

This Here...

“...a primitive attempt at communication” (K Huett)

EGOTORIAL

Trip journals, conreps and that sort of good ole faannish poop really fall under the general heading of “travel writing”, albeit a somewhat specialized form of the genre. Looking back over some of my past efforts, I should perhaps consider this a strength, not only because I believe

Tits, Sausages & Ballet Shoes is some of my better writing, but perhaps even more because I’ve gotten asked for conreps on a fairly consistent basis, at least during periods when I’m actively attending and writing. Although nothing so faannish ever appeared in *Arrows of Desire*, one of the earliest pieces in *This Here...* was a Novacon report, a subsequent one being requested by Doug Bell for the pages of *Head* (and, of course, written *in situ*, as was the CfAg report for *Banana Wings*). The Czechoslovakia (CZ) conrep has already been requested by The Inevitable Byers, so I suppose yar boo sucks to anyone else who might have wanted it. Sorry, Earl.

Anyways, the point of that rather self-serving bit of bollocks was to introduce the perhaps abbreviated story of my recent disastrous trip to Tennessee (see *Mockingbird*, herein).

The ‘olidays worked their usual insanity on the Farey household, but I can report emergence of all parties mostly unscathed. I was lucky enough to have my son Thomas here for most of Xmas Day, one of the few times, to my detriment, I actually get to spend any time with him. As I

type these words, BB, suffering as are we all from the depredations of the same cold/flu we’ve all got, and got again, is dealing with a long weekend brought about by the convergence of MLK Day and Obama’s inauguration, which of course dominates the airwaves at the moment, though the Cartoon Network happily decided on a *Powerpuff Girls* marathon yesterday in advance of the complete episodes DVD release on January 20.



The fannish recasting of popular culture icons such as these is always a fun pastime (“and it’s Traditional!” © Tobes). Fairly obviously Lilian Edwards is Blossom, and I’d suggest Max as Buttercup, but in thish’s piece of loc whoring I’ll invite suggestions for Bubbles...

Still on the subject of TV channels that Sheryl Birkhead doesn’t get, I managed to miss the season finales of *Stargate: Atlantis* and *Sanctuary* by virtue of being in the caravan in Tennessee that night, and have yet to find the online reruns. Hopefully they’ll either repeat on TV or I’ll discover them somewhere before *Heroes* starts again after the Superbowl. Proving its rep as a home for out-of-work *Star Trek* actors, and perhaps showing a sense of timeline, the show now moves

from the classic series (George Takei, Nichelle Nichols) to *TNG* with the casting of Michael Dorn.

It’s all good.

Nic Farey, January 2009

MOCKINGBIRD

I bought a caravan (US: "camper trailer") a few months back, and it had been sitting at my old boss Tyler's place while I was waiting to find someone who's be willing to tow it to my place in Tennessee for a sum of money I considered less than fuckin outrageous - I put an ad on Craigslist and one bloke wanted \$900!



Not mine, but a very similar (and smaller) one

Anyways, I finally made an agreement with George, who's a mate of former employer & current landlord Mike (and in one of those small county synchronicity things, George's missus does BB's hair, and they both just bought the house behind our old domicile in Kenwood Beach).

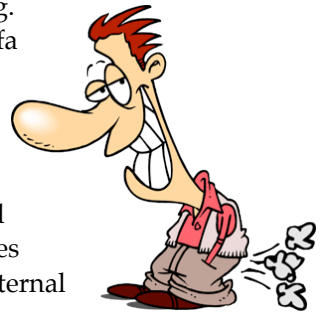
We set off early Sunday morning, after moving the box to Saint Leonard Saturday night from it's previous location in Tyler's yard. The cold and clear start assured us of arrival in daylight, but little was I to know at that point that this would be the best weather I'd see all week. Apart from taking a TomTom induced mild change of direction, the trip down was happily uneventful, except for our rather conspicuous failure to get lunch at Cracker Barrel, which in Southern tradition was jam-packed at 1pm with a half-hour wait to get seated. These minor travails aside, we got to the land around 4, more or less as we'd expected, found a level spot for the caravan, unhitched and prepared to hit the shops.

George and his buddy were planning to leave out on the Monday morning, so I'd previously trawled craigslist for one of those li'l 49cc scooters (which do not need to be tagged or insured and so forth, or so I was told) to tool around on while I was there, since I'd planned to do useful stuff like pulling a permit from the power company, titling the trailer in Tennessee and the like. However, I'd failed to

check the laptop battery the night before we left and so couldn't check emails or messages all that day (and most of the next, as it turned out). I'd found a decent deal from a bloke in Bristol, and the plan was to either pick the thing up on the way down, or have George drop me off on his way back to get the thing.

Back to our early evening shopping expedition, which apart from getting in the usual essentials (beer) meant looking for a generator so we could get power going (ideally including some heat, since it was forecast to be freezing or below). Since the local Super Wal-Mart was not sufficiently Super to carry such an item, we todded off to Lowe's to peruse their selection, settling on a fairly honkin' 8000W John Deere unit for \$800. With this and the propane backups (heater & light) from WallyWorld, a pack of cards and beer, you had to figure we were well set. We got gas for the generator, got back & filled 'er up - it was pretty much dark by this point, but George being an auto mechanic had all kinds of flashlights & stuff, so we plugged in and...

Nothing. This caused George to flit about between the generator and the caravan fuse box until we hit upon the idea of plugging in my phone charger to see if John Deere's finest was actually - er - generating. Apparently not. So, we hunkered down with a couple beers and a little propane heat and light, figuring we'd go exchange the thing in the morning. George's mate cranked out the sofa bed, and being nice I gave him the big bed (because he's a big bloke) and scrunched myself into one of the bunks. Actually it wasn't too bad, despite being cold outside, with three big hairy blokes snoring and farting to keep the internal temperature up.



This is the bit that's supposed to go "the next day dawned bright and clear", but it didn't, so it doesn't. Cold and drizzly, we loaded up the no-good generator and headed off in search of the breakfast I'd promised the lads, finding a Hardee's where George was surprised and well pleased to discover a pork chop and gravy biscuit. "Southern breakfast at it's finest", I observed, content with an orange juice. No problem exchanging the generator at Lowe's, after a bit of Q&A along the lines of: "Why are you returning this generator?" "Well, it doesn't actually generate anything except exhaust fumes." We also stopped at an RV place not too far from my land, and John Deere paperwork and caravan booklet in hand, we attempt to discern what we need for an adaptor to make sure we've got the right thing going on. The adaptor lead turns out to be \$50, which I quickly calculate at about \$6.25 an inch, musing that this

would be a decent deal for the frustrated little old ladies of the region.

So back we go, and through the process again, but this time in a murky daylight at least. We have the nous to check out the generator first with the phone charger - seems to be all right - and we plug in again with the new & improved configuration.

Nothing. It occurs to George, at least, at this point that we might still be doing something wrong, and hope we haven't blown up the electrics in the 'van. Who'd have thought there were several *wrong* ways to hook the fucker up, but apparently there are, and we have been exploring several of them. George has to leave to get back to Maryland, so I'm left with a partly-charged phone, a dead laptop, our second dead generator but, thankfully, ample beer & cigarettes, and more importantly the phone number of the cab driver I used on my last couple visits. I'd also taken the precaution of bringing the local phone book (which I'd been given by my realtor), so I started calling hotels. If I didn't get somewhere with power soon I was gonna be pretty well cut off from civilization.

Managed to get hold of the Hampton Inn and Don the cabbie before the phone died, and amid increasingly worsening weather got to the hotel mid-afternoon, more than ready for a hot shower and some decent nosebag, not to mention charging up the now-dead phone and the already-dead lappy. The scooter bloke from Bristol had, of course, emailed me, so I got back in contact with him to make tentative arrangements to get there and pick the thing up. He offered to get someone to truck it down, which in retrospect would have been a *much* better idea as it turned out, but I wanted to make sure I saw the thing first in case I changed my mind about it.

The next day was all about the weather, which was horrible. Spent most of the day looking at Accuweather forecasts, looking out the window, exchanging emails with scooter bloke and concluding that I wasn't going anywhere much til Wednesday. My friendly cabbie agreed to come out with his truck so I could return the *second* generator to Lowe's. A few phone calls had determined that certain bits inside of the first one (and presumably the next) had in fact *melted*. I even got a guy to come out and test the thing (mo' money), as well as conversing with guys at Lowe's and the RV joint. Thanks to Lowe's return policy I was gonna be all right to return another generator, but I didn't think they'd do that a third time. Having fucked *both* John Deeres out of their stock, I downgraded slightly to a Troy-Bilt, though that had an automatic

starter on it. The RV place helpfully took back the \$50 lead ("I'm really not supposed to") and exchanged that for a \$10 one which is supposedly what I really needed all along. Back to the 'van to set the *third* generator up, and I am understandably a bit reluctant to plug this one up, so I just attach the medusa lead provided and run it through a window so I can at least keep the lappy and phone charged up. I book a room at the Days Inn Bristol, a few miles from scooter bloke, and await Don the Taxi.

To Bristol without much incident except to note the diminishing contents of the wallet at this point - I still need to carry \$600 cash for the scooter, but I still have it. Find the hotel, no problem, get settled in, ask about a place to buy beer (gas station a block down) and head over there. Symptomatically, since the whole trip has hardly gone according to plan so far, they have a machine which scans your driver's license for age verification, required for any and all purchases. It takes but a moment to find that the Green Card does *not* work the same way, and I am obliged to trudge another 4 blocks (and back), though I do clock a Mexican restaurant which I am assured by gas station people is pretty good, something I agreed with after eating there that night.

