

PERRYSCOPE 43



PERRYSCOPE 43, April 2024, is an issue of a personalzine published mostly monthly by **Perry Middlemiss**, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3122. E: perry@middlemiss.org
Available for the usual or download at efanzines.com with thanks to Bill Burns, and FANAC.org with thanks to Joe Siclari and Edie Stern. Unless otherwise specified all material is written by me.
Cover photograph by Robyn Mills, River Ganges, India, October 2023.

INTRODUCTION

Things are changing here at **Perryscope** headquarters. When I first started with this little fanzine in 2020 it was destined only for ANZAPA (the Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association), but it was soon obvious to me that I wanted to talk to a wider audience and so I spread it out beyond the membership of that apa.

Recently it has become clear that the size of each bi-monthly ANZAPA mailing is getting beyond what might be readable in a short time period: mailing 336 was 654 pages, mailing 337 was 590, and the latest, mailing 338, was an inbox-destroying 828. It was starting to get ridiculous and some members were noting that it was just too big to get through and comment on everything. The extreme size of these recent mailings was partly my fault as I had a total of 66 pages in mailing 338, far more than my fair share. So I decided I needed to do something to address that issue. I didn't want to stop producing **Perryscope** and I understood that ANZAPA members might still want to read it and have therefore decided that I'll add all of the members to the monthly mailing list for this fanzine, and not include it in the apa. It strikes me that this is the best compromise. I'll still be a member of the apa and have, since I rejoined in 2020, been meeting my member's requirements with other small publications. That will continue. I enjoy ANZAPA and don't want to lose my place in it. But I also don't want to swamp people with too much to read at one time.

I have two new correspondents in this issue, Lucy Huntzinger and Irwin Hirsh, both old friends who responded to requests for some written material. I had actually asked Irwin for something else but he was unable to produce that (for reasons that he may explain in a future article), sending along the piece here instead. It has a nice connection with this fanzine which you will discover at the end.

Lucy Huntzinger responded to my request with her article about Corflu, a small fannish convention which I have never attended but which I always wished I had. It may be possible for me to do so some time in the future but I'd better get a move on as it seems the people willing to run this annual event is diminishing as the participants get older. Regular **Perryscope** correspondent Leigh Edmonds was also at Corflu 41 in Las Vegas and if you want to know a bit more about what went on there you can read about it in Leigh's trip report of his recent journey through the US. (Look for **Ornithopter MK IIB** at efanzines.com)

Will these writers become regulars? If it was up to me, then yes. But we'll just have to wait and see.

Cover notes:

It was very early in the morning — sunrise, as you can see — and I'm looking a little ragged. I put it down mainly to the time of the day but it might also have been that I was looking at the mass of humanity taking the waters of the Ganges in Varanasi, and the open-air cremation sites burning on raised concrete platforms in front of me. Some things are destined to stay with you forever.

SOME THOUGHTS ON *DUNE : PART TWO* by Perry Middlemiss

Dune: Part Two (2024)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Sf

[THERE MAY BE SPOILERS HERE.]

Dune: Part Two kicks off just as *Part One* ended with Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet) and his mother Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson) attempting to integrate themselves into the lives and ranks of the Fremen on the desert world of Arrakis. As you will recall some of the Fremen, especially Stilgar (Javier Bardem) believe that Paul is their prophesied messiah who will come from off-world and lead the Fremen to the promised land, a world where their planet is not covered by desert and they do not have to hoard water meticulously. Paul is hell-bent on revenging the death of his father and the destruction of his House by the Harkonnens and, while at first not believing the prophesy, slowly comes to realise that fulfilling it might just be his best chance at getting the revenge he seeks. He will use and abuse any means and anyone to achieve his goal. So we finally get to one of Frank Herbert's major themes of these early books, namely, don't wish for a Messiah, you might just get one. Herbert's view was that absolute power corrupts and, while we only get to see minor glimpses of that corruption in this instalment, you can see it starting to develop.



Writer and director Denis Villeneuve has done a wonderful job of adapting such a difficult project for the screen. Many fans of the original Frank Herbert books may be annoyed at the omissions and compromises Villeneuve has made here, but we need to be aware that this is an adaptation of the novel designed to fit into a reasonable screen time (155 minutes for *Part One* and 165 for *Part Two*). A full, and more detailed adaptation might have required a minimum of 10 episodes for each episode if adapted for television. And it's an adaptation, that is it's Villeneuve's team's vision, not ours specifically. If his views about how it should appear on screen happen to match ours then so much the better. It is still the case that we should be reviewing what we see rather than what we hoped to see.

If fact, some of the problems some viewers might have with this adaptation probably hark back to the original novel. I've always had a lot of questions about the desert planet of Arrakis: how does it maintain its oxygen levels with little plant life? (I have recently heard that this is tackled in a latter book in the series, though in what sounds like a rather "hand-wavey" sort of explanation.) How do the fauna ecosystems work when you only seem to have huge sandworms, small desert mice and a few birds? How have the Fremen developed the technology to be able to produce the sand-thumper when they seem to have no way of making the components and appear to have little else of that tech level? Why does the Emperor travel down to the surface of Arrakis setting himself up for a full-blown attack? And I'm not sure about the timing of the plot. That last may be down to Villeneuve, as he runs the timeline of *Part Two* over a period of less than nine months — Lady Jessica is pregnant when the planet is taken over the Harkonnens, but has still not given birth at the end of *Part Two* — and I'm fairly sure Herbert took longer than that.

But it's all just a distraction as the film sweeps us up in a spectacle reminiscent of the desert scenes from David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lawrence striding across the derailed train, and Paul on the giant sandworm) and with Villeneuve's signature film touches (especially the shot of a person, seen at a distance from behind, silhouetted against a blank screen full of just one colour shade,

something that he used in both *Arrival* and *Blade Runner 2049* and which reminds me somewhat of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*). It is interesting to note that the cinematographer on this film, and also the first part, and hopefully the third, is Australian Grieg Fraser. He won an Academy Award for Best Cinematography on *Part One* and you can expect he'll win again for this. He can handle the sweeping desert scenes in bright light just as well as the close intimate scenes between two people in the semi-dark. Without his work this film wouldn't have the power it so obviously displays.

There are glimpses of other visual media here: *Apocalypse Now* with its sweeping helicopters and Baron Harkonnen emerging from his oil bath; the very final scene of the knife fight between Paul Atreides and Feyd-Rautha which immediately struck me as reminiscent of the scene near the end of *Game of Thrones* when Arya Stark kills the Winter King; one combatant takes a possibly fatal blow in order to draw their opponent in close enough to deliver their own *coup de gras*. I'm sure there are many others lurking here and I wonder if this is just a product of the filmmakers — Villeneuve and his team — having the same sort of filmic cultural background that we all do. It's THE prime cultural medium of the 20th century and we all have it now etched deeply into our intellectual DNA. Images resurface from our collective memories so it is hardly surprising that we see glimpses of them in new films.

On the acting side I want to point out the excellent work done by Austin Butler (previously in *Elvis*) as Feyd-Rautha, nephew to Baron Harkonnen, and dark, evil counter-point to Paul's light. The washed-out black-and-white scenes of the Harkonnen planet's Colosseum-like arena provide him with a perfect introduction, and with shaved head and eyebrows and face, he presents as the menace and "villain" that the story needed. Timothee Chalamet, Zendaya, Rebecca and Javier Bardem are all fine in their roles with the only disappointment being Florence Pugh (as Princess Irulan, the Emperor's daughter) who shows little interest in proceedings. Hopefully that picks up as she is bound to have a major role in the next instalment. But it's Dave Bautista who seem to be having the most fun of all the cast, running around yelling at people and smashing heads, literally.



Blade Runner 2049



Arrival



Dune Part Two



white fireworks are an especially nice touch.

Villeneuve's team needs to be especially praised for its set design, costuming and, for me above all, the colour palate that he uses: the severe black-and-white of the Harkonnen home world stands in stark contrast to the orange, reds, and browns of Arrakis and accentuates the vast differences between the two. You could easily go back and watch this film purely for these aspects alone. The black-and-

If you aim to watch it on streaming then I think you will be a bit disappointed. This film is big. Epic in the old David Lean sense. It's loud, very loud in fact, wide, exhilarating and tactile. If you came out of the cinema after watching **Part One** of *Dune* and felt you wanted more, then with **Part**



Two “more” is what you get: more sand, more sandworms, more characters and way more plotlines. And a couple of big lead-ins at the end to **Part Three**, which will be based on Herbert's *Dune Messiah*. David Lynch's film version of the book from 1984 was quirky and interesting in its own right but this is the version that will stick with me longer. See it on the biggest screen you can.

R: 4.7/5.0

MÜNCHEN CHICKEN GUTS by Martin Field

During my time in the late '60s roading with the Mike Cotton Sound, the band had a residency for a few weeks at a Munich club known as the PN HitHouse – situated in Leopoldstrasse in the bohemian area of Schwabing.

The club was run by owner Peter Naumann, hence the name, although on the side we unkindly referred to it as the PN "Scheißhaus". A famous venue in its day it hosted many British groups, including The Yardbirds, The Kinks, Eric Burdon and the Animals, and Jimi Hendrix.

People like Maurice Gibb would drop in of an evening and chat; local bands like Amon Duul (I not II) would come in and jam. An excellent time was had by all. Too excellent in a way – Munich was one of the crossroads for the hashish trade – and it was plentiful and cheap.

A residency, like recording studio work, is easy work for a roadie because once you've set up the gear all you have to do is turn up to make sure the sounds and lights are working. Then, in this case, you sit back drinking litres of lager and learning a little Bavarian-tinged German from the local schönes madchens. (Ah! Ulrike, I remember your melodious accent so well.) For example, “Tell me, meine liebe, how do you say ‘Where is the railway station?’ or, ‘Where can I buy herbal cigarettes?’

Munich had lots of lovely, fattening, rustic food, and beer to dream about. At little stalls in the main drag we ate bratwurst, bockwurst and weisswurst – liberally pasted with senf – tasty German



From left, Jim Rodford, Nick Newall, Derek Griffiths, Mike Cotton, Frau Naumann, John Beecham, Peter Naumann, and Martin Field

mustard. A highlight of the street tucker was Hohe Küche: currywurst. And for breakfast there was the wonderfully filling Bauernomlett – Farmers Omelette (with the lot).

Not far from our apartment was a restaurant called the Wienerwald, where we dined often. None of us could read the menu but based on luck and price we discovered a delicacy called “Hahnchen Magen”, which suited most tastes.

It was a meat dish of some description with a tasty sauce and came with kartoffelchips. As I recall, we drank glasses of a slightly sweet riesling to accompany.

Eventually somebody asked one of the band’s constant circle of interpreters, “Was ist die Hahnchen Magen?” “I think you would call this food, the guts of the chicken,” was the amused reply.

