like you I am puzzled that we, the most surveilled nation in history, seem to have no serious terrorists any more (other than those who blow up buses and subway trains, or kill off-duty drummers in army bands...but who for some strange reason seem to be off the radar), but just kids sharing bomb techniques with their Aussie mates or very young guys who haven’t yet figured out that rushing to join ISIL is a pretty dickhead thing to do. We are frequently told that the massed surveillance by GCHQ is regularly thwarting many threats, but oddly these never seem to come to trial.

I’m not sure I’m altogether happy with this ‘sanitisation’ of D. West...this “Oh, it was all an act, a persona.” We don’t need this. In his earlier writings I know D had no time for me. He said so. I know he made the odd false assumption about me but even so, you knew where you stood with him. Or at least, you thought you did. If we once accept that he was deliberately adopting, falsely, a ‘grumpy’ persona then he is no rock at all. Fandom needs the unreconstructed D. Our shibboleths need to stand whatever tests are thrown at them.

“Sorry sir, but I’m afraid your fandom has been condemned. It’s your shibboleths, they’re not up to current regulations!”

(EDITOR: *The curse of the Missing Loc strikes again. Here's what Paul had to say about Vibrator 21*):

According to my *Chambers English Dictionary* (the only one available to me without climbing several flights of stairs or chancing t'interweb), 'abuse' means "to make a bad use of: to take undue advantage of: to betray (as confidence): to misrepresent: to deceive: to revile: to maltreat: to violate".

Well, I checked *Vibrators 2.0.18 & 2.0.19* but could not find any abuse therein contained in my contributions, unheralded or otherwise. I do of course have enormous respect for John Nielsen-Hall, so stand to be corrected if I am inadvertently being abusive whilst I think I am just being my normal, lovable, friendly self. Am I perhaps fooling myself, in that my normal self-expression is not as lovable and friendly as I would like to think? Say it ain't so, Joe.

His second letter however did reveal that you lied to me when you said that nobody else had complained of having two page 13s and no page 33. Actually I will cut you some slack and instead accept the probable fact that John hadn't complained until after I did. It still though means that my copy was not unique and hence unlikely to sell for untold thousands on ebay. *Sic Tempus Financial Solubility*.

I note people talking about saxophone players. I am definitely a bit of a philistine in this respect. I like the instrument (in its various guises) but only have albums by Gerry Mulligan, Bud Shank, King Curtis and Hank Crawford, with only the last being currently digitally available to me. I really must get back to getting my vinyl onto hard disc. But then there are so many other things I should get back to, many of which would take precedence.

For the last couple of years I've pretty much done bugger all except read books and fanzines (and write occasional LoCs). This has got to stop! So I have.

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### **JOSEPH NICHOLAS HAS BEEN BUSY**

Many thanks for copies of the most recent two issues (20 and 21) of *Vibrator*; apologies -- thanks to lack of time -- for my non-response to the first of these. (As the old saying has it, I've been so busy in retirement that I wonder how I ever had time to go to work. Never mind being particularly busy since returning from Australia some four-to-five weeks ago -- gallery visits! Special exhibitions! Evening lectures! Concerts! It's a full-on cultural programme we practise here at the Jansons Road Horticultural and Historiographical Collective....)

I am coming in late to the ongoing debate about genre versus literary works, but one point which seems worth making is that -- whatever they wrote -- very few writers remain in print much beyond their deaths, and whether they do is as much down to luck as anything else. Shakespeare is commonly regarded as England's greatest dramatist; but if, following his death, his friends had not clubbed together

to assemble and publish a collection of his plays, they could well have slipped down the same memory hole as the plays of his contemporary dramatists -- perhaps to be rediscovered a century or so later, but without any of the cachet that they have had for the past four hundred years. Charles Dickens worried throughout much of his professional writing life whether he'd be remembered after his death; but he has remained stubbornly in print whereas his equally lauded contemporaries have fallen into oblivion. (On a visit to Bury St Edmunds some years ago, we came across a plaque in the Great Churchyard dedicated to one Henry Cockton, "author of *Valentine Vox*, *Sylvester Sound*, *The Love Match*, and other works", who had died in 1853 and whose friends had subscribed to erect his memorial three decades later. "His works are his best monument" was their inscription; but he and his novels are of course quite forgotten.) Very often, in fact, it's genre writers who remain in print while the literary authors who claimed the bulk of the review space in the weekend newspapers disappear from bookshops and libraries, Agatha Christie being an obvious example (although I find her unreadable). And of course some authors go out of print even before they've died: John Brunner, for instance.

