



SEVEN



# BEER CAT SCRATCHINGS

Al & Al's Footnote Purrzine, with Ruddles and Tanglefoot

Lee van Cleef strode onto the set. In a panic, people stopped their spaghetti harvest and started humming along... "Ahh Eee Ah Ee Yah, Wah Waa Wuh". Yes folks, it's...<sup>1</sup>

## The Good, The Bad and the Ugly<sup>2</sup>

First, The Good<sup>3</sup>:

*Thunderbirds FAB, the next Generation*, which with an impressive sense of timing manages to catch on to the current Anderson comeback, is one of the truly original pieces of theatre. Now, some people might think that the jokes and visuals are too "in", since anyone who had never seen the TV *Thunderbirds* would not know what was meant. Nah. Once you've seen one Gerry Anderson show, then you know the style of them all. This is fortunate, as the entire show is done by two people and a sound track with serious attitude. Highlights of the show included the blowing up of the new bridge, and the near drowning of the World President in a tank locked behind two pairs of steel doors, a tripwire connected to some explosives and several more barriers, while Joahn (or was it Virgil) attempts to find the way in. As per the TV shows, the water level keeps rising, but never quite makes it. Even when it's up to his chin, the next time you look, it's only up to his waist<sup>4</sup>. Although played out with actions, the effect worked<sup>5</sup>. The Mysterons proved that Captain Scarlet was not invincible by shooting his strings... All in all, multo bueno.<sup>6</sup>

Next on the list of the great and good must surely be Armistead Maupin's<sup>7</sup> *Tales of the City*<sup>8</sup>. Now, for

<sup>1</sup>Monty Python's Flying Circus. Well not this time, anyway.

<sup>2</sup>Look, if *Star Trek*, *The Prisoner* and *Red Dwarf* can manage a Western theme...

<sup>3</sup>And I can't remember the Italian for it.

<sup>4</sup>Apparently, Gerry Anderson's comment on seeing this part of the show was along the lines of "I see you wised up to my time wasting routine"

<sup>5</sup>Cynics and Terry Pratchett would probably say "Learn the Words"

<sup>6</sup>It's a pity that its run has finished for the moment, unless you catch them on tour.

<sup>7</sup>Which, with an extra "E", can be read as "is a name I dreamt up"; no-one really believed that was his real name, so kept trying to make anagrams out of

those of you who haven't read any of the books the question has to be Why not? Those who have will agree that it is a fairly close representation of the book (itself a fairly close representation of those around Maupin himself. Indeed, he has been seen in a couple of scenes, in the background, of course, bending over his typewriter and presumably listening in on the events taking place in the foreground - a nice touch). Although off to a slowish start, it has rapidly become as compulsive as the original books.

## The Bad:

The new *War of the Worlds* TV show<sup>9</sup>. I'm tempted to leave it at that, but, just in case anyone else is feeling a bit insomniac<sup>10</sup>, I'll elaborate. The acting came straight out of the William Shatner school<sup>11</sup>; so wooden that it could have been turned into furniture. The plot, in the pilot episode, was corny verging on the naff, while the special effects weren't so special. Apart from that... it was fairly obviously PC<sup>12</sup>, it. (That one's his own anagram. btw)

<sup>8</sup>Trust me. There is a connection. One day, while taking a break from reading SF, I was avidly reading one of the series on the DLR. So avidly that the train was all set to reverse and go back where I had come from. The train captain asked me what I was reading that was so good, so I told her. "What's it about?" "It's about the goings on of various people in SF", I replied, since only the terminally unhip call it 'Frisco, and 'San Fransico' can be a bit of a mouthful on a cold day when your jaw wants to freeze up. "Oh, I prefer just reading the SF itself..." which only goes to prove that fans are lurking out there, many of them in disguise.

<sup>9</sup>There he goes, on about television again. What a Media fan!

<sup>10</sup>You know, the kind of person who can tell you what's going on in *Prisoner Cell Block H*, cooks student style food with an electric guitar backing track, and wishes that Mike Mansfield would stop wittering on and let the music speak for itself.

<sup>11</sup>...or was that Pinnochio?

