



## VIBRATOR 2.0.7

THIS ISSUE CONTAINS: MY BIG TOE, SAN FRANCISCO, LONCON 3, BARBECUE, SHADES OF GREY, HUGO VOTING, BIG VAST WOBBLING TITTIES (NOT!)

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No sooner is one issue of Vibrator put to bed than another lurches zombie-like out of the primeval swamp wherein it was engendered, to take the place of its foul progenitor, only recently sent forth to stumble through the mire of response and non-response and supreme indifference. Hello Randy. Hello Mr Hooper. Plus ca change le meme chose. No, I don't know what it means, Audrey. It's French. Don't expect me to explain the French to anyone. They ride bicycles and sell onions. The only good thing about them seems to be that they invented garlic. That's enough for me. I gather some of them are thinking of putting on a Worldcon in Paris in 2016 (or are they? Who knows?); that is how weird they are. Even more weird, some Britons are involved in the bid. It's all too much for me, mes amis. If you are receiving this issue you probably know what you have to do to receive the next one. Okay, probably nothing, because mostly this goes out to a group of close friends. But don't none of you get complacent. The fabled Sword of Greg can fall anytime, anyplace.

Remember to stay in touch with me at [graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk). Please send review copies and fanzines for trade to 45 Kimberley Gardens, London N4 1LD

This issue is dated August 2014. Thanks as always go to Pat Charnock for proofreading and correcting my errant mamaries

### NURSE, THE SCREENS.

Some time ago I woke up one morning singing the blues. And I had good reason to. My big toe throbbed painfully to the degree that I found myself unable to walk. I thought initially I might have injured myself while drunk and had forgotten, but since at the time I had not been drinking this didn't seem feasible. Also there was no sign of bruising, or indeed of any inflammation at all associated with an infection. I don't know why I didn't write this up in Vibrator at the time since the fanzine seems eminently suited for reported topical health scares.

Now it has happened again. Only this time it's in my knee (same leg). A pain as if I had struck it, but I have no memory of doing so and there is no bruise or inflammation. Pat insists I should see a doctor but as usual I am sceptical; they will find no simple diagnostic solution for it because there are no external symptoms. Which means they will only send me for another round of blood tests, by which time it will likely already have disappeared. My own self-diagnosis tends towards some form of arthritis or rather subdued gout, perhaps a side effect of the regime of drugs I am currently on. Since I started on a combination of drugs for my diabetes and blood pressure I have become aware of minor twinges of joint pain. I don't really want to go to the doctor only for them to put me on even more drugs with even more possibility of side effects. So I will suffer in silence, apart from moaning about it here.

### SAN FRANCISCO

It occurs to me I have never written here about my love affair with San Francisco. That is sadly something which needs correcting, and possibly at some length. Bear with me. The Charnox, en familie, first took a trip to San Francisco in 2008. We stayed at the Ramada Inn on Market Street, which only a few years earlier had been the venue for a Corflu, an institution I am ashamed to say we barely knew about at the time.

We had made the acquaintance of a lot of California fans through Harry Bell's ITB list and were quite keen to visit them and see them in the flesh. We'd hired a car but didn't really need it to see Bruce Townley who met us at our hotel. My kids spotted him first, and knew enough about what draws fans to fans to recognize him from a distance. "That's him, isn't it?" said Dan of the approaching shambolic figure. It was indeed.

Bruce was a great host but seemed to fall out with me all too often on matters which he considered crucial but which I regarded as trivial. I didn't read sf. Bruce did. I went to a bookshop he recommended and even bought a book, but apparently didn't wax lyrical enough about the experience to satisfy him. I preferred not to walk back through the rain after catching a bus from an obscure station. Bruce did. Eventually this escalated into a moment when Bruce invited us back to his apartment. It was okay. We had a good time looking at his collection of tiki mugs. Then when we left, I remarked that there was an odour of cat's piss in the lobby of his building. Bruce was originally insouciant. But later he sent me a vitriolic email accusing me of traducing his friendship, on the basis that I just might have smelt something familiarity had made him unaware of. I could only laugh. Unfortunately it has coloured our relationship ever since. Now he will not even Friend me on Facebook and considers me a loose cannon (whatever that is). Maybe it means someone who is passionate to defend his beliefs to perhaps an excessively emotional degree. But I'm quite happy with that. Later, when I passed through San Francisco before going on to Sunnyvale he took me to a bar/restaurant called Lefty O'Douls, but when I got emotional on the pavement outside my hotel (jet-lagged) he refused to hug me.

We had both a good experience visiting Robert Lichtman and Carol Carr, without being made uncomfortable by someone questioning our basic beliefs. And when, more recently, we met up on the Portland trip, with Claire Brialey, Mark Plummer, and the Charnox kids at the Elks Club, Bruce actually offered to hug me. I can't explain it.

More happy memories of time spent in San Francisco relate to Robert Lichtman and Carol Carr. Whom we first met took us for a lovely day out at a Sonoma vineyard. I felt an immediate sense of rapport, which I guess is what some levels of fannish acceptance give you. Later we managed to meet in again in Sonoma at a charming restaurant, despite an annoying car failure en route.

Our most recent visit to San Francisco after Corflu in Portland. We went accompanied by James and Shell and a dynamite bundle called Eloise (my granddaughter). Our favorite haunt, the Boheme Hotel in North Beach was booked up so we hung out on Fisherman's Wharf instead in a corporate Sheraton. Having Offspring in tow gave us an excuse to do all the touristy things, like visit Alcatraz. Pat told Bruce she wanted to visit something called the Columbarium, which was something I'd never come across before, a necropolis where memories and relics of the departed were stored. I'd bought a cheap mobile phone a few days earlier and had used it to take quite a few photos. On my way to the Columbarium I somehow managed to lose it, and also lose all those photographic memories., which was a bummer.

A random San Francisco memory: rain. Something I think, along with fog, the city is not exactly a stranger to. Rain on Market Street, coming out at Embarcadero from SFA airport. Lots of rain. Feeling alone a long way from home, trying to find respite on my way to the Mark Twain Hotel. Buying a bottle of Vodka from a corner store and immediately being greeted by a wino who thought he had known me for years and put his arms around me in a friendly embrace. Checking my pockets afterwards. Finding the lobby of a hotel out of the rain – a downtown Hilton with people in smart suits moving through the lobby where I felt distinctly soaked and downtrodden. The Mark Twain Hotel - small, no fun. A restless sleep woken early in the morning by utility vehicles moving in the streets outside. You pay for what you get. San Francisco is not always fun, but when it is less than fun it is better than lots of cities which are no fun at all. I've often said if I ever won the lottery I'd move there in a flash.

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## FIRST OFF THE MARK WITH A LOC THIS MONTH IS EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE JOLLY SANTA CLAUS, TARAL WAYNE

It took weeks to get over the crushing blow that you thought my carefully hashed-together Vibrator logos would get you in trouble with stuff, law-making types at the post-office, but I have finally regained my will to live. Indeed, I almost believe I could write another loc.

Much of Vibrator is a little hard for the non-British fan to follow, naturally. From this side of the Atlantic, it is a little hard to smell your feet and distinguish between the aromatic qualities of different personalities. But at least I now understand why so many people refer to British fandom as consisting mainly of pedophiles. Or is that podophiles? My Latin was never very good.

I remember my first bicycle just as though it were 50 years ago. That is, dimly. It was the early 1960s before my parents bought me a brand new red and white, CCM bicycle. CCM was Canadian-made, the company the largest manufacturer of bikes in the country. It dated to before the turn-of-the-century, and within my limited, eleven-year-old knowledge, there were no other bikes. I had heard about an exotic type called Schwinn, but these were apparently only figments of the imagination of a Buffalo, USA, TV station that we received television from. I had never seen one. (But a sterling example can be seen in *PeeWee's Big Adventure*, so they are apparently real.) I went many places with that bike – even after once the original paint it became badly chipped I spray painted it gold – and was way behind fashion in exchanging it for a ten-speed with dropped handlebars. Imagine my surprise when I discovered there were *English* bicycles! But I still remember the sense of wonder I felt when I ran my fingers lightly over an engraved logo on a friend's bike ... *Raleigh*. It seemed just as wrong as if it had been named *Seymour* or *Francine*. But it got worse as I grew older. Even the French made bikes (*Peugeot*). Today, if I cared enough to look, I'd probably discover that the Spanish, Italians and even – dare I say it – the Japanese made them. What has the world come to?