A couple of emails & phone calls with scooter bloke, and he'll pick me up in the morning to take me to his house to get the thing in the morning. That dawns cold and snowy, but being satisfied with my purchase I plonk on the helmet (included) and beetle off back to the hotel, albeit with no gloves or scarf, ensuring that I arrive back half-blind and with frostbitten fingers. Accuweather suggests Bristol is going to get snow in the afternoon, so I decide to stay another night.

Accuweather lied their asses off. The afternoon was bright and clear and might well have been a better time to ride the 40 miles or so back to Chuckey. Next morning was fearful cold - I went back to the gas station for work gloves, also figuring I could stop at the Wal-Mart a few miles down the road for a scarf & such. No such luck. After a sputter where the scooter died & took a half hour to get started again, with a quick time out to a nearby Dollar Store to get more

gloves to put over the other gloves, and finding Wal-Mart with no scarves to be had, and *another* stop at some kind of outdoor store for something scarf-like, and a quick stop in Johnson City to readjust the bag bungeed to the back of the seat which had become un-bungeed after hitting a couple of bumps, I am happily, if coldly, beetling down 11E at a fair clip. The scooter is not renowned for Maserati-like performance but gets up to 50mph or so on a downhill.



JOHN DEERE

"...and the fucker sank!"



Still life, my stuff...

The inevitable happens - I get pulled over. According to the somewhat grumpy Washington County deputy, all I have been told about the freedom to ride 49cc scooters about the highways of Tennessee is total hooley. He keeps me standing in the cold for at least a half hour until I am handed three citations: no tags, no insurance, no license (the latter possibly carrying a year in jail) and a court date of February 18th in Jonesborough. I politely ask what the procedure might be to get a tags for the thing, since there is no actual title document. He has no idea, but with an air of grim seriousness probably hiding sadistic delight he informs me that I *must not* ride the scooter. It's at least 10 miles from where I need to be, and approaching noon. I prepare myself for a long push, but not before the scooter itself, as if in resignation, topples off the stand and smashes one of the wing mirrors.

I start to push down the highway, which is rolling. Uphills are rough, but ameliorated somewhat by coasting downhill once over the rises. After a couple miles a welcome piece of Tennessee hospitality arrives in the form of a big blue pickup truck. "Saw ya pulled over back there earlier - need a ride someplace?" Turns out he doesn't live far from my land at all, and happily drops me right there. One last push gets the scooter to its resting place, I fire the new generator back up, still not plugging the camper in tho, and start trawling the Yellow Pages for lawyers. I find a likely prospect and call to arrange a consultation, which it appears can be done that very afternoon. Another call to Don the Taxi secures my ride into Greeneville, and I tell him I'll call when I'm done.

A helpful consultation and \$500 later I am back on the street, satisfied at least that I'll have solid local representation at court, Don is recalled to scoop me up and drop me at the Super Wal-Mart where I can get supplies,

and a pedal bike to cover the 8 miles or so back to Chuckey. I acquire a Mongoose 7 speed which handily has a little rack on the back and I get a basket for the front, a multi-tool to attach same and a cable lock. Fitted, kitted and secured, I amble back in for some groceries to fix a bit of dinner, then back out to rediscover the long-lost joys of pedaling. Again, the uphill are uphill to a point that I have to get off and push. I recall that I do have some beers back at the 'van and make another stop for a bag of ice, which I figure out how to strap to the back by wrapping the cable lock around. Some pushing and pedaling later, I arrive back just as it gets completely dark.

Still reluctant to test plugging in the 'van, I once more crack a window and run leads through from the generator. I have the propane camp light and a small amount of heat, a snuggie blanket and heavy sleeping bag. The stove, of course, works because the propane tanks are full, and I manage to conjure a fry-up which is only half nasty but fills a hole. The forecast is for cold, and this time they're right.

I wrap up well and fall asleep after some Grisham, only to wake at some ungodly hour, feeling chills despite my extensive wrapping. I begin to consider whether I'll in fact be able to do *any* of the things I had planned for the beginning of the week, at the beginning of the following week. This would be going to the power company to pull a permit for onsite supply, and getting the 'van titled properly for Tennessee. I also consider biking over to the main part of Chuckey town where there's a big weekend flea market. Despite managing to take a picture of a lovely sunrise, the cold rain soon sets in, rendering me unlikely to be going out to get anything on a pushbike, including more gas for the generator, which I am still reluctant to plug the 'van up to.



Mid-morning finds me single-minded to the extent that the only thought I have is "Fuck this!" Having already spent way too much on the week, I decide I might as well decamp back to the Hampton Inn where at least I can weigh my

options in warmth and comfort. Don the Taxi doesn't work weekends, and this is now Saturday, but I get another taxi number off the hotel, pack almost everything and head out. It's still cold and wet.

I get take-out from the next-door restaurant which is pretty good, and settle down to football (this being a playoff weekend) and attempting to plan. Do I remain for a few days, try to get the permit & title situations done? Do I try to get back into the 'van. Will the weather co-operate? Answers to all of the above: no.

I start to look at the Greyhound schedule for Sunday night overnight to DC, and after the third time they fail to sell me a ticket realize that the Greeneville stop (which is actually in Mosheim several miles away) has no ticket office (which I *knew*), and so you can't buy online at short notice for a will call. I have *so* had enough! In the continuing spirit of "Fuck this" I book a flight out of Tri-Cities airport for first thing Monday morning. A quick layover in Atlanta and I'm back in DC in more than enough time to snag the commuter bus which will boot me out behind BB's work about half an hour before she gets off. What the hell, it's only another \$350 (for which I could have flown from DC to Seattle and back three times). Madly, I looked at the first class availability, and was surprised and pleased to find I could snag first class from Atlanta to National for only \$20 or so more. Sold! At least I'd have a slightly more comfortable outro to this disastrous trip.

Not. The Tri-Cities departure was delayed three hours. My rescheduled connection at Atlanta bumped me back to coach. Missed BB's quitting time by a mile, and finally got back to Saint Leonard around 7pm.

Fuck this.

RASSLIN'

As the Sainted One's eyes glaze over, the *Rasslin'* column begins...

Unlike the Mitey Arnie The K (unless he's changed his mind about them), I'm not at all a fan of either of the Hardy brothers, Matt and Jeff, or Mutt and Jeff as they would likely be christened by more cynical Brits. Both do terrible promos, both have made a reputation based on "high-risk" spots (i.e. a lot of leaping off the ropes and missing) and both appear to have gone to the same grimacing school and graduated *magna cum laude*, which means their matches more often than not consist of them getting whupped around the ring and hideously overselling the other guy's moves until some lucky break allows them to turn the match and score the pin and limp off carrying expressions of great pain, though possibly not as much pain as a cold-eyed appraiser might endure in watching them.



The Pretty Boy

Both were holding titles until recently. Pretty Boy Matt (the more muscular of the two) had been sent to ECW for a program there which resulted in his winning the ECW Championship from Mark Henry (who he never actually pinned to get it), but recently lost the strap to newcomer Jack Swagger. Jeff the Freak, incredibly, got the WCW Championship from Triple H in what was a surprise result to everyone (well, presumably except the bookers), especially since the air was rife with

stories about him reeling around airports pissed out of his head, not an activity usually found to be endearing to the powers that be. The next WWE pay-per-view event, *Royal Rumble*, will probably have taken place before you read this (but after I write it), and Jeff is scheduled to defend against Edge. A segment in last week's *Smackdown* related an auto accident in which Hardy and his girlfriend had been involved, and a pyro "accident" at the end of the show left him being stretchered off, perhaps setting him up for a loss or at least an inability to defend (this might suggest a hitherto unreported "violation of policy" by the Freak, meaning that WWE would have to set up some business like this



The Freak

to explain an absence due to suspension). The car accident piece, made up to look like police video, had all the hallmarks of a work, so I suppose we'll see (or, indeed, will have seen). Needless to say, both Hardys are hugely over with the fans, of whom I continue to despair.

(Note to the uninitiated, except Plummer who hasn't even got this far: a "work" is essentially a situation which is a storyline element, pure and simple. A "shoot", conversely, is a piece that reflects the true situation.)

Anyways, as promised, this column I'll talk some about Jeff Jarrett's TNA promotion, currently airing Thursdays 9pm-11pm on Spike TV here in the States. More specifically and by the kind prompting of John Purcell, I'll be commenting on their womens' division, the "Knockouts".

Smart move by Double-J to adopt "Knockouts" as a descriptor for his woman rasslers, and call their strap the "Knockout Championship". In rasslin' parlance, a "knockout" is a woman performer who *can* actually wrestle, or at least hit moves and spots with credibility. "Knockout" wrestlers were either old-school and retired or pretty much just working the independents until TNA brought them back into the limelight. WWE's "Divas" are renowned for their lack of actual wrestling ability (with one or two exceptions), being chosen and promoted more for their ability to get on the cover of *Playboy*. TNA goes so far as to parody this with some success with its team of Velvet Sky and Angelina Love, "The Beautiful People", who are thoroughly vain and disliked. The recent storyline with them fawning over "Governor Sarah Palin" (incidentally played very well by former WCW stalwart screamin' Daffney Unger) and submitting to hideous makeovers, shoveling cowshit and enduring all sorts of grief in the belief that they were going to be among the elite and ensconced in the White House. Yes, they do play them that stupid. This storyline had its denouement last week with a *Carrie*-style dumping on Angelina and Velvet in center ring and the revelation of the hoax to them. Although it may have overstayed its welcome a little bit, the parody of both the vacuity of WWE divas at their worst *and* of "The Simple Life" I thought was generally well done. Perpetrators Roxxi and Taylor Wilde came out to castigate the Beautiful People, and in an excellent line as part of criticism of their preening, Wilde shouted, "We're *Knockouts*, not *Divas*", getting a good pop from the crowd. Sky and Love, though, in common with TNA's other female talent, can actually wrestle, so I also give them great credit for their participation with this angle.