Next time we ate at the Wienerwald everybody chose something else from the menu.

“I wanted adventures. I wanted to go up the Nung river to the heart of darkness in Cambodia. I wanted to ride out into a desert on camelback, sand and dunes in every direction, eat whole roasted lamb with my fingers. I wanted to kick snow off my boots in a Mafia nightclub in Russia. I wanted to play with automatic weapons in Phnom Penh, recapture the past in a small oyster village in France, step into a seedy neon-lit pulqueria in rural Mexico. I wanted to run roadblocks in the middle of the night, blowing past angry militia with a handful of hurled Marlboro packs, experience fear, excitement, wonder. I wanted kicks – the kind of melodramatic thrills and chills I’d yearned for since childhood, the kind of adventure I’d found as a little boy in the pages of my Tintin comic books. I wanted to see the world – and I wanted the world to be just like the movies”

— Anthony Bourdain, *A Cook’s Tour: Global Adventures in Extreme Cuisines*

ON A SCALE OF ONE TO FUN by Lucy Huntzinger

Nic Farey wanted to know how I rated Cor41u as we sat around the Dead Dog Party last month congratulating ourselves on how well it went. Without thinking I said I ranked it top five. He eyed me closely and suggested it should be higher. I thought back over the fifteen Corflus I've attended and decided he was right.

Naturally, the first Corflu was the best Corflu, none finer. We were delighted to present fannish con and the fun never stopped all weekend. (Also, I met my future husband at it, which is a pretty big win on a personal level.) The second best was the one I ran in Nashville, where I fervently welcomed a fannish contingent to my place of exile and invented the idea of paying a small fee to be left out of the Guest of Honor hat draw, still a very popular feature. Corflu 41 takes third place due to the inventive programming, the excellent mix



Sandra Bond and Nic Farey



of attendees (especially the coup of getting Ted White to it), and the very best Sunday banquet food I've ever had. I rank Corflu 30 in Portland number four because I was the Guest of Honor and enjoyed it enormously. Lastly, I award place number five to Corflu Ocho in El Paso because the tradition of playing a baseball game as a program item began there; never did I think we would age out of playing, but then, Corflu itself is 41 which is long past a major league player's best years, too. Good memories, one and all.

Having said that, I've never been to a bad Corflu. I don't think there have been any. And though they can't read this, I just want to say to Allyn Cadogan and Shay Barsabe, my co-creators of Corflu: we actually did create a memorable part of fan history. Who would

have guessed, back in 1983 when we were drinking margaritas and moaning about being treated like second class citizens at Worldcons, that the little con we came up with would last this long? Thank you, fandom, for embracing it.

THE MOOCH OF LIFE

For those among you who don't know what Lucy is talking about, Corflu is a small, annual, fannish convention held to appreciate and celebrate the very thing you are reading here: fanzines.

Fanzines come in all shapes and sizes, and cover everything from sf (where, I guess it's safe to say, it all started) to books to films to food to sex to relationships to sport to adventures and misadventures to...well, you get the gist; just about everything.

Corflu, by the way is a fannish term and a diminutive of "correcting fluid", that stuff we used to paint on stencils with a tiny brush back when that was the only cheap way we could put a publication together. I never did enough of that to be nostalgic about it, but it still takes me back.

WATER WALL by Irwin Hirsh

“That’s me.” And after another look. “Yes, that’s me.”

We were standing at a John Wolseley painting that my parents bought in 1978. It’s been a favourite of mine ever since. Within my family it is called The Wall, since it is a painting of a wall. It has a skirting board, a picture shelf displaying photos, a sandshoe and other stuff, wallpaper that has been drawn upon, and a couple of hanging paintings. Its actual title is “Fragonard at Mallacoota or Sari Anderson kicking her sandshoes off”.

I first met John on 28 October, 2022, and we each had questions of each other.

“Who is Sari Anderson?” I asked. I could see other elements from the title: a depiction of Fragonard’s “The Swing” and the sandshoe, but was ignorant about Sari. John told me she was an art student when he was teaching at the Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education. On an art camp, while climbing into a hammock, she kicked off her sandshoes in a gesture that reminded him of Fragonard’s painting.

Some of John’s questions related to us lending the painting for an exhibition. In late 2023 the Gippsland Art Gallery, in Sale, would be putting on an exhibition that relates to the time when John was teaching in Gippsland. This led Wendy and myself into a plan to spend a weekend in Sale, which built up to attending the show’s Opening on Friday evening, an artist talk on Saturday morning, and a Sunday visit to Andrew O’Rorke’s and Roger Haige’s place in Golden Beach.



At the Opening Jenny Long, John’s spouse, told us that some of John’s old students are here. “Does that mean Sari Anderson is here?” I asked.

“No. But her sister is.”

And so it was that Marita, Sari’s identical twin sister, was telling John and me that it was she who is in the painting.

“If so,” I told Marita and John “for about 45 years the painting’s title has been wrong. Now it’ll have to be retitled. The exhibition catalogue will have to be reprinted.”

And because of the weather this conversation almost didn’t happen. Early in the week major rain “weather” had been hitting East Gippsland. Water was breaking the banks of rivers and creeks, and tv news were showing us scenes of people rowing boats down their streets. “We’re safe,” Wendy and I would say to each other, “Sale isn’t in East Gippsland.” On the day before we were to leave Sale began being mentioned in the dispatches. The Thomson River began to be a concern. We started watching weather and road-closure webmaps.

Friday morning the Bureau of Metrology's website was telling us the water level in the Port of Sale was rising and close to reaching the break-the-banks point. Both the Gallery and our accommodation are near the Port of Sale. The BoM said it'll post another update at 11:30am. That became our Go/No-Go point. Our morning's activity was split between packing for a weekend away, watching websites, and telephoning our hotel and Sale's Tourist Information office. Someone at the latter told me that it wasn't raining in Sale, though it looked likely to occur later in the day and the following. "Canal Street will most likely be flooded and closed."

As I'm being told this I'm looking at a map of Sale. Canal Street is right behind the Gallery and 100 metres from where we're staying and said as much over the telephone connection. I was told that the water would have to rise a few further meters before the Gallery and our accommodation would be affected. I was assured that the Princes Highway (the road from Melbourne) is too elevated to be affected by any flood, as was the main, central part of Sale. The roads likely to be affected are those in north-west Sale, and those north and south, all of which are low-lying and near the Thomson River.

And so we set off for Sale. I'd been anticipating this exhibition for a year and was excited and intrigued for what lay ahead. I never saw the exhibition where The Wall grabbed my parents' attention and in the years since I've learnt that The Wall sits apart from everything else I've since seen of John's work. It has the hallmarks of so many of his works, letting smaller images build up to a whole, but don't think I've ever seen another of his works that are of an interior or depict a human. Wolseley's skill is in environment. Not landscapes but careful studies of an ecosystem or a plot of land. In Sasha Grishin's book "John Wolseley: Land Marks III" The Wall is in the chapter titled 'The Gippsland wallpapers' and I was looking forward to see more of John's wallpaper.



The opening was for the Gallery's summer series of seven exhibitions. One was of Lego builds, by a father and son who live in nearly Maffra. "I take it you know Sue-Ann Barber and Trevor Clark." I asked Brad, the father, "Would they know about this exhibition?"

I took some photos and sent them to Sue Ann, and mentioned that Brad wasn't sure if they knew about exhibition.

This message continued a conversation from earlier in the day. An hour into the drive we stopped in Druin for a lunch break and a visit to an Opp Shop. At the latter we bumped into Sue Ann. "We're going to Sale for an Art Gallery opening," we told her. Sue Ann replied that they were also going to Sale, to see a friend, and then off to Maffra for a Lego expo.

Sue Ann messaged back if she only learnt about it that afternoon, when she and Trevor arrived at their friend's place. "I had to laugh when I realised it was probably where you are," she told me.

After checking out the Lego exhibition we wandered to room housing 'John Wolseley: The Quiet Conservationalist', which is when we were introduced to Marita. After unsuccessfully convincing John, me, and an old art school friend that the painting's title was wrong, her friend pointed to one of the people in photos on the shelf, "Is that you?"

Marita took a photo of the photo and examined her telephone screen closely. “Yes,” she told me, “That’s me!”

“Are you sure? It could be Sari?”

“That’s *my* nose.”

The Opening Night was one for introductions and conversations. With Simon Gregg, the Gallery Director, and Louisa Waters, the Exhibition Coordinator, and Tony Hanning, the Exhibition Curator, and John and Jenny, and Marita and a small number of her fellow art students. The latter traded gossip and memories, and the art camps featured prominently. With a cheeky grin, one told me they lost their virginity on one camp.



The following morning was John’s

Artist Talk. Half an hour before it commenced the week’s weather kicked in. Mitta, one of my sisters, called me, and said she’s stuck outside of Sale. Knowing she wouldn’t be able to get to Sale in time for the Opening, she travelled to Welshpool, where she stayed with two friends Richard and Brendon. They were on the way to Sale when they hit upon a flooded road and the next best route involved two hours travel and they were resigned to missing the talk. She asked me to pass on their



apologies and regrets to the Wolesley-Longs, who were pleased to receive the message and regretful that the three would be missed. As I was to learn John and Jenny had been close neighbours of Richard and Brendon, and they would’ve liked to have a reunion. While talking to Mitta I received a text from Andrew O’Rorke, telling me that part of the road to their place was closed to due to a flood. Talking to those at the Tourist Info desk, we discovered that there is a ‘drive-around’ that would involve an extra 50 minutes, so all is okay.

The Talk was fun. John tells a good story. Before it was asked he explained why in his mid-30s he moved to Australia. Having a big need to get out of England, he was wondering where to go. A friend suggested Australia "At 6 o'clock you go to art show openings, get drunk on the free booze, and occasionally someone will buy your art." His first home in Australia was a camper van. Then he came across an abandoned farmhouse. It was missing one wall and the other walls were falling apart. But it became his home. He’d hang his paintings on the walls and draw

and doodle on the wallpaper. The Gippsland wallpaper series is his attempt to recreate that environment.

After the Talk Wendy and I took some time for a closer look at the wallpaper paintings. Four were in the exhibition and they were very much a travelogue of John's first period in Australia. We appreciate and are delighted by the titles John gave to the painting. With "The First and Second Gippsland Pictures" (1976-77) we wondered which was first and speculated that the other may have been the second started but not completed. "Total Solar Eclipse 23rd October 1976" (1976) is about more than those few minutes but a record of a day's group outing, which can be read as a comic-book page. (See links for these paintings at the end of this piece.)

When not looking at the Gallery's works a major activity of the patrons was looking out the back window for a view of the Port of Sale and Canal St. As predicted Canal St had indeed been closed; at the road's lowest point water had spread fully across the road and into the car park below the gallery. As we were staying so close-by Wendy and I made a number of visits to the Street, to watch the level rise and then fall. We never came close to finding the actual Port bank.



