



19 COLORADO 38  
VIBRATOR 2.0.23

**December 2015**

# PIECE ON EARTH



Steve  
Stiles  
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## WILL THIS BE MY FINAL WORD ON GLOBAL WARMING? I SUSPECT NOT

A lot of people, including some of those who were actually there, seem to agree that the Paris accord on Climate Change is too little too late and is generally unworkable because it depends on self-policing. The Chinese accept that their own carbon emissions will continue to rise until 2030, when they will (maybe) plateau. This is in the face of anything they have actually signed up to support. The delegates have committed a lot of money to further research, but not that much considering their individual GNPs.

I believe they should not be looking for ways to prevent global warming, but should be looking for ways to manage it. The main thrust of The Martian is that there are no problems the human race cannot tech itself out of, but of course that is fiction and we know from experience science fiction is never the place to look for answers. Still I would like to see more concrete funds (no pun intended) spent on flood defences and raising ground levels of territories threatened by rising sea-levels. That should not be beyond the will of man. Meanwhile how about relocating portions of humanity to areas not so vulnerable to predicted rises in ground temperature? I am as always perhaps stupidly optimistic about the human race's ability to rise above its ape origins and deal with the evolutionary problems that confront it. Certainly one of the boldest steps where no man has gone before would be to address the redistribution of wealth, perhaps freeing up money from corporate offshore bank accounts and converting it into resources we can all use and benefit from before our planet goes down the plug hole, just before which I expect to see the Very Rich building Virgin spaceships to take them and their families to Mars, or Beyond. I often think of J.G. Ballard. He wrote disaster novels but what really ran through them was the ability of individuals and cultures to withstand and adapt to them, albeit in an occasionally warped fashion.

Meanwhile I am going back, not to climate change denying, which I never did anyway, but to trying to suggest to people that we shift our perspectives and think outside the box on this issue.

## JIM MOWATT ON CHRISTMAS

I'm trying now to reach out and grasp that little bit of Christmas wonder. I can almost feel it, like a breath of wind or a leaf falling upon my cheek. It's intangible and yet it still feels like a real memory of something precious. Christmas does feel special and yet i find myself not really remembering why or even how I might be able to hold on to that little piece of magic. There are moments when i still catch a whiff of it. A quiet morning when the weather is cold, the fire is warm and my place of work is closed and no longer demanding my attention. it may help a little more if Bing is warbling on about a White Christmas and some implausible romance is playing out upon the television screen. Mulled wine and sprouts (although not in the same glass) may help too.

Ultimately it's the disruption that makes it special. It's a day different to other days and therefore something to celebrate for that. Vive le difference.



### **PHIL PALMER HAS SEEN THE FORCE AWAKENS – SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO**

I was expecting a big disappointment and The Force Awakens duly delivered. I thought, going in, that lots of people had been taking themselves much too seriously and that this was going to be a film that had forgotten that its roots lie in dressing up and being campy. And on one level that was the case, they trudged through the action scenes, the light bullets never hit anyone playing a speaking role, they blew up the big round thing, they blew up the Vibrator - or was the Oscillator, I forget - they blew up the pub, blah blah blah. They stole gags from every other movie, including Hardware Wars. But at least someone got at the dialogue, "There is an Awakening, I felt it." "I felt it too." But there is none of that context-free Silver-Age dreamy stuff that Phantom Menace, for example, was so good at, no personal touches at all. Indeed they went out of their way to be contemporary, angst-ridden and relevant, right up to the final scene where our heroine travels to a remote island, tracks down George Martin and tells him to write his damn book.

### **SO HAS SIMON OUNSLEY**

So I saw 'Star Wars – The Franchise Awakes' today and here is my report. Warning – satirically mutated plot spoilers follow.

I was a quivering wreck by the end because it's about 95% fight scenes and has disappointingly little of the New Age 'Force be with you' claptrap that I, and admittedly possibly I alone, had been hoping for. I think it was a mistake for Disney to make it over the Christmas holidays. That meant there were plenty of special effects available on the new computer they got from Santa but the supermarkets were closed so they couldn't order new plot supplies and had to make do with ones that already been used in the previous movies.

Basically the main thing they had to do was to find Luke Skywalker so he could train a new generation of Jedi Knights to take on UKIP, sorry I mean First Order, the evil force which had arisen from the ashes of Joy Division when their lead singer Darth Vader died (to be replaced in this new movie by Professor Snape from Hogwarts). This meant destroying the brand new iDeathStar 7S by disabling the capacitor and taking down the Maplin website so they couldn't order a new one. This they managed to do fairly easily – save the ubiquitous Gandalf-style death plunge – which achieved everything they wanted to do except to find Luke Skywalker which was what they wanted to do.

Fortunately the day was saved by the spontaneous regeneration of Skippy The Bush Kanga-r2d2 who was able to report that Luke had fallen down a mineshaft and been sulking there all along. ("What's that you say, Skippy?" Beep. "The map is on your hard drive?" Beep beep.) So all's well that ends well. I think more could have been made of the sub-plot about the awkwardness of making arrangements for Christmas lunch when so many close family members had gone over to the dark side but the movie's main lesson (in homage to Basil Fawlty) came over clearly enough: when you're battling an incipient Jedi Knight 'don't mention the Force.'

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## JIM LINWOOD

Many thanks for Vibrator 22 which I read at lunchtime in the *Slug and Lettuce* (aka the *Slag and Legless*) by the Thames in Richmond.

The vinyl solution issue brought back my own memories of records in all their forms. My first encounter was as a child when my folks collected a record player and several 78" shellac records from the home of a deceased relative. The records were mostly vocals by the likes of Jack Buchanan (Goodnight Vienna) and Al Bowlly (Goodnight Sweetheart) - the latter's recordings have now had a recent cult revival. In my mid-teens I became a fan of the jazz broadcasts by Willis Conover on Voice of America particularly the music of Stan Kenton. From various junk shops I cobbled together a large console that could play all manner of records then available and bought my first 12" 33rpm album, Kenton's *Cuban Fire*. I followed this up with Elmer Bernstein's soundtrack albums from two of my favourite films at the time: *The Man with the Golden Arm* and *The Sweet Smell of Success*. My love of jazz continued and I built up a LP collection of West Coast Jazz (Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Stan Getz, Dave Brubeck) as well as Dizzy and Bird. In 1966, Bob Dylan gave an hour-long solo performance on BBC TV which made me a life-long fan. The next day I went out and bought his *Mr Tambourine Man* EP which I still treasure today. When I worked in central London from 1974 onwards the whole of the jazz record shops in the Charing Cross area, particularly Doug Dobells, was my empire and I have several boxes full of LP's and EP's to remind me of that time.



I even had some inside experience of vinyl production when our daughter, Eleanor, published her punk rock fanzine, *Baby Bites Back*, in the 80's. On some of the issues she attached 7" flexi-discs of groups which she had recorded and then had the tapes transferred to vinyl. Issue 5 in 1988 featured a disc of the group *Safe Houses* singing "If I Should Die". She sold the zines and discs outside rock venues before going in. They now seem to be collectors' items on eBay.

Jim Linwood can be found at [jlinwood@aol.com](mailto:jlinwood@aol.com)

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## **PHILIP TURNER GETS A LITTLE BIT CONTENTIOUS**

Wholesome belated birthday. In response to your leader, I would say that Syria is peppered with bad Moslems (*sic, Ed.*) and it should be up to the allegedly good Moslems in the region (Turkey, Saudia, etc.) to sort them out. Their only alternative is to face Donald Trump's exclusion from Yourope and the US until they can prove beyond a shadow of doubt that they are not bad Moslems.

Biological warfare of Roy Kettle's sort seems a truly brilliant weapon to inflict on all those who go darn the gym. Especially to someone who couldn't lift a case of wine to save his life, thanks to arthritis and other afflictions.

Astral Pole (10) -- ah, yes! Copernicus! Nice to see Taral Wayne sharing his talents as a crossword compiler with us. But could he order a plate of Phu-Yuck with a straight face? The world needs to know.

Random thought: am I the only one of your correspondents who doesn't have one or more of his/her names in the email address? No, there's also Mr. ExcellenceInGardening.

Where are the International Banditry of Hackers when you need them? Taxi Nic seems to need their services desperately in order to bring Uber's sinister software platform crashing into the dust.

Maybe Pat should be awarded a disclaimer to tag on to accusations of being the zine's profofrder. Something along the lines of: "Those parts of the zine which I have eyeballed have been profored selectively to preserve typos which are rather amusing or profof that the author could not be bothered to read his/her composition before sending it to Graham."

*(EDITOR: You seem to suggest Muslims should be considered guilty until proven innocent. I'm not sure you'll find many people who agree with that principle. Maybe, like in Minority Report, we should find a way of predicting whether they will commit crimes if allowed into our countries (but hey that is surely science fiction?). Merely speculating that they might commit crimes doesn't seem convincing enough an excuse to deny people basic liberties or at least liberties that other religious and ethnic groups already enjoy.)*

Philip Turner can be found at **farrago2@lineone.net**

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## **STEVE JEFFREY**

Precision about age definitely seems to wane as we get older . In primary school the fractional component of being 'seven and a quarter' is hugely important, but gets dropped for round numbers until being qualified with the inevitable 'ish' when we start losing count in our fifties and sixties. I'm not sure how much of this latter imprecision is due to fading memory as much as denial. I'm not *that* old, surely? But why not just give them your date of birth and let them work it out?

My take home message from Citizen Kale is not to use Roy's greengrocer. Not that ours is that much better, although I've yet to experience an explosion of whitefly when I open the shopping bags, but I always end up having to discard several satsumas that have gone green and furry before I get round to eating them.

I must have blanked somewhere since this issue seems to be littered with responses about cats and guns. Not, I would think, a good combination. And terrorist cats with guns would be even worse.

Libidinous perverts, emotionally intelligent trousers, steampunk rap and something called the Uber controversy. Either Lloyd Penney and I are reading completely different copies of Vibrator or I really haven't been paying it the close attention it deserved. Almost certainly the latter. I'll go to the back of the class now.

I have to disagree with Fred Lerner's blanket assertion that records producers are not musicians. Surely if you produce music, you are de facto a musician. Plus a lot of producers are in fact musicians in Fred's rather tightly prescribed definition of the term of being able to play an instrument themselves. (I'd be interested to know how Fred feels about people like the Chemical Brothers who make music by twiddling knobs and manipulating recordings and samples rather than blowing down bits of brass plumbing or hitting bits of wood or ivory.)