I don't think I ever really believed there was a God. People talked about him all the time in the 1950s, but where was the evidence? Had I ever seen him on TV or in a comic book? Oh, well, maybe in comic books – I think I had a *Classics Illustrated* of the Life of Jesus once. But when I learned that artists *drew* comic book, just like I drew tanks and jet planes, I knew they couldn't be trusted. TV, though, was infallible. One day I lost one of my plastic toy soldiers, though, and was desperate enough to even try prayer. It seemed pretty weird to talk to someone I couldn't see and didn't answer back, but sure enough, *an idea popped into my head!* I had yet to look in the dirt where the flowers grew in front of the house! I ran out to look, and there it was! God had come through. Unfortunately, when I was a little older, I tried again. I had bought a box of bubble-gum for the cards, and hoped for a complete set. I made a sincere vow that if I found all the cards I needed before I unwrapped the last pack, I'd do something good, like always do my homework or give up masturbation.

And that rat, God, let me down. I've been a wanker ever since.

Of course, Canada was a lot more British in those days. We actually stood up when they played God Save the Queen at the start of every school day and every movie. Even hockey games, though what the carnage and bloodshed that ensued had to do with British sovereignty or God, I have no idea. Then again, maybe bloodshed and carnage is a pretty good way to describe the history of British monarchs and the Church.

I could never bring myself to actually sing along, and would stand there, my mouth clamped shut. When I got older, I refused to stand at all, and was the only one who was still in his seat when the opening bars of the anthem began to blare through the theater speakers. I may have only been a little ahead of my time. We've mostly gotten rid of that rubbish, today. We have a flag of our own, not the Red Ensign borrowed from the British Atlantic Fleet, and even self-serving national song about ourselves! "Glorious and free." "We stand on guard for thee," my ass. These days, the only vestige I see of the queen is on the coins in my pocket, and on low denomination postage stamps. All feeling that the British monarchy has just about faded away ... and that's *in England*. In Canada, it's just about invisible. Ask Lee who waits tables at the Korean kimchee place, or Singe at the corner grocery, or Mehmet at the

dollar store “who is Queen of Canada,” and they’ll look at you as though you were demented. The Monarchy in Canada is kept alive mainly by the Conservative Party, and our Primordial Minister, who seem incapable of turning in their 1952 calendar for something fresher.

Taral Wayne can be found at [Taral@bell.net](mailto:Taral@bell.net)

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**JIM LINWOOD, OBVIOUSLY STUNNED AT MY REFUSAL TO INCLUDE HIM AS A WAHF IN THE LAST ISSUE HAS ACTUALLY COME UP WITH A REAL LOC THIS TIME**

Many thanks for another great issue of *Vibrator Weekly*.

I hope that your lack of interest in pre-70’s fandom is not like Lillian Edwards’ belief that fan history only began when she entered fandom. *Relapse* is one of my favourite fanzines and I hope to see more issues in the future.

The early 60s were my most active years in fandom. Through the BSFA I met fellow like-minded teenagers Alan Rispin, Dave Hale, Brian Jordan and Chris Miller (co-founder of the Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group). Together we formed the Cult Type Thing (CTT) which involved writing long letters to each other using carbon paper in those pre-photocopier days. The content of the letters wasn’t goshwow Sci-Fi stuff but humorous, iconoclastic text much like the Yahoo group InTheBar on a good day. They were really personal fanzines covering our weekly activities including the girls we’d met. We wrote to each other at least once a week with typed or hand-written letters of at least 5 pages – Chris holds the record with one of 19 pages long. The CTT folded when 5a Kingdon Road in West Hampstead became the youngfan slan shack. I moved in when Bruce Burn was thrown out by Gwen the landlady for reasons best left unmentioned. I joined Alan, his girlfriend, Diane, and Dick Ellingsworth. The other CTT members dropped in occasionally and Mike Moorcock was a regular visitor. Mike was my first fannish friend and we’d corresponded when we were schoolboys. Mike’s pro-writing and editorship of *New Worlds* were his day job which we didn’t discuss; instead Mike, assisted by Dick and I, formed the rock group the Bellyflops which performed in the Kingdon Road kitchen. After I left London Mike expanded the group to include, among others, Charles Platt and Lang Jones.

I’m still occasionally in touch with Alan, Brian, Dave and Chris and have often thought of reviving the CCT as an internet forum but, alas, it would be too much like an episode of *Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads*. . .

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

*(EDITOR: I played with a later incarnation of the Bellyflops, Jim, which met at Charles Platt’s Portobello Road flat. Also present was Pete Taylor, Mike Harrison, Diane Lambert and a new kitten Charles had adopted. We laid down several tracks on my tape recorder which included a rollicking version of Mike singing Be Bop a Lula, and a rambling instrumental jam which ended up with Charles exhorting the kitten to ‘stop biting all the wires’. I have the tape somewhere and will consider making copies if there is sufficient interest backed up with venture capital.)*

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THIS MONTH’S ARCHIVE FAN PHOTO SHOWS JIM LINWOOD (NICE QUIFF, JIM), MIKE MOORCOCK, AND SANDRA HALL ENJOYING SOME WEED ON THE STEPS OF ST MARTINS IN THE FIELDS WHILST WATCHING A CND RALLY. MIKE IS EXPLAINING TO JIM THAT YOU REALLY DON’T HAVE TO WEAR SO MANY LAPEL BADGES TO ASSERT YOUR IDENTITY. SANDRA IS SILENTLY WILLING MIKE TO PASS OVER THAT DOOBIE. YES THAT IS ETHEL LINDSAY IN THE BACKGROUND



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**PAUL SKELTON IS UP NEXT. AT THIS RATE I WON'T HAVE TO WRITE ANY MORE OF THE NEXT ISSUE**

I guess, on the basis that you showed me yours, I should show you mine. Strictly between the two of us of course.

*(Ed. Paul provided an exquisite colour photo of his vast extensive grounds at this point, but I don't do colour, any more than I do photos of extensive grounds which make me jealous.)*

As you can see it is, mostly shrubs, bushes and ferns, with just a few ground-cover flowers...lots of evergreens...strictly low-maintenance. The tall stuff on the left is three young lilacs, with Himalayan Honeysuckle (*leycesteria formosa*, as identified for Cas on Facebook by that famous horticulturalist Roy Kettle) growing up through it. You can just make out Cas' naff plastic heron to the left of the pond whilst the naff pot duck is just visible on the ponds right behind the dying grasses. The naff stone Westie is hiding under the bushes just to the left of the hydrangea. All the naff meercats are hidden behind the green garden shed and the naff memorial gnomes are thankfully also invisible. The strange black-topped white tower is a free-standing parasol with its winter cover still on.

Even what little maintenance it needs is done for us by a man who comes round in the high-season once a fortnight to do whatever is required, for a tenner. Well, it used to be once a fortnight, but he switched it to 'every four weeks', and last time he came he said we'd only got three weeds, left without charging us and said he'd be back in six weeks time. That is definitely low-maintenance.

The only bit of gardening I actually have to do is mow the lawn, which I had done just before I took the photo. Well, two photos actually, which I stitched together into the panorama above. OK, even that's not quite true as just a few weeks ago I also hoovered part of the lawn...as you do.