To what extent electronic publishing will change this is unknowable -- it certainly has the potential to ensure that everything ever published remains available, provided there are sufficient numbers of people to undertake the work of scanning it all, but whether anyone would actually want to read (say) long-forgotten novels by the likes of Henry Cockton (I'd never heard of him until that visit to Bury St Edmunds) and thus provide *post hoc* justification for the time and other resources expended on the scanning is another matter. (I suspect that the answer in most cases would be "no" -- life just isn't long enough to wade through such sludge.)

The death of D West was rather shocking: not the sort of thing one expects to discover on Facebook while on the other side of the world, or indeed to hear about in any other way while still in the UK. What also surprised me (I wouldn't go so far as to describe it as a shock) was the subsequent revelation that his grumpy fannish persona was just an act. Presumably it amused him to see other take it seriously; it certainly fooled many of us. But your deadline looms! I shall stop here.

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## **THE VINYL SOLUTION**

**Ted White** started me thinking about record collecting when he wrote this succinct summary of vinyl formats:

Columbia Records introduced the LP (33-1/3 rpm, both 10" and 12", the former for pop albums, the latter for classical albums) circa 1948. This really fried balls at RCA Victor, so the people over there decided to come up with a competing system. Subtract 33 from 78 (the nominal speed for singles) and you get 45 rpm. That's how

RCA Victor did it. Then they decided on a proprietary format: 7" disks (smaller than previous record sizes, except novelty records in odd sizes) with huge center holes, playable (initially) \*only\* on RCA Victor players.

But although 45 singles were introduced (and supplanted 78 singles because they didn't break), so were 45 albums. They were supposed to compete with LPs -- in both the popular and classical arenas. To this end the EP ("extended play") 45 was introduced. Instead of three or four minutes a side, EPs had six to eight minutes a side. The albums were literally albums, holding three disks (for 10" LP-equivalents) to five or more (12" LPs). Very quickly RCA realized their error -- classical music fans in particular were incensed -- and began to issue these albums simultaneously as LPs. And over much of the '50s, the 45 albums (and EPs) were phased out, as 10" LPs were, in favor of 12" LPs.

But some people exploited the medium artistically. As I pointed out in my review of the first CD of music by the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra:

"One of the things Sauter-Finegan did was to take advantage of emerging technology. They recorded for RCA Victor, and that company was, in the early fifties, pushing 45s as an alternative to the (33 1/3) LP. Whole albums were issued on 45s, and the 45 EP was introduced - a 7" record that would hold six to eight minutes of music a side (10" LPs held only 12-15 minutes a side; 12" LPs ranged from 15 to 25 minutes per side). So Sauter and Finegan wrote an 'Extended Play Suite,' consisting of four pieces, each of which occupied one side of a 45 EP, and each of which averaged about six minutes in length. Two of them, 'Horseplay' and 'Dream Play' are included on this CD. 'Child's Play' and 'Holiday' are not. That's a pity, since not only do they make up a complete suite (with recurring themes), but 'Dream Play' does not stand alone - or in tandem with 'Horseplay,' which overshadows it - as well as would 'Child's Play,' the piece that originally backed 'Horseplay.'"

Somewhere in the middle '50s THE GLENN MILLER STORY hit the movie theaters. RCA Victor put out a five-12-inch-LP album of Miller's primary recordings. The 45 version of that album (which I saw but never considered buying) was unbelievable, a vast number of 7" EP disks. No 45 player could hold all those disks....

