



February 2016

**SQUEEZE ME
AND TEST
YOUR MANHOOD**



Gosh, it's nearly Valentine's Day. Once I used to worry about not receiving Valentine's cards. Now I would be disturbed if I did. It would only put me in mind of those "Hi!" messages you receive in your junk mail. "Hi! My name is Natalia from Croatia. For years I have admired you from afar. I hope you will excuse me for being so forward, but I cannot hide my feelings any more. Natalia is not my real name, but you will recognize me. Let me send you some photographs...". I sometimes feel like replying, "Hi, Natalia, I'd love to see some photographs but one thing worries me, why would a pouting curvy attractive Eastern European beauty be interested in establishing a relationship with a cantankerous, married 69 year old alcoholic who can't even get it up any more?". But of course I never do it.

This is the new Vibrator, number 25 I believe. If you are interested in corresponding with a cantankerous, married 69 year old alcoholic who can't even get it up any more, you don't have to send photographs (in fact I'd rather you didn't) just contact me at **graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk**

Around here I normally say something about the deadline for the next issue. I don't know why I bother since most of you who respond know it is generally the end of the month, and those of you who don't obviously don't need to know. But, hey, Jerry, try to get me something by 28th March 2016.

Someone in this issue has accused me of producing all-male issues. That's because women don't write to me, unless they are called Natalia. So let's hear next issue from all my women friends, Pat Meara, Pat Charnock, Alison Fairbairn, Alison Scott, Judith Hanna, Pat Bell, Cas Skelton, Geri Sullivan, Pat Virzi, Eve Harvey, et al. Except they won't. You know what women are like.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK?

Well, some consternation about detecting gravitational waves, illustrated in the media by pictures of black holes colliding presumably taken by Black Hole paparazzi.

Okay, observing predicted effects proves theories. But those theories have been around for over a hundred years, so have the effects. It's only now that we have built a measuring device big enough and sensitive enough and expensive enough to observe them. Will this change anything in either the state of the universe or our understanding of it? I don't think so. We will just put more and more money into bigger and bigger and more sensitive machines fine-honed to try and pick the nits out of some overall unknown and unknowing design while other priorities go unheeded. You know what they said about arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic? You could call mankind obsessive in that respect, and I don't mean in a good way.

But I am mostly worried because the correlation between gravitational waves and black holes colliding seems speculative at best, especially when one is held to prove the existence of the other. There may well after all be other colossal galactic events, as yet untheorized about, capable of creating detectable gravitational waves.

Basically I don't trust scientists to know what they are talking about. On a science feature about black holes recently I found a supposed physicist talking about how gas molecules rotating around a black hole created friction. The analogy he used was with space shuttles or meteorites building up heat by friction through the Earth's atmosphere. This does not happen and is a blatant disregard of physics which you would not expect from a physicist. What causes any body to heat up when entering the earth's atmosphere, whether it is a doomed shuttle or a meteorite, is, as any fule know, not friction but the heat created by compression of gases. Think of the last time you pumped up a bicycle tyre and found the pump getting uncomfortably hot. Same principle. Nothing at all to do with friction.

So, yes, we probably are all Doomed, but mostly by the physicists who seek to speak for us whilst obviously being trained at very sub-standard schools and universities. Remember, someone who constantly assures you they know what they are talking about is not necessarily to be believed.

Speaking of which...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ECONOMICS

Roy Kettle's son, Nathan, is a maths PhD involved with *very big numbers* (ie, probably more than 10) . He works for Jane Street, which is a E.T.F. organization based in New York but with barely 450 employees Nationwide. What's an E.T.F. you say? Well the abbreviation stands for Exchange Transfer Funds. Still, none the wiser? Don't worry. Anything you Google will not tell you very accurately what they actually do, in understandable terms. But I can disclose their basic business is making money by doing as little as possible. That is by being very clever and employing very clever people. Remind you of any villainous companies employed in Hollywood Movies? Don't worry, it will. Jane Street and similar companies monitor financial trends and invest their own money and use finely tuned mathematical algorithms and computer codes, to bleed a marginal but transient profit from vast publicly held investments with very little effort. Take the money and doesn't even break into a sweat.

In as much as I don't understand it, being more concerned with things like keeping food on the plates of my family, I still have a gut feeling it boils down to clever basically non-productive people making money by not doing much at all. I think whoever Jane Street is/was woke up one morning and had a Good Idea about how he/she/them could manipulate markets using convolutions of maths, and I don't see how that can be good for any economy. If I was a supersmart PhD and his was the best way I could find to spend my time, I would be asking seriously questions of

myself. But, hey, everybody needs a job and not everybody can get into advertising tobacco or working for Monsanto these days...

Meanwhile strange how worlds collide.

I was talking to Bill Burns, the cable geek, recently and he was telling me how a trading company had invested in a new superfast optical cable pipeline which would give them a few milliseconds advantage in monitoring international markets. Hold that thought.

Now something tells you there is something wrong with your sleep pattern when you find yourself watching a film on the Syfy channel as dawn comes up.

The film was Supercollider, a peculiar Bulgarian production funded as many films on this channel are these days by Canada, and as you can imagine heavy on special effects.

But the story was at first intriguing in being a little different from the usual mix of raining sharks and tornadoes (although tornadoes **were** a big feature in this film, I think they all employ one CGI firm which specializes in tornadoes)

Anyway an accident with a Cern-like supercollider developed by a Corporation called Zero-Point results in one of the scientists being shunted into an alternate reality where the world he knows has collapsed (and tornadoes are rampant), his faithful wife has become a crack-whore and his lovely daughter has been killed by a truck.

Spoilers here because I know you will never watch the film. All well and good so far, except people who have obviously read Philip K. Dick are intent on persuading him he has Regressive Memory Syndrome and should accept this new reality. Cue an attractive Psychiatrist who looks as if she would not be out of place in a Bulgarian porn film, all legs and tits. And a couple of dark-suited agents are intent on retrieving his iphone (hold this thought) which he retrieved from the laboratory, at all costs. Wonder why. All good stuff so far and the setting in a post-apocalyptic urban environment is attractive to us sf fans.

But here's the rub, it appears the **accident** was engineered by the evil director of the corporation to displace time by several seconds to... yes you've guessed it, allow him to manipulate the stock markets. Are there no depths these super-intelligent people will not stoop to in order to make money?

Of course in the end it was all about the phone, which contained a code which could reverse the whole horrible accident and restore normality. Thanks scriptwriters, didn't see that coming. Despite my spoilers I think the film is worth watching, not only because it suggests inventive means by which the superrich may seek to become even more superrich. And we were all worried about the Higgs-Boson.

DANGEROUS DOGS

Some discussion elsewhere (not in the National Media) about whether dog should be leashed or unleashed when walked in public spaces. People who have had entanglements with aggressive dogs seem predictably to lobby for more control, whilst those whose experience has been wholly friendly are obviously less stressed about the situation.