And that notion that music written down isn't music until someone plays it has echoes of the tree in the forest debate. Is a book a book only when someone reads it? (And by extension from Fred's assertion, reads it aloud. I would suspect the majority of composers (and not a few musicians) hear the sound of the dots on the page in their head, even if they don't actually need to play it to make it 'real'.

A brilliant 'Ozymandias' moment in the middle of Joseph Nicholas's letter in his parenthetical aside on the plaque to one Henry Cockton, "His works are his best monument". Just so. Popularity and posterity are not infallible arbiters and preservers of quality. Witness the fate of John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*, overlooked and rejected by everyone until after the author's suicide and is now regarded as part of the American canon for which Toole was awarded a posthumous Pulitzer Prize for Literature.

I remember (and still have) 45 rpm singles with that large central hole for which you needed either a little springy three armed plastic adaptor that fitted into the hole on the record or a circular block that fitted over the record player spindle. A lot of them came from jukeboxes (my parents owned or ran a series of pubs back in the day before jukeboxes went digital) and quite a few import singles also seemed to come this way.

There was a local news item last night about a pop-up music shop reopening in Abingdon (Oxford, not Virginia) that specialized in vinyl because people are starting to (belatedly) realize just how crappy the limited and compressed sound of mp3 downloads is.

I still have all my vinyl records - about 4 boxes of lps and a couple of hundred singles, mostly dating from the 1970s and 1980s, an eclectic (I like to think) mix of folk, prog, jazz, rock and reggae.

(EDITOR: I think you have a somewhat Romantic view of a Record Producer actually producing music. What he produces are records. That involves jumping through all sorts of financial hoops and arranging various shady financial deals, nothing much to do with the actual music. There have been fairly \*musical\* record producers (Phil Spector, Quincy Jones, George Martin, and many modern black rap producers and others). It's good to know or even contemplate that there are record shops stocking vinyl on audiophile grounds, but I suspect Tesco is not one of them, neither I suspect is HMV despite the seasonal slant of their Christmas promotions towards old vinyl. These are mere marketing ploys along with USB turntables which you can buy your dad to make him feel hip and still connected to his musical childhood).

Steve Jeffrey can be found at [srjeffery@aol.com](mailto:srjeffery@aol.com)

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### PAUL SKELTON

What was I thinking? What the fuck does *Sic Tempus Financial Solubility* mean? I can only conclude that it was my snot-logged brain cells (both of them) going down for the third time. Remind me never again to try writing a LoC when I'm feeling unwell. However, onward to the bits of *Vibrator 2.0.22* that **do** make sense (i.e. the rest of it).

When you wrote "As soon as the war was over my parents moved down from the bleakness of Yorkshire..." I was put in mind of them spending the war years hiding in a secret cave on the east side of the Pennines to avoid conscription. Obviously I'm sure this wasn't the case but your description of a Yorkshire with which you could only have had a visitor's acquaintance is not how I remember my West-Riding childhood. Yes, I'm sure there were bleak bits, as I know for a fact from many visits to relatives as a slightly older child being driven back over the Pennines via Woodhead and Penistone (which route raised a startled exclamation from Mike Glicksohn when we drove him and Susan over part of it many years later. "There really is a town called Penis Tone? People really live there? Willingly?"). As kids we always looked forward to the fork in the road over which was the sign 'Broadbottom – 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> miles'. It's still there; I'm childishly relieved to say.

Then again, it could be my memories which are at fault. After all, you went on to write "So I grew up avoiding the war but certainly experiencing the austerity and rationing which came afterwards." OK, you had a year's start on me but, as a young child, I never experienced 'austerity' because I never knew anything else. I certainly didn't feel particularly deprived and I do feel that nowadays to claim one has experienced 'austerity' one would need some other experience against which to compare it. Rather it seems to me that instead of experiencing 'austerity' as a young child, what I have done is experience 'non-austerity' ever since, though as you pointed out the change was gradual (as implied by the phrase "a post-war recovery set in"), so instead of noticing particularly the prevailing conditions when you set off on life's journey you are simply aware that as one journeys through life the neighbourhoods seem to be improving.

One thing that does still intrigue me about your parents' precipitous rush to Greater London was the reason behind it. Did you ever enquire? Was it a relocation that was pre-

planned, but postponed by the war? After all, only an idiot would move to London during The Blitz. Or was it instead a deliberate strategy to take advantage of post-war circumstances? London, more than anywhere else, would need rebuilding. There would be a lot of work, a lot of money sloshing about; likely more people would have cars sooner than elsewhere in the country. It was the end of the rainbow where the post-war pot of gold was likeliest to be found. Two totally different reasons for a sudden post-war move to London and whichever pertained might speak volumes for their characters.

Leroy was excellent, but then Leroy is almost invariably excellent. I shall however leave him to eternities of wracked self-doubt over that 'almost'.

*(EDITOR: As far as I can fathom, Paul, my parents moved down to London after the war because my father got a job offer at Wembley Stadium through a contact he had made by being in the motorcycle trade in Haworth, in Yorkshire, his home town. I think they rented their house at first but then went on to buy it. I got the impression from talking to my parents that they were part of a network of friends that supported each other. For several years they received regular Christmas cards from a very wealthy Yorkshire industrialist and entrepreneur. There were of course things they would never tell me about their background, and things about which I never bothered to ask.)*

Paul Skelton can be found at [paulskelton2@gmail.com](mailto:paulskelton2@gmail.com)

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### **JOHN D. BERRY, LIKE THE BLUE WHALE, IS NOT A FREQUENT VISITOR TO THESE CLIMES BUT HE IS WELCOME NEVERTHELESS.**

Since I don't share your fascination with recorded vinyl, I wasn't expecting to enjoy "It's a Plastic Thing," but in fact it was very good indeed. Perhaps because it's not just about records, but about what they meant to you, and the context in which you got them.

Surf music wasn't a whole lot less exotic to me, growing up in the suburbs of New York, than it was for you in England. I had actually been to California, once, when my parents took me with them on a family trip to Disneyland (at least that's what I considered to be the purpose of the trip). But that was when I was eight years old, well before I was even listening to music on the radio, much less finding surf music among the tunes. California! Sun! Surf! Girls! It may have been just as mythical to a teenager growing up in, say, Garden Grove, Calif., but for me it was a world away.

Although I don't go rummaging in thrift shops or record stores looking for rare old vinyl, I did find a few oddities at a sidewalk sale several years ago. They were 45's, and they all seemed to date from around 1960, when Hawaii became the 50th state. Hawaiian music! Well, music about Hawaii. A couple of them turned out to be by highly respected Hawaiian musicians like Gabby Pahanui, but most were imitative pop crap. And they weren't exactly in pristine shape. Still, a find.

In other news... Perhaps the title of Roy Kettle's piece should have been, "Black Kale, White Fly." Then it could have been a martial-arts movie, and Roy's deft moves while trying

to defeat the whitefly menace and save Italian spelling would have been seen as the artful dodging that they were.

John D. Berry can be found at [johndberry.com](http://johndberry.com)

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### **MIKE MEARA SUGGESTS (AS USUAL) WE ARE ALL DOOMED!**

You don't know how old you are? Even I know how old you are. You're about eighteen months older than me, that's how old you are. So the next time those credit card chappies get on your case, tell 'em I said that, and also that in my opinion you're a pretty decent-ish kind of cove, all in all, and not likely to do a runner, mainly because you can't, and I feel sure you'll have no further problems in that regard.

Your next bit brought to mind the old adage that the three things you should never discuss with strangers are sex, politics and religion. But these days, sex is not the big deal it used to be - not for me, anyway - and everyone but the activist minorities is happy to share the view that all politicians are equally contemptible. But I remain unwilling to discuss religion, even with those who aren't strangers. This is because my own views on the subject have, somewhat to my alarm, become a bit too extreme for my own comfort, so that I think it's best I keep them off the record until such time as I can get to grips with myself. Despite all that, however, there are perhaps a few points I can safely make:

(At this point I constructed a seven-point bullet list, but then took my own advice and deleted it all again, all except for this last one:)

We're doomed! We're all bloody doomed!!

You just knew I'd get to that eventually, didn't you? Even if you'll never know exactly how.

Nice piece by Roy. Good to see he has returned to something like his best form.

Lots of good letters too: Taral Wayne, Milt Stevens, Chuck Connor, Fred Smith. And Paul Skelton - but when does he ever not write a good loc? Even Lloyd Penney shines brighter in Vibrator than he does elsewhere. You get better letters than I do for aMfO. Or should I say "used to do", since my most recent ish is now far in the past - a situation which is likely to develop further. I feel that the deserved success of Vibrator has contributed to the decline of aMfO, even though they are quite different in style. But perhaps that is just an excuse. (Send all excuses to the usual address, folks, and I'll consider using them in the next ish. No, wait...)

When you warned that Ian Williams used the "c" word in his loc, I assumed you meant "cats". Getting Ian to talk for one minute without hesitation, deviation, repetition or mentioning cats would, I imagine, be quite difficult. And of course, he did indeed mention cats, a bit. But he used the more usual "c" word as well. Claire Brialey has already explained (though perhaps not publicly, I can't quite remember) how the use of this word as a pejorative is unfriendly to women; so well did she do this, in fact, that I now routinely try to remember to follow her advice. As should we all.

Ted's history of latter-day analogue formats was most interesting. I have one of those 7" albums he mentions - RCA EJB-3002, consisting of two four-track EPs in a gatefold picture sleeve - by the US jazz and session guitarist Mundell Lowe: the discs have the large centre holes Ted describes, and sides 1 and 4 are on one disc, 2 and 3 on the other, to facilitate playing on an autochanger. The discographies I have been able to check don't mention this EP album version, but give the number as LJM3002, which adds a ninth track and was a conventional 10" album. Puzzling, that. Anyway, as Ted says, they were phased out, but the concept still popped up from time to time - think Beatles' *MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR*.

I have rather more 10" vinyl albums, with both jazz and pop content. Thinking just about the aesthetic appeal, I always preferred the 10" album over the 12": it was the quarto to the larger format's A4, if you like. You don't like? Okay, I'll press on.

My parents were classical fans, and since the classics don't lend themselves to the strictures of the 78rpm record, they did have mostly 10" and 12" vinyl albums, though they too veered towards the doubtless estimable Charlie Kunz. Probably not on Sundays, though. They also had a radiogram - a Ferguson, I think it was - which seemed at the time to be the ultimate bit of musical furniture: it had a record deck, speakers, and room to store your disc-cleaning kit and your records, provided you didn't have very many. At some point it bit the dust - I can't remember how or when. No sentimentality there.