I first saw 45s from the UK in the mid-'50s. They had this triangular punch-out with a small (78, LP) spindle hole. If you had a player with a fat center-column, you knocked the triangle out and had the usual wide hole. But if you didn't have a special 45 player, you didn't need to put in a plastic insert, or drop a plastic centerpiece over the spindle. I thought this was a better way to make 45s, but never saw any domestic 45s like that.

7" disks that play at 33-1/3 rpm are usually called 7" LPs. There have never been many, but for a few years in the early '70s Columbia Records put out a monthly "magazine" called PLAYBACK, accompanied by a 7" LP (three or four tracks per side)

of the music written up in that issue -- a way to introduce new Columbia recording artists and new albums. The subscription was free and I enjoyed it.

In the late '70s and '80s (before CDs became dominant) 12" singles became popular, especially for extended-mix dance singles. These came in both 33-1/3 and 45 rpm. I have a bunch (from both the US and the UK) by Prince, of whom I was a huge fan for a time.

Probably more than you wanted to know.

--Ted White

### **IT'S A PLASTIC THING by Graham Charnock**

As soon as the war was over my parents moved down from the bleakness of Yorkshire to an end of terrace house in Wembley, in the ancient and now defunct county of Middlesex, where I was born in 1946.

So I grew up avoiding the war but certainly experiencing the austerity and rationing which came afterwards. Soon, however, a post-war recovery of sorts set in and my parents, people of frugal habits, found themselves with a small amount of disposable income.

My father, a mechanic by profession, bought a car, an old Wolsey equivalent of an Austin 7. It was the first of a succession of family vehicles, usually bought second-hand in some measure of disrepair so he could use his skills to refurbish and add value to them before selling them on and trading up.

My mother used to do the washing in a \*boiler\* which lived in my father's workshop, working it with a three-pronged dolly, and feeding it through a cast iron free-standing mangle. One of the first household appliances my father bought her was a Hotpoint electric washing machine, and laundry chores moved inside to the cosier confines of the kitchen.

In 1953, in time for the Coronation, he bought a black and white television. In these gradually accrued possessions we measured our \*wealth\* and became proud of our growing middle-class status.

Pop was delivered weekly by the Corona van and my mother bought Sunny Stories every week for me to help me to read. The eldest of my two brothers was conscripted into the Air Force. The other became a Teddy **B**oy.

As far as music was concerned our interests were sustained by the radio, usually courtesy of the BBC's so-called light-programme. On Sunday afternoons lunchtime comedy shows were followed by Sing Something Simple with the Cliff Adams Singers. The word simply forever became connotated in my mind with this sort of music.

Then a momentous event occurred, and my father bought a Ferguson Radiogram, which incorporated a turntable which could play 78s, 45s and 33 rpm records. My

mother was into Mario Lanza and my father liked Charlie Kunz, a piano-player, so 78s started appearing in their record collection. They were thick, heavy items and would thwack down with a reassuring weight onto the turntable when released by the automatic record loading feature. They were easy to break, too, if mishandled. Gradually more mainstream and \*popular\*, although still fairly soft, artistes established themselves in my parents' collection: Frankie (Green Door) Vaughan, Pat (Friendly Persuasion) Boone, Gracie Fields (a throwback to their Yorkshire origins), Bing Crosby, and the like..

Elvis was a crossover artist between 78s and 45s. My mother bought a couple of 78s but my brother, the Teddy Boy, of course soon started amassing 45s featuring Elvis, Bill Haley, Buddy Holly, Ricky Nelson and others. Occasionally Cliff Richard disturbed the American axis with numbers like 'Move It'. My mother developed a fondness for Adam Faith. My father stuck to his Charlie Kunz 78s.

I listened to and absorbed all this stuff, but had little personal disposable income. The first record I bought with my own pocket money was an EP of Tommy Steele featuring the soundtrack of his film Tommy the Toreador. I bought it at Woolworths and it was the same price as a regular single, so I justified its purchase by convincing myself it at least represented good value for money. Tommy Steele did some good rock 'n' roll records, but this was definitely not one of them.

