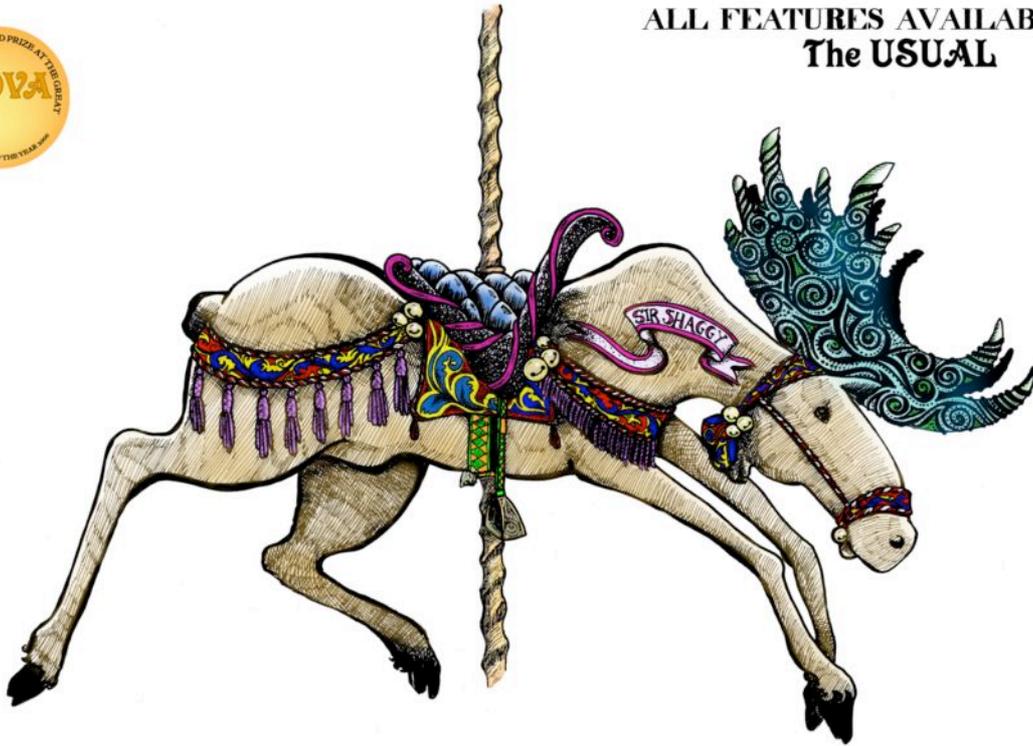


# D<sup>R</sup> PLOKTA PRESENTS HIS

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## STEAM~DRIVEN FANZINE

ALL FEATURES AVAILABLE FOR  
The USUAL



WITH MANY UNIQUE SHOWS AND ATTRACTIONS  
RIDE ON THE BLUE SCREEN OF DEATH

MEET THE MYSTERIOUS GREEN AMBER  
IN THE TUNNEL OF LURVE

WHAT THE SECURITY GOPHERS SAW

HEAR THE TWO HEADED  
CHILD FROM HELL

MISS MASON STUNS ALL WITH  
HER ANTI GRAVITY CORSET

Watch elves cavort in a state of nature  
(not suitable for those of a delicate disposition or ladies of good breeding)

◊O◊N◊E◊ ◊W◊E◊E◊K◊E◊N◊D◊ ◊O◊N◊L◊Y◊

The MARVELLOUS  
MECHANICAL  
MOOSE ORGAN

This is issue 28 of *Plokta*, edited by Steve Davies, Alison Scott and Mike Scott. It is available for letter of comment (one copy to Alison's address is fine, we pass them over to each other), trade (copies to each of our addresses if possible, please), contribution, editorial whim, or for an advance DVD of *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*.

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The *Plokta News Network* is at  
www.plokta.com/pnn/

The cabal also includes Giulia De Cesare, Sue Mason, George the cat, Steven, Marianne and Jonathan Cain

Art by Alison Scott & Sue Mason (cover), Sue Mason & Joe Siclari (8), Steve Kyte (2), Sue Mason (3, 4, 5, 7), Steve Jeffery (10), Kurt Erichsen (13)

Photos by Steve Kyte (2), Alison Scott (3), Steve Davies (5, 14), Mike Scott (8), SMS (10), Tom Womack (12)

#### Addresses of Contributors

**Sue Mason**

**Giulia de Cesare**, as for Steve Davies

**Kurt Erichsen**

**Steve Kyte**

**Others**, see *Lokta Plokta*

Cover inspired by the very wonderful Carters Steam Fair.

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A bumper crop of locs this time, due to their non-appearance last issue. We even tried to do a thorough search of Alison's study, but gave up when our native bearers quit.

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The Cabal paid a visit to Britain's most traditional fun-fair.

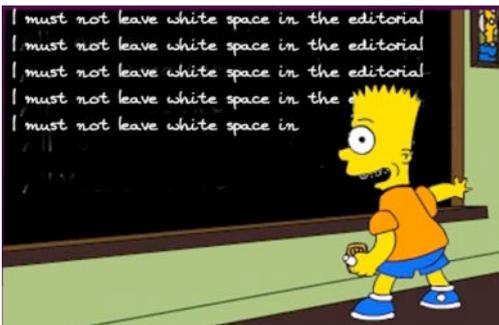


Still in glorious  
**PLOKTACOLOR™**

*Steve Kyte can use Photoshop too*

## Editorial

SO here we are again with the traditional it's-too-late-to-be-technically-eligible-for-the-Novas-so-it-*can't*-be-a-desperate-last-minute-bid-to-curry-favour-with-the-voters-honest-guv November issue of *Plokta*. But frankly, it'll be a miracle if this is actually being passed around at Novacon (Novacon 2002, at any rate), due to our complete lack of task orientation and goal focus at the past couple of *Plokta* weekends. Many of you may be thinking "surely it's not been long since the last issue of *Plokta*. Or even, in extreme cases, the last two issues of *Plokta*. You may have received the last two issues out of order, together, or not at all. OK, time to come clean; we've had a bit of a cockup on the mailing front. Far be it for us to lay the blame where it's due, but Alison failed to post out issue 26 for months on end, and Mike decided that everyone who'd been at the con could wait for issue 27 until after he'd got back from his secret tryst in Cornwall (see elsewhere in the issue). So no need to worry, Dave, we haven't gone monthly.



We've not got very far with the fanzine on previous weekends. In fact, our only hope for getting the fanzine out for Novacon is that this weekend we are (pause for dramatic chord (or, as Douglas Adams might have put it, "Shrubbery!")) *childless* (if you don't count Alison, of course). Yes, Marianne and Jonathan are staying with their grandparents, the cat is sulking in a garden somewhere in Berkshire, and there is nothing standing in the way of our relentless pursuit of perfection

in fanzine production except for beer, the Internet, large meals, *Dance Dance Revolution*, more large meals, more beer, Giulia's heavy elf-slash addiction, *Have I Got News For You* and Alison's usual habit of spending 95% of the available time in selecting the fonts to use on the cover. So, business as usual then.

Alas, Giulia has joined Steve in the increased leisure society, and the Cabal are now less than 50% employed (indeed, less than 20% employed if you don't count government work). So she's going to need to find a new excuse to give her physiotherapist for spending all day hunched over a hot keyboard.

"Elrond is my wallpaper, but Haldir is my screensaver"

London fandom is looking for a new pub again, following the Sparkler Affair, the Secret Policemen's Piss-Up, the Murine Infestation, the Gaseous D b c le and other incidents too unsavoury to mention in a family fanzine. Despite cries of "we're happy here, we don't want to move again!" from the electorate, Mike has been joining the pub crawls organised by Paul Treadaway to try to find a replacement venue—how we suffer for fandom—and we hope that we might have somewhere by Novacon. But updated details of the seemingly endless quest can be found on the *Plokta News Network* web-site ([www.plokta.com/pnn/](http://www.plokta.com/pnn/)), which we haven't plugged since the previous page.

