



VIBRATOR 42

JULY 2017

Photo: Bill Burns

Vibrator 42 is upon us. Run and hide everybody. It will suck your souls from your bodies and leave them empty husks for the wind to blow where it will. If you are stupid enough to stick around and attempt to read it, then I have no sympathy for you. You will find only the rantings of several people whose sense of proportion and rationality has been seriously depleted. One thing I can promise you is that there will be no Andy Hooper this issue; his featured loc last issue has obviously left him seriously depleted himself, and perhaps on a life support machine in Seattle, merely gasping for the oxygen of publicity which continues to be denied him.

Is this any way to talk about one of your most respected contributors, I hear you ask. Well, no, but then I am and will remain Graham Charnock at graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. Like it or lump it. Although I'm not sure what lumping it entails. It's an old English colloquial saying, you understand.

I have to thank Dave Cockfield especially for sending me Five Pounds to contribute towards the further production of this focal point fanzine. There's a man who knows the true value of fanzines. It was a new plastic five pound note as well; it wasn't as if he was trying to get rid of his old currency before it was withdrawn. I would like to suggest that Dave is establishing a precedent in this matter, but it seems to me you could all learn from him. Thanks Dave.

Occasionally I sit here in my study, look out my window, and try to find something to comment upon, but I don't think a moss-covered chimney brest is really significant, although pigeons sometimes flutter down and sit on it and fix their beady eyes on me with that characteristic head-swivelling movement. Are they watching me or not? I sometimes talk to them but they show no sign of responding or understanding me. Perhaps they know me of old to be an incoherent drunk. Or perhaps my arguments pass over their heads, or maybe they are merely bored with hearing me rant about Donald Trump.

I was intending to do a piece on Donald Trump, not a rant, but I hoped a reasoned assessment of his time so far in office, cataloguing the pros (ha ha) and cons of his run as a tyrant, but as soon as I started on it a fresh calamity and failure would occur either in his administration, or his personal behaviour so it was kind of becoming hard to keep up. When his administration is over or he is dead I will probably run a retrospective piece about him in my America the Damned series. I bet you lucky people can hardly wait.

Thanks as usual to all my contributors and my wife without which this issue would never have occurred.

AMERICA THE DAMNED: An Occasional Series

The Newark Riots 1967

1967 was a special year for me. It was the year I turned 21, the year the Beatles released Sergeant Pepper. I lived in Fulham and walked to work every day along the Kings Road, where Felix Dennis, who lived with Chris Priest and I, was street-selling OZ Magazine. People wore flared jeans and flowery prints. It was a summer of love, but also a summer in the UK at least of quiet revolution. Teenagers were becoming an economic market and everybody under the sun was exploiting it.

In the US things were rather different. The revolution was not so quiet. 490,000 US troops were in Vietnam and not everybody thought that was a good idea, least of all the troops themselves who were resorting to recreational use of cannabis to get them through the horror.

Reaction to the American involvement in Vietnam had already claimed four lives in the infamous shootings at Kent State University in 1964, when, not for the first time, America started killing its own citizens. In 1967 in the US dissent was seeded and grew in several other locations, most notably in Newark.

Newark is a the most populous city in the US state of New Jersey and a major air, shipping and rail hub. It is also the second most racially-diverse city in New Jersey after Jersey City itself. In the middle decades of the 20th century Newark was subject to a phenomenon known as “white flight” which was characterized by a significant loss of the area’s middle-class population, and a corresponding rise in poverty and perceived under privilege. With an air of general dissent and dissatisfaction in the air, it was an area primed for turmoil which came to a head on July 12th.

Normally there is a precipitating event for a mass, apparently spontaneous, uprising. In this case it was when two white Newark policemen, John DeSimone and Vito Pontrelli, arrested a black cabdriver, John William Smith. After signalling, Smith passed the double parked police car, was then pursued and pulled over by the officers. He was arrested, beaten by the officers and taken to the 4th Police Precinct where he was charged with assaulting the officers and making insulting remarks. If this sounds familiar to you it is of course not unlike recent much-reported abuse of black citizens by the police throughout the US, except in those days there were unlikely to be people on the street to record and document the event on their cell-phones. And people were far more likely to believe the police than disbelieve them. To suggest we should learn from our experiences might suggest we are better or at least equal to apes, but it seems that is not so.

The first peripheral victim of the unrest following the police’s action in Newark was early in the evening of July 15 when a woman named Rebecca Brown was killed in a fusillade of

bullets directed at the window of her second floor apartment. Six days later 24 civilians, a fire-fighter and a police officer were left dead.

After the riots the decline of Newark continued apace. And things barely improved into the 70s with white flight continuing much as before.

It might be worthwhile reminding ourselves what was going on generally in the US in the months preceding the event. In April – Large demonstrations were held against the Vietnam War in New York City and San Francisco. Elvis Presley and Priscilla Beaulieu were married in Las Vegas. Murderer Richard Speck was sentenced to death in the electric chair for killing eight student nurses in Chicago. A race riot occurs in Tampa, Florida after the shooting death of Martin Chambers by police while allegedly robbing a camera store. The unrest lasts several days. June – The Buffalo Race Riot began, lasting until July 1 and led to 200 arrests.

So, already, obviously a lot of riots sparking off nearly anywhere you could name, from A-Z. In the UK all we had to worry about was whether we could be seen hanging out in Carnaby Street.

Throughout the US following on from Newark there were riots in major cities practically every week as well as thankfully victimless mass meetings and protests:

July 19 – A race riot broke out in the North Side of Minneapolis on Plymouth Street during the Minneapolis Aquatennial Parade and businesses were vandalized and fires broke out in the area, although the disturbance was quelled within hours. However, the next day a shooting set off another incident in the same area that led to 18 fires, 36 arrests, 3 shootings, 2 dozen people injured, and damages totalling 4.2 million. There would be two more such incidents in the following two weeks.

Newark wasn't the only place to suffer Ravage by Riots in this decade, of course. Famously there were also the York Riots in 1969, which was a far more polarized conflict between a white gang and a black gang and thus more criminal based than as an example of social upheaval.

Its most famous victim was Lillie Belle Allen.

On July 21, Lillie Belle Allen, a black woman from Aiken, South Carolina who was visiting York with her parents, was riding in a car driven by her sister, Hattie Dickinson. Dickinson turned the car onto North Newberry Street and was looking for a grocery store when she saw a man with a gun leaning out of a second-story window. Multiple members of two all-white gangs, the Newberry Street Boys and the Girarders, were on the street that night, and many of them were armed.

Dickinson began to turn around in the intersection of Newberry Street and Gay Avenue but the car stalled. As more armed white men began coming onto their porches, Dickinson panicked. Her parents, who were in the back seat, began praying. Her older sister, Lillie Belle Allen, jumped out of the car to get to the driver's seat and take the wheel. She flailed her arms screaming, "Don't shoot!" Multiple shooters opened fire from the street, rooftops

and windows, fatally wounding Allen. More than one hundred rounds were fired at the car, and Allen was shot by several different types of bullets.

