





AMAZING - COLOSSAL - SENSATIONAL - STUPENDOUS - GREAT - BORING

From the people who brought you 'Last Tango In Poughkeepsie' (a remake of 'Last Tango In Paris', but with Peanut Butter), 'Alice's Packed Lunch', and 'A Star Is Aborted'.....comes their latest and greatest smash.....it's...it's...er, it's....it's been so long I've forgotten what it is. Never mind, we'll assign it the codename 'Small Friendly Dog' and the number fifteen. I'm Skel and she's Cas and 'here' is 25 Bowland Close; Offerton; Stockport; Cheshire; SK2 5NW. This issue is firstly dedicated to everyone who is fed up to their left tit of feminism and feminists. Some of my best friends are women, but would you want one to marry your sister? The true dedication of this issue however is to the following people for their invaluable and much appreciated assistance:-

British Rail; National Travel; Dave Rowe; Coral Clarke; Dave and Hazel Langford; Martin and Liese Hoare; Derek and Pamela Boal and My Bank Manager

.....in enabling the Skeltribe to enjoy a wonderful few days in and around London early in July.....and yes, what follows is a trip report.

### I'M ON THE ROAD AGAIN - CANNED AT

We are speeding towards Munceton. The train is crowded but Cas and I have managed to get the last remaining pair of seats and so are symbolically together whilst other couples are separated, sometimes in different carriages. A good start. The sun is shining, but not in our eyes. A glorious day. In our luggage is food for the journey, also a couple of cans of frozen Tuborg lager. Yes, unlike bottles of beer, cans may safely be put in the freezer without fear of them bursting open if inadvertently forgotten. It is nine-thirty and I am guaranteed a can of ice-cold lager with my lunch. I have the morning paper and a 'Sweeney' novel on the table before me, my wife at my side, the warm sun shining through the windows into the cool train and onto the surrounding countryside which is brightly delicious.... the blues are blue, the greens are green and the shade is shady .....my headache and nine paracetamols are behind me, the kids

are over a hundred miles away and even the knowledge that I am heading straight toward them cannot blight my inner serenity. Stretching before me, fourteen infinite days into a distant and unknowable future is ~~THE~~ HOLIDAYS. I am really looking forward to it. I have an overdraft to spend and the sheer novelty of such a prospect adds savour to my anticipations. It's a wonderful day! Halfway there a strange Italian-looking George C. Scott type, fully dressed in a grey three-piece suit with buttoned up waistcoat, tightly knotted tie and seventeen layers of sweat plonked his black business case on the table, sat in the vacant seat opposite me, hauled a paper out of his case and proceeded to cast fearful glances over the top of it, down the length of the train. MAFIOSO!! I knew it! Casually I slid down in my seat as much as possible so that the inevitable hail of machine gun bullets might reach him without first having to pass through me, and peered up at him out of the corner of my eyes over the intervening table. I contemplated warning Cas but didn't want to cause a scene and tip him off that I was on to him. Fortunately his courage returned and he strode manfully off at the next station to meet his fate, whilst Cas bent down and whisperingly enquired why I was trying to limbo-dance under the table. The gentleman opposite her deftly extracted my knee from his groin and said nothing. I don't think either of them noticed anything unusual.

Half-an-hour before we were due in Nuneaton Cas wanted to go and stand at the door in case the train only stopped there for 3.6 milliseconds or something. This strange behaviour was to become a feature of the holiday.

Nuneaton station itself was strangely quiet as, following a couple of recent derailments, through trains no longer belt through the centre at warp factor five. Our train shuffled in on an outside platform and so we went, uneventfully and totally forgettably, to Leicester, where we partook of some of the partakeables we'd brought with us and where a disreputable and seedy looking young man began taking several photographs of British Rail's highly secret suburban rolling stock before joining us on the last leg of our journey to Stamford where Cas' parents, the Skelkids, and the first part of our holiday awaited us. (....to be continued.)

SMASHed again

Many people wrote disagreeing with my comments on 'Mash'. Here is a sample from Rich Bartucci which encapsulates the gist, the very nub of all such responses:-

"M.A.S.H." is set during the Korean War because the movie of the same name was also set during the Korean War. The movie was set during the Korean war because the book was set during the Korean war. The book was set during the Korean war because the author, an American surgeon who writes under the pseudonym of Richard Hooker, just happened to serve on a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital during the Police Action and came to draw upon his experiences in composing his hilariously funny and disrespectful book. Or so I have been told."

ARE YOU A SEVEN STONE WEAKLING?

.....well piss off then before I kick your snivelling  
little head in!