I needed music at university, of course, and there were no Sony Walkmen in them days. Instead, I had a portable record player, with the (mono) speaker in the lid, which could run off batteries or the mains. I ruined quite a lot of good vinyl on that machine. It would have been more, but there was a limit to what I could carry with me in my trunk. Thank goodness for small mercies.

At first I thought that the cover picture was your own shot of an item from your collection. Then I did a bit of research, during which I discovered the very same photo on the internet. I'm surprised, then, that you chose this image of the 1977 reissue, rather than one of the 1963 original on Parlophone (also available on the internet). From the point of view of a vinyl non-collector such as myself, this normally wouldn't matter a jot, but in this case it does: as you should know, the original has an extra track - thus making it that relative rarity, a five-track EP - which was for some reason omitted from the reissue. (Oriole, of beloved memory, UK home of the equally beloved Spotnicks, would routinely issue *six*-track EPs of that Swedish band, making them even more irresistible to the penurious instro fan that I was in the sixties.)

As I said, I don't collect vinyl, or CDs for that matter. I do accumulate them, however, which is different. What I do collect is what is on the substrate, that is, the music. I don't give a fig about first pressings and all that stuff. I don't even care if there is no substrate at all, and thus am perfectly happy with downloads from Amazon, especially when they're a whole lot cheaper than the maybe-not-even-available hard copy would be. (There are those who opine that lossy formats such as mp3 are not audiophile quality, whatever that is; well, I'm a mere musicophile, and I find that a download at 230mbps variable bit rate is quite acceptable to my ears. Okay, my ears may be crap, but they're unlikely to get any

better at my age, are they?) I transcribe everything to mp3 anyway, so, vinyl or CD, it's all archive material now.

I go for the package which combines value for money with top sound quality. So my early and once much-loved and much-played Shadows LPs, which were among my first purchases in the early 1960s, have long gone in favour of the Early Years 6-CD set, which has all these and much much more in superb sound quality. (In fact, while researching this, I discovered that there is a revised version of this set available, with even more material, rare stereo versions etc - well over 180 tracks for just around £12 including postage. I am seriously thinking of upgrading.) And my Ventures material is not from vinyl, but from those neat CD twofers with bonus tracks which appeared some years back.

(Unlike you, I always preferred the Shadows (and the Spotnicks) over the Ventures. In that, I am in the minority, however, for the Ventures are the biggest-selling instro band of all time, apparently. I think the Ventures did better with their Mosrite deal - though they've gone back to playing Fenders now, I gather - than the Shadows did with those awful Burns (no relation I hope, Bill) resonator guitars which ruined their sound. And they didn't even look good, either. Sunset, by the way, is/was Liberty's budget label; Dolton was bought by Liberty in 1960, and the first Ventures Sunset release I can find is RUNNING STRONG from 1966. Apparently every tune on this was retitled to make it look like an original album, whereas in fact it was all previously-issued material.)

Speaking as a jazz fan, I think the jazz collecting fraternity are by far the worst purist collectors. My mate Alan in Leicester, from whom I buy lots of jazz in whatever's-cheapest, whatever's-available format, tells me some hilarious tales of his customers. There are those who will buy only vinyl, and thus will happily (one has to assume) pay £45 for a custom reissue of a Blue Note classic album on two 12" 45rpm discs, rather than £7 for a secondhand CD of the same material with bonus tracks. That's three disc turnovers as against, er, none. Bring back the autochanger! And there are those who will buy only **mono** vinyl. Yer wha? Alan regularly scores several hundred quid a pop for rare vinyls on eBay, when the same music - remember the music? - is available in far better sound quality for a tenner or less on CD. A first (I assume) pressing of Blue Note 1568 by Hank Mobley has fetched well in excess of \$5000 at auction. (I don't have this, or any version thereof, because I don't rate Bill Hardman, who played trumpet on the session. But I could get the music, along with that from five other albums, on a compilation CD reissue for just over a fiver. Maybe I will.) The obsession of these nutjobs means that they are missing out on whatever has been issued in CD-only format since about 1990 or so. Is it really rational to define one's taste in music according to the format(s) in which it is available? Or are these people really more concerned with their bits of rare plastic with their nice cover art?

But these irrational nutjobs are at least harmless, in contrast with some of the religious variety I narrowly avoided discussing at the beginning; I mustn't go back there, so perhaps it's time to stop.

*(EDITOR: I have the Parlophone original issue of the Cougars EP, of course, but couldn't be arsed to try and dig it out from about eight shelves of unsorted and unfiled 45s. I also had*



*forgotten about the extra track on the original issue. Mea Culpa. I'm puzzled by your reference to Burns Resonator guitars. Resonators are typically metal bodied guitars used mainly for slide, and although they did make them I can't recall them being featured on any Shadows tracks. Hank's Burns guitar was a signature model (as illustrated). Bert, the guitarist in our group, The Burlingtons, being an archetypal Shadows fan, bought one, along with an Echoplex delay, and a Vox AC30 Top Boost amp, and could do immaculate soundalike impersonations of classic Hank tones. There is also a geriatric Shadows tribute band on Youtube called the Red Strats who play, not surprisingly... I think it's a pity you seem to have given up on aMFO which was for a long time flying the banner for British Perzines. It's a pity too that you seem cowed in the face of Vibrator. Come on in and play, there is room for everybody and the water is usually warm. I am totally cynical about the appeal of Vibrator. I load it with as many comment hooks as I can and I stick to a schedule so my readership knows if they comment their words of wisdom will be published within a month. The Grand Strategy is working so far. Famous last words.)*

Mike Meara can be found at **meara810@virginmedia.com**

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### **DAVID REDD**

Thanks! Vinyl, oh goody. But after The Old Lady Drives to Dolgoch, you never got into those Argo lps of chuff-chuff noises from GWR and the rest?

From the selected highlights of your life story, you must have been just entering your teens when Elvis went into the army, Buddy Holly got killed and the music changed from mostly joyous exploration to mostly production-line efficiency. (Neil Sedaka's 1959 Oh Carol pretty much marks the pivot.) Just as you were getting interested in pop music too. No wonder you turned to West Coast sounds for excitement.

A minor footnote to Ted White's condensed yet very comprehensive Vinyl Formats for Beginners: some quirky areas had as dominant format not the 7" single but the 7" EP, e.g. France and the rather smaller Welsh-language market. Still usually only 50% really good stuff per disc, though.

All the best for a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year,  
David.

P.S. Since you ask: No parish magazine for us now, hence no LoCs; in fact supreme indifference to church activities (and to most old-style social activity) is indeed the default mode round here, even among much of what's left of the congregation. Civilisation hasn't got long to go. Enjoy it while it lasts, eh?

*(EDITOR: I used to work in a bookshop that had a railway section and used to sell those Argo LPs and cassettes, David, although I must confess I never borrowed any of them to listen to. That would have been too weird. But I did have lots of interesting conversations with steam fans who really could tell the difference between a 0-4-0 tank engine and a Beyer-Garrett.)*

David Redd can be found at **dave\_redd@hotmail.com**

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## **MILT STEVENS**

In Vibrator #22, you reveal that you are a Scorpio. Some of my best friends are Scorpios. Most of them aren't. If you can't remember your age, you should at least be able to remember your astrological sign. Someone might ask you about it in a pub.

I usually remember my age, so people never ask me about it. Credit people usually ask me things like the atomic weight of cobalt or the distance to the moon in centimeters. I suspect I'm attracting the wrong sort of credit people. It would be so much easier if they just asked my name, my quest, and my favorite color.

You're only as old as you feel. That proposition can be a good thing or a bad thing depending. When my mother was 95 she admitted there were days she felt as if she was a hundred. Years ago, I discovered you are never the right age. You are either too young or too old.

A few weeks ago, I was involved in a conversation about college education. One of the other people in the conversation challenged me as to when I had gotten a degree. I gave a date that was more than 50 years in the past. To the other person's tastes, that disqualified me from knowing anything about college at all.

I never bought a phonograph record back in the days when they made such things. Back when I was a teenager, teenagers were supposed to be obsessed with rock and roll music. They were supposed to exhibit their obsession by buying lots of 45 records. I wasn't obsessed with rock and roll music. I didn't even much like rock and roll music, and I was spending all of my money on science fiction magazines anyway. All in all, I wasn't really cut out to be a teenager.

I'm now thinking about all those ancient televisions, radios, and record players. Back then, they were goshwow and thoroughly modern. By now, they seem like not much of an improvement over painting the walls of your cave.

Milt Stevens can be found at [\*\*miltstevens@earthlink.net\*\*](mailto:miltstevens@earthlink.net)

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## **LLOYD PENNEY**

I read something on Facebook, I think, that you were looking for submissions for issue 2.0.23 of Vibrator. That reminded me that I hadn't responded to 2.0.22 yet, so here I come with a loc to screw up your page count royally. No, no need to thank me...

If you don't know how old you are, perhaps you can't count that high, or you don't need the reminder, or it's just plain too late. I will be 57 at my next birthday, so perhaps I should just remember Heinz. I seem to think better with my stomach, anyway.

Paris, San Bernadino...too many guns, and not enough sense. Too much poverty, jealousy and distrust, on all sides. With Canada taking in 25,000 Syrian refugees, one idiot Republican candidate now wants to put troops at every US-Canada border point. I think uberidiot Trump wanted a wall along the northern border, and I am all for it. Keeps the damfool US politicians in...

My loc...anything from Joseph Nicholas on the Paris agreements? As this agreement on climate change was being trumpeted, I can only imagine how much in the way of kerosene fumes went into the atmosphere as people flew all over the world to Paris and back. Pubnights again? Monday is our Third Monday pubnight in the west end of Toronto, and looking forward to it.

I'd read recently that in countries with liberal gun laws, those who carry guns regularly lose their fear or aversions to weapons that can kill. That may not explain Switzerland, but it does explain the US. Right now, money aside, it is the regular massacres that happen there that discourage me from crossing the border. At some point, I know a rather foolish politician will try to change the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. It is what is needed, but it will not happen, and that politician's career will come to a screeching halt.

There's lots of sports teams who have names that are not PC, and they don't show any signs of changing. Washington Redskins, Edmonton Eskimos, Chicago Blackhawks, many more...they should be changed, but I believe the original intent was to honour the people the teams were named after, but people being people, offence will be taken where none was intended. Change the names, and let someone else be offended for a change. Philip Turner should know that the Eskimos defeated the Ottawa RedBlacks 26-20 to win the Grey Cup.