The next day we travelled down to Andrew's and Roger's. Overnight the water over Longford Rd had receded enough so we were able to take the direct road to Golden Beach. Over many beers and meals I'd been hearing about the planning and building of the house, and I'd never been able to build of a picture in my mind of the house that Andrew built. After the building was completed photos of the place didn't help get me to that complete picture, and during Andrew's guided tour my mind was full of "Oh yes, now I see ..."

Andrew and Roger asked about the previous two days activities, and we told them about the seven exhibitions and Marita and everything. "And," I added "We've found a new artist to follow. Annemieke Mein."

"She's a local legend," Andrew told us.

"I can see why." Mein's forte is depictions of native Australian wildlife, whose biggest works are in three-dimensional textile. A close viewing of her work is delight. The day before Simon Storey told me that there is always an exhibition of Mein's work at the gallery, with a change every season.

After lunch Andrew took us on a tour of Golden Beach, including to the art gallery that is being built by the Golden and Paradise Beach Ratepayers and Residents Association. Andrew told us about the local politics involved to developing the gallery. They have received support from Simon Storey, who is intrigued by the possibility of using the space to put on an occasional small exhibition of works from the Gippsland Art Gallery collection.

The following day we had one more visit to Canal St and travelled back to Melbourne. But in one way our weekend wasn't yet complete. Without actually meeting her we'd come so close to one character in The Wall's title. The opportunity to get close to the other character would come up in February, when we would be spending a few days in London. We rendezvoused with Alison Scott and Steven Cain for a visit to the Wallace Collection. It's an amazing collection and sharing the

visit with Alison and Steven was a bonus, especially watching their delight in the displays that interact with their interests. And in the first floor Study we met Jean-Honore Fragonard's *Les hazards heureux de l'escarpolette* (AKA *The Swing*) and in so doing we were transported to what entered John Wolseley's mind one day in the late 1970s.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

<https://johnwolseley.net>

<https://www.gippslandartgallery.com/exhibitions/john-wolseley-the-quiet-conservationist>

<https://www.wallacecollection.org/explore/explore-in-depth/fragonards-the-swing/>

https://assets-global.website-files.com/62f0875bfa02d241c358a4a8/6535b80b4846a51d3aac6094_WOLSELEY-John_The-First-Gippsland-Painting_.jpg

https://assets-global.website-files.com/62f0875bfa02d241c358a4a8/6535b751d49a0ebb74a56933_WOLSELEY-John_Total-Solar-Eclipse-23rd_1978-4n-1024x998.jpg

Note: Fans of sometime **Perryscope** cover artist W. H. Chong may know the words of John Wolseley as he wrote the foreword to Chong's book "Portraits".

WANDERINGS AND READINGS – An Occasional Column by Julian Warner

The Just Freemans

I recently managed to confuse writers Freeman Wills-Crofts and R. Austin Freeman. Partly because of the 'Freeman' element and partly because of obsessive writing. I've written before about Wills-Crofts and his obsession with train and ship timetables. He also had a rather pedantic writing style which made you wish he would just 'get on with it'.

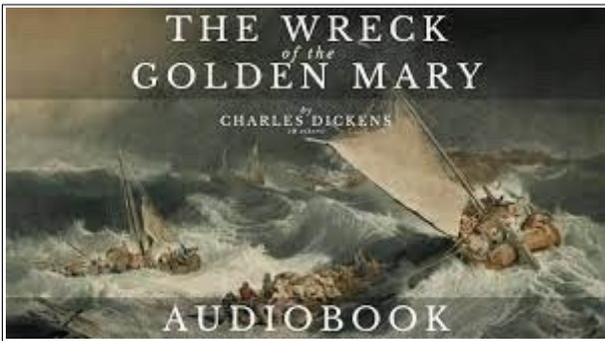
When I'm cooking or washing-up (and so on) I often find an audiobook on Youtube to listen to. A recent choice was R. Austin Freeman's "The Stranger's Latchkey" read by Simon Stanhope. Even in the introduction, Stanhope spoke in an overly clipped and staccato style.

Once we got into the text, I was mildly horrified by Stanhope's robotic reading and Austin Freeman's tedious, over-described and pedantic text. Yes, I listened to the end of the short story but just to find out how it ended – with a touch of biffy but a damp squib as far as explanation of motive goes. The hero, Doctor Thorndyke is a classic Victorian/Edwardian smart-arse who proclaims his towering intelligence by over-explaining minutiae of medical knowledge to his sock-



puppet assistant. This would be very much in the style of Sherlock Holmes if it had some style. Holmes can be insufferable but at least he is well-written.

There's also a lot of prissy Edwardian moral value stuff. Ladies must be respected even when they are clearly off their heads and stealing is wrong no matter how vital it may be to solving the case. Mundane items like bicycles and lanterns are also over-described. Conversations are full of bland phrases which convey nothing.



Afterward I moved on to listening to a reading of Charles Dickens' "The Wreck of the Golden Mary". Whilst that too carried a little of the pedantry of the period, and too many Christian homilies for my liking, it was at least entertaining and interesting. A better reader helps too.

I should make mention here of a third Freeman, John Hall-Freeman, who, leaving aside various sins, introduced me to a lot of jazz and who ran the 'Space Merchants' SF bookshop in Perth for quite

some time, and in doing so provided employment for a few Perth fans of the period.

Apologies for mangling Edgar Wallace's 'Three Just Men' into 'Just Freemans'.

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

Codes – F: format (e for electronic, blank for paper); R: rating, out of 5.0.

Abbr – 1001: 1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die; Aust: Australian; Gdn: Guardian Best 1000 Novels; Nvla: novella

March 2024 books

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>Red Harvest</i>	Dashiell Hammett	Crime	Mar 10		4.2	1929	1001; Gdn
<i>The Undeclared</i>	Una McCormack	Sf	Mar 14	e	3.4	2019	Nvla
<i>Out on the Cutting Edge</i>	Lawrence Block	Crime	Mar 18	e	3.4	1989	
<i>Silver on the Tree</i>	Susan Cooper	Fantasy	Mar 23	e	4.1	1977	
<i>Lucky Girl</i>	M. Rickert	Fantasy	Mar 31	e	3.3	2022	Nvla

Books read in the period: 5

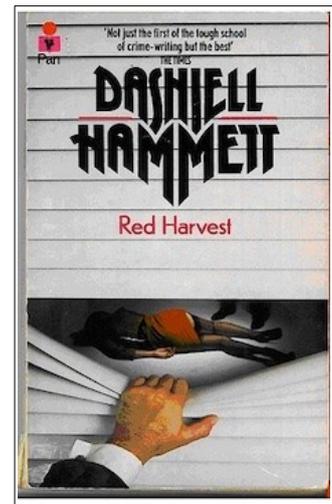
Yearly total to end of period: 22

Notes:

Red Harvest (1929) – This is #1 in the author's Continental Op series of novels.

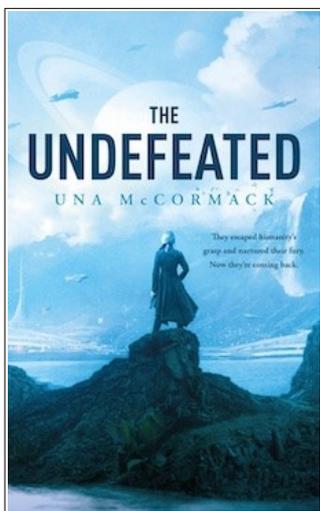
This novel appears on the 1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die and the Guardian Best 1000 Novels lists.

The narrator of this novel – the Continental Op – remains unnamed throughout and we only get the same view as he does. But that’s enough as he really is the centre of attention in this story about a small town of Personville (nicknamed Poisonville for reasons which soon become obvious). The Op is called in by local big-wig Elihu Willsson (who seems to either own or run most businesses in this small town) to investigate the murder of his son Donald. The Op has already noted the influence of the local criminal gangs from his short time on the case and realises fairly quickly that Willsson is worried that his grip on the town is loosening and he wants the Op to get the local criminal gangs under control. He extracts a pledge from Willsson allowing him to do what he needs to, though, after he solves the murder, his client attempts to renege on the deal. The op is having none of it and gradually starts pitting one gang against another and watching the body count, the “red harvest”, begin to grow rather rapidly.



This is one of the all-time great crime novels, one that changed the face of the genre forever. It may not have been the first to shift the emphasis away from “cosy” murders to concentrate more on the violence and blood and guts, but it was certainly the best of those early hardboiled works. As Raymond Chandler was to say of him: “Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons...He wrote scenes that seemed never to have been written before.” His influence was profound, even to the Coen brothers filmmakers who took the title of their first film, **Blood Simple**, from this novel.

R: 4.2/5.0



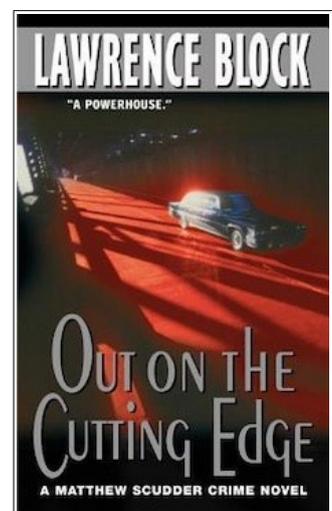
The Undefeated (2019) – Sixty-year-old Monica Greatorex made a name for herself reporting on wars and places of conflict across the galaxy, and now she has decided to return home to the planet Sienna, a place she has not returned to since she and her mother fled after the death of her father when she was a teenager. Accompanying her is her jenjer, a bioengineered human who has been created to serve and obey. Their servitude is enforced due to their need to be continually medicated, presumably with drugs that are severely limited. This novella is a contemplative look back at a life of privilege, a life that has visited many places in the galaxy and reported on them to the populace, but which has failed to see and be aware of the major problem that exists right under her nose; one that will become exceedingly visible over the course of this novella. It is good to see an ageing female protagonist here but the story feels a tad rushed and I think more could be done with the basic themes if it were longer. Worth

reading. If the cover here reminds you of anything it’s because it’s a reworking of Caspar David Friederich’s “Wanderer above the Sea of Fog”.

R: 3.4/5.0

Out on the Cutting Edge (1989) – This is #7 in the author’s Matt Scudder series of novels.