I'm wary of dogs myself, but of course love the dogs of friends who keep them well-trained and under control (I've met Bertie and he's a cutie). When we first moved to Haringay it was before pit bulls and other classified *dangerous* dog breeds were proscribed, and the area was quite well known for its drug dealers each of whom marched their own dangerous status pet along our street quite regularly. Once, outside our house, a group of youths trained their pit bulls in death-grip tenacity by throwing them a rubber ring on a rope and then hauling them into the air and swinging them around on the rope. Experiencing that sort of behaviour has certainly clouded my view and nowadays when I see a big dog approaching no matter how friendly it looks I'm most likely to cross over to the other side of the road. Certain dangerous dog breeds have been proscribed now, of course, and ownership requires registration with the police who are called up to run veterinary tests to evaluate a dog's aggressive potential, and even a potential dangerous dog can be trained and controlled by conscientious owners but still we get headlines about children being savaged or killed by a dog *belonging to those nice folks next door*. I have met Rich Coad's Bertie and can confirm, if confirmation be required, that he is a cutie. Gary Mattingley writes occasionally about his dogs, and I'm sure they are delightful and well-trained too and I look forward to meeting them one day. Other famous fannish dogs among my readership include Paul & Cas Skelton's Bestie the Westie, whom I have also met, and Rob Jackson's flock of three whom I've likewise met and are all charmingly stupid and non-violent.

HERE FOLLOWS THE LETTER COLUMN

JAY KINNEY WISHES TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS

Well, GC, I breezed right through Vibrator 24, made easier by skipping most of the letters. Reading LOCs on previous issues which consisted of LOCs on previous issues, begins to feel like an infinite regression, if you get my drift.

You were, I thought, a bit harsh on the recently departed Mr. Bowie, rattling on about lack of musical integrity and yadda yadda. What's musical integrity got to do

with it? The man was a pop star, something he was very good at, even if it involved him recreating himself every few years. Granted, I don't think his output aged very well, and my interest drifted away after Brian Eno quit producing his albums (which, I've gathered from things I've read, were largely Eno doing his thing and sticking Bowie's name on it). Those were -- what? -- 35 years ago? No, longer than that. The last Bowie album I bought and enjoyed was Scary Monsters and that was 1980. After that, his music didn't really connect with me. His hard rocking Tin Machine stuff struck me as sub-par and for the rest of his career he seemed to have lost whatever moorings he once had. I did find it amusing when his personal fortune was so low that he sold shares in his future output, only to not make anything of consequence ever after. Hmmm, maybe you weren't too harsh after all.

But I will say this: some of his albums were indelibly of their moment, a moment that he helped create. Aladdin Sane was so very 1973.

I gave Nic's Taxi column a decent try, but when I realized that he was intent on giving me a tour of filthy Las Vegas restrooms, I admitted defeat. I'll pick up again next issue.

Please give Pat my greetings. I owe her a LOC on Raucous Caucus 4, which I have right here by my side. Soon, I promise, soon.

If you print this in an upcoming Vibrator, please leave my email address off of it (or disguise it in some fashion).

Jay Kinney cannot be found. Anywhere.

BRUCE GILLESPIE KNOWS I AM SO DESPERATE FOR LOCS I WILL EVEN ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTE

I know this is no substitute for the letter of comment I never seem to write (especially about LPs, which I still intend to write about), but thanks for saying exactly what I would say about David Bowie, but daren't on Facebook! And you say it so much better than anybody else. Thanks also for the review of Blackstar. I've been tempted to buy it, yes. And I buy almost every other CD I'm even slightly tempted to buy. But somehow I've resisted the temptation, and thanks to you I find I was right to save my money.

I did like Bowie as an actor, whenever I've seen him in films. After all, he was essentially an actor rather than a musician in his musical concepts. I did like The Man Who Fell to Earth, especially after I saw the uncut (by producers) version, but liked even more his performance in the difficult-to-watch Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence. And he was very impressive as Tesla in The Prestige. I have a vague idea I've seen Labyrinth, with Bowie in it, but it can't have made too much of an impression.

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IAN WILLIAMS SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY PERSON TO HAVE RECIEVED A MIS-PAGINATED ISSUE. I WONDER IF HE WILL EVER REALIZE WHY.

Hope this finds you well and not as confused as me. I say this because I confess I was confused by the latest Vibrator. Specifically the pagination which, in my copy, goes as follows: 9, 12, 11, 12, 13, 14, 13, 16, 17, etc. I didn't notice this at first though I did find it odd that Paul Skelton suddenly started going on about global warming in an erudite manner that suggested Joseph... and then it dawned on me.

Okay, I'll update your readers on the current state of my health which improved, physically and mentally, after the first two weeks. While my knee needs some physio work (quite a lot in fact), I can do most things without help and can walk short distances outside, albeit awkwardly and with the use of a walking stick. And my appetite is back to normal, not necessarily a good thing. I confess, following the death and funeral of my oldest friend Barry -over 50 years of conversation with never a cross word- I'm in rather a downer frame of mind; but time heals in every sense.

Bowie was never an artist who interested me and I found the massive outpouring of grief to be as painful as the Diana hysteria. Frankly, the only musician whose death affected me, and that partly because of her youth, was Sandy Denny at 30. I loved her voice and her music so much I forked out £150 for a (not quite complete as it turns out) 19 disc box set which came out a few years back. Worth every penny.

I might have wanted to comment on Skel's loc but alas it was, as you'll realise, truncated. What revelations were in store on page 10, I wonder? Not sure who wrote the loc on page 15, unless it was more of Fred Smith.

My Sporting Life was, I presume, your sporting life, Graham. Well, my sporting life was almost non-existent or, shall we say, generally mediocre. I wasn't bad as a back (defender) in my class football matches and I also, to the surprise of everyone including me, turned out to be the second best sprinter in the class and gained some brief credibility for it. In gym, a thuggish PE teacher once decided my inability to touch my toes was the result of recalcitrance on my part rather than short tendons and tried physically force my back down. He failed but didn't seem concerned about the discomfort he caused me.

Looking at the candidates for the Republican Presidential Nomination has convinced me that many Americans are stupid, ignorant, and religious bigots. Actually that's a lie, it hasn't convinced me at all; I've always thought that. Still, it's disheartening to see that not one of the candidates is actually sane. Not sure there's much difference between them and ISIS.

Your back cover is appropriate in that I recently bought a Shadows collection covering 1958-62 and I do of course remember the Spotnicks. You will remember to include pages 10 and 15 next time so that I can enjoy Vibrator to its fullest extent.

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MIKE MEARA

I realised that my plan to loc #23 was doomed when I went off to France and forgot to take it with me. Your insane publishing schedule would ensure that the next ish would be out before I got back. And I was almost right. But there were a few things I wanted to say on #23, and your other correspondents sometimes get confused and left behind, so why not me?

Right, here we go. First, the cover. Brilliant. Pity it's not eligible for this year's FAAns, as it clearly says "copyright 2016" on it. Never mind, Steve has done enough elsewhere to secure his short-listing.

Next, I just wanted to agree with you on Climate Change. (Is this right? - ed.) Let's look at a few points. Firstly, CC is definitely happening. So consider these two scenarios:

A (or 1): CC is mostly a natural phenomenon, like the mini Ice Age we had, back a few hundred years ago, but in reverse. What can we do to stop this? Virtually nothing.

2 (or B): CC is mostly a man-made phenomenon, due to going vroom-vroom with cheap petrol, the Chinese building a new coal-fired power station every five minutes, eating too much beef, not following Joseph's excellent gardening advice, or like that. What ***will*** we do to stop this? Virtually nothing.

End result: identical, and not good. So you are right to think that focussing on dealing with the inevitable consequences should be our priority. Gonna be expensive, though. Not to mention impossible.