(As I type, I am listening to Absolute 80s, and someone is prattling on about Castle Greyskull? At least it's better than all Star Wars, all the time. That will get worse over the next few days.)

"Your fandom has been condemned, and I want you out by the end of the month." Fafiation for all! Well, that certainly cleans up that mess. Will the last one leaving Fandom please turn out the lights?

I remember, when I was working at a radio station in the town of Orillia, where I grew up, giant record players that could play 78s, 45s, 33½s and if I recall, 16s. The record players were strong enough for anyone to sit on the turntable, and be revolved at any given speed. That might also have explained the stains on the record room floor.

Robert Lichtman's loc...when I do download a zine, I respond to it, and then I put it in a Zines to Print folder on my desktop. I just checked the properties of that file...close to 3500 files, about 6.55 Gb in size. We're having our problems with Uber in Toronto, and our mayor, usually, a pretty efficient guy, doesn't seem to want to do anything with the expected furore between Uber and our local established taxi companies.

Alison, love your Beam covers! (I know, the wrong zine, but it might be a while before I can get to loccking Beam 9.)

I should wrap this up, and let the Internet have its way with it. Much happy partying for you and Pat and the family for Christmas and New Year's, and let's time travel a bit, and see you in the next year, that SFnal year of 2016! (page and a half...not bad.)

Lloyd Penney can be found at [penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)

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## **SIMON OUNSLEY SHARES HIS FIRST LOC FOR TWENTY YEARS – ANOTHER VIBRATOR FIRST!**

Hi Graham – Many thanks for Vibrators 21 and 22. I'm not sure if you sent me special large print copies or this is the standard format but either way I found them relatively easy to read on screen so thank you. Having said which, my reading ability is still severely curtailed by eye pain so sorry I haven't been able to read as much of them as I would like. I will probably get round to some more but I wanted to send you this before issue 23 arrives. You are impressively prolific. The thoughts that follow are mainly on issue 22 but I just want to say that issue 21's cover by Steve Stiles is simply brilliant. Love those ghosts. They deserve their own comic book.

I wonder if Roy Kettle has considered that he might be guilty after all: that the sudden infestation of spiders at his gym may be due to the whitefly he brought in with his kale. The next time he goes for a workout, he may find an infestation of birds to catch the spiders, which will be followed by cats to catch the birds and then dogs to catch the cats and by the time it gets all the way up the food chain to bears there's going to be a real problem and probably a surcharge on the council tax. Probably best to stick to the kale crisps in future.

I must congratulate David Redd on his impressive knowledge of Leeds fandom, especially as he has never met us. Not many people would remember that Michael Ashley has a brother called Graham (who once wrote an article for one of my fanzines, as it happens) and the correct identification of Mike Ford as a former Black Hole editor is also impressive. I think he was co-editor with John Nixon but I could be wrong about that.

These days saying you could be wrong and moving on usually means you just can't be bothered to google so, with my conscience pricked, I just did some high pressure search engine stuff and I'm proud to announce that.... I still don't know if I was wrong or not. There is no exhaustive list of Black Hole editors on the internet, a sad state of affairs for the premier organ of the Leeds University SF society. Perhaps its title was a harbinger of the oblivion into which it would some day sink, much like us all really.

Oh dear. Here am I getting all maudlin already and it's not even (quite) Christmas yet. At least I have cheered myself up by remembering that we published a David Redd story in an early issue of Interzone. 'On the Deck of the Flying Bomb' issue 4, I add (with only a little

assistance from Greg Egan's excellent online index – at least some things are properly documented).

Fred West asks why D West didn't use the name 'Donald' in his fannish persona. I can help him out by quoting West himself from his article 'Performance': "This business of my name – or initial – is an accident rather than an affectation. It happens to be the form I've always used as a signature, and I saw no reason to change when coming into fandom. The result is that I am called Donald by my family, Don by my non-fannish friends, and D. by the fans – apart from Pete Presford, who ruthlessly persists in calling me Dave, despite yearly corrections since 1976."

So there you are – though I seem to remember calling him Don when I first encountered Leeds fandom in 1978. I seem to think that 'D' became more prevalent as his fannish fame grew, though to be honest the whole thing is clouded in the mists of years.

You briefly mentioned 'Sunny Stories' magazine. That's the first time I've heard of it since my grandma bought me a copy and it had a crocodile in it which made me feel sick. I seem to remember the story involved the crocodile eating children but my imagination may have got a little out of hand. Either way, the title of the publication did not seem entirely appropriate. 'Warning: Crocodile Megadeath' might have given my grandma a better idea of what she was buying – but possibly the trades descriptions act had not been passed in those days.

Speaking of horrors, the spectre of Christmas looms and I have tinsle to sprinkle so I will draw this to a close, my first loc for over 20 years, I think. It's very sad that it's D's death that has lured me back into fandom but it's nice to be reconnected, at least in a modest way.

Simon Ounsley can be found at [ounsley@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ounsley@yahoo.co.uk)

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## **FRED SMITH**

Your views on the events in Paris are well said and I would agree that tighter border controls and better internet surveillance are surely necessary. Putting troops on the ground might eventually be needed if it would help to draw together the rag-tag opposition to the dictatorship in Syria.

I always have to stand (or sit!) back in admiration at folk who can write two pages about practically nothing, as Roy Kettle does here on kale but have to also say that I've read and enjoyed greatly that mystery novel (with the SF background) that Roy and Chris Evens wrote: *Future Perfect*. I bought the Kindle version and followed this up with the Chris Evans edited *Conspiracy Theories*, also very good. Noticed then on my Kindle another book by Chris that I hadn't remembered buying, a sort of autobiography titled *Memoirs of a Fruitcake*. A strange title which conveyed nothing.

I decided to read it anyway and was immediately surprised to discover that Chris had been involved in radio from an early age and, as I carried on reading, was struck by the name-

dropping of celebrities he had met, on practically every page. However, when he boasted of creating "TFI Friday" and buying Virgin Radio from Richard Branson the penny finally dropped: this wasn't "our" Chris Evans but a carrot-topped disc jockey of the same name. Reason I had his book was simply because I inherited this Kindle from my daughter and she had obviously liked the bum enough to buy his crap work. I gave it up after a few pages since his "show-biz" chatter was totally uninteresting to me. Likewise, his big-headed persona I find annoying and I hate disc jockeys on principle anyway.

'Fraid I haven't more comment to make this time. Just one query for Taral Wayne, though: What's the purpose of the two guns in the photo of your cat? Are they real and are they yours? And, if so, why?

Seasonal Good Wishes to yourselves (and your readers!)

Fred Smith can be found at [f.smith50@ntlworld.com](mailto:f.smith50@ntlworld.com)

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### **DAVE COCKFIELD**

I loved the upside down back to front pages. They taxed my puzzle solving abilities to the limit but proved that I'm not quite senile yet.

Now that I'm back in good old Blighty quaffing good British real Ale and scoffing all the pies my weight is now 295 lbs. It's disgusting that excessive food and drink holidays in France are not available on the NHS for obese gits like Ian Williams and myself. I guess he has his Knee as an excuse.

All the vinyl stuff was very interesting but as I no longer have any I have decided not to comment. Nostalgically waxing lyrical about the past and treasured albums that were full of fascinating clicks or so warped that the stylus was in synchronous orbit most of the time just seems pointless.

I do miss the album covers though. The foldout shield of Hawkwind's "Warrior at the Edge of Time" and Jethro Tull's "Benefit" with the pop up of the band on stage were particular favourites.

Kev Williams is keen on the current resurgence of vinyl but on a recent visit to FOPP we were both dismayed at the £25 price tag on the new stuff. I guess that it is worth it because the records are at least 180gm true vinyl and not cheap plastic as they were when I gave up on them.

Unfortunately a People's Uprising would not succeed except as an re-enactment of the problems in Syria. The Tories would control the South, Scots the North, Geordies the North East, and then there would be Brummies, Scousers, Mancunians, the Irish and the Welsh. Plus many that I've missed.

Not to mention the various ethnic nationalities and religious fanatics of all faiths. Recently it was stated that we should no longer link Church and State because of the decline in Christianity. However that is just the Anglican Church. Where I live there are

many fundamentalist African Christians who have set up churches in abandoned Cinemas and even old Supermarkets. Likewise Jehovah's Witnesses regularly wear out my doorbell.

I think that we have to have faith in Jeremy Corbyn. Okay he has had a lot of stick from all quarters, not just his turncoat party ministers. I think that he put forward a very good considered argument against British planes bombing in Syria. I was just disappointed that he had a go at one of his own supporters that increased the anti-Left rhetoric. Personally I can't stand Ken Livingstone but he was wrongly pilloried by the Media and MPs for supposedly supporting Terrorism when he said that the bus attacks in London years ago were by people who considered themselves to be martyrs in retaliation for the war in Iraq. It was not widely reported that he was making the point that you have to understand your enemy and that he thought that bombing ISIS in Syria would make an attack in the UK more likely. The Media conveniently did not mention that he also said that he has always condemned terrorists and believed that ISIS was a great evil that had to be totally eradicated..

He set out his ideas on the conflict that I found very refreshing. Secure a political solution to the current crisis in Syria. If necessary split the country in two creating two countries. One controlled by Assad and the other by the rebels.

He correctly pointed out that many of the so called rebels were as equally inimical to Britain as they were to Assad so could not be depended upon to form a reliable land force against ISIS.

He suggested that after sorting out Syria politically it would then be necessary to support a bombing campaign with land forces. These would need to take the form of a coalition from Middle East Kingdoms, Russia, Europe, and the USA.

This is what Jeremy had a go at Ken about because he is vehemently against ever sending British troops to war in the Middle East under any circumstances.

Of course the Media edited the comments to suggest that even he thought that Ken's views made him an apologist for terrorists.

Many of Jeremy's detractors in the Labour Party are now showing themselves to be damp squibs as the Media run out of sensationalist stories to print.

Jeremy has been head of the Labour Party for only 3 months yet, given his so called lack of support, has managed to be a very effective opposition Leader. The Tories have had damaging reversals in their proposals for Tax Credits and the reduction of the Police Force. They are being hammered over the NHS. In the New Year the Tory idea for 5 year council house tenancies and the removal of the inheritance of tenancy will be a big issue that I'm sure Jeremy will oppose successfully.

That is because he is a Socialist who cares about people and their everyday lives. These are the issues that will see him succeed as Leader of his Party. Not the desire to influence the wider International stage that the like of Blair craved. He is not perfect but he is a damn sight better than he's given credit for.