Ex-cop Matt Scudder is now a New York PI working when he can and trying to stay off the booze. (You have to wonder if Block is writing about his own battle with alcohol here.) He is approached by a man from the Midwest who is looking for his lost daughter. She appeared to go missing about two months previously in Scudder’s neighborhood and the father is

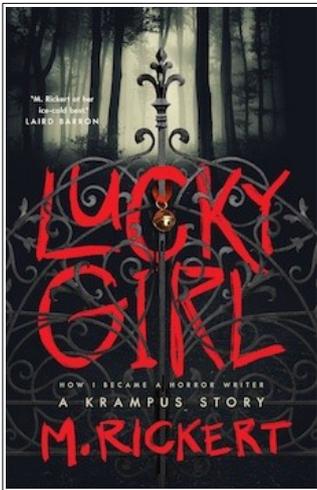
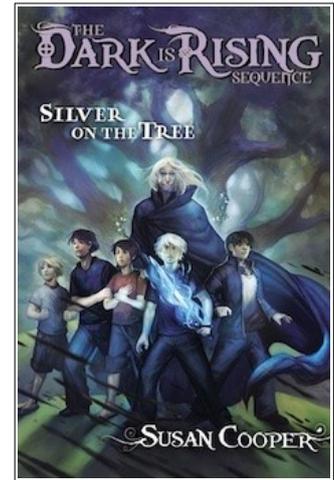


now desperate for news. But try as he might Scudder can't find out what happened to her, no-one has seen or remembers her. Throughout his investigation he continues to attend AA meetings and there meets Eddie Dunphy who, after a few encounters, says he has something to tell Scudder. But, of course, he never gets the chance as Scudder finds him dead in his run-down apartment, apparently of self-inflicted autoerotic strangulation. Scudder is not convinced and as he digs into Dunphy's death he happens on some news about the missing girl. This is a typical Lawrence Sanders novel: short on plot, long on characterisation, heavily into Scudder's personal troubles and a pocket view of NY in the 1980s. Gritty and compelling, you really can't go wrong with these novels. R: 3.4/5.0

Silver on the Tree (1977) – This is #5 in the author's The Dark is Rising series of novels.

With this book we reach the end of Susan Cooper's series of young adult fantasy novels concerning the struggles between the Light and the Dark. Here Will Stanton and Merriman, two of the last Old Ones, along with Bran, the time-displaced son of King Arthur, gather together allies and weapons for their struggle. They are helped in their quest by the three Drew children who have appeared in the previous books. While there are some interesting set-pieces there is little in the way of tension here and the book suffers from that. The prophecies that have circulated through the previous four volumes finally come together and the end is predictable but rather slow in arriving. So, while it is a bit of a disappointment, it still caps off one of the seminal works of YA fantasy from the 1970s.

R: 4.1/5.0



Lucky Girl, How I Became a Horror Writer (2022) – Four young people meet in a seedy diner and decide to spend Christmas together and later decide to make it an annual event. During their first meeting they each tell a Christmas story with the intention of making them as scary as possible. Years later our narrator, Roanoke (Ro for short), is a successful horror writer and, we discover, the sole survivor of a house fire in which the rest of her family were killed. The original four friends re-unite at the huge Gothic mansion belonging to one of them. There Ro begins to piece together their shared history and finally solves the mystery of what happened to her family. Mary Rickert is an excellent writer but one who doesn't seem to write enough. I was very impressed a number of years back by her debut novel *The Memory Garden* which I thought one of the best Fantasy novels I read in 2018. You always come out of her books thinking that there was a lot more in it than you originally thought.

R: 4.4/5.0

This fanzine acknowledges the members of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which it is produced in Hawthorn, Victoria, and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

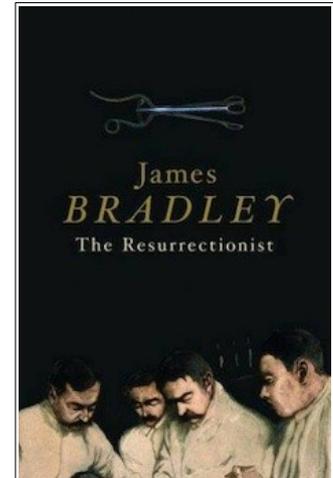
REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

The Resurrectionist (2006) by James Bradley

Genre: Literary

[This review was originally published on the weblog **Matilda** on 14 April 2006.]

"Don't judge a book by its cover" the old adage runs. Yet we all fall victim to it. We're conditioned to it, and publishers and marketers expect it of us. Mostly this is not such a bad thing, at least as far as books are concerned. The cover art, the blurb on the back, the author photo, the typeface, the paper quality, even the size of the bloody thing, all merge together to produce a first impression in our minds. So it's of special interest when a book leads you one way, and then swerves another. Such a book is *The Resurrectionist*, the third novel by James Bradley.



The cover of the Australian edition is striking, in that it is mostly black. Surely not a great colour to catch the eye, you think. And what's that thing above the author's name and title? It looks rather sinister. Then there are the figures at the bottom, all intently studying something "off-cover". You're being led somewhere, that much at least is obvious. The book has the look and feel, the heft, of a literary novel, and yet, there's this thing about it — a thing that leads you to expect a horror novel. And in some ways, that's what you get. But in many, many other ways you get far more than that. You get a literary novel that uses the techniques and traditions of the gothic genre, and that twists and stretches them into patterns rarely seen.

The novel is told in first-person narration by Gabriel Swift, an orphan in 1820s England, who is sent to London to study with Edwin Poll, one of the great anatomists of the time. Gabriel's role is to help prepare for Poll's lectures — in other words, to wash and clean and lay out the bodies for dissection. At that time only the corpses of the executed could be used in such a way, and, of course, there was a shortage. So Poll's house is drawn into the commerce in human bodies, dealing with the resurrectionists, the grave-robbers of the novel's title. This illegal trade has a corrupting influence on all who partake of it and Gabriel is gradually drawn deeper and deeper into the depravity of the exhumation and theft of the world around him. He falls, both professionally and personally, into a pit of his own making and from which there appears no escape. Over three-quarters of the way through the novel, the locale changes from London in the 1820s to the colony of New South Wales in 1836: an abrupt shift from the dark and grime of England to the bright light and clear air of the Australian continent. At first this jump is rather unsettling: we have a new location, a new time and, at first, what seems like a new protagonist and narrator. But Bradley has unsettled us for a particular reason. One that at first is not at all obvious.

Bradley's choice of his protagonist's name is an apt and significant one. The angel Gabriel of myth is the Archangel of humanity, resurrection, death and hope. A heavy load if ever there was one. And Bradley uses his narrator to carry the similar weight of his novel. In other words, the book lives or dies on how the reader takes to his narrator. At the beginning of the novel Gabriel has our full sympathy. He is a child without prospects, without hope, who is taken into a world where he might well advance to a position that he might never have dreamed of. He begins as a boy among men, an innocent among the corrupt and as the novel progresses we see him slowly change, losing his boyishness and his sense of innocence. He becomes devious both in his personal and professional habits and his final fall is swift and abrupt. He is expelled from the company of Edwin Poll's household and finds himself without hope and at the mercy of the resurrectionists. He reaches a point where drug addiction and murder are commonplace occurrences, passing almost without

regret, and yet he still has further to go. At the last his descent into the depths is complete when he betrays his new companions and he finds himself trapped in a metaphorical Hell.

Throughout the book there is a growing sense of foreboding. The change in Gabriel is subtle and measured and you find as a reader slowly becoming unsure of whether to trust him as a narrator. Is he giving us a true account of his life, or only a disordered narrow view of it? It's this realisation that Gabriel probably knows more than he is telling us, that he knows something awful is about to happen that builds the suspense within the plot. We almost can't bear to look, but, at the same time, can't bear not to. This is a classic horror technique; one that usually ends with the "monster" appearing and blood spurting every which way. But the best horror works don't show us the "monster", we only get glimpses of it out of the corner of our eye, a flash as it crosses a doorway, a shadow on a wall. We know it's there, we just can't get to see it full in the face.

So it is with Gabriel's demons — they sneak up on us, corner us in the graveyard, and, just as we think we understand what is happening we cut to the light. We suddenly find ourselves in a place totally different from the one we just left. Handled well it's a wonderful technique, jarring and disorientating. Without the initial spadework, however, it can be a mess, it doesn't work and we don't believe it. In *The Resurrectionist* Bradley would have struggled to have achieved a better result. The transition from the dark into the light, from claustrophobic London to "the sunlit plains extended", is complete and totally satisfying. Just like the rest of the novel.

Early on in the book, Edwin Poll, Gabriel's master, addresses a lecture-hall of students, and delivers what might be considered his *raison d'être*: 'We are men of science, gentlemen, students of nature. It is our purpose to tear down the veil of superstition, to pierce the very fabric of our living being and elucidate the nature of the force which animates these shells we call our bodies. And we will find it here, in this cold flesh. For these tissues we will divine the shadow of that force which drove the fuse within, which set his heart to flicker and beat. Call it a soul if you wish, yet I promise you it shall prove no more and no less mysterious that this magnet's power to bend these filings to its will.'

In many ways this creed might also apply to Bradley's role as the author of this work. One that he fulfils admirably. Read this book.

R: 4.2/5.0

WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

March 2024

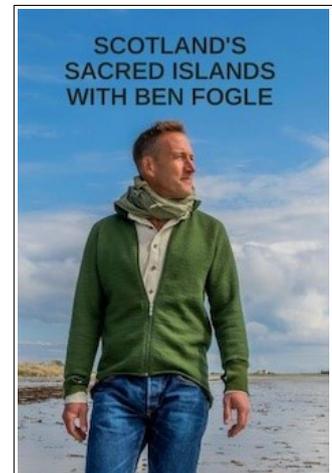
Television

Scotland's Sacred Islands With Ben Fogle (Season 2 — 4 episodes) (2023)

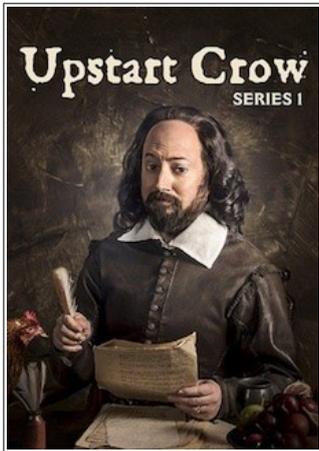
Platform: SBS

Genre: Travel documentary

In this series British broadcaster Ben Fogle visits 12 Scottish islands in search of an understanding of their wildness and the spirituality of the people who live there. Robyn and I decided to watch this as he visits Islay, Jura, the Orkneys and Skye in the series, all islands that we will be visiting later this year on our tour around Scotland. Filming seems to



have been carried out with a minimal crew – sometimes only Fogle on his own using his phone and a selfie-stick – and lots of use of a drone camera, to very good effect. The drone in particular, allows for some wonderful sweeping panoramic views of the rugged coastlines, seascapes and mountains. He does, though, seem to have lucked into the best weather in the region in a hundred years with lots of sunshine and only the occasional passing shower or storm cloud. Good stuff, especially if you look on it as a travelogue and holiday entree. R: 3.4/5.0



Upstart Crow (Season 1 – 6 episodes) (2016)