The day after Allen's death, the Pennsylvania Governor declared a state of emergency and ordered an emergency curfew as two hundred National Guard troops arrived in York. Three days later the city settled down and the Guard left York.

Four prosecutors and four detectives spent two years trying to solve the Allen case and an earlier gang related murder case, but people who knew about the fatal shootings kept silent, either because they were afraid or they didn't want to be seen as traitors. "It was tougher than pulling teeth," said Thomas V. Chatman Jr., who was lead detective on the murder investigations for the York City police. "There were witnesses. But no one wanted to tell you anything. People took sides according to race and didn't want to cooperate." Because there was distrust among blacks, prosecutors said, they were never able to acquire sufficient evidence to charge anyone, and both shootings went largely uninvestigated for the next thirty years.

We can draw whatever moral lessons we like from all this information, but perhaps the most significant one is that history repeats itself and always will. In the Summer of 2011 a similar police racial killing in Tottenham led to widespread riots, arson and street violence throughout other racially sensitive areas on the UK.

Like Creedence Clearwater Revival said: Who'll Stop the Rain?



JOSEPH NICHOLAS

At last to respond to the various issues of *Vibrator* you've been sending me. As I remarked at the social event for John Purcell last week, I've been rather busy over the past

few months -- with the garden and the allotment, obviously, given the time of year (and when the summer eventually starts to wind down, it will be time to plant out the autumn crops, meaning no let-up in busy-ness of the gardening front), but also visits to museums and galleries, excursions to various places on Our List, and the programme of lectures offered by the British Museum, LAMAS (the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society), and Gresham College. Having said which, the diary for the next couple of months is empty save for a behind-the-scenes members' tour of the Natural History Museum's mollusc collection in mid-August and New Scientist Live at the end September, but the Scheduling Committee will be meeting tomorrow to diarise another round of exhibitions and excursions. (See -- we even schedule a meeting of the Scheduling Committee!)

Paul Skelton remarked in his letter in *Vibrator* 37 that some of the pages of one of the fanzines in his collection had been removed, and wonders who might have done this, because the fanzine lacks address information or any other provenance. I'd suggest that it may most likely have been Darroll Pardoe who perpetrated what Paul refers to as this "desecration". I say this because I recall reading, way back in the 1980s, a comment by Darroll -- presumably in a letter by him to a fanzine -- that if he came across an article he particularly liked he would remove it from the fanzine, keep a record of where it came from, and discard the rest of the publication. (The presumable corollary to this is that he did not routinely keep the fanzines he received, whether or not he removed material from them.) This prompted some discussion, with (I recall) Ted White remarking that to remove an article in this way was not just to damage the fanzine but also to remove the article from its context, which he argued lowered its value even to the person who had retained it.

I didn't contribute anything to that discussion myself, because I was beginning to wonder whether we had room to retain all the fanzines then in our possession -- the ultimate decision being that we didn't, and the bulk of what we had was passed on to Vince Clarke for inclusion in his fanzine library (which in turn went to Rob Hansen on Vince's death). The only paper fanzines we retain now are the ones we've published ourselves -- which means (I'm sure you're ahead of me here) that I can't look back to see if I can find any evidence of the discussion that I half-remember. But this may nevertheless provide an answer of sorts to Paul's query.

Turning to *Vibrator* 38, your references to Dick Whittington and the Whittington Stone chimed with me because I worked in the Archway area in the early 1980s and used to walk past that not-at-all-salubrious-looking public house on a daily basis. The Whittington legend is almost certainly an invented one, perhaps dreamed up to justify all the additions to his story in the pantomime of the same name, which I think may have been the first pantomime I ever saw, when I were nobbut lad and it were all fields round here. (Or, rather, there. Literally fields: where we lived in Salisbury in the early 1960s, our cul-de-sac of a street had fields of wheat and barley on two sides of it, but one day I came home from school to find that the farmer had sold the land for housing and excavation machinery was churning through them, laying out a new street plan.) I found it slightly baffling, in

particular the fact that a role labelled as "Principal Boy" appeared to be played by a female while two of the female characters were obviously men in very bad make-up. Presumably I asked my parents for an explanation; but equally presumably, I was much too young to grasp the significance of cross-dressing and the overturning of gender stereotypes that it represented. (Assuming that anyone in the early 1960s used the term "gender stereotypes" in everyday conversation.)

I haven't been back to the Archway area at any time since the early 1980s, so am interested to read that some attempt has been made to add humanising elements to the ghastly gyratory system, the legacy of a long-abandoned plan to ram a multi-lane highway through north London. However, I can't see that this is likely to assist in any regeneration or gentrification of the area, because any and all such improvements will be cancelled out by the sheer volume of the traffic using the gyratory, not to mention the noise and pollution it generates. And of course there's the looming ugliness of Archway Tower, which is probably overdue for demolition but in fact can't be torn down because of the quantities of asbestos used in its construction and thus the near-impossibility of removing same without endangering the health of everyone living and working in the area.

Reading your comments about the Turkish restaurants and other eateries to be found on Green Lanes reminds me that not so long ago I came across a comment from you on the Harringay Online forum about the deception practised by the operators of one particular Turkish restaurant. It would be interesting to know how if at all that has developed -- have they been granted their retrospective planning permission for their unauthorised conversion, or have they still to formally apply for it?

In her letter in *Vibrator* 40, Marion Linwood remarks on an Australian television series called *The Dr Blake Mysteries*, set largely in Ballarat. Dr Edmonds (for it is he!) once had some harsh comments about this series, for including in an episode set in one particular year of the 1960s a Beechcraft private aircraft of a type which did not first fly until later in that decade. As a fellow aviation nerd, I can only endorse this criticism -- and make one of my own, about the appearance of a Lancaster bomber in the film *Atonement* (based on Ian McEwan's novel). This is an aircraft which first flew in January 1941 -- yet it flies overhead in scene which takes place in 1936. Grr! Nor is it the only piece of military inaccuracy in the film: amongst the vehicles on the beach as Robbie and his comrades arrive at Dunkirk in 1940 is a German SdKfz half-track in British khaki camouflage. Double grr!

Andy Hooper's discussion of the Sultana tragedy in *Vibrator* 41 was fascinating -- and I say this as someone who has only a passing interest in American history. We have a bare handful of books about the USA in our history collection, and they are generally revisionist accounts such as *The Free and The Unfree* and *A People's History of The United States*. We have three times that number of books about American political issues in the politics collection, although here again they're generally revisionist surveys and interpretations, by Noam Chomsky and others. (Non-revisionist stuff I can get from the mainstream news media, after all.)

DAVID REDD

Oh dear, illness again, and Steve Stiles this time. Not fair that someone who has spread so much happiness should face a nasty like that while others sail on without a care. Normally I maintain a discreet silence on personal troubles, especially this year, but all my get-well-soon sympathies to Steve.