I can accept the fact that the film was set when the book was set because we all know the high regard which Hollywood holds for the sanctity of the original novels from which their films are made. Who can forget such word-for-word screenplays as 'Soylent Green' and 'The Omega Man'? No, this is merely the subject matter of my remarks, not what I was saying about that subject matter.

Yeah, 'MASH' is great. And safe....20 years safe. We do not have to look at what's happening now. We can escape from Vietnam to nice cosy old war. Lookit, pain and suffering and mutilation are funny. Would people have thought it so funny if it had been screened back during the Korean war, when US soldiers were bleeding and dying? Of course not, because 'MASH' is right and such truths are not popular during the event. The public could not have accepted the truth of 'MASH' during the

Korean war any more than it could have accepted a similar truth about Vietnam back when 'MASH' came out, even though the 'truth' was the same...."only the time has been changed to protect the public's peace of mind". The time for the truth in a Korean setting was during the Korean war. The time for the truth in a Vietnamese setting was during the Vietnam war. This is what I meant by a lack of guts.

By the way, the last paragraph should have read....."when US soldiers were bleeding and dying in Korea." On stencil composition can't half play hob with what one wants to say. Hmmm, might as well stick with Rich for a bit.

RICE BARTUCCI 2105 Independence Ave.; Kansas City; MO 64124.

I am surprised at the fact that so many of your correspondents have related the origins of the derogatory expression 'It Sucks' to the disdain of the heterosexual majority for the orogenital practises of the homosexual minority. This fellatious reasoning is obviously a product of increasing sensitivity to the present Gay Lib movement in this country.

In actuality, the expression 'It Sucks' was born in Southern California in the early 1920's, when a species of clinging vine evolved in the citrus groves. This creeper, entwining the fruit trees, would attach itself to the ripening oranges, grapefruit and kumquats and suck from them the sweet juices stored therein. This, of course, was met with anger and aggressive response on the part of the citrus farmers of California, who set about finding a way to control the new "sucking vine" before it could ruin their cash crops forever. They produced a number of herbicides and other measures to no avail; the vine was impervious to man-made chemical agents. Finally, late in that disastrous season, agronomist Homer Phelps discovered that the urine of a certain breed of show dog - the French poodle - would retard the growth of this deadly weed. Vast numbers of these oddly-trimmed animals were imported to Southern California post haste and soon, under the avenging drizzle of poodle whizz, the "sucking vine" was driven back.

The remnants of this fierce struggle are still to be found



within American society; in addition to the semantically negative expression "It sucks", there remains the huge poodle population of Southern California to testify to the veracity of my accounting.

Did you know that if you indulge in sexual intercourse whilst mowing the lawn it doubles your sexual appetite? That's right....."I could not love thee half as much loved I not on a mower." Now who said that? It wasn't the bloke out of 'A Tale Of Two Cities', because he said, "It is a far better thing that I do now than I have ever done before." Then again, what else could he have been talking about?

I must express my thanks to Dave and Mardee for the Polaroid print that was inside my copy of the TABEBUIAN 33. "That's RUDE" said Cas, "...but how did they know you like that sort of thing?" (In case you hadn't guessed Rich has finished and this is 'hand-some local fan-ed (with more than the average amount of typos) makes good'). Whilst dealing with personals I'd like to tell Ira (pageing Mr. Thornhill) that my problem was just the opposite. When I married my very own non-fan she was quite prepared to get involved with fandom, it was just SF she wanted nothing to do with. However, lately there are beginning to appear certain cracks in her fortress of non-involvement.

We saw 'The Omega Man' on TV the other day and I gave her 'I Am Legend' to compare....she preferred the film. (Quick to take advantage I thrust 'Make Room, Make Room' at her and said "Remember Soylent Green?" She is enjoying it. Mr. Harrison will be pleased. She'd read 'The Furies' and 'Day Of The Trifids' before she met me, and said she liked that sort of SF and did I have any others similar. Everything I would suggest however was turned down as not being similar enough and I was reluctantly forced to admit that I didn't have any other novels set in the immediate future with civilisation collapsing before the

rapacious ravaging of ambulatory avocados whilst gert wasps look on and buzz peevishly. I should complain.....as long as I don't have to read historical novels in any form of reciprocity I'm ahead.

### SIMULACROUS MUSINGS.

Feminism....sexist....Ms....., words which a few years ago were relatively uncommon now appear in fanzines with alarming regularity. Apparently every active female fan is pissed off. A very sad state of affairs. But why should you be burdened with my thoughts on the subject? Because it's my fanzine, that's why!