Platform: ABC iView

Genre: Comedy

Ben Elton's comedy about Will Shakespeare (played by David Mitchell) is a wonderful piece of light entertainment. The title comes from a supposed description of Shakespeare by Richard Greene, a contemporary and rival, and Greene appears as a character in this show. Played by Mark Heap, he is the villain of the piece, attempting to stymie Shakespeare wherever he can and hoping to get him in trouble with the palace of Elizabeth I. But, as expected, Shakespeare muddles his way through, using incidents from his life to expand his plays and provide him with ideas for new works. This first series revolves around Shakespeare's attempts to get his teenage romantic comedy, **Romeo and Juliet**, to work. Hovering in the background, and occasionally taking one of Shakespeare's plays as his

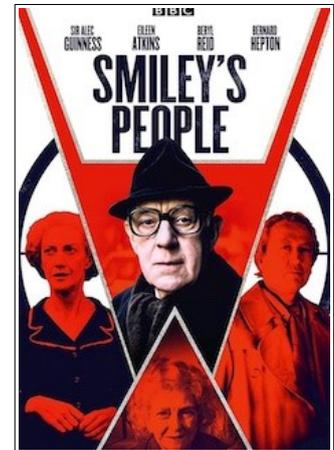
own, is Kit Marlowe, spy and dramatist. Marlowe (Tim Downie) as portrayed here is rather untalented and really only interested in having a good time and getting ahead at court. Keep an eye out for Emma Thompson as Queen Elizabeth I and John Sessions as the Chief Inquisitor. Amusing stuff. R: 3.8/5.0

Smiley's People (Miniseries – 6 episodes) (1983)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Espionage

Alec Guinness returns as George Smiley in this follow up to **Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy**. This was actually based on the third novel in the author's sequence about the quest for Karla, head of Moscow Central. The second, **The Honourable Schoolboy**, was not adapted for television, I suspect because the producers thought it too expensive, given it is based mostly in Hong Kong.



As this series starts Smiley is no longer in the Circus, having completed his stint at the top after the clean-out in the wake of the Russian mole incident, dramatised in the previous mini-series. He is called back in when one of his old agents, a former Soviet general and head of an Estonian emigre organisation, is found murdered. The general had been trying to contact Smiley with some very important information but the Circus has attempted to fob him off, considering any story he might tell to be dubious at best. Smiley is convinced otherwise and sets out to investigate. And here this series differs from its predecessor in that the bulk of the analysis and legwork is done by Smiley himself. His investigations take him to mainland Europe (West Germany, France, and Switzerland) and at times it is difficult to tell where he actually is, or what he is doing. The plot moves slowly with new characters being introduced with little lead-in or explanation, and other characters being dispatched in such a way that you aren't really sure who's who: I read the book in the past few years and I was having trouble following what was going on sometimes.

Overall this series isn't as good as the previous production – it would be extremely difficult to recapture that magic – although it does allow Guinness to shine once again in a role he seems to be

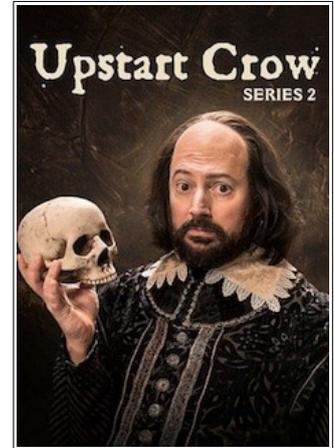
have destined to play. Watch *Tinker Tailor* first, then read the novel this is based on before tackling it. R: 4.2/5.0

Upstart Crow (Season 2 — 6 episodes) (2017)

Platform: DVD

Genre: Comedy

Will Shakespeare spends most of season 2 of this comedy series agonising over the progress of his teenage romcom, *Romeo and Julian* (sorry *Romeo and Juliet*). In the background there are a series of running gags that were begun in season 1: Shakespeare’s complaints about the poor service he receives during his travels between his London house and Stratford-Upon-Avon (late departures, no departures, poor customer service, rutted tracks etc etc); and the casual sexism against Kate, this landlady’s daughter, as she makes continuing attempts to be allowed to act on stage. There is a lot to like about this series: it is very well researched with lots of amusing asides about Shakespeare’s personal and professional life, about the English class structure, the monarchy and just about everything else they can think of. David Mitchell shines in the lead role and all of the lesser parts are handled with aplomb. The major villain of the piece, Robert Greene (played by Mark Heap), comes across as rather one-note and repetitive and is the main drag on the fun. R: 3.8/5.0



Film

Codes – P: platform (c for cinema, blank for home); R: rating, out of 5.0.

Abbr – 1001: 1001 Films You Must See Before You Die

March 2024 films

Title	Director	Genre	Date	P	R	Rel Date	Notes
<i>The Lady in the Van</i>	Nicholas Hytner	Drama	Mar 2		3.8	2015	
<i>A Matter of Life and Death</i>	Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger	Drama	Mar 9		4.1	1946	1001
<i>Dune: Part Two</i>	Denis Villeneuve	Sf	Mar 15	c	4.7	2024	
<i>American Fiction</i>	Cord Jefferson	Drama	Mar 16		4.4	2023	
<i>Suddenly</i>	Lewis Allen	Crime	Mar 22		2.3	1954	
<i>The Master</i>	Paul Thomas Harris	Drama	Mar 23		2.4	2012	
<i>Journey Into Fear</i>	Norman Foster	Thriller	Mar 25		2.6	1943	
<i>Poor Things</i>	Yorgos Lanthimos	Fantasy	Mar 26	c	4.2	2023	
<i>In the Land of Saints and Sinners</i>	Robert Lorenz	Action	Mar 29		3.4	2023	

Films watched in the period: 9

Yearly total to end of period: 17

Notes: Hopefully I can keep up this schedule as it seems to be working and should be easy enough to stick to, though I have noticed that it has impacted my book reading. After listening to some recent episodes of the **Filmspotting** podcast I appear to have developed an interest in films from the 1940s and 1950s. And I'm happy with that.

The Lady in the Van (2015)

Platform: SBS

Genre: Drama

In the early 1970s Alan Bennett, the English playwright and actor, moved into a house in Gloucester Crescent in Camden, North London. Also living in the street, although in her parked van rather than in a house, was an old lady who went by the name of Miss Shepherd. Superbly played by Maggie Smith, Miss Shepherd was keep moving from outside one house after another by the local authorities until, in 1974, Bennett offered his driveway to her. The arrangement was only supposed to last a month or two until Miss Shepherd made other plans. She finally died in her van, still parked in Bennett's driveway in 1989. Along the way she became part of the neighbourhood scenery with locals offering her food and clothing. And also, along the way, Bennett slowly started to piece together her life, discovering that she had a brother, had been expelled from holy orders by the nuns who thought her too argumentative, and that she had, at one time, been a concert pianist. This is a fantastic, funny and very moving portrayal of a lost life that still managed, in a very strange way, to connect with the people around it. It is interesting that Smith, along with director Nicholas Hytner, also worked on the original stage play and radio adaptation of Bennett's script. Maggie Smith is magnificent, as always. R: 3.8/5.0



A Matter of Life and Death (1946)

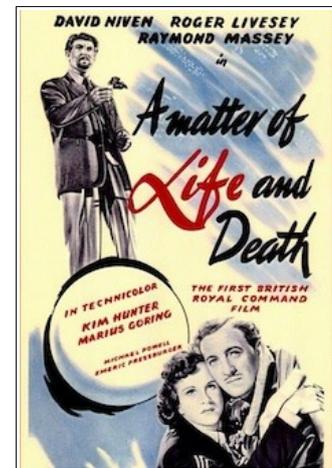
(aka ***Stairway to Heaven***)

Platform: YouTube

Genre: Drama

This film appears on the list of 1001 Films You Must See Before You Die, and as number 83 on the Sight and Sound Greatest Films of All Time 2022 list.

Every now and then a film seems to pop up out of nowhere into my consciousness, mainly as a result of being mentioned in a newspaper article, or magazine essay, or on a podcast. So it was with this classic from Powell and Pressburger recently; in this case the **Backlisted** podcast. None of the usual streaming services had it available, and I didn't have a DVD copy so I was relegated to watching it at home on YouTube, on the main TV screen.



First off I should note that the quality of the reproduction wasn't that great, with some of the swirling "special effects" being rather murky. But that didn't detract from this film about an airman, Peter Carter (played by David Niven), who finds himself between Heaven and Earth after supposedly dying by jumping out of a burning bomber aircraft during World War II. Somehow he gets "lost in the fog" over the English Channel and washes up alive next morning on the shores of eastern England. During his last few moments on the plane he was in contact over his radio with a young woman, presumably at some aircraft dispatch headquarters, and, in rather melodramatic fashion, falls in love with her. Of course, he immediately meets up with her on the beachfront and the romance blossoms. But Heaven is in a quandary about what to do with him, so they send a conductor to bring him back. He naturally refuses to go, noting that his circumstances have changed

as a direct result of Heaven's mistake. And so he is allowed to plead his case before a Heavenly judge.

Originally intended as a way to help settle differences between the US and Britain during the war, the film moves beyond that and, putting the rather rushed nature of the romance aside, is an interesting look at the power of love. Unfortunately, the film does get a bit bogged down during the courtroom sequence in Heaven which slows down the flow and lays on the patriotic fervour rather too thickly. For all that, there are some very interesting sequences and film-making techniques in play. Look out for a fleeting appearance of Richard Attenborough and a strange behind-the-eyeball shot that made me laugh. David Niven is perfect in the lead role. R: 4.1/5.0

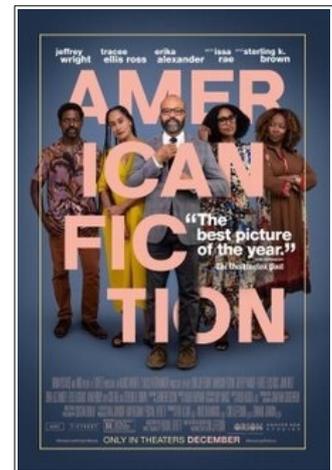
Dune: Part Two (2024) – see review above

American Fiction (2023)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Drama

Writer and director Cord Jefferson's adaptation of Percival Everett's 2001 novel ***Erasure***, follows African American literary novelist Thelonious "Monk" Ellison (Jeffrey Wright) whose latest novel is struggling to finish a publisher. His agent informs him that the book isn't "black" enough. Ellison is bemused by this pointing out he himself is "black" and so this is, obviously, a "black" book. But it's not the "black" genre that "white" readers and publishers expect. After his sister dies and his mother is diagnosed with dementia Ellison finds himself in dire need of some quick money to pay the bills, so he rushes off a novel in the "preferred" style, purportedly written by a criminal on the run from the law, which he and his agent send out under a pseudonym. Of course it goes gangbusters and Ellison is offered the biggest advance of his career, followed by a massive amount for the film rights. This is a wonderful satire about modern western "white" society and the African-Americans they see, or want to see. Genuinely funny, sad in some places, and exasperating in others it is easy to see why this was shortlisted for the 2023 Academy Award for Best Picture and Best Actor for Wright's performance. And I really liked the ending, though I think my wife was less enamoured with it. R: 4.4/5.0