"Don't get noodles on the moose"

This may be the last issue of *Plokta* for some time. Not only will *The Two Towers* be released in December, but just after Novacon we're getting the extended edition of *Fellowship of the Ring*, containing four commentaries, 28 minutes more footage of Aragorn, and apparently three more words from Haldir.



Remember, remember the fifth of November  
Gunpowder, Novas and Plokta

## BOLLOCKS

### Bowled A Google

As alluded to in the editorial, Alison was searching for suitable fonts to use in composing the cover of this issue. So, of course, she did a web search for "Victorian font". It's just a shame that the first result started "The Victorian font can be found to the left of the nave...".

### Fanzine Articles We'd Like To See

*Tobes and Max Hit The Road* by, well, Max and Tobes

*My Trip Report* by almost any TAFF delegate

*Why We Resigned* by the Interaction board

*Why I want to run a Worldcon* by Stephen Boucher

Anything at all by George

### Personals Column

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single fan in possession of all his *geolies* faculties should get in touch with Lilian Edwards.

### Cute Cat Story

It's the time of year when our feline friends begin to leave presents on the back lawn. We think they're trying to encourage us to store up birds and rats for the winter. Of course, Spookie has a bad habit of eating the whole thing except for the beak and the feet before presenting his gift to his loving mum. Anyone have an idea of what to do with a pair of ostrich feet?

### Cattle Mutilators Strike Again



Storybook girls Dorothy,  
Alice & Pippa Bull

## BOLLOCKS

## All-Electric Bollocks

Hey, do you remember those great ads back in the fifties and sixties showing how you'd have an all-electric home one day? There were those lovely, sleek, custom-built houses with lime and yellow colour schemes and furnished entirely in formica with added tailfins. They were populated by trim little housewives with Doris Day hair, who wore aprons with unfeasibly nipped-in waists and perhaps a few discreet tailfins even, as they glided about pushing a button here and a button there to activate the automatic duster, vacuum cleaner, sweeper and so on. All would be electric-powered, air-conditioned and remote-controlled.



*The Aibo always seems to come out worse*

Well, it didn't quite work out that way, but we are getting close to the all-electric house. Steve and I have a house that is getting on for at least 60% electric. Instead of being sleek and custom-built, it's a bit grungy and retro-fitted, more *Blade Runner* than Doris Day. And an all-electric vacuum cleaner, though it is still Giulia-powered as far as locomotion goes. But we do have something that those sleek little housewives never dreamt of.

We have wireless networking!

I can push a button here and a button there and look at elf-smut anywhere in the house. I even went outside and did it but it was too bright to see the screen. Oh, well, you can't have everything. We use the webcam while jet-setting about the globe to re-assure ourselves that the house is still standing. So far I have refused to let Steve replace George with an Aibo, but ask me again after the next dead rat. And now we even have an in-house chat room, so we never have to actually meet as we live our parallel lives.

And not a tailfin in sight.

—Giulia De Cesare

## That Walthamstow Earthquake Explained

**“We’re having a Dance Dance Revolution—just as soon as we figure out what dance dancing is.”—sig on DDR forum**

IT WAS all Max's fault. She mentioned, in a sort of off the cuff way, that she'd been playing dancing games on her Playstation. I had a vague memory of seeing one such game, in Namco Station—what will those zany Japanese think of next—and it looked like fun. Fun in an embarrassing sort of way. But also, it reminded me of a theory I'd had for a while.

If you want to get fit, you go to a gym, right? And there you do all sorts of fundamentally boring things, along to cheesy dance music. Then you go home and play video games all night. So wouldn't it be much better if you could play a completely obsessive video game that required you to be physically active in order to excel? Play video games, get sweaty, get tired, get that overwhelming desire to play just one more game. But for some reason, I appeared to be the only person who thought this. I mean, stepping machines have little LED displays to show you the terrain you're walking over; surely that's a rudimentary video game? Wouldn't there be a market for something a bit more like “Quake—the exercise machine”? Tone your body while blasting aliens into so much strawberry jam, that sort of thing.

Over the intervening ten years, things have improved. Steven fondly remembers a rowing machine in which you are aided by a shark who helpfully eats your opponents. And we saw a machine at a cycle show that let you cycle along a virtual road—but without the game element, it was hard to see how this would be more fun than, well,

cycling along a real road. And these machines cost thousands of pounds.

But then I discovered Dance Dance Revolution, or DDR to its friends. We were on holiday, back in Pensarn again, and playing pinball in the beach arcade. Right next to the pinball machine was a dancing game. We had a go. We did very badly. We looked very stupid. But I'd hatched a plan. One bout of instant gratification later, I was the proud owner of a Playstation, a dance mat, and a dancing game. “In your living room nobody knows you're a twit.”

Of course, there was a SCART problem. It's like this. How was I to know that I needed three SCART sockets? My TV is quite new, and so has two. The DVD player plugs into one, and the cable box plugs into the other. And the Playstation? Well, I never thought I was the sort of person who would own a Playstation. So the Playstation plugs into the video, which plugs into the cable box, which plugs into the television. And it's simplicity itself to use the Playstation; you just make sure that the video is on, and tuned to L3, and the amplifier is on, and turned to TV. And all of these things have different remote controls, none of which are labelled, and Jonathan has hidden most of them.

Once you've got the telly set up, there's the question of the actual game. It's like this. Arrows appear on the screen, and you step on them, in time to the music. Demonstrate sufficient foot-eye co-ordination and you'll progress to harder, more exciting songs, while the game remarks how fabulous you are. Try a song a bit harder than you can manage, and it starts to slag you off, booing and asking rude questions before unceremoniously dumping you at the Game Over screen. It's basically a cross between



*Saturday Night Fever* and *Whack-a-Rat*. After a few songs, thousands of arrows have been brutally smashed, and you're wringing sweat out of your hair. You never got this tired playing *Civilisation*.

What it isn't, of course, is dancing. If you got up on the dancefloor and acted like a DDR player, you'd be laughed out of the place. Like in *Riverdance*, your arms stay rooted to your sides as you move your feet in ever decreasing circles. In an effort to prevent spectators from noticing this, the fans have developed "freestyle" dancing, where hitting the right arrows is almost incidental. But the simple fact of the matter is this: *you always look stupid when playing this game*. Yeah, and we looked dead cool playing *Neverwinter Nights*.

I discovered I was behind the times and these games had been around for years; obvious really, given that there was one in the arcade on Pensarn beach. The most famous is Dance Dance Revolution, but the one we'd been playing was its competitor, Pump it Up. They started as beat-tapping games or *bemani*; only later did Konami work out that it would be more fun to attach a dance mat to them, so you could tap out the beat with your feet rather than your hands. This clever idea has netted Konami so much money that they've now started a subsidiary company to develop gym machines with video game elements—just what I was looking for in the first place.

DDR is a global hit, but much to the disgust of its fans, it's known by the undeniably naff name of "Dancing Stage Euromix" in the UK. Another interesting feature of these games is that, broadly speaking, all the music is crap. This isn't a problem inherent in the system; it's that it's very expensive to license music to put in video games and play at home, even though the sound samples are only 90 seconds long (you're knackered after that). So most DDR songs are original compositions by a Japanese expert in writing rotten dance music. Working in a variety of styles, this anonymous Konami employee uses more



*Steve wishes he'd brought along his super wide-angle lens*

pseudonyms than Lionel Fanthorpe, notably including "Naoki M" and "Naomi K". Of course, as these are not so much dancing games as Arrow Smashing games, the specific music doesn't really matter.