33rpm long players never featured strongly in my parent's record collection. I don't think they had either the time or the patience to sit down and listen to a whole half hour's worth of music at one sitting.

I myself didn't develop a taste for them until I was given a Christmas present which meshed in with my childhood interest in train-spotting. I was given a record called The Old Lady Drives to Dolgoch which was a documentary record of the Talyllin Railway. I played it over and over until the whole soundtrack was impressed into my memory, marvelling at the magic of how the same noises and sounds seemed to repeat themselves every time I played it.

It was during my Grammar School years that my interest in pop music developed. I remember when Love Me Do was released there was earnest discussion amongst us spotty teenagers about whether this was the music which would supplant Cliff Richard and the Shadows.

I was pretty sure it would. Not that I disliked Cliff, and especially the Shadows, for my interest in instrumental music was keen and far outweighed my interest in vocal artists. I found surf music particularly exciting, redolent of a sunny California I believed really existed and was not just a fantasy figment of my imagination. That it was American was a big issue. Remember I had grown up with austerity. Here was music from a far-off country where they not only drove big flashy cars but actually spoke the same (kind of) language as us.

American surf music was thus far more exotic than the Shadows bland Norrie Paramour orchestrated studio pop, bought to you courtesy of HMV. I started

spending my pocket money on the regular releases by the Surfariis and, especially, the Ventures. I was getting into playing the guitar at this time, and their Mosrite guitars were another lust object. I even joined the Ventures Fan Club and received a signed glossy photograph of them all the way from their office on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. I mean, Hollywood!

My first collecting craze was for Ventures LPs which I soon found were imported by a small basement enterprise in Great Newport Street, off the Charing Cross Road. A lot of them were released on a label called Sunset, which also seemed to me impossibly exotic to a boy used to buying labels with archaic names like Parlophone. These were artefacts to covet, far beyond their musical value, formed and fashioned in far off California, still a territory I could only dream of and imagine.

I had to sell all my Ventures imports when I was on hard times in Notting Hill. It was the worst decision I have ever made. Every time I go to America I try to redress the balance by bringing a bit of authentic vinyl back with me.

My love affair with vinyl continues. I inherited the Ferguson Radiogram when my mother died, but it is now virtually in mothballs in my study. I've always collected 45s, looking for that rare single which doesn't come up on Youtube. Unfortunately I've never found one. My closest punt was a single by Dave Helling called Christine b/w The Bells, which was issued on Planet Records. Dave Helling was a busker who worked Leicester Square in London, and I saw him working the queues a few times. This was his only single. I can't remember where I found it, but it is something I have never seen turn up even on the ubiquitous Youtube.

Stemming from my love of guitar instrumental music my main speciality in collecting at the moment are instrumentals from British beat combos, a genre popularized by the Shadows of course, but giving rise to many strange and exotic offshoots. A fad back in the sixties was taking classical music themes and rejigging them in a beat combo format leading to curiosities such as Saturday Night at the Duck Pond by the Bristol group, The Cougars, which was a reworking of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake.

If you are a collector, records arrive on your doorstep through circuitous routes. Record fairs attract serious and knowledgeable collectors. Charity shops can be good, bad or indifferent in their range of stock, and you have to be patient and dedicated to sort through boxes of junk to find something that appeals. Most charity shops seem to be full of nothing but the collections of recently deceased people who apparent liked Jim Reeves a lot. Once I worked with a homosexual boss who had a tiff with an old lover. His lover had been a dj with an extensive collection of disco records. He'd left them with my boss and when they fell out my boss asked me to take them and dump them in the canal (he was really angry). Of course I didn't, but I can't say I've played any of them recently. I still buy job lots of singles on ebay. They are my own personal favourite small objects of desire.