Suddenly (1954)

Platform: SBS

Genre: Crime

This short (only 77 minutes) black and white film features Frank Sinatra (in his first role as a film "heavy") and Sterling Hayden as the sheriff of the small California town of Suddenly (weird name for a town, but there we are). A train carrying the President of the United States is to make an unannounced stop in the town late one afternoon, so local security is bolstered by the early arrival of Secret Service agents. From about noon onwards the town is gradually shut down and local shops and houses searched. Of special interest is the large house on top of a nearby hill which has a perfect view of the railway station and, presumably, the President as he disembarks. Before the police can get to the house it is visited by three men claiming to be from the FBI. In fact they are led by John Baron (Sinatra) who takes over the house, and captures Sheriff Tod Shaw (Hayden) when he arrives to check the location. And then we have a stand-off with Baron explaining he's only undertaking the assassination for the money and the hostages (the sheriff, the woman of the house, and her son and father) appealing to his sense of patriotism. Interesting and



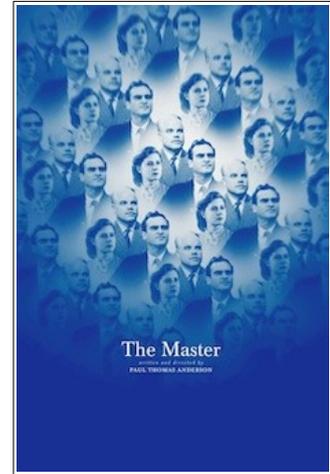
engaging stuff without saying or doing anything particularly out of the ordinary. I've seen this film described as "film noir", which may be true from its subject matter though certainly not as a result of its production techniques in my opinion. R: 2.3/5.0

The Master (2012)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Drama

Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix) is demobbed from the US Navy at the end of the Pacific War suffering from PTSD. After wandering rather aimlessly from job to job he stumbles onto the ship of Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman) and falls in with him. Dodd is the leader of a quasi-religious philosophical movement, The Cause, which is loosely based on L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology. At first resistant, Quell slowly falls under the spell of Dodd and begins to become an active member of his group until the two have a falling out. The problem with making a film of a cult-like group such as this is that their behaviour is neither internally consistent nor logical if seen from the outside. And so it is with this film. In retrospect I now see that some of the scenes that I found totally confusing must have been designed to be shown from the point-of-view of Quell in some of his more disturbed moments. But there is little or no indication of this during the scene changes. Most of them seem totally gratuitous for no overall effect and you get the impression they were included to add a sense of WTF to make some point or other. The film is wonderfully acted though some scenes are completely over-acted and over-directed detracting from their overall impact: Hoffman is very good, Phoenix is over-the-top too often, Amy Adams as Dodd's wife is okay but isn't given enough to do. There is an interesting film in here trying to get out but it is constrained by cast and crew trying to be too obscure. R: 2.4/5.0

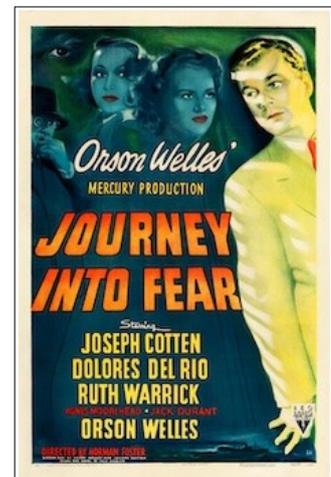


Journey Into Fear (1943)

Platform: DVD

Genre: Thriller

Based on the Eric Ambler novel of the same name, that I read about a year ago, this short black and white film was, according to the credits, written by Joseph Cotton, but a bit of research indicates that an uncredited Orson Welles co-wrote and produced the film. Both he and Cotton feature in lead roles (Cotton as the lead character Howard Graham, and Welles as Turkish Secret Police Chief Colonel Haki), and they are joined by Dolores del Rio (as Josette Martel) and Everett Sloane.



Howard Graham is an American armaments engineer working with the Turkish government who is recalled home in the middle of World War II. In Istanbul he escapes an assassination attempt and is then sent out of the county by Haki on a tramp steamer, hoping to avoid his followers. But the German assassins are wise to this and also board the ship. Drama ensues as Graham is confronted by the Germans and told he will be killed unless he leaves the ship with them, though little tension is built up here, as there doesn't appear to be enough time to establish the characters' inter-relationships; the film only runs for 68 minutes. The attempted romantic angle between Graham and Martel falls flat, but it is very interesting to note the specific lighting del Rio receives whenever she is on screen. Lots of *film noir* lighting, blocking and camera angle techniques in play here. [Query: maybe Cotton and Welles worked on this script while they were filming *Citizen Kane*, released in 1941?] R: 2.6/5.0

Poor Things (2023)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Fantasy

This adaptation of the 1992 novel of the same name by Scottish writer, Alasdair Gray, is a strange mixture of styles and influences, including:

The Island of Dr Moreau, steampunk and ***Frankenstein***.

The film begins in Victorian London with the arrival of medical student Max McCandles (Ramy Youssef) at the home of surgeon Godwin Baxter (William Defoe). There McCandles becomes fascinated by a young woman in the house who appears to be mentally impaired in some way. We later learn that the young woman (Bella Baxter, played by Emma Stone) is someone very peculiar indeed. When the body of a young pregnant woman, who has died by suicide, is delivered to Baxter's house he decides that he is unable to save the mother but may be able to do something for the unborn child, and so transplants the baby's brain into the head of the mother. The body is then re-animated and McCandles is employed to document her intellectual and psychological progress. He becomes enamoured with her, and asks her to marry him. But before she does so she decides to run off with dodgy lawyer and rake, Duncan Wedderburn (Mark Ruffalo), and then travel around Europe in a grand tour of sex and general debauchery.



Emma Stone won the Oscar for Best Actress for her portrayal here and you can certainly see why it caught the eye of the voters. Having to play an infant in a grown woman's body, to show the gradually evolving language and motor skills and still make it convincing takes some doing. Mark Ruffalo has rarely been better than his work here throwing himself into the role with a wild abandon that emphasises his range. He was nominated for a Best Supporting Actor Award at the Oscars but came up against an amazing performance by Robert Downey Jr, and missed out. I suspect in any other year he would easily have gotten the nod.

This is a very difficult film to get into and after the first 20 minutes or so I felt I could easily have walked out, but I'm glad I didn't. Even so I think the filmmakers went a bit overboard with their use of a fish-eye lens from time to time, and the jumps between colour and black-and-white film. Maybe there were specific reasons why they did that but they weren't obvious from a first viewing. I may need to go back and re-watch this later in the year to work out what's happening and why. The set design and costuming are wonderful additions to the overall film.

This is not an easy film to watch and you will have to stick with it until the end to get the most out of it. I certainly doubt I will see a stranger film than this all year. R: 4.2/5.0

In the Land of Saints and Sinners (2023)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Thriller

I was a bit dubious about watching this film as the past few Liam Neeson outings I've watched have been disappointing, ***The Ice Road*** in particular. But this one seems to be a step up in interest and quality. Maybe it's because he's back home in Ireland. The film starts with a car bombing of a pub in Northern Ireland during the early 1970s, the height of The Troubles. Children are killed, along with the intended victims, so the IRA bombing crew head off to lay low in a small coastal town in the northwest of Ireland to stay with the brother of their leader, (Doireann McCann, played by Kerry Condon). Unknown to them, the town is also the home of Finbar Murphy (Liam Neeson) an ex-hit man who is now just



looking for a quiet life in a small cottage. McCann's brother is a bit of a nutcase and when Murphy discovers he has been violent to a young girl he takes matters into his own hands. This, of course, leads him into a direct confrontation with the IRA gang, and things start to get a bit fraught. Neeson still seems to walk through his roles but this one comes across as having a bit more depth than usual, and he's helped by the supporting cast of Condon, Jack Gleeson, Ciarán Hinds, and Colm Meaney. Interesting and distracting, though the outcomes are all rather predictable.
R: 3.4/5.0

PERRYSCOPE Responses

Perryscope 41:

Mark Olson: "In regards the destruction of the enjoyment of literature by schools, Jim Mann, I think, pointed me to a short poem by Jean Little:

I used to like "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."
I liked the coming darkness,
The jingle of harness bells,
breaking—and adding to—the stillness,
The gentle drift of snow...

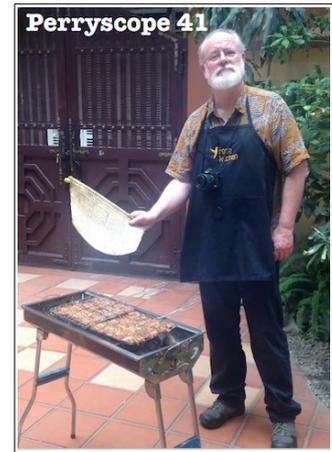
But today, the teacher told us what everything stood for.
The woods, the horse, the miles to go, the sleep—
They all have "hidden meanings."

It's grown so complicated now that,
Next time I drive by,
I don't think I'll bother to stop.

"...Which captures my experience exactly. Fortunately for me, Shakespeare was not on the agenda, and 'only' Bronte and Dickens were rendered unenjoyable to me. I still, sixty years later, bounce on Dickens.

"I've found that I really enjoy some out-of-place/time versions of Shakespeare and some of the very best Shakespeare I've watched have been a bit odd... E.g., Ian McKellen, et al's *Richard III* set in a vaguely fascist 1930s Britain was brilliant. And Helen Mirren playing Prospera in *The Tempest* was also very good. (These things can be terrible, too. A few years ago I watched National Theatre productions of *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth*, both set in a vague modern 3rd world dictatorship. It was a tough battle — they competed hard — but their *Macbeth* triumphed, winning the title of 'Worst Professional Shakespeare Production I Have Ever Seen'.)"

[**PM:** I haven't actually been tempted to watch the McKellen version of *Richard III* but, thanks to this reminder, I might just do so. Generally I've found myself less than impressed with productions of the plays that move the action from the original time period to sometime else. I've never really seen the point of it. But I'd be willing to make an exception here as I like both the play and the actor, and I have heard good things about it.]



Perryscope 42:

Lucy Sussex: “I am not a huge fan of H. Garner (as opposed to A. Garner). I remember a fellow library student reading H&OPC and commenting: ‘Well, if that's the best of Australian literature then I don't think much of Australian literature.’

[**PM:** She certainly seems to divide opinion. When I first start reading a novel of hers I find myself thinking that there isn't much to it. But the further in I get the more I start to see going on between the lines.]

