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**PERRYSCOPE 36**, September 2023, 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 efanazines.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, Ireland, August 2019.

### INTRODUCTION

I always think of August as a transitional month, as we move away from winter towards spring, hoping the latter gets here faster than usual, watching the buds slowly begin to pop up on the trees and desperately hoping the weather will be kind enough to allow me to cook something on the barbeque outside. I pass another birthday (how do they keep turning up so often?) and start to wonder if I've done everything I need to for the upcoming trip to India. The answer to that last one is generally no.

I am fairly certain that the India trip of three weeks (starting in mid-October) will impact the publishing schedule here, but that's also something you've heard before. I have to admit to myself that I'm just slowing down and that I can't carry on doing what I have been doing at the same pace. The brain starts to turn itself off or kick in the governor that slows everything down.

You will see that from the number of books I read in August: a grand total of 2, the lowest monthly total since I started this fanzine and probably the lowest in over ten years. I can partly put that down to some medical issues I had during the month (which you can read about further into this issue), and to the fact we had my step-mother over from Adelaide for a week. That was a pleasant change of sitting up and talking most nights rather than dumping myself on the couch and falling asleep over a book. But these are all just symptoms of a longer, seasonal malaise brought on by winter. Or, at least, that's what I'm telling myself so I can look forward to some type of upswing as spring comes in. I can only hope.

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The average city man's ignorance concerning the nearer bush—to say nothing of “Out-Back”—and the human life therein, is greater even than the average new-chum's, for the new-chum usually takes pains to collect information concerning the land of his exile, adoption or hope. To the city mind the drovers, the shearers, the station-hands, the “cockies” or farmers, the teamsters, and even the diggers, all belong to one and the same class, and are accepted in the street under the general term of “bushies” —and no questions asked. The city mind is too much occupied by the board-and-lodging or rent problems, &c., to have any but the vaguest ideas concerning the unique conditions of the life that lies beyond the cities. And, in return, the Sydney or Melbourne man is regarded Out-Back as a jackeroo or new-chum—little or no distinction being made between the Australian-born “green-hand” and the newly-arrived cockney; which is just.

—“**Crime in the Bush**” by Henry Lawson, *The Bulletin*, 11 February 1899

### WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING TO ME LATELY – Medical Adventures

I rarely talk about my medical adventures here, COVID infections aside, basically because I rarely have any. The last time I spent a night in hospital was when I was about 7 or 8 (so some 60-odd years ago) which I wrote about in a **Perryscope 22**, and the long-term health conditions brought on by genetics and lifestyle – namely high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels – are kept under control by standard medications, and no-one can make any sort of interesting story out of that.

So not exactly exhilarating.

But I always knew there was a spectre haunting me in the form of skin cancer. I grew up in Australia in the 1950s and 60s, just when the ozone layer over the South Pole was starting to be whittled away, and we spent a lot of time in summer outdoors with little in the way of protection. It was generally assumed that everyone who got sunburned would peel and then turn a variable shade of brown. I didn't. I've always been rather fair, with a touch of red-hair in some photos and certainly in my beard of later, pre-white years. It was a given that I'd burn, peel, go fair and then burn again, and again. And I did that a lot over the years leading up to about my mid-teens. By that time I'd either learned my lesson or had tired of running around outside in the sun and heat. As it has turned out, the damage was probably already done.

In addition to the stupidity outlined above I had the added knowledge that both my father and brother had both had skin cancers removed. It was in the family and my past history indicated that I was destined to have my own skin problems.

As you do, I kept putting it off until, in Morocco this year in May, I began to notice that some spots on my right arm were starting to look a lot pinker than they had previously. At my next doctor's appointment I asked for a referral to a dermatologist – which is the standard procedure here in Australia. The doctor took one look at my arm and wrote it up straight away.

I made an appointment and a week or so later I was stripped off with the doctor playing a light all over my skin and zeroing in on a couple of spots she found of interest. Within 30 minutes I had three spots identified as needing to be removed and checked; one in the middle of my back and one behind the left ear both looked like skin cancers to her, and one on my left forearm looked like a cancer pre-cursor. She told me that I had a lot of skin damage on my face and arms and back. The way she put the emphasis on the "lot" didn't fill me with much confidence that this was going to be a short-term experience.

A week later and I was face down on an operating table being injected with local anesthetic, and 45 minutes later I was sliced, diced and stitched back up again. I was a bit woozy getting off the table, which I put down to the anesthetic behind the ear impacting my balance and the litres of the stuff she seemed to be pumping into my back. My wife Robyn had come with me to the appointment and drove me home. I probably could have managed it but it just seemed better to be on the safe side. I slept well that afternoon.