I really think I should get down to writing my Definitive Guide to "5,271,009 Ways We're All Gonna Die Horribly, Real Soon Now". But, being a bear of little (and diminishing) brain, every time I remember one of the ways (such as the methane locked up in the frozen tundra, but not for long, folks) I forget another (like the growing resistance of bugs to antibiotics, due to our idiocy in feeding them (antibiotics) to farm animals). Oh - looks like I remembered that one after all. Maybe in the next aMfO, then...

My mention of "resonator" in connection with Burns guitars was because I recalled they had some kind of patented resonator system built into the body. Googling this memory shows it to be correct: it was called a "Rezotube" system, and gave rise to that most unpleasant twanging, buzzy (twuzzy?) sound that polluted the Shadows' records from 1964 until, thankfully, some music fan in desperation stole Hank's guitars in 1970 (this somewhat but not entirely according to the Burns website). Sadly, Hank still seems to love that sound. But he has his faults, as we know. Need I but whisper the word "Watchtower".

Lots of good locs again. In a recent loc of yours to aMfO - it lives again, folks! - you mention wanting to steal my mailing list. In fun, clearly, since you get locs from lots

of people I don't. And this is not just because I don't send some of them aMfO, feeble excuse though that is.

Finally, loved your Twelve Days of Christmas Inventions.

Now, #24. Good loc from Steve Stiles. Damn, that man is talented. I like the idea that, in what I might delicately call a post-coital state, his eye would be drawn to an album with "Erectus" in the title. Well, that's teenagers for you. Sex-mad, the lot of them.

For some reason which is far from clear at the moment, you choose to reprint Ian Williams' loc on #21, first seen in #22, again here in #24. By popular request, perhaps? We all wanted to secretly thrill to those naughty c-words all over again? Or perhaps some other reason associated with Editorial Brainfade? I sympathise. Been there, almost done that.

If anyone ever asks my star sign, I always say Fortnum & Mason. Partly in homage to the Monty Python sketch from which it comes (I think) and partly in the hope that whoever it is might then pop in and buy me something nice from the wine department.

To Fred Smith: my preference for 10" over 12" is purely aesthetic. From a musical capacity point of view, 10" is clearly crap. It's a pity that the 16" transcription disc size never got a chance with the general public. Why, you could get as much on one of them as you could on a CD!

And another nice bit of writing from you to (almost) finish. (I confess I never read Nic's taxi bit these days. Time to reset the meter, maybe?)

Not only is Vibrator now a true Focal Point fanzine, it may well be the most important fanzine currently being published. We'd all like you to keep it up, I'm sure, but - no pressure, okay?

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PHILIP TURNER

aMfO #20 arrived just before the Super Bowl, Vibrator 2.0.24 crashed through my letterbox on the day after. Just one more zine needed for the bus analogy. That's a very fine cover with an interesting patch of clouds in the top-left corner. Yes, D. Bowie was very much a musical migrant, always eager to cash in on the next trend and cast off most of his previous fans. Haven't listened to anything of his by design for ages.

I'm willing to bet that yon Philip Turner has stopped beating his wife only because he's having trouble finding suitable sticks no thicker than his thumb. Mslms -- the Arabic script of everyday use consists entirely of consonants (28 of them), vowels having been reserved for the exclusive use of royalty. Westerners neither appreciate

nor respect this convention, and they feel they have the right to stick vowels into adopted Mslm words to aid pronunciation.

Thus I use Westernized versions of words, which I picked up from reading the works of T.E. Lawrence, who used to know a bit about Qrbs before he gave them up to star in a blockbuster biopic in the 1960s. Does a different spelling of Mslms using different Western vowels have any greater legitimacy? Not if it conveys exactly the same information as Mr. Lawrence's spelling. Maybe I should start referring to Qslmsts as Mohamedans; then we'd really see the wet hens flapping!!

All the Trumpanalia reminds me of an encounter with visiting American academics in the 1960s. My boss and I were socializing with some fellow photochemists at the time and one mentioned that he had voted for Barry Goldwater instead of Richard Nixon because he'd rather have an honest idiot than a crook. I suppose it all depends how honest you think Mr. Trump is.

That Joseph Nicholas can sure write a good scare story. Lest we forget, the not-so-great Global Warming Fraud is a religion, and its messages of doom; no matter how pseudo-scientifically they are dressed up with blatant fictions, e.g. rising sea levels which aren't and rising global temperatures which aren't; should be treated with the same respect as those from any other weird cult.

Go, Eskimos! And damn the torpedoes.

My sporting life at school was very selective. I used to avoid rugby and cricket, preferring to have Wednesday and Saturday afternoons off, but I always turned out for lacrosse, which provided the contestants with a weapon. As far as protection went, everyone had a big pair of gloves and only the guy in goal wore padding and a face-mask, unlike the helmets and stuff modern lacrosse-playing wimps need. The only death whilst I was there was one of the sixth-formers. He must have come from quite a wealthy background as he gassed himself in his own car.

Oh, tragedy. The last of the cherry and raisin cake, drizzled with Drambuie, has been consumed. Still, making some more gives me a reason to crawl out of bed tomorrow.

Taxi Nic's extended bogvert for Las Vegas overflowed into too much information for anyone who's never going to be there. But hey! The poor bugger has to write about something.

And now, having done my duty to both your good self and Mike Meara, I shall return to my own Personal Publishing Programme. After I've made some more cake, of course.

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

TARAL WAYNE WRITES THIS ISSUE STAR LETTER AND HIS PRIZE IS IN THE POST

I can't remember when I first heard of David Bowie. I can remember a time when I hadn't heard of David Bowie – or The Doors, or Bob Dylan, or The Byrds – and a time when Bowie was one of hundreds of pop performers I knew about along with Fleetwood Mac, Queen, ELO, Brian Eno, or Yes . But I don't recall the moment I thought, "David Bowie? So that's David Bowie!"

Sure, sometimes I heard "ground control to Major Tom," or some other Bowie lyrics from the radio, but, remarkably, I never seem to have listened to an entire Bowie song from beginning to end ... much less an entire album. None of my friends seemed interested in the artist, which limited my exposure to just about zero. I knew people who were big on The Moody Blues, on Elton John, on Blue Oyster Cult, but nobody who owned a David Bowie album.

The first I really knew about Bowie was as an actor. I saw him in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, with mixed feelings. A few years later I saw Bowie as the Goblin King in the Henson-fest, *Labyrinth*. With repeated viewings, the music grew on me, and only just last year I was thinking, "maybe I should listen to other music by Bowie."

Then, of course, he up and died!

But I did acquire a Bowie album to play, from the delete bin at WalMart. I paid \$5 for a copy of *Dance*, which appears to be a Bowie best-seller. I have only listened to it three or four times, so far, unfortunately I can't report that I've fallen I love with it. It is bright, snappy, pop music, with an eccentric vocal style, but that's about all I can see. "Get me to the Church on time?" That's what all the excitement was about? It seemed so... well.. prosaic. Of course, if I studied the lyric sheet more carefully, I might pick more out of the words that a catch phrase, here and there, but I've never been good at following lyrics by ear. That may explain my high tolerance for Yes ... good music and falsetto gibberish.

I don't regret owning a copy of *Dance*, but I'm reluctant to invest another fin in David Bowie unless I someone will vouch for an album that has a great deal more to it. And, by "more to it," I don't mean "ground control to Major Tom..."