Kong chokes Gail Kim, *Against All Odds* PPV, 2008

The Knockout Division is dominated by top heel Awesome Kong, and the continuing problem has been finding credible opposition for her. Arnie has noted several times in

his online columns that the departure of Gail Kim left a huge gap in the roster, but while there is no denying that the loss of Kim took away one of the most effective women wrestlers of the current crop, there *is* sufficient talent to challenge Kong's dominance, though I do feel many of the knockouts have been handled and promoted badly. A big surprise was the push for Christy Hemme, formerly of WWE and, hem-hem, *Playboy* model, as a serious contender for the title. Hemme was said to be taking all this very seriously indeed, and was being trained intensely by A J Styles. She had wrestled a couple matches against Kong, following the fairly standard format against a (much) larger opponent of getting her off her feet and onto the mat and using speed and agility against brute strength - in other words, a copy of Rey Mysterio's entire career. Hemme, however, suffered a genuine training injury before her scheduled title match at the *Genesis* pay-per-view, and I'm inclined to think that her short actual wrestling career may likely be over as a result, since despite her best efforts I doubt she has the durability of others who've been doing this stuff for years.

Hemme's match was replaced by a cluster brawl intended to determine a new #1 contender for the title, with the result going to ODB. Having played up the more humorous aspects of ODB's character in recent months and giving her a more disheveled trailer trash look, TNA now has just three weeks to restore her credibility in time for the next pay-per-view, *Against All Odds*, which in many ways is shaping up to produce some changes. Kong tends to have extended absences from time to time as she wrestles frequently in Japan and is enormously popular there, so if she's about to embark on another far eastern trip the title *will* need to change hands. ODB was always one of the more likely knockouts to be able to stand up to Kong in terms of size and strength.



One Dirty Bitch

The obvious problem has been, not so much in finding, as making credible opposition for Kong, a problem TNA has perhaps made worse by the creation of the heel "Kongtourage" which now includes Rhaka Khan and Sojourner Bolt as well as Kong's perennial sidekick Raisha

Saeed, although admittedly this has allowed matches which give the *appearance* of reducing Kong's air of inevitability when any of these get beaten. I think that TNA has really wasted Roxxi, despite her having been touted as a true hardcore knockout - she seems to have to job whenever she's fighting a singles match against one of the heels, or at least that impression is given. There are consistent rumors that TNA is interested in Ms. Chif, a popular wrestler in the independents, but unless she came in as a heel her arrival would be tantamount to showing Roxxi the door.



Ms Chif

There *are* a couple of credible knockouts hidden among the crush of divas over at WWE. It must be galling for Beth Phoenix to have to sell some of the hugely lesser "talent" over there, but since she's having a good extended run as heel champion I doubt it's likely she'd jump. The other notable I think would work well in TNA is the Brit Katie Lea Burchill, who also as a heel has to job to the pretty things more than ought to be the case. WWE is showing signs of having it's female division attempt to wrestle actual matches rather than engage in scantily-clad callisthenics, but even with Kong's dominance, there's no doubt TNA has the far superior product in this area.

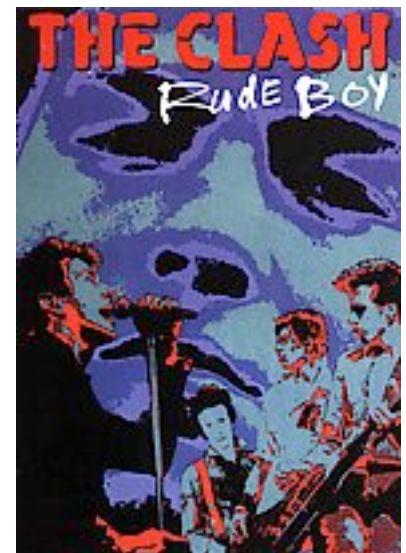
THE TAO OF RAY GANGE

BB's niece Jennifer, who now lives and works in Boston, is something of an Anglophile, especially when it comes to music. She certainly knows of my particular all-time greats of The Who (greatest rock band the universe has ever witnessed) and The Clash (second greatest rock band the universe has ever witnessed, and not by much either). What wouldn't I have given to have been in New York in 1982 when The Clash played as main support to The Who at Shea Stadium! (I'm actually listening to the live version of *Clampdown* from that show as I type this, courtesy of The Clash official website. Mind you, Terry Chimes was back at the drum stool by then, so not the ideal lineup...

Anyways, Jennifer usually manages to come up with something Who-related or Clash-related for a Chrissy gift, but as she pointed out last year, it's becoming increasingly difficult to come up with stuff that I haven't already got. We had this problem previously when she'd bought me the special edition re-release of *The Kids Are Alright*, but got tipped off by BB that I'd pretty much rushed out & got it already. For this reason I'd deliberately *not* bought *The Who at Kilburn* DVD released this November - this restraint is all the more surprising because that was the show filmed for the *Kids* movie, though ultimately not used, but more to the point, *I was there!!!*

Still, I digress (frequently, as digressionist *extraordinaire* A J Sullivan has observed - and inevitably giving rise to the further aside that when I see the name "A J Sullivan", I often feel it seems like it should be followed by something like "10ov, 2M, 3-66"). The point is that this year I got a Borders gift card, with enough on it to get the recently issued Clash coffee-table book (although that's really a denigrating description for that fine tome), and something else as well.

In the back of my mind the "something else" was almost certainly going to to *Rude Boy*, the almost universally panned 1980 movie featuring the Clash and - er - other people and - er - other stuff. The band hated the film so much they had 'I don't want no Rude Boy Clash film' badges made up before it was released. There are a couple of DVD versions available, but the one I ended up with turned



out to be a wise choice. As if recognizing the rotten tomato status of the effort, the menu has an option which skips the movie bits and just plays the Clash music bits, which are as absolutely dead good as you'd expect, including a couple of "I was there!!!" moments, most notably the Rock Against Racism concert in Victoria Park, where the execrable Jimmy Pursey of Sham 69 shoved himself in as guest vocalist on *White Riot*, and I cannot be seen since I'm by one of the trees you can see *way* back there.

An imdb user posting sums it up as "awesome concert footage - terrible movie". After my recent re-watch though, I'm more inclined to agree with Joe Strummer, quoted from *The Clash* book:

"That film looks pretty good today, although at the time we fell out pretty badly with the filmmaker. After we saw it I don't think we really understood what he was going on about - maybe we got fed up with him, maybe we were all fed up with each other, having to travel around together. It all became messy in the end. But I think the film stands up well."

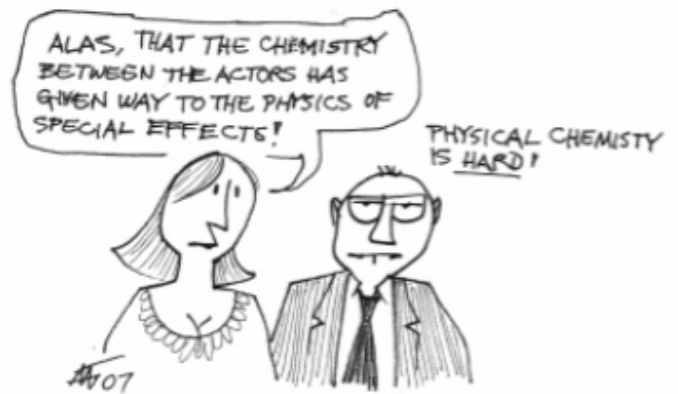
There is a definite sense of confusion about the piece, which also runs a lot longer than you might expect at a tad over two hours, but I've come to realize that the confusion of the movie quite accurately reflects the confusion of the times. Filmed through 1978 and early '79, this was the time of the fall of Labour and the rise of Thatcher, the National Front (for non-Brits, they were a *way* far right political party), the opposing Anti-Nazi League, marches and demonstrations, the police going crazy at the Notting Hill Carnival (the events that inspired *White Riot*) and so on.

And *I was there!!!* 1978 was right in the middle of my college years (at LSE), and it was no exaggeration at the time to say that many of us felt that there was a *movement*, a huge reaction against, among other things, the high levels of unemployment, or to be more accurate the unavailability of *meaningful* work (as documented in *Career Opportunities*), the excesses of Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee contrasting the pallor of most people's everyday lives, and the rise of right-wing elements, which with a little dilution, gloss and bullshit resulted in the election of Thatcher and over ten years of Tory rule which made my decision to leave for the USA an easy one. If *Rude Boy* is disjointed, hard to understand and in places violent, so was 1978, so in that sense it's a remarkable record of the times.