These thoughts rightly belong in a LoC on SIMULACRUM 7, but as they were also partially stimulated by AMOR 15 and because of my earlier flippant pseudo-dedication I wish to take this opportunity of figuring out just what my position is on this topic.

Firstly I am aware how impossible it is for almost any man to really appreciate the problem on any level other than the purely intellectual. OK, that's the level where I'm forced to operate, so no point in kicking about it. Alrighty then, first point is that everyone has a right to behave in a sexist manner. Anyone is entitled to a sexist outlook to whatever degree. It is not yet mandatory that everyone be perfect. Perfection is not compulsory. This is part of the rights guaranteed the individual by our system of government and by the democratic philosophy. This applies not only to individuals but also to groups of like-minded individuals. A group can get together and operate a 'men only' club or bar or society or whatever and that is their right. Like-minded individuals can join them and those who disagree can go elsewhere. They are being sexist, but they are entitled. Just so is Susan Wood entitled to organise a 'women-only' room at a convention (assuming the approval of the concom). Susan has as much right to sexist behaviour as anyone else but she must accept it as sexism. She seems in fact to accept this when she implies that the whole reason for the sexism is to shake up we sexist men. "Let's see how them dumb-assed sexist men like it when the boot is a horse of a different colour" sort of attitude. But...but...later on she is talking



about and defending the need for women-only space at conventions she speaks of WOMEN getting together "in a supportive and non-sexist atmosphere....".

The only thing that stopped me falling out of my chair laughing at that is that SUSAN IS DEADLY SERIOUS. A person as intelligent and perceptive as Susan Wood is saying all this, and meaning it. This is the great drawback of being able to appreciate the problem emotionally.

However, if individuals have a right to sexist behaviour, Society does not. It seems to me that instead of wasting time complaining of sexist behaviour among fans, where everyone is a unique individual and should be approached everytime on the basis of his (?) own personality, one should instead devote ones entire energies to the public sphere, where sexism is intolerable.

In this country there now exists a 'Sex Discrimination Act' which is no ultimate solution but at least indicates that Society in general is aware that the problem exists. Oddly, we are taught that the Rule of Law is good because The Law applies equally to every person irrespective of his circumstance. I say 'oddly' because this does not apply to the law on Sex Discrimination. To this law there is one exception. The Church. The Church is specifically exempt from the Act. I was incensed when I discovered this fact. Sex discrimination is either wrong or it isn't. How can it be alright when practised by the Church of England but wrong when practised by Safeways?

Some members of the Church agree with me. An english vicar was recently carpeted by his bishop because he allowed an american lady priest to give communion in his church ('allowed' be damned, he paid her airfare specifically for the purpose) and women are still not permitted to officiate at church services in this country. The people who framed the laws were too gutless to run the risk of "tampering with religious freedom".

Which covers the individual and the society.. two out of three. So far I've managed to avoid 'Sexism and the mighty Skel'. Trouble is, I don't come out too good and unfortunately it's no consolation knowing I've a right to a sexist outlook. That's no

help at all. I don't want to be a person of whom someone like Susan would disapprove. It ain't easy, but then I guess it was never meant to be.

Last Christmas Nick wanted an action man toy. He didn't get it. No way was I having my son messing about with dolls. Hellfire, he's effeminate enough as it is. How could he help be otherwise when all his young life he's been dominated by his sister who is two years older than he is. So, when he grew capable of joining in and playing it was obviously with her, in her games.

It didn't help that Rod, Cas' first husband, didn't want another child when he was born and quite unreasonably blamed Cas who in turn, by way of rejecting this blame also rejected Nicholas to a great extent, which forced him constantly into the company of his dominating sister (At the time when I first met Cas, if one asked Nicholas a question Deborah would always answer it for him). However, the fact that I don't want my son playing with dolls I have since realised is my problem, not his, so this year he is getting the action man he still wants. I'm still not happy at the prospect but I'm gonna have to lump it.

#### TRIP REPORT - 2

Stamford is a very old town which has maintained its character by the simple expedient of ensuring that any new buildings built in the old town proper are architecturally compatible. It's a nice town, pleasant to stroll around. The old stone buildings seem to exude a contagious patience. The mood of the town is set immediately upon leaving the railway station as one crosses the Meadows which run alongside the river by the centre of the town. It is a small town but as you stand in the Meadows with the sun on your back you can look around and see the spires and steeples of six old large churches and quite easily and naturally you change

down a gear and the rest of the day now seems plenty long enough. . For whatever,

There isn't much to do there if you're a young swinger, I suppose, but on our evening strolls Cas and I kept encountering youngsters chattering away happily to each other in various languages. Apparently there is an international holiday hostel in the town, just around the corner from the lodge gates of Burliegh House (where the European Three-Day Event takes place when held in this country and where Princess Anne won the European Title a few years back). There were a lot of foreign tourists there while we were. A couple of Swaydish Paypul asked us for directions to the nearest Bed & Breakfast establishment. This led to an outbreak of the dreaded 'mimic's symptom' and I spent the next few days giving way to sporadic outbursts of English-as-she-is-spoken-in-Sweden. Compulsively, but I suspect not very well.

