

Pips V – Jim Mowatt



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TAFF – A Game of Four Halves

First there was only one, then Steve Green sent out the rallying call and magically there were four. The four will fight it out for the privilege of representing UK fandom on the far side of the Atlantic where cowboys, gangsters and Indians roam the Earth. The winner will attend the 69th World Science Fiction convention in Reno, Nevada. I mercilessly hunted down each and every one of them and subjected them to such probing questions as what is your name and why do you wish to win TAFF. The results of this fierce enquiry were recorded and munged together into an audio fanzine/podcast named Pips 05. Some people did bemoan the lack of writing downedness of the zine and asked for the writings. This coincided with someone offering to sell me transcription services for only 50c a recorded minute. OK, sez I, let's do it.

The Interviews



Paul Treadaway

Interviewed in the beergarden of the Cambridge Blue public house in the pouring rain.

Jim Mowatt: Paul Treadaway, so right, first question, why are you standing for TAFF?

Paul Treadaway: I'd like to reconnect with other people that I've met before and meet new people and spread the network of fandom further afield.

Jim Mowatt: ah, now, on that point. TAFF, it's an old chestnut but it always comes up. TAFF, is it still important?

Paul Treadaway: Well, I guess if people is still supporting it and, you know, voting for it, donating, and so on, then they must feel it's important – you can have endless arguments I suppose about, you know, what it was originally set up for which is, you know, 60 years ago nearly now isn't it. I mean, you know, in times have changed since then that the people must think it's important or they wouldn't keep supporting it. I mean, yes, what importance it has to them. That is something you can only speculate about.

Jim Mowatt: Absolutely. So presuming you won TAFF and you got over there, are there particular people you would want to see, particular places you want to go, who – do – you know, who are you thinking about meeting when you're over there?

Paul Treadaway: Well, obviously, I want to reconnect with – I've met people over the years. As I said on my platform, I've recently been either selling a convention or running one ...

Jim Mowatt: But who in particular? Names, you know, people like to hear their own names.

Paul Treadaway: There are just too many. I mean, there are also people that I've met online but I haven't met in person yet, for example. And, you know, so reconnecting with the people that I've met before and just meeting, you know, new people. And you know, personal – more personal level and more social context than I'm just here to sell this worldcon to you.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, I see. So you actually get to talk to them without selling them something although you will be selling them TAFF in a way and you would be raising funds all the time as you're going.

Paul Treadaway: Well, that's part of it is, isn't it? I mean, it's to raise a profile of it and obviously, people are either into the idea or they aren't. Going to be the future of it, isn't it?

Jim Mowatt: It is, yes. So, your platform was made basically about conrunning because that's what you do.

Paul Treadaway: That's what I have mostly on, yes.

Jim Mowatt: I want to talk to you a little bit about conrunning. Now, first why do you do it? What do you get out there? What's the buzz about conrunning?

Paul Treadaway: Well, I think like a lot of people, you know, it's – you go along to conventions and then you realize that these are all being run by volunteers and obviously some of them are then your friends and you're still wanting to put something back into it. So I think that's why a lot of people get into it.

They want to actually start contributing and obviously the more involved you get in it then you think you know, well, this could be done better and there's all kinds of ways we could improve things and, you know, you have ideas of your own, opinions of your own and so on and you think, yes, the more involved I get, the more I can make things better.

And then you end up in this whole sort of network of people who are producing this stuff for fandom.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Paul Treadaway: And, it's actually a good feeling when you see people enjoying the thing that you are producing.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Paul Treadaway: And that's a very gratifying feeling.

Jim Mowatt: I want to ask you also, what do you think the current state of conrunning is? And are there any bright, new conrunners out there you can see coming along.

Paul Treadaway: Well, it seems I'm a bit out of touch to be honest. I mean, I haven't been able to go to many conventions recently. So, I'm not really able to spot the new talent as it were that there's something coming ...

Jim Mowatt: So, new stuff, your fannish future. What are you planning now? What are you looking forward to?

Paul Treadaway: I suppose, you know, the big question is, "What is the future of conventions of the sorts the way it used to?" You know, what are the trends with the internet and so on? A lot of the things that conventions used to provide, the introductions of new stuff and meeting like-minded people, those things are not really kind of exclusive to the conventions anymore. I mean, you can get a lot of that over the internet. So, the question is I suppose – and then – and it's a big question. I don't really have the answer to it. You know, what's going to be the future of conventions?