The extras on the DVD version are, for once, well worth a look. There are four extra bits of Clash concert footage, and most interestingly, substantial interviews with both filmmakers Jack Hazan and David Mingay, as well as Clash road manager Johnny Green and the *Rude Boy* himself Ray Gange. While Gange is mostly dismissive of the movie (Green is somewhat kinder), both offer fascinating insight

into the process of the film and indeed of the time it was made, as well as some fine reminiscences of the band.

Once and future Clash manager Bernie Rhodes, who had been sacked by the time the movie came out, cynically (and bitterly) observed at the time "This film was supposed to show how The Clash changed events. Instead it showed how events changed The Clash..." That's one interpretation I suppose, but I prefer to see it more as a record of how the powers-that-be operate a system of containment to suppress anything that might challenge their comfort and well-being. It is surely not accidental that *Rude Boy* begins with the Silver Jubilee and ends with the election of Thatcher.



LOCO CITATO

[[Editorial comment looks like this.]]

From: 4030 8th Street South, Arlington VA 22204, USA

December 10

Alexis Gilliland writes:

[...] Seeking stfnal comments you post the table of contents for "The World Treasury of Science Fiction". Lots of luck in getting input beyond what people have been reading recently. What have I been reading recently? At Albacon, in October, Lee bought the seven volumes of Phil and Kaja Foglio's *Girl Genius* series that I read, and thoroughly enjoyed. Google *Girl Genius* on your computer, and you can not oprly read the first seven volumes, but also volume eight, which should be available in hard copy by Christmas. First rate entertainment, and although it is a sort of a graphic epic novel it is still great cartoonish fun with lots of jokes. Academics wouldn't like it though, because it makes fun of them. Is it science fiction? Well no, more fantasy with a tip of the hat to science. As Agatha Heterodyne, the heroine, says: "Any magic, sufficiently analysed, is indistinguishable from science."

[[I haven't thought about Foglio in years! I looked over the website and immediately re-recognized his unmistakable style - good stuff indeed! I like the way he manages to pack in a lot of detail while the drawings still seem very clean and clear. I was also reminded that Foglio had illustrated (and adapted into comic book form) Robert Aspin's 'MythAdventures' series. I hadn't realized that Aspin died in May 2008, apparently in bed reading a Terry Pratchett novel. Make up your own snark for that one...]]

Philosophy and TV wrestling? Well, you give them both about the same space, and I regret that I have nothing to offer about wrestling. However, we note that Aristotle was condemned to death for "corrupting the youth of Athens", because his students kept trying to overthrow the Athenian government, which suggests that Aristotle was either one hell of a teacher or very selective about his students, though a case could be made that he was a social climbing jock sniffer. The modern reader sometimes has difficulty following these ancient arguments. To the question: Which came first, the chicken or the egg, the modern answer, informed by evolution, is that the egg came first, since here were eggs long before there were chickens. The notion that the "idea" chicken preceded the real chicken and the real egg gets confused with the Gaussian distribution curves of all the properties of all the chickens that were ever measured. The Platonic chicken, then, would be a breed like the sixty or so breeds currently listed, and should go well with dolmades, and retsina. The Platonic fan would appear to be similar, one clique among many, all having similar characteristics but slightly different interests. The proclamation of a "Core Fandom" in which the declarer is prominent is rather similar to Plato's Academy advising the citizens of Athens on how they ought to govern themselves.

From: garcia@computerhistory.org

December 12

Chris Garcia writes:

Shot through the heart, and you're to blame, darling you give love a bad name.

Sorry, I've been listening to a lot of 1980s hair metal. It's not as bad as folks make it out to be. Truly it was a good time to own stock in hairspray. Now, it's not a good time to own stock in anything. Luckily, I have no stocks to have fail (aside from 10 shares of WWE that I bought at their all-time low!) and no savings to lose. Truly, I was ready for this downturn.



Rhaka Khan - unwanted by C Garcia

And what I wouldn't give for a finch of eh, I can't complain.

I read Greg's note in *Banana Wings* saying that there were so few zines that'd done 35 issues. I've done one zine that broke 35 (the Drink Tank, now hovering around 200), co-edit one that's nearing 80, and put out just over 100 other zines in total. That's a crazy number when I think about it. I've done more than 350 issues total. That makes no sense to me. I think a list of zines that've gone more than 100 would be pretty small (I know of Horizons, VFW, Vanamonde and MT Void).

[[Well, lets see: Ansible is of course over 200 right now, although some people don't consider it to be a fanzine as such (notably Dale Speirs, per his excellent piece for the lamented nichevo, and who has surely pubbed well over 100 issues of Opuntia). I think Henry Welch is there or almost there with The Knarley Knews, and File 770 has hit the mark. The various publications of the BSEA are well over 100. A cursory trawl of the Pickerslist also yields Checkpoint, Cloud Chamber, Derogatory Reference, Erg, Rambling Fap, Thyme and Yandro...]]

I sleep very little. It's sad. I like sleeping, that's where I'm the Detective and Miss Traci Brooks is the leggy dame come to my office about her jerk of a husband, but I seldom get to sleep much between all the other little things I do. It's a sad thing, but when I get a full day and night to myself, I'll usually doze while having DVDs on. Recently, WWE Long-form Biography DVDs have been my dozing films of choice.

[[Traci's all yours chappie. I'll take Roxxi and/or Rhaka Khan...]]

The integration of fannish and mundane life is easy for me, I think I have the job that is most receptive to fandom that there could be outside of being a bookseller, but there are others who have those multiple lives. Kevin Roche is a good friend of mine who gave a great example at the SteamPunk Convention a while back. He showed up in a button-up shirt and slacks. He seemed slightly out of sorts and after a bit of chatting and one lap around the Dealer's Room, he disappeared for about half an hour and returned wearing a mesh shirt and pants with cut-out sections at the thighs. "Now I feel like myself" he said. "I didn't have time to change between work and here." For me, it's just my life. I push everything together to make sure I don't miss anything in any of the worlds I

play or live in.

Speaking of worlds I play in, the WWE of today ain't bad. The talent is at a huge level right now, with Morrison being one of the most talented wrestlers the WWE has had in years, and guys like Evan Bourne and Rey Misterio having great matches. Finlay's always been a big talent. Shelton is a personal fave because he is so dedicated, but he's never been given that big moment. I think that the run-up to Shawn Michaels retirement will be good stuff if the rumors of a title run are true. I wanna see him go out like Flair should have back in 1990.

[[I just wanna see Michaels go out. Period. Won't happen though, I'm sure. I agree with you about Shelton Benjamin who is an excellent worker but never seems to cut a promo. He is wearing a strap at the moment (December 2008), but I agree he could deservedly get a bit more push. We'll disagree on Mystério (it's a 'y', by the way - the earlier 'Rey Misterio' (Miguel López Díaz, who is the current one's uncle) was spelled with the 'i'. Rey's matches are to me interchangeable, but of course the fans don't care and he remains a huge favorite. I just think the '619' finishing move, while it was fun to watch the first couple of times, really stretches the bounds of credulity - like every wrestler is going to hang on the middle rope and wait for the 619 to happen...]]

I totally think HHH isn't what he used to be, though his big matches at the top of the card are pretty good. I was watching the Hell in a Cell DvD (disk 1) which featured the first six HiaC matches. Talk about a good time to be a wrestling fan. The first one was an amazing match, easily 5 Star Supersonic wrestling, the second was a throw-away as it never really started as a match, it was just an excuse to watch Undertaker beat a guy up. The third was the stunt show that Mick Foley put on, the fourth a very typical match of the day, the fifth was the one that made me realize how good HHH was in 2000. He and Cactus Jack just have an amazing match that was all sorts of drama and violence and beauty and madness. The 6-man match from later that year was one of the wildest and most impressive matches ever. HHH brawled well and knew how to do everything to gather heat. He deserves his position for the run he had in the 1999-2002 time frame, but he should work harder now.

[[I do get the distinct impression that HHH is going through the motions at times. One of the things about him that disproportionately annoys the crap out of me, is that if I had his money I'd definitely do something about that horrible great hooter, although Stephanie's new tits may have overspent the cosmetic surgery budget for decades...]]

The World Treasury is a good line-up. That's my fave Vonnegut short in *Harrison Bergeron*, Davidson's *The Golem* is a classic, I've never read *Tale of the Computer That Fought A Dragon* or *Codemus*. *Party Line*, *The Proud Robot* and *The Lens* are all fantastic, and the only real dark spots come from Varley, Disch and Wolfe (though there are far better

Sturgeon, Ballard and LeGuin stories). All in all, it's one I'm going to have to buy.

[[Of course in my opinion there's no such thing as a bad Ballard story - he is still my all-time favorite writer. The 1989 publication of the 'Treasury' would anyhow have missed a couple of great ones: 'Report on an Unidentified Space Station' and 'The Secret History of World War Three'. I might have picked 'The Voices of Time' or 'The Comsat Angels' over 'Chronopolis'...]]

I love English wrestling and it's not easy to find it on tape these days. I found a tape from a trader, but I haven't bought it yet. Stupid economy!

Fine stuff and I can't wait for the next!

From: earlkemp@citilink.net

December 14

Earl Kemp writes:

You're saying "cheapest gas is around \$1.59, although diesel is still kind of high and kerosene is a fuckin outrageous \$3.82..." Don't I wish!

Around here gasoline has dropped to \$1.49 but kerosene is really out of sight. That's a major problem for me because I've used kerosene space heaters as my only source of winter heat for the last three decades. When I started living in Mexico, in masonry houses without either heat or cooling facilities, I did what the natives do, depend on kerosene space heaters. Kerosene then (petrolio) cost .25cents a gallon.