And then the fun started. In addition to the skin surgery I had been prescribed a cream that I had to smear over successive sun-damaged sections of my body. This cream was to act as an exfoliating agent, stripping off the top layer or layers of skin, and allowing the skin regrowth to help with the healing of the damage. Forehead and scalp first, then right arm and rest of face, and then the left arm, after the surgery wound had healed up properly. The arms would need four weeks application, the rest two weeks each. I was also warned that I had to keep all exfoliated patches of skin out of the sun – so a hat and long sleeves at all times – and to wear factor 50 sun cream whenever I went out. There is a reason why they like to prescribe this treatment during winter.

All was good for about the first week and then I started to notice the red splotches starting to appear on my skin. I had been warned about it, but it's one thing to be told and another to see it actually appear. By the end of the first fortnight my forehead looked like I'd had a really bad dose of the sun and the skin was starting to peel.

Around this time I'd been informed that the biopsies showed the spots on my back and behind my ear were indeed basal-cell skin carcinomas – the simplest and “best” type to get – and had been completely excised by surgery, and that the spot on my arm was described as an “atypical benign lesion (scarring with calcification)”, which had also been excised fully. Which was all good news. I'm guessing, from what the doctor said, that the arm spot might have been burned off using liquid nitrogen, or some such low temperature liquified gas, but that it was better to know what the spot was rather than to just assume anything. Future treatment might well be restricted to “burning off”. At least I can hope so.

Two weeks after the surgery the stitches were removed and the wounds seemed to be healing well. The nurse also told me that the skin on my forehead was looking about right for that stage of the treatment. And a fortnight later it has certainly improved markedly.

So now I'm in for the long haul – getting through the skin cream treatment, and then a return visit to the dermatologist in November. That visit might well point to more intervention on the “benign lesions” on my arms. I'm expecting it.

While this description of my treatments might sound complicated it isn't really. The condition of the skin on my face, as I write this, is a poor and not a nice sight at all, but it will improve. Overall, this medical adventure doesn't rate on the scale at all compared to some others I know.

The moral, if there is one from all of this is that, if you suspect any skin damage from the sun, then get yourself checked out. The best time to do that was five years ago, the second best time is right now.

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.

## WANDERINGS AND READINGS – An Occasional Column by Julian Warner

**Not the Safety Dance** — In which Julian muses titferically.

I've been thinking about hats for various reason: watching old sixties and earlier TV and film, reading crime novels from the thirties through to the sixties and having to buy hats recently. Perry is wearing hats more often lately — for reasons which he will no doubt have explained elsewhere.

When I was a child — in England and Scotland — there were hats for uniform (Cubs and Scouts, Boys Brigade) but not much else. I didn't like woolly hats and balaclavas because they made me itch. I'd had a school cap (black and pink) for my posh English school but that was soon discarded when reaching proletarian Scotland.

As a teenager in Australia, there were more uniform hats (Scouts, Church of England Boys Society, Army cadets) but despite the searing sun in WA, sunglasses and hats were uncool. Shorts were also uncool. Jeans all year round except for the hottest of days. If I recall correctly, the 'giggle hat' which I'd bought for cadet wear sufficed for sunwear. I'd always despised berets — particularly the khaki army ones and the brown Brownie ones — as making you look like you had been doing handstands in a cow paddock. As a side note, as you probably know, the Scouts traditionally wore uniforms which had similarities to British army uniforms. The Boys Brigade favoured nautically-themed uniforms (similar to the Sea Scouts) and the Church of England Boys Society had vaguely RAF-themed uniforms, with a blue forage cap. To digress even further, in watching Jean Renoir's film *Le Caporal Epingle* this week, I was struck with the number of different ways that the titular Corporal's mates found to wear the boring old forage cap.



Julian in a hat owned by P. Crowther  
the boring old forage cap.

My first encounter with serious hat folk was probably in meeting Science Fiction fans in Perth. Given that my first SF convention was the Swancon 5 national convention, I met hatted fans from all over Australia. Guest of Honour Anne McCaffrey was also known to wear hats.

I'd already encountered the flat cap/beard/waistcoat look in the folk music world and many of the SF fans looked just like folkies (I wonder why?). Folkies and SF fans had maintained the fashion of hat-wearing when most seemed to have abandoned the idea in the seventies. There were and are many fans who are notable for their hat-wearing. Deerstalkers seemed to be common amongst Perth fans. There was a side-issue with cloaks. Some fans liked wearing cloaks all the time, usually with a hat of some sort and there were those who disdained cloak-wearing as being a bit too close to being a 'costumer' or a non-serious fan. Either way, cloaks were not for me. I think I must have been inspired by the serious hatters to buy my first Akubra fedora.