With the addendum on the *Sultana* tragedy, “America The Damned” just got heavier – thank you for the extra weight, Andy. Certainly proves that you Graham yourself did a worthwhile service bringing it all to our attention. The addendum also shows that it’s not just the people, it’s the system other people set up. In all wars, even after they end, the collateral damage goes on hurting.

After a previous “America the Damned” I dipped into James D. Zirin’s book *The Mother Court*, about justice and those dispensing it in the Southern District of New York, but its mention of Sacco and Vanetti is only as a precursor case to the Fifties execution of Soviet spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The legality of their death penalty, and indeed the never-quite-clear grounds for conviction, seemed to hinge on the debatable relative priorities of the 1917 Espionage Act and the 1946 Atomic Energy Act. Too dispiriting to summarise, but I note that disapproving voices re the Rosenbergs’ death penalty included Albert Einstein, Jean-Paul Sartre, J. Edgar Hoover and Pope Pius XII – remarkably unlikely comrades-in-arms. I could hope that “America the Damned” finds no worthy material closer to our own time.

Your click-bait about the Beatles is much more likely to get a response from me than the click-bait daily emails from Canadian Meds and friends. (I’m not sure the physical improvements promised would be possible in these trousers.) Meanwhile, the effects of a Portuguese ebay purchase have died away, since replaced by a flow of Spanish-language ads from Mexico. So what did I click on to unleash *that*?

Ah, you nominate as a Beatles’ best *Rubber Soul*, just as I’m downsizing the cassette on grounds of diminished sound quality. I suppose its balance of accessibility and adventurousness were brilliant right from Track One; “Norwegian Wood” is so listenable as to be instantly cultural mainstream, yet brings a totally unexpected sound to pop with its sitar. “The new music starts here,” wrote Richard Goldstein, correctly. (Best to forget the album’s “Wait”, a reject from *Help* only thrown in to fill a gap, but the rest is gold.) Is *Rubber Soul* my own favourite Beatles LP, since you ask? No. I have a choice of three.

First of course *Revolver*, where it all came together. From the opening with “Taxman” (what on earth are they doing?) to the ending with “Tomorrow Never Knows” (what on earth are they doing?), you can’t fault it. Not even “Yellow Submarine”, which might have been better with Lennon’s unused intro and without Donovan’s simple “sky of blue, sea of green”, but which entered our national mythology anyway. And “Here, There and Everywhere” would be called Paul McCartney’s masterpiece if he hadn’t already written

“Yesterday”. This is the Beatles at their most accomplished, mate. Even *Sgt. Pepper*, shorn of its intended “Penny Lane” and “Strawberry Fields Forever”, is little more than a colourful retread along the road of *Revolver*.

Actually, I have two other almost equal favourite Beatles albums, or half-albums. One is *Magical Mystery Tour*, the memorable half being cobbled together from singles: “Hello Goodbye,” “Strawberry Fields Forever”, “Penny Lane”, “Baby You’re a Rich Man” and “All You Need is Love”. A high point of 1967, particularly with “All You Need is Love” having redeemed *Our World*, a rather patchy early satellite multinational co-production. My other favourite half-album is *Abbey Road Side Two*, and for me a magical lucky-dip all the way through, which surely I don’t need to describe to anyone. And since its Side One contains “Something”, and I have kept the original vinyl ever since 1969, *Abbey Road* has to be the favourite whole album. Your question answered?

More clickbait in your “Whither Fandom”, I suspect. Glad as I am to see Eric Frank Russell mentioned with a clear-sighted view of his abilities (cf Kingsley Amis assessing EFR as “the least unimaginative” of traditional sf writers) I should point out that the first half of “Next of Kin” was only uninspired padding, indeed a throwback, slung in to make a whole book out of a short novelette long after he’d run out of good ideas. Everybody has to eat. I’d rather remember his shorter work such as “Hobbyist”, “Minor Ingredient” and “Fast Falls the Eventide.” (Some exploration and militarism in there too, but better used.) But these were childish things which you put away when you discovered the new improved *New Worlds* with added M. Moorcock, so won’t you tell *that* Charnock story? Even if there is no happy ending?

No books of The Saint here. Our crime libraries are mostly Sexton Blake thrillers in various downmarket formats. The characters of ace detective Blake and his supporting cast over his career from 1890s to 1970s are wildly variable due to around 200 different authors, some of them quite competent, a few even good and the best (Jack Trevor Story) reaching for excellence. There was a fun Sexton Blake radio series in 1967 - a good year! - which recycled old pulp thrills quite acceptably and on CD gives far less eye-strain than the old story papers with their microscopic print.

As for stapling A4 paper into A5 booklets Rob, thanks for the tip, but I place such papers on a hardboard sheet which has guide strips and four little holes where the centre fold will be. Then I press down my top hardboard strip with its four strategically-placed nail points, and the sheets gain four tiny perforations just right for inserting staples by hand. Fiddly, but due to OCD preferable to creaky fingers making that 45-degree bend not loose enough and leaving permanent creases in the zine. Which is another reason I’m grateful for paper copies.

I seem to have said little about a bright bunch of letters, so thanks again to all the gang and yourself.

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NIC FAREY

Here we have a copy of "*Vibtaor 41*", it sez here in the email, clearly a new title which I must add to the so far generally ignored *Incompleat Register* FAAn awards voters' guide.

This issue does in fact seem, well, *different* somehow from previous instalments, and I'm struggling a bit to find a good adjective to differentiate it. I thought of "serious", but that's not quite right, since it might imply that you'd previously been unserious, which you're not at all since you always write engagingly and thoughtfully on your personal topics of interest. There's probably a word that describes perfectly what I'm failing to convey, it might be "cohesive", since there's the feeling of an organic flow about this issue. Perhaps that's what you get for leading off with renowned historian Andy Hooper's additions to the *Sultana* story. Andy has in the past occasionally tended to write in what comes across as a condescending manner, a flaunting of knowledge and research if you will, often with crushing detail of the disappear-up-its-own-arse variety, but that's a trait which has all but vanished in recent years, and his contribution here could even be described as "breezy". It's certainly highly informative, and quite conversational, which isn't so surprising given its origin as a loc. That nice Mr. Hooper rarely fails to deliver a good read, and aren't you glad that with his contribution he appears to have acknowledged that you and *Vibtaor* do actually exist.

I'll have to pass on your Beatles-related comment whoring. (Oh, wait, this is a comment, ah fuck, you succeeded.) I don't dislike the band by any means, (unlike Ulrika O'Brien, as it turns out,) but was never engaged with them to the extent that I'd be able to cite a favourite album in the way that I could with The Who, The Clash, Roxy Music or even John Martyn. I think that's got a lot to do with our age difference, which I've never considered significant in absolute terms, but musically is really quite a gulf, since my "coming-of-age" in terms of musical awareness was much more the 70s than the 60s. It's also undoubtedly true that some of my preferred genres (eg "first wave" ska, reggae, Northern soul, much of which I discovered in retrospect) were singles-based (or song-based) rather than album-based. To the usual despair of advocates over at Radio Winston, I maintain a wariness of "proggish" acts like the Moody Blues (except, of course, for "Go Now"), Yes and the like, but naturally there are exceptions like always being quite fond of ELP, probably because Keith Emerson was not only a massively skilled musician but also a quite mad showman.