Each song comes in a variety of difficulties, resulting in dance routines ranked from one to ten feet. After a month of fairly solid practice, I can now do all of the fours and most of the fives. I've even managed a couple of sevens, downhill and with a following wind. I've also picked up Jungle Book Groove Party, a game which allows you to sing karaoke while also dancing along to such classics as *The Bear Necessities*.

Oh, yes, and the floor bounces. It's all too hard on the feet if you play on a solid floor, so I use the nice springy floor of the living room. Steven has started refusing to go into the cellar without a hard hat, and the mice have taken to covering in the corner whenever I play. I've even tried to teach the *Plokta* cabal. Dr P wasn't bad, but thought it would be easier with an ordinary controller, and Sue was fine until she had to distinguish left from right. She reckons it's a lot less fun than bellydancing with thirty other women, but I'm not at all sure what that would do to the house.

—Alison Scott

## BOLLOCKS

### The Wonky Wong-Kei

I was in Chinatown recently. I went into London for the monthly SF pub meeting, and decided to try my old haunt of the Wong Kei where I've been eating on and off for more than twenty years. The food is fine and it's pretty cheap; the service though is something else. Alas, it's awfully changed. The WK used to be famous for having the rudest staff around. Basically, you'd go in the door, look around and be immediately set upon by a pack of attack waiters demanding, in broken English, to know how many people are in your party. "How many? How many? One? Sit here. Two? Downstairs, downstairs! Three? Upstairs, please." I've seen would-be diners storm out in a towering rage at this point, but if you meekly sit where you're told, the waiter slams down a pot of tea, a cup and a pair of chopsticks, and demands to know what you want to eat. Asking for a menu is considered very *infra dig*, though they can usually find an old battered copy which they throw on the table with a sneer. Personally, I usually just stick to the Singapore noodles, though I have been known to be more adventurous when the *choi sum* is in season.

Unfortunately, the modern concept of customer service has cast its malign influence over the Wong Kei. The waiters have been taking English lessons and they're even trying to be polite (when they remember). This time I actually heard one ask a diner if he knew what he had asked for and did he really want to order congee? And they even called somebody Sir while demanding he sit at the long tables with the rest of us rabble. What's

more, the Singapore rice noodles looked as if they had been made up from real ingredients instead of using whatever was lying around the kitchen at the time. Inconceivable! The end of an ancient tradition. I don't know what the world's coming to.

—Steve Davies



# Protecting Flat Surfaces From The Weather

I spent a recent Sunday in London with Phil, an old friend of mine. We decided we'd go visit the Tate Modern together. Neither of us is greatly educated in the labyrinthine complexities of modern art theory, but we think we can recognise the difference between something good and somebody taking the piss. We got to exercise this uncommon skill repeatedly.

The great engine hall was a disappointment. It's a huge space, crying out for something big and dramatic. It contained a small number of vertical forms (sculptures to you and me), no more than six feet high. Some of the individual works were reasonable (there was a Giacometti, a Gormley and a number of minor pieces) but there appeared to be little rationale for them being there. There were three groups: one of traditional human-body sculptures, one of modern human-body pieces and one of semi-abstracted human-body pieces. They seemed to have been assembled with no regard either to the space they were in or to anything other than following the theme. This turned out to be a consistent feature of the gallery. A room full of unrelated works involving collections of similar objects, a room full of unrelated works having something to do with the concept of dissonance, and so on. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

At this point, Phil expressed some concern about us taking the piss out of something that might be a great work of art. My feeling was that if it was good art, then taking the piss out of it wouldn't hurt it. And if it was crap then it deserved to have the piss taken out of it.

Having agreed on this as a strategy, we proceeded to a room called "Virtual and Real." Immediately by the door was a piece called "Light Switch" by Ceal Floyer, a Karachi-born artist who "invites us to reconsider the nature of visual perception through an engagement with everyday, ephemeral objects and situations." The piece consisted of a slide projector, projecting the image of a light switch onto the wall at exactly the position you might expect to find a physical switch. You get it? Light switch? A switch made out of light? Well, we were amused. Not impressed, engaged, intrigued, confounded or even disturbed. Just amused. It was a nice little joke, worth no more than 5 seconds of anyone's time.

Next to the light switch was a piece entitled "Oak Tree" by Michael Craig-

serious disagreement. The piece consists of a small shelf, out of reach of the plebs, with a glass of water on it. Notes explain how the author has actually changed the glass of water (through his secret superpower of Art) into an oak tree. I guess it's on a high shelf in case anyone accidentally swallows the oak tree (or even drinks it maliciously, in a philistine act of art criticism). This is the Humpty-Dumpty school of art, where a word means whatever you want it to mean. Phil felt that the artist should be strung up. My grip on reality has never been that good anyway so I just got the giggles. It was a great temptation (which you'll be glad to hear we resisted) to spend the rest of the day redefining arbitrary objects as oak trees and leaving it at that. In fact, some of the later galleries would have been a lot better if they'd been just been defined as oak trees to start with and sent to be pulped. This would doubtless have saved some rainforest somewhere for a good 30 seconds.

There were a couple of other pieces in the room, but we had some trouble finding them. We eventually realised that the floor tiles were actually a work by Carl Andre, an artist who deserves to be turned into IKEA flatpack furniture if ever I saw one. The other was either the emergency exit or a ventilation shaft. We finally decided it had to be the ventilation unit because it wasn't as well made as the door. Creating a piece that looks like a ventilation duct, in a building full of real ventilation ducts strikes me as... well, superfluous. No, I'd go further, complete crap. Or possibly scrap.

A very large room was devoted to the oeuvre of one Sarah Lucas, purchased at vast expense for the national collection. Hmm. Let's be diplomatic. Ms Lucas is a manufacturer of utterly talentless drivel. Her artistic ability is completely non-existent. Her works bear about the same relationship to art as a single molecule of hydrogen does to the Magellanic Clouds. The only piece with any spirit to it was a garden gnome constructed of cigarettes. She must have been having an off day when she created it. The majority of her creations consist of smuttily symbolic arrangements of household objects (two melons on a sofa, two light bulbs and a fluorescent tube sticking out of a futon... that kind of thing) or cut-up pages from the Sunday Sport. I'll come back to this, but I'd like to say that any sufficiently dirty-minded ten year old could do better, and

a great many have done better. Given my choice of rooms in which to place a substantial quantity of gelignite, this would be it.

Escaping from the desolation of Lucas brought us to two small rooms devoted to Eduardo Paolozzi. I have some time for Paolozzi. He is erratic, with bursts of inspired artistry giving way to leaden kitsch. Naturally these are all displayed with equal loving care. After all, what matters is not the quality of the art but who it's by. No? Anyway, one of his signature dishes is the repurposing of rubbish and ephemera. If anyone wants a copy of the October 1938 issue of *Wonder Stories*, tough, it's now officially an artwork. Or part of an artwork. Or something. It's in a glass cabinet, it *must* be art!

And while we're on the subject of glass cabinets, next door to Paolozzi we found Damien Hirst's installation 'Pharmacy'. This was one of the most enjoyable experiences I've had in any gallery of modern art. Not because of any aesthetic aspect of 'Pharmacy' which consists of a room lined with glass cases full of pills (or at least the packaging for pills), plus 4 kick stools in the middle of the floor, each of which bears a bowl containing a honeycomb. Oh and there's an insect-killing light but that might just be to keep bugs out of the honey... So I spent several minutes dashing round the room going "I've been on that", "I've just stopped taking that", "I'm on that at the moment" "I hear that's got really cool side-effects..." If ever there was a Victor Gonzalez memorial artwork, this is it. Great fun, I haven't laughed so much in ages. See, you knew modern art had to be good for something.