Jim Mowatt: It is a big question. I mean, because this – there's all the virtual stuff going on. I don't think that will replace conventions. But do you – could you think it could be added on to conventions? Do you think we'll get more participation through the internet?

Paul Treadaway: Well, it's ...

Jim Mowatt: And how will that happen ...

Paul Treadaway: That's actually one of the interesting innovations because I haven't been able to get to conventions for, you know, a year or two.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Paul Treadaway: And one of the things I – you know, there has been some live video cast from some of the conventions, the virtual Tucker Hotel thing going on.... I think we might see a lot more of that and – you know, and when the technology improves, you know, it will be possible to interact a bit more virtually as well with the convention as it's going on. But I think people are always going to want to meet face to face. It's just a question of what sort of size and, you know, what kind of event it's going to be I suppose.

Jim Mowatt: I think so. Well, good luck with the TAFF race.

Paul Treadaway: Thank you. Yes.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, I hope you do well. And it's raining so I'm going to go back in.

Paul Treadaway: Yes. It is the right time to go back in ...

[Song plays]



John Coxon

Interviewed via Skype

Jim Mowatt: And now, let's hear from John Coxon. Right, John. You're running for TAFF this year.

John Coxon: Yes.

Jim Mowatt: And first question has to be why. What is it that has made you run this year as compared to any other year?

John Coxon: I wanted to run for TAFF for a couple of years now because I think that – I think it would be a wonderful experience for me personally and I also think I could do a lot to represent British fandom and to represent the sort of American-Canadian side of things when I go back from the trip. But the real impetus for choosing this year to launch my – what will hopefully be my only bid, my first bid to win TAFF is mainly because I'm 22 now whereas last year, I was 20. So, going abroad or below the sort of magic 21 didn't strike me as a very good idea. I did seriously consider running against Steve Green last year but the age thing was a big factor in that decision. So yes, basically I'm old enough I guess.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, yes, I suspect so. So you can join in with fannish activities I suppose.

John Coxon: Yes.

Jim Mowatt: Another thing that particularly struck me about your manifesto, you said you were talking about new ways of reporting the trip. Now, what sort of things are you thinking about there?

John Coxon: I wanted to try and use social media to a higher extent than it has previously been used. I want to try and record – and I know Steve Green did a video blog. I want to try and build on that. I want to try a trip report as is traditional. I don't want to replace the trip report obviously because that's the essential pillar of what TAFF is all about.

But certainly using stuff like – using stuff like Twitter in my journal, sort of incorporating that back into the trip report as well, posting in on my journal regarding my trip, getting other people to post – posting people's like responses to things I have posted and generally trying to make it a more interactive thing as it's really *happening* because like one of the – one of the cool things I thought about Chris Garcia's trip report. I was reading it and coming across a passage of text where I had stolen his computer from him at a convention for half an hour or so.

I just thought that was a really cool idea and I quite like to get more of that kind of thing going in my – in what I do alongside using stuff like video blogging and stuff like Twitter to a higher extent because as you know, I'm an avid Twitterer so that would be something I would be hoping to build upon. And I actually did a fanzine called *Retweet* at Corflu. I don't know if you saw that.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, I did ...

John Coxon: But sort of similar things to that, trying to marry the world of fanzines and trip reports with the world of the interactive media to create something a little bit different and trying to explore how the electronic world can affect the traditional fanzines in other ways than just transferring a fanzine onto the internet. But it's something that interests me. I have obviously digital stuff that I will be thinking a lot more about as when I win and thinking about how to put it all together in a way that's a bit less out there. But that's the general thrust of what I'm hoping to do.

Jim Mowatt: Sounds good, yes. I was reading Chris Garcia's TAFF report quite recently and I also liked that interactiveness that it did. There was quite a few different people who had put a paragraph here and there where they grabbed his computer and just added to the report. Well, I really enjoyed that.

Another thing I want to ask you. If you win and you go over there, who are the people you particularly want to chat to?

John Coxon: Obviously Chris Garcia because he's one of my nominators and he's a good friend of mine. I would like to meet up with the current TAFF administrators because I met them when they were on the TAFF trip and they're really great people. But certainly personally, I want to go where the cons are and I want to meet people and try and interact with people that I haven't met before or that I don't know very well. Because for me, being quite a young fan, this is going to be almost completely a sort of fresh look at how things are because I've never been to a foreign convention before. I've never been to a Worldcon before. I've only been to like four Eastercons and so, certainly from my perspective, it's not so much about meeting people I already know. It's meeting new people and hopefully, that will be something I can really bring – really bring a new perspective – or not necessarily a new perspective per se but like an enthusiasm derived from the fact that for me, it would all be completely new and completely shiny.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, indeed. I wondered – I'm trying to pin you down to a name if possible. Is there one person that if you could have a wish – I mean they may not be able to get to a con or whatever. But is there one person you think of that you've maybe read about and you haven't met yet that you would really love to meet? Can you think of any one name in particular?

John Coxon: Well, I guess for me, it's not so much names as groups of people. Like I want to go into Las Vegas to hang out with fans there because I've read fanzines coming out of that collection of people and sort of individual people within that collective who have done really well. The Bay Area fandom, I really want to meet a lot of people there. Just stuff like that. Not names per se but groups of people who I've read about through fanzines and what not and I would love to meet them sort of in real life and get an idea for what goes into those fanzines and into those communities of fans. So, no, not a name. More groups of people I guess.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

John Coxon: Did I answer the question?

Jim Mowatt: Yes. That's absolutely fine, John. And a particular old chestnut here, TAFF, it comes up year after year after year. You know, is it still relevant? Is it still important? What do you think? What's the importance of TAFF these days?

John Coxon: I think TAFF – because TAFF obviously started because we were in a world where communication across the Atlantic wasn't as easy and it's derived from that and certainly I think, way back in the 50s, it was like one of the only way you got to interact with fans across the sea. But I don't think that that makes it irrelevant today because there are a lot of fans who can't afford to go to Worldcons, go traveling, meet other people. I think that it really gives people who aren't that privileged the chance to get more involved in the fandom. But only to get not just from the perspective that I would love to go and see all these conventions but from the point of view that you can feel like you're putting something into the fandom and you're doing something for fandom which you would previously have been unable to go and do and to go and put that energy into something and see the rewards.

And certainly I think that although the internet gets rid of the need to be with people physically either so I don't think the fact that we can communicate more easily across the sea means that we should be getting rid of TAFF or saying it's irrelevant because I think the fact is that looking at the fund, looking how many people are voting, looking at how many people are standing, you can really see that it's healthier than ever.

So I think it's still very relevant. I really do. I think that it provides fans and fandom with an opportunity that neither of them would have otherwise get and I think it's an opportunity for people to get new experiences and for fandom to benefit as a whole from the injection of new ideas and enthusiasm and stuff like that.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, yes. Yes, indeed. Finally, can you just tell us a little bit about yourself just so we get to know John Coxon a little bit better? Can you maybe tell us what you're reading at the moment, what you're studying at the moment and who you are. Just about a minute on who you are.

John Coxon: I'm John. I study physics, astrophysics at the University of Leicester which is currently proving to be very stressful but it's usually very good fun. I'm currently reading *The Forever War* by Joe Haldeman inspired by – a housemate recommended it to me and also the theme for the next Eastercon is military history so I'm trying to read military history in preparation for that.

I got into fandom when I was about 14 years old, going to the ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha AGM. I got into the Peterborough Science Fiction group started to go to Eastercons in 2007. I've really been – really been caught up in the fandom, caught up in how amazing everyone is. I really want to do more stuff and do more to put into the fandom and to give something back for the amazing experiences I had from it.

I've written my own fanzine, *Procrastinations*. I won Best New Fan at Corflu. I believe it was in Las Vegas. I could be wrong about that one but I won Best New Fan 2008, I think it was, and yes, I just – I love putting things into the fandom. I love helping out and it has been such an amazing thing for me that I can't imagine not being a part of it.

Jim Mowatt: Well, thank you very much. And finally, do you just want last couple of words to the potential TAFF voters out there?

John Coxon: Yes. I mean, I – obviously I'm biased. I genuinely think that I am a good choice for TAFF. I'm not saying that the others aren't because there's – I mean, four brilliant, brilliant candidates are on the ballot this year and it's going to be a closely contested fight. I would like to think that I can bring a level of enthusiasm and possibly naivety is the wrong word but I think I can bring a different perspective on things to the TAFF trip by being less experienced with fandom than some other people are and being that sort of fresh face and meeting new people to doing new things and put in my boundless enthusiasm into the systems and seeing what happens.

So, yes, I think you should vote for me because I think I'm a good candidate but I think the others are good candidates as well so it's a bit difficult really.

Jim Mowatt: Excellent. Thank you very much, John.

[Song plays]



Liam Proven

Interviewed via Skype

Jim Mowatt: And now we encounter Liam Proven. Liam Proven, you're running for TAFF this year. Just wondered why particularly this year. What brought you out and said, "I'm going to run for TAFF"?

Liam Proven: What brought me out was a collection of friends phoning me up. However, Jim, dear boy, you got my surname wrong. You know that.

Jim Mowatt: I got your surname wrong? Go and tell ...

Liam Proven: It's Proven, P-R-O-V-E-N. You said Probon which is a new one out of – I've never – not heard that one before.

Jim Mowatt: Right. I fell over my lips obviously. I meant Proven and I do apologize.

Liam Proven: Well try and get it right. So, yes, I got a series of phone calls because I have never dreamt of running for TAFF or anything quite like it before but I was first prodded at Novacon the end of last year when I was sitting chatting with Tobes Valois about his TAFF trip and how much he enjoyed it and so on.

And I was saying that I really would like to visit an American convention someday but that I couldn't see any way that it was likely to happen in the sort of foreseeable future because as a freelancer in the current British financial climate, I just don't have the money and Steve Green said to me, "Oh my word, if only there was some sort of fund or almost like a sort of fannish charity that could sort of send you to a convention in America. Wouldn't it be great?" He said, "You know, you could go even if you weren't able to afford to go."

Jim Mowatt: He's very subtle isn't he, that Steve?

Liam Proven: Hang on, hang on. There is such a thing. Yes, Liam, why don't you run for TAFF? And I pooh-poohed him and Tobes went, "No, you totally should, man. It's good," and I pooh-poohed him as well and there it lay for a while. And then a friend of mine, James Shields in Ireland phoned me up and said, "Liam, you should totally run for TAFF, you know. Only John Coxon is doing it and, you know, it will be great," and I went, "No, no, I'm not sure about that." And various other friends phoned me up and they all said the same thing, that you should do it, Liam. You should run for TAFF. You've run for JETS a few years back. You know, you've done it before. You've done a fan fund before. Why don't you do this?

And I let myself get talked into it and here I am in, to my slight startlement, the biggest TAFF field since the early 90s or late 80s or something and ...

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Liam Proven: ... I appear to be in it.

Jim Mowatt: You do. Yes, yes, a four-horse race. It's going to be quite something.

Liam Proven: Yes.

Jim Mowatt: I want to ask you, do you think TAFF is still important these days?

Liam Proven: I think it is. It's something of a fannish tradition now and more perhaps in decades gone by than today, it did a great deal to sort of build friendships across the Atlantic and to get people into whole new social circles who had never met before.

But these days with the graying of fandom and with perhaps smaller numbers than in years gone by of regular fans who went to every convention going and more – maybe people just dropping in now and again. I think possibly now there is more of a need to try and actually get over there and persuade American fans that it's worth coming to a strange little old place across the Atlantic now

and again to a con and to persuade British fans that hey, maybe it's worth taking a foreign holiday in the States this year and going to a con over there. Possibly numbers are shrinking. We need to do a little bit more outreach. We need to get out there and talk to people and persuade them that this thing is actually still worth doing.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, yes, to stir up the vibrancy again.

Liam Proven: Well, I hope so.

Jim Mowatt: Yes. I hope so too. When you get over there, is there anybody in particular you're looking forward to meeting?

Liam Proven: No. I can't say that there is as a particular individual. But I've never been to a con in the States. I've never been to a con outside of Europe and I've never – I've only ever been to two outside of the UK. I was at the Worldcon in the Hague in 1990, I think, Confiction and that was terrific fun. I gophered and worked pretty hard all weekend. I met loads and loads of people and ran around like a lunatic and had a whale of a time.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Liam Proven: The Worldcon in 2005, I worked press liaison on that one and I also was involved in setting up the Young Adult Fun Activities, the YAFA Program so I'm quite used to volunteering at cons. The only other con outside of the UK I've ever been to was a small Robert Rankin-themed event in Stockholm about six years ago, seven years ago now, which was terrific fun but sort of the other end of the spectrum from a Worldcon with only about a hundred members.

Jim Mowatt: Oh, yes.

Liam Proven: So, my hope would be given that I work for myself, that I can take as much time off as I'm able to afford in America. My hope would be to spend a month or six weeks or maybe more over there and to travel around and visit as many different conventions as I can timetable into the period.

So not just to go over for the Worldcon in Reno but to go for maybe three or four different cons and try and travel around the country. I have been to the States before but I have not seen very much of it. I've been around the New York and New England area and I've been to Colorado and Denver in the area around there and that's it.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Liam Proven: I've never been west to the Rockies and I've never seen the majority of the country. So, I was hoping to turn the trip into a bit of an epic journey and try and travel around, visit as many different cities and places and people and fans as I possibly can. There are a few people that I would like to go and visit with. I do have a few friends over there. I've got a few friends in the Seattle area including Randy Byers and Dave O'Neil who's an old friend of mine from British fandom and I've got, as I've mentioned, friends in the Denver area. I've got some friends in the New York area so I would hope to sort of visit a number of the big cities, the big metropolitan areas, visit with people there and so on.

Jim Mowatt: Sounds good. The one in Seattle keeps coming up time after time. I just don't know why.

Liam Proven: I blame those swines in Redmond.

Jim Mowatt: Yes. Yes, quite possibly. Right. I was looking through your – what do you call it, statement? TAFF candidate thing. Manifesto, that's the word. And you say you've pubbed a couple of ishes. Well, I can't actually remember them myself. What were they called?

Liam Proven: Okay. Well, when I ran for the JETS fan fund which was to go to the Japanese Worldcon in '07, I wrote up a holiday that I went on. I've never been on the sort of big fannish trip but I did what was, one of you might call it sort of holiday of a lifetime, a cruise from the south of Norway right up into the Arctic to the Russian border and back which I did in 2004 and that was a rather long trip. It took about two and a half weeks. I traveled something like 5000 miles, visited 20 or 30 cities so I took my trip diary from that and edited it together into an account of sort of travelogue which came out as about a 45-page long miniature book illustrated with quite a lot of photos that I took and I distributed copies of that to – well, anybody that was interested in fandom really. I gave them away at the Eastercon that year and a couple of other cons and I gave away at the Ton in London. It's also available still on eFanzines.com. It was called *Sailing North*.

So I just did that to show people, look, I can actually write because amongst other things, I write for a living. I'm a professional journalist mainly working in the IT area but I can write and I've written and published professionally thousands of pieces so here's a report of a trip that I did. If you send me to Japan, this is an indication of the sort of thing that I will give you back in return. It went down rather well so that sort of counts in a way. It wasn't a fanzine or such. In fanzine terms, I used to be indirectly a member of an APA called Acnestis which was run by Maureen Kincaid Speller.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Liam Proven: And my then partner was a member of this but that meant that also if I wished, I was able to. So I produced a magazine for them which I sent out which was called at the time the Rent Boy Review and that went out to Acnestis so that wasn't sort of general circulation. However, I've written for other people's fanzines. I've had pieces in *Floss*, in *Journey Planet*, in *Banana Wings*, I think. Possibly in Plokta. I've had pieces in John Coxon's zine and Doug Spencer's zine and a few other places. I've also got pieces pending in James Shield's fanzine *Brick Fix* and another piece coming up quite soon for *Journey Planet* and talking to Pete Young about doing a piece for *Zoo Nation* when he does another issue of that.

So, you know, I've not done that many of my own but I've done a couple of issues of my own but I've appeared in quite a few other people's zines.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, yes, a lot more than I expected on this one. Right. I want to ask you. You were talking to me earlier possibly about this Eastercon. You've just had something that landed in your ...

Liam Proven: Yes, this has just come up. I am now running the program for Illustrious, the 2011 Eastercon at the Hotel Metropole at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre. So this is a bit of a turnup for me. I've never been on a convention committee in a formal role before. I have helped out on a couple of Octacon committees before and things like that.

The chap who was running the program has had to step down for personal reasons so I've taken over but then I'm starting with a pretty much clean slate. So, I've got a few people that I'm going to be – getting some help and guidance from, not having done this before but this is quite exciting and I'm going to be spending a lot of the next two or three months putting together a program. I've already got a list of volunteers who've offered to appear on the program and we've got some ideas because we have a couple of themes for the convention, one upon which is SF over the decades and one of which is military science fiction because the guest of honor is David Weber who's well-known for writing that sort of thing.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Liam Proven: So, I'll be putting things together along those themes but also be looking here to assemble a program about science and science fiction, possibly trying to get some stuff to introduce specific elements of fandom to people that aren't otherwise involved with those such as gaming, filking, costuming and things like that.

Jim Mowatt: Well, it sounds very daunting. I ...

Liam Proven: Yes, yes, I thought that.

Jim Mowatt: I wish you ...

Liam Proven: But hey, you know, steep learning curve but some – you know, I think a lot of people have done this kind of thing before and everybody had to do it for the first time at some point. So, in at the deep end.

Jim Mowatt: Indeed. Right. Finally, if you can round it out for me, in about a minute, can you tell the TAFF voters what kind of guy you are, why they should vote for you for TAFF.

Liam Proven: In one minute, oh my. Let me see. Oh, I'm a very genial and easygoing chap and I get on with actually everybody. I do a little bit of almost everything. I'm not particularly factional. I am, as I hope I'm coming across, articulate and can communicate and can get on well with people in various different countries. I've lived abroad and so on and I very much want to do this and there is no other way in my life as it is at the moment that I'm ever going to get to afford to cross an ocean to go to a convention.

So unlike some of the other candidates who are possibly going to cons in America this year already or have done so before, I've never done it before and I'm totally not going to be able to do it again but the only way I'm going to be able to make this trip is to do it as the TAFF delegate so I'm really hoping that I get to win.

Jim Mowatt: Excellent. Well, thank you very much, Liam and ...

Liam Proven: Very well ...

Jim Mowatt: ... I wish you luck.

Liam Proven: Thanks very much. Cheers, Jim.

[Song plays]



Graham Charnock

Interviewed via Skype

Jim Mowatt: And although he doesn't give himself a proper introduction in the song, here's Graham Charnock.

Graham, I should get straight into it and ask you. You're running for TAFF now. Why particularly now rather than any other time? You've been about in fandom for years and years and years. So ...

Graham Charnock: I have but I've been out of the loop for a long time essentially and only really got back actively into fandom, fanzine fandom at least in sort of the early part of the century and notably in 2003, I think, when I went to Hinckley Eastercon and before that, I've previously got in touch with the lovely boys from Chunga who have revitalized me and given me an appetite for writing fannish stuff again. But it never occurred to me – I honestly thought I was too old to stand for TAFF because I've always thought TAFF was a young man's game and earlier – well, later last year, I did sort of thrash around the idea when – the idea for the 2011 TAFF race was first mooted.

But hell, why not? You know, I might as well do it but then I didn't do anything about it and in the end, when it came down to Steve Green sent out a message that only John Coxon was standing and that if no one else stood, it's going to have to be called off because it's obviously no point having a one-horse race. So that was a point that tipped me into thinking well, I might sort of give it a go. You know, give John something to go up against.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Graham Charnock: And people have managed to convince me by then that sort of I was being a bit of a dreary guts about being old and ageist and what not and that actually I had some life left in me. Oh, I still got some life left in me, Dr. So I decided to go ahead with it.

Jim Mowatt: Right, splendid because it looks like it's going to be quite a lively race.

I was looking through your manifesto. It's a lovely piece of writing. Actually, I quite enjoyed it. I see you promise in your manifesto to turn into a rabid shrew and party until your balls fall off. So putting aside your free roaming testicles for a moment, why is it a shrew?

Graham Charnock: Well, so I did a fanzine *Wrinkled Shrew*. You might not remember. You were a young lad. With Pat, it gave some notoriety in its day and we were quite pleased with it and almost won an award. So shrew have always been close to my heart so they're nice little, furry creatures but can sometimes turn nasty and that's sort of – that's me really ...

Jim Mowatt: That's you, yes.

Graham Charnock: I'm terribly nice and mild but I can give someone a rabid bite if necessary.

Jim Mowatt: Oh, and do you think it will be necessary?

Graham Charnock: I don't think so. I don't think so but I think shrews are also known for being – sort of very febrile, hot-blooded, fast-moving little animals and hence, short-lived unfortunately, poor things.

Jim Mowatt: Oh, yes ...

Graham Charnock: So I thought that might be a good way to go through the American continent to get coked up, amphetemined up, whatever drugs they use these days. Not that I do drugs or condone the use of them on any level, don't do it, white lines, don't do it but just to sort of, you know, get myself psyched up, worked up and go through America on a high.

Jim Mowatt: Sounds good. Who were you particularly looking forward to meeting over there?

Graham Charnock: It's going to sound terrible isn't it, but all my old friends, guys I know. I suppose is against the TAFF ethic. I suppose you're supposed to go over there and make new friends and influence people which is also on the cards but I can't really predict so I'm going to meet and get on with and want to hang out with. The more the merrier, really and I've got a lot of old friends over there specifically in Seattle. You know, just people like Randy Byers and John Berry places like that.

I'm assuming some of those will be around at the Worldcon. If not, I can probably do a road trip up to Seattle. I'm probably – I'm really looking to make something of a deal of it and start on the east coast and go through – try and get into people like Ted White, Kurt Phillips in Abingdon, Frank Lunney, Pennsylvania, sweep right across America up through Las Vegas, call in on the Vegrants, maybe go up to Reno obviously and then onwards and upwards to Portland, Oregon where Dan Steffan hangs out up to San Francisco where I have lots of good friends like Robert Lichtman, and up on into Seattle. However that will work out or not, whether I'll have time to do it or not, I don't know. But that's an ambition.

Jim Mowatt: It's a hugely ambitious project, yes, but a lot of fine names there and a lot of people that – who will be delightful to meet.

Graham Charnock: Yes.

Jim Mowatt: So, you know, you're doing this rebirth thing as it's your second coming I suppose as a fan. What do you see as the future? What can we see from Graham Charnock in the future?

Graham Charnock: More of the same, essentially until I peg out. I'm doing a fanzine at the moment which will be my last fanzine pre-Corflu and pre-Eastercon so it's obviously something to sort of remind people in – who are interested in voting for me for Taff that I can still do fanzines. It's going to be mostly self-written so it's trying to remind people I can write a bit, to get that out in another few weeks, I hope. After that, more and more and more and more and more.

Jim Mowatt: Alright.

Graham Charnock: I do like trying to get into high profile fanzines that's why I brought up *Chunga* because it's sort of my favorite fanzine of all— should have won Hugo long ago and *Banana Wings* of course is another high profile thing I've been in with a con report a few issues back and I would like to do more for them. Anyone who will have me. Even John Coxon if he wants an article from me he can have one.

Jim Mowatt: I'm sure John Coxon would print your stuff

Graham Charnock: Yes.

Jim Mowatt: Seeing that I've got a fanzine fan here with me now, I – there's something I quite like to ask you. The Hugo Award this year, *Starship Sofa*. A podcast as a fanzine, what do you think ...

Graham Charnock: Yes.

Jim Mowatt: ... of the podcast as a fanzine?

Graham Charnock: I don't think much of it quite honestly. I'm – you know, I'm old – I'm old and I'm old-fashioned and I like paper fanzines for a start. I've grown to accept email fanzines. I think Bill Burns is doing a magnificent job in collecting all these and giving people access to other people's efanzines in his website.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Graham Charnock: So I can live with efanzines they're good and they're easy to download but nothing is ever the same as a paper fanzine.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Graham Charnock: I don't like the idea of podcasts as fanzines because they're not fanzines, are they?

Jim Mowatt: Well ...

Graham Charnock: What do you think ...

Jim Mowatt: They're a different thing.

Graham Charnock: I'll throw it back at you Jim, what do you think?

Jim Mowatt: I think they actually are. They're a different form but, you know, a paper fanzine is one thing and will be enjoyed in one way. An audio fanzine which, you know, a podcast could be an audio fanzine I think is enjoyed in a different way and I think it's just extra to add to the rich tapestry of fandom but I don't think the Hugo category, fanzine, should include both because I think they are different. They can have similar content but they are different in the way ...

Graham Charnock: Yes. Well, I'm in agreement with you and if you want to clutter up the Hugos with even more categories then, fine go ahead and do it. Electronic fanzine is okay but something that's not written essentially audio or even video, it doesn't quite do it for me. If they want to have a separate Hugo category for it, fine.

Jim Mowatt: Well, that's what I would go for, a different category.

Graham Charnock: Yes.

Jim Mowatt: Right. So you're going to do TAFF. You're going to go for it and I presume you're going to do a paper TAFF report.

Graham Charnock: Yes, of course.

Jim Mowatt: Have you got a name for it yet?

Graham Charnock: *Great American Novel*, I think is the closest thing I'm going to call it because it will probably be that big. I'll probably have to publish it on Lulu or something as a novel.

Also, what I also want to do is try chronicle it in another kind of way which is through videos and I want to take a fairly good video system with me if it comes off and if it happens I would like to invest in some really good video gear and actually do a road trip video, that's you know, reasonably semiprofessional and edited down and full of interviews with people because I did interview Chris Garcia at one of the Heathrow Eastercons and I felt that went quite well. So I would like to do some more of that sort of interviewing fans and writers in a sort of semi structured format, you know.

Jim Mowatt: Yes.

Graham Charnock: Get down face to face and do it that way rather than just stumble into a party with a video recorder and point it at someone.

Jim Mowatt: Oh, yes ...

Graham Charnock: So that's another ambition I might try and incorporate in the trip.

Jim Mowatt: Yes, it would be quite good. I was looking at that Chris Garcia video you did the other day and it – you know, I did a similar interview with Chris Garcia in audio and it – although it was good, I think we both had a similar problem in that if you're interviewing in a convention, then there's a huge amount of background noise. So although it seems a bit rude, I think often the best way is to try grab hold of the person and take them into an unused room somewhere.

Graham Charnock: Yes, that would have been my ambition with Chris though, the – well, we just sort of sat down in a bar and so, obviously got people there. I mean Max at one time came up and sat down at a table and seemed certainly unaware that we were recording and just joined in the conversation from the sidelines and I thought .

Jim Mowatt: Oh, that reminds me. It was quite funny. Steve Green did the same when, I'm in ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha and we were interviewing Dirk Maggs who has done a lot of the production on the audio for *The Hitchhiker's Guide* and we were interviewing him at Corflu and we all sat around and, you know, we got their microphone there and we're asking him questions and Steve Green wandered in and just started chatting in the middle of it.

Graham Charnock: That's right.

Jim Mowatt: It – actually, it wasn't too bad. It ...

Graham Charnock: Well, that's what fandom is about. Fandom is a casual thing, isn't it? Especially at conventions where your conversation is going on and you just wander in and sort of take part or whatever in it. If you want privacy, you're quite right. Go to – get a room as they say if there is.

Jim Mowatt: Anyway, I'll finish this up because, you know, I don't want to keep you all night. I want – just before we finish a final campaign notice of about a minute just saying who you are, maybe what you're reading at the moment or what qualifies you to be the TAFF candidate of choice.

Graham Charnock: Gosh. I'm Graham Charnock. I've been around a long time. I do lots of fun things. I'm a shit hot writer and that's why you should vote for me. At the moment, I'm reading a lot of science fiction – NOT! What I'm reading is a lovely book by Stephen Sondheim about songwriting because I also do a bit of songwriting in my own time. And, it's a lovely book I picked up with stuff that he has collected lyrics and it's just readable from beginning to end. Each song tells a story and that's what we're all about isn't it, telling stories. That's not science fiction. It has got nothing to do with science fiction but that's what I'm reading at the moment. It's all part of the great eclectic nature of Graham Charnock which is another reason why you should vote for me. Okay?

Jim Mowatt: Okay. Thank you very much Graham Charnock and ...

Graham Charnock: Thank you, Jim. I'll be seeing you.

[Song plays]

Jim Mowatt: I urge all of you to vote for somebody for TAFF and hand over lots of money at the same time. Bye for now.