My own Father's Day was good in that for the first time I got messages (brief but heartfelt) from both my sons, who are several thousand (Thomas) and many thousand (Sean) miles away. Since I ended up minimally involved in the upbringing of either of them, it's a fuckin miracle they'd want to have anything to do with me at all, but apparently blood really is thicker than water.

The withering of fandom eh? It seems to be well accepted now that we're in a decreasing-in-numbers niche, though I'd hesitate to say "vanishing", even though the

obituaries are piling up. Although Herbert George is remembered almost entirely for his sf output, my favourite novel of his is the non-skiffy *History of Mr. Polly*, so there y'go.

Late to the Roger Moore wake, I remember him affectionately for *The Saint* and *The Persuaders*, as James Bond, not so much, although Pierce Brosnan's interpretation of the character (heterodoxically my actual favourite) was definitely informed by Moore's. Roger was considered a gent, certainly, and not shy of self-deprecation. I recall seeing a blooper from *The Wild Geese*, which (quasi-quoting) showed Moore on a two-way radio: "[callsign] to [callsign], over?"; "[callsign] go ahead"; [callsign]... pause...; "Of course, if I'd had the presence of mind to learn the fucking lines, this would be a lot better...". Richard Harris cracks up behind Moore.

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GARY HUBBARD

Well, it seems like everyone has a Saint story. Here's mine.

It was the early Sixties. I think I must have been seventeen or so. Every summer, the Parents used to take us to a campground up near Sault St. Marie in northern Michigan. The Great Outdoors has always been a snore for me and I generally found these trips boring, although I did discover my first Marvel comic in a party store up there. On this occasion, however, I and my brother Ron managed to finagle the Old Man into letting us stay at home, so the Parents packed up the lesser brothers and went away for a week, leaving us to our own devices. But before he left, the Old Man gave me some money to get by on and, like the good servant in the parable, I socked it away out of sight and knowledge of my brother, who was demonstrably prodigal, doling it out as needed for food and whatnot. I have to admit, though, that I misappropriated some of it and went down to my favorite used book store where I found a copy of *The Saint Omnibus*. I didn't know Simon Templar from Adam, but it looked interesting. What appealed to me about it was that the hero was English, and I thought he might be like James Bond. I was already a big fan of JB, having been turned on to the books by a school friend, Larry Tate.

Larry was the most remarkable person I've ever met: smart, personable and highly articulate, despite having a harelip and a speech impediment, which he dealt with by giving frequent and riveting book reviews in English class. Often, the books he reviewed were Ian Fleming novels, which the English teacher allowed because...well...he was Larry Tate. I tried to imitate him with my own book reviews, but I was no Larry Tate. He also ended up with the prettiest girl in the school whereas I ended up with Rosy Palm.

So...Larry Tate, James Bond, and all that. I was hoping I would find more of the same in the pages of *The Saint Omnibus*, but Simon Templar puzzled me from the start. He wasn't a government agent nor a private detective in the usual sense, but more like a notorious troublemaker and sting operator with no visible means of support. The part that resonated strongly with my teenage self in those stories, however, was that ST was living in sin with

Patricia Holm; I really dreamed of having that same kind of deal myself someday. Of course, cohabitating out of wedlock is nothing these days. When Bess and I started doing it, we found that it was just the same as being married so we got hitched anyway. Still, it was a cool thing in the Saint stories.

My enjoyment of *The Saint Omnibus* was impaired a little bit by my brother. He'd gone ahead in our parents' absence and had his car painted and started badgering me for the \$39.95 Earl Schieb wanted to release his car, but I never would. He had to wait until the Old Man came back, and complained about it for years after. About the same time I started noticing issues of *The Saint Mystery Magazine* on the news stand at Rexall Drugs right next to the *Mike Shayne* magazine, so I started buying those. As I recall, they contained mostly reprinted Saint novels with commentaries by Charteris and a few short stories by other writers. Truly, I never warmed up to the Saint all that much, and by the time I joined the Army set him aside for the soft-core porn books that were all the rage, many of which were written by Robert Silverberg and Dick Geis.

I never knew that Roger Moore had played the Saint on TV until after he'd taken on the role of James Bond and it was mentioned in his vita. The Canadian TV station in Windsor, across the river from Detroit, was showing the program, but I never saw it, because it was aired at an inconvenient time on Saturday afternoons (about the same time the other stations were showing monster movies) and a lot of those syndicated British shows on CKLW were as dull as dirt: *The Champions* and *My Partner*, *The Ghost* come to mind. I found Moore personable, and while he might have been good as the Saint, I never liked him as James Bond all that much. For me, Sean Connery was the only *real* James Bond; all the others were just carrying on the brand. Still, I've been collecting all of Moore's JB movies that I can find, because I like the opening and closing credits on those films which feature naked ladies in silhouette floating in space and doing other things. If I could figure out how to compile just those scenes and throw away the rest, I would.

I gradually lost sight of the Saint until a few years ago when it became my job, in my capacity as a librarian, to catalog *The Saint: a complete history in print, radio, film and television* by Burl Barer for our collection—nice book. These days, however, I've become more interested in FBI agent Lemmy Caution, who appeared in a number of books written in the 1930s by British author Peter Cheyney. The only story I've read so far is *This Man is Dangerous*, but I'm hoping to find some more. The book was good fun and Cheyney's depiction of American gangsters is, in a word, adorable.

Actually, I was not unfamiliar with Lemmy Caution (although I didn't know he was a literary character), because back in the Seventies one of the TV stations in Detroit used to air these dubbed French movies about him, usually at some ungodly hour in the morning, but worth staying up for. They starred Eddie Constantine, an American actor who was once romantically connected to Edith Pilaf and had a pretty good career in French movies; most of them pretty light-hearted. One Lemmy Caution movie, I remember, ended with a pie

fight in a barn. It's sad that Hollywood had forgotten the value of a good pie fight. I think *The Force Awakens* would have been a lot better with a pie fight.

(EDITOR: Lemmy Caution as a hero was of course also appropriated by Jean Luc-Godard for his dystopian semi-sf film ALPHAVILLE, which also starred Eddie Constantine. It had no pie fights, though, as I recall, but a mass execution in a Ballardian deserted swimming pool. Note: I am retaining the typo Edith Pilaf because it is too good not to use. Chuck Biryani anyone?).

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LEIGH EDMONDS

I hadn't received my customary email with the attached pdf of VIBRATOR so I thought you'd probably been spending your time in supermarkets or hospitals and had got behind. Then I went to look at Bill's site to see if he'd got around to putting up the latest IOTA and there, bless my socks, was the latest VIBRATOR too. You and I together on the same web page. Imagine it! Perhaps best not.