I have these reflective vocal chords. If in the company of a scotsman for any length of time I tend to start apeing his accent unless I remain ever alert. It's the same each week when the episode of 'When The Boat Comes In' finishes I find myself lapsed into my own version of one of the North-East dialects. The trouble is it's not just my voice that lacks self-confidence...and it really does get embarrassing when I'm walking along in the company of a bloke with a limp, which I do every day at work. I think in my previous incarnation I may have been a chameleon.

Stamford is not a bad area for 'Real Ale'. It used to be even better for until recently it was the site of Melbournes brewery which unfortunately is no longer in business. I was in a pub by the Meadows one day sampling a pint of Ruddles beer when an american tourist came in and asked for a pint of ale and I had a mental flash of the landlord sending the ostler out to tend to his horse.

"A pint of Ale". What a marvelous phrase. "A pint of Ale please inkeeper, and some vittles." Even though we talk of 'Real Ale' we always seem to ask for "A pint of Beer". What really drew my attention to this American was an uncanny non-resemblance to Robert Silverberg. There was an aura of Silverbob about him. Does Silverberg have a larger, older, less hirsute, slightly balding brother?

That Ruddles pub, by the way, was The Golden Fleece and despite its exterior olde world charm inside it was identical to the long bar of countless local pubs, but because of the beer it somehow did not seem anyway similar. However, it was not in Stamford itself, nor in Ruddles Ales that my heart at last came home. It was in the nearby village of Great Casterton at an old thatched pub called the Crown. There it was that my taste buds came at last to their final reward. There is no beer but Rheer, and Samuel Smith's Old Brewery Bitter is His prophet. Beer is personal, like scotch. One man's favourite malt is another man's rubbing alcohol. The same goes for beer. Somewhere on this earth there is a brew more suited to each individual's taste than any other. I have found mine. Every evening we would take the twenty-minute stroll from Ray and Jackie's (Cas's parents) to The Crown and would sit in the cosy lounge, quietly and warmly lit, relax in the rich red furnishings and quaff the dark rich brew off the darker tables before us. A relatively still brew, only slightly effervescent. No fakey, foamy head. Served only slightly cool, not so cold as to chill the taste buds. You can't get the full flavour out of good beer if it is too cold. Of course, with relatively tasteless stuff like lager it doesn't make much difference, and lager that has not been well chilled is evial. Because of the great upsurge in lager drinking in this country, requiring chilled storage, most pubs now serve their beer too cold. True with many modern brews this is not a disadvantage for if one just wants something cold and fizzy to



pour down ones neck, something less sickeningly sweet than a soft drink, then stuff like Watneys and Whitbreads is probably adequate and the chilling of ones taste buds becomes a positive boon.

Not so with a decent brew though. At lunchtimes too we would saunter down to the Crown (too slowly for me) with the kids and sit in the pub garden slaking our thirsts and chovelling bag after bag of Walkers excellent potato crisps. Yes, even the crisps were special. Other lunchtimes we would always try and find a pub to lunch in, rather than a cafe. Our Bethany is now firmly convinced that the main reason for going into a pub is to eat.

The English way of life has changed a lot in my short part-life but one way it has very definitely improved is with the emergence of the pub as a place to eat and drink. The simple choice of butties or a ploughman's lunch have now been improved by a vast range of toasted sandwiches, pizzas, chilles, knife and fork meals of incredible complexity and sophistication, soups, all manner of things in baskets, salads, cold and hot pies, gateaux, hot sweets, cold sweets, iced sweets, coffees and such. All usually better cooked than in any cafe and all served (yes, actually served..no self service..graciously without brusqueness) and eaten in a much pleasanter atmosphere than a cafe provides, not redolent of the sterility of an operating theatre in atmosphere whilst evincing an air of seedy disrepute regarding cleanliness. Not only do you now get a better choice of food prepared better, in nicer surroundings, but one also has the civilized amenity of having a drink whilst waiting for it and another whilst partaking.