Locally, in Kingman, I have been buying my kerosene from a bulk supply company for years, but this year the price jumped so high I started looking around. Home Depot was having a big sale on space heaters of several types, including, of course, kerosene, along with a large display of kerosene on sale. Naturally I went to Home Depot and checked it all out and was shocked into stunned silence. I couldn't even say fucking outrageous! Home Depot's on sale price for kerosene in 5-gallon cans came in at a neat \$9.85 a gallon.

At the bulk place where I bring my own 5-gallon cans (new ones cost \$7.50 each) I can fill them up for the cheapest price in town...\$6.12 per gallon.

And you're bitching about \$3.82??? I could use a tanker full of that wonderful stuff.

At this moment I have one heater running, my fingers are very cold...it's 40 degrees outside...all ground water was frozen overnight....\$3.82 per gallon....! Damn you're lucky.

Stay warm...

[[Ouchie! The last winter I spent in the old beach house before I got locked up was three years ago, and I think kero peaked at about \$4 - we used space heaters there a lot

because the place was a sieve. We did have an oil furnace but weren't in any position to buy 200 gallons of heating oil at any given time, so it was space heaters (electric in the bedrooms) and 10 gallons of kerosene a week. Now we're in an apartment and the utilities are all in with the rent...]]

From: 25509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD 20882, USA

December 15

Sheryl "take an armadillo to lunch" Birkhead writes:

(Oh joy - waiting for a blood draw - it's been 45 minutes and I'm still behind a whole room... oh well)

Ah, never despair on the number of zines pubbed - there are QUITE a few of us out here who have never pubbed their ish. Me, I've put out 2 special one shots and a short apa run - so essentially no - I have not pubbed. However, the nice long run zines DO become old friends as they drop by and I do appreciate all the work that goes into them.

"Sanctuary" - don't know anything about it - but it sounds as if you have cable - so that might explain it.

[[The cable's a bit of a sore subject since the evil stepthing stole a cable box out of the apartment (we don't have them connected cos they didn't work) and proceeded to hook this up at her girlfriend's mom's house, where they proceeded to order HBO and a load of pay-per-view movies. But yes, 'Sanctuary' runs on the SciFi channel, so if you only have over-the-air you won't get it (unless you ever upgrade to a fast internet connection - most of these shows are available online a day or so after they air)...]]

No bus service out my way - well, I fib... there is one bus - about 3 miles away, but the "country" roads have nowhere to walk except in the road itself and most drivers are a bit possessive of their portion of the roadway - so neither bikes nor foot are suggested ways of getting around.

[[Evidently we have some County Commissioners who believe that this county's public transportation (such as it is) is a complete waste of money. Fair takes me back, that does, as they seem to be operating under the thoroughly Thatcherite principle that we'll starve the service into worthlessness, then abolish it altogether because it doesn't work...]]

On Lee Gilliland's license plate... I too settled on management - then suddenly realized COP MAGNET - red convertible, blonde... then you smack yourself in the forehead.

In case anyone in fandom continues to say we are tolerant, clique-less etc. etc. - take another look. It isn't so and never has been. I never fit in (my problem) and never will but have yet to accept that fact. In the long run it simply does NOT matter.

[...]

From: jpurcell_54@yahoo.com

December 16

John Purcell writes:

Unlike you and Red Green's nephew Harold, I have plenty of things to do during these next few weeks. It is now the holiday break between semesters, and there's a nice little "honey-do" listing under construction, some of which I already knew about: fixing up the backyard fence, cleaning out the garage, moving furniture (as needed) - that kind of malarkey. It's not that I don't mind, but that I knew this was coming. Like you, a nap or two a day between endeavors will come in handy to recharge my aging battery pack. Speaking of which, when I'm done loccing *This Here...#9* and *Chunga #15* this morning, it should time for today's first nap. After all, I've been up since 5:30 AM, so that makes four hours awake time so far today. *yawn* I do feel a nap coming on Real Soon Now.

[[As I indicated in my email to you, John, I was at about the same place (nap time) having been furiously scanning previous issues of This Here... and retyping Arrows of Desire for hopeful inclusion in the domain of magister Burns. Suitably fortified, of course, with a large mug of London Tea and a couple of slices of Marmite & peanut butter on toast, which everyone else I know thinks is disgusting! I forget where I heard of this unlikely concoction, but it was waaaaay back in my vegetarian days, probably the early 80s when I was still pretty skint. If you think about it, it's actually a complete meal, with carbs (toast), fats (butter), vitamins (Marmite) and protein (peanut butter). And in that order...]]

Your mental perambulations about the means by which we create our fannish personae remind me that I really need to finish *Banana Wings #36*, which I've been reading in bits and pieces over the course of the past week. I think you and Claire are moving in the right direction in that we do shape our own fannish personas: how we want other fans to perceive us as opposed to how we are perceived outside the faniverse. Speaking for myself - since you or anybody else can't do so - there is a definite professional me who inhabits office A-206 at Blinn College when that Me is not standing in front of a Freshman English class. The Professional Me is distinctly different from the Fannish Me, although there are times when there is an overlap and the Fannish Me cannot help but interject some fannish sensibility into a literature discussion, such as when we're doing the Gothic Lit unit. It's too easy. But at least I know it adds to the discussion, giving the subject a depth my students probably wouldn't get from one of our other faculty members.

So getting back to your commentary, I really can't say which fannish forebear I may be transmuting myself into. Tucker, of course, is a worthy objective to emulate, as are Bloch,

Warner, Speer, et al, from those wonder years of yore. Frankly, I think I'd rather just settle on being who I am while learning from the Masters. I have no desire to "recreate [myself]...through the lens of reportage," which means I'll be happy being merely me. Which, I guess, is the Fannish Me. I think I could live with that because right now, the Fannish Me is having a lot of fun, and that is definitely A Good Thing.

[[And looking forward to Corflu Zed...]]

As for your "rasslin'" comments, I enjoy watching these shows - RAW, ECW, and Smackdown - for their entertainment content, to say nothing of they're great background noise while I grade papers. I agree with you about John Morrison and the Miz being a good tag team at present: they are totally unlikeable heels, but quite talented wrestlers. Their match last night (12/15/08) on RAW against C.M. Punk and Kofi Kingston (whom I like a lot for his energy) was a fun one to watch, and a good example of how well they work together as a team.

Probably the best "heel" going right now is Awesome Kong, who is definitely unlikeable, and all I can think of is a mixed gender tag team of her and Mark Henry. That would be a definite heavy weight team. They'll probably have to add extra braces under the squared circle for support. Other good heels right now I think are Chris Jericho, JBL, and Randy Orton. Yeah, they're all on RAW, but I generally don't like the cast of characters on Smackdown that much. They are way too over-the-top for my tastes. Give the old days, the bad guys I grew up with like Man Mountain Mike, Doctor X, Nick Bockwinkel, and Larry Hennig. Those guys were fun. While I'm at it, I might as well mention here that I will always have a soft spot in my heart for The Crusher and Dick the Bruiser, my all-time favorite tag team.

[[See Rasslin' re: Kong, if you haven't already done so...]]

Anyway. One thing in the loccol that struck me was the mini-debate over defining "copacetic." The primary definition I go by is this: "very satisfactory or acceptable; fine." (m-w.com) This works well. I have an American Slang Dictionary in my office, but since I'm at home right now that does me no good at present and I really desire not to open another window on this computer. It is, though, interesting to note the spelling variations: "copacetic" vs. "copasetic." Fun stuff.

Curt Phillips' loc commented on NASCAR, which immediately reminds me of Jeff Dunham's routines with Bubba J and Peanut: "Oh, look: they're taking another left turn! Didn't see that one coming." There's a big track just five minutes south of town - the Texas World Speedway - that is largely unused since a bigger and better track was built way up towards Dallas-Fort Worth, but there are still racing events held there a half-dozen times a year, mostly motorcycles. Last summer it was the site of a weekend

music festival that brought in something like 20 acts, including Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Doobie Brothers, and Johnny Winter to augment a passel of Texas bands. I couldn't afford a ticket, but folks who did go told me it was a lot of fun. I'm holding out for the Navasota Blues Festival in August; that's only 20 minutes south of here.

[[Holy crap - I got to come visit next time one of those fests is on! I'd always heard there was actually some good music to be had in Texas (especially in the Austin area), but that's a well decent line-up. Skynyrd were on the bill of the Pink Floyd outdoor concert at Knebworth Park (stately home), which would have been around 1972 - I'm recalling this without research on the basis that I think I was 14. I remember a lot of unusual smells which were new to me, but my main memory is of Floyd's performance.



Skynyrd at Knebworth, later than I thought...

It was well dark by the time they came on, and they opened by playing some stuff from the yet-to-be released 'Wish You Were Here' album, including 'Shine On You Crazy Diamond'. Then all the lights went out around the park, and apart from some minimal guide lights on stage (which was way afar from where we were sat), we were in total darkness. There were four huge speaker stacks arranged around the park in quadrophonic formation. After several minutes of darkness and silence, during which our eyes had grown quite accustomed, a heartbeat suddenly pounded out of all the speakers at once. Have you ever seen 100,000 people all go a foot in the air (from a seated position) all at the same time? Fuckin awesome! A couple more heartbeats, then they isolated one of the speaker stacks, then sent the heartbeat from stack to stack around the whole park five or six times, before playing 'Dark Side of the Moon' complete and uninterrupted...