Dave Cockfield can be found at [\*\*daverabban@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:daverabban@gmail.com)

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## **JOHN PURCELL PLAYS CATCH UP**

So it says October 2015 on front cover. And I am writing this letter of comment on Dec. 22, 2015. Big deal if it's late. You're lucky to get this at all.

Yeah, Gun control. A subject that I cannot stand. As you know, I live and work in Texas - not a native-born Texan, thank heavens, just a temporary import - and firmly believe that ultra-conservatives in this state (and country, for that matter) have taken massive liberties in defining how the Second Amendment of the US Constitution should be interpreted. My position is much more moderate, if not reasonable. Then again, I have always been a reasonable person. See, I don't mind if people who live in high crime areas own a handgun if they feel the need for self defense. That makes sense. I don't like it, but it makes sense. I likewise don't mind if people who enjoy hunting for food and sport own a hunting rifle: again, that makes sense. Then there are the marksmen who enjoy the challenge of precision shooting competitions. Again, that makes sense. What doesn't make sense is the average American Joe Citizen arming themselves with weaponry and ammo stockpiles that make them better armed than a small nation. Reasonableness is what's missing. I just don't understand why some people feel acquiring arms to such an extreme is necessary. It seems to me that it would be easy enough to track somebody's weaponry purchases in this day and age. Once a person surpasses two or three guns, then that should send up a red flag. I just don't get it. Citizens should not have access to military grade weapons. Again, that simply doesn't make sense.

Maybe we'll get lucky and the Mother of all Mother Ships will come down and fart us out of existence. We can only hope.

Well. That is a happy way to start of a loc, now isn't it? Shall we talk about cat pictures on Facebook? No? Well, I have eschewed posting them on my Facebook page, instead opting for posting pictures of my grandson, who is supremely cute now at age two and a half, and no longer looks like Winston Churchill. We have Chris Garcia's urchins for supply that look-alike contest.

Barcon 3 sounds like an interesting idea. If you're at MidAmeriCon II next summer maybe we can do a BBQ Crawl. I don't dare do a Bar Crawl these days, but a mouth-watering endeavour like a barbecue run works for me. What say you?

Oh, what else in here is worth comment? Nic Farey writes about taxi driving in Las Vegas. Boring. Lots of letters: always fun reading, but nothing there that I care to follow up on, so that's out. Ah, a fine remembrance of D West. So sad to hear of his passing, even though I never met the man. He sure created some wonderful work over the years. My wife, who is an artist, has expressed her admiration for his style and works. Thank you for sharing Graham West's tribute to Don. It was lovely and greatly appreciated.

With that I sign off. Many thanks for the issue, and I'll get onto the latest *Vibrator Real Soon Now*. Ooh, that sounds rather kinky, doesn't it?

*(EDITOR: I never mind getting late locs, John. My publication schedule is such that a loc on an issue two months old still get's published mighty damn promptly. More inclination to loc a zine like Vibrator I think that to loc a zine that only appears once in a blue moon and irregularly at that .I would love a chance to go on a BBQ crawl with you in Texas, which is after all the home of the BBQ. The last one I had was at Pat Virzi's Corflu in Austin and that was yummy. However I am less than keen at the prospect of attending regional U.S. cons.)*

John Purcell can be found at [askance73@gmail.com](mailto:askance73@gmail.com)

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## **KEVIN WILLIAMS**

I wanted to say one thing about Vib21, the tribute to D, given by his son. It was wonderful and heartfelt. As I've said previously, Don was one of the cool guys in fandom, and a real talent. He deserved to be world famous and in receipt of large art council grants.

I enjoyed Vib 22 a lot. Roy on form with his tale of kale, and Paul Skelton managing to be funny about bugger-all – that's a real gift.

What fascinated me most was Ted White's tale of how the 45 rpm record came about. It is such a baselessly stupid an idea (subtract 78 rpm from 33 rpm), arrived at in a panicky reaction from a big company caught napping, that it just must be true.

One of the old work retirees was an ex-EMI technician, who working in the 'proofing dept', checking out the quality of the metal masters and the initial pressings, before production. They also did small runs of special items such as 78 rpm shellac *picture* discs, before and after the war. These were produced for promotional reasons (apparently Hitler and Oswald Mosely had some produced), or indeed to combat piracy (echoes of the digital era). The record would be pressed first and then a very thin film with the printed illustration laid over the surface and the record pressed again. The sound quality was significantly compromised until they later added an additional layer of transparent plastic on top and then the record was pressed. He said he had a crate of them in his loft. I suggested to him that these would be very valuable. He's sadly gone now, and I've no idea what happened to these.

Like you, at home when I was young, the radio was always on. The only two records in the house were LPs of the 'Black & White Minstrel Show' and a Milo O'Shea Irish Rebel record ("*Shot by the Redcoats, I lie here dying...*") – the latter believe it or not, was a comedy record. Until my brother (8 years older than me) got an elegant grey and black leatherette Decca record player, and my musical education began in earnest.

The Garrard auto-changer would be crashing half-pound 78's down on to the turntable. Relentless Ted Heath and Stan Kenton big band workouts would pour forth, my brother rightly shunning the awful pop of the day (this is the late 50's). This was a purple period in Jazz, especially Jazz from the West Coast). So I got an early education, which helped me get into Rock & Roll the moment I heard it - Bill Haley's 'Shake, Rattle and Roll', which was released when I was 8.

But I never really connected with Big Band Jazz as much as to the horn, clarinet and piano-based, west coast stuff which I would quietly absorb, as I sat (quietly) in the corner pouring over the Lion, Topper and Dandy, that my dad used to bring home every Saturday night: an early formative multi-media education, occasionally enhanced by the fumes of Humbrol polystyrene cement, as I inexpertly glued bits of Airfix kits together.

There were a couple of Big Band tracks that I fondly recall, Kenton's 'Peanut Vendor' (for years, I thought that a vendor was a form of dance music), and the amazing 'Sing Sing Sing' from Benny Goodman's ground breaking 1938 Carnegie Hall concert. Another fond memory is Oscar Brown Jr's version of Cannonball Adderley's "Dat Dere", where the entire booze-ridden band stand up and sing: "Hey Daddy what's dat dere? What is dat ober dere, And hey Daddy can I have dat big elepunt ober dere". I was also mesmerized by Sinatra (I fell in love with the image of the short black-haired woman on the sleeve of 'Songs for Swingin' lovers'), Jimmy Giuffre's breathy clarinet, Chico Hamilton's brushed hi-hat, Brubeck's chunky block chords, Jim Hall's eloquently bluesy guitar, Shorty Rogers and his varied Giants, MJQ and on and on. I found Jimmy Smith and Wes Montgomery all on my own a few years later, and then some of the individualists: Monk, Mingus. Then the Beatles arrived and everything changed.

Moving on – I was interested in your fascination with late 50s/early60's Shads-style guitar instrumentals. I had a few of the Shadows singles, and was interested to listen to 'The Cougars', 'Saturday Night at the Duckpond' on You Tube, and really liked it. I just happened to mention it over a beer with one of my son's pals, Ed – who works in the 'synch' business – providing, licensing and producing (if necessary) music for movies, TV, and ads. His big annual project is the John Lewis Xmas ad, which he organised with the ad agency. Last year he helped make the career of Gabriel Alpin, who he got to record the cover of 'Power of Love' for the 2014 John Lewis ad.

Anyway, Ed listened to the Cougars, and has now told me that he's actively considering the track for an ad for Ford that he's working on (about changing expectations). So, if it comes off, and if any of the Cougars are still with us – there may be a late and unexpected pay day!

Coincidentally, just after reading Vib 22 on the train to Brighton (great place for Xmas shopping), I stumbled across a vast vinyl record store, called WAX FACTOR in the North Lanes:



It had a large section on instrumental 45s (Ventures; Outlaws; Black's Combo; The Dakotas, The Packabeats, and of course B Bumble and the Stingers). The store yielded me an early Waterboys single and a promo copy of Amy Winehouse 'Stronger than you' which has an accapella version I'd never heard, which is as astounding as it is sad.

Have a satisfactory Saturnalia

Kevin Williams can be found at [kevinwilliams48@googlemail.com](mailto:kevinwilliams48@googlemail.com)

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### **ROBERT LICHTMAN CONTINUES HIS UNBROKEN RUN OF LOCS SINCE ISSUE 1.**

In your introductory words to *Vibrator* #2.0.22, you write, “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 don’t understand the concept of getting “verification” from a credit card company with which, presumably, you have an existing card. What is it that you need it for? Perhaps memorizing the year of your birth would be helpful – you could offer that to the credit card company and let them work it out. (Yes, I’m ignoring any irony hashtags here.)

*(EDITOR: Mostly here Robert I am referring to those not infrequent times when I lose or misplace my credit card and have to phone to cancel it. I am always led through various hoops to prove I am actually the person who owns the card he is claiming to have lost. I don’t know why. And of course the \*lost\* card invariably turns up after a few days on the ledge or bookcase I left it on.)*

Roy’s tale of his adventures with the greengrocer over the correct name for “black kale” was enjoyable. I buy kale at the local farmer’s market, especially in the winter when the leaves are small and sweet-tasting, but can’t recall ever having encountered whitefly. (Perhaps it’s one of those agricultural pests we Americans wiped out long ago with liberal doses of noxious but supposedly beneficial chemicals sprayed from “crop duster” airplanes.) What happens most often with farmer’s market produce (though, to be fair, not very frequently) is that a small coterie of tiny ants will have come along for the ride. I won’t see them at first, but within a day or two I’ll see some of them – sometimes only a single one – on the counter near where the produce (fruit, mainly) resides in a wire mesh basket. I kill these immediately and cross my fingers that they’re merely hitchhikers and not a local invasion. The other, less frequently encountered rider is the occasional small light-colored worm that lives in the folds of various leafy greens (usually of the “Asian” variety). When I see one, I carefully remove it down the kitchen drain. Organic farm-to-table produce can be such an adventure.

Somehow over the years I’ve managed never to read any Steven King, although I’ve seen and even enjoyed a number of movies made from (or at least “based on,” as the credits go) his work. So I’m not entirely out to lunch in reading Taral’s characterization of King’s characters: “What mainly distinguishes the Steven King hero, though, is that he possesses about as much real knowledge of anything as a potato.” That would certainly be true of Jack Torrance, the character played so brilliantly by Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*, as he approaches writing his novel. (My favorite character in that movie is the one played by Scatman Crothers, who has all the smarts so absent in the others.)