I agree fully with Joseph Nicholas that we face serious challenges in the mid-century that may well turn out to be more than we can handle if we do nothing now. I may disagree with Joseph's pessimistic view that our "industrialized lifestyle of the last two centuries" is to blame, however. It depends on what exactly our "industrialized lifestyle" is. If Joseph means CAT scanners, rapid transit, home computers, air conditioners, Mars rovers and all the trappings of a secure, pluralistic, enabling high-tech living, I don't agree. But I do agree that our modern lifestyle includes a great deal of frivolity and waste that is absolutely unnecessary – the iCrap of the month, and the expensive designer cover we are encouraged to buy as a market accessory, is a perfect example. Unfortunately, while such waste is worth tens

of billions to the economy, I don't think we can help the environment much by eliminating it.

I for one don't want to go back to a "sustainable" Hobbit-style economy, where we all toil in the fields to provide our daily bread and turnips, and eat blackened potatoes all winter. Where there are no shots for the flu or insulin for the diabetic, because sophisticated pharmaceuticals are too complicated an industry to be supported by a largely agrarian society. Where opportunities to advance yourself are limited to acquiring a second mule, or a favorable marriage to someone not from your own village. Where you learn to perform your own music when you want a barn dance. Where ... well, you can finish the rest of the picture ... it's colour by numbers and not as pretty as a Hildebrandt.

No, I don't think our lifestyle is at fault, though certainly it can be improved upon. As I see it, it's our *numbers* that are unsustainable. I'm not sure that 7 billion people can live on this planet at *any* level of technology for long! If we do not have a high standard of living, with technological fixes for everything, food production will plummet, epidemic and endemic diseases will return in force, our ability to manage natural disasters will vanish and populations will crash to pre-industrial levels. But if we do maintain our current standard of living, we will fry the planet about the same time we run out of the essential resources we need to continue.

Assuming there are no miracles, naturally. Some people believe it is all but inevitable that some technological breakthrough will instantly fix our problems, producing vast amounts of clean power, near inexhaustible supplies of vital materials and enough food to feed billions of additional bellies. It is currently fashionable to boost asteroid mining as such a panacea. But while we might visit an asteroid in my lifetime, we probably won't be sifting their dirt for platinum or water ice until well after mid-century, if ever. For the effort involved, an asteroid would have to be made of pure pixie dust to be worthwhile. Nor will ice we can make into rocket fuel, or platinum save our bacon.

Fusion power would be a better bet. But it's been ten years away for decades, now...

I think what we need is some sort of Rapture. Let God levitate $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population to some Neverland where *He* can look after them. The remaining, under-2 billion of us might just manage to put our affairs in order. Seeing as I'm an atheist, I volunteer to remain behind.

We might cope, that is, if we were allowed to. But there is, perhaps, where the blame really lies. Despite democratic institutions, we in the developed world still live in societies where the very wealthy get their own way to a far greater degree than the millions of ordinary citizens around them. In our hierarchical civilization, those with the loot stand to gain the least by changing the status quo. Indeed, they usually stand to lose ... at least *something* ... and they hate to lose *anything*. Therefore the

willingness to change the status quo is inversely proportional to the power anyone has to resist it.

That is why your children will burn the very last drop of oil the planet will yield, and your grandchildren will breathe the toxic fumes. Not until then will we cease to pump CO2 into the air and money into the numbered accounts of the corporate elite.

Taral Wayne can be found at taral@bell.net

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL LIKES A BIT OF CASTIGATION

You have already been roundly castigated for these views on David Bowie when you were so unwise as to unburden yourself of them In The Bar. But no doubt, you felt it would be worth seeing who else you could wind up by reproducing them here. The essential points you either fail to understand or, more likely, wish to ignore merely for the sake of stirring up comment and getting people hot under the collar, are (a) Bowie was an artist. Being given a terminal diagnosis was presumably a stimulus to his artistic imagination. There's nothing weird or creepy about that. Your views on the resultant music don't reinforce your argument. (b) Bowie was never any kind of authentic, roots, paid-his-dues type of musician. You sneer at him for not listening to country music. I bet he didn't listen to the blues or jazz either. So what? He didn't need them. His was a unique vision, an ability to reinvent himself in various pop persona's, and write finely crafted songs to express those persona's. I maintain he was a kind of genius even though I, like most people, found his output very variable. That isn't important. He did make some seminal music, particularly in his Berlin phase with Brian Eno, and that stuff will endure.

I found myself shaking my head in despair at some of your correspondents. Jeremy Corbyn is a person of profound and sincerely held views. So was Pol Pot, probably. So was and are a great many politicians who are not merely sitting in various assemblies for the inflated expenses claims. It doesn't make them sensible. I have many sincerely held beliefs which, when I am so foolish as to express them, are often ripped to shreds, spat on, and trampled underfoot. I fail to see why Jeremy Corbyn should not get the same treatment, particularly when he has finagled his way into the leadership of a major political party and is attempting to run it by jettisoning all pragmatism and common sense. Are we supposed to be nice to him, because he is sincere? Its like saying " Don't mind him, he cant help it." The man is a fool, but his supporters, all these £3 members of the Labour Party, are more foolish still. He cannot win a General Election unless he undergoes some sort of Damascene conversion and does whatever is necessary to recover his party's fortunes in Scotland and the South of England. It doesn't matter how many Labour Party members there are, how much support he has, how sincere his views are, what's needed are votes in the ballot box.

You would not believe how much I agree with Joseph Nicholas. The problem when it comes to tackling climate change is that, as Joseph observes, its consequences are beyond our life span. There will never be a move away from industrialised society. We are now industrial beings. Our ingenuity may not save us, but we will keep trying to use it just the same. Conceivably, and possibly as a council of despair, we will build those mighty spaceships to carry us away so we can make a dirty mess somewhere else, but only if we develop a conscience towards future generations, to whom the responsibility for continuing the species on another world would fall. You get a lot of holy patter about our responsibility to generations unborn now, but no sincerity, because it doesn't really matter to us except in a very abstract sort of way. If we do come to having to move elsewhere in the galaxy, we will be absolutely reliant on generations unborn, and that will focus our minds, presumably. But Joseph's scenario is way more likely.

And a big shout out to Nic, whose discussion of the various bogs frequented by cab drivers in Vegas was illuminating, as always.

*(EDITOR: In fact, Johnny, in the interview I referred to Bowie bragged about how broad his tastes were, saying he listened to *all* kinds of music. Then in an aside where the smirk was almost audible, he said "except that is for Country and Western". He was a spilit arrogant attention-seeking twat and far from the open-minded genius you paint him to be. I find it's usually best to form opinions from reported and observed facts rather your embedded prejudices.)*

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MILT STEVENS IS AS JADED ABOUT POLITICS AS I AM

While reading Vibrator #24, it occurred to me that you have about as much influence over the current US presidential race as I do. That would be no influence whatsoever. I am a citizen of the United States, and I can vote. I probably even will vote, since I always vote. However, my vote doesn't make any difference. The California primary is so late in the process that the decision as to the two major party candidates will have been made already.

I haven't been watching the presidential debates. Watching the debates would probably give me an upset stomach. If I don't get a choice, I don't deserve an upset stomach. As far as I can gather, the candidates other than Trump haven't said much of anything, but they have been really snarky about saying it. I suppose we are so used to empty political promises that we now dismiss the promises before we even hear them.

Aspiring politicians always claim to have demonstrated leadership. This probably means they have been able to find their way to the bathroom by themselves for

several years without incident. They also claim to support public education. This might mean something if any politicians ever opposed public education. With universal support from all our politicians, our educational system has been a complete muddle for a hundred years.