Well, as you do if Mike Meara has been round and sawed up many of the logs you've collected for him, not this time using his now-broken electric reciprocating saw (which left neat piles of fine sawdust on the path down by the side of the workbench) but this time using his mains-powered chainsaw which hurls huge swathes of woodchips out onto the lawn. Still, that nice Mr. Dyson's whirlwind vortexes (vortices?) came up trumps.

*(ED. Paul includes lots of photos here, without realizing they are useless to me . I think they are supposed to show his problem with slugs.)*

I could of course go to the expense of a web-cam and a motion sensor, though come to think of it I suspect a slug wouldn't trigger one anyway. The low-tech solution of course would be to leave a saucer of dog food on the carpet overnight, then, when I get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, as I invariably do, detour downstairs and nab the bugger. The downside of this of course being that, whilst I have on occasion been known to get out of bed and head for the bathroom without actually waking up (which invariably has nasty consequences whether done

in Stockport or Toronto, only the latter of which involved Tim Kirk artwork) I usually only wake up sufficiently to perform on autopilot and easily go back to sleep afterwards. Switching on lights and detouring downstairs and hopefully performing complicated slug-capturing manoeuvres (possibly whilst screaming "NOT SNIGGERING NOW, ARE YOU!", would definitely make going back to sleep afterwards contra-indicated.

So what we have to ask ourselves is, "How badly do I hate a sniggering slug?" Watch this space...but only if you are mentally challenged.

None of which foregoing has anything whatsoever to do with *Vibrators 2.0.5&6*, but just shows what utter bollocks you're likely to get back when you bombard me with frequent fanzines, as Andy Hooper found out to his cost.

So perhaps it's time I turned my attention to your esteemed organ, the journal of contumacious curmudgeoncy. Or should that be curmudgeonly contumely? At least that way around WORD doesn't complain about me inventing 'curmudgeoncy'.

I enjoyed the archived photos, though assume you are being particularly disingenuous in pretending not to recognise Gray Boak, Ian Maule and Rob Jackson...or were you just too upset at having remembered Richard McMahon? I can't remember now why he should still get on your tits after all this time nor can I, from what little I ever had to do with him, imagine why he should have gotten on them back in the day. Suffice to say that I hadn't remembered him and will doubtless, after he stops rippling *Vibrator's* waters, swiftly forget him again.

I also liked D. West's 'diabetes' cartoon. Cas' dad developed diabetes. He died. Mind you, he was seventy-nine at the time.

Honey Walls? Innuendo? I guess I must just be thick.

I don't need Bath Salts, I already have high blood pressure. Well, I don't at the moment, but I suppose I would have if I stopped taking the tablets...which reminds me of reading the leaflets that come with the various medications I take. One of the FAQs they all answer is invariably "What happens if I forget to take a dose of my tablets?" They never reply "Don't worry about it. Paul Skelton forgets almost as often as he remembers, and he's still alive."

Now, go and sit on the naughty chair. 'Drinking & Driving' is **not** synonymous with 'Drunk Driving'. I don't have a pub lunch that often, but whenever I do I will drink & drive. However, as long as I restrict myself to no more than 1½ pints I figure to remain within the legal limit (particularly as I know of no pubs that stock on hand-pump the sort of beer that has been known to feature occasionally in some of Claire Brialey's fanwriting) and to have virtually no more likelihood of veering out of control into a passing massed choir of singing nuns than if I'd stayed at home. What **really annoys me** (writes 'outraged of Stockport') are the mentally-challenged knobheads who argue that, because some stupid people ignore the existing legal alcohol limits, we should reduce them further. As to 'Single Handed Sailing', that's a definite non-starter. I don't think anyone with only one hand should be sailing in the first place. I mean, how the fuck can they tie the various knots?

As to *Flowers for Algernon*, I can only stand on the sidelines muttering "Hear, Hear", and sounding like some stupid plonker in parliament. Excellent story, excellent film.

Thoroughly enjoyed your report of the first Corflu 32 committee meeting, though suspect you might have been exaggerating somewhat regarding the corpulence of the Banana Bunch. Is this some form of in-joke that sails right over the heads of we \*Bloody Provincials\* (copyright Bill Temple I believe)? Now I may stand to be corrected when they arrive at your place for your post-Loncon bash (assuming they are attending same), when everyone else has to leave the room so that they can enter, but if they look then much as I remember them I shall be reporting you to the 'Pork Pie' police.

Unlike Ian Williams' cats the only fly Bestie ever killed was one he accidentally trod on whilst it was stupidly crawling across the carpet (yes, indeed that selfsame green carpet that featured on page two...how's that for continuity?). He does chase them when they sometimes somnolently zoom slowly (can you zoom slowly?) past him down near the carpet, but he never catches them. He does though get very excited when he sees me grab an aerosol of Raid, and bounces about, wanting to be in on 'The Kill'. This actually displays a degree of intelligence because he never gets excited seeing me with an aerosol of toilet deodorant, so can obviously differentiate between the two. Well, I can differentiate between them, and I am intelligent, reputedly. Of course it does help that we keep one on the shelf at the top of the cellar-steps whilst the other is always in the bathroom. If Cas ever swaps them around I'm in deep trouble, though I suspect the flies will be laughing. Well, it beats sniggering. One wonders as to what evolutionary influence led to this ability of a dog to differentiate between different aerosol cans.

I can't really comment on your piece on Fannish Infidelities, never having been such an Infidel. Nor will I, given that Cas and I have cycled all over the known universe, see your 'Biking Memories' and raise you. I shall instead restrict my response to my main 'non-biking' memory. Both me and my best friend were promised bikes by our respective parents for passing our 11-plus. He didn't in fact pass, but he still got the bike. I can see it now, black and yellow, with drop handlebars and derailleur gears. I though did in fact pass...but never got the bike. Times, apparently, were hard. I of course was just a typical selfish kid who'd been gypped on a promise, with never a thought for how devastated my parents were that they'd been unable to deliver on it. Some months later my father wheeled home a sit-up-and-beg dingy brown monstrosity with calliper brakes that looked like some hapless First-World-War soldier had used it to cycle home from the Somme. My dad was going to use this, plus a lot of hard work, as the basis for 'My Bike'. Over my dead fucking body! I had thirty-bob with which I purchased a spare frame and some wheels from the brother of another friend. This was actually my first mistake because the bike my dad brought home was a Dawes, a quality machine, whereas the frame I bought was a fairly crap Raleigh. It was though, bright red, which when you are eleven is very important.

Did you really intend 'R-LAURRAINE TUTIHASI HAS REPLIED TO VIBRATOR 2.0.4' to come across with the same tone as used to be used with, 'LADIES & GENTLEMEN, ELVIS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING'?

Hymns don't bother me. I ignore them. I also ignore any song that descends to including the words 'God' or 'Lord', even when sung by artists whose work I normally appreciate greatly. The only two exceptions to this are Judy Collins' version of *Amazing Grace*, which is just so superb it overrides my sensibilities, and Linda Ronstadt's *Life Is Like a Mountain Railway* where the lyrics are just so risible that even an atheist like me can't take offense. Cas insisted on reading this before I mailed it, in case I'd made a complete hash of something and in this context pointed out that I'd forgotten John R. Butler's *The Hand of the Almighty*, with its superb refrain of "God will fuck you up. He'll really fuck you up.", which was recommended to us by Mike Glicksohn & Susan Manchester, the former an atheist and the other a true believer. If there's room on this e-mail I'll include the track as an attachment..

But I need to stop this now, as Cas has just informed me dinner is just minutes away and besides, there is quite a bit of 2.0.6 I haven't read yet. How the hell did that happen? I must be confused.

Hoping you are the same.