So I printed it off for my usual trip down to Melbourne on the train and, as usual, some good stuff and a good fannish read.

Andy Hooper does go on about the Sultana Tragedy, doesn't he? There's a lot more to this than we at first thought, more than I thought I ever needed to know about the American Civil War or riverboats. We keep telling everyone out there that everything they need to know is in fanzines and all they need is the index. Here is the proof. I thought that Andy has gone to a lot of work to research and write this piece and then I find, right at the end, that most of the work has been already done. Except, of course, for Andy's turning it into a fanzine article so that it will go into that great repository of all knowledge that is known as fanzine fandom.

As for your article proclaiming Rubber Soul the best Beatle album. No, not really, Rubber Soul was the warm up act for Revolver which is the best. Let me not go through the tracks and describe them (we all know them well I'm assuming) let me just make the assertion, which hardly needs defense, it's self evidently true. After that it was down hill to the overestimated Sgt Peppers and then off into the wilderness, with a few touches of brilliance on later albums.

More revelations about your childhood memories makes me feel even more deprived. My dad was not an engineer but he liked to tinker with things and, having grown up on a farm, knew how to turn his hand to most things mechanical - skills which he had had extended for him during the war. By the time I came along he was managing an agricultural business and had access to lots of things like tools, lathes, welding equipment, etc, etc. He taught me how to heat metal up really hot so you could bend it into decorative shapes and how to weld bits of metal together. Perhaps he imagined that I might take to that kind of

thing but, while being able to manipulate bits of hot metal was interesting, and being able to hit them really hard on an anvil had a certain attraction to a teenage boy, all that kind of thing was insignificant in comparison to Doc Smith's space battles or Asimov's Galactic Empire and the glories of Trantor. So I never followed up on what he taught me. I still wouldn't mind beating the crap out of bits of hot metal occasionally though.

Briefly, on your 'Wither Fandom'. This is something that has engaged my thinking (he says laughingly) in iOTA a bit. It's like debating angels dancing on pins, a deep philosophical and/or theological question but one without resolution. I note, however, that most of the article is about stf, not about fandom. Thus is demonstrated the close link between stf and fandom.

There's lots of lovely comment hook material in the letter column but I've just written a LoC to Bruce Gillespie telling him that some of his letter writers (mainly me) drone on too much and we should control ourselves, so I'm taking my own advice. Still, I cannot help but remark on Rob Jackson's description about how to turn a pdf of VIBRATOR into a genuine fanzine. I'm sorry Rob, I may be lacking in a sense of geometry or something, but I got confused. All I know is that there is a button on my printer to turn it on and there is an icon on my computer screen that says 'print' and when I push one and click on the other a copy of VIBRATOR appears. What more do I need to know?

Oh yes, and Jennifer's tale of Nick's experience - or lack of experience - of feminine hygiene products made me laugh out loud. Waking the woman sitting in the seat next to me on the train, who was not amused. (Not that I knew what Nick didn't. Another thing I learned today.)

I think I have a very vague understanding of the things that Steve Stiles is facing, and I was going to write about my week in hospital between the previous issue of VIBRATOR and this one in great detail, but Nick's week in hospital was so much more interesting and entertaining than mine so here is but the executive summary.

Watching tv and finding it hard to breathe. Going to bed and finding it even harder to breathe. Getting up and calling the ambulance, going to hospital, lying around in Emergency for a few hours while they figure out that I have a blood clot in my lungs. Start getting injected with aggressive blood thinning agents to dissolve the clot. (Later descriptions of my condition make it sound a lot more life threatening than the original description.) That was the exciting part. The unexciting part was lying in a bed in Intensive Care for the following four or five days while they gave me more of this blood thinning agent, hooked me up to the machine that goes 'ping' and stuck that little oxygen thingie that you see in the movies up my nose to give me oxygen (I've come to be a very great fan of oxygen) and being bored witless. After a day Robin Johnson came along with things for me to read and that's how I spent the rest of the week, until they thought that something had improved to the state that they let me come home. Breathing is still a bit of a challenge, but getting better, and I'm on these little pills they've given me for the rest of my

life. At the moment the best thing I can do is stuff like reading and commenting on fnz, thus this.

Three asides, if I may, two related to what Nic wrote. The other is that I can recommend having a PhD if you ever end up in hospital. Not that 'Dr' appears on the hospital records but it gives the staff who are not medical practitioners some pleasure to be dealing with someone who is even more highly qualified (on paper at least) than the people who boss them around all the time. So I got treated very well.

I identified completely when Nick wrote 'normal 5-10 somethings per something of something'. In fact, I went to visit the specialist who is looking after me yesterday and he started saying the same sort of thing. Being a bit more alert than when I was in hospital I asked him if he could explain what he had just said in English. He looked blank for a moment and then his explanation seemed to involve even more and longer Latin sounding words than he had used the first time.

The thing that startled me was Nic's summary that the bill for his experience will come to over \$200,000? I'm so amazed that I'm speechless. Nic doesn't tell us who will be paying that bill, I hope it's not him. Not that the cost of my hospital stay might have been any less, just that I don't have to pay it.

My total expenses for six days in hospital was a touch over \$600, and I get about a third of that back from Medicare when I feel up to standing in the approved queue for the mandated length of time. Perhaps I should explain that a little. Valma and I pay health insurance that comes to about \$3,000 a year and that means if we have to go to hospital we can afford to go to the private hospital rather than the public one. (In Ballarat the private and the public hospitals are over the road from each other and there is a walkway over the road linking them.) The advantage of going to the private (owned by the Catholic Church actually) one is that you end up getting a private room rather than being put in a four bed ward. The same doctors work in both hospitals and the treatment is almost exactly the same in both hospitals.

Now that I think about it, going to the private hospital cost me \$300 because that was the cost of being admitted through Emergency there (that would have cost nothing if I'd been referred by my local GP, but I didn't think of that at four in the morning). The other \$300 was the excess I have to pay before the health insurance company picks up the rest of the bill. This would have been worth it if I'd gone straight into one of those plush private rooms when I got there but I spent five nights in the ICU, in the same kind of conditions and getting the same lack of sleep that I would have got over at the public hospital.

Thinking about it again. This all started on Saturday night when Emergency at the public hospital is overpopulated and understaffed but all was quiet at the private hospital until I arrived. So perhaps things worked out fine after all.

Bugger. I ended up burbling on more than I said I would. I promise more self restraint next time.

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MILT STEVENS

In Vibrator #41, your description of your father caused me think of a number of things. You can always view your parents from a number of angles. The angle you choose at any given moment is largely the product of that moment. One major factor regarding my relationship with my father was that I was born fairly early in WWII. My father was in the Navy. In the Navy, they have a saying that you have to be there for the keel laying but not for the launching, so my father wasn't there when I was born. In fact, I didn't meet him until I was about three years old. I think that served to create a certain distance between us.