Other responses we can expect from aspiring politicians: When asked about foreign affairs they blame the other party. When asked about taxes they mumble. When asked about abortion they start praying. When asked about sex they start sweating. If all else fails, they talk about their dogs or start wondering what the word "is" might mean.

Obama is hated for being black? I thought we hated him for creating massive traffic jams when he comes to Los Angeles to attend \$1000 a plate fund raising dinners. While he is in town, he doesn't even pretend to be interested in our problems.

I noticed Sanders is a year older than I am. If he feels up to taking on an eight year commitment to a really rough job like being president, I'd like to know where he gets his vitamins.

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PAUL SKELTON

What is surprising is not that so many ageing pop stars are popping their clogs lately, but that in fact there are any of them still left. Let's face it, they are generally of an age with us, if not indeed slightly older, and being pop stars have made pots of money enabling them to explore significantly more dissolute lifestyles, not only burning the candle at both ends, but burning a lot more and bigger candles. That reminds me though that Loudon Wainwright III is still with us. "Who needs love? Who needs romance? I just want to eat your underpants!" Ah, Loudon...they just don't write lyrics like they used to.

Today's *Manchester Evening News* reveals however that musicians don't have to be old or famous in order face their exit music and run out of encores. I don't know if any of the names in the following quote will mean anything to you, but appended here just in case...

'Four members of a band and their manager have reportedly been killed in a car crash in Sweden.

A car travelling over a bridge in Stockholm is understood to have smashed through a barrier and dropped more than 80ft into a canal below.

According to reports today, all four members of Warrington-based indie band *Viola Beach* were inside, with their manager.

The band has reportedly toured with Middleton rockers the *Courteeners*. Victims of the crash have not yet been named but *Viola Beach* band members include Kris Leonard, River Reeves, Tomas Lowe and Jack Dakin.

According to reports, the band were managed by Craig Tarry, from Warrington, who is also reportedly a victim of the crash.

His LinkedIn page reveals Mr Tarry has worked in the music industry since 2006 and also managed indie rock band *Exile Parade*.

The Foreign Office confirmed today that five British nationals died in the crash. The victims are believed to be men aged between 19 and 35.'

I'm not sure I believe anyone can actually be named 'River Reeves', which is a sort of cross between River Phoenix and Keanu Reeves. One problem with going the 'accidental death' route is that you don't get to record a special album for it. You will also note (if you have the right edition of WORD) that the *Manchester Evening News* does not seem to be aware that 'band' is a singular noun, but then they are **only involved professionally with the English language!**

(Paul adds this PS: When I included that MEN clipping I just thought Viola Beach were an obscure group from the sticks and that they were doing the clubs in Sweden like The Beatles did them in Hamburg. I hadn't realised they were strongly fancied to be major band in the future and that Sweden was their first really big gig. If so, whilst definitely a bigger tragedy than Bowie's death in that 5 people died, it could well be more significant musically in that, whilst Bowie was not exactly re-using old teabags musically, their entire potential will never come to fruition. I know it's a big stretch, but what if they were going to be the equivalent of [insert band of choice here]?)

I loved the way Steve Stiles pointed out that illness and lack of energy meant he'd have to be brief...before banging on for a page-and-a-half. Not of course that I am one whose LoCs never go on too long, nor of course would I even presume to imply this of Steve's LoC. The only way it could be said to be 'too long' is on the brevity front. Interest-wise it's fascinating. For instance I am crogged that Baltimore would have had 170 gun homicides by January 6th. Hey, I've been to Baltimore and I was never afraid for a moment. They could put that on my tombstone...probably, it would seem, within minutes of me ever setting foot there again.

Ian Williams' LoC was a bit depressing, though again I find myself backing up a step and reaching for my caveats...not because it is depressing to see a fanwriter of such pedigree who can't spell the word 'steak', nor indeed finding a copy typist and a proofreader of even greater pedigrees who both appeared to have been looking the other way...but rather for the confirmation that knee surgery can result in "constant pain only partially reduced by pain killers". As someone who may need knee surgery in the foreseeable future though I have tried to reassure myself that this probably

only applies with total knee replacement which, fingers crosses (and legs too) I won't need.

The Stockport Nitpicking Typographical Society would like to take this opportunity to point out that member number 2348 (Skelton, Paul) has had his membership revoked for "Nitpicking above and beyond the call of duty."

Another thing Ian and I currently have in common is his statement "It's Sunday Morning and my head is relatively clear". However, my fridge contains several beers (lowest alcohol content 7.3%) and some Russian Standard vodka...and I'm not getting any younger...so I suspect his and my futures are set to diverge somewhat at this point.

I believe Philip Turner is right when he effectively says that we should stop trying to prevent Global Warming and concentrate instead on trying to cope with it. The other thing I would point out is that it isn't the job of our government to make things better for people in other countries, but rather to make things better for people in our own country. That, in theory, is what we are paying them to do. So ineffective measures that simply hamper our own country's productivity (say, by giving us less economic energy) whilst those countries trying to 'catch up' refuse to take any such steps before around 2050, simply means that things will get worse and we are hampering our own ability to cope. Logic would seem to dictate that we too should simply build more coal-fired power stations and shout 'FUCK YOU!' at the rest of the world.

Obviously we couldn't do this and sleep nights, so I guess there is no conclusion other than, as both Mike Meara and Joseph Nicholas (surely not the most expected of bedfellows) insist, "WE ARE ALL DOOMED!"

Hoping you are the same...

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FRED SMITH

Lot of space devoted to David Bowie who is of little interest to me, of course, although impressed more by his acting as in "The Man Who Fell To Earth". He made a good alien! As for his appearance - make up, clothes, etc.- he was a much better looking guy when dressed normally, I thought, obviously his search for a striking stage persona brought the weird look. As for his music or singing, er, no!

Steve Stiles (a fine artist himself) mentions Harvey Kurtzman, Bill Elder and Wallace Wood, well remembered from *Mad* Comics, of which I had a small collection. I preferred the comic to the "slick" magazine that it became mainly, I think, because it was less,er, colourful and had used up all the lampoons of other comics: Superdooperman, Shadowskeedeboomboom, Melvin of the Apes, Prince Violent, etc. It also seemed to have less (or none!) of Wood who was my favourite. Maybe Steve

with his "intimate" (ha-ha!) knowledge can tell us what happened to Wood. As for jazz, I'm surprised that a jazz fan could turn to pop/rock, although rock 'n' roll has its roots in rhythm 'n' blues. The Beatles, Rolling Stones and, especially, Bill Haley rehash much that was done a decade or more earlier by Louis Jordan and the Tympany Five. The very term "rock 'n' roll" is derived from a 1922 number recorded by blues singer Trixie Smith, "My Daddy Rocks Me (With One Steady Roll)" She goes round the clock (I looked at the clock and the clock struck one. I said "Daddy, ain't we got fun"....etc.) It's not dancing, of course! "There's no slippin' once that man takes hold" she sings. Apart from Trixie, who recorded it twice, first in the Twenties and then again (much better!) in the Thirties there are quite a number of versions on You Tube including two by small (white) groups, complete with girl singers, that look as though they were videod yesterday! Young,too!