Most pubs still only cater for 'pub grub' at lunch time and then only during the week (not on a Saturday or Sunday) but there are a growing number now going beyond even this and this whole revolution stemmed from the switch by breweries from tennants to



landlords. The basic difference is that a tennant might own his pub, would buy the beer from the brewery and re-sell it to his customers at a profit. The more beer he sold the better off he was. He was in effect a partner. The more beer he sold the better for both himself and the brewery. He was in the business of selling beer. The breweries had the benefit of having less capital tied up in the whole vat to cess-pool operation but obviously had to restrict their profit to the brewing side of the business whilst his partner, the tennant, took his profit from the retail trade. However, successful businesses tend to grow and when you can't grow by brewing more beer (because the drinking public can only consume so much) then one either has to branch out into other spheres of business entirely or encompass other aspects of the brewing trade, such as the retail side of the business. Accordingly many breweries decided that in future the retailers, or tennants profit would in future be theirs. Thus, when Tennancy agreements lapsed they did not sign new ones but instead installed a landlord.

Now a landlord is not a partner of the brewery, he is an employee. Whether he sells six zillion pints a week or just sixty, he gets paid a wage. providing he maintains a minumum level of competency he has security. He isn't really interested in selling more beer, over a certain limit. He merely has to sell enough. Enough is enough. Enough for the brewery is enough for him.....which is always less than in a tennanted pub because when you are in business for yourself, when every pint you sell increases your profit you look after your livelihood, which means you look after your product, your beer. When you are a landlord, generally you simply do the bare minumum which satisfies both your contract of employment and your conscience and too often these days it is the latter which is the easier satisfied. So, the only way a landlord is likely to sell more beer is to attract more customers and the only way for him

to do this is to provide a different service, and if this service should incidentally profit only him..... Hence the upsurge in 'pub grub' from which the landlord makes much muckers and the brewery strictly zilch except from the incidental beer sales to the additional customers. That's the Yang. What has happened to the beer, unfortunately, is the Yin. Thank god for the exceptions.

#### ODE TO A FAN

I must go down to the typewriter again,  
to the lonely typer and duper,  
for I must pub my ish once more,  
whilst I'm still in a drunken stupor.

19 March 1978 (SKEL)

"Decapitation is a gruesome affair but I am condemned to die that way.... Be sure not to forget to eat dried bean curd with fried peanuts. The two give you the taste of the best ham." - Chin Sheng-Tan's instructions to his son in his will, 17th century... quoted from the Time-Life volume, 'The Cooking Of China'.

I love cookbooks. I drool at pictures of mouth-watering dishes. Lists of ingredients fascinate me. I can't cook. It's just another form of fantasy to me.

Anybody who saw the second issue of my column in Wally Stoelting's FANS-ZINE, could they please send me a copy, 'cos nobody else did (hint, Wally, HINT) or if they did my postman ate it.

The BBC is now into its second series of '1990' ...cerebral SF, but enjoyable, but how could it be otherwise with Edward Woodward? (With everything else that gets repeated how come ITV never reran 'Callan'). Also on the Beeb, 'Blake's 7' is nearing the end of its initial series. I hope it gets a

second series. The plotlines are somewhat juvenile (It is a stablemate of 'Dr. Who', but aimed at an adult audience, but despite this and the low budget it has an enthusiasm which transcends its faults. It is 'space-opera' writ small. It takes me back years. It is fun. I will miss it in its absence. A certain Derby fan of questionable intelligence thinks it is abysmal. Ignore him, he is an old fan and ~~drunk~~ tired. ITV meanwhile offers only imports like 'The Tedium From Atlantis' and 'Logan's Amble', the latter I watch in the hope of getting a flash of Jessica's knickers. However, despite the fact that she spends all her time cavorting around in the shortest skirt known to human science/Hollywood...nary a bit of bum do we see. The City of Domes deserves destruction, if only for its invention of inertialess fabric. A pox on you, Mr. Nolan!

Anybody who gets the impression that I am trying to wrap up a lot of loose ends (Ouch...damn these Y-fronts) is damn right. In a recent phone call 'ACDF-OQUI' revealed his intention of publishing an issue of his defunct zine before Easter and muttered incoherently about 'joint-mailings', whatever they may be. However, a sense of urgency was conveyed and Skel's 'Vaster than Empires, and more slow' return to fanzine publishing has gone for a ball of chalk. The world's first 1,000 page fanzine (circa 1985) is not to be. The LoCs, full of 'current' events like plagues of boils and suchlike (damn, a plague of suchlike-hell God, that's even worse than locusts you mean bastard) will have to go. There were more of you than ever before. Thankyou. I won't list your names in case I miss someone off. You know who you are and I thank you. That goes for everybody except Mike Glicksohn. Crawler that I am, Mike must get special treatment, if only because of the incredible good taste he reveals in his latest LoC-column. Yes, we can't let Mike Glicksohn go down incognito like the rest of you bums.Special consideration, and all that. OK, here goes..... WAHF: Mike Glicksohn.