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## I LOVE THE SMELL OF BROKEN GLASS IN THE MORNING

### More Adventures of a Las Vegas Taxi Driver

by Nic Farey

It may come as little surprise to my devoted reader (J, Unc) that this column is very occasionally written under the influence of some alcoholic beverage or other, usually beer, occasionally whiskey, but since I finished the beer yesterday, and it's a wee bit early for the hard stuff, I opened up one of the bottles of wine we snagged in the Fresh & Easy closing down sale. No doubt much to the horror of the posh retirees who have adopted *Vibrator* as their personal *Daily Telegraph*-like harrumphing post, I will freely admit that this plonk is definitely of the sixpence-a-bucket standard, and is fucking up my guts a treat. Just so's you know. How this will affect the later ingestion of two-day-old leftover curry, I cannot wisely predict, other than the likelihood of extended squirrel-chasing on the morrow.

I have to fill in with some blather, because this is generally a slack time of year for Vegas taxi drivers, other than the occasional bursts of activity such as SEMA (an automotive trade show with 150,000 or so attendees) which was a few weeks ago, and the upcoming (as I write) rodeo week, known here as "Cowboy Christmas", first week of December, which is also a bonus for the topless joints, rub and tug establishments and gay clubs and bars. We also just had a couple of 20,000-attendee conventions last week, the American Academy of Ophthalmologists (quite a serious, though amenable bunch), and a National Aviation Association expo with lots of moneyed people who sell, use and fly private planes and are therefore mostly well langered. In response to a question, I got fully (and cheerfully) regaled about the difference between an ophthalmologist and an optometrist, all of which went pretty much woosh over my head, lodging in the sunshade for my later retrieval. There's a couple of "problems" we have with business conventions just in traffic management terms. Sands Expo is fucking dire to get in and out of, less so the main Las Vegas Convention Center, but still a pain, and we end up sitting in traffic quite a bit. This makes it harder to book well, since the waiting time element of the fare is much less than you'd get if the cab is in motion and the meter is working on distance. Creeping up the road *might* only add a couple of bucks to what's already a short-distance fare of \$10 or so (usually from hotel to convention center). The other annoyance is that business travelers are often constrained by their accounting departments to only give a maximum \$3 tip. The credit card processor charges a \$3 "voucher fee" for running the card, which can (a) piss off the customer (though that's sometimes ameliorated a little when I explain that it's like an ATM fee, and I don't get any of it), and (b) cause them to think that the \$3 fee *is* the tip, so fuck-all in the pocket.

On the TNC front, I'm still rather futilely engaging in "discussions" (ahem) on the comment boards of the Las Vegas Sun newspaper, any time a story about Uber and Lyft comes up. The county recently passed ordinances with the business license rules for the drivers and companies, Commissioner Steve Sisolak saying that they'll

require a list of active drivers, as that's going to be the basis for the fee, and that he's been advised that this would be allowable under state law, only to have to awkwardly retract that the next day when he was re-advised that it wasn't. The companies don't want to release this information, and really don't think they should be regulated at all in the same way taxis are, since their claim is that they're not a taxi company, just a software platform. Anti-capitalist that I am, I'm hoping for the day when it all comes crashing down around their ears, since Uber in particular seems to me to be massively over-valued, given that it's an operation with no physical assets apart from the software program. We shall see.

Unsurprisingly, the radio protocols will be a bit different between cab companies. YCS were (and presumably still are) fairly strict with theirs, Lucky is a bit more relaxed, although all the firms will insist on keeping radio traffic to a minimum when there's an "incident" in progress, whether that's an accident or a potentially dodgy fare. At such times, everyone is supposed to STFU so the dispatcher, supervisor and the affected driver can communicate easily. For potentially truly dangerous situations, there's a sort of hierarchy of call signs. At YCS, a general problem is a "coffee break" (*passim*), whereas a more serious one would be conveyed by including the company name in a radio message : rather than simply identifying as (cab number) 3999, the driver would say "Yellow Cab 3999". The Lucky equivalent of "coffee break" is to ask dispatch for a "Check 500", which clues the office to radio to the driver every three minutes or so to ensure all is well. The serious end of things is communicated by a deliberate miscall of the cab number. All Lucky cab numbers start with a 2. If I'm driving 2509, for example, and there's a serious problem, I'd call in as 1509 to alert the office that something is majorly wrong to the extent of life-threatening. Lest my reader (Unc, J) thinks that this is a regular occurrence, I'm happy to point out that Las Vegas is one of the safest cities in the world to be a cab driver, perhaps not least because there are cameras everywhere (including in the cab), and also because we have procedures like this in place.