Our natures did the rest. It wasn't our differences that caused friction. It was our similarities. We could both be very hard headed when we thought we were right. Both of us tended to be remote. Once I would have said my father was remote. I've come to accept that I'm rather remote myself. I identify with the relationship between Nicholas and Andrei Bolkonski in *War and Peace*. That's a book that talks to me.

My father was an automobile fan and a perfectionist. He also read pulp magazines. His efforts to interest me in auto mechanics drove me away from it. I could never be as good an auto mechanic as he was. The pulp magazines were another matter. My father read all sorts of pulp magazines at the rate of about a boot of them every week. For some reason, I seized on the SF pulps and none of the others. You can guess where that led.

In my early days in fandom, my father referred to fans as 'My beatnik friends.' Then he joined the Horseless Carriage Club of Southern California. He became the editor of their clubzine and was elected to their board of directors. While doing all this, he began to understand what I had been doing in fandom all this time. In old car fandom, it's standard practice to wear the attire of the era of your car when you go out on a tour.

I was able to point out to my father 'When my friends dress up funny they don't go out on the street that way.'

He didn't make any more comments about beatnik friends.

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PHILIP TURNER

(EDITOR: Philip quite rightly chastises me for losing his loc on Issue 40, so let's start with that one)

Thanx for Vib 40, which arrived on June 14th in an envelope with a franking telling me that this is World Blood Donor Day. Not that I was expecting to participate. As a pensioner, my blood is much too old and tired for anyone else to want.

I also have a collection of Saints: 36 paperbacks and a couple of hardbacks assembled by a sustained campaign many years ago. Yes, Roger Moore made the character his own, but Ian Ogilvie did a creditable job in the role too.

There is an eye-catching word in the Sultana Tragedy saga: EMUCKFAU. It has the almost pig latinesque sound of a useful word to deploy in the hope that combustible people will explode on hearing it! May I quibble? The one in the 19th century was the **second** American Civil war, given that a lot of Americans wanted to Bremain when Judge Washington was running his rather inept Leave campaign in the 1770s. And steamers with the paddle at the back are stern-wheelers, according to all the Western films I've seen.

There's an occasional feature in the Daily Mail called Wordy Wise -- readers messing about with familiar words to create a new concept with a witty (with any luck) definition, e.g.: apartmint – one with the hole in the roof. Jim Linwood's "The Boston Stranger" would be an ideal contribution, assuming he can come up with a suitable tag line.

"Jumped, humped, born to suffer, made to undress in the wilderness." That would appear to be Taxi Nic's lot in life right now. I'm now in fear and trembling in anticipation of when he tells us about his troubles with lobsters.

And finally, here's a contribution to your Joke Wall:

"Knock, knock."

"Who's there?"

"Police."

"Police who?"

"Police move your car, it's parked on my foot."

[or if you're in that sort of mood: "Police fuck off and die."]

(EDITOR: And now for Issue 41)

I did do a LoC about issue 41, but when I arrived at the PC with the mag; nothing! Not a sign of the two small sheets of paper, which were inside it. When I went back downstairs, there they were on the floor. Your mag had spat them out in disgust. To find out why, read on . . .

Here I sit, composing a LoC about the new-look Vibrator 41, knowing it will never be used. Why? Because I am dead meat to the blessed Mr. Charnock. I can hear him going, "Knock, knock" and I know the response to my "Police who?" (talk about being the harbinger of your own doom) is not going to be the one about the car. Why? Because the Fab Four never impacted me. I have hundreds of LPs from the 60s, 70, and 80s but nowt by the Beatles. I am officially a non-person, as far as Mr. C. is concerned. So what am I doing rattling on beyond this point? I'm a writer. It's what we do.

Getting myself even deeper in to Mr. C.'s bad books, I can reveal that although I enjoyed his Elric stories, I was no great fan of the icon M. Moorcock's editorial policy, which is why I

let my sub to New Worlds lapse. Wither SF? It all started going wrong when people stopped putting spaceships in SF works; and that's from someone who managed it in only 50% of his 'obviously' SF novels. And put none at all in the stuff I categorize as 'life with a weird twist', which is probably well over the border of Mr. Moorcock's speculative fiction. Oh, dear. I was corrupted. Get over it. Stuff happens. About all I can offer in the way of mitigation is an appreciation of Stan Freberg's works, to which I was introduced by my father.

Well, as I sink toward compulsory obscurity, cast in to the outer darkness like a discarded fag packet, I'd tell you, "So long and thanks for all the fish!" But I'm a fan of the Packers rather than the Dolphins. [a spot of NFL humour for those who appreciate American Crunch] I'd say farewell to anyone who might have scanned my previous contributions to *Vibrator* and found some small amusement in them, but Mr. Charnock's mouse has probably clicked on the 'delete' button already to send this message into email o'blivion. (oh, no! not an Irish joke)

Over and out as I wonder what drives someone to be an arse doctor. There must be great satisfaction in the job if Taxi Nic was attended in his hour of need by a whole gang of them.

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ROBERT LICHTMAN

I love Steve's cover for *Vibrator* #41. The characters leaping from one cube to another have a beautifully unhinged feeling. You write that he says "it may be his last piece of fan-art this year. But I don't believe him and never did." Why? Has he said that before? I hope he has some more suitable cover art in his files and can send them in your direction. Even more I hope that his surgery scheduled for August 9th goes smoothly and is a complete success in removing all traces of that lung tumor.

Andy Hooper's long piece on the Sultana Tragedy made for fascinating reading – such a great level of detail! – but ultimately leaving me with nothing to add other than my appreciation for the history lesson.

My favorite Beatles album is and always has been *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart Club Band*, both for musical and personal sentimental reasons – the latter because it was the first Beatles album I bought on the same day as its release (June 2, 1967, at the beginning of the Summer of Love in San Francisco, where I lived at the time and until I left for Tennessee in 1971). It seems to me beautifully realized as a piece of musical artwork instead of merely a collection of tracks, what with the songs running into one another instead of having a little space and time between them. I have two close runners-up – one being yours, *Rubber Soul*, and the other being *Revolver*, which I find equally, as you put it, "a perfect *pop* album" and for pretty much the same reasons.

In your Father's Day piece, you make reference to yours having a metal turning lathe

which he taught you how to work. My father's entire career consisted entirely of running various heavy-duty lathes, the specific names of which I don't remember. When jobs in that field dried up in Cleveland, he moved the whole family in 1950 to Los Angeles. Jobs there were plentiful because of the presence of many shops catering to the "defense industry." So my father worked on machines that turned out parts for things like jet fighter planes and guided missiles. The tolerances for these were very tight, and one false move could render useless a very expensive piece of metal like titanium. He would occasionally get clearance to bring home a reject – bright shiny objects of mysterious shapes – which would be among my brother's and my playthings when we were very young.

As for memories of him, they are mostly negative. He was not a kind person, and was quick to anger and judge. These days my Father's Day activities consist of sending e-mails to each of my four sons, all of whom are now fathers themselves, and await replies – some of which are phone calls and all the more valued because of the voice contact.