Further on, we came to a favourite room, "Landscape Encoded." I liked Simon Patterson's "The Great Bear" when I first saw the original some years ago, hanging in the foyer of London Underground's offices at Canary Wharf. The tube map is reproduced, except with the names of the stations replaced by people, so that for instance the Jubilee Line are all famous footballers, the Bakerloo line are great thinkers and so on. Where it falls down is at the intersections. Baker Street is represented by Charles Darwin which is OK for the Bakerloo line, but old Charles wasn't much cop as the centre-forward for Galapagos United ("The Finches") and so the whole thing lacks that ultimate spark of brilliance.

Also in "Landscape Encoded", we have the largest ant farm in... I was going to say in the world, but I'll settle for the largest ant farm in any modern art gallery I've been around. 47 national flags (mostly South Pacific nations but including the UK and USA) made from coloured sand were connected by plastic tubes and ants allowed to run around inside. Now as far as I could tell, all the ants have since died and the piece is now a static work. If we assume that it was originally performance art, carried out by a cast of ants, which I think was the intention, is this strictly now an artwork? Or merely the dead remains of an artwork that should have been tidied away and donated to some small child's sandpit? My vote is for the sandpit.

Performance art. You know, I've got nothing against it as an art form. It's often fun for both artists/participants and onlookers (actually in most performance art the distinction is pretty blurred anyway). But the heart of it is the performance. When it's over, it's over. The thing that utterly subverts performance art is displaying props or films from the performance as if they were art in themselves. The Tate has a number of these. There's a Mark Wallinger exhibit on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor with a video showing him standing on Primrose Hill, breathing balloon gas and reciting a Victorian children's hymn in a squeaky voice. Not art. Not any more. It might have been art while he was doing it (personally I'm not convinced, but I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, just this once), but now it's just the reanimated corpse of dead art. I've got this mental image of the Tate's curators as mad scientists in a bad Hollywood monster B movie. They pull the switch, lightning crackles, and zombies rise from the slab crying out "brains! braaaaaains!" Unfortunately they eat the curator's brain first, leaving us suffering the Tate Museum of the Mediocre.

But it's not all bad. Barbara Hepworth's sculpture is excellent. The Rothko room is pleasant enough and Rebecca Horn's upside-down exploding piano is always good for a laugh. We learned that Mondriaan once went off in a huff when someone suggested the concept of diagonal lines to him and the extraordinary mural on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor is actually made of mud. Then, while leaving the "Socialist Realism" room we bumped into an official gallery guide, giving his spiel to a crowd of sheep. He led them round in front of "The Discussion" by Gussano, a superb piece which, to my mind, almost makes up for the appalling wastelands elsewhere. He discoursed knowledgeably on the striking composition of the picture, the relationships between the figures, the significance of the brown colours in the overall colour balance... There's a problem here. You see, "The Discussion"

incorporates a large proportion of found material, in this case newspapers.

When the piece was new, these would have been white and the general appearance of the piece would have been very different. So much for the guide's street-cred. He also completely misrepresented the political background of socialist realism, but there you go.

Reflecting on all of this, I was struck with a dramatic realisation about the nature of art. No, honestly, this is really significant. We're talking a major turning point in the field of art criticism. Given a substantial Arts Council grant we could be cooking with gas here. Anyhow, here it is:

The one unifying theme to absolutely every single piece of modern art is that the artist is trying to make you see things in a different way. Basically, as an ignorant peon, the way you perceive the universe is naturally inferior to the rarefied perception of the artist and so he/she condescends to invest objects with some hint of what they claim to see. This way you can marvel at the superiority of these wondrous beings and accept your true place, grovelling at their feet. There's just one problem with this. Your average modern artist has the imagination of a gerbil. What are the great emotions, luminescent thoughts and lofty ideals that they fossilise into art? Well, so far it looks like food, drink, drugs, sex, more sex, defecation... oh and an addiction to puns and trivial toys which doesn't say much for their sense of humour either. Look at some of the great works of art of the past. Many of them (obviously not all) are actually trying to get across very complex ideas. You can see real hunger in those bowls of fruit, real pain in those crucifixions, real lust, real... experience.

That's the heart of it. How can artists produce great art when they haven't suffered for it? I mean, it's almost a cliché "I suffered for my art" except these days they don't. Nobby, the gnome made out of cigarettes, presumably portrays the artist's terrible experience of having to cut back to 5 packs a day so she could afford to buy another couple of melons and a banana. What we need is a movement to improve the quality of modern art. Naturally, to do this we need to persecute artists. We should get the National Lottery to put a bounty on the heads of artists, forcing them underground, painting on the run, sculpting guerrilla art while looking over their shoulders, listening for the mob. Any artist captured would be decapitated on prime-time TV and their head placed on a spike at the Tate (or, in Damien Hirst's case, in a tank of formalin) as an installation with real immediacy. None of your namby-pamby smutty stuff here. Blood, gore and dead artists. And good riddance.

—Steve Davies

## BOLLOCKS

### A Treat For One Eye

Tibs wrote to let us know that *Lilo and Stitch* includes references to Viewmasters. On Friday, Marianne and Jonathan were delighted to discover that the current Happy Meal toy is a genuine *Lilo and Stitch* Viewmaster. Look through it to see stills from the film. Except that, in a blow for monocular equality, these fine stereoptical devices seem to have been manufactured by someone who has Missed the Point in a most comprehensive way, since they only have one eye-piece.



### Torture Garden

Last *Plokta* weekend, it seemed as if every LiveJournalling fan in the country was parting at the Torture Garden fetish club in London on Saturday night. Except for us, who were too busy eating vast amounts of food and getting pissed producing our finely crafted fanzine. Sulk. But we let Sue put her over-active imagination to work:



**BOLLOCKS**

**Boucher for TAFF**

It seems that a Worldcon bid for Australia in 2010 was spontaneously generated at ConJosé, and took something like \$4,000 in pre-supports. Always in favour of Worldcon bids for somewhere that's 10,000 miles away, this fanzine supports Australia in 2010.

Let's Do It Again!  
**Melbourne in '10**



**Marianne's Choice**

We discover from the *Independent* that pop-psychiatrist Oliver James says "If you seriously want your child to grow up a genius, then I'm afraid you'll have to die before the child is 15." Apparently "an astonishingly high" percentage of US presidents have had one parent die before they reach 15. So the question is, will it be Steven or Alison who voluntarily incorporates in nine years' time? Guess who we're betting on.

**Fame At Last**

D West wrote to chastise us for not sending him #26, and added "Is this any way to treat a contributor? (Let alone a Hollywood star)".

He helpfully included a picture of Don West, a character in the recent movie *Ivansxtc*. We can't see the resemblance ourselves.



**A Second Chance at Eden**

(YES, I know that Peter F Hamilton has already used that title. Isn't he an appalling reverse plagiarist?)

In September, I was in Cornwall on another secret assignment. Not, I hasten to add, in any way related to the ZZ9 excursion to Magrathea, which I later discovered was there a few days after me. Talk about narrow escapes.

So, as one does in Cornwall, I decided to visit the Eden Project, a hole in the ground that the National Lottery poured a few tens of millions of pounds into with better effect than in Greenwich.

This is actually easier said than done, even in September. It really is a compulsory attraction for all visitors to Cornwall, and it's getting 2 million visitors per year against planned numbers of 700,000. This means that it tends to fill up, and then they post an angel with a flaming sword to keep people out for the rest of the day. But on the second attempt I turn up at opening time and there's only a fifteen minute queue to park in the unfortunately named Strawberry car park.

At first sight, the complex looks considerably more alien than it ever did when they were filming *Doctor Who* episodes in the same quarry, thirty years ago. It's all glistening translucent domes and coloured banners waving in the breeze, and could perfectly well be a domed colony on another planet. Except for all the tourists, that is.



There are two domes. The larger one, pictured above, is the tropical biome. You could allegedly fit the Tower of London inside, although I wouldn't want to be on the M4 stuck behind the lorry that was transporting it to Cornwall to test the hypothesis. The smaller dome is a temperate biome—you might wonder why temperate plants need a dome in Cornwall, but they seem in practice to be mostly Mediterranean.