Paul Skelton can be found at [paul\\_skelton\\_yngvi@hotmail.com](mailto:paul_skelton_yngvi@hotmail.com)

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**SPEAKING OF R.LAURRAINE TUTAHASI, THE PERSON WITH THE MOST UNMANAGEABLE NAME IN FANDOM, SHE DIDN'T EXACTLY WRITE ME A LOC, BUT COMMENTED:**

After reading your article in *Fanthology 2013*, I looked online at your guitar collection. Impressive. My favourite is "Compromise Kills" just because it looks so interesting and different. I tried my hand at playing a guitar, but the ukelele is a better fit for me because of my small size. But I haven't touched either in years. Here is what she was referring to:

<http://www.cartiledgeworld.co.uk/guitars.html>

*(Ed. I replied)* Thanks Laurraine. Compromise Kills was initially my brother's guitar. I used to sneak into his bedroom and practice playing on it. Later I stole it but he didn't seem to care. He'd moved on to a cheap electric anyway. It started out as a cheapo steel string but when its bridge began to lift, and cracks appeared in its top and sides, I changed over to nylon strings. I'm still very comfortable busking with it because I can't really hurt it any more than it has been hurt already. Interestingly (or not) the graphic on it is based on a drawing the late Felix Dennis, OZ defendant and millionaire entrepreneur did for one of my early fanzines.

Here's a video of it performing at a gathering at Rob Jackson's place:

<http://www.cartiledgeworld.co.uk/spanko.html>

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## **A DAY OUT IN DUXFORD**

*(It's well known that visiting TAFF delegate Curt Phillips has an interest in militaria, so it seemed only reasonable to invite him to spend a day out at one of the Imperial Museum Sites, this time in Duxford.)*

Today my good wife and I hied ourselves to the quaint market village of Duxford, there to meet with one of our visiting Transatlantic brothers and several of his loyal supporters. Unfortunately a carriage had overturned on the M11, delaying us somewhat between junctions 4 and 5. News was sent by an ingenious method of electronic communication that our compatriots had already arrived and were eagerly awaiting us joining them. In a field just outside the village, the locals had constructed an ingenious sort of park devoted to man-powered flight (as if such a thing were possible!). We arrived safely at last and again by means of this ingenious hand held electronic device managed to find our brothers. There was Sir Keith Freeman, the only genuine Knight (of St Fanthony) amongst us, and of course, Curt Phillips, who could trace his family back to the earliest settlers of his continent, but usually didn't care to, in case \*their\* descendents descended upon him seeking charity. We had amongst our party a Good Doctor, Robert Jackson, who could have tended to us if any of us fell low with fatigue, ague, or feminine problems, but fortunately that eventuality never arose. There was also a varlet and a knave called Ian Maule and two inhabitants of the lofty realm of academia in nearby Cambridge, Jim Mowatt and his Fair Lady Carrie (Wasn't that a Cat Stevens song?)

So we marvelled at the many quaint contraptions on view, separating occasionally to pursue our individual interests (Ian Maule could hardly be constrained and wanted to scamper off immediately to the Land Forces (ie Tanks) exhibit several miles away, but allowed himself to be distracted enough on the way for some of us to enjoy a coffee and a bacon butty (worth £3.00 of anyone's money, but especially Pat's). We saw a Spitfire take off and a mighty engine indeed it was, with a mighty engine which emitted a throaty roar as it performed a barrel-roll over the airfield. It was even better than the bacon roll.

And so eventually to a pub called the Red Lion five minutes away on the other side of the M11 (but don't believe the satnav directions if you ever try to go there; they will lead you instead to a tation car park on the wrong side of the tracks) where many ribald tales were recalled and re-told. Curt vouchsafed how he had met with one Martin Hoare the previous day who had told him of his problems in trying to transport a life-size Tardis, obviously without realizing he could simply step inside and simply set the controls for it to transport itself to the Excel Centre. Rob Jackson was ribbed about the quality of his quizzes and disclosed that he thought the one he had set at Cobalt was worse than any of the others he had attempted earlier. We all agreed it had indeed been worse on so, so many levels.

Eventually wool was exchanged (don't ask, but it could become a new Fannish tradition). Curt doffed his dress-cap and we all went our separate ways.

**SPEAKING OF R-LAURRAINE TUTIHASI, SHE FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH VIBRATOR 2.0.5 DESPITE FINDING LITTLE TO RELATE TO IN THE CONTENTS SHE AT LEAST MANAGED TO COMMENT. THAT'S MY KIND OF LOC WRITER.**

I'm not one for dangerous living. I've never used any drugs that were not prescribed by a doctor or are not available OTC. I did once drive after taking an antihistamine and drinking a cocktail, but I was careful to drive at the speed limit. I have probably been legally drunk while driving a couple of other times, but as I can't really handle more than one or two drinks, I don't think I was really dangerous. Driving itself makes me nervous enough anyway, and that alone probably makes me at least a somewhat unsafe driver. This was not always so. However, I have a condition called neurocardiogenic syncope. This means that my blood pressure can unexpectedly fall while I'm in a standing or sitting condition. As far as I know, doctors don't know what causes this. However, recent experience seems to indicate that a low thyroid condition can probably contribute to this. The blood pressure drop is momentary, lasting only a few seconds at most. However, this (as far as anyone can determine) caused me to total my car once; and I've been a much more nervous driving since.

Theoretically I am supportive of civil disobedience, but I have not actually done this myself.

I've never sailed, so you can count me out of this one. However, I was in a boat when my father rented a boat. He had previous experience sailing on a lake. Unfortunately this was on the sea, and we had some near misses.

I've never been anywhere near a war.

I don't generally care much for mushrooms and am highly unlikely to go hunting for them. My allergist recently recommended adding mushrooms to my diet, but I will buy them at the market thank you very much.

I've never really had any real interest in drumming, but this is one activity that I wouldn't rule out completely. I play other musical instruments to various degrees of proficiency.

I never had any children. I guess it wasn't meant to happen.

I've never had enough interest in any variety of football to consider becoming a referee of the game.

The death of Daniel Keyes was one that touched me. His "Flowers for Algernon" is one of my favourite stories, and we had recently read the novelized version of it for the book club I belong to.

R-Laurraine Tutihasi can be found at [laurraine@mac.com](mailto:laurraine@mac.com)

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**OH, WHAT FUN WE HAD AT LONCON 3**

I never meant to go to Loncon, I swear I didn't. Big tent circus sf had stopped appealing to me many years ago, almost as many years ago as actual sf had ceased to appeal to me, and long before it became known as sci-fi. Even Eastercons had palled in their appeal. In 2004 I went to Eastercon in Hinckley and enjoyed myself despite myself, mostly because I met up with outrageous Victor Gonzales and his retinue who persuaded me to phone D. West there and then to verify his credentials.

At the London Eastercon in 2008, we organized a splinter group meeting for Harry's ITB group over the road and that went well. Afterwards I went on to the Radison Edwardian (as it was then) to the Con proper and really felt out of my depth. So many people I had no interest in knowing or investigating passing by in floods. Earlier through Harry's group I had met lots of American fans who told me about a fanzine convention called Corflu.

I went to Austin in 2007 and immediately knew I had found my ideal con environment. Small, cozy, comfortable with no one imposing their egos, just convivial non-judgemental company among like-minded individuals. This experience was repeated at all subsequent Corflus I went to. So I sort of got back into the idea of going to cons again, but Mama, I really never meant to go to Loncon.

Something always told me it would be a step too far. Then a lot of Americans who were less discriminating than I in terms of vast conventions decided to come over for Loncon, some of them already my friends, and I felt impelled at least to take some measures to meet them.

So a number of us in Harry's In The Bar Group arranged a splinter meeting at the Ramada, close to the Excel Centre, where a number of fans were staying. I was up for this right up until the morning of the event, and had even earlier bought a day membership at Loncon in anticipation of going on there afterwards.

But that Saturday morning I experienced what can only be called an anxiety attack, boosted by the logistical difficulty of getting there and reports I had read of vast queues and people like Chris Fowler using Orwellian metaphors to describe the horror of it all. My son Dan suffers from them and for perhaps the first time I understood what he goes through. I was shivering, sweating, with generally an overall funk and fear of death.