Ian Williams is interesting on cats. How many do you have, anyway, ian? No doubt you watched the recent programmes on TV about which made the best pets. dogs or cats. While I don't have any of my own my son has two rescue moggies I love. The feline tends to wander and explore other folks' houses of course and before son acquired his he was frequently visited by neighbours' puddies. So he now has an electronic cat flap that can only be opened by the two resident cats. Sorry to hear about Ian's knee trouble, more evidence of our aging population. I suppose, and I hope it improves quickly. I too have had surgery at various times, seven operations in all, the last carpal tunnel.

This question of determining ones age that you and Paul Skelton bang on about reminds me of a friend who, asked about his daughters' ages, said he didn't know and couldn't remember which years they were born! Incredible! It's not as if they (or he!) had left home. You can understand anyone forgetting the day and month of a child's birthday but the *year*?

"Music I grew up with"? Well, you could guess from previous locs but, apart from being exposed to the likes of Bing Crosby and other pop singers of the time, It was nearly all jazz and big bands like the Dorseys, Basie, Goodman, Ellington, Harry James, Charlie Barnet, Artie Shaw etc. But the very first record I possessed (a 78, of course) was Billie Holiday's "Mean To Me" with Teddy Wilson's small band. Coincidentally, I've since recorded the same song myself with two different bands and two different girl singers. The bandleaders' decisions, not mine! It was Albert Ammons's "Boogie Woogie Stomp" that started me on to piano, though, quickly followed by Meade Lux Lewis's "Honky Tonk Train Blues". Then I gravitated to Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum.... I could go on listing dozens, if not hundreds, of songs but I don't want to bore you completely!

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DAVID REDD

Derived much masochistic pleasure from Joseph Nicholas' briefing on why we're doomed. Like any unthinking micro-organism we consume our resources until they're exhausted. And climate change melting the ice is bad news for a civilisation increasingly dependent on ports at sea-level to unload container ships from China. But I can grumble forever about the Anthropocene, or as I prefer to call it the Pleistocene Terminal Event. Much more of our plastics and pollution and destroying the biodiversity around us, and we'll switch back from an air/water atmosphere to earth's natural methane/ammonia. That'll clear the nostrils.

Anyway, I think my solution of the Fermi paradox is more universal than Fred Hoyle's: the leading fraction of society will provide lethal tools to the irresponsible majority, who will then destroy everybody. (See current events in Syria.) I've forgotten the title of that Fredric Brown short story about a nuclear scientist which ended "Only a madman would give a loaded gun to an idiot." The sf of my youth had lots more cheerful stuff – Poul Anderson's "The Helping Hand", William Tenn's "Null-P", etc etc. As you know, Bob. And modern cheerful stuff too – Jeff Carlson's 2011 story "Planet of the Sealies" envisages the last survivors from refugia excavating landfill for dirty nappies containing human genes. We can't say nobody warned us.

Aside to Fred's post-WWII "the dowdy creatures our housebodies had become!" My father noted in his 1945 diary how the streets had become dull and tired. Six years of war did take it out of both the landscape and the survivors.

Also enjoyed Nic's latest bulletin and your sporting life. Lovely back cover too!

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DAVE COCKFIELD HAS BEEN COTTAGING ON OUR BEHALF (FULLY STORY WITH PIX!)

You have printed another thoughtful and insightful piece from Joseph Nicholas. I find it impossible to find fault with his conclusions. Robert Lichtman also presents his ideas well. For many years I've been a follower of James Lovelock and his Gaia theory. It is dispiriting when even he has come to the conclusion that we are on a steady downward slope and that all we can do at the moment is manage the situation as best we can. This entails moving populations to safer areas and embracing Nuclear power in the short term until such time as the Human race miraculously finds solutions to Climate Change and Global Warming.

Servants of the Wankh

I enjoyed reading Nic Farey's scatological musings. It was probably apt that I read his piece while disposing of the remnants of a Sainsbury's Lamb Rogan Josh via the back passage. Best place for it as it turned out.

It makes sense to have a mental list of potential rescue centres should you be caught short.

My personal dilemmas stem more from a weak bladder particularly in the morning after my Blood Pressure/Cholesterol medication that includes a diuretic.

Soho is the main area that I prowl in the centre of London, due predominantly to my need to get a fix browsing in bookshops. (No not Porn! Why bother when the Internet is free).

These days you are likely to be arrested if you have a piss against a wall, in the bushes, or on the odd Cenotaph. I have therefore mapped out a number of pubs where loos are easy to access. Near Charing X Station there is even a French style pissoir.

Just before Christmas on my way from Oxford Circus Tube station to Gosh Comics in Berwick Street I suddenly felt a desperate need to vent my bladder. Fortunately on the way is a Public Convenience in Broadwick Street. I quickly trotted down the steps at the entrance but had to stop before I reached the bottom. Every Urinal was occupied and two guys were waiting in a queue. Damn!

I dutifully crossed my legs and gave a silent prayer that there would be a vacancy soon. However after a few moments I suddenly realised that the six guys at the Urinals were all having a Wank!

Or at least trying to as none seemed to be particularly tumescent.(Can I help it if I have an eye for detail?) The two guys standing to one side were timing the action with a stopwatch and filming the proceedings on a mobile phone.

Not wanting to be caught in a potential raid by the Vice Squad and a little afraid that I might be invited to join in the proceedings I bade a hasty retreat to the Comic shop. The scene I had just witnessed had me disorientated , as it was frankly weird. But even more startling was the fact that my bladder had totally withered up and that I no longer needed to relieve myself in any way whatsoever.

I now tend to stay clear of that one but have noticed a sign by the steps informing the Public that the loo is regularly checked by our wonderful Constabulary for drug use and lewd behaviour. Presumably not by them.

I made a recent visit to take a couple of photographs and discovered that there were only four urinals so I have to assume that two were shared by Wank Buddies when this tale occurred.

I wasn't actually able to get a photograph of the urinals because at 7.30am on a Saturday morning there was actually a jerk in there Jerking off. Go figure.

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JOSEPH NICHOLAS

I was never a fan of David Bowie's music -- although I could appreciate the artistry, I was also struck by the feeling that there was something knowing about it and the various personas he adopted to perform it: not so much doing something because of an inner need that had to be satisfied at whatever cost, but because of a calculation about how it might play with the projected audience. That said, I'm less bothered than you over his insertion of himself into his last album as a subject of his muse, since this re-framing of a work of art by its creator as an expression of his or her own endeavour and personality -- as its producer, its consumer, and its subject and object -- has been a standard trope for at least the part thirty years, and perhaps longer. Consider Andy Warhol: many of his paintings in his last few years featured himself. Consider Ai Wei Wei, who documents the progress of his own artistic productions via an Instagram feed. And there are probably lots of others, so Bowie is not at all unique.

But I said in a previous communication that I'd write something about the music that I grew up with. The earliest memories I have are of seeing The Beatles play live on black-and-white television in the music slot that the BBC then granted to "popular beat combos" in programmes that were otherwise aimed squarely at the under-twelves -- BBC executives and producers in the early 1960s clearly had no idea at all how to handle music which had broken out of the light entertainment bracket which was their only alternative to classical music and serious news -- and listening to Brian Matthew's Saturday Club on the old Light Programme. And setting the alarm clock to wake me in time to listen to the first record broadcast on the first programme of the new Radio One on (I've just looked this up -- thanks, Wikipedia) Saturday 30 September 1967. (I was a few months shy of my fourteenth birthday.) Until then, it

had been Alan Freeman's Pick of The Pops on Sunday evenings and minute adjustments of the dial to get the best possible reception from Radio Luxembourg -- I obviously wasn't in the right place(s) to get usable signals from Radios Caroline and London.