Later research (for photos) shows me to have been wrong in several ways above. The Floyd concert was in fact 1975, and Skynyrd were not on that bill - they played the

following year when the Stones headlined (and were terrible!)...

The new Texas Speedway was rechristened 'Texas Crashway' by fans. They'd apparently had a lot of problems getting the surface right, and at the inaugural race there was a huge pile-up on Turn 1, Lap 1, to be followed by several others during the course of the race. They resurfaced the joint the next year, and the year after that, and eventually got it right...]]

From: srjeffery@aol.com

December 17

Steve Jeffery writes:

I'm impressed. You develop an intriguing argument about ideal forms in under 2 pages of 'The Philosophers' Song' that Neal Stephenson threads through over 900 pages in *Anathem*. (Though admittedly he barely mentions fandom or Claire, let alone James Bacon.)

Of course, being Stephenson, he takes the whole Platonic/Aristotelean argument one stage further to propose a nested succession of theoretical universes, each less 'ideal' than its ancestors. (At the risk of losing half his readers, he even does diagrams at one point. I think the last time I saw a sf author needing to resort to drawings to explain tricky concepts was Greg Egan's *Schild's Ladder*, though I wouldn't be surprised if Mr Baxter had reached for a ruler and set square on one occasion.)

But this nested universes argument, tricky though it is to wrap your head around, also works nicely for fandom. F'instance, my idea Claire is derived from both talking and writing to her directly but also includes elements of her idea Claire in her fanwriting, while my idea James Bacon is mostly though his own writing but also largely filtered through both both Claire's and Mark's idea James Bacons (the latter being the one that goes "Bye-o <ping>" rather a lot). Of course if James then introduces his idea Claire and Mark in his own fanwriting, the whole thing is liable to get terribly recursive.

As an aside, I notice that the Banana Twins rarely feature as fannish characters in each other's writing in the same way as the leprechaun-shorted Mr Bacon (of this one go 'ping' fame), or Noel 'Toolman' Collyer. Perhaps this is the secret of a happy and stable relationship.

The Treasury is an impressive find. There are probably six or so stories in there that I would consider real classics, including 'Harrison Bergeron', 'Fifth Head of Cerberus', 'Angouleme', 'Weinachtsabend', 'Aye, and Gommorah...', some I remember but haven't read for years (decades) and don't know how they would stand up ('The Gold at Starbow's End'), and quite a few I haven't even heard of ('Pairpuppets' by Manual van Loggem?). No Lafferty,

which is a bit of a surprise. There's always a Lafferty story in any decent comprehensive anthology.

Plus others which are good, but don't quite meet the mark. I would definitely have chosen 'The Ones who Walk Away From Omelas' instead of Le Guin's 'Nine Lives'. Also some odd omissions. Where's the Padgett's 'Mimsy Were the Borogoves'? Bixby's 'It's a Good Life'? Or Ellison's 'Jeffy is Five'?

[[Certain stories may not have been available, of course. Knowing what a cranky old grid Ellison is apt to be, it wouldn't be at all surprising to learn that he had some massive feud with 'Treasury' editor David Hartwell, precluding his presence in the collection. Another friend remarked that the selections could be supposed to represent "the artsy, New-York-lit version of 'SF' typical of Hartwell's taste", so that may also have some bearing...]]

Worth it alone, though, for 'Angouleme' and 'Weinachtsabend'.

Must check out Alexis Gilliland's website. 10,000 cartoons? When does the man sleep, or eat?

[[Well Steve, he's had a few more years cartooning than you have, you just got to step it up pal...]]

From: ansible@cix.co.uk

December 19

Dave Langford writes:

Thanks for *This Here... 9*, which staggered me with its coincidental serendipity. Well, actually, it made me blink and mutter "That's funny." I'd just been drafting the annual Very Boring Column for SFX magazine, the one you can get away with only once a year, listing more or less boring 2009 anniversaries. One of these is the centenary of Maeterlinck's play *The Blue Bird*, which is where the Blue Bird of Happiness comes from. And there it is, or rather its stand-in, on your cover. Yawns of astonishment! Oh, let's forget it and have a drink.



From: PO Box 1443, Woden ACT 2606, Australia

December undated

Kim Huett writes:

Rather than wait till I've bought a new computer at the post-Christmas sales I'm writing now in the hope you don't mind such a primitive attempt at communication.

[[Not at all, since you're not the only one to do so, and you're also kind enough to write in all caps, which isn't specifically a dig at Sheryl Birkhead (OK, yes it is)...]]

Now at least you know that I exist, at least to the extent of sending you a letter. Make of me what you will because of this, as you suggest we're all endlessly mutable in each other's minds so why fight it?

Even the likes of Harry Warner and Greg Pickersgill aren't immune to multiple interpretations of themselves. For example I'm pretty sure my image of Warner, as an unlikeable conservative who used his newspaper training to churn out reams of uninteresting boilerplate letters, is different to the majority view. So in this regard I'm with Claire rather than with you.

[[What you're doing here is applying a value judgement to the idea Harry Warner, something I did not do. The debate kicks in when we try to determine what observational data is accumulated to have created the idea Warner, which in this case was pretty much solely based on his letters. You may not in fact recognize a different idea Warner to others, but perhaps interpret it in a different way. (Was that a 1962 Triumph Herald convertible whizzing by?) As to "reams of uninteresting boilerplate letters", that was the other Harry, Andruschak...]]

Since this is to be a very short letter I will refrain from discussing the *World Treasury of Science Fiction* except to note that as far as I can see there are no Australian entries. If A. Bertram Chandler's *Giant Killer* is too long then perhaps Jack Wodham's *There Is A Crooked Man* or Philippa Maddern's *Inhabiting the Interspaces* should have been considered. I don't think one story in such a large collection would be too much to ask for.

Mutate or perish.

From: fjagh2008@ericlindsay.com

Eric Lindsay writes:

Thanks for *This Here...* #9. I note not changing fanzine names (no matter how much it seems a good idea) means you get to higher numbers earlier. Why it has only taken 30 years or so for me to get close to 100.

So a bus manages 8 miles an hour? Sounds like a good reason to persuade most people to give up personal

transportation. Mind you, I still want the jet belt I was promised for 21C.



Greg, Kim sez you're not immune... Have you had your shots?

[[Well of course the bus actually goes faster than 8mph, it just takes that long to get from Calvert Beach Road to Prince Frederick because of the tortuous route...]]

I go with Aristotle rather than Plato on ideal forms. But I am less than ideal, especially on locs.

Avoiding the wrestling is something I am very pleased to have managed. Despite the efforts of Las Vegas fandom. However TV here has been so poor that I no longer own a TV set.

No idea now what our post office will be doing about their end of lease. But since they didn't even report their closing days over Xmas, I am not sure they know either. We will probably have a new address mid 2009.

From: shelvy20012000@yahoo.com

December 28

Shelby Vick writes:

Who told you, Nic?

Musta been Ted White; he's one of the very few remaining who knew the truth. And I could tell you knew from the way you referred to the "idea" Walt Willis. -Or is 'Farey' just another way of spelling 'Fairie' or 'Fairy'?

[[Ah, if it's etymology you're after... In fact the surname 'Farey' is one of the family of variations (Farrey, Farrer, Ferrer etc.) which derive from 'farrier'. So my memorable last name is actually - er - "Smith"...]]

Well, we might as well get the whole story out. After all, it's been over fifty years since the beginning of fandom's greatest hoax.

My first introduction to it came with my initial visit to Lee Hoffman in Savannah -- late 1950 or early 1951. She handed me a copy of *Slant* -- and a handful of letters from Bob Shaw. Turned out that Bob Shaw, James White and Vince Clarke started it all.

They were drinking blog at the White Horse and started kicking around the idea of a hoax. While they were talking, White was fiddling with a pencil on a napkin, drawing zig-zag lines. Then his eyebrows lifted as he drew a straight line between two of the zags. "W.A.W." he mused. "Those are the initials we'll use."

"What do they stand for?" Shaw asked.

"We'll figure it out, but it seems right to me."

December 27

"Has to be in Belfast," Shaw announced. "I'm familiar with Belfast, but not many fans are. No way we could have it in London."

When they discovered a postal worker in Belfast named Walter A Willis, Clarke let out an "AHA!" The fact that Willis actually read science fiction nailed it.

So they brought a small hand press and got busy, after keying Willis in.

"This is all very hush-hush," Lee told me. "They're wanting to spread thruout the world and thought Quandry would be the logical next step. Are you in, ShelVy?"

Who could resist Lee Hoffman?

We contacted Robert Bloch. (Yes, 'Robert-Bloch-author-of-Psycho', but also author of 'I have the heart of a little boy. I keep it on a jar on my desk.') It appealed to his sense of humour, and he was included immediately. (I sometimes think he succumbed becos I threatened him with a lifetime subscription to confusion if he didn't come along.)

Then came TED and Ted. *The Enchanted Duplicator* and Ted White. Ted was just a kid, but a very talented kid. Shaw, Clarke and White threw a lot of stuff together and sent it to Lee, who added a few things of her own. But someone had to put it all properly together. I don't know how they found Ted White, but they did.

He did a marvelous job of both editing and rewriting, exhibiting the talents he would become known for, later, in a professional manner.

Some fans commented on the depth of 'Willis's' writing. He could be serious, light and punny, and could handle action. Ran across things like: "Very broad talent! Willis has multiple – and very talented! – personalities."