I do find it annoying, though, when Taral paints Americans with the same broad and

elitist brush: “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.” Yes, there *is* that tendency in American culture, but it’s far from as widespread as Taral would have it. I don’t see this ignorance in the people I know, although I suppose a case could be made that because I live in the “liberal” San Francisco Bay Area I’m missing a broad spectrum of Americans. After all, Fox News is *not* America. And frankly, when I lived in Tennessee and got out and around the people who lived there I experienced intelligence in most of the people I encountered – and I don’t think it was because I was a Farmie and they were somehow on their best behavior for fear of offending me. To me Taral’s negative comments are a latter-day variant on the old “fans are slans” thing with a soupcon of disdain for “mundanes.” (Of course, with much of contemporary fandom out in the media-oriented hinterlands, these distinctions have largely disappeared. And I don’t think anyone would characterize the various Puppies as slans.)

Concerning guns in America, Milt Stevens writes, “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.” Well, maybe so, but the same could be said of *every* U.S. president. None of them have the same power to control and confound the gun discussion as the National Rifle Association and its insidious hold on Congress and a sizable chunk of the American people.

Fred Smith muses, “I suppose that his partner, Hazel, was Mal Ashworth's widow (?).” Since you didn’t respond to that, I’ll be one of (probably) several to confirm this. I met them, all three, on my TAFF trip back in 1989, when I stayed with Mal and Hazel. As I wrote in my “Report in Progress” back in 1989:

“...Met at Skipton station by Mal & Hazel Ashworth, who immediately drive me out to a pub called the Craven Heifer in small village of Addingham. Spend the evening there visiting with Mal, Hazel and Don West, who is awaiting us there, trying local brews and enjoying the pub ambience. It's ‘drawing’ night, which means that with every drink one buys one gets a number. At 10:15 they start calling the numbers. Winners pick a slip of paper from a glass, the slip stating the prize. The four of us won three of the 20 prizes that evening. Mal won a ‘Genius’ pint glass, D. won a Guinness bottle opener and I won a deck of playing cards. Don later left the opener for me.”

But perhaps the most memorable part of my visit with the Ashworths took place the next day.

“That evening, after dinner back in Skipton, we drive in to Leeds for a weekly gathering of locals at a hotel near the train station. Don West is there, as is the infamous Michael Ashley (not the one who did *History of the S.F. Pulps* but a new one) and various other Leeds fans to be listed in the Real Report. A good time is had by all. At the end of the evening, Don walks over to me and we stand back to back because Hazel has been curious as to our height differential. I’m about 1½ inches taller. Don tells me he’s interested in writing me an

article for *Trap Door* 'about fan history,' and asks me when my next deadline might be. Later, on the way out of town, a truck throws up a rock which shatters our windshield. Driving home is like driving through a cathedral window, but manageable. I immediately offer to take over for Mal, who is quite pissed, but he handles it well the whole way. When we get there, Mal lays down for a while and then comes down with folders full of old fanzines, including a very thick one of old Burbee, Laney, Perdue and other Insurgent stuff. He also shows me, for contrast's sake, a folder full of old Norman G. Wansborough fanzines and a studio portrait of Norman himself. We locate and Mal gives me several duplicates: riders with *Slant*. Talk about obscure! This takes us all nicely away from the broken windscreen trauma. We go to bed late."

I'll never forget that ride home!

From the time line in "It's a Plastic Thing," it sounds rather like your Teddy Boy brother and I may have gotten into early rock music and its offshoots around the same time. It was your father who bought the record player that could handle all three speeds, but it was me who did the same thing here – a Voice of Music "portable" with a couple of built-in speakers that could pump out sounds slightly superior to what one heard on the AM radio stations that played such music. I was in that transition between 78s and 45s, but on the latter side of it so that the only pop 78 I ever bought (and played to death) was Johnny Ray's version of "Hernando's Hideaway," which I got about a year or so before I sprung for (as you report your brother's purchases) "Elvis, Bill Haley, Buddy Holly, Ricky Nelson and others." In my case the others included a lot of "rhythm and blues," the newly sanitized name for what a few years earlier had been called "race music." But I see I'm beginning to reprise my article, "Loony Tunes and Other Melodies," that you published long ago in *Bye Bye Johnny* #3 (and which you are free to reprint for a perhaps new audience) and am going to let it go at wondering about the parallels between me and your brother.

Nic's column was surprisingly sober this time around – after I got past the early parts where he's speculating on the effects of cheap wine – leaving me with nothing to say other than "very interesting" about the column itself. I did like his explanation of "broken glass," though. And I'd add that perhaps enough already about Eviol Uber. I think we get it.

Pat's profreeding notes were instructive. I also remember the "quick and dirty" aspect of *Vibrator* – both in the current incarnation (first three issues under ten pages, but after that the graph of issue page counts ascends skyward, peaking at forty pages a few months ago – but is that just another bar to leap over?) and in its earlier versions in the '70s and earlier this century. It's easier for me to keep up when the issues are smaller, but of course it's not about me.

And I totally agree with her on this point: "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." I don't do that myself with *Trap Door*, but if I published monthly I suspect I would.

Robert Lichtman can be found at [robertlichtman@yahoo.com](mailto:robertlichtman@yahoo.com)

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## **JOHN NIELSEN-HALL IS UP FOR AN ARGUMENT, AS USUAL**

I feel obligated to carry on arguing with Fred Smith. You may decide that I shouldn't.

I think Fred will find that most record producers are musicians of some sort. George Martin was classically trained, Phil Spector played the piano and sang in the fifties, ( though it must be admitted that the "Wall of Sound" owed a great deal to his arranger, Jack Nietzsche) and both Glyn Johns and Bill Szycmyk (? spelling) were guitarists. To return to where we came in, I'm not sure about Joe Meek, who appears to have been more of a tape recorder enthusiast than anything else. In the present digital age he would have had a field day, as a great many turntablists have proved with productions entirely built of loops and samples.

Fred is entirely correct when he points out that there is no music until someone actually plays it, but I would go a bit further and say that there is no music until someone thinks of it and then plays it/ gets someone to play it. Fred's definition of Jazz is what I thought, music that someone thinks of at the same time as they play it, and for me, that isn't a finished thing; that's daubs on the canvas, something that might lead to something, but only when its written down. It's not a fit thing for extended public performance. That's grandstanding, a display of musicianship, but not proper music.

And this leads me to my issues about vinyl. I like the music, but don't see the need to extol the medium. I was listening to Johnnie Walker on Radio 2 in the car the other day, and he was playing records from the 70's -literally- scratches, crackles, wow and flutter painfully evident even on the car radio. Walker was insisting that this rendered the music as it really should be heard. Bollocks! We only put up with that back then because that was the best we could do. Despite the moans about compression, digital sound is way better. I have the Shadows and a load of early surf records on CD- and that's okay for me. Not that I play them that often.

John Nielsen-Hall can be found at [johnsila32@gmail.com](mailto:johnsila32@gmail.com)

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## **DAVE LANGFORD**

Well, I enjoyed the special vinyl issue despite not being the sort of person who acquires music on vinyl or in any other format. Thirty-four years ago (bloody hell) I did a Novacon report as a spoof Desert Island Discs for Malcolm's Tappen, listing all the vinyl in my possession <http://ansible.uk/writing/des-isle.html> and making unconvincing connections. No doubt I still have all those records somewhere, and very certainly the collection hasn't grown. This is all I have to say about vinyl.

Speaking of golden oldies, another fanzine of yours came to light the other day, Bye Bye Johnny 4 with the heartfelt obituaries of Rob Holdstock, John Brosnan and Chris Priest. What still puzzles me about this one is the cover, credited to D.West but looking to my inexpert eye a lot more like a Rob Hansen drawing of our Don. The pen technique

seems very different from native D. West, but then I remembered his article on fanzine art illustrated with pretty damn good imitations of other fanartists ... don't tell me this was D. doing, for whatever arcane reason, a self-portrait in the manner of Rob Hansen? Stranger things happen at sea.

*(EDITOR: The cover issue on Bye Bye Johnny 4 is old news Dave and was laid to rest years ago. It was and is by Hansen and I acknowledged my mistake at the time. Nice of you to bring it back up though, after all these years.)*

Dave Langford can be found at [deafman@gmail.com](mailto:deafman@gmail.com)

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## **NON XMASSY EDITION**

### **Ongoing Adventures of a Las Vegas Taxi Driver by Nic Farey**

Apropos of filling a bit of space, again, we've started watching *Gotham* on the Hulu, which unlike Netflix has advertisements in it, and I was particularly alarmed by one for Immodium AD, which according to the ad gets rid of your diarrhoea 30% faster. "Fuckin'ell", I thought, "That shit (ahem) comes out quick enough as it is!"

I made some notes on my home office whiteboard so I wouldn't forget the little vignettes I intended to share with my reader (J, Unc), reading as follows:

- **Drunk guy**
- **Other drunk guy**
- **Chicago wanker**
- **Navajo writer**

While I often get fares asking "What's the craziest thing that's happened in your cab?" (which tends to prompt the "driver, grab my dick" story) I was actually asked the other week who my most *interesting* passenger had been. I genuinely happen to think that every fare is interesting, or at least potentially so; the ones who like to chat always have a story, a backstory, an anecdote or personal history of some kind that's unique to them, so you tend to get quite the cross-section of humanity, which ends up mostly confirming to me that most people are fundamentally decent. My example of the interesting passenger was a fare I got from a late flight arrival at McCarran one time. Waiting on the nut, another cab pulled up past the line and disgorged a passenger and luggage, all of which made its way back to the line. The browncoat comes over and asks me if I have GPS navigation, which of course I do. Turns out this nice young Danish bloke is off to a private address somewhere, a company-rented house which turns out to be in deep northwest Summerlin, a \$90 ride, so thanks to the idiot driver who gave up the fare. The interesting part, for me anyway, came with the conversation about what he did for a living, which turned out to be the lucrative business of tracking and GPS systems for those ginormous Maersk container ships that ply the rolling seas. Now that isn't something you tend to think about on a daily basis, but of course it's a thing which has to exist, and it was fascinating to hear about, honest. As I finished telling this to the fare who asked, about to drop her at the Hard Rock Hotel, I had

time to ask what *she* did for a living, and it was revealed that she's a Navajo writer who also works in womens' shelters and health centers, prompting me to opine that *she* might well be one of my most interesting passengers. Sadly, I didn't get her name for follow-up reading.