I read Wells's *Things To Come* a very, very long time ago, and no longer remember "its complex development of militarism" or much of anything else about it – except that like the other Wells work I read (the usual two) it was well-written. But I do remember that the first time I saw the movie I was struck with how shallow it was compared to the book. This is not to say I didn't enjoy it.

You write that "fanzines...are emulations, objects produced in the form of the media you are trying to emulate. If you google fanzines these days the first entries will always be for music fanzines. They took exactly the form that sf fanzines took because they too emulated the magazines that music fans read." The first entry I got was a dictionary definition: "a magazine, usually produced by amateurs, for fans of a particular performer, group, or form of entertainment." Science fiction be one of those forms. The next result Google provides is the Wikipedia article on the subject: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanzine>

In its first paragraph it makes clear the origin of the word: "The term was coined in an October 1940 science fiction fanzine by Russ Chauvenet and first popularized within science fiction fandom, and from there it was adopted by other communities." Following that there's an extensive list of genres that have fanzines. Science fiction (and its subcategory media) is first, followed by comics and horror films, and then various musical categories. If you read the article, you'll see that many of these genre fanzines were pioneered by science fiction fans. (I'm thinking Ted White and Dick Lupoff for comics, Paul Williams and Greg Shaw for music.) And of course they took the zine-producing skills they developed in science fiction fandom to their new ventures in other genres.

Yes, fanzines are emulations – but they are also magazines, and if they resemble other magazines (of the professional kind)...so what?

You conclude by writing that "Other people have written better articles about the origins of fanzines and their importance in the cultural history of our civilization. I urge you to seek them out." I would say that the Wikipedia article is one of those: very detailed and with a

list of references at the end that one can click on and be taken to many other places with juicy information and views by many writers.

Of Dave Cockfield's various reasons for enjoying books, the most evocative for me is his "when I pick up a book it is tactile, often looks good, and smells beautiful, I get a warm nostalgic glow just thinking about the pleasure it gave me in the past." Some of the books in my library aren't the original ones that I read and enjoyed, because of the way I moved from San Francisco to Tennessee. Originally my then-wife and I had thought we would make the road trip in our converted mail truck, check out whether the scene appealed to us, and then go back to retrieve what we wanted from our stuff, which we had stored in a rental garage and left the key with the couple who took over our house. In preparation for this, I'd already sold off a lot of my books (and records, but that's another story) to various rare book dealers in the Bay Area – some of them, such as for instance a first edition of Ginsberg's *Howl* for decent money – and had only stored a small quantity of books I couldn't bear to part with. When we got to Tennessee, we ended up staying and sent for various things completely from memory. Some of those things were books, but mostly not. So upon returning to California in 1980 with only a handful of books, it began gradually to niggle at me that I didn't have and missed some of the books I used to have. Over the years I've reacquired many of them, as much as possible in the same edition I originally owned and often at a premium but I didn't care. So I can, for instance, pick up my copy of Fredric Brown's *What Mad Universe* and/or *Martians Go Home* and feel that "warm nostalgic glow" that Dave does with his books.

Reading over the part of my letter in #40 that David Redd refers to, about buying books at full price, I see I left out a key word when I wrote, "On more than a few occasions, I have rushed to buy a very desirable book to me at full price, or at least Amazon's best price, only **later** to encounter a stack of that title in one of the local bookstores that carries remainders at a much reduced price – so reduced at times that I nearly cry at my own profligacy and haste." This applies, of course, only to books produced by standard publishers that are produced in reasonably sized editions. An example would be *Something Good for a Change* by Wavy Gravy. I bought it new in 1992 and still haven't read most of it. The impetus here was that I bought it when he was giving a reading at Moe's in Berkeley, so my copy is autographed. More typically, the books I buy new at full price are very limited editions, sometimes as few as fifteen copies, and those I never expect to see remaindered – and with just a little looking I can see that many have already proven to be very good investments. But that resale-later-for-big-profits aspect of the big picture is not what led me to buy those books in the first place.

Jennifer Farey's letter about having to give Nic a tutorial in how to use a maxi-pad scooped his column in this issue. I laughed out loud. But the column was interesting for its detail about his treatment during and after, and it was good to read that he got out of the hospital and back to work in time to catch a very lucrative period. But it was this sentence that also had me rolling in the virtual aisles: "Local fan friend visitors included Jacq

Monahan, who, concerned that I might not be getting enough sleep, brought a copy of *SF Commentary*.”

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TALES OF A LAS VEGAS TAXI DRIVER

By Nic Farey

MEMORY, CHIPPED

I remember reading some article several years ago, reporting a study that people who habitually do puzzles, crosswords and such are less likely to end up with Alzheimers, dementia and that. It seems a bit Department of the Blindingly Fucking Obvious in that exercising any of your parts regularly ought to keep them in decent order and not subject to atrophy, though I'm not exactly sure how that works for Grah's liver, or mine come to that.

In the mid 1980s I ended up having back surgery (after just about everything else had been tried) for what turned out to be a couple of degenerate discs (insert your own rambling aside about Tom Lehrer records, or whatever), and they told me I'd probably be good for about 5 years, after which I'd be skittering around in hunched-over cripple mode again. In fact, I had 7 or 8 pain-free years before it all started acting up again. When I got laid off from the cushy desk job (late '90s, now) and six months later embarked on what would be a longish spate of being a horny-handed son of toil, my first thought at the time was that this would probably kill me, ooh me poor back, now expected to haul around quantities of lumber ect ect. DofBFO with hindsight decreed that six months or so in I'd just about turned into the tuff wiry fucker that I'm now mostly not, with less aggro from my dodgy back than I'd ever had.

There's a reason for that tangential paragraph, which will no doubt come back to me in a minute, as I'm not untypically hung over as fuck from the depredations of last night's Winston/ESI bash.

Oh yes, memory, that was it.

Every trade has its "knowledge", not all of which might take three years on a moped to learn. I like to think that I was a decent and creative analyst/programmer on those chunky IBM midrange boxes, and later an equally skilled and creative carpenter. Department of Blowing Your Own Horn issues an amazed press release that I'd gone from someone who you'd hardly trust to change a light bulb to a quite different bloke who could happily design and build your entire house.

"Get to the fuckin point", quips the frustrated and equally drunk and/or hung over multiple award-winning editor of this glorious fecal-point fanzine.

That's as if I could remember the point, but that's really the point innit?

Career path: a bit overweight (215 pounds or so, whatever that is in French money) sitting behind a series of desks, foul-mouthed, only a couple of tattoos, all covered by a short-sleeved shirt, because decorum. Confident, knows what he's about; then six months or more loafing, cooks a lot, fails to find work until me mate Chewy suggests I could go laboring for his boss, building houses; laborer, then willing learner of carpentry, then skilled man, dropped 30 pounds or so in not-French money, acquires more tattoos, learns the correct usage of the word "motherfucker" in all types of social situations, is now a wiry and confident worker with an English grammar school knowledge of geometry and that which is head and shoulders and half a torso above anything the American system provides. Confident, learns what it's about. This helps a lot in jail, by the way, in that I'm not a part of any group, but generally respected, since pretty much everyone (including the screws) considered that I'd been unduly fucked over by the insane State Trooper, and yet refused to be bitter and angry, just getting on with doing my time. I suppose it didn't hurt that I *looked* like someone you really wouldn't want to piss off, but always acted, in jail parlance, as a "grown man", that's to say you behave right and show respect and deference to the other blokes you're locked in with.