The other source of music in our household was my parents' membership of the World Record Club, a "try-before-you-buy" mail order LP service which offered a range of recordings -- mostly classical, plus music from films and shows -- to its members: as I recall, one either did nothing on receipt of the monthly catalogue and received that month's "editor's choice" by default, or sent in an order for something else, all on the understanding that if the LPs were not to the recipient's taste they could be returned at no cost to him or her. As far as I recall, my parents maintained their subscription to the WRC until we moved to Munich in mid-1969, when it would not have been possible to continue to receive or return LPs by post to a British address. (Not just because of postage costs: the West German customs authorities of the time seemed to regard anything other than a letter from outside the country as potentially subversive, and routinely ripped the package apart or destroyed it. I lost several books to their tender ministrations.) I've no idea what eventually happened to the WRC; presumably it was overtaken by declining interest or more likely the ubiquity of music radio, rendering a "try-before-you-buy" editor's choice entirely obsolete. And of course "try-before-you-buy" cannot possibly work now, in an era where not only everything ever recorded is potentially available to anyone at any time but where it can be downloaded for less than it would have cost to send an LP through the post -- although I do recall, when first subscribing to BBC Music in the early 1990s, seeing adverts for just such a service (the "Wilson Stereo Library"), requesting that potential subscribers send two first class stamps "for a speedy reply". Presumably that too slumbered into eventual oblivion.

Anyway, enough of this. It's lunchtime here in Sydney, as Judith has just reminded me, and apart from anything else I should check on the laundry I hung out a few hours ago. 29 degrees -- a light breeze from the northeast stirring the breakers as they roll into Manly Beach -- a UV index tagged as Very High, so no baking out in the sunshine just at the moment. Heigh-ho!

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LLOYD PENNY

How does the Royal Mail let you drop so many Vibrators in the mail? I am sure there's a few posties complaining about all the buzzing. Generous you, supplying all those batteries... Even tougher is e-mailing those little buzzers. I have the 23rd one, I am not sure if I am late or not, but off it goes anyway.

How many American fans must think that their country has gone utterly mad, with all the gun deaths, school shootings, and insane politics? I can sit up here to your north, cock a quizzical eyebrow, and wonder how much more extreme can the US get?

I am pleased to see more work on climate change, and some governments are suddenly more appreciative of the situation. I have heard that it is already too late to fix the situation, given our current level of technology. The greatest frustrations are that it is government and industry who can do the most about it, and they are the ones who listen and do the least.

Christmas was a magic time for us as kids because there were surprises in store, and different things to do and eat. The magic went away because we were asked what we would like for Christmas, and we often didn't get it, and we learned the truth about Santa. Later, the magic returned, for you could be Santa for the person or persons you love. At Christmas, I ask Yvonne what she wants for Christmas, she gives me a list, and I go and get them. We know we can only afford so much, and there might not be many surprises, but at least we get what we would like, and we're happy with that.

The newest SW episode...I liked it, but I can see where people would say that it was almost a remake of Episode 4. Let's blow up another massive space station!

It's one thing to comment on English place names like Penistone and Broadbottom, but have a look at the map of the island of Newfoundland. Start at the village of Dildo, and go forth from there...

Mike Meara, I notice I have different styles depending on the fanzine I am responding to. Sometimes, I am prime smartass; other times, I provide mere response, or relay information, or do a little personal journalism. I tend to mirror the attitude of the faned in charge of the publication. Sometimes conscious, sometimes not.

From what I saw on Facebook, Randy Byers has banged his gong, and his time in hospital is done, and good for him. Cancer may not be completely beat in his case, but it does seem to be beaten down and under control.

As far as anything medical goes, I had my eyes examined by our friendly neighbourhood optometrist, and surprise, my eyes have actually improved a little bit, so that means no new glasses, and my wallet says ta. All done, off this goes, see you with the next! Which should be 2.0.25, I think...

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TALES OF A LAST VEGAS TAXI DRIVER BY NIC FAREY

MEDICAL EDITION (NUMBER TWO)

Arnie Katz once declaimed to me that while Las Vegas was a thoroughly service-based town, everyone was in fact quite incompetent, but they were *very* nice about it. I think I might have been comparing my DMV experience with that on the east coast (specifically Maryland), and remarking how much more efficient and friendly Las Vegas was by comparison. I think it may be common everywhere that people like to complain how rubbish their own town is with this and that, for example I was warned early about how terrible Vegas drivers are (to which my inevitable response was, "Go drive around DC for a week, then come back and tell me that") and how crap the public transportation is (likewise, where we lived in Southern Maryland had four buses *a day*, thank you very much). Anyway, what brought this to mind was that I took a day off work Tuesday for a medical procedure (removal of sebaceous cyst), only to be told 20 minutes after my scheduled appointment time that they *just* found out that the doc who does that was in fact on vacation, ever so sorry. I had the definite arse that I lost a day's work for nothing, even though all the drivers and my supervisor told me that I really didn't miss a thing. Supervisor Celso said "You would have got frustrated, except you haven't been doing this long enough to get frustrated. Wait 'til you've been at it for 16 years!" ("I'll be fuckin' dead by then!", I wittily riposted.)

It's sort of a medical pre-nuptial week, as, speaking of arse, I reluctantly have the appointment with the up-the-arse procedure on Friday, meaning that a mere few hours from now I'm allowed 2 toast then fuck all else for over 24 hours, and am scheduled at an inconvenient (ahem) time for me to start drinking the nasty spoo that's supposed to flush you out so the camera can presumably be unobstructed in where it needs to get. I had toyed with the concept of writing this iteration of the column during that time, with a no doubt graphic and glorious squirt-by-squirt account of it all and a great deal of grumpiness. I have, however, decided that this is perhaps best left to my reader's (Unc, J) imagination, and in any case would likely be trumped by the medical woes of those even more aged and infirm, and also would be better in *Raucous Caucus*.

The spoo-induced clean-out is supposed to start at 5pm, a time at which I would normally be asleep, so I'm going to manfully attempt to sleep a lot of the day away so as to be awake at the appropriate time. This inevitably reminds me of the bloke who went to the arse doctor, sheepishly admitting he was having a bit of a bowel movement problem, which the doc asked him to describe. "Well," he sez, "I have a very substantial bowel movement every day at 6:20am on the dot." "That doesn't seem to be a major problem" sez the doc, "So what's the issue?" Bloke sez "I don't get up 'til seven".