Pat had already set out that morning (having transferred a membership from old friend Rich Coad) so I rang her to tell her I would be a no show. Immediately of course having come to that decision I felt a lot better. Several hours later I decided I was being a coward, and that is something I never like to accuse myself of, so I bit down on the bullet and headed out for the big tent. How, after all, was I going to get something to write about for Vibrator otherwise?

What did I find? The Fan Village worked better than I expected it to, because it was at least a vast area you could lose yourself in, and wander about lost as if you were not really a very lonely person. (Later I explored the food halls, and found the truly lonely people picking over the remains of their solitary meals with no one to comfort them). I'd hoped to brush up alongside some of my old writer mates but I gather most of them were at a publisher party that evening which was not even in the Excel Centre.

Nevertheless I managed to find Ian Watson and even David Wingrove, but he too looked lost and obviously on the way somewhere else. I was told lots of writers were elsewhere in the mega-complex and could be approached by people willing to tickle their egos, but that was not what I had come to the convention for. I had come as a fan to seek out the manifestations of fandom I was familiar with of old, not the glory seeking of professional sf celebrities.

I mentioned this on Facebook and dear Chris Fowler, who I suspect mostly gets invited to parties on the back of Pat Cadigan, chastised me for being an Old Phaart who knows nothing about modern sf and had a massive chip on his shoulder. Well, he was right, but having a big chip does not make it an unreal chip. My chip is based on old fan friends like Chris Priest and Malcolm Edwards (both of whom I once partied with) these days ignoring me as if I had a bad smell about me.

People change and move on in terms of their friendships. I can accept that, and some are more forgiving than others. Some old friends are still tantalized by the lure of professionalism and move away from me by declaring this is an overriding interest, making them somewhat selective in their friendship in a way I have seen happen so many times. But I know enough how professional sf works, and that publishers are only interested in people who can make money for them. If you can't come up with the next Game of Thrones they are likely to drop you. If they court fans, their courtship is only ancillary to that general ethos. As a writer I've always written what I thought had a basic internal integrity, in that it didn't owe much to anyone else. No one cares about that these days. Where is the next Hunger Games or Twilight? Fair enough, but I don't think Graham Greene ever thought of being the next Joseph Conrad, or Joseph Conrad ever thought of being the next Mark Twain. They wrote out their own lives not ones borrowed from other writers. As an old Phaart, I appreciated people like Bob Shaw and Ken Bulmer taking time out not only to tolerate but occasionally to seek out us lesser mortals, and in fact encourage us. Ken even published one of my stories, although later he told me had hadn't an idea what it was about. The day China Mieville comes up to me in the fan village and says, 'Hey Graham, tell me what it was like editing New Worlds in the 70s' is the day my faith in modern sf would be re-established. Until then, sf can piss off.

## MILT STEVENS HAULED HIS ASS OUT OF HIS COMFY CHAIR, LIT UP A STOGIE, AND Poured HIMSELF A SHOT OF BOURBON FOR JUST LONG ENOUGH TO COMMUNICATE ACROSS THE AETHER

While reading Vibrator 2.0.6, I recalled an incident at a convention years ago. It was at a room party. Someone noticed there was a strange device attached to the bed. It was called "Magic Fingers." We also noticed there was a coin slot on the side of the device which would accommodate a US quarter. Of course, we were mature fans. We did what mature fans will do. We spent the next hour speculating as to what "Magic Fingers" might do if we were to insert a quarter. Finally, we had run out of speculation and had to resort to empirical method. Half a dozen of us flopped on the bed and someone inserted the quarter. You might say the results were anti-climactic.

Corflus have a lot of programming for their size. This is a little strange since we really don't need any program at all. We can go on forever about any topic in the known universe. It would be cheating if we actually knew what we were talking about. Of course, we really don't need any topic at all. We natter in print and we can natter verbally as well. If we keep going, one of us is bound to write King Lear.

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

*(EDITOR: Milt, I generally agree about programming at Corflus being largely unnecessary, but when people do bother to do it, I think it is generally appreciated. We have four people in charge of programming at Corflu in Newcastle in 2015, but I think they are all aware of the dangers of over-programming, so I do hope you will think of joining us.)*

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## APRES PISSED

Following the last Glasgow Worldcon, Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna organized an aftercon party enabling people to socialize with visiting US fans. Joseph had no plans to do the same for Loncon, so I foolishly offered my back garden as a venue for such a get together. By all accounts It was a good party, and thanks to Claire Brialey's intervention included even Australian fans Justin Ackroyd and Roman Orszanski. I guess it was a good party. I didn't see much of it, or chat with as many of the guests I'd invited as I had wished. Note to self: it's more fun to go to other people's parties than to put on your own. When you are running around cooking food in a high carbon monoxide environment you tend to miss out on a lot of things. At least I got to talk a little to Suzle, who I think I have shamefully tended to ignore in the past. Nice to see Linda Deneroff and Elinor Busby (surely the oldest fan ever to have been in our garden). It was nice to be able to entertain our esteemed TAFF delegate, Curt Phillips, as well, of course, especially when we managed to goad him into attempting a real broad southern accent. The highlight for me was a spirited rendition of the Astral League Anthem sung to the tune of Men of Harlech. Unfortunately no one videoed it. Joseph and Judith turned up quite late because I think Joseph had to trim Judith's bush, or something. I couldn't take it all in, the carbon monoxide was taking hold. Best fun otherwise was Alison Scott. My god she can gab for England. Close runner up in that category, Cas Skelton. At one point I thought we had a budding fight in hand. Phil Palmer (an expatriate currently living in New Zealand and editor of Chocolates of Lust among other zines) confronted Paul Skelton because Paul was the only person who had ever refused to trade fanzines with him. Was Paul contrite? No, 'It's probably because it was shit,' he said. However, both being Gentlemen they shook hands and agreed to bury the hatchet, in each others' heads.

Must do it again, in about twenty years time.

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# APRES PISSED: A PHOTOPAGE

Janice Maule, Roy Kettle, Phil Palmer



Steven Cain, Linda Deneroff



Mark Plummer

Joseph Nicholas



Judith Hanna and Pat Meara



Jerry Kaufman



Pat Meara, Claire Brialey



Phil Palmer, Ian Maule, Pat Charnock



Linda Deneroff, Curt Phillips, Mark Plummer



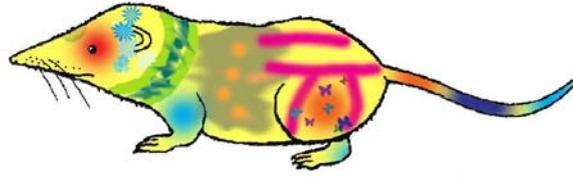
Paul Skelton



**Charnox Barbecue**  
**20th August 2014**

## STEVE STILES GETS RADICAL ON MY SHREW'S ASS

Color the Shrew



### EVER RELIABLE AS ALWAYS, ROBERT LICHTMAN PITCHES UP WITH HIS LATEST COMMENTS

In the colophon of *Vibrator* 2.0.6, you've hit upon one of the reasons fanzine fandom is ailing—pondering the reception your new issue will receive, you write: "What will be the reaction? Supreme indifference from fellow fanzine producers...who think because they also produce fanzines for trade don't have to be bothered to write locs?" As a fellow fanzine producer, I find that frustrating, too. With every issue of *Trap Door* in recent years, the response rate goes down. I had 39 LoCs on #28, 29 on #29, and so far only 21 on the most recent issue. Granted its circulation has also declined by fifteen in that period as our older friends and fellow fans die off and there are insufficient numbers of newer fans to replace them, but still it's a sad state of affairs. Attempting to look on the brighter side, there are still months to go before I work on the next issue's lettercol *and* there's usually a dribble of belated responses in that time; but it doesn't look good.