"Drunk guy" on the above list was a first for me, a fare who actually passed out in the cab (thankfully without puking, which does happen, though less often than you might think). I picked this bloke up from Delano one Friday, excessively langered, and it took a minute to get him to say where he actually wanted to go, which started out as Fremont (a nice ride!) but ended up being Paris (a meh ride). He was about out of it when we got to Paris, but half woke up when I told him (at high volume) that we're there, and mumbled "New York New York", where it turns out he is actually staying. So turn around and off we go, and by the time we get there he's totally passed out. Our procedure in these cases is to call emergency services (paramedics), since we're not allowed any laying on of hands on the punters, so the EMT ambulance (and CCFD paramedics) duly wheel in with sirens which also fail to wake him the fuck up. *They* are of course allowed to shake the bugger, who attains a bit of semi-consciousness, enough to be a bit aggrieved: "Why am I surrounded by EMTs?" (Er, because you passed out drunk as fuck in a taxi, pal?) At least I got the fare, had to run his card for him, and probably should have entered a massive tip, but it turns out I have ethics, so I didn't. He staggered in, but left his phone in the cab, which rang with a call from "Mom". I did a callback (having got in the line at NYNY), and tactfully without mentioning the state he was in, confirmed with her that he was staying there, got his name, and informed Mom that I'd be handing the phone in to security at the hotel. Glad to see the back of that one.

"Other drunk guy": I dropped a ride at Caesar's about 3am on a club night, where there was the usual honkin' line of cabs waiting. One of the valets has it over on his toes and asks me if I'd like to go round to the Colosseum valet (at the back) and pick up a ride. Now it's not uncommon for valets, bartenders and the like to call a cab for punters they want to get rid of, not necessarily people who actually need a taxi, so my first thought is "How drunk is this bloke?" Valet then says, "Take him where he needs to go, come right back here to the front (ie skip the line) and I'll load you again", prompting me to think "Uh-oh" and other warning-type remarks. Anyway, around there I go, and other drunk guy (with bird in tow) has beetled off a bit, but I manage to scoop him up to the great amusement of all the scab Uber drivers who stage round there. He hangs half out the window, well angry with repeated imprecations about "motherfucking niggers" directed at the security staff, while the bird is trying to talk him down a bit. They're only going to Monte Carlo, a pretty short ride down Frank Sinatra Drive behind the hotels, so they won't be in there for long, at least. There's a tirade going on in the back as I drive, me keeping wisely schtum as the lass keeps up her end. They get out at Monte Carlo, and he actually apologizes "Sorry about that conversation". "All right mate", sez I, "I just drive the cab." It'd be nice to report that my front-of-line load back at Caesar's was a decent one, but instead I got Meridian Apartments, just around the bloody corner.

"Chicago wanker" was a bloke I picked up from the airport, going to the Wynn. He was telling me about having stayed there before and being surprised at how thin the walls were,

having clear earshot of the couple next door having some serious knob, apparently. "Well, what do you do?", he rather deprecatingly observed, adding "I got off before *he* did". I was more surprised that the Wynn's walls were that sound-conducive, either that or the shaggers were being exceptionally noisy about it. DIY rub & tug, cheaper than the massage parlor version.

One I happily missed out on: A driver says over the radio the other night that he had a passenger going to Paris (what is it with Paris?) who did actually pay the fare, but then honked up (biohazard), opened the cab door and fell out, and was now unconscious on the ground. Despite suggestions from other drivers supporting a decision to fuck off and leave him there, EMTs (and cops) were called to the scene to assist Paris security in ensuring that this prune likely ended up in a somewhat less comfortable bed for the night than he might have been expecting.

### **THE LICHTMAN-SCOTT ANNOYING BIT OF GLOSSARY**

**Alison Scott** : A trenchant critic of the Farey *oeuvre*, dating back to long-ago days of *This Here...*, when she expressed stern disapproval of me splitting a piece over two issues. The Damon Knight to my Van Vogt, perhaps. Happily, this does not preclude her from providing superb front and bacovers for *BEAM 9* (plug), available now at an efanines near you.

**Biohazard** : "I have a bio", or "biohazard" is our polite-speak for "Some cunt threw up in the cab". If it's a copious one, we'll call for a tow, if less so, drive back to the yard where the detailers will clean it up and we'll switch cabs (unless it's also on you, eur, then it'd be off home for a shower & scrub, and hope you don't spew yourself from the pong). Something else we're not allowed to touch, although if it's mostly out of the cab (to the extent of a bit down the side or on the sill), most drivers will either car wash the offending puke off, or wipe it up and deodorize. I have cleaning materials and air freshener that I bring to work, as all drivers really should.

**Browncoat** : Airport workers who manage the traffic flow, directing taxis and passengers, so called because of the color of their uniforms. Most of them are nice, one or two are utter arseholes, like the fuckbag the other night who waved me over to a pickup, showing great annoyance that I didn't move nifty enough for him (I was checking a message from a personal fare on my phone), then proceeded to berate me for not putting my phone down, looking daggers the whole time. I hadn't seen this miserable 'erbert before, but being charitable I'm guessing that he had the arse for having to work late to manage the delayed flights.

**CCFD** : Clark County Fire Department

**Nut** : First position on a stand (yes, we've had this one before, but the Mighty Robt may not remember - I feel it my duty to remind him).

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## **THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS INVENTIONS**

We all remember that lovely song, the Twelve Days of Christmas. In fact (and not many people know this) the twelve days of Christmas, beginning on December 25<sup>th</sup> were all consecrated to individual saints and martyrs, but they were all overseen by St Thomas Edison, the patron saint of Invention.

*Day 1 (25th December): Christmas Day celebrating the Birth of Jesus*

On this day in history Reynald Wentzner invented improbably shaped aircraft. This was in 1798 so he had a free range on his imagination. His notebooks reveal that some of his aircraft were shaped as kittens, some of them as beefsteaks, and some of them as bats, but he felt this latter presented an insufficient leap of imagination. After all, bats could already fly. He continued his idea of flying meatstuffs, though, by speculating about aerial lamb chops and even, in a coup de theatre, a squadron of pork chops. In 1799 he moved on to the concept of improbably shaped biscuits, a goal which although more modest proved infinitely more palatable (literally). The public liked his penis-shaped biscuits (with cream topping) but balked at those shaped like bats, since Halloween had not yet been invented (See Joachim Squirtz, 1816). Napoleon once said he owed a lot to Wentzner but this was thought to be a reference to him losing a considerable sum to him in a game of Texas Hold 'em during the Siege of Paris.

*Day 2 (26th December also known as Boxing Day): St Stephen's Day. He was the first Christian Martyr.*

On this day in history Mickey Joysnatch invented a brand of tasty fritters based on recycled chicken gizzards. Mickey lived in the small town of Clutch, in Iowa. It wasn't his fault. He had been born there. He had fond memories of his high school teacher Miss Morrison teaching him how to align segments of plastic to create something or other. His parents were aligned with a particular offshoot of the Methodist Church of Bali, one of the few Pentacostal Churches that didn't outlaw recycled chicken gizzards and in fact allowed you to rearrange things. He met his death when a huge communal barbecue exploded after being hit by a US drone. So did several other people. Let us all learn from that.

*Day 3 (27th December): St John the Apostle (One of Jesus's Disciples and friends)*

On this day in History Butch Malone, an Irish navy, invented quantitative easing by putting another notch in his belt. He had come over from his famine-struck homeland to help build the Kennet & Avon canal and the ready supply of potatoes, particularly in pasties at his local Greggs, had caused a considerable expansion in his girth. He also invented an anti-chafing

gel formed from pitchblende and saltpetre, which almost blew his balls off when he dropped ash from his clay pipe upon it, but that is another story.

*Day 4 (28th December): The Feast of the Holy Innocents.*

On this day in history Rick Stein (no, not that one) murdered his architect Rudolphus Smerge for failing to include an ensuite bathroom in his designs for a pied a terre in Vermont. Rick was having built to celebrate his acquisition of a Freemason's License. He claimed Smerge had flagrantly ignored his demands for convenient toilet facilities which he considered enshrined in the American Constitution (although it wasn't). Stein was mad of course, but Smerge was even madder for not considering Stein's priorities. See case references: *The State versus Stein, 1989.*

*Day 5 (29th December): St Thomas Becket. He was Archbishop of Canterbury in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was murdered on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1170*

On this day in history purple became the official colour of the autonomous European state of Transnistria, at the behest of the then reigning cultural minister, Rudy Berkhof. Apparently it was a colour that had been handed down in his family through many generations, starting with his Great Uncle Bernard in the form of a handkerchief he had bequeathed to his grand daughter Emily Van Plonk. She later blew a large proportion of the country's cultural budget on a holiday in Ibiza, but who wouldn't?

*Day 6: (30<sup>th</sup> December) St Egwin of Worcester. One of the most baffling saints in the calendar. He probably invented bicycles.*

On this day in history in AD 564, the Chilean peasant Alveola Contraras invented the sew-on button, and with it, of necessity, the buttonhole. It could be said then that he invented the trouser fly, or at least this specific variant of it. Contraras was annoyed that his breechcloth kept falling off on hunting trips exposing him to ridicule. Unfortunately he did not have sufficient foresight to patent the general idea of the button, thus distancing him from a hoard of royalties to be gained from computer applications, let alone that annoying version of hardware that found its first iteration in pocket calculators. Ironically (or not, if you believe Alanis Morissette) he was killed when he paused to do up his fly whilst being charged down by a water buffalo.

*Day 7 (31st December): New Years Eve (known as Hogmanay in Scotland). Pope Sylvester is traditionally celebrated on this day. He was one of the earliest popes (in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century).*

On this day in History, in 1898, Herbie Flowers (no relation) rode his bicycle into the small market town of Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, or it might have been Uddersfield in North Yorkshire. He carried with him a map which he claimed had been inherited from an ancient Aztec ruler called something unpronounceable, and showed the secret location where the Aztecs had stored their gold, rescued from the invading Montezuma. He marshalled the

town's inhabitants to help him dig for the gold in a local slate quarry, and being idiots, they were all too keen to help out. After several decades only a stale Cornish pasty had been discovered and Flowers was discredited. He cycled off into the sunset. Eventually he found the true source of the Aztec gold in a flooded excavation in Kanab, Utah, but the authorities refused to let him search for it because the artificial lake was home to a protected species of newt. He died poor and embittered in 1971 on the same day King Floyd released their single Groove Me on the Chimneyville label. If only he had lived long enough to hear it, but I guess that can be said about a lot of people who die on the same day records are released. Probably lots of the inhabitants of Hiroshima in 1945 regretted never having had the chance to hear Perry Como's 'Til The End Of Time'.