<sup>12</sup>No, I'm not recycling that one again — it may be Politically Correct to recycle everything, but there

since with a cast of four, there was a token black, token handicapped person, token female, token Native American, token Liberal<sup>13</sup>, token intellectual and token grunt soldier<sup>14</sup>. The whole had a pace that would make a snail on Mogadon seem lively, which is strange, given the amount of stuff to try to pep it up a bit; the odd explosion, a mini gun battle, cracking a code. The usual stuff.

Despite all this, apparently it survived not just its pilot episode, but also its first series, although most of the characters, scriptwriters, production team and so on were killed off for the second series. Strangely enough, some folk like it so much they are busy copying it and dubbing it into German to send onto some friends<sup>15</sup>...

*War of the Worlds*, while not brilliant, is streets ahead of what surely must be the nadir of television. Most of the daytime output<sup>16</sup>, but in particular, the game show set in a mock supermarket. Contestants answer questions about shopping, and instead of points, they fill a shopping trolley. Or something like that. I was unlucky enough to catch the start of this show one morning, when I was looking for the weather... almost as bad as that Grab a Granny game show (in fact I think it's hosted by the same person. Eat your heart out, Jeremy Beadle).

Back in the real world, it is good to know that reality can often be found skiving off just when you least expect it. One such place is Kettering. People often have theories about homing pigeons that get lost falling into magnetic anomaly regions<sup>17</sup>, which then confuses their sense of direction.

are limits.

<sup>13</sup>American style Liberal, even if it is a Canadian production.

<sup>14</sup>It doesn't take a genius to work out that some doubling up on rôles is essential here to make things work. To be honest, it doesn't really matter which permutation you use (Perm any 2 from 4. Win a major prize!)

<sup>15</sup>I don't think they'll remain friends long if that's how they're treated.

<sup>16</sup>Remember the Victoria Wood sketch that was a piss-take on *Play School*? "It's only childrens' television, so we can do what we want" Daytime scheduling is generally so banal that *Neighbours* is high brow by comparison.

<sup>17</sup>Like in *2001*, only without the simians smashing

Kettering was built on one. When heading south, you not unnaturally follow signs for **south** Being a town with a bypass, it is not immediately alarming to note that **south** is actually west. However, at the first junction, **North** is also signposted (to the north), while **south** is signposted to the east. At the next junction, **north** is to the left, while **south** is back the way you have just come. Since you can't do a U-turn, you try another direction. The next junction has **north** and **south** pointing in the same direction. At each junction, **north** and **south** are shown in all possible combinations except opposite each other<sup>18</sup><sup>19</sup>

And finally, **The Ugly**:

This is convoluted. My sister has recently acquired two Tonkinese kittens, called Calypso and Steffi<sup>20</sup>. As part of all the usual vet type stuff was a novelty event. Take a picture of your cat and the photograph will then be entered in a "Cute cat of the Month" competition. It is hard for kittens not to look cute (except when they are clawing your furniture), and so a couple of 'kittens at play' pictures were sent off. Some time later, the vet announced that Calypso had been runner-up in that month's competition. Steffi hadn't. My brother-in-law then mischievously suggested that, since one was not cute, it was obviously ugly...

Don't believe a word of it.



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each other's skulls in or the big black monoliths...

<sup>18</sup>An instant theory (just add thoughts...) on the subject. Kettering has abandoned the conventional directions, and replaced them with two multi-purpose ones - **Nourth** and **Weast**. This then makes all crossroads have only two directions to choose from, which can then be decided on the toss of a coin. After all, not everyone carries 4-sided dice around with them.

<sup>19</sup>The trick is to find the sign labelled East and follow it. this then takes you out of the anomaly zone (unless of course you then go west...)

<sup>20</sup>As one does...

This has been the seventh edition of *Beer Cat Scratchings*, produced by Alasdair Hepburn and proof read by Allison Ewing. Snotters is on the left, and Gutbucket on the right. The address is still 123c Chobham Rd, Stratford, London, E15 1LH, so how about some comments?@1993 for all the original bits, including the cat images... Thanks Jim