As for Richard McMahon, I'd (apparently blissfully) never heard of him until your mention here, but as I have a partial set of the first run of *Vibrator* I took a few minutes to poke through them. And was rewarded with your brief review of his *Inverted Ear Trumpet* #2 in the third issue: "so badly duplicated I couldn't read it. I might have missed the experience of a lifetime, but somehow I doubt it." I laughed at this, and thought of reviewers such as Pickersgill and Nicholas who were equally (um!) candid in their reviews (and further back, the "Fanzine Scope" column in late '40s and early '50s fanzines written by F. Towner Laney). Were you channeling them, or vice versa? I think we should be told. The next issue had a letter from McMahon himself, which I found rather mealy-mouthed. There's a several-issue gap from this one to the next in my collection, and by then the McMahon affair had not just faded, but disappeared. Who was he, anyway?

You write of the Corflu planning meeting that you were "somewhat startled to see the work-out gym equipment" in Mark and Claire's living room. Leaving aside your further comments about its effect, I was pleased to read that I'm not the only fan who has such equipment around. And I assume that they, like me, actually use it from time to time even if you don't detect any noticeable effects in their physique. As you may recall from your visits here, I have an elliptical trainer in one corner of the basement room also containing my computer, printer, scanner and—oh yes!—my fanzines and books. I used it fairly religiously (also known as every other day) for quite a few years until my aging knees caught up with me and the impact it had on them made me, regretfully, abandon it. But not exercise altogether—Carol has a stationary bike in her office, and now I use that every other day. It's not quite as good a workout as the trainer, but it's much easier on my knees. Another source of sustained exercise that we both have is the staircases in our respective houses. I don't know about you, but I'm up and down the flight of stairs from the main living area to the basement many times a day—and at a minimum (usually exceeded) I traverse the ones from the front door up to street level at least twice: once to retrieve the newspaper in the morning, and again to bring down the day's mail in the afternoon. As a nod to my age, I no longer do these steps two at a time.

Bill Wright isn't the first fan to hold certain thoughts about the deathlessness of fanzines, but he puts it well in his

letter when he writes: “I have this vision of literary researchers generations hence mining eFanzines for such ideas, harvesting perspectives from us twenty first century savants as bases for their PhDs in Literature or their magnum opuses uncovering astonishing insights into the human condition.” And he goes on to further flesh out this thought in what he refers to as his “stream-of-conscious babble,” and I loved it all. It vindicates those who’ve mouthed the deathless platitude that “all knowledge is contained in fanzines,” something that was first coined as a tongue-in-cheek jest by Charles Burbee and has been taken to heart over the years even though it’s patently untrue.

There seem to be two kinds of fans when it comes to interest in and appreciation of fan history. You’re clearly one of the ones who isn’t concerned with what came before you hopped on board. That’s unobjectionable to me, and because of your lack of interest it’s completely understandable that you “found Peter Weston’s *Relapses* futile and self-involved examples of the worst kind of fan-history binding.” I have mixed feelings myself. I *am* interested in fan history, but there’s a limit. So while I found much to enjoy and learn from in Peter’s fanzine, I also found articles, some of them very long, that I skipped over because, upon dipping in to test the water, they were really much more than I wanted to know about the activities of some fans—specifically the ones who were only names to me, whose period of activity didn’t overlap with my own, and/or who were...there’s no other way to put it...living uninteresting (to me) lives that they wrote about at length. I can’t say this reaction to material in fanzines is unique to Peter’s, though.

I don’t really remember my earliest bicycles. My recollections begin when I was maybe thirteen or fourteen and got an adult-size “English racing bike” with skinny tires, hand brakes, and a four-speed shifter on the right handlebar. It was red. Most such bikes had only three speeds, and for me at least the absence of that additional gear meant they weren’t suitable for pedaling up long grades. That fourth gear was very low—I had to pedal like crazy for those hills, but it was easy-going and allowed me to travel long distances in my pre-automobile days, which were most of my teen years. Thus it was that I could visit distant used bookstores and load my saddlebags for the trip home with (early on) car magazines and (later) science-fiction books and magazines. As you write, “I experienced the freedom that owning a \*proper\* bike gave to you.” One example of this for me was the long bike trip I took to a record store called Dolphin’s of Hollywood to buy obscure rhythm and blues records, as I recounted in part of my article in *Bye Johnny* #3.

Reading your comments on fan funds and Claire’s responses, I agree with her that having to become a Registered Charity would create unnecessary complications in the operation of the funds. You mention Abi Frost’s embezzlement of TAFF funds as a reason why this should be done, but in the big picture this is something that’s only happened that one time (although Claire says “Things have gone wrong several times,” and I wonder what the other one was) and chances are remote that it would happen again (though, of course, not impossible). It’s good to read that both TAFF and GUFF have separate UK bank accounts. I don’t know what the situation is for TAFF. When I got the US TAFF funds from Jeanne Gomoll in 1989, I deposited them in my checking account, set up a ledger on my computer, and never had a problem knowing what money was mine and what was TAFF’s—oh, and what money was FAPA’s, too. At that time I’d been FAPA Secretary-Treasurer for three years—and now it’s been 28 years—and I’ve been totally in violation the whole time of this sentence in the group’s constitution’s section on my official duties: “He must keep FAPA’s funds separate from his own, in cash or deposit.” Never did, never will, and if any FAPA members are reading this and are shocked, I tell you, shocked, they are welcome to take the job away from me.

“I don’t know about you, but I watch a lot of aspirational tv, where people view ideal (and some not so ideal homes they would like to buy.” We watch what we call House Shows, too, from time to time. One of our favorites is “Househunters International,” where we get to see a couple or single person looking to buy a house or condo in some country other than the one in which they’ve been living. The format is simple: look at three houses, weigh their merits or lack of same, eliminate one, and then choose one of the remaining two, followed by a visit some months later to see what they’ve done to the house and perhaps what remains to be done. There’s a domestic version of the show, too. Another is “Fix It Or Flip It,” about people caught between upgrading the house they’re in or getting another, more ideal one. These are both on HGTV—do you get that channel?

Lovely D. West cartoon!

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

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### **MEANWHILE EARL KEMP SAVES US ALL THE BOTHER OF READING FIFTY SHADES OF GREY. OR IS IT GRAY?**

For some time I've wanted to examine 50 SHADES OF GREY but refused to buy a copy. Then I found a used copy for \$1 and bought it. What a waste of money.

Except for the wildly popular selling of copies of the book (and two sequels...yetch!), there is no explanation for its selling except the really hard-core pornography contained within it.

The book was so bad I deliberately punished myself by forcing me to read the entire damned thing.

Allegedly written (two previous versions before book publication) by a British citizen living in London I was surprised to find nothing in it the slightest bit British. Not even accidental slips of language differences. Most notable of those is the gray/grey word. In the US grey exists only for dogs and busses...besides that the word is gray...period. There was at least one slip where grey was used incorrectly for gray. There was also rampant misuse of blond/blonde even within the same paragraph. Perhaps the most offensive part of the entire book was the "word fat" or crap inserted for no purpose other than making the book longer...and more boring...like a 10-page "sex contract" like far too many references to "(fill in blank...a number) shades of grey" that seems to appear at least once on every other page. The book could have easily been one third of the published length and not miss one single sex session nor failed to sell additional copies. Also really annoying totally unrelated MANY, many headers and footers of far too many boring emails were also used to "fat out" the too fat manuscript.

The fact that there was no normal male/female contact in the entire book, and that the sex is handled in the crudest possible ("I don't make love. I never make love. I fuck...long and hard...for personal satisfaction only. I don't even notice how much I debase and humiliate you.") manner is quite a turn off.