Frank McEwen: “I reckon I first heard Roland at that infamous house in Stepney back in the day. [**PM:** Infamous?] You missed the Werewolves connection with Melbourne — <https://www.leechofook.com.au/> I have not been) and it's worth reading about the original restaurant. I saw him once (or maybe twice) playing solo. We also watched the documentary Warren Zevon — **Keep Me In Your Heart** (2003) and were very disappointed with it — you have been warned.”

[**PM:** Like you I have also yet to go to Lee Ho Fook in Melbourne, most probably because it is in the city and I rarely venture in there these days. As Marc Ortlieb mentions below, I did see Zevon once when he turned up in Australia in the early 1990s. That either slipped my mind or I didn't want to get into a long discussion of that as I was really trying to concentrate on the album itself.]

“Which of those 3 PMs is not the worst? 3 out of 3 for me. It always struck me as curious that Turnbull became so devoid of ambition once he became PM. We were in Paddington one day years ago when I suggested to Eileen we try eating at a restaurant with outdoor tables that we were in front of. Then Turnbull sat down and Eileen replied with something along the lines of ‘I'm not ... eating with that ...’ very loudly right next to him. CoalMo is great but I'd like to burn it.

“Currently we are watching some old series that have been put up on Youtube. Someone must have run the AI over them because the quality of things like **Callan** has somehow improved considerably in the 10 years since I watched copies taken from the remaining tapes. **Special Branch** is one we are watching currently. The old series are interesting in terms of dialogue and settings — a lot is implied — compared to contemporary TV. A few years ago I started to copy my old VHS tapes to MP4/AVI but could never get the quality to be worthwhile plus the files were huge. There is software I could buy that can do the AI cleanup, but you need a Graphics/AI chip like Nvidia plus it takes a long time and a lot of power. I'm guessing Google/Youtube can easily clean up things with their AI resources.”

[**PM:** The best thing about all of this is that some of those old tv series are still available, the better quality is an added bonus. I have a DVD of **Callan** and will have to check that against the YouTube episodes you mention.]

Marc Ortlieb: “Given that you're aware that I don't read that skiffy stuff any more, it will come as no surprise to you to note that the one comment hook from **Perryscope 42** that reeled me in was your mention of Warren Zevon's **Excitable Boy**. I should note that you missed your chance to give this a little fannish credibility. I'm sure that you were part of the little fannish group that saw Zevon live at some disreputable music venue in suburban Melbourne — along with Bruce Gillespie. It was the last time I saw Andrew Brown — across the auditorium. Andrew's six foot ten was hard to miss. That concert was to become a part of Zevon's live album **Learning to Flinch**.”



[**PM:** Yes, I was a part of that small fannish group that saw Zevon in Melbourne. As I recall it was you, me and Bruce Gillespie. A wonderful one-man show.]

“I was lucky enough to discover Zevon’s music one album earlier than you — the self titled **Warren Zevon** — and that was courtesy of the version of ‘Mohammed’s Radio’ that I found on Jackson Browne bootleg. Gosh. Does anyone remember bootlegs? Perhaps I can write a piece on bootlegs I have loved, for an upcoming ANZAPA contribution. The quality was always on a par with some of the worst live performances that surface on YouTube clips, but they gave us a chance to hear live music from artists who only rarely ventured this far south. The particular Jackson Browne bootleg was **The Return Of The Common Man: An Evening or Two Under The Influence His Back Pages** and also featured Browne’s take on Zevon’s ‘Werewolves of London’, Lowell George’s ‘Long Distance Love’, Reverend Gary Davis’s ‘Cocaine’ and a strange little song ‘You Just Want Meat (You Don’t Want Me)’. **Warren Zevon** thoroughly sold me on his music leaving me unsure of whether ‘Desperadoes Under The Eaves’ or ‘The French Inhaler’ was the best of Zevon’s songs. Having supporting players like Jackson Browne, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, Waddy Wachtel, Rosemary Butler, David Lindley, half the Eagles, and one Everly brother certainly didn’t hurt the album.

“Needless to say there would be further contenders for the best Zevon of all times. **Excitable Boy** came as no real surprise to me and, while I like the album, it didn’t impress me as much as its predecessor, despite featuring Linda Ronstadt and most of the other half of Fleetwood Mac. (I must see if Christine McVie ever completed the set.) I used to feel that my serious music loving friends found my love for Zevon’s music somewhat below par but that didn’t change my opinion. For me, the stand out track from that album was ‘Accidentally Like A Martyr’.

“**Bad Luck Streak in Dancing School** was, I felt, a better Zevon album in that it didn’t try to be too commercial. There weren’t quite as many members of the California Mafia but Linda Ronstadt’s descant on ‘Empty Handed Heart’ was beautiful and ‘Play It All Night Long’ completed a trilogy of songs: which started with Neil Young’s ‘Southern Man’ to be followed by Lynyrd Skynyrd’s ‘Sweet Home Alabama’: *Well, I hope Neil Young will remember A Southern man don't need him around* and then capped by Zevon’s ‘Sweet Home Alabama’ *play that dead band's song*. A suitably macabre way to sum up a band’s career.

“All that said, I suppose I should seek out some of the darker detective novels that influenced Zevon, including those of Carl Hiaasen, who contributed to songs on Zevon’s *Mutineer* and *My Ride’s Here* albums, but that would mean taking up reading again and reading leads to all sorts of other foolishness, like writing reviews for fanzines and I wouldn’t want to go down that path again.

“So best to leave it there. Besides, surprise, surprise, I should be getting ready for a Scout meeting and I don’t think my Cub Scouts are quite ready for Zevon’s cynicism...”

[**PM:** Zevon, I believe, became great friends with Kenneth and Margaret Millar. Kenneth, who was better known by his pseudonym “Ross MacDonald”, wrote the Lew Archer novels, and is considered to be one of the great Californian crime writers. Margaret Millar was also an excellent writer, though largely forgotten. I reviewed her novel **Beast in View** a few issues back. Zevon was a story teller as much as a musician.]

Martin Field: “If 42 is *the* answer, what is *the* question?”

“Thanks for a good read as usual. I particularly enjoyed your incisive take on Warren Zevon, and his sinister songs. Like you, I used to listen to ‘Lawyers Guns and Money’ and ‘Film Buff’s Forecast’ on RRR – the good ol’ days indeed.”

[**PM:** Yes indeed.]

Julian Warner: “Unless you have information otherwise, I would put forward as equally possible a theory that the 'rock steady' line from 'Johnny Strikes Up the Band' is a quote from Alton Ellis. A few of Zevon's chums, notably David Lindley (who went on to do a Ska version of "Werewolves of London") were fans of reggae, ska and rocksteady music.

“The lyrics from Alton Ellis's song are:

Better get ready
Come do rock steady, ooh
You got to do this new dance
Hope you're ready
You got to do it just like uncle Freddy
...

“There's some bio info about Ellis at: <https://www.songfacts.com/>

[**PM:** Again I note your greater musical knowledge. This is an excellent suggestion and probably closer to the mark than mine.]

Nick Price: “I knew casually of Warren Zevon. It was good to have a more informed and meaningful piece about him. I found myself looking musically backwards recently after stumbling across this video of the ['Stairway to Heaven' tribute](#) to Led Zeppelin where they were honoured at the Kennedy Centre in 2012. They were [subsequently interviewed on The Late Show by David Letterman](#) who asked if they had received similar honours in their own country. Their answer, 'No.'

“Sun Ra reminded me of how Jerry Dammers of The Specials and Two-Tone Records [created a tribute act to him](#). That seems to have petered out in 2014. [Videos on YouTube](#).

“Your piece on Discogs reminded me of [this recent article in The Guardian](#) foretelling a return to content rentals and purchasing rather than streaming.”

[**PM:** I have yet to dispose of my old CDs and DVDs even though I can get all of their content via one streaming service or another. Just can't seem to part with them. Nor can I get rid of the old vinyl albums either. I hear tell some of them are going for a pretty penny these days so maybe I'll just look on them as an investment.]

“As for Shakespeare, I wasn't exposed to it at school in England. I do though remember seeing a good production of [Much Ado About Nothing in 1993 in Melbourne](#). The cast included Hugo Weaving, Frances O'Connor and Michael Veitch.”

[**PM:** It is always better to see a play live rather than sit and listen to a tired reading of the text. I'm astounded that you studied no Shakespeare at school in England. I doubt there is a single school child in Australia who hasn't had at least one of his plays as a set text at some time in their school careers.]

Rose Mitchell: “Thanks for **P42**. I really enjoyed this edition. But I must say, I was very surprised to learn you are a West Coast Rock fan. Back in the 70's (shit, is that apostrophe correct? I don't want to trigger you after your FB tirade about apostrophes (smirk)) I was a huge fan of the

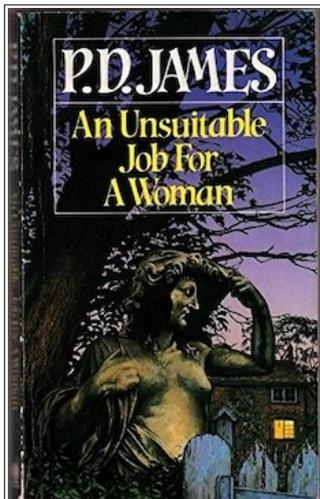
California sound and big fan of Linda Ronstadt. [PM: Apostrophe permitted, just.] The scene was very incestuous; the many musicians, singers *et al* popped up all over the shop on each other's albums and did short stints in each other's bands. But I never knew "Poor, Poor Pitiful Me" nor "Hasten Down The Wind" was written by Warren Zevon. PPPM was on **Simple Dreams** not **Hasten Down the Wind**, or did I read that wrong? HDTW was a soulful song with beautiful harmonies with Don Henley, from the Eagles, another example of the California mix and match music scene of that time. All my music was on vinyl and well used. When came time to dispose of my collection having nothing to play them on as CDs had overtaken my audio equipment, both Murray MacLachlin and Julian Warner sniffed rather long and loudly at it, deemed too mainstream I think, or maybe the condition of the records — they were well used! I loved that music genre, still do."



[PM: Julian may well scoff, but it's really a matter of loving what you grew up with. Isn't there a line about "knowing the lines of all the songs from when you were 16". That's about the time when your music tastes tend to be formed. If you love something, just stick with it. Scoffers gotta scoff.]

"I LOL (channelling my inner Millennial) at Martin Field's piece on the new improved Swiss Army knife. I definitely want one of those round grippy things! And I am sure I read somewhere that there was a tool included in the SAK that removed stones from a horse's hoof or is that an urban myth. Julian Warner has a collection of pocket knives perhaps he can comment?"

[PM: Actually I thought the tool was to remove *boy scouts* from horses' hooves. But I'll leave that for Marc Ortlieb to confirm.]