26 March 1978 (Skel)

The reasons for this past year's unprecedented absence of all zines skelish are of course manifold. There is of course a vast groundswell of lethargy, without which untold minor reasons would have counted for nought. Odd to think that over six years of unfailing quarterly publishing should terminate with so little advance warning. Like none at all. The more discerning will notice, if they have incredible memories, that the trusty skel typer has shuffled this mortal coil. Whenever one hit the 'h' key it started to haemorrhage internally. All I can say is "Thank ghed it dhidn't happen to Prhesford's thyper!" Only a temporary setback, but there is a shortage of typewriter repair shops in the Vale of Lethe. It took many months to get around to reclaiming this old manual from Cas' parents.

Also, I got a new toy. A 'Sharp SG-400E' Music centre. 25 Watts RMS per channel, Dolby system, each component meeting the international DIN standard for 'Hi-Fi'. Enough buttons and controls to take me to Beta-Centauri and back. Over £370 worth of orgasms for my eardrums. When we originally settled on that model we toured all the discount electrical stores but none of them carried it, nor a reasonable alternative so we had to settle for paying the full price from Cas' catalogue which at least gave us her 10% commission and 38 weeks free credit, bring our outlay down to around £330. Fortunately, something went wrong. To start with they were out of stock and when they did finally get it despatched it never arrived. After about ten weeks I told them which hole they could stick it up and cancelled the order (they are incidentally still billing us for it).

In the meantime two local discount stores had started carrying just that model, at a saving of about £80-£90. Their promise of 'Immediate' delivery because they had four in stock caused me to clean out my savings and get an overdraft for the balance. When the



withdrawal slip arrived from the Post Office Savings Bank I cashed it in and rang the store.... "I have the balance and am asking you to deliver the music centre today as agreed." Needless to say they couldn't. Fortunately it only took a fortnight for my music centre to get off the ship at Manchester Docks and into my living room and they did knock me some more money off so I only ended up paying £270.

However, this tale of Love's Labours Won does now mean that I seem to spend all my time recording my LPs onto cassettes, recording other people's LPs onto cassettes for myself, recording cassettes for other people, or listening to cassettes that other people have recorded for me. I never realised that a music centre would be so time consuming. In the last few months the number of cassettes I own has gone up from about 40 to 140.

Fortunately my musical horizons are expanding. Through the kindness (and long hours spent recording) of Mike Meara I have 'discovered' Gordon Lightfoot, Bonfa, Jobim, Duane Eddy, Creedence, and many more. So far the only failure in the tapes Mike has recorded for me has been Joni Mitchell who I am still unable to appreciate despite repeated attempts. I must persevere in this however because that many people just cannot be wrong. The fault must lie in me and I shall exorcise it eventually.

However, fnz keep falling through my letter box in a tribute more to the generosity of certain fans than to their intelligence. My conscience is sorely troubled. So I am back. So it goes.

The new BBC radio series 'The Hitch-hiker's Guide To The Galaxy' is a disappointment despite excellent extracts from the book in the title. Which has nothing to do with anything at all, but after a full year layoff you don't expect me to be organised, do you?



## THE SUMMER OF '77

Halfway through the fortnight's holiday in Stamford there came the real reason for the holiday. A long weekend in London. Flushed with my success at drinking chilled lager on the train to Stamford I also froze a couple of cans for the coach trip to the great Metrop. Unfortunately coaches don't run as smoothly as trains and instead of opening a can of Carlsberg what I in fact opened was instant unpopularity from the people in the seats within spraying distance around me. About then I could have easily walked under my seat without ducking. The last 20 minutes of the journey were endured in a welter of embarrassment but finally we pulled into Victoria coach station and peered about anxiously for a glimpse of long blonde hair and a handbag which would indicate our native guide...Dave Rowe.

Knowing the complexities of London's transport system we knew we'd need a local expert. Dave's first act was to lose us all, himself included, in the labyrinthine depths of the very first tube station we went into. About then I began to get qualms. Luckily Dave knew his way around Edinburgh so we were soon back on our way to Regents Park for a quick picnic before tackling the zoo. Regents Park Zoo is unique. One enters, one walks about 'n' million miles and one exits not only in the same galaxy, but also through the very gate one entered. There are some zoos which man's sore feet were not meant to know. There are eight million stories in the Naked Zoo...this has not been one of them. Cas, Dave and the kids skipped gaily off to the Tun. I straggled knackeredly behind.