### **THE MIGHTY ROBERT LICHTMAN UNREGULATED GLOSSARY**

**Broken Glass** : After starting with Lucky, I often heard radio advisories from other drivers, stating something like "Broken glass at Southwest departures". I got around to asking one of the other drivers the question that "Broken glass doesn't really mean 'broken glass', does it?" Turns out that (unlike YCS) Lucky doesn't want to specifically state on the air that the cozzers are out and about and checking us, whether they be Metro or TA. A lot of the time they'll be unmarked, so it's a useful bit of info, probably more so to the drivers who really flaunt the regulations (not me, guv, honest, I just shave red lights).

**"Check 500"** : All clear/all is well code.

**Goober** : What many taxi drivers call Uber.

**TNC** : Transportation Network Company i.e. Uber, Lyft, and the soon-come Get-It. Seen by some as the saviors of transportation, wave of the future ect ect, and by

others as well shady.

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## **ROBERT LICHTMAN**

Steve Stiles turned in a really great Halloween cover – so much going on there and so many moods on the monsters' faces! Even though, as you write, you're "not sure we can justify it in terms of Halloween content," it's a terrific montage of mixed expressions. "Halloween is not a thing we have taken to in the UK, at least not as much as in the US, where they make endless horror films about it. Having said that a recent visit to Sainsburys has revealed an extensive range of the usual seasonal tat." So you are not immune! Personally speaking, we never go to any of those films – and we're lucky to live in an area whose streetscape is so alien to the concept of happy happy children going from door to door to collect their bounty of sweet candy. In the decade since I moved here from Glen Ellen, I can't recall even one trick or treater showing up.

Thanks for publishing your Barcon 3 and D. West Memorial pieces here. As I wrote previously on your putting all those con reports in #19, I appreciate having a permanent place where I can reread them if I wish. I don't archive InTheBar, where they first appeared, and the group website is fairly useless for finding things.

Lloyd Penney writes that he has "a file of e-zines that is still small enough to put on a single 16 Gb thumb drive." He must download and save many more electronic fanzines than I do. I just checked the folder on my hard drive where they live, and the whole batch – currently 1,922 fanzines – is somewhat short of 6 GB. And quite a few of those are fanzines I also have in print form.

Thanks to R. Laurraine Tutihasi for her explanation to me of why she and her husband replaced their aging Prius. It was interesting to read that with age the fuel economy had begun to deteriorate. To my mind that doesn't necessarily mean this was a "precursor to other problems," but then my tendency is to repair as long as economically feasible since unless you run into a string of major repairs it's still cheaper than putting out the money to buy a new vehicle. With my car the list of possibly looming major repairs that might cause me not to perform them includes such things as automatic transmission failure, major engine problems, and replacement of the timing chain. (Yes, timing chain – my 1998 Corolla was the first to have one instead of a belt. With the latter I would have been on my third replacement.)

Nice to see a LoC, however short, from Jay Kinney, though a shame that it took the death of D. West to bring him out of the woodwork.

Thanks, Nic, for including in your glossary a definition of "squirrels" as it relates to your life as a cabby. I *did* wonder when I ran across your "chase out the squirrels" as part of your pre-work morning activities, and this explained it well. Don't we all have our equivalent means of getting up and running in the morning, especially as we get inevitably older?

Your inside look at how Uber (ptui!) and its ilk have affected Vegas cabbies and cab companies – i.e., not all that much – was an interesting read, and like you I find it amusing that the cabs of the company that doesn't take the Way2Ride app have roof displays advertising it, and wonder if that might cause some confusion and awkward moments for the drivers of those cabs.

Finally, thanks so much for printing Graham West's lovely eulogy of his father! Reading it closely, I learned so much about him that I'd previously either not known at all or, at best, only suspected.