There's a lot of angry drivers on the taxi stands lately because the book is generally down. Part of this is due to the rideshare companies, but another substantial part is that there are so many more cabs on the road. One exceptionally angry bloke (with a Noo Yawk accent) was telling me that on his previous stint as a driver, it wasn't uncommon to make \$100,000 a year, since there were about 450 taxis on the streets and you'd work steadily every shift. Now there are over 2,000, and even I have noticed the difference since I started, when you ought to easily get 20 or more rides per shift, now you might be lucky to get 12 (i.e. one ride per hour) on a weekday. There's been talk that we should strike for a \$4/hour base *plus* our commission, but also a fatalistic acceptance of the fact that while you might get half of the drivers out, the other half would be out there coining it, even some in great sympathy with that cause, since we all have bills to pay. I might categorize drivers three ways: Angry/DGAF, Fatalistic, and Clueless/DGAF. The latter category will include most of the turnover that we get. It was interesting to me to hear from one of our drivers that a large proportion of those hired by the cab companies don't make it six months, generally because they either don't care for the conditions of the job, or that they simply can't cut it. I'll note that YCS fired me *just* before my six months were up (thereby negating the possibility that I could appeal my dismissal via the Union), but I did get set on with Lucky immediately, and I've now got a year in, total. I'll put myself in the "fatalistic" box, since the job is what it is, and to be honest the drivers out there could use being a bit better and more savvy about how they go about it, even though we all know there's a lot of luck involved in what rides you end up with. You can get days where you have several, if not many rides under \$10, which isn't so bad if you get fast turnarounds, but can indeed be frustrating if you've been waiting on a stand for an hour or more just to get a ride going across the street. Alternatively you can have days like yesterday where I only got 11 rides, but the shortest one was almost \$14, and I had three over \$30. Sometimes it's slow as molasses in winter, you hope that later it will pick up as people start to move around a bit - my first ride was at 2:13am, the second at 5:10. That could be considered a bit unlucky, but not atypical.

So, I had that Henry Biggs in the back of my cab the other day, to a resounding chorus of "Whohe?" from my reader (J, Unc). Having clocked quite readily that I was English (something that most Americans fail to do, pegging me as Australian, seriously they do), we got to having a natter on the ride (Four Queens to airport), when he confessed to "My claim to fame regarding England is that I swam the English Channel!" As indeed he did, back in the 80s, and is still at it, according to a bit of Googling, having last year swum around Manhattan Island as a fundraiser for Ferguson, MO. The bloke, it turns out, is also a former University dean and rapper-by-night, it says here: <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/swimming-cause-u-city-s-henry-biggs-raises-money-ferguson-youth-initiatives>

After apparently having managed to avoid having anyone of note as a fare, the same week I had that Dom Flemons in the back of the cab too (Boulder Station to

airport). (Yes Unc, I know...) Since his luggage consisted of a guitar, banjo and a modest travel suitcase, we naturally got to talking about music on the ride, and vague familiarity on my part turned to recognition when he revealed that he was a founder member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops, whose "slice "Cornbread and Butterbeans" had indeed been posted on our (ptui!) Facebook group 'Radio Winston' in the past. Flemons is now solo, and by all accounts a busy boy. I posted one of his more recent videos to RW (*Ed: Radio Winston*), whence it inevitably made its way to Alan Dorey's steam radio programme, I hope to the delectation of all. Dom and I had a really nice convo, mostly about the blues and its continuing influence, and I'll happily recommend that you look him up and have a listen.

THE ROBERT LICHTMAN MEDICAL DICTIONARY

Is on hiatus having its arse looked at for potential blockages...

SPEAKING OF ROBERT LICHTMAN

Turning to *Vibrator* 2.0.24 and your article about David Bowie, I confess to never having gotten "into" him at all and for many years only being vaguely aware of his existence – although also over those years I would hear various of his recordings on the radio and think to myself, "Hmmm, that's pretty good – wonder who it is." I think this can be largely put down to his coming to the fore around the same time I'd gotten into Stephen Gaskin's "Monday Night Class" *and* to being focused on the music surrounding me in San Francisco. This was in 1969, when his first hit "Space Oddity" was released. I don't recall hearing that at all. You write that he called himself "a tasteful thief, but I prefer the term shameless whore," and based on a documentary I saw recently in which he moved from one musical influence to another, stealing liberally and then hiring the people who were in his inspiration sphere – all the while creating and then dropping various personas as he went along – I would tend to agree with you. Given my positive reactions to various songs, I would credit him with being a good performer. But basically, he's someone whose oeuvre I simply missed. That said, all respect to those for whom the Bowie experience was entirely different. I have my own musical touchstones from earlier periods, so of course I understand.

After reading Joseph Nicholas's letter, preceding my own in the issue, faithful readers will find me rather weak and almost optimistic tea. He writes that "the evolutionary record demonstrates that the long-term destiny of all species is to become extinct, and the only difference between ourselves and the others is that we will be the architects of our own extinction. My own guess is that the human species will be extinct by the end of the third millennium."

I wouldn't go that far, but I would suggest that there will be a large decline in human population numbers as the rich focus all technological advances on themselves and leave the rest of us outside the domed cities in which they'll continue to amass their ever-vaster wealth. I don't think that going off-planet will turn out to

be feasible, though, and additionally there will be fewer species around while those self-chosen few escape the Sixth Great Extinction to which Joseph refers. They will raise crops and livestock for eating, while the rest of us will have to make do with the “food pills” of much science fiction – and that’s if we’re lucky and avoid the soylent green fate. Too stfnal by half?

My own sporting life coincided with yours in several places, starting where you wrote that your “mum gave me a kit bag on my first day with plimsolls, shorts, and socks, but not replacement underwear, which on reflection I could probably have used.” What we had instead of underwear, also provided by my mother, was a “jock strap,” known in the literature sent home instructing our parents what to buy for us for physical education as an “athletic supporter.” This held our young wobbly bits in check but left our rear ends covered only by those shorts (which were required to be in the school colors, of course, so we would all match). We were supposed to bring everything but the shoes home every Friday night so they would get washed over the weekend. As the school year passed, it became evident in the locker room atmosphere that not everyone complied.

You also wrote: “Mostly I remember sitting out there on summer days with my school chums, avidly avoiding sports. Some sports however could not be avoided. There was cross country running.” Like you – and to my great surprise – I was actually pretty good at this. In my second year, the coach put great emphasis on the various running events. I was crap on the “dashes,” but good on the long-distance runs. His “final exam” was what he called the “Tijuana Derby,” five laps around the quarter-mile track. Probably it was because of my long legs, but in a field of maybe 25-35 in his class I came in something like seventh or eighth place.

In the last two years of high school, I could count on at least one mysterious call to the coachs’ office where there would be several of them all pumped full of “school spirit” and trying in the hardest way to get me interested in trying out for the basketball team. There were only a few boys taller than me in the whole school, and they figured that in me they had some sort of secret weapon that, if activated properly, would win them high positions in the standings for the league in which the high school played all its sports (football being the main one, of course). But thanks to my growth spurts (the biggest one was five inches in a year) leaving me uncoordinated and gawky and my disinclination towards sports in general – by then I was already a fan and more interested in publishing fanzines than playing various forms of ball – I always dashed their hopes.

Nic on personal relief facilities at Vegas hotels, airports, etc. a fascinating read. And yes, “john” and “the head” have been terms I’ve used at various times, but from years of reading British fanzines “bog” is certainly not unfamiliar to me.

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Well that's it for another issue, not too late off the blocks, but at one time I thought it wouldn't happen. I seriously thought it was time to give up this lark and confess I was somewhat lacking as a fan-editor and thinking perhaps going for a monthly sprint was the wrong way to go about it, compared to slow old plodders like Robert Lichtman or the Fishlifters steadily producing substantive work. Also smoking a lot of dope and sleeping a lot each day seemed to take over from any fannish impulse. But people kept sending me letters which I had no option but to publish, because they were by and large good letters, and occasionally great letters. Now I've come to accept this fanzine is more an ongoing letter column than anything else. Is that good bad or indifferent? I don't know but it is ultimately *your* fault. So I continue to be strapped to this treadmill which constantly flays my soul, occasionally pausing only to post embarrassing songs on Facebook.

I guess I will stick with you as long as you stick with me.

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