All I remember of the Tun is foul beer and a piece of incredibly cheap and delicious pie...and Mike and Pat driving past and returning a few hours later when they'd found a place to park, and Dave disappearing with the kids so that we might the better enjoy ourselves. Greater love hath no fan..... Then, when

he returned it was off to our first flop. We'd asked Coral Clarke for a spare floor. Totally gobsmacked we found ourselves in an umpteen story semi-detached mansion complete with fountain and a sense of quiet luxury totally alien to someone with a background like 'No. 13 Slagheap Street, Barnsley.' Nobody (Gerald Lawrence) mentioned Mayors of Surbiton, inventors of vital parts of diesel engines, zillion room mansions and laps of luxury when he suggested we write Coral to see if we could 'flop' on her floor.

You know when you were adolescent and your parents were always excruciatingly embarrassing you? Well, Coral must have been a lucky girl because her parents could never have embarrassed her. Two nicer people etc.... even at breakfast amid talk of shares and portfolios my working-class sensibilities were left unbruised. She must have been nearly as lucky in her parents as I was in mine. A lift with Coral's mum to the station after breakfast and we were once more on our way to team up with Dave Rowe under the 'big round clock' at Paddington station, which gave worrywart old me some anxious moments when it turned out to be square (or was it vice versa?) and Dave's train was delayed. After standing for a few desultory moments under every single clock within two miles of the station we did in fact meet up with Dave at the original clock and forthwith commenced to do the traditional tourist bit, taking in Trafalgar Square, Downing Street (we have a picture indicating that Dave Rowe will one day be Prime Minister....when he grows up), Horseguards Parade, Changeing The Guards at Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park (where Cas took a snapshot of a couple of twigs floating on a distant puddle which to this day she insists were ducks on the Serpentine) and eventually to The Tower of London.

Now I was fucked when we got there. It is not humanly possible to delete all the expletives required to describe my state after a full afternoon tramping around that Hell-on-earth. I will omit the entire

episode. Instead we shall cut immediately to the station where Cas and the kids wave a fond goodbye to Dave whose kindness and help will long be remembered. They waved. I summoned the last dregs of my fading energy and weakly managed to flutter my eyebrow in farewell to Dave as he stood outside the compartment window, on the platform. Across from me an old dear sceptically viewed my archly arching brow, glanced at Dave's long blonde locks and his handbag, gave a strangled 'Harr-rumph' in the manner of an epileptic ferret, and busied herself in her magazine, no doubt furiously composing letters of protest to the Chairman of the Railways Board.

What do broadminded frogs read to turn themselves on? Spawnography. I thought that up last night in bed, having nothing better to do, but I am unsure about that answer. Perhaps 'frogsporn' would be better? Be sure to send in your votes, folks.

And so to Reading and Castle Langford. Boldly following all the arrows and signs screaming 'Exit' and 'Way Out' we emerged in a public toilet in Hampstead, apparently the only egress from Reading Railway Station not covered by Eagle+Eye Langford in his prowling Vauxhall. However, he did eventually espy us and pulled up before us in his motorised patchwork quilt, comprising alternative squares of fibreglass and rust. My state of total exhaustion was born out by the fact that I got in, rather than walk ahead accompanying the man with the flag. This proved to be a wise move as 'Wheels' Langford's first act was to run him down then, whilst still looking over his shoulder, welcoming Cas and the kids in the rear seat, he also took out three complete bus queues and an unlucky hot-dog salesman before once

more returning his attention to the road. After that his score improved. Immediately upon arriving I collapsed into a chair after the briefest of pauses at the fridge to divest myself of a can of lager and a noxious pseudo-sausage roll which had been purchased at a Watney's pseudo-pub somewhere near the Tower. Dave, wise in the ways of fen rushed to revive me with some beer, large quantities of which he had laid in, having heard tales of certain imbibing tendencies to which I'm prone. SHOCK-HORROR-SHAME....I was too buggered even to drink and nursed a single half-pint almost the entire evening. Struggling manfully to conceal his pity Dave forced down the rest so as to leave no nagging reminders of my strange impotence. A truly selfless sacrifice which ably illustrates the concern a fan will display for even the briefest of fannish acquaintances. It certainly is a wonderful thing.

Much recovered the following morning I breakfasted on the can of lager ~~the booze sod had over-~~  
~~looked~~ I'd stuck in the fridge then we all went into Reading to cast envious glances at lots of nice books and people purchasing them, before sojourning in a pub yard by the river where we partook of various partakeables. "Come on Bethany," I said, "...eat it all up so you'll grow up into a big girl." "A big girl like you, Dad?" she replied. Hazel thought this incredibly funny. She will get hers.