...Yeah. <g>

The success of the Willis Campaign floored us all. When its success was assured, it was arranged for Lee to corral 'Walt Willis' in Chicago and prevent too much exposure until he could be properly tutored.

It worked like a charm! The 'idea' Walt Willis came to life.

When I say it was fandom's greatest hoax, I mean because of the grandeur and great sweep of it all – plus the fact that it has lasted for this long.

(Please note that not once did I even imply that I had anything to do with the wit and wisdom of 'Walt Willis'. Don't give me credit of great restraint – I mean, how else could I even have the slightest hope of making this tale believable?)

[[Er... Ted?...]]

Nic, your recitation of your life and sleeping reminds me so much of my own life. I no longer have any responsibilities. The house is my daughter's. She does all shopping, cooking, repairs, etc. I just sit at my computer seventy

hours or more a week. I go to bed anywhere from nine-ish to one or two ayem – or later! I nap mornings, afternoons, even early evenings. I get up and go back to my computer.

–Oh, I do spend some time reading, mostly library books with an occasional fanzine thrown in. I write, work on Planetary Stories – www.planetarystories.com – then nap some more. This isn't the retirement I had envisioned (I was going to try to return to professional writing) but it keeps me busy.

Your comment about 'real' people reminded me of a column I just did for *Vegas Fandom Weekly*, where I was trying to decide just who I was! I ran three photos of my from different ages – Nolacon in 51, Tropiccon in 88, and a more recent one. Was puzzling over how much I've changed over the years. Finished it, 'Will the real Shelby Vick please stand up?'

The 'real' Shelby Vick didn't respond.

Good segue from various forms of 'real' people into professional wrestling. Excuse me, 'rasslin'.' Been a fan of pro rasslin' for years. Usedta be, we had pro rasslin' right here in Panama City. I've seen Ric Flair; in fact, was a time when Ric Flair had a boat docked down at nearby Mexico Beach. I've also seen the Wrestling Pro, the Masked Demons, and on and on. Even saw Dusty Rhodes.

Speaking of Dusty, wasn't he supposed to have been a plumber before he became a rassler? Since Dusty skated on the edge of politics a time or two, he might be considered an early version of Joe the Plumber!

You mention Shawn Michaels' supposedly career-ending eye injury. Reminds me of something from way, wa-a-ay back – about forty years ago. We didn't have cable at that time. In fact, I'm not even sure if our county had cable available. We did have a really tall antenna, and could pick up Dothan, Alabama, Pensacola and, when reception was good, Tampa, Florida. I mention those particular places becos they all had pro rasslin' on 'em. Anyway, there was an area baby face who never made it big – at the moment, I can't even remember his name. But the point is, there was a match we saw over Dothan TV where he supposedly got his leg broken.

Three days later we were getting good reception and saw him in a match from Tampa. He seemed totally healthy and won the match. Wouldn't have happened these days, when cable rules.

[[Actually the matches may not have been recorded in the order you saw them, even if both purported to be "live". I mentioned lastish about WWE's continual 'talent exchange' between ECW and Smackdown, but didn't mention then that these are typically recorded on the same night at the same venue, but presented on TV on different days with the pretense of being in real time. When WCW was on the way down the tubes, as a cost-cutting measure

both 'Nitro' and 'Thunder' were taped on the same day, but the commentators (notably the execrable Tony Schiavone) made sure to mention "just three days ago" during the 'Thunder' show when referring to 'Nitro' to try and keep the illusion up. Rick Rude had the distinction of appearing on both WWE (then WWF) Raw and WCW Monday Nitro on the same night! The Raw show was in fact taped the previous Tuesday - Rude had no contract at the time and appeared on Raw on a handshake deal with Vince McMahon, but signed a contract with WCW before the following Monday Nitro show...]]

And here's where I say 'Thank you!' for sending me the latest *This Here*.... Really great cartoons, as well as writing.

Thanks for not giving the answer to the black man in the road. Was it just becous the answer was so obvious? It was daylight.

[[Actually I did give the answer at the end of the column, and yes, it was that obvious...]]

Your Treasury reminds me of a hardback I have, the old Groff Conklin's "Best of Science Fiction". Can't lay my hands on it right now, so can't give the contents - but it was great.

[[Only in sf could anyone named 'Groff Conklin' be taken at all seriously. Well, that and sports maybe. The 'Best of' was his first sf anthology, published in 1946, and Wikipedia also informs me that The Conk also edited 'A Treasury of Science Fiction' (1948)]]

Great LoCs, but I found no hooks.

Your award-winning limerick brought up that forbidden topic, 'politics'. I didn't vote for Obama, and it wasn't becous of his color - it was becous I was convinced that his color was the only thing that got him there. If he had been white - absolutely the same background, accomplishments, etc, but white - he would not have been able to get where he was. He is a nice guy, friendly, sharp-witted, clever - but not accomplished enuf to run for president. He reminded me a lot of Jimmy Carter.

Now, with the Democrats in control, maybe he'll have an opportunity to do something. Somebody needs to!!!!

From: penneys@allstream.net 1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON CANADA M9C 2B2

Lloyd Penney writes:

Many thanks for *This Here*... 9. We're always under a lot of pressure to Pub Our Ish, and I'm still working away on getting my own done. Is there ever enough time to get all your fanac done? Never. We just do what we can. That's why I enjoy writing locs. They are small enough to fit into scraps of time available.

My time is usually taken up with work. It's been about four months now putting in 50- to 53-hour weeks, add another 10 hours for transportation on bus, streetcar and subway, and the rest of the time is spent sleeping or getting ready for work. Weekends are so important right now because it's the only time I actually get anything done for myself. Add in the scraps of time for myself through the week, and the weeks get very long.

One thing I like about the idea of fan writing is the creation of community, and getting to know people from around the world. I am not sure we have our own Plato or Aristotle, but we seem to have our own infamous names, and they seem to get more attention than do anyone who might be labelled a fannish philosopher.

I also used to get Joy Hibbert's fanzines, like *Zetetic* and *Sic Buiscuit Disintegraf*. [...]

Eric Lindsay says that Airlie Beach may not have mail service. I think the mandate of Australia Post probably says that all inhabitants of the country shall get mail delivery of one form or another. I think Canada Post says the same. Both Australia and Canada have large wildernesses to service, and it's part of their job.

My loc... staging a Corflu or Ditto does take a lot of work. My only involvement with the local Corflu and Dittos has been to create and/or hand out the badges. I probably would have liked more to do. I wasn't aware that E.B. Frohvet had announced his gafiation, but I don't doubt that he announced it in a previous Alexiad. This is a personal decision; I have also been deemed unsuitable for a fan fund, and while I won't personally bid for any more fan funds, I will participate, nominate and vote. They don't get rid of me that easily.

[[We had a long discussion on this in previous issues of *This Here*... as I recall, and I've already commented extensively about all this "unsuitable" malarkey, whenever and wherever it is applied...]]

The most recent scrap of time is well-done and over. Never enough time. The holiday is done, the inlaws are finally satisfied, and time finally becomes my own again. Take care, and see you next issue. Hope you had a great Christmas, and happy Hogmanay. Lang may your lum reek!



December 29

From: mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com

January 3

Mark Plummer writes:

I don't think I replied to an earlier email in which you admitted you'd overlooked sending us a copy of TH#9 -- about which I am not bitter, oh no -- but I printed a copy from the PDF anyway. Or at least most of a copy because for some reason that back page Tom Toles cartoon defied both of my regular printers, leaving only a space where it was supposed to be. Odd.

[[As I mentioned in that mail, I was probably having what my old boss Jim Armentrout used to call a "senior moment". I just assumed that you were on the truncated paper copy mailing list, without clocking the fact that it was the BW mailing list I was using, and you're obviously not quite so daft as to mail a copy to yourselves. Re: the Toles cartoon, I'll try a rescan of it & email it to you. The magickal legerdemain of Magister Burns sometimes does odd things to illos. I'm not sure if you'd be able to receive my original pdf of #9 (pre-compression), which weighs in at 4.2Mb...]]

Having a *This Here...* here again is of course very welcome. Not that I disliked *Beam* or anything, far from it, but I think this personal fanzine format suits you more. Your own writing was much the best part of *Arrows of Desire* and as I've said before I really value that eight-issue *This Here...* first run, so I am of course really pleased to see it back as more than just a letter round-up.

[[All 'boo gratefully accepted mate. If I don't get to mention it elsewhere, I'm working with Bill on getting the AoD archive up on efanazines. As I write, #1 thru #4 are up...]]

I hadn't previously spotted your willing-or-otherwise eight-issue cut-off point but if it's any consolation you can at least claim to have more staying power than Greg Pickersgill who has fairly consistently ground to a halt after issue 7. And I know what you mean about the spur derived from seeing somebody else's fanzine coming up fast behind you. We had that experience in 2003, courtesy of Sue Jones. She provided the reassurance that it was still entirely possible to send paper fanzines through the UK postal system, but also -- and as I said at the time -- nothing concentrates the mind quite like the knowledge that you are about to be overtaken by a tortoise.

You will, I'm afraid, have to cope with me "[not] even attempting to feign interest, and with glazed eyes ... shifting from foot to foot, presumably attempting to confirm the presence of some kind of blood flow in [my] alcohol stream" while you're off on one of your rasslin' kicks. Of far more interest is the BW#36-provoked 'The Philosopher's Song'. Claire may have no maternal instinct but something like this spinning off from our fanzine gives me a feeling of almost fatherly pride.