It's supposed to be a habitat and showcase for endangered plants. But frankly, Kew Gardens has more plants better displayed, and they're not the main attraction of the Eden Project. No, it's much more worthwhile visiting for the domes themselves, and the wide variety of daffy sculptures.



*The Corn Dolly of Doom*



*An eagle made from 250,000 wine corks contributed by RSPB members*



*That's a nasty fungal infection you've got*



*The Minoan skin for Dance Dance Revolution*

# Lokta Plokta

Chris Bell  
nobody@dev/null.com

You are collectively a Bad Influence, but don't go resting on your laurels on that account. Whence else am I going to get not one but *two* guaranteed distractors that even cause the Tall Naval Youth of Doom to read them when he is meant to be doing Something Important like finishing the washing he'd put into the machine untutored and on completely the wrong cycle, whilst failing to make sure all the powder left the in-tray at the right moment and thus that everything being rinsed didn't merely get washed again and again in decreasingly powerful soap solution over several washes, before vanishing to Oxford leaving me to sort out the bubbles from all over and hang up three shirts and some underwear but nothing like a full washload? Not to mention stopping me from getting on with the emergency re-read of *Tristram Shandy* before the beginning of term, a date on which coincidentally the builders arrive to spend three or four months reconstructing the house again—the front is falling off this time, the back we already have under control by inserting a metre of concrete under the foundations, and one side isn't going anywhere because next door is in the way and anyhow that side is uphill from here. There really isn't anything much else it can do solo after this: the front fell off, the back fell off, the other side-wall is held on with large metal strips cunningly incorporated into the floors after half of it fell off, the roof has been replaced as an emergency, the kitchen collapsed, and we don't have a cellar for the whole lot to fall into.... Dry-rot we've done, rewiring we've done, what's left? Coupu

infestation? Maybe the stairs will vanish one night? So the next thing will have to be its enlisting next door to slide down the hill and push the entire edifice into the house on the other side.

My advice to all prospective mature students would be "don't do it", on the basis of events since I signed up for this degree, went to Freshers' Week and became bewildered, and opened the first (anglo-saxon) text. Two weeks after the beginning of my first term my mother died. Of the immediate family, one developed a malfunctioning thyroid, and another got tonsils bad enough eventually to require surgical removal, over the next year and a half. Meantime the house got dryrot in five rooms at the back and the front began to drift away from the rest, and my front teeth all began to come apart, so that for the past eighteen months the implants have been gradually brought into play, which, since whilst one waits for them to happen finally everything dental is held together with dental blutac, means no solid food whilst it's going on. (What a waste of a convention on Jersey, all that food and no way to chew....)

That will be enough whingeing.

It is very satisfactory to the ego to note that a childhood joke of mine, gleaned almost certainly from the Very Old Wall in *The Perishers*, has become part of fandom's consciousness. "Bring back the Groat", the slogan said, and I had it as an ambition for many years, and I finally convinced someone else that it would be a good idea and we did it for the gopher-tickets at Reconvene. Now you've invented an acronym to explain it, and everything. Gosh. And really it was all because a pint of ale back in the dim-and-distant used to

cost 4d, i.e. one groat, and the Reconvene Groat was theoretically worth a pint (or a lunch) before the Adelphi decided it was just a unit of currency and they would give change for the Groat note.

Something tells me that this explanation needs to be made as public as possible before the Groat turns out to have been a fannish thing since 1958, originating in Leeds, or proto-Croydon, or somewhere suitably fannish. Surely at least one of the *Plokta* Cabal remembers the Groat Decision for Reconvene?

A complaint. You have fallen victim to the Curse Of The Smart Quote. When you use smart quotes, the single quote before a word, aka the apostrophe, comes out the wrong way round for its function, and words such as '50s and '60s in Brad Foster's LoC look silly. This is not something you do often, I grant you, but it's a growing trend; two books I have read recently, each from a small publishing house, have been bedevilled by this particular typo, and it's surprisingly irritating after the first couple of times it makes one look for the other end of the quotation and then realise there isn't going to be one. Be aware of it, it looks dead amateur and naff.

*[Aaaaaaargh! I cringe and cover in the corner. Alison trips over me and drops the baby on George, who starts clawing at everything in reach. All die. Oh the embarrassment.—Proofreader]*

Reading *Plokta* and *Ansible* and going to three cons a year seems to be the only fannish activity I get at the moment, having sworn off conrunning until I have done this degree. Hence the LoC: I need to make sure I get the occasional fix of fandom. Rumours that I am involved in Bindweed are erroneous, I'm not involved at all, it's only a

up helping to run the thing after I have finished the degree it will be entirely coincidence. There is good precedent for landing everyone else with running a convention and then wandering off into the groves of Academe, after all.

Back to the washing. Or *Tristram Shandy*. I wonder which is the less enthralling prospect? A shaggy-dog story told backwards at enormous length or a detergent-slimy shirt. I really do know how to live, don't I.

Actually I am an example of iron will-power. Steve's bit on computer games means I am bound to mention this. I have a Mac, you see—no, not a new super-triffic all-singing etc, just a small Mac. It came with one game on it. The game was/is the SuperTetris sampler: play up to 3000 points or two whole levels just to see how triffic it is, then buy the CD, is the idea. Unfortunately this was out for sale several weeks before I got the computer, so the CD was no longer all that available by the time I wanted it and I never made the effort to find a copy; I just became the world's greatest expert on scoring under 2000 points for two whole levels (1 and 5) of SuperTetris. (My record-low score is 1756 and an empty well, which is very impressive to anyone who has the faintest idea what I'm talking about, so there.) And now somebody who shall remain nameless (but lives in Birmingham and indulges himself in Random Acts Of Mindless Kindness and keeps a moose who distributes chocolate at conventions) has found the CD for me and given it to me for my birthday.

I am not going to install it until I have got this degree.

And I'm not on any concons until then either.

Really

(I was planning to eschew LoCs as well as concoms and SuperTetris, but luckily I didn't say so in public, so this bit of not-reading-*Tristram-Shandy*-or-*Clarissa* is legitimate. Phew. Slogan: "*Plokta!* better than the washing for wasting time constructively!")

Chris Bell (about to find out whether the shirts have been eaten by coypu in her absence)

**Jerry Kaufman**  
JAKaufman@aol.com

Being in Seattle means that one is exposed to much of Dale Chihuly's work in the area, and many stories in local media. He's quite the character, looking broad and squatty, with wildly curly hair and an eyepatch. He's had major shows or installations in places like Jerusalem and Venice, as well as London, and there's now a Museum of Glass in Tacoma, our "sister" city to the south. (Seattle and Tacoma are actually great rivals in many ways, and we delight in putting Tacoma down. At one time, when the city had more active paper mills, Seattleites made many references to "the aroma of Tacoma.") [*We only know Tacoma for its Narrows.*]

**Steve Jeffery**  
peverel@aol.com

Here's something on an idea that's been brewing for some time, but your covers finally persuaded me to try it out in Photoshop.



Thora Hird is elected as the new Davros for making the Daleks' old problem with stairs

(I'm listening to someone talking on the radio about Extreme Ironing. Is there Extreme Fanac?)

**Claire Brialey**  
claire@fishlifter.demon.co.uk

Alan Sullivan's February *Jird* attributed to you the following advice on how to become an award-winning trufan: "Be witty, funny and shag Claire". In case the veracity of last year's Novas is in doubt, I'd like to quash any possible rumours about me and Dave Hicks or Doug & Christina—individually or collectively. And I'd like *not* to quash any possible rumours about me and Alison Freebairn, because if Jim de Liscard's going to take five months off work we've got to make him think he's missing *something*.