*Day 8 (1st January): 1<sup>st</sup> January - Mary, the Mother of Jesus*

On this day in 1996 Dirk Gregson invented the Improbable Execution Machine. Dirk had lived in Texas for most of his life and was familiar with existing execution procedures, in fact several of his cousins had encountered them first hand, but none of them struck him as existential enough. His basic problem was that he considered them all too briefly over and not protracted enough (some of his cousins were pretty barbaric). He had always believed, since his father had beaten him at an early age, that those about to die should be given time enough to consider their death and repent on their sins. He thus invented the IEM, which is programmable to keep you alive for as long as you need to redeem yourself. A special feature of this is the Redeemometer which performs psychological profiles upon you until it determines you are ready to be redeemed, or killed as he preferred to call it. I would like to report the Machine was last used on him after he had killed a nineteen-year-old schoolgirl called Mary Mulligan, but am unable to do so due to legal restrictions. Damn you, Texas.

*Day 9 (2nd January): St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen, two important 4th century Christians. And neither of them Nazis.*

On this day in history in 1814 Lloyd \*Ringo\* Barrattsworth, a mill-worker in Lankworth, Derbyshire, invented drumsticks for drumming. Previously people had been using chicken drumsticks which so often proved too short for the task (although Clemence Maine employed them to good effect on a retro-bayou hit in 1942 called "God's Bones"). Obsessed with the notion that drumsticks should be made of animal bone, others tried to develop drumsticks made out of human femurs and tibias, and a money launderer, Ronnie Welch, even rather futilely tried one made out of a scapula in 1789. Finally Lloyd hit on the idea of trimming branches off trees, skinning them of their bark, applying a light oil and marketing them as the modern drumsticks we know today. He even filed a patent for a plastic or nylon tip, but unfortunately these products would not be invented before the Twentieth Century.

*Day 10 (3rd January): Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. This remembers when Jesus was officially 'named' in the Jewish Temple. It's celebrated by different churches on a wide number of different dates!*

In 1923 in a reaction to Hegelstein's famed uncertainly principle, Kurt Junger, a disgraced athlete and meat butcher, invented the certainty principle which suggested you could be certain enough of anything providing you were experiencing it and not drunk out of your mind, and possibly even when you were drunk out of your mind if you were not a Catholic. This conflicted with Rabbi Muti Ezra's view that all experience was essentially conflicted, and anyway bacteria such as campylobacter were to blame, at least for making you itch. In 1924 Barry Sturgeon refuted all these arguments by tossing himself off a tall building in Birmingham. No one missed him, except his grandchild Noel Starkey who went on to hold commemorative serves every year, which were usually only attended by a bag lady called Ethel Landrys. So it goes.

*Day 11 (4th January): St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American saint, who lived in the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the Epistles it celebrated the feast of Saint Simon Stylites.*

Liberty was invented in 1647 by an itinerant flute player called Frank Smith, or at least an anglicized version of that name. He was convinced he'd been oppressed by robber barons, when in fact he was suffering from a form of paranoia attributed to toxoplasmosis, having fallen face first into a puddle of dog-shit. He set up a school devoted to liberty, and exhorted his scholars to designing loose fitting lingerie and finely crafted pewter objects. He was eventually recognized by King Charles, who met him in the street one night just after the lamp-lighters had done their job. He later went on to patent a process of engraving sentimental messages on bones. But that is another story.

*Day 12. Twelfth Night. Take down your tree. 5<sup>th</sup> January (also known as Epiphany Eve): Celebrates St. John Neumann who was the first Bishop in America. He lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

In 1904 Schmack McKlusky, a Scottish Immigrant, went on an expedition to Alaska as part of the Gold Rush. He'd invented a new kind of spade called a tetraspade with which he hoped to make his fortune. Unfortunately he didn't patent it, but merely mentioned it in passing to his Aunt Vera in a letter asking her for money, so no actual drawings of the device exist. His description implied it had multiple spades on a single head. If had persisted with the design and added an electric motor he might have invented the Rotovator, but he didn't. He managed to find one very small nugget of gold and converted it into whiskey which unfortunately killed him when he wandered out drunk on a cold night and was killed by a bear. Life's ironies are so rich.

# **A SELECTION OF FANNISH CHRISTMAS RECIPES**

## ***Tony Berry Pudding.***

This delightful Christmas Treat uses typical autumn fruits, and all sorts of berries except possibly juniper berries. If you have an excess of juniper berries, however, please feel free to throw them in. Firstly make a basic pudding mix, out of a packet if you don't have the knowhow or intelligence, to do it for yourself (Tip: it's basically flour, eggs, and sugar). Add zest of lemons, limes and oranges and any other zest you happen to have around. But don't try and show off by using exotic zests. They will invariably rebound on you. I once knew a man who tried to zest a kiwi fruit and died in the process. Grease a baking tray with, well, grease, and line with parchment or naval quality tarpaulin. Pour the mixture into the baking tray and mix in the berries. Stand well back in case they explode, but if nothing has happened within five minutes you may safely approach them. I know most people will here be expecting a joke about Tony Berry's Locksmith abilities, but I'm not going to crack one of those. Bake in a moderate oven until it is not burnt. Serve with raw syllabub.

## ***Fishlifters Baked Lobster Surprise***

Claire once showed me a lobster she had brought home with her from her far-flung travels in Outer Mongolia or it might have been Seattle. One intimate night while we were discussing Corflu matters she shared this recipe with me whilst I removed her suspenders. First take your lobster, descale it and whittle it into the shape of a Mosquito bomber from WWII. Then tell it some jokes. It will be pretty angry but just ignore its feelings, it is only a lobster after all. Take off those rubber bands that are used to constrain its claws and kill it humanely by subjecting it to Motorhead and a large hammer. It will thank you and possibly sign a petition to pardon you when the European Commission on Lobster Rights meets in Geneva (Tickets \$6,000 from Useless Conventions 'R' Us). Smear the lobster with butter and put it in an oven. The surprise is if it will be edible.

## ***Frank Lunney's Starters***

There is nothing that Frank likes more than Pigs in Blankets. Oh, no that is David Cameron. Still I'm sure Frank would also like these mouth-watering tid-bits with which to celebrate the festive season, unless you are Jewish, when it is the holiday season.

First get some pigs. These are not real pigs of course, but tiny cocktail sausages. You can buy them in bulk from Costco, or else make them to your own weird recipe incorporating whatever inedible ingredients you have to hand. Costco's are at least labelled as inedible so you know what you are getting and is useful for avoiding lawsuits. Next, sauté them in a

small pan, or a big pan if you have bought too many. Discard any that explode, they are not good for you and may get you in trouble with the NSA, or even NASA if you are infringing one of their copyrights for rocket propellants.

Once the pigs have cooked set them aside and prepare their blankets, these can be made of bacon slices, pancetta, salami or anything except real blanket material (that way madness lies). Wrap them, slap them, comfort them and croon old Rosemary Clooney songs to them. Cook them again, if you like (it's always safe to be sure), and serve with a platter of pickles cut into various interesting shapes, or else leave the gherkin whole and proclaim it is a penis.

### ***Christmas Kebabs***

If you live in Harringey there are no shortage of Christmas Kebabs, some of them even with Holly attached. I once kissed a counter-chef under the mistletoe. His lips were very, very greasy. If you live in the outliers of civilization in places like Bude or Basingstoke or Maridge Hill (we won't talk about Edmonton), however they may not be so readily accessible. Why not make your own? All you need is low-grade meat, preferably lamb, but it can be horse if you have a reliable supplier. Take a hammer, or several, and smack it into something resembling meat that has been smacked. It doesn't matter at this point what shape it is. Leave it to hang for several months. That will solve most problems. Cut it down and make sure it is not still breathing (insurance companies will call you out on this). Cook it over several candles or oil lamps, and slice it into easily regurgitable portions. It will make cleaning up afterwards so much easier. Best served with a fresh Retsina

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### **R.I.P LEMMY**

I never knew Lemmy, but Mike Moorcock's Deep Fix (of which I was a member) shared the same management as Hawkwind and while we were rehearsing and recording New Worlds Fair we used a lot of their equipment. I was privileged to borrow some of Lemmy's kit to play through. Most bass players rely on a sharp, tight, well-defined tone delivered through a solid state amplifier. I was startled to find the cones in Lemmy's Marshall speaker stack were torn and punctured resulting a growly, flapping, distorted tone. I remarked that I thought Hawkwind would be able to afford slightly better gear but was told Lemmy had taken a knife to them to personally inflict the damage, since this was the sound he was after. Dirt, pure dirt. (Un)fortunately we didn't use Lemmy's gear or Lemmy himself on the album; most of the bass chores being handled by the flawless Kuma Harada who had a brilliant ear and could work out a part for a song after one play-through and with no charts at all. I can't say I really much cared personally for Motorhead's music, apart from a few

obvious stand out like Ace of Spades. It seemed to rely too heavily on decibels and distortion for my taste, although I appreciated Lemmy's taste in cowboy hats and cowboy boots. Not so much his predilection for Nazi regalia.

If you've been asleep for the Christmas season and have only just woken up, this has been the Christmas 2015 issue of Vibrator. This issue is dedicated to Randy Byers for various obvious reasons. I don't believe in soppy stuff, but let's all send him our best wishes. It can't do any harm. So how was your Christmas? Do let me know. On second thoughts don't, I'm depressed enough already.

In other news please spare a thought for the Christmas cats of Croydon who now live in fear for their furry lives, else in fur of their feary lives, and remember a puppy is not just for Christmas, it is for serving up in Korean Restaurants.

Next issue No. 24 is due for publication at the end of January 2016 and will be marked by the publication of the second annual collected volume on Lulu. First volume available here <http://www.lulu.com/shop/graham-charnock/vibrator-combined-volume/paperback/product-22036766.html> (Well-produced compilation volume of the first dozen issues of this essential current British fanzine! – Robert Lichtman).

If Pat is still talking to me after ruining the Chestnut Stuffing she will no doubt be proofreading this issue.

As usual you can find me at [graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk) where I will be hiding under a stone waiting to hear from you. By January 29<sup>th</sup> at the latest.

# FACEBOOK BUMPER FUN

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# ISLAMOPHOBIC MEMES

## FOR ENDLESS FESTIVE BRAINWASHING

FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY