

KANSAS
VIBRATOR 2.0.13



February 2015



Here we go, another month, another issue. Aiming to get this out at the end of February, which will leave only a few weeks to produce a Special Corflu Issue for distribution at the con itself. As well as this and that, there is another Corflu Progress report to produce and a Souvenir Programme Book. By the time Corflu itself rolls around I think I may resemble a dried-out shrivelled up husk, bled of all creativity and good for nothing except accepting drinks from complete strangers, pretty much what I have been for the past ten years, in fact. But never mind, I will never lose hope or inspiration as long as I have the support of you, my fellow fans. Oh, I might as well give up now, then. Now seriously, I am indebted to the small but vocal voices this fanzine seems to have aggregated around its cold crustacean shell. This fanzine was always intended to be a vehicle for dialogue, hence its monthly schedule giving people the chance to interact within it without too much fear of a delay in response.

I am Graham Charnock, I live at 45 Kimberley Gardens, London, N4 1LD. Call in any time you're in the neighbourhood. My virtual neighbourhood is graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. This issue is dated February 2015. The deadline for the next one will be March 24th. in time for Corflu 32.

THRILLING SHOPPING ADVENTURE STORIES

Where and how one shops, and what one buys, is to a measure determined by where one lives. Go back to before the fifties and life was so much simpler. If you lived in a town or a city you had a choice of *local* high-street shops to provide basic needs, or if you wanted something more exotic you could go *uptown* into a city centre. If you lived in a village and were lucky you had a local shop which carried a minimum range of goods, but might well have included fresh vegetables from local suppliers. Today, as demographics have changed, so have shopping habits, although some as always remain the same. The rise of supermarkets in the sixties and seventies, with free flat parking, and their location in cheaper sites away from urban centres, is the most obvious change. In towns and suburbs people have become accustomed to travelling short distances in their cars to do one big regular shop. They may be fortunate to also have a selection of local shops for more spontaneous needs. People in villages may also have access to a supermarket not so far away, providing they have transport, of course. In any event, their village shops have possibly become more sophisticated in the range of goods they stock, while the availability of fresh seasonal produce from local farm shops may well have become more abundant (and cheaper and fresher) even than those available in city centre sources.

Of course supermarkets differ, not so much in price these days with comparative and competitive pricing in operation everywhere, but in the range and quality of goods offered as well as standards of service, so you may still find your shopping habits determined by your location and how willing you are to travel to a supermarket of your choice rather than put up with one which is closer but with which you may be less happy. This is a particular dilemma for poor inner city dwellers like me. If I draw a circle two miles in diameter there are probably six or seven sizeable supermarkets within that catchment area. I am spoilt for choice perhaps, but that can be a two-edged sword. Supermarket X is nearby but I prefer Supermarket Y's range of fresh food. Meantime Supermarket Z is further away, but overall is cheaper, although their range of goods is not so large, and the service not as friendly. Supermarket W is further away still, and expensive, but their parking is easier. I would perhaps be better off living in a large town which has maybe only one or two superstores on their outskirts. As an inner city dweller I am also somewhat spoilt in my own particular case, by living very close to a cosmopolitan high street which has a wide range of independent retailers, possibly only lacking a good book and/or record shop. But who cares about books and records because that reflects another major change in retailing, which of course is the growth of online shopping. People living in rural areas may well feel at a disadvantage in shopping on so many levels, but online shopping at least levels the playing field. Many online shopping sources (including that Monster whose name we dare not mention) offer quick response turnarounds for orders, often with next day delivery, and these are by and large

supported by good websites which let us know exactly what we are buying. People need not feel disadvantaged in this respect as long as they have a good internet connection. But that's another story.

NIC FAREY TAKES TIME OUT FROM DRIVING HIS CAB AROUND LAS VEGAS TO TAKE ME TO TASK

You berk,

The cautionary tale of Jill is a limerick, not a clerihew.

The classic clerihew is an often satirical four-line pome, the first line usually being a person's name, no given meter, rhyming scheme AABB. Classic example:

Sir Christopher Wren
Said "I am going to dine with some men."
"If anyone calls,
"Say I am designing St. Paul's."

I've got the original Bentley collection round here somewhere, and you may recall that I've essayed some fannish ones, a couple of which Sandra (I think) used as fillos, then there was a longer article, with examples, that I did for Earl Kemp's el. There was one for you in there too, in which I played with the form slightly by adding two lines. If memory serves:

Graham Charnock
Like an old broken clock
May be right, as they say
Just two times per day.

("Oh no", says Pat,
"It's once, if that.")

Nic Farey can be found at fareynic@gmail.com

IAN WILLIAMS TAKES TIME OUT FROM TENDING TO HOMELESS PUSSIES TO... TALK MUSIC

So let's talk music.

Am I really into **The Shadows**? Well, no. But I used to be back when I wore drainpipe trousers (we all did) and laughed at a teacher who proudly related how in his youth he was so proud of his 17inch turn-ups. My mate **Barry**, who is still my mate and will be meeting at the pub next week unless he has another heart attack, was also into the Shadows. And the **Ventures**, which he played for me. I liked them but still preferred The Shads. However, this was the golden age of guitar instrumentals -this must be around 61-62- which produced two records which remain undying favourites of mine and which I know you recognise they being the sheer magic of **Pipeline** and **Wipeout!** There's a very good 60 track cheap compilation which includes several Shads tracks, Duane Eddy, Link Wray, The Chantays etc but not, alas due to still being in copyright, The Surfaris, and it's called **Rimshots & Reverb**. If you're feeling nostalgic you may like it.

Barry was into playing electric guitar. He never got into a band but he often had some sessions in the front room of a guy called Phil Smith (who left Sunderland and never came back). He brought me around one day and ensured that I would never become a rock star by virtue of the fact that I couldn't (and still can't) sing and was unable to even play a simplified bass line of **Louie Louie** (der-der-der-dum-dum-der-der-der).

But I have remained an avid fan of electric guitar (mostly rock and blues) for my entire life and will only stop being one when I'm dead. Which sort of brings me on to the topic of taste in music; or more specifically Skel's -to me, incomprehensible- total dislike of Irish music. Which is like saying: I dislike English music. Or American, though admittedly Irish is somewhat narrower in range, but not that narrow. Going the other way, I could say that I like African music. Which would be a lie. I like **some** African music which mostly comes from the north west -Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, etc. Whatever.

I genuinely can't understand anyone of our generation (and others) not liking Bob Dylan -the one undisputed genius contemporary music has thrown up- or at least some of his stuff. I've just ordered a couple of his latest albums after reading good reviews. That said, I will not be adding his latest to my collection as I never liked Frank Sinatra songs when Frank was singing them.

There, despite not even a brief mention as wahf this time, another loc.

Ian Williams can be found at ianw700@gmail.com

MIKE MEARA WAXES INSTRUMENTAL

Thank you for the new ish, which I received in paper form today (February 9th). On our return from visiting the Skeltons yesterday (February 8th). Pat informed me with more than a hint of smirkiness that over the weekend she had received the pdf of same. Clearly you have given up trying to extract a loc from me, and are attempting to get one from Pat by stealth. Good luck with that.

But I realise that this loc is vain and doomed, as I note that the deadline for such things is either 31st January (which has passed inexorably into the, er, past) or 31st February (which I feel confident in asserting will never even arrive, let alone pass anywhere). However, placing my trust in gopod to carry my words safely to their destination, I shall continue.

The Shadows were my favourite pop instro group, and still are. I was playing a selection of their more obscure stuff only a few days ago. These included "Ranka Chank" (from their RHYTHM & GREENS short film), "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Arthur" (a title which would probably not pass muster today, even as the B-side it is) and "Chinchilla" (from Cliff's SERIOUS CHARGE movie). I wonder if it's Hank who plays the tinkly piano on this one? He could certainly play piano a bit, but it could be Norrie Paramor.

Second favourite after the Shads would be the Spotnicks. It was their 1962 single version of "Orange Blossom Special", with all that echo-laden rhythm, which got me hooked, and their "In London" album was the second LP I ever bought, probably with a record token (remember them?) I got for Christmas. The solos on things like "Nightcap" and "Skintops Blues" probably aren't improvised, but sound like they could be. Any road up, it's fantastic stuff to be hearing on an early 60's pop instro album, and may even have sown the seeds for my later interest in jazz. I even like some of their vocals (unlike those of the Shads, who should have stuck to what they were good at). To listen to Bob Lander mangling the lyric of "O! Man River" through completely failing to understand what he is singing about is a rare delight even today, and certainly puts early Abba into perspective.

After them, the Americans get a look in, but not, alas, your beloved Ventures. No, for me it's the String-a-Longs and the Fireballs, and then maybe Johnny and the Hurricanes. And finally, the Ventures. They never did any proper tunes, just rhythm-and-riff stuff. Maybe that's why you like them? Even then, I preferred Duane Eddy. A schoolmate had an EP with "Rebel Rouser" on it; the EP had a gouge, doubtless caused by a dropped tone-arm, which was so perfectly placed that for years I thought the ***thump*** it produced was part of the tune.

So you see, your claim at the bottom of page 6 that I am a "dyed in the wool jazz buff" is true, but far from sufficient. My musical tastes are very, very much wider than that.

And now, a point of order. Your clerihew is not. It's just a limerick. Line three should actually be two lines. Here's a proper Clerihew:

Charnock (Graham)

If he knows the rules, does not obey 'em.

His correspondent, Meara (the nark!)

Is very much nearer the mark.

I love clerihews as much as I do limericks. If you do them right, you insult someone in such a clever way that they only want to punch you a little bit. Such is my hope.

I wonder if I can guess

Why you need a dress?

In any case, please don't wear a corset

Or they'll find bits of your tits in Dorset.

Back to music again. Fred Smith says Dylan isn't his cup of tea, which is weird, but not for your reason. Dylan has done a wide range of stuff in his long career, and now, gopod help us, Sinatra. Surely there must be something in that vast and sonorous oeuvre that fits Fred's bill? If not, he's a hard man to please, by crikey. Oh, and while I'm at it, I don't like U2 either. I couldn't care less if The Edge fakes it on a pedal, so long as it sounds good. But what I've heard, I just don't feckin' like, an' that's all she wrote.

And that ***is*** all she wrote. Goodbye for now.

Mike Meara can be found at meara810@virginmedia.com

(EDITOR:

I may not know a clerihew

From a Limerick like what you do

I just can't understand the rule

I must have gone to the wrong college)

PAUL SKELTON HAS BEEN WALKING THE DOG

Just back from Bestie's morning walk. Would have been back earlier of course if somebody could have been bothered to stir her stumps. There are no prizes for guessing the identity of the impatiently-waiting husband (waiting for the walk, Graham. I'm 67 not 17) who earlier exhorted his dressing-gowned, face-booking wife, "Have you tried switching it off and **NOT** switching it on again?"

Of course the 'stumps' referred to are not the result of the extreme podiatry advocated by Phillip Turner in your esteemed organ. Cas' podiatrist did not attend the Attila the Hun College of Advanced Chiropody. Cas does though reckon that, as she had to go every seven weeks to have her toenails cut, either Fred Smith is somewhat careful with his money or has the slowest-growing toenails in the world. Well, either that or Cas is more gullible, with a more avaricious podiatrist. One thing I must never do though is get into any sort of music discussion with Fred as I can confirm our tastes there definitely walk or dance to the beat of a different drum.

I do like some Glenn Miller, but other than that dislike 'Big Band' music. However, when anybody writes that they think some artist or performance is particularly brilliant I try to check it out. This happens a lot in crime novels as the detectives seem to spend 95% of their time listening to obscure music. So far I have invariably been disappointed, and sadly Fred's "Happiness Is A Thing Called Joe", by Frances Wayne (found on YouTube) is not the exception to that rule. To me the delivery seemed somewhat mannered and artificial. I suppose that could just be a generational thing though. I recall when Linda Ronstadt went into her Nelson Riddle sequence and I stopped buying them. Brian Robinson disagreed saying "But it's still the same great voice." True, but it wasn't the same heart or soul. She was

now singing boiler-plate (as jwc once had it in an entirely different context). So maybe not necessarily generational, just more a case of 'different strokes'.

I thought all UK folk of a certain age were into the Shadows, weren't they? They were after all from a time prior to any polarisation in Rock & Roll. I do recall their stage routine of shuffling about in formation, sorta like two-dimensional synchronised swimming but without any water. I thought I had their 'Greatest Hits' CD, but it must have been vinyl, as all the stuff I have of theirs is courtesy of Mike Meara and now on my network drive. That's where I thought my Ventures stuff was too but on checking I see that also must still all be only on LP. I'd forgotten just how far I hadn't got with transcribing all this stuff onto something to which I can currently listen.

Enjoyed the clerihew, which I might mention in passing in my LoC to *Trapdoor 31* (it sort of emphasises a point I want to make there), which I am about to finish off as soon as I get this off to you.

Paul Skelton can be found at paulskelton2@gmail.com

MRS COULIBABY (HMM, NAME SEEMS SOMEHOW FAMILIAR) WRITES A LETTER OF COMMENT

Hello My Dearest, Please i need your help

Please permit me to introduce myself, i am Miss Elinah Ibrahim Coulibaly 20 years old female from the Republic of Ivory Coast, West Africa, I'm the Daughter of Late Chief Sgt. Ibrahim Coulibaly (a.k.a General IB). My late Father was a well known Ivory Coast military leader. He died on Thursday 28 April 2011 following a fight with the Republican Forces of Ivory Coast (FRCI).

You can read more about my father in the link below:

(Editor: link deleted by reason of common sense)

I am constrained to contact you because of the maltreatment which i am receiving from my step mother. She planned to take away all my late father's treasury and properties from me since the unexpected death of my beloved Father because my mother died during child bearing and i was left alone with my step mother to take care of me. Meanwhile i wanted to travel to Europe, but she hide away my traveling documents. Luckily she did not discover where i kept my father's File which contained important documents like the will and deposit certificate of my Father's fund which bears my name as the next of kin to inherit the money in his bank account. Now I am presently staying in the Refugee Mission Camp in Burkina Faso. I am seeking for long term relationship and investment assistance. My father of blessed memory deposited the sum of US\$ 11.5 Million in Bank Of Africa here in Burkina Faso with my name as the next of kin.

I have contacted the Bank to clear the deposit but the Branch Manager told me that my late father place an instruction on the deposited fund that i must present a foreign trustee who will help me for investment of the fund.

Therefore, i decide to seek for your help in transferring the money into your bank account while i will relocate to your country and settle down with you. As you indicate your interest to help me, i will give you the account number and the contact of the bank where my late beloved father deposited the money with my name as the next of kin. It is my intention to compensate you with 30% out of the total money after the transfer for your assistance and the balance shall be my investment in any profitable venture which you will recommend to me as i have no idea about foreign investment. Please all my communications with you should be through email address for confidential purposes.

Thanks in anticipation of your positive response.

Yours sincerely
Miss Elinah Ibrahim Coulibaly.

(EDITOR: I have told Mrs Coulibaby her story has touched my heart and I will be depositing all my worldly possessions in a bank account in her name. It's the least I can do. I look forward to her settling down with me.)

DAVID REDD CAN'T KEEP UP

Vibrator 2 0 12 already? I can't keep up with this mad pace. Wisconsin? I had an aunt and uncle in Racine. They used to send over popcorn and the funnies, and we sent them "John Bull" weekly.

So to "popular*" music, which is to Vibrator as John Brunner was to Relapse. The Shadows ... I still possess a marked-down CD of their "Life in the Jungle", although it sounds more like "Life Sipping Martinis by the Palms." But then last month for £1 came into my life their "20 Golden Greats", with its non-chronological tracklist designed to mask their loss of form. This archaeology did stir a residual liking for Kon-Tiki and, surprisingly, Atlantis. Topical of you to mention the Shads. And as for Bob Dylan in your lettercol, this week he entered the album chart at No. 1. You certainly have your Finger on the Pulse of the Zeitgeist, good grief.

* A century ago a singer was arranging a concert in my grandmother's area, for which she would sing in support, and he asked her in almost exactly these words, "Will you choose popular songs or good ones?"

(Non-musical item: intelligence of dogs. In our house I saw a teenage human struggle with a door handle our Labrador could operate easily. And when I've noticed a teen male spot a female and literally pant and paw the ground, I can agree totally with Milt Stevens' "some dogs are more intelligent than some people." Some dogs are nicer too.)

Irish bands. Don't go that route. We can subdivide them into bands (groups), big bands (extinct), boy bands (sadly not extinct), brass bands (punishment for schoolkids and parents), showbands (the village-hall equivalent of cruise ship entertainers) and non-bands (everyone else in Ireland). The Emerald Isle does still produce some respectable music, but you have to be selective, and avoiding any variety of "band" Irish or not is probably wise. Personally, I avoid Glen Miller.

Thanks for the Vib. Can I go back to sleep now?

David Redd can be found at dave_redd@hotmail.com

TALES FROM THE TAXI (SIX TWELVE REVISITED) BY NIC FAREY

Well, this is all a bit previous if you ask me, guv.

I haven't even had anybody, much less that Lord Kettle or even lesser that even more decorated Floyd Mayweather in the back of the cab, although I grant you on a *very* dark night it could be difficult to tell them apart. I think Lord K is probably taller. I *just* got my Taxicab Driver's Permit yesterday, and I know that's what it is because it helpfully says 'TAXICAB DRIVER'S PERMIT' across the top, and I know it's mine because there's my name and a good-looking photo on it. This "column", as Grah may wish to call it, might end up being a one-and-only, since in a couple of ways the permit is highly provisional. First off, as a newbie it's good for 90 days only (after which I'd get the usual 12 month one, I expect), and secondly if they don't like what they hear back from both the FBI and the State of Maryland in terms of prior naughtiness, they'll summarily yank it from my pleading hands. That all having been said, (and given that I was told by the Investigator Who Deserves The Capital Letter to disclose DUIs & such, since they don't want any surprises), I'm surmising that if they really thought I was that dodgy, I wouldn't now be in possession of said permit along with the employment authorization slip, which means I get to be out on the streets plying the trade, well, soonish. What would queer it would be some undisclosed felony, accident causing injury, controlled substances, sex offenses and that, which it may surprise some snarky fuckers to know that I'm all clear on.

I've got some more process to go through: a presentation from the Union (OPEIU), then a couple of days of company training. I'm figuring on an actual start of March 3rd. I could get going quicker, but there's stuff going on at the end of the month that I can't change, so I dunno about asking for days off right when I get started.

But since Grah asked suspiciously nicely, and who doesn't like the idea of writing for an award-winning fanzine (translation: any fuckin' one I don't edit), I'll give you some background stuff which might save a bunch of boring explication later. (So, er... boring explication now, right then.)

Like a lot of your major cities, I expect, taxis in Nevada, and particularly Las Vegas, are *hugely* regulated. The list of ordinances and laws covering the things for which the driver can get a ticket is probably an inch thick, and ranges from pretty obvious stuff like having a physical altercation of any kind, down to failing to carry out a property search of the vehicle after *every* ride. Also farting out of turn, I shouldn't wonder. The biggest thing that struck me, though, was that unlike any other city I've been in (all right, not that many, but still...), you *cannot* simply hail a cab in Vegas, and it's a violation for the driver to stop and pick you up if you wave at him or her. All journeys have to originate either off a recognized taxi stand or via a radio call pick-up or booking. This is also complicated by the "medallion" system. All cabs are allocated a particular "medallion" which can limit both the geographical area and the time at which you can do a pick-up. (Drop-offs can be anywhere, though.) There's, I dunno, 20 or more of the bloody things, and anyone who's *really* interested in all the different ones can look them up on the TA website: <http://taxi.nv.gov/>. I guarantee you'll leave with glazed eyes.

The firm I'm signed up with, Yellow Cab, generally starts out the new blokes on "extra board", 12 hour standard shift, 6 days a week, starting at half past midnight. "Extra board" is where you don't have an assigned vehicle, but you show up and wait to see if there's a spare one, more or less. The implication I was given was that there usually will be. They told me that we'd start with an all-areas medallion, meaning you'll work the Strip, airport and Downtown, and possibly spend an arse-numbing amount of time waiting in line. After you've been there a bit, you can "bid" for the shifts you want, which basically just means putting your name down, then they're allocated based on seniority.

So anyway, I've jumped the hoops all right so far. Passed the drug test (any day, any time, no problem for me there), and the DOT physical, which as far as I can tell involves being able to stand up without wobbling, and pissing into a cup without coming up with something that's fluorescent green. Even Grah might well have passed it. Well, maybe not the fluorescent green part. Or the wobbling, come to that. OK, never mind. Anyway, you get a nice little certificate which you're obliged to carry around (it's a ticket if you don't, naturally), which basically says "This person is not actually dead". There are some actual TA exams, like school, but swot me did his homework. The first test when you put in your TA forms is 15 questions (either multiple choice or true/false) on the computer. I think you're allowed to miss four, but I was 14/15. The one was about a fare dispute situation, I answered (a) Contact your dispatcher, where the correct one was (a) *and* (b) Contact TA dispatch. Typically, the driver's dispatch will contact TA for you, so ah well and that. The Driver Awareness Program ends with a 25 question test, you can miss 7 of those, once again I was one off perfect at 24/25. The miss was a situation where a fare swipes their credit card, it's denied, and they don't have any cash, which apparently *isn't* intended deception like I said it was. Just a bastard.

Some of the questions (and answers) were probably intentionally hilarious. My favorite was this one:

Under which of the following circumstances can a driver refuse to take a customer:

- (a) You don't like the way he is dressed
- (b) You don't like the destination area he is going to
- (c) The trip is too short
- (d) He has blood on his hands and is carrying a knife

Answers on the back of a \$20 bill to the usual address.

By the time *Vibrator's* millions of readers are perusing this, I should actually be out and about plying my new trade, otherwise the next column will be very short indeed. (Preview: "Arse!")

APPARENTLY IT'S NOW MARION'S TURN IN THE BARREL IN THE LINWOOD HOUSEHOLD, BECAUSE JIM DOESN'T THINK HE'S QUALIFIED TO OFFER DRESS ADVICE

Thanks for Vibrator 2.0.12 which I have liberated from Jim.

I hope that your dress hunt goes well. Size measurements vary in different stores in what is known as "vanity sizing". The Bonmarche chain sell clothes for non-standard body shapes comprising separate small blouses/jackets with large size waist fitting skirts (or visa versa) that you could buy for varying body sizes. You would have to consider shoulder width instead of bust size.

Before Xmas I went to M&S to get Jim a present: a nice shirt to do the gardening – he would not be seen dead in anything smart. In the nightwear area they were selling nightshirts that would fit both sexes. Add a belt and Voila! – a short waisted dress!

Damart do dresses that I call "Mrs Merton's": pink, girly things with drop waists that flatter (not flatten) older person's bulges.

Marion Linwood can be found at jlinwood@aol.com

(EDITOR: I don't know if I could bring myself to buy anything from Damart. D. West used to live in Bingley where they were located, and I recall he once took us on the tour of their factory, pointing out with particular relish their thermal range with their extended fur lined gussets. I don't think I have ever recovered.)

NOW UNCLE MIKE MEARA'S CLERTHEW PAGE

Starting with a topical one, or outdated
if you are reading this next month.

Angela Merkel
Said "I'm sure this berk'll
"Never learn to kiss my ass."
Was she referring to Alexis Tsipras?

Eva Braun
Yearned to be a golfer of great renown.
But her game was flawed, and what really sunk 'er
Was her tendency to end up in a bunker.

St Francis of Assisi:
Why was he so surprisingly greasy?
'Cos he had a stove in his back yard
Where he rendered those animals into lard.

The Corflu Committee
Do not reside in any one city.
No - they are scattered, just like the Armada,
Making their tricky job just that bit harder.

Robert Zimmerman - later, Bob Dylan -
In the eyes of his fans went from hero to villain.
They thought his new music bestial
At the '65 Newport Folk Festival.

David Cameron
In the Commons, could not help but yammer on,
Purely because he could not stand
To listen to Ed Miliband.

R. LAURRAINE TUTIHASI HAS NOW CAUGHT UP WITH VIBRATOR 9

I enjoyed Mark Plummer's LoC even though I didn't understand half of it, not because he was incoherent, but because I'm unfamiliar with half the subjects he was discussing. Still I found the letter entertaining. That's a sign of a good writer.

I also enjoyed your version of O. Henry's "The Dream".

Since this letter is way late for your publishing schedule, I thought I would just share my mushroom and new car experiences.

My allergist advised me to eat mushrooms every day; I think it's supposed to help with the immune system. I don't like the ordinary button mushrooms, but I've been finding all sorts of other mushrooms I find much more palatable. My favourites are shiitake, but I found Portobello pretty good. One time I bought a package of mixed mushrooms, and they were not bad. I eat all of them raw in my salad. I wouldn't mind using any of them in any recipes if I found time to cook.

In January we replaced our thirteen-year-old Prius with a Honda Civic Hybrid. It was a challenge learning the ins and outs of the new car. There are differences inherent in getting a Honda after buying Toyota products. I guess it's a patent thing, or maybe it's just that Honda likes doing some things differently. I'm glad that the windshield wiper and headlight controls seem to follow some sort of industry standard. So ordinary driving is okay. The challenge was in setting the Blue Tooth and the navigation controls and radio stations. The first time my iPhone rang in the car, I almost had an accident trying to figure out how to pick up. The call rolled over to voice mail before I figured it out. The navigation system is enough like the Toyota that it's not that much of a challenge once we set things up. Undoubtedly there are things we still haven't figured out. My favourite feature of the Civic is the automatic headlight; I've always had a soft spot for that feature, which used only to come in luxury models. Our other car is a Lexus.

R. Luarrane Tutihasi can be found at laurraine@mac.com

(EDITOR: It doesn't sound as if you have any real problems with mushrooms, Laurraine. I like Porcini myself. We often enjoy a risotto with a mixture of mushrooms. I've never felt confident enough to go mushroom picking. I value my kidneys too much.)

BRYN FORTEY HAS A GRUMP AMONG FRIENDS

By way of coincidence, the same day I read the latest VIBRATOR the Shadows featured on the BBC4's TOTP repeat from the 1980s. Not the original foursome of course, only Bruce Welch and Hank Marvin still surviving from the days when they were called the Drifters, before the American group insisted they had used that name first. I do remember though that they didn't try to stop Clint Eastwood being a 'High Plains Drifter'. The Shadows played (or mimed to) 'Ghost Riders In The Sky' and reminded me how sanitized, sterile, safe and non-rock and roll their music was. I was never a fan.

Another musical reference was your dislike, which I share, of the modern interpretation of rhythm and blues. For me that particular brand of delight started around the time McKinley Morganfield applied amplification to his guitar. Some of the earlier exponents of soul certainly did come from an R&B/gospel background, but not today's insipid offerings.

Grumpy old man mutterings over for today.

Bryn Fortey can be found at brynfortey@yahoo.co.uk

FRED SMITH'S MUSINGS TAKE A MONETARY DIRECTION

In view of what you said I decided to have a listen to Bob Dylan and, guess what, he's still not my kind of music. Recently I've discovered Patti Austin in a concert gig she played in 2007 accompanied by a very good piano, bass and drums trio and singing Gershwin, Cole Porter and others in a kind of dedication to Ella Fitzgerald. Now this is my kind of music, even more than big bands. Patti would be 57 at that time and, although she started out as a rhythm 'n' blues- and sometime backing -singer she's got much more than that: intonation, rhythm, expression, dynamics, etc. She's got it all! I've accompanied quite a few girl singers myself so I know wherof I speak.

That's not the best Steve Stiles cover you've had. It almost looks like the kind of thing we used to get drawn directly on a stencil. Sorry, Steve.

Mention of the change to decimal currency reminds me that when selling calculators (before that time) I had to learn the mental conversion of £.s.d. into decimal equivalents because the machines worked in decimals. Easy for shillings but not so easy for pennies so that if one shilling (12 pence) was £.05 sixpence was £.025. Still not too hard but one penny, tuppence, fourpence and the like gets you into recurring decimals such as .00833333 and so on! So the change to decimal currency was applauded by everyone involved in money calculations.

Your article on the Shadows (No. I'm not into them!) very interesting but more so for your own band experiences. Talking of drummers, I've noticed that virtually all the pop/rock drummers I see on video or TV hold the sticks like a pair of clubs (and play them like that!) where dance band, jazz and big band drummers hold the left stick between the thumb and palm of the hand. Presumably they were taught that way which I think gives more flexibility and control.

Robert Lichtman talks of reading the Roy Kettle / Chris Evans *Future Perfect* which, as it happens, I've just finished. One thing confused me, though. There's one whole chapter that is part of a space opera (all in italics) that seems to bear no relation to the novel or, at least, is not explained in my Kindle edition. Could Roy perhaps enlighten us, or me anyway!

*(EDITOR: Steve's more casual stuff is, I think, a good fit for Vibrator. I'd somehow feel uncomfortable about reproducing some of his more ambitious full-colour work, for example. I've been fortunate in that most of the drummers I've played with have been *classically* trained and not only know what a paradiddle or a flam roll are but know how to play them. I was intrigued by your mention of accompanying singers. In what context? Do you play keyboards? I have an image of you perhaps as a suave nattily-dressed lounge pianist perhaps tinkling away in the cocktail bar of a classy hotel. Play it again, Fred.)*

Fred Smith can be found at f.smith50@ntlworld.com

MILT STEVENS CONFESSES TO HAVING TIN TONSILS

In Vibrator 2.0.12, you become nostalgic about the music of times past. People do that fairly often in fanzines. I'm only sort of joking when I say I am blessed with two tin ears. It's not that I dislike music. I just don't notice music very much. When I was a teenager teenagers were supposed to go wild for rock and roll. I responded with mild apathy. I did like folk music during the folk music era, although my voice wasn't even good enough for folk music. (I'm not only blessed with two tin ears I also have tin tonsils.)

When I was a teenager I acquired the habit of listening to music while I was driving. That habit persisted for many years. It stopped about 20 years ago when I became so involved with work that I wanted to use commuting time for thinking about technical problems. Music became an interruption. These days, the gym is the only place where I commonly hear music. I don't even know what decade most of the songs come from.

When we were doing the program for the 1984 worldcon we encountered the problem of... diverse social relationships in the science fiction field. Program guests usually got a second membership for their spouse. We realized that didn't really cover all the possibilities. We finally settled on one program guest membership with a second guest membership. That seemed to cover it.

As I understand it, husband and wife are still terms for spouses of the opposite sex. Partners is the term most used for spouses of the same sex. Of course, there are some people who become snarky if you don't use their idea of correct terminology. I refer to such people as jerks. Once I have determined that a person is a jerk, I avoid talking to them.

I'm sure you will tell us why you want to wear women's clothing in a future issue.

Milt Stevens can be found at miltstevens@earthlink.net

JOHN PURCELL PLAYS CATCHUP

So I'm commenting on your Holiday issue almost two months after the fact. Meh. Getting a letter of comment out of me these days is pretty good. I have been so busy with my job and doing a lot of music playing in recent months that, quite simply, fanzines have been rudely shoved aside. Therefore, it is about time that I try to create some space for the fanzine fix that is gnawing on my left foot.

Your impression of U2 is pretty dead-on, in my opinion, and I pretty much agree with it. I think their best years are behind them, and the band is living off of past glories. Bono certainly is. He has done some fine humanitarian work over the years, but I'm beginning to think he's a bit too full of himself. Perhaps his recent faux pax regarding U2's latest release will humble him a bit, but probably not. I do, though, really appreciate your quick overview of other Irish rock bands of note, both past and present. I remember Rory Gallagher fairly well, and enjoy his music, and I really need to check out Radiators From Space; the Pogues I know, but it is always fun to check out prior bands that folks were in. I like your description that some Irish bands' music is "best heard in Dublin pubs with a finger in your ear." I can identify with that. When I was a teenager I played in a neighborhood garage band that may not have had quality musicianship, but we could sonically peel paint off of houses. You know your band is loud when you're getting fan mail from the local University's Seismic Registry department.

But back to Rory Gallagher. Now you've got me checking through the Internet - and eventually the used LP bins at our Half-Price Bookstore - for more of his solo music. Have to agree with you, Graham: he is a fine guitarist, and like you, I always admire what guitarists can do what I cannot. So it goes.

Enough of this. I've got a fanzine to work on.

All the best,

John Purcell can be found at askance73@gmail.com

LLOYD PENNEY WRITES FOR THE SAKE OF COMPLETISM

Discovered a short time ago that I never did respond to issue 2.0.11 of Vibrator, so the completist in me says I must. And, I will.

Christmas for us saw us enter the 21st century, I guess...rather than going off to the local shops to pick up presents, everything Yvonne wanted was in a catalogue, so all her presents were ordered and paid for online, and everything came off without a hitch, she got everything she wanted, everything fit, and all were happy.

Greetings to Uncle Johnny! Some local fans I know have already diminished, but I have promised myself I will not sail Hobbitwise into the sunset. We've entered our second fanhood, and rather than conrunners, which we were for 30 years, we are now filthy dealers, selling steampunk jewelry for that wonderful filthy lucre.

Diabetes? I am on the edge. I've got my meter and test strips, but I am not taking any medication for it. My doctor says that I've just got to reduce my intake and weight, and I should be good. I've lost about 7 pounds so far, but it's difficult to exercise when it's so damned cold outside. (-40C = -40F. I know this first hand.)

Bob Dylan has issued a disk of show tunes. You have been warned. This has been a Public Service Announcement. Google up how to handle bleeding ears. Also, I wish people would stop referring to Starbucks stores and coffee shops. The hot liquid they sell is coffeish, but is too far burnt to be real coffee. Seattle fans regularly issue apologies for Starbucks, as they should.

Lloyd Penney can be found at penneys@bell.net

ROBERT LICHTMAN – YES, HE’S HERE AGAIN

Wow, a front cover – with Big Art! It’s good to see that after five issues of having to make do with a tiny space to the left of *Vibrator*’s title logo, ace artist Steve Stiles has graduated to a full page. And a lovely piece it is, following through with the unique wavering-line style Stiles has developed for use only in your monthly focal point fanzine (and so reminiscent in a way to the work of ‘50s/’60s fanartist Dave English).

By the way, your fanzine having reached one full year of regular monthly publication has led to a milestone of sorts here in my basement. Due to the “Charnock, Graham & Pat” folder having expanded well beyond maximum dimensions, a new folder “Charnock, Graham - Vibrator” has been created and inhabited – not just with these dozen issues but all of the previous incarnations in my possession: 3, 4 and 6 of the original quarto zines (which were sent to Kevin Williams), 7 and 8 in a reduced facsimile format (which I think was provided to me by Randy Byers), and the unnumbered but by far largest issue of all, *Vibrator Truly Tingling Stories - The Mysterious Affair at the Hinckley Hanover International*. Copies of 1, 2 and 5 would be welcome from any source, originals or otherwise.

Am I “really into the Shadows?” I wasn’t sure until you mentioned their hit “Apache.” That sounded familiar to me, so off I went to YouTube to see if my memory was right. I played this selection of the various offerings of that song – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qhls1k8yuPU> – and, sure enough, I was remembering correctly. I never owned a copy of it, but I enjoyed hearing it when it would turn up on the radio in Los Angeles, where I was living at the time.

“In my raw youth as a record buyer (my pocket money allowed me to buy one single a week) I was aware of the Shadows, and being a protean guitar player, their records appealed to me.” My own record-buying period started around 1955 or so, and my situation money-wise was pretty much the same as yours. I don’t need to regurgitate the whole history of that time because I already did – my article “Loony Tunes and Other Melodies,” which you published in *Bye Bye Johnny* #3. Where our stories differ is that you had an interest in playing music and followed up on it, whereas I became a fan early on and made fanzines, many fanzines. It was interesting reading your personal history that led to the Burlingtons and beyond.

In an editorial comment to Brad Foster you wrote, about your mother, “The only thing she confused was my name when talking to me, either alone, or in company with my friend. She was suffering from degenerative brain disease so I suppose that could be excused.” This reminded me of one of the last times I saw my late father before he was removed to a nursing home and then, before I could visit again, died. He was telling me about something or other, and in the course of several minutes I was me, then his friend Russ from one of the machine shops he worked in fifty years earlier, and then me again, and then a friend of his (‘Screwloose’ Miller) from the Navy back in 1934 or thereabouts, and finally me again. All of this was perfectly seamless on his part, and I let it all go by, happy only that in the end he apparently knew who he was really talking to. (Or maybe he didn’t, but I gave him the benefit of the doubt.)

You write, “For reasons probably best not gone into at this stage, I find I have to buy a dress. Can anybody, apart from Joseph Nicholas (not that I am excluding him), give me some hints? Size is the first problem.” My first (and last) thought is that Sandra Bond would be your best resource for this. Perhaps she has already responded, but if not you might seek her out since she has size problems not unlike your own.

I didn’t know I would cause an envy attack on the part of Fred Smith, who wrote, “Robert still has the dexterity to raise his foot and place it on the bathroom basin! For the cutting of toenails I go to the podiatrist which is a lot easier and only required every sixteen weeks.” If I waited for sixteen weeks, my toenails would be long enough that my socks would be in danger of serious shredding when putting them on. Every three or four weeks is about my limit. You wrote, “I’ve met Robert Lichtman and can indeed testify that he is very slim and limber for his age. I’m not sure I’d like to see him cutting his toenails though.” You’re not the only one! I perform this task, of necessity, in front of

the bathroom mirror, and it's not a pretty sight. But it is easier on my body than the alternative, which would be to lean over while sitting and attempt the task. My lower back would complain mightily. Philip Turner had the best take on the whole toenail thing, though: "There seems to be rather a lot about toenails in the LoCs. Is it too late to mention that here in Romiley, we solve the problem by having our feet surgically removed and hiring staff to do our walking about? Probably." What's the going rate for such staff, Philip?

In closing, I had a lovely "aha!" moment when I read this: "Deadline for the next issue is 31st February 2015." There is, as you probably now know, no such date – and I hope this won't be a problem for your other contributors. My delight came from having a sufficiently long-term fannish memory to recall this:

"Mercer's Day: The 31st of April. Archie Mercer once absentmindedly set a voting deadline, in OMPA, for 31 April, and Walt Willis, noting that he as OMPA President had power to deal with all emergencies ('...not just OMPA emergencies – all emergencies!') decreed that thereafter the 1st May would be known as 31 April, to be followed immediately by 2 May."

Thus, as a one-time President of OMPA myself, I declare the 31st of February to be "Charnock's Day," to be followed immediately by March 4th. I have spoken!

Robert Lichtman can be found at robertlichtman@yahoo.com

THE ONTOLOGY OF BOOKS

I've spent my professional and personal life involved with books. Buying them, selling them, yes and occasionally reading them (and even, although not so frequently, writing them).

Of course reading them came first. My parents never had any books about the house, except for the obligatory bible, so I couldn't rely on them. I had several local public libraries which I frequented with religious regularity. I say they were local but they were an expeditionary walk for a couple of miles in each case. Getting into books was also an excuse to get out of the house.

My library books were never overdue when I found I could read one in a couple of days; the problem became that even with public libraries they just didn't satisfy the collecting urge, and the urge for possession.

I must at some stage have got a small regular supply of money, probably pocket money, because I was never one for seeking employment as a teenager, so I began buying books and magazines, whenever I could. My mother had started the magazine habit with me at the almost pre-reading stage by buying a monthly magazine for me called "SUNNY STORIES", a rather well-meaning educational comic but one whose publication I looked forward to with keen anticipation every Wednesday (the anticipation that this was also *pop* day, when the Corona Van came to call).

The books and mags I acquired with my own money were of course special. I could put them on my meagre bookshelves (a couple of shelves in a built in wall cabinet my father had built in my bedroom) and not have to bother about ever returning them; they were mine to keep forever. Charles Platt once made a point of referring to public libraries as the National anal repository. At least the shit I had was all my own.

I have said my parents were not book owners, but occasionally we would visit friends and relatives in Yorkshire where they hailed from, and there was often a shelf or two of classics in these small one-up one-down mill-town homes, mostly Charles Dickens and other *worthy* writers like Jane Austen. It's true that it's grim up North and frequently I found myself seeking solace in these dusty volumes and thus got to know the repertoire of these writers,

without much enthusiasm for any of them. It must have been the first time many of these volumes had stirred from their shelves in many years.

Back home my parents had bought me two significant presents. One was an old Barlock typewriter on which I produced a school magazine which I sold for a penny a copy, and the other was a bicycle, I mean a *real* bicycle, a Dawes with drop handlebars. Perhaps they were hoping it might distract me from a unhealthy preoccupation with books, but I only used it to seek out more books, cycling down to the nearest Plusbooks shop in the Harrow Road and loading up my saddle bag, usually with pulp US sf magazines. Yes, I had progressed from taking out fantasy books like Mumphy and Moomintroll Family in public libraries, and even, hard-core rocketeer texts about early space and jetplane pioneer, to reading the Right Stuff Itself.

I also had a school friend who lived in Ealing so soon discovered in my travels the weird second-hand bookshop down Ealing Common way whose proprietor was an unsavoury grimy looking character usually dressed in a shabby raincoat. What the hell, his premises were stacked high with books and magazines. It all looked largely unsorted and untended so you got the impression that everything you turned over had never been seen before by human eye or touched by human hand. I have an idea the shop had a certain local notoriety and have a half memory that when it was closing down Greg Pickersgill was considering making an offer for its entire stock. If only.

I consider myself to be fortunate to have been born into an age when second hand bookshops were not only viable, but were culturally attractive, and the prospect of owning one was not strictly limited to people whose primary qualification was to have a private income, a hangover from publishers who also had always seemed to have needed such a qualification. For years whenever we went on holiday my first directive seemed to be to search out local second-hand book dealers.

However, I was never poor enough to contemplate opening up my own second-hand bookshop, so had to settle for being employed in a regular bookshop, independent only in the fact that it was owned as a sort of whim by a West Country publisher, David & Charles. This was The Baker Street Bookshop which was distinctly West End in showroom premises a block down from Marks & Spencer's Head Office. It did not have good passing trade, and it was not in an immediate retail environment, so if one was canny one could easily predict increasing rent renewals in the heyday of Thatcherism would ultimately be its downfall. Nevertheless, in managing it, I learnt a lot about the politics of bookselling and publishing and distribution, and about how these various aspects got their cuts from the original work of the writer. None of it was particularly attractive to me, to consider pursuing any of these aspects as a career, but what could I do? I was born to deal in books and couldn't really escape it. I went on to become a wholesaler and a distributor. Each stage it seemed took me away from a real understanding of books, and certainly quenched a lot of my love affair with them. My last employer, a trade distributor, got rid of several dump bins full of books every week, some damaged but most simply past their sell-by date. That shocked me at first, but eventually just contributed toward devaluing the book as a cultural item in my view.

At some stage I stopped reading books. Especially I stopped reading science fiction. The whole field had mutated so much from what I was familiar with that I could no longer relate to it. Old time fan Bruce Townley has taken me to task publicly about this. He even took me to his beloved Borderlands Books, in San Francisco, but seemed to interpret my less than enthusiastic reaction to it as a personal affront. It was not. It was merely a reflection about how I had changed and moved on from my own feelings about what reading books, and its importance in the overall picture, was about

Chris Priest once pointedly did a calculation about how many books he read a year and how many years he expected to live. He compared this with how many books were published every year, and ended up concluding there was no way he could make any significant inroads on this body of work to justify himself even starting reading them. And that doesn't include all those classics we all have on our bedside tables in huge piles threatening every day to collapse and overwhelm us with earnest literary endeavour. That is my view. So much is published these days, the

process of selection itself probably takes more time than actually going into a shop and buying the book involved. And of course you can't go into the shop any more. You can't pick up the physical product; you have to rely on third party reports and reviews.

I may have stopped reading books, but it hasn't stopped me buying them. I graze Amazon and buy what appeals to me. I read the preface and perhaps a few pages, and then cast it aside and graze on. That is the way I am, but it doesn't stop me gazing upon my various collections, sequestered about the house, sometimes with affection, sometimes with desperation. Every book I have acquired is a significant other in my disordered life. There can be no divorce.

BYE BYE SPOCK

It's sad that Leonard Nimoy has died, but good I guess that it has triggered a small debate about the place and importance of Star Trek in the history of sf. There was imaginative sf on radio and television of course long before ST, and it was material which touched on broader issues than *To Boldly Go*. ST quickly usurped these early expressions and quickly became what several generations subsequently thought of as the *norm* for sf, and possibly still do. Star Wars took the Imperialistic exploration theme to a bigger budget level and possibly had even more impact on the form. People have commented they found Star Trek inspirational but It's ironic that the same young people who were lapping up Star Trek when it first appeared, were campaigning against US Imperialism in Vietnam, although of course a considerable number of them were also fighting to maintain just those policies. Star Trek was truly all things to all trekkies. I'm with people like Ted White in thinking that a lot of Star Trek was very bad science fiction, and, far from being inspirational, merely dumbed down the emotional response that old-fashioned sense-of-wonder based sf had earlier generated. This argument may be developed in future issues depending on your response.

VIBRATOR BACKSIDE

So we go. So we go. Swing high me heartys, swing low, carry me off on tomorrow's tide, give me a smile, mouth open wide, tell my wife I had to go, Ho ho Ho.

So me jolly heartys another issue is laid to rest underneath the shells and stones, underneath the barnacle encrusted dry-bone bows of ships in dry docks, underneath the clams and the weed that swirls around locking my bonnie's red-haired locks. Unlock the clocks. Unlock time, take us down, where submarine bells chime. Where the sand among the shingle on the strand chatters amongst whelks and clams. Maybe I've said clams too many times, I must mention winkles, mussels and fronds where they belong.

Next issue will be a special Corflu 32 issue with a specially commissioned Steve Stiles cover that is Really Good, so if you want to be featured, start thinking about it NOW. Raise a pot of grog and email me at graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. Closing date: 24th March, 2015.

graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk

www.cartiledgeworld.co.uk

www.efanzines.com