"This is supposed to be a fuckin TAXI column!", screams the impatient, occasionally erudite and Jim Burns-baiting editor into his Vodka-top. "I want stories of Gay Sex, so I'll get a rare loc from the reader (J, Unc)!"

Almost there, Grah, almost there.

And now I'm going to say "TAXI". I've always had this daft work ethic that whatever I end up doing, whether it's wrangling software, or 2x6 lumber, steel studs, shovelling shit or driving a TAXI, I want to be good at it. I don't want to settle for mere competence, it's a compulsion if you like, but I have to be fuckin *good*.

As noted somewhere above, there's a "knowledge" to driving a cab in Vegas. A lot of it is the mundane aspects of learning the stands and the traffic patterns on the various properties, much more is about knowing what's going on in town, where the good shows and restaurants are, and since July 1st your closest marijuana store. You learn your way around, and since the major streets run north-south and east-west it's not fuckin rocket science. We go a lot by "major cross streets" (where we live eg would be Desert Inn and Nellis), and so you learn, and you remember.

Remembering never used to be a strong point, in the past I've been quite dreadful at simply recalling the names of people I was just introduced to a minute ago, and even sometimes those I've known for years, like Ye Editor Cliven Grimshaw. The skill at cabbing, however, has reordered this (to the point that I can barely recall the actual dimensions of a 2x10 piece of lumber, which is an utter lie since of course I do, but I probably couldn't

program anything in RPG/400 now), but I know and remember the names of my work colleagues, the valets and security guys at the properties I often stage at, and most importantly which ones are cunts and which ones aren't.

But there are odd and really inexplicable gaps in long-term memory. A few weeks ago I must have spent half a day of incredible frustration at my inability to recall the actual name of the legendary lead singer of Big Brother and the Holding Company, even though I could see in my mind the iconic photographs of her, and hear in my mind her singing voice, and remember that she was my ex-girlfriend Louise's favorite singer. Perhaps more trivially, but also perhaps more worryingly, I spent another couple of hours trying to remember what those water-dispensing red things on the side of the road were actually called. (Fire hydrants.) At the same time, while I'm staging at the Luxor North valet, I greet every valet and security guard by name, and bullshit like a champion with every one of them. I did promise JR, one of the (armed) security blokes, that I'd give him a mention, since he's a TMI kind of guy, fond of describing the alleged river of sweat running down his back and into his arse cheeks on a hot day. It may not surprise the reader (Unc, J) to learn that, given my recent tribulations, many people seem compelled to include arse as a topic of conversation when in my presence, though having been mates with Gay Chris for a while, it's a played-out topic.

Rambling hung-over, ok, drunk again aside #203: I await with glee the correctness brigade giving it some major excoriation over me referring to the bloke as "Gay Chris". It's a fuckin adjective people, nothing more or less; it identifies "Gay Chris" as a different person from "Fat Chris", "Black Cris" (yes, that's a different spelin, and is accurate, since in his case 'Cris' is short for 'Crispin') and any other collection of similarly named people. Ferfucksake, grow up the lot of you. Who gets to decide that an adjective is suddenly pejorative? </end rant>

"TAXI stuff now?" sobs Graham "Fred Smith" Charnock into his glued-up laptop with the unworking mic.

It's monsoon season here in the meadows, which means we get most of our rain, flash floods, and accidents galore. The standard complaint is that, despite it happening every year, no-one knows how to drive in the rain (slow down, increase following distance, how fuckin hard is that?), but my contention has always been that half of the fuckers don't know how to drive in the sunshine either. Then again, I'm a professional. So Supervisor Joe (thus distinguished from other drivers named Joe, see adjectival rant above) gets on the radio to remind the assorted lowlives behind the wheels of the company's free pickles that they ought to be doing just that. Ten minutes later, he's back on, having been involved in a water-related accident, not his fault since some clueless wankbucket rear-ended him in a cab line. This is on a rain day, when inexplicably we only have two road supervisors out there, so the *other* one has to attend Joe's incident (procedure, TA reports, all that jazz), while not even five minutes later another driver gets it up the arse in the Wynn tunnel (awkward), and there's a mad scramble to get it all covered. I'm now very fond of reminding

Israeli Supervisor Joe (accurate adjectives, not pejorative) that he really shouldn't be warning of wet roads, because we see what happens. He is also a nice bloke, and either larfs an eye-rolling larf or just encourages me to fuck off. It's all good.

In other utterly non-taxi arse news, our dog Lulu had one of her occasional bouts of constipation this last week, signalled as always by a modest hanging dingleberry, an unwillingness to "go outside" and her locating herself in her "shame spot" which is underneath the dining table rather than her usual relaxed positions of dog bed or couch. This episode went on a bit longer than usual (4-5 days rather than 2-3), and we were considering the recommended merits of baby laxative, with a worry by Jen that Lulu might pebble-dash the place while we're asleep. Lulu will typically do her business when I get up in the morning and when I get home from work. We had to almost drag her out the door for those few days, and she shamefully failed to crank out any turds and nipped back in the place as soon as possible. We were a bit more worried than normal, given that we had this week's Winston/ESI bash coming up, but on Tuesday, calloo, callay, I got home from work, dragged her out by the scruff and lo and behold glistening poo emerged from the orifice and with a skip and a jump she was back to her usual self.

Thus I have acquired a new epithet from Famous Author(TM) J L Farey. While still being "honey-but" (arse, *passim*) I am now the Dog Arse Whisperer.

It's a proud and lonely thing, if only I could remember...

Thanks and stuff. To reiterate, I was touched by Dave Cockfield's unsolicited gift of a brand spanking new plastic five pound note, and of course, Dave, in gratitude I promise not to reveal the details of your recent transgender operation nor publish any of the rather graphic photos you sent me of the various surgical techniques. Chuck Connor has not transitioned as far as I know but was also kind enough to send me a pile of grunge, garage and punk vinyl which has helped me while away the hours while I type this rubbish. I may well review some of the material in future issues.

Pat Charnock (or Fat Pat has we now know her) continues to increase her BMI after having some surplus flesh removed surgically (for the full story see the next issue of Raucous Caucus) and continues to earn my undying gratitude for proof-reading Vibrator and also checking the pagination upon publication.

As usual I am Graham Charnock: graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk

Any Patrick O'Brien readers out there? I recently bought his The Golden Ocean as background research for something I was thinking of writing about George Anson's round the world voyage, but couldn't get on with his incessant blarneyisms.