In the afternoon I demonstrated my inability to throw a frisbee either the correct distance or even in the right direction. Also my complete inability to catch the fucker. Stupid things anyway.

When I'd finished making a complete fool of myself we packed and Dave drove us round to Martin & Liese Hoare's. All the way there, and for the rest of our holiday I had a nagging feeling that I'd forgotten something.



Once at the Hoares' we reacquainted ourselves with Saggy, who seemed to be settling in well. Then, after dining with them and the ubiquitous Gerald Lawrence we all sojourned to the 'Ferryboat' to meet up once more with sundry Langfords and Mearae, there to lay the foundations for the evening's more serious drinking back at Martin and Liese's, where we had left the kids watching 'Umpteenth Return To The Planet Of The Hairy Anthropoids'...and also apparently turning the central heating up to 40,000,000 degrees Centiheit, which action they later denied, in the manner of kids immemorial, both individually and en masse. Rotten little liars.

Later I proved the mathematical statement that 'Canned Ruddles plus uncanned Skel -equals- canned Skel plus uncanned Ruddles'. Proud of myself I tried to explain this 'proof' to Gödel but he didn't understand, being two cans ahead of me at the time.

The following day the bus which the best laid plans had earmarked for the next stage of our journey, to visit the Boals, ganged agly by simply refusing to run on a Sunday. A pox on rural bus services. British Rail fortunately came up trumps and Derek even more so, met us at the station whilst weglumly scanned the bus timetables outside, having been tipped by Liese's phone call.

After a pleasant afternoon chatting and relaxing (and worrying about what it was I'd forgotten at the Langfords) we left Pamela to wash the tea pots whilst Derek once more acted as chauffeur on the journey to nearby Uffington where we were to spend the night with an old friend of Cas'.

(It was not until we finally got back to Stockport that we were to discover just what I'd forgotten at Dave and Hazel's, when the postman delivered this plain brown envelope, completely devoid of fingerprints and other such identifying marks.....



We have still got **YOUR**  
**Sa**<sup>US</sup>**age** roll . . . send  
**£3.99** or We will **Post** it  
back to you , in

**piE** **CE****S**!!

Meanwhile, back on holiday.....

The following morning we were driven into Oxford by Josephine's husband Paul (remember Cas' friend?) where we sightsaw and where, determined not to enjoy the entire holiday, I spent the whole day being unreasonable and arguing with Cas.

After that it was back to Stamford on the coach for a few days winding back down before the holiday terminated and we headed back to smoggy Stockport.

A lot of people put themselves out for us in the course of this holiday, feeding us, putting us up overnight, and equally important, running us from point 'A' to point 'B'. Thanks aren't enough. Maybe the knowledge that they enabled us all to have a marvellous holiday is, I dunno. Thanks anyway to one and all.

This summer we are going back to Stamford, with Mike and Pat, just for an overnight stay, to share with them the pleasures of the 'Golden Fleece' and the 'Crown' and Sam Smith's 'Old Brewery Bitter'. How's that for an endorsement?

Hi there, this is Cas, he says I can have the last 10 lines and I told him what to do with them. Since we last met we have had an addition to the family, a Peruvian Guinea Pig. She is small, cute and extremely hairy so what else could I name her but.... GLICK. What I really wanted was an Old English Sheep dog, if you should see this person wondering along with a fluffy ewine pig on a collar and lead it'll be me. I have to leave room for him to say goodbye so love to all, tatty bye for now.

31 March 1978 - last stencil - (Skel)

Which about wraps it up. Remember, until we meet again..."Sing 'skunk' and think 'hedgehog'."  
- LW III 'In Concert' BBC2/Radio 1: 25/2/'78.

Last Minute THINGS

- 1: Congrats to Rob and Coral  
on their engagement.
- 2: It was Waterloo not  
Paddington...I am a  
cretin.
- 3: 44444444444444444444444444444444  
(May the 4s be with you.)
- 4: Yes, we finally saw and  
thoroughly enjoyed 'STAR  
WARS'.
- 5: Thanks also to Dave  
Cockfield Cockfield for  
things not mentionable on  
the back cover.
- 6: There is no number six.
- 7: "Happy Birthday To You,  
Happy Birthday To You,  
Happy Birthday Dear  
Mike Glicksohn,  
Happy Birthday to You."
- 8: Richard III didn't do it.
- 9: Really last stencil  
11th May 1978.

FROM:- Skel & Cas.

25 Bowland Close,  
Offerton,  
Stockport,  
Cheshire,  
SK2 5NW.  
ENGLAND.