**Kim Huett**  
atoxenwurm@hotmail.com

I trust that by now you have your copies of the Lucy Huntzinger collection. Time I asked if you would be so kind as to mention its availability in the next *Plokta*. If you could do so I'd be most grateful. The collection is what you would call POD so there's no rush about this. Just so long as you mention that anybody who's interested should send me their equivalent of a couple of dollars to cover postage. I'll then happily send them a copy.

**Kim Huett (again)**

Avast ye Ploklubbers,

I saw a really neat segment on cooking last week and I understand you all have some affinity with food. Basically chef Ian Parmenter demonstrated how best to cook in your hotel room with the sort of appliances found there. Some tips, such as that croissants can be easily reheated by putting them in a bag and blasting them with a hair dryer, were a bit obvious. Using an electric jug to boil assorted vegetables while steaming asparagus stuck in the spout was clever though. Even better he wrapped a fish in non-stick paper and cooked it by resting a hot iron on each side. Call me a vapulater but isn't this the sort of practical information that *Plokta* should be delivering to its audience?

I suggest nobody takes the idea of Valois coffee any damn further! I'm sure I'm not the only one who doesn't want to imagine a warm rush of Tobes gurgling down their throat. [*Obvious editorial comment withheld for reasons of taste and discretion. And, may we just add, Eeeeeeeurgh!*]

**Jan Stinson**  
tropicsf@earthlink.net

Do you know whether there are copies of *Strange Delusions* available on the Web or via e-mail? I did a search (admittedly a brief one) and didn't get any solid hits. I hope that if I write to Tobes and ask if he has extra copies (and include some filthy lucre, postage being so horrendous), he'll send a few. I'd love to read more. Ghu, listen to me, I sound like a *fan* already....

**Marcus L Rowland**  
mrowland@ffutures.demon.co.uk

Something you very rarely hear about is the Viewmaster cameras. There were two or three different models, all fairly primitive 35mm

them was that the film went through on a slanting path so that the images were above each other but offset by several frames on the film. It's difficult to describe in words—basically when you took a picture the left eye view was on the top half of the 35mm film, the right eye view was on the bottom half and several frames to the right (or possibly right at the top and left underneath, it's been a *long* time since I saw one). You had to use a special cutting jig (which was extremely expensive) and Viewmaster film frames (ditto) to put the thing together and view it.

**SMS**  
cira.sms@virgin.net



Snoddors now officially has names: Cuilliann Jacob Erasmus Kenneth Kepler... Short.

I'm sure *that* will entertain someone.



PS:

Eira says: "In the shower, you can't hear your baby scream".

**Brin-Marie McLaughlin**  
BrinInSF@aol.com

Apparently, there seems to occasionally be some confusion over the deceased SF fan Aubrey Vincent Clarke, whose obit and subsequent tributes appear on the PNN, and the living musician Vince Clarke, of Depeche Mode and now Erasure. Today, I happened to be in a chat room here on AOL with the living Vince Clarke, when he happened to see the obit of the *other* Vince Clarke. At first he experienced what my mother used to refer to as a 'modified stationary panic', because he thought somebody was posting a satirical obituary about *him*, but then I explained who *Vinç* was.

But he was still curious to know a couple of things, though, so I said I'd look up your email and ask you for him.

1. Does PNN ever get Erasure-related email? [*No.*]
2. Has anybody else ever been seriously confused over the identity of the two Vince Clarkes? (e.g. seeing the header "TRIBUTES TO VINCE CLARKE" and instantly assuming the worst.)

**Granny Lala**  
HerbsAcadiana@aol.com

My life is so narrow it looks like an alley full of trashcans that haven't been cleaned for 20 years. The only interesting things in there are the dent patterns in the lids I've used to suppress the memories. I've got my back up to the bricks and am covered with outdated newspapers that read like toilet paper in a privy.

I've saved you a place back in the corner where a dim ray breaks through the roofs at precisely 5PM. Just step into the light and I'll recognize you since you will be the only thing there on 2 legs.

Does it count that I spent 8 years on Jackson Square back in the 60's and am addicted to coffee with chicory and the smell of mule piss? (That's New Orleans for those of you who haven't left their rooms in 5 years.)

Brother, can you spare an E-zine?

**Granny Lala (again)**

[*Commenting on the chocolate teapot.*]

SheesH!

Just let some intellectuals loose and they miss the entire lawn while blowing on dandelion fluff and declaring the wind to be from the South when they were really looking for 4 leaf clovers.

It all starts with false assumptions and having your mind stuck in the narrows of a pot-de-chambre, er, chocolate teapot.

Chocolate tea pots have always been meant to be used for instant powdered teas and cold liquids such as water, wine, etc. The tea may be any dried leaf or herb. If spirits are used this creates a medicinal extract. The most common being powdered cannabis. The chocolate shell giving it a subtle bouquet much appreciated by connoisseurs. The tea is then held in the mouth until warm or approaching body temperature, and then it is spit directly into the palm from whence it is wiped on the trousers, or alternatively spit into a chocolate teacup. (See notes on Winetasting Parties, or How to Drink and Still Stand up in a Wine Cellar.) If the tea is powdered cannabis, the spitting is omitted and swallowing is recommended. There is also another technique which involves snuffing the solution into the nostrils from a chocolate saucer, which was practiced in Mayan culture in ancient times, but it has been abandoned for centuries. There are practitioners of sniffers in pockets in Peru, but they have gone straight to

cocoa and/or coke and there is no record of them ever using the chocolate teapot method, using chocolate burial urns instead. Shouts of "This is some damn good shit!" usually accompany the ceremony.

Antique chocolate teapots are highly prized as collectibles and fetch astounding prices on E-bay. The price is directly related to who used them last and if any cannabis powder residue is still there, or if a packet of it is included. The chocolate saucers are much rarer and accordingly fetch greater prices. Some slight melting damage is tolerated.

**Kim Huett (yet again)**

That is simply the cutest drawing of D. on the top right hand corner of page seven. I hadn't realised this before Sue stepped in but now I can't imagine him as anything but a disgruntled and chain-smoking winged mouse.

A mouse, it must be noted however, who can pack a punch when you manage to focus him on the right topic. I wasn't impressed by Alison's defence of Glenn Brown either but couldn't never have explained why with sort of detailed arguments D. used.

**Debra.Kerr**

*Slice* is a show of fish slices and cake slices not just as humble domestic objects but as major works of contemporary art.

Slices were first created in the early 1700s when fashionable eating habits required that fish and cake be served at the table with utensils appropriate to the high status of their owners.

Silversmiths were required to make the servers into objects of beauty as well as use and some very highly wrought artefacts resulted, ornamented with a great deal of piercing and chasing.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the fashion began to die out, but from the 1980s onwards it was revived almost single-handedly by Professor Seymour Rabinovitch, a distinguished American scientist who has commissioned new work from leading silversmiths in Britain and the US. *Slice* shows what they have been able to do. The fish is the main source of inspiration and the slices slither and writhe across the surfaces they rest on, some staring at the viewer and others threatening to bite.



**Charles Hitchcock**  
hitch@ptc.com

I'm entirely in sympathy with Alison about camping; as a proto-fan I spent two summers travel-camping around Europe, including the wettest Scandinavian summer on record. After dripping our way down the Norwegian coast, my parents finally damned the budget and rented a campsite *and* space in a dorm; we pitched everything and slept in comfort until we could stand the smell of it's-really-almost-dry canvas. (We also discovered that while the legendary English breakfast may have been fading even 40 years ago, the Norwegian version was still at the let's-skip-lunch-and-walk-instead-of-taking-the-bus stage.)

Colin Greenland  
(with a CD of  
comment—*Honeybee* by  
Moose)

Hi there and thanks for all the *Plokta*s. *Ploktae*. *Ploktata*. Whatever they are. Here's some moosic never played on the wireless. Searched the credits for Durrphhorn but couldn't find it.

You're quite right about *Late Junction*, though. Last time I tuned in they were playing Tom Heasley. Ambient tuba. True.

#### Martin Morse Wooster

Knowing about your love of things Japanese, I thought you would like to know about Chindogu, the ancient Japanese art of "unusefulness." Learn the Ten tenets of Chindogu, and how you will obtain enlightenment by wearing toilet paper on your head! I also pass on a Japanese noodle dish consumed by space aliens.



#### Tom Womack

I enjoyed Game On more than Steve did; too involved with Real Computers (RIP Acorn Archimedes) to have met the consoles when they were new, and I spent far too much of my rationed time upstairs playing the specially-imported *Pikmin*; I have to remind myself roughly weekly that I don't need and can't afford a Gamecube. Couldn't escape the bulldozer, let alone reach the Vogon fleet.

I admit that I too failed to notice the twenty-foot glass

fountain of fire at the V&A; maybe it wasn't there in January, though I remember the chandelier. I'm sure it writhes squamously to elude all efforts to trap it on CCD; Giulia tells me the *Plokta* photo was borrowed from some outfit with the wherewithal to sedate it first. All I was able to get in January were photos of Vicki Rosenzweig in plate-mail gauntlets, and the Greatest Chair On Earth.



Bend over, Tom

#### SMS (again)

Particularly flattered that Sue not only remembered the details of Eira's Pregnancy Wardrobe with such accuracy but that she gave me a hairline I've not seen in over five years.

(Snodders/Moose insists that he took up far more tummy space and that we "Look funnier than that")

Dave Langford  
ansible@cix.co.uk

I'd heard some distant rumour of a pink *FT* issue, but was taken unawares when this practically glossy publication arrived. There was a long blank pause before I joined the chorus heard at breakfast tables up and down the nation: "Bloody HELL, it's *Plokta*!"

I'm sorry about the Hugo. Have taken measures to ensure that *Ansible* is henceforth placed in the Semiprozine category. They thought I was joking when I suggested this, even though I chose the immensely dignified Tobes as my mouthpiece, but the SMOFs

Meanwhile, the Pink Pound issue was much enjoyed. I may not get a namecheck on the front page, but I see my mantelpiece does. Please don't tell Alison that Hazel and I giggled at inordinate length over the picture of the scantily clad bathing belle on, or rather facing, Page Three.

Steve's mention of the *Elite* space-combat computer game brought back memories. I saw the original BBC version briefly at some show, but the 1991 PC *Elite Plus* was the subject of intense Langford research because there were actually plans for spinoff novels. If *Doom*, why not *Elite*? These books, it was madly fantasized, would be written by various *SF Encyclopedia* hacks such as Paul "John Grant" Barnett, myself, and John Clute. I explored and recorded various byways of the game—"special missions" awaiting in odd corners of one or another galaxy, and the way hyperspace jumps could very rarely go wrong and dump you into "Witch Space" (or whatever it was) amid millions of attacking purple Thargs. Eventually the whole project faded away, though not before various space-operatic synopses had been drafted, including one bizarre Clutean extravaganza which after many transformations and contortuplications became his very first skiffy novel *Appleseed*. Not a lot of people wanted to know that.

Joseph T Major  
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**Bollocks p. 3:** Installing the CD-RW drive in my computer was made interesting by the discovery when we opened the case. Large quantities of loose gray fur resembling the pelt of Elfling filled the case. We had to vacuum it out. No yellow fur from Sulla. No white fur from C'Mell. Just Elfling fur.

Incidentally, it's C'Mell who sits atop the computer

fledglings will lose their wariness of Spooks, having been brought up in nests of his hair. That's one of the many clever advantages of our feline masters.

#### Martin Morse Wooster (again)

I was quite pleased to see the article by Rob Jackson. The first British fanzine I ever saw was *Maya*. There I was, a callow college student, learning about all the fun things that happened at British conventions. The drinking of pint after pint of real ale, the dinner expeditions to Indian restaurants, the massive consumption of vindaloo, the frenzied run to the toilet! It evoked the sense of wonder. I still have most of those issues of *Maya*, which I understand are quite collectible ... well, mine would be collectible were they not partially encrusted with souvenirs of youthful overconsumption of alcohol. But I still have them.

I'm sorry, but I have to ask a clueless American question: why Croydon? Is it the center of the UK fan universe, the British Seattle or Madison? Where can I find the Slan Shack of Croydon?

Alison Scott finds surprises on Radio 3. There are no surprises on American radio. Everything here is precisely programmed by marketers. I've taken part in these surveys; for \$60, you spend two hours in a hotel room with a wireless device that has a dial you can turn from 0-100, or, for some questions, from 1-10. (No, it doesn't go to 11.) You then get five-second snippets of songs, which you then rate by twisting the dial. The last one of these I did, for an "oldies" (pre-1980) rock station, was interesting because of the large amount of rock history that was left out. I think the Beatles were down to six acceptable songs, the Rolling Stones had three, and Janis Joplin hung in with one. However, every song from the early 1960s about surfing, fast cars, the beach, having a

milk shake with your sweetie, and driving your GTO into the surf was included.

As for our classical stations here, the commercial one (our version of Classic FM) has decided that all their listeners are either a) stressed out stuck in traffic jams driving to and from the office or b) stressed out at the office. So they offer music that is designed either to perk you up or relax you. During the late afternoon, they found that half their audience wanted perky music and half wanted relaxing music, so they alternate. And of course, both stations excise anything bothersome, including all organ music, all vocal music, and nearly anything written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only three overtures of Shostakovich, for example, are now allowed. All in all, I'd rather listen to a symphony for Durrphhom.

Alan Sullivan

**Covers (Sue Mason, Alison Scott):** I take it the next CD ROM and the web site have now acquired a certain Asian flavour—including big musical number and wet-sari scene (apparently it is an old Bollywood tradition or an ancient charter or something like that). Probably in a Peter Sellers accent. As the great sage Lobsang Robert Rankin once said: “Politically incorrect, but who gives a toss.” I don't believe the “Worldcon Disaster” bit, by the way. Just because you missed everything after the comment “This convention is

going to suck...”

**This ... (Giulia de Cesare):** I can't wait to find someone willing to try and talk Wag into trying this—he works in IT, does far too much Intemet and computer game stuff and has a gypsy back. He's probably got the gaffa tape already and is likely to be up for it, given that he once dealt with his own bladderstone (a most unsavoury tale involving pliers, WD40, an electric drill, a very steady hand and more nerve than is entirely Human).

**Martin Morse Wooster (yet again)**

I like reading TAFF and DUFF reports, and since there aren't any new ones (\*koff\* \*koff\*) I buy the old ones and read them. So having bought Jerry Kaufman's 1983 DUFF report *Kaufman Coast to Coast*, imagine my surprise when I turned to page eight, and, in a description of the Natcon, came across the following passage:

“I flung myself down on the bed nearest the door, and was soon talking to a small dark woman exotically named **Giulia de Cesara** (sic). Giulia was from Tasmania. At last, I thought, I can get an explanation for that mysterious headline in *The National Times* (a weekly Aussie paper) I had seen on the plane: Spy Planes Over Tasmania.” She explained it as being part of a dispute between the Tasmanian government and environmentalists over the placement of a new dam.... As we leaned back and

watched Greg Hills sew up the seams in his pants, Giulia went on to explain an even more bizarre event: the mysterious disappearance of a baby at Ayers Rock. The distraught mother had blamed dingoes (wild dogs) ... It led, inevitably in Australia, to books of dingo jokes and bad fanzines like *Dingo Vomit*”

Now I have met Giulia, and she is obviously too young and debonair to have been an actfan in 1983. So how did this passage appear? Then it came to me: the Cabal have mastered the art of time travel, and turned into chrononauts, sailing the time streams to insert themselves into crucial moments in fanhistory! Coming up: George the cat seizes control of the 1939 Worldcon and expels fans who fail to give him treats.

At what point did advances in technology make you feel old? For me, the first time this happened was in the early 1980s, when I saw an exhibit of old train cars that included the commuter car I rode every day in 1977 downtown to my first job. More recently, I felt aged by an article in *Wired* that reported that young people today don't use watches, since if they want to know the time, they look at their cellphones....

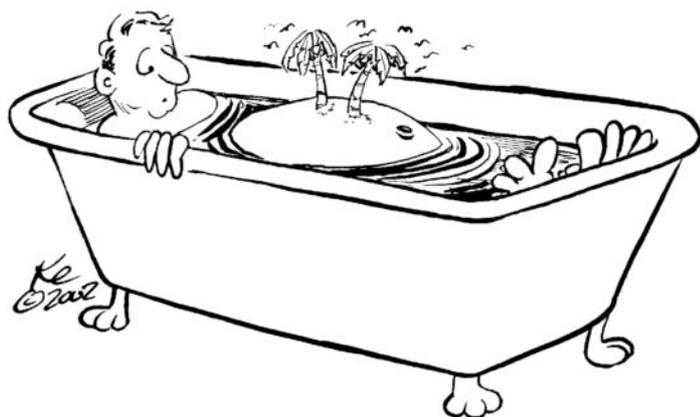
**Kim Huett (still again)**

Steve seems rather surprised at how bizarre many USian beliefs are. I am in turn surprised at the way Europeans are bemused by the acronym to their west. I would have thought it was obvious that transporting so many of the undesirable across the Atlantic would result in a cultural stew with some very suspect lumpy bits floating in it. It's like Britain sending a selection of its most vile and degenerate pieces of genetic flotsam to a series of mandatory detention centres on the far side of the planet. Who could be surprised when the result of that piece of housekeeping resulted in

Australia. Yet Britain continues to leave its borders open to Australian soap operas, cricketer teams, and even myself. You only have yourselves to blame if such a naive attitude results in you having to endure the like of Shane Warne or Kylie Minogue. For a small fee however I can be persuaded to never repeat the act of visiting the ‘mother country’. Unmarked bills please.

WAHF

**John Dallman** (pointing us at a Usenet posting about chocolate moose), **Michelle Hiley** (“We're the fourth fannish generation”), **Tom Feller** (“Thanks for leaving copies in the ConJosé fan lounge”), **Kurt Erichsen** (enclosing some illos), **Robert Lichtman** (who suffered from Alison's crappiness about mailing #26), **Terry Jeeves** (“The real world is fantastic enough to baffle anyone”), **D West** (also a victim of the great non-mailing of #26), **Douglas Spencer** (breaking our strict “no doggerel” policy), **Brian Ameringen** (“Arthur Cruttenden has a double”), **Pamela Boal** (“Perhaps a little unfair to Viewmaster”), **Gerri Sullivan** (“Walking into the Dead Corgi party after Sparks & Gerri's not quite excellent adventure truly made my weekend”), **Andrea Dale**, **Christoph Meyer** (asking to trade), **James R Cunningham**, **Kathy Chamberlin** (requesting submission guidelines and subscription rates), **Pam Wells**, **Henry Welch** (“Our titles are quite boring in comparison to Kip's fine collection”), **Tibs** (mentioning *Lilo and Stitch* Viewmasters), **Paul Campbell** (“Any address in Clacton-on-Sea is as good as any other”), **Bridget Bradshaw** (“I dove into the cover with hoots of laughter”), **Teddy Harvia** (“What I once considered superfluous technology is now an integral part of my life”) and **Annie Olsen** (with coffee of comment).



# Carters Steam Fair

## Steve:

There we were in Reading, desperately trying to avoid making a start on *Plokta*. Giulia had already disappeared off up to London for a bead fair, along with the ravaging hordes of the Berkshire Beaders. It was beginning to look as if there was no option except to knuckle down and begin editing the LoC column. Fortunately, Alison had left all the LoCs in Walthamstow, so we decided to go to the fair instead. We don't usually go because they're mostly video games and loud music, with hordes of teenagers drinking and being generally unpleasant. This time it was slightly different.

Carters Steam Fair is the world's only touring antique fair. All the attractions are genuine restored rides, some dating back to the 19th century and many actually powered by steam. The story goes that John Carter was a collector who acquired a decrepit set of antique gallopers (a merry-go-round with horses). In 1976 he took them on the road in an attempt to defray the cost of restoration. They've now got a full range, from Victorian swing boats to a 1950s dodgems complete with music played on the original 45s. Even all the lorries and living-vehicles are authentic.

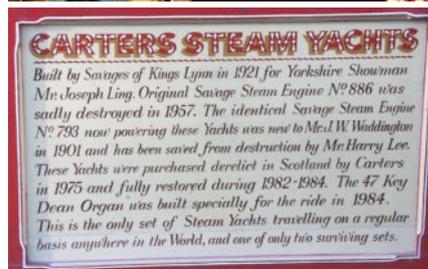


*The two-headed child from bell*



*Sue on the steam gallopers*

We wandered up the hill and took a look around. If you had a pair of small children, or if you were older than about 28, this is the fair that you'd really want to go to. All the rides are perfectly within the capabilities of normal people, the emphasis seems to be on fun rather than separating people from their cash, and everybody in sight seemed to be having a good time.



## Sue:

I like slot machines. Sign of a mis-spent youth. When I was a kid, my parents had a caravan in the seething fannish metropolis of Pensarn (see *Plokta's* passim) and I spent many a happy hour in the arcade on the beach, sheltering from the driving rain of a Welsh summer playing with slot machines.

As well as the new models, there was a fair selection of vintage machines too. These only took old pennies; they were antiques even in the 70's, most of them from the twenties to the forties with garish panels in pink and green and yellow promising all kinds of wonders and marvels and fun.

Ball bearings racing about a track, wobbly tin horses plodding along as you twisted the wheel and driving a wolloping gert big huge ball bearing along a track to win a Nestlé chocolate bar, they were delightful.

There were also the dioramas, about the size of a shower cubicle, with such edifying themes as The Haunted Graveyard, Henry the Eighth's Wives and, my absolute ghoulish favourite, The Chamber of Horrors. Shock at the red hot poker! Shudder at the Iron Maiden!

Scream (or, if you are eight, gaze with admiration) at the Terrible Rack!

The dioramas were old, from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were beautifully made, of wood and papier maché and cloth. The little man in the Iron Maiden was there, in his loin cloth, the doors, with their impressive spikes were shut on him and then, voila, they open again to reveal his perforated body, with really good red blood and an agonised expression on his poor face. The poor man on the rack was rent limb from limb, with blood in the form of red silk ribbons attaching his arms and legs to his body. Hours of entertainment and very ingenious.

They were, of course, terribly valuable and eventually the owner of the arcade found this out and they disappeared into some museum somewhere far from Pensarn.

The old slot machines gradually followed and I never thought I'd see them again.

Until the Steam Fair. There, in all their tarnished glory, were the slot machines of my childhood. The garish colours were somewhat faded, but the brass and wood fittings were lovingly polished and well cared for, some of them the exact same ones I played with as a kid. So this was where they ended up.



*The Penny Arcade, where you could buy 3\_p-worth of old pennies for only £.1*

And the old skills haven't atrophied; I won a packet of candy sticks (candy cigarettes without the red blob at their tip, swizz) and had a good hour of fun spinning wheels and working handles and reliving more innocent times.

No sign of the dioramas though; they are probably in a museum, unplayed and unloved, even though they might be much admired and very valuable.

I think the slot machines got the better deal. They might be abused by sticky fingers and heavy-handed players but they are at least still in use and still giving enjoyment.