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### **DAVE COCKFIELD BLAMES EATING AND DRINKING FOR NOT READING VIBRATOR**

I'm afraid that I was late reading Vibrator 2.0.21 because I was in Burgundy (France) for most of November sampling large quantities of excellent White and Red wines, both old and new. Burgundy Cremant and even Champagne took a hammering too. To help prevent the accumulation of acid these drinks were accompanied of course by the usual equally large quantities of Breads, Meats, Cheeses, Snails, Frogs Legs, and Oysters. Then there were the restaurants with Beef Bourguignon, Coq Au Vin, Steak Hache, Steak Tartar, and Foie Gras. The last night of the holiday was spent in St-Omer near Calais where lots of great Belgian, French, and German Craft Beers and Lagers were consumed.

I weighed myself at 293 pounds the day before I left. On return I was down to 287 pounds. It all sounds good but there was a lot less left in my Bank Account.

The one downer on the holiday was the death of my friend Dave Thornton who lived in the village of Le Rochpot where I was staying with friends. He was in hospital in Lyon for an exploratory operation that ended up with haemorrhaging that they couldn't control. He died the next day.

The funeral was scheduled very quickly in the village. Family came from England and the arrangements were made by his friend Charles from Paris. Dave was a talented musician and jammed and recorded a lot with his French buddies. Musically they were fine but unfortunately none of them could sing. All were Grateful Dead fans and Dave even had his own red wine made from his small vineyard that was naturally called Grateful Red.

The service in the small church was touching with many from the village attending. It was of course virtually all in French but Charles had an English translation of speech on his iPad that he delivered extremely well. He had an accent of course, but he captured the fun and laid back qualities that made Dave such a wonderful person with stories from his life with his late partner Harry.

One of the best involved them travelling across the Northumberland countryside after seeing The Grateful Dead at the Newcastle City Hall in 1972. They left at about 1.30am and there had been liberal consumption of alcohol, dope, and mind

expanding substances. During the drive Dave saw a shimmering white horse in the moonlight that suddenly appeared like a ghostly apparition. He asked the others if they had seen it, to which they replied that they had. "Thank FUCK! for that" said Dave, "I thought I was tripping out". This story brought a lot of laughter in church proving to be a great release of emotion. I don't think that the Priest was too happy with the profanity though.

In the same way I was very touched by Graham West's speech about his father. I never knew D although I think that I spoke to him briefly on a couple of occasions. Reading this speech however left me wishing that I had known him. Thanks for including it in Vibrator.

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### **ALISON SCOTT**

I realise I'm a tiny bit tardy with my response to Vibrator 2.0.21, but I hoped you would just about have the flexibility to squeeze it in.

On pictures of cute cats (or cute anything else) on Facebook -- I very much enjoy seeing pictures of my friends' own cats, dogs, children, artwork, friends or whatever else. And if they're Ian Williams, I enjoy seeing pictures of the cats he's currently fostering. Because all of these things are examples of people sharing their lives with me, and that's what I'm on Facebook for.

What I don't much like is 'random pics of cats from the Internet'. I find them endlessly tedious. But I do like plenty of other internet memes (eg sarcastic epithets about women who drink too much wine and coffee) so I just kind of put up with the cats.

Do any of your friends other than Chris Garcia have babies, Graham? Most people either post lots of pics of their kids or none, the latter in the rather odd belief that this contributes materially to keeping them safe.

On reading your report of Barcon I was powerfully reminded of the introduction to Dave Langford's collection of conreps, which I have just purchased from him for some enormous sum (£4, maybe?), where he expounds on the limitations of the form in lesser hands. Detail about travel methods to get to the con, check. Descriptions of meals, check. Excessive drinking, check. Remarkable and unique bowel movements, check. Well, you get the idea.

Every time I check into ITB, I find that the discussion is somehow less rarefied than I expect. Though I've just had a look, planning to give you some sparkling examples of tedium, and it's full of interesting topics and people right now. In fact, I got diverted from my letter for several minutes, which given that the letter is itself a diversion from the things I'm supposed to be doing today was a bit unfortunate.