"I see you are continuing your pursuit of old novels with recent reading of PD James' **Unsuitable Job for A Woman**. I recall that PD James always had a shocking or sensational character in her books, usually lesbians living perfectly ordinary lives except for becoming murder suspects. Quite daring and outre at the time. She made good cases for normalising LBQT+ people and was quite outspoken about social injustices. Surprising because she presented as such a Conservative. Recently one of the ladies in my swim group was extolling the Sue Grafton series, urging us to read them because they were very exciting and novel. She was working her way through the series with glee. I recalled you and Carey Handfield talking about them some time ago and she rang a bell. I have now ordered **A is for Alibi** from the library and look forward to delving into it. Keep up reviewing the oldies but goodies."

[PM: An excellent series and one I'm sure you'll enjoy. It's a pity that PD James only wrote two Cordelia Grey novels. There was a lot of scope for many more, but I suspect that the Adam Dalgliesh were the ones that brought in the money so she was probably contractually obliged to keep writing them.]

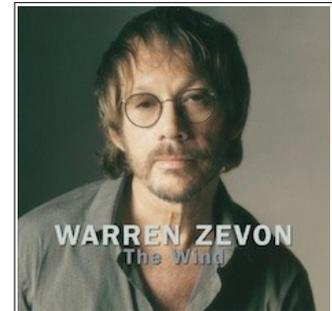
William Breiding: "Heath Row and I have been having some email discussion about the theory and practice of loc-hacking. You may have read some of his remarks in **StF Amateur 7** in which, in typical Heath style, he covers pretty much every aspect of exactly why a fanzine or an apazine does or does not receive comments. This is not an area I'd previously given deep thought until Heath started dissecting it.

“I bring this up because I consistently enjoy **Perryscope** but usually find that I have little to add to the conversation—very similarly to Fred Lerner’s quarterly Fapa zine (don’t ask me to try to spell it properly!), **Lofgornost**—always a fun, interesting zine. I tend to write notes to both of you explaining this, but I always feel guilty, nonetheless.

“Heath’s examination of this aspect of fanzining has made me revisit the problem. And it is a problem because we all want responses to our fanzines, especially personal zines. My only defense here is that I don’t have a strong enough opinion about what’s under discussion to add my two cents. Which is not a statement about my enjoyment of your (or any given) zine. While I suppose it’s possible to ramble off on a Harry Warner or Skel digression for a page or two, that’s not really my style of locking, in most cases. I usually respond directly to the material, not riff on one aspect of one sentence in an article. (I’m not denigrating this style of locking—it can be very entertaining and informative, especially if it’s aimed at your fanzine.)”

[**PM:** As you note, we all have our different styles of letter writing. I like to respond with at least an email of “Thanks” when a new fanzine arrives, and I do have an ambition to write a letter of comment to most of them, though I tend to fail more often than not. Part of my problem is time, as a lot of my available fan activity time is spent producing this little number. But when I do write locs I tend to concentrate on just one or two topics. Anything else and I’d be worn out before very long.]

“For instance—I really enjoyed your piece on Zevon’s **Excitable Boy**. I think, for any Boomer with an interest in pop music, this album made an indelible mark. I just can’t imagine anyone being impervious to Zevon’s songwriting and vocal delivery. But maybe that’s just me. Bruce Gillespie has wide ranging tastes in pop music but maybe he found himself bored with Zevon. One of my favorite memories involving Zevon is visiting my brother’s house in the country outside of Morgantown, West Virginia, where he was commercially growing hostas (he developed a hosta he named Kirk for you know who) and rhododendrons and belting out “Roland the Headless Thompson Gunner” and “Werewolves of London” at the top of his lungs while tending to his nursery shirtless, in cut off jeans and work boots. And of course, “Lawyers, Guns and Money” is permanently lodged in my mind as the theme song for a rich jewish revolutionary girl I once dated. I always wondered if she was ironic enough to be applying this song to herself or if she was just clueless. I never had the wherewithal to ask. Zevon’s final album, **The Wind**, is also a masterpiece, which this same brother sent as a gift, scrawling ‘RIP’ across it on a post-it note.”



[**PM:** I agree that Zevon is one of the more interesting musical figures to come out of the East Coast in the 1970s. He’s just so vastly under-appreciated.]

“I was very amused by Martin Field’s riff (speaking of riffing) on the Swiss Army Knife, which reminded me that I still need to watch the Daniel Radcliffe/Paul Dano film, **Swiss Army Man** (2016). I’ll get on that.

[**PM:** I know of it but haven’t watched it either. It’s rather weird from what I’ve heard.]

“I had the exact response you did to **True Detective**. The first season was brilliant. Couldn’t even get through the first episode of the second season. Haven’t watched the third season but very much want to view the fourth, with Jodie Foster, one of my all time favorite actors and Hollywood icons

(I mean, come on, she has steadfastly stood by Mel Gibson through all of his shenanigans, and defended him—that's true friendship).

Re: Heath Row's question, 'Is Swing music jazz?' While it's true milage my vary, I think, without question, the majority of Swing is Jazz, some of it very much so, while other Swing is less so. Kay Kaiser's version of 'Ferryboat Serenade' is great jazz-pop vocal at its best.

"Nope, no answers here!"

[**PM:** Yeah, none here either.]

Leigh Edmonds: "You look so pensive on the cover that I'm worried. I'm also worried about the fellow looking over your shoulder who seems to have something military on his cap and some nefarious looking device on his chest which he no doubt used to keep in touch with his CIA chums while keeping track on you. Is that it?"

[**PM:** Nope, he was the main photographer in our group. He's carrying one camera and a camera bag and has his sun-glasses stuck in the neck of his t-shirt. I have no idea what he has on his cap, but I don't think it had anything to do with the military.]

"You're allowed to be as unpredictable as you like. At our advanced age being unpredictable is about the only thing that keeps the youngsters on their toes when dealing with us. But I don't know that you could say we are unaccountable because we no doubt have obligations to our family and friends that we are expected to meet, from time to time, when the mood takes us. The great thing is that we can choose among those obligations and personal interests to do what we want when we want to so that although I should be checking through the index that Bruce has prepared for the history of fandom in Australia (part 1) I'm instead writing you a letter of comment. I also just picked up from the post office a package from Hannants in Britain (well known as a pusher to those in the scale modelling community) which includes amongst its contents a kit for the Mitsubishi MU-300 which I'd really like to start work on. So, options, options everywhere, and what we choose to do is entirely up to us.

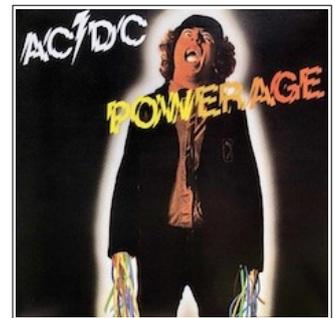
"I was really surprised to read that Warren Zevon's 'Werewolves of London' only made it to 8 on the Australian charts. It is one of the few songs that I still remember clearly from that era so I could probably still sing the worlds if pressed. (But being old I don't have to, so don't even think about it.) I haven't heard the entire album but I have, of course, also heard some of the other tracks that were liberated onto the Australian airways. The other thing that made albums like *Excitable Boy* memorable in Australia was that we'd only had FM radio for a couple of years and I have the feeling that tracks on this album might have sounded less interesting and exciting on AM radio."

[**PM:** And I remember the early days of FM radio when the DJ would just play an entire album all the way through. He (they were nearly always "he") might make a few comments when he flipped over the disk but not many. You had the time to sit and appreciate the music. I was also lucky in that I had a few friends in Adelaide (Paul Stokes and John McPharlin mainly) who were into all sort of music that the radio wasn't playing, so I got a bit of an education. But I never really had enough money for a full-blown stereo and so was a little hampered. These days I can listen to pretty much whatever I want, whenever I want. You tell a music app what you like and it then makes suggestions for other tracks you might also like. It's very much hit-and-miss of course, though some interesting gems arise from time to time. I've also found some interesting tracks being played in restaurants and cafes. There's no point in asking the wait staff as they are either too busy or too young to recognise

the song. So I've taken to using the Shazam app on the phone, which helps enormously.]

"I liked the title of the article, 'What has impacted my life'. I was on the train when I read it so I gazed out the window and pondered. I wondered if such things in my life might be divided into three categories, to quote Ian Dury, 'Sex and drugs and rock and roll'. Or to put it in an older form 'Wine, women and song', which they had to say in those days because we only invented sex in the 1960s and, anyhow, that's a bit too gender specific for our modern times. It's probably best not to dwell on the 'sex and drugs' thoughts in this family fanzine (which didn't stop us forty years ago) which leaves us with 'rock and roll'. Out of the air I picked five LPs that had an influence on my life. First, and surprisingly, comes an ancient Russian (Melodia as I recall) recording of the Shostakovich Violin Concerto. The record had such a wobble on it that it was surprising that the needle actually stayed in the groove and the recording quality was abysmal, but the feel of the music made me think that the people who made that record understood more about the Blues than most of the guys playing in Chicago. It is probably that LP which got me started on 'classical' music.

"What else? There's AC/DC's *Powerage* which was on very high rotation at our house in Brunswick when we lived there. Big Brother and the Holding Company's *Cheap Thrills* which I almost wore the grooves out on when I first got it. In this spur of the moment poll I could not separate the Sex Pistols *Never Mind the Bollocks* and The Saints *(I'm) Stranded* which both said that rock and roll was back when they came out.



Way out in front is The Beatles *Please Please Me*. It is far from being the Beatles best album but it was the first and it came out at a time when what had been the vitality of rock and roll in the mid 1950s (Elvis, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis and etc, and even Roy Orbison) had been turned in brainless pap. The album begins '1..., 2..., 3..., 4.... the rhythm kicks in and 'Well she was just seventeen, You know what I mean ...' And rock and roll was back! Sex too, maybe that was when it was invented. 1960s sex anyhow. Drugs didn't come along until maybe *Help*. I could burble on about this album at some length, as you so interestingly did with your comments on *Excitable Boy*, but I can hear Bruce's index calling for attention from the shelf over there so I must get on with that. The one thing I will add is that one of the things that comes across in *Please Please Me* is that the Beatles were a very tight band, perhaps one of the tightest you are likely to hear. I guess it came from years of playing and touring together so they knew their playlist inside and out by the time they went into the studio to record their first album.

"Anyhow ..."

[**PM:** I have to say that is a very eclectic set of albums. But I guess that's the way for all of us. We get our musical influences from all over the place; as we do for literary, cinematic, pictorial influences and preferences as well. I do like Zevon's work and have all of his albums. But I couldn't listen to him exclusively. Nor anyone else either. And that's just the way it should be.]

I also heard from: Spike, Edie Stern, Henry Gasko, and John Harvey, thank you one and all. ■