[[I sometimes vaguely wonder that there might actually be something wrong with punting pieces like "The Philosopher's Song" in This Here..., since there's a valid argument that I perhaps ought to have loded you with it. It can also come across as a bit incestuous, perhaps, but I also remember the opinion of the Jiant Brane L Edwards (back in the day when she still believed in the existence of paper), who argued that she never wrote locs because she didn't want to "waste" writing in fanzines other than her own. (I seem to recall the statement really being that blunt.) There is also the argument that, however unlikely it may be, there could be someone reading This Here... who might not have been aware of Banana Wings, or had lapsed from reading it perhaps, in which case the piece might have prompted them to seek it out - a welcome result.

Realistically though, I'd consider something like "The Philosopher's Song" to be a reinforcement of the sense of fanzine community (referring to its gestation rather than its specific content), the sort of article/column which in it's most trivial form would be a "fanzines received" listing. (All hail GHLIII and TZD, with apologies for the typo lastish where he became GLHIII.) This kind of cross-referencing I think is often a good thing, and can lead down unexpected paths. My article in an earlier This Here... criticizing Ted White's piece in Squib on Ardis Waters and the spirited correspondence that ensued would be a fine example...]]

I'd not before come across Plato and the horses versus the idea of the horse. In *Boggs: A Comedy of Values* (1999), Lawrence Weschler noted that "Back in the 1870s in the anti-Greenback tract *Robinson's Crusoe's Money ...* David Wells argued that to imagine that paper money might supplement or replace precious metals was to succumb 'to a mere fiction of speech and a bad use of language' for a paper could only represent money; it could no more be money than 'a shadow could be substance, or the picture of a horse a horse'."

In the early 1990s the Turner Prize-winning artist Mark Wallinger painted a number of life-sized pictures of horses, but in 1994 he bought a race horse and named it A Real Work Of Art. The horse thus became the art, and more parochially provoked a lengthy debate at the 1997 Eastercon with Jim de Liscard attempting to explain it to notoriously modern art resistant Noel Collyer. In particular, this focused on reproductions of the pieces in question. The former works -- in common with the paintings of Stubbs -- were pictures of horses, while in the latter case the horse itself was the art, unless both were featured in book about Wallinger in which case A Real Work Of Art would become a picture of a horse while one of the early paintings was portrayed as a picture of a picture of a horse.

At about the same time Jim was also talking a good deal about a long-planned project to produce a fanzine called

Fuck the Pope. Dave Hicks came up with the idea that as Jim would almost certainly never get around to producing anything -- this being Jim we're talking about here -- a number of us should roughly simultaneously publish review of *FTP* as if it existed. I did go so far as to draft a couple of paragraphs invoking Wallinger and debating whether *FTP* should be considered as a fanzine or a picture of a fanzine. Or indeed a picture of a horse.



Sainted Plummer unwittingly provides the hook for this photo...

[[Ha!! Lovely idea! This reminds me of a conversation, I think at Corflu Valentine, where ways to cause insanity in a diehard fanzine completist were being discussed (and I believe there was someone specific as the designated target). The conversation arose out of my one-shot Yield It, and the suggestion was made that successive issues of a fanzine should be completely differently titled in order to sow confusion. This reached its absurd culmination in the proposal of what might be considered the 'punctuation' series of fanzines - the first would be called Semicolon and consist of a single semicolon on a single sheet (or, if you're Pete Weston (qv), a full color 32-page spread of semicolons). This might be followed by the nominally similar Question Mark and so on, although 'Question Mark' was always my preferred title for the Banana Wings spinoff interviewzine...]]

And as for the idea of James Bacon... Peter Weston gave me a box of fanzines at the BSFA AGM. I was hoping for all manner of gems and so was a little disappointing when the first fanzine out of the box was an issue of *Trap Door*. Not that there's anything wrong with *Trap Door* of course, but we've got them all. Next... some recent -- well, last decade or two -- Geri Sullivan fanzines. We have those too. Oh well, I thought, perhaps I could send them on to James -- and it was only after I'd popped them in an envelope that I

realised that I was, indisputably and literally, giving James Bacon Ideas and when James gets ideas it's not just chickens that become apprehensive.

This isn't desperately relevant, is it?

If you're getting daft in your old age then I'm getting dafter despite the fact that you've got five years on me. I still can't decode the CPMGNT number plate. Like you, I read the last four letters as 'management'. I did try googling the word -- while being conscious that this might be *very* unwise -- and the first hit seems to be a gay dating site. *This Here...* #9 is hit number ten, by the way.

[[The decrypt is in Sheryl's letter above, and possibly explains why you hit a gay dating site...]]

Good arras -- or at least the *idea* of good arras...

From:miltstevens@earthlink.net

January 26

Milt Stevens writes:

This Here... #9 begins with a discussion of the issue number and issue numbers in general. Before *This Here... # 8.5* was published, I probably would have guessed there were 20 or 30 previous issues. For awhile, they seemed to be arriving with the frequency of an Australian bunny rabbit. Publishing rapidly can give the impression of publishing more. Getting to a 30th issue of a genzine is an accomplishment. Many genzines don't even make it to a second issue. Apazines are another matter entirely. Fred Patten just quit *Apa L* after publishing a weekly apazine for over 2000 issues. If anyone ever surpasses that issue number, it won't be in my lifetime.

[[20 or 30 issues of This Here...?, I'm rather surprised you thought that, even with the frequency I was punting them. The 8 issues of the first run came out in a little over a year, so maybe it just seemed they were coming out every couple weeks. I'm not, and probably never will be up to Garcia levels of production...]]

When I was first in fandom issue numbers seemed to be more significant than they are today. *Yandro* was approaching a hundred issues, and the Coulsons were hoping to someday exceed the issue number achieved by *Fantasy Times*. *Locus* would eventually exceed both of them. Some fans had publishing house numbers which were a not particularly subtle way of bragging about how many zines they had published. I don't exactly know how many total zines I've published, but I suspect it's between three and four hundred.

You certainly can sleep a lot when there isn't much else to do. I slept a lot during the three years I was on an aircraft carrier. When we were out West we would go out for 45 days at sea, then back to port for a week, and then another 45 day line period. Since my job didn't require it, I didn't

go up to the flight deck level when we were at sea. This meant I didn't see sunlight for 45 days at a time. I read a lot, wrote a lot of LoCs, joined a bunch of apas, and still slept a lot.

While I haven't thought about it in particular, I suppose I do have some notion of the Platonic ideal of a fan. The ideal fan would read the stuff, collect it, be a member of a club, go to conventions, and be involved with fanzines. Forry Ackerman was the first major fan I ever met, and he represented the ideal fan to my young and impressionable mind. That was the impression Forry intended to give. My impression of the ideal fan hasn't changed since the beginning. I still think reading, collecting, clubbing, convening, and zining are the essential activities of fans. Costuming, filking, and gaming are things fans may do. They aren't essential to my idea of fandom, but I realize there could be disagreement on that point.

WAHF

Ed Meskys (with an annual letter); **Martin Tudor** (COA: 8 Temple Bar, Willenhall, West Midlands WV13 1SQ, UK, empties084@btinternet.com) ; **Randy Byers** on a multiplicity of topics all unrelated to *This Here...*; **John Neilsen-Hall**; **Bill Burns** (re: archive uploads of *This Here...* and *Arrows of Desire*); **Robert Lichtman** (hopefully supplying my missing copies)

INDULGE ME...

“” A Catholic priest, a rabbi and a Baptist minister walk into a bar. The barman looks at them and says “What is this, some kind of joke?”

“” Nursing the New Year's Day hangover while spending a contemplative 20 minutes or so on the bog with the *Rolling Stone* best of year issue, I was reminded of an old Kenwood Beach theory I espoused where I claimed you could tell what the guys had been drinking the night before by their lav performance. You either had your head down the toilet making the sound “BUUUUUUUUUUUUDD” or your ass on it making the sound “BUSSSSSSSCCCCH”.

“” How can *Journey Planet* do all them lovely Underground stations while missing the obvious one?

Or did they get there via Hatton Cross?

“” For those among you who like to keep track of the songs in my head (S Jeffery) the most persistent of late has been “Gates of the West” by the Clash,

but with a late and unbidden appearance by the Spanish Inquisition Song from Mel Brooks' *History of the World, Part I*.

“” Choffing down Advil while suffering from what Uncle Johnny likes to call “the bad lurgy”, I was reminded of an exchange between two British MPs of yore. The Labour member complained of an ““orrible ‘eadache”, to which his more patrician colleague replied: “My dear fellow, what you need is a couple of aspirates.” Might have been F E Smith, that one.

“” Q: Why did the chicken cross the road? A: “For some fowl reason.” (Max Miller)

“” Watched the Twain Prize show on PBS the other night (for the late George Carlin), which had a great line-up including Lily Tomlin, who quoted one of Carlin's great “Brain Droppings” more or less as follows: “I'm not worried about all hell breaking loose. I'm worried if just *part* of hell breaks loose. How would we know?”

“” There you are, then.

MIRANDA

THIS HERE... is written, edited and produced by: **Nic Farey**
Published by **Seven Views of Jerusalem** in the US and **Fishlifter Press** in the UK.

PO Box 178, Saint Leonard, MD 20685, USA

Email: thishere@mac.com

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PO Box 178

Saint Leonard MD 20685

USA

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