I have clearly missed bits, but when I see a reference to Victor kitting out an RV, the image that springs to mind is Breaking Bad.

I'm still feeling distressed about D West's death. It feels very selfish and pathetic to have these waves of misery at the loss of his art, when so many people that I know are grieving for the loss of the person. But every time I see another reminiscence, or reprinted picture, I find myself thinking that no fan art is ever going to be as brilliantly incisive ever again. D always rather hated \*Plokta\*, but we loved his letters and art. I am not sure he ever criticised us for the placing or reproduction of his pieces; if he did it was surely well-deserved.

Nic Farey's column continues entertaining, though I don't entirely understand the requirement for an explanatory glossary; it makes it read like a sample from a GCSE English paper. Whatever happened to interpreting from context?

We did rather belatedly see the Martian in the cinema (on those cheapy midweek tickets you get). I enjoyed the central message that any adversity can be overcome by the better application of science, while acknowledging that it's just another variety of geek wish-fulfilment fantasy. Like those post-apocalyptic SF stories where the world has gone to buggery but with our superior brainpower our plucky band of heroes survive and start to build a new world. I think I would have found the Martian a better movie if at the final scene, they'd not only failed to implausibly catch him but lost one or two more of the crew in the process, so that the rest limp home ruefully. This is probably why I don't make blockbusters.

*(EDITOR: Alison, I do apologize for using the unimaginative established tropes of con-reporting. I fully realise my hands are lesser than those of many folks. But bear in mind that Barcon is a social event, not something heavily weighted with substantive programming which would lend itself to earnest dissection. My con-report reflected that, I feel. Vibrator is really a sort of diary (as you might have realized) so including pieces like this reminds me if nothing more of significant or not-so-significant events in my life. If you have read any of my con-reports in the past you will know I am not a believer generally in the chronological style replete with detailed minutia of bowel movements, but, hell, sometimes shit happens. And yes, I have many friends who have children (even you) and generally enjoy seeing pictures of them on whatever social media comes my way. Cats less so. It just amuses me that cats on Facebook have become yet another of those universally recognized tropes. One day we will all elect a cat as World President thanks to Facebook. Better than Donald Trump I suppose).*

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That's it for now, I'm afraid. Look, go away, shuffle off to your sad homes and carve turkeys, stuff yourself with pecan pie and enjoy linking up with members of your family you only see once a year and don't much care for anyway. Next issue will be the Christmas one. Happy Holidays. Oh, give me a break. Here at home we have our problems. It seems there is a core of the Labour Party who do not like Jeremy Corbyn and do not believe in the democratic process and feel themselves above the will of the people and are determined to get rid of him on any pretext. This sort of death wish in a political party is unprecedented as far as I can see. So Britain will continue to be ruled by a privileged elite for the next century who will continue to protect their self-interests and grind the poor even deeper into the dirt. Time for a People's Uprising, I think, to end all this nonsense. We can probably buy guns and explosives from ISIS. Hey, call me Che. But I am [graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk)

This issue has been proofread by Pat Charnock. Deadline for the bumper Xmas issue will be 31<sup>st</sup> December, by which time it will all be over.

*Pat writes:*

*I've just proofread Vibrator, and felt like making a comment about my "proofreading".*

*Graham, as I remember, you started Vibrator those many years ago as a "quick and dirty" fanzine. And I guess my attitude to proofreading is to try and sort of keep it that way. I'm more interested in picking up layout problems than typos. I'll pick up a lot of typos but sometimes typos are just amusing in their own right. But when a loc has been copied and pasted and a bit's gone missing or been repeated, or a bit's got lost in a column or page break, I'll try and put that right. And when looking for typos, I'll correct more in your own pieces than in people's letters. I reckon your readers should bear some responsibility for their own mistakes.*

*And sometimes I don't see the complete fanzine because you'll draft most of it before the end of the month, I proofread it, and then you'll add stuff and finish and print it without running it by me again. So I'll take no responsibility at all for repeated or missing pages, printing and collation problems.*

*Pat Charnock*