Briefly the story is so small it isn't worth considering...certainly not worth reading. A 21-year-old virgin (never had a romantic session with any boyfriend) is graduating from college intent upon a job with some publishing company perhaps as an editor. Yawn! Virgin meets 28-year-oldimpossibly successful businessman who has somehow acquired an inexhaustible fortune and is "the most beautiful man who ever lived." Only problem is this beautiful man (never, not once "handsome") is terribly screwed up mentally. He has no concept for romance, for male/female human relationships, etc. and has spent his rich life doing one thing only...arranging for suitable females to act as sex slaves to his overwhelming compulsion. The two of them enter a three-month trial arrangement wherein she is forbidden to touch him, to look him in the eyes, to do anything except stay still, hands bound (so she can't accidentally touch him), while he (and I quote) "fucks" her hard and fast. Repeatedly, hour after hour.

By story's end there is no explanation of any sort for the reader explaining why beautiful will not allow hole to touch him yet that fact clouds the entire book.

She is so hot for him, wants him desperately as a lover, not a fucker, and hopes that he will change in time. Of course he does not, and after 400 pages MUCH TOO MANY, of offstage S&M that never actually happens, she walks away from their "trial run."

Over the years of editing far too many "erotic" books I felt that I acquired a fine sense of who was writing what manuscript. 50 SHADES proves me wrong. Allegedly written by a female it is undeniable a male book. I would think it impossible for any woman writer to totally abandon femaleness and replace it with solid masculine concepts. In this book there is no room (except fleetingly through the female protagonist's thoughts) anywhere for any female angle

or viewpoint. If I were a betting person, I would bet that a man wrote it, not the female receiving all the notoriety. If I am right, I hope he gets a proper amount of the loot the book is harvesting.

That's it, folks! The entire plot...No story...No reality...no humanity...no humans. What an incredible waste of time, of paper...how the hell can they make a movie of this garbage?

And the book is earning millions of dollars...no justice anywhere.

Earl Kemp can be found at [earlkemp50@gmail.com](mailto:earlkemp50@gmail.com)

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### **LATE ARRIVAL THROUGH THE VIRTUAL LETTER BOX IS THIS FROM THE OMNI-PRESENT LLOYD PENNEY**

Something buzzing in the e-mail again...thank you for Vibrator 2.0.6. Once it stops buzzing, you'd better be prepared to supply fresh batteries.

Plans afoot for another Corflu, another I won't be going to, but whatthehell, let's live vicariously. The assorted schemers, I am sure, have nefarious plans on the back burner, and vicious crimes on the front, too, but will probably stage, if not the crime of the century, definitely a high-class Corflu, and best of luck to all of you.

Ah, the local...Bill Wright must have had thick slices of thesaurus for breakfast one morning to write all of that.

I've liked Peter Weston's zines, for they explain why we do the weird fannish stuff we do today. I figure if you can't enjoy the weird stuff fandom provides, you've got to start your own, and that might explain my own fanac from time to time.

My loc...still haven't gone in for that sugar test, suppose I should soon. Professor Elemental will be in Niagara in September, and if I can't see him perform, I should be able to chat for a while anyway.

We all know that Arnie Katz has released a new issue of [*Ed: expletive deleted*], so now to see if Robert Lichtman locs that posthaste. I will try to do the same, but there are work problems that are keeping me from doing all the writing I want to do. There was a day where you could peacefully protest and the police would supervise from a horse or a car. Today, the police, in a used Humvee, might beat you or tase you, and most likely kill you. The safe place to protest seems to be online.

Time to fold and e-mail. Loncon was a no-go for us, and seeing it broke the Worldcon attendance record, I get the feeling that it may have emerged into the category of convention too big for us to go to. The little cons are the best. We will get to London in a few years, and do some things others would laugh at us for doing, but we are now too old to care. See you the next buzz.

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

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### **A PARTIAL CONVERSATION by Rob Jackson**

When it comes to this fanzine production lark I am never sure whether I am a traditionalist or a moderniser. Perhaps it depends on the opinions of the person I have just been speaking to.

But whenever it is fanzine Hugo voting time, the old arguments resurface. They aren't like they used to be, comes the cry from the traditionalists. But things can't stay the same for ever; we don't do ditto or hekto any more, comes the riposte from the modernisers; it's our scene now.

A debate about paper versus electronic fanzines has been happening on an e-list where I post quite actively. What others have said is private, so I won't quote anyone else's stuff from there. But what I can do is post my own writings, even if it shows that I now disagree with my own self of a week or two ago. (After all, the only person who has to give permission is me.) Hopefully this shows that I have been thinking about all this, and have started off a Luddite and finished up at least a partial convert.

Here's what I said on 18 August, the day after this year's Hugo Award winners were announced.

*Have just been to look at A Dribble of Ink, and scrolled back to about May or June. It is a flashy and \*very\* superficial, though easy to read blog with a superficially appealing eye for zappy artwork, mostly semi-abstract and hard sf. The editor's take on the "best fanzine" category is summed up here:*

*"Over the past several years, vast change has come to many of the fan categories at the Hugos.*

*The "Best Fanzine" category has seen a dramatic shift in the past two years, since SF Signal's first nomination, and traditional zines are being replaced by blogs and online magazines. "So never the twain shall meet..." said Mike Glycer, of the many-times nominated File 770, describing the seemingly impassable gulf that exists between the online community and the traditional fan community. I don't believe Mr. Glycer. While this divide between the two fan communities is undeniable, genre fandom is ripe with opportunity for creating a global fan community that embraces diversity—of voice and publishing platform—and challenges readers, authors, and publishers to become more inclusive and welcoming than ever before."*

*It certainly isn't an intellectual challenge. Nor is his critique of Andy Weir's THE MARTIAN, a book of which there were some free copies being distributed by Del Rey at the con, and which various people including Bill and Mary Burns hugely approve, thinking it deserves a Best Novel nomination next year. Here is all he has to say about it:*

*"I read Andy Weir's The Martian because of the cover. It's shiny and dramatic, features an astronaut, and, well... it's really shiny.*

*Earlier this year, I read An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth, the autobiography of Chris Hadfield, a Canadian astronaut and former commander of the International Space Station, and Packing for Mars by Mary Roach, a non-fiction examination of what it takes to survive in space. So, after two non-fiction books, The Martian seemed like the perfect cap-off to my mini-tour of our solar system.*

*The difference between the three books is obvious from the get-go, most notably the backgrounds and first-hand experiences of the three authors. Hadfield's book draws on his own personal knowledge of being an astronaut, including a harrowing tale of a time when he was literally blinded while doing a spacewalk. Roach's book is a well-researched examination of the amusing and relatable aspects of human life in space. Weir, on the other hand, is an admitted hobbyist, and his novel combines Roach's obsessive level of research with the a mile-a-minute plotting of Michael Crichton's best science thrillers.*

*"I'm the sort of geek who will stay up all night to watch the news and see a Mars probe land," Weir told Shawn Speakman, in an interview with Suvudu. "So I started out with a pretty heavy hobbyist knowledge of the material. Then, while writing the book I did tons of research. I wanted the science to be as accurate as I could possibly make it."*

*Doesn't exactly stretch the brain, does it? If you want a bit of eddyercation, bring back Banana Wings or Journey Planet.*

*I don't object to the wish to see the online fan community and the traditional fan community as equal. But*

*one thing which is not equal is the size of the voter base for these blogs, which is weighted in favour of the blogs whose circulation is limited only by the range of the internet. And the other inequality is the mental age of the readers, which is obviously about nine for the blogs - when it is a good idea to have an GCSE or two, at least, before you read BW or JP - or something like SF Commentary.*

*We are headed for an age when the lowest common denominator, and flash presentation, are respectively the king and queen of the Hugos - the fan categories at least.*

*The other noteworthy point about A Dribble of Ink is that it didn't actually get all that many actual nominations: it was fifth of the five nominees in the Fanzine category. Most of those who voted for it must have discovered it on their voter packet and been attracted to it by the superficial presentation.*

*I am sure there *\*are\** some blogs in which genuine intellectual challenges are posed. It is just that the winners will be the cheap and flashy, unless something changes fast.*

((end of my 18 August e-list post))

The responses from that included one from someone who has been quite involved in this year's Worldcon, and so has had her ear much closer to the ground about the politics of the current fanzine Hugo voting than I have. In a nutshell, hints were dropped that we should go and read A Dribble of Ink in more detail, and read behind the chronological editorial blog, where most of the comments are fairly brief, and go via the hyperlinks to the featured articles to find a bit more intellectual meat. These might be at least the intellectual equal of some of the longer pieces in print fanzines such as Journey Planet, Banana Wings or SF Commentary.

They included this year's winner for Best Related Item, a featured article by Kameron Hurley called "We Have Always Fought': Challenging the 'Women, Cattle and Slaves' Narrative." I read this, and discovered a really well written and heartfelt argument in favour of strong women taking the action lead more often in sf and fantasy fiction. This may not be a new argument, and it has been said many times before; but I can see exactly where Kameron is coming from, as the battle is still by no means won – there are still too many sexist subtexts in sf and fantasy, and too many meek, submissive or subordinate women in writers' imaginations. And what she wrote obviously struck a chord, as the voters who read the Hugo voting packet obviously loved what she said and voted for it in droves.

So yes, that was definitely worth publishing and reading; and it deserved its airing. And yes, it would almost certainly have passed the editorial scrutiny of the Journey Planet collective, or Bruce Gillespie at SF Commentary, or the Fishlifters at Banana Wings. So I am converted on one score – yes, there is decent, intellectually stimulating stuff to be found in the blogs that are called fanzines in the revised Hugo voting world we now inhabit.

In which case, the argument about whether a fanzine is a piece of paper that flops on our doorstep every month or two (or six, or ten) or a blog with enough of an episodic format to be called a magazine, is now dependent more on its content than its format. I revisited this subject on the e-list on Tuesday evening 19<sup>th</sup>, pointing out that with the arrival of the internet, fanzines are no longer the only medium of communication:

*((It)) is much more positive to live in the world as it is rather than erect a Canute-like failed bulwark to prevent – or just lament – the passing of the old ways. If a paper fanzine is now a work of art rather than an irreplaceable mode of communication, that's just evolution for you.*

((end quote))

These blogs have one other huge difference to old paper fanzines – the size of their potential audience. There is another understandable lament often heard about them – they are not *\*fannish\**. We have to ask what fannishness is though – if it's about a sense of community, we have to think what community it is that the reader is part of. Here's another point I made:

*Do we wait for the wheel of fannishness to be reinvented, or try to re-seed it into these blogs?*

*The trouble is that these blogs are aimed at such a large and diffuse audience that the human interaction, the friendship, the sense of family and camaraderie that were part of the concept of fannishness are unlikely ever to be recreated in quite the same way. Part of the trouble is that it is no longer a proud and lonely thing to be a fan – sf is now everywhere. It's all too big just to be one tribe.*

*Will some of these blogs become human, or friendly, or about \*people\* in the style of the fannish culture we are used to and grew up with? Who knows?*

((end quote))

And as far as the presentation of A Dribble of Ink is concerned, I have decided to look on the positive side of my earlier “flashy” epithet and call it “neatly presented and decent looking.” OK, most of the artwork is serious and there aren’t many cartoons; but you can’t have everything. We no longer live in a world where duplicated fanzines can only print black and white lines or block colours; we have 16 million colours on our monitors’ palettes now.

But I still have a couple of unanswered questions. (1) How come a 14 page article is allowed in the “Best Related Item” category which used to be reserved for full-fledged books? After all, if it was a work of fiction it wouldn’t be a novel but a short story. Should the WSFS Business Meeting have a few of their interminable debates about word length or some other limitations in this category? Yes, I know it is easy to read once you find it in your Hugo Voter Packet – it’s \*short\*, dammit!

Which brings me to question (2). Can you really have an opinion on the Hugos any more if you don’t get the Hugo Voter Packet? I confess to being a Luddite here too, as I didn’t download the Hugo Voter Packet this year but voted only in those categories where I already knew the scene well enough to make some judgements, which are the fan categories. But I suspect I am out of date here too, as – if they are conscientious and tech-savvy, which I am sure nearly all are – your average Hugo voter will have a damn good look through the material they are sent online and read it and make up their minds based on what they are sent. Non-voters can’t really comment on this any more as it is now a scene which is only open to insiders. And you become an insider by paying a supporting membership to the current year’s Worldcon. If you want to piss, you need to pay your penny to get into the toilet.

That’s the way the world changes. And change is what the world does. I thought that most of us were interested in learning that when we first read sf as youngsters. We were learning the future might be different. And it is – now.

**Rob Jackson, August 24 2014**

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### **THE HOME STRETCH IS IN SIGHT, BIGGLES**

Like an Olympic sprinter I lunge for the final tape, all too aware that it is the nature of fanzine production that when one does think the end is in sight, some dolt will send another Loc to cause you to repaginate the entire issue (This time it was Lloyd Penney). Hey ho, easier to do on a word processor than on a stencil, I suppose. And here I must applaud Colin Hinz who breathed new life into an old Gestetner at Loncon and managed to produce the first duplicated fanzine for many moons, and perhaps not the last as he threatens more. We all, I’m sure, have happy memories of cranking our dupers back in the day, and of soldering electrostencilled illos into the main text, of collecting crudsheets and using them to interleave regular paper to absorb excess ink. If you don’t have these memories then you are not a \*real\* fan in my book, and, yes, that does go for all you bloggers out there. I do know that once a duper was running properly it was far quicker at producing copies than modern ink-jet and laser printers.

## ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

Tonight I met my old mate John Nielsen Hall (editor of **Motorway Dreamer**, see *efanzines.com*). He'd recently had his last kidney removed and was enduring dialysis three days a week and was bored to Hell. We met at a restaurant on the Southbank, an area I have not visited for many years and which now seems to have been turned into a miniature terraced theme park where tourists are entertained under the shade of the London Eye. It made me aware that if you turn your back on London for just a few years it changes and metamorphoses behind your back into something you don't recognize. The old County Hall, once the seat of local government throughout the years of the London County Council and later the Greater London Council, is now in the process of being remade into a shopping mall/tourist venue with a Seaworld exhibit and a London Dungeon, and multiple hotels and a large McDonalds, and numerous other facilities. I am glad to see it all develop as a tourist attraction without feeling much of need to visit it any more, thank you. Maybe in ten years time.

### **THIS IS THE END MY BEAUTIFUL FRIEND**

No, unlike the Lizard King and Robin Williams I am not going to top myself, merely announcing the end of another glorious attempt to achieve fannish immortality with yet another copy of Vibrator. Will this be the fanzine that finally stunned Andy Hooper's FLAG into silence and sent Mike Meara's aMFO scuttling away to hide under a rock with shame at its woeful irregularity? I don't know. I hope not.

Just a note here to tell you I am entering Dave Langford territory and going progressively deafer due to wax build up in my ears, but have a doctor's appointment sometime in 2016 to have my ears syringed. Until then you will have to talk very loudly to me, and probably have to type Locs in large fonts. August was a busy month in terms of fan activity. September should be quieter with only the prospect of an Antiques Fair at Alexandra Palace in view. October will be Barcon, a select exclusive meeting of a clique of fans, each of whom must bring their own towels to Leamington Spa. But that is at least two issues away,

Finally on another list Murray Moore has mooted the foundation of something called Slow Fandom, something which I am sure will catch on, although based on my experience of Loncon it already has. Greg Pickersgill remarked to me that he had never seen so many people shuffling about flat-footedly and I must say I had to agree with him. I don't think however this is what Murray envisaged as a model for Slow Fandom.

Do remember to keep up and email me a loc or two. Catch up on back-issues on efanazines if you have to. It's free you know. Hell, you might consider voting me a Hugo in 2015, but no, I'm not a pretty, vapid blog (although I have got Steve Stiles' artwork) so that wouldn't work.

[graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk)

[www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com)