My experience from watching TV as I grew up was that hats were a historical and cultural marker. In particular, sweaty detectives on *Matlock* and *Homicide and Division 4* wore trilbies or pork-pie hats. As a teenager, I wasn't interested in looking like a sweaty detective. Hippies generically wore a shapeless felt hat. I didn't have one of those. I liked punk music but there was never an iconic punk hat (you can argue otherwise if you wish for Goth and Steampunk). Flat caps (such as I wear now) seemed to be for older men. Cowboy hats were strictly for Country and Western fans (allowing for punk/country crossover oddities like The Johnnys).



There are rugged individuals (or oblivious ones) who care not how daggy they look in their battered (crushable!) sun-hats with or without chin-strap, neck-flap or chook feather. I am not one of those. Whether I look stylish wearing them or not, I like stylish hats. Fedoras, trilbies, maybe even a homburg.

As I noted recently elsewhere, I found the proprietor of Smart Alec Hats on Gertrude St was a knowledgeable, friendly and nearly fannish person. I bought a couple of his hats and was not swayed in my opinion at all by the fact that he gave me a free hat as well. I should ask him next time I visit whether he knows Sally of Sally's Hats — a person who was variously connected to SF fans.

As we watch so many 'old' films, we also get to see many hatted people. I notice the language of hats — how Maigret gestures with his hat, how he unselfconsciously puts his hat on the hat-peg at any house he visits, how he and his confreres never go out without a hat. I've read crime novels where the gist of some of the text is effectively: "He's running and he's not wearing a hat — he must be a criminal". Hatlessness as an indicator of lowly social status. Look at the kids in all those films set in the Bowery in the twenties and thirties — they all wear hats. Terrible bashed about hats but definitely hats. I'm rather taken with the recycling that produced the 'Jughead' or whoopee hat, turning a worn-out fedora inside out and cutting a dagged brim so that it forms a felt crown. No, the Jughead hat is not for me. That seems to be a peculiarly US invention.

I own a baseball cap but I don't like it and rarely wear it. It's a practical design for playing baseball but it doesn't protect your ears from skin cancer. Wearing one backwards is a cultural signifier that I don't need. Then there's hats with earflaps. I have this theory that

hats with earflaps actually reduce the intelligence of the wearer. Greatest case in point is the duckhunter cap. Not going there.

I acknowledge that I have an old-fashioned, masculine appreciation of hats. I'd be interested in doing some research into the language and significance of hats, and that would necessarily involve the gendered differences in the hatted subjects. There's also a wealth of slang involving hats. **Roger's Profanisaurus** contains numerous, colourful and sometimes humorous, hat-based expressions.

I tips me lid t'yer.

[Footnote: In the course of writing this, I encountered the Facebook page for the Church of England Boys Society. I hadn't thought about them for a long time. The FB page is partly a contact site for victims of paedophile leaders in the CEBS. Otherwise it's a page for people who remember what a great time they had in the CEBS. \*sigh\*]

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### WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

**Podcasting – TWO CHAIRS TALKING, co-hosted with David Grigg**

**Notes from this month's podcasts**

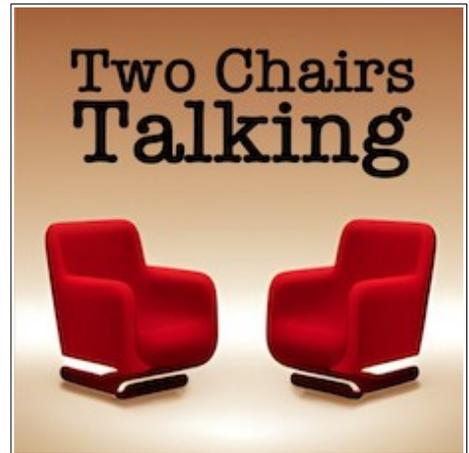
**Episode 94:** (3 August 2023) *Just a feeling in my water*

David and I discuss audiobooks and the recent swag of award winner and short list announcements before diving into what we've been reading lately. I finish up with a rave rant about the second season of THE BEAR.

**Episode 95:** (28 August 2023) *A mixed bag of goodies*

This episode we discuss an assortment of reading and movie watching, ranging from Restoration period historical fiction through a contemporary true story to the fantastic and not-so-fantastic futures of science fiction. I also give my thoughts about GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY Vol 3 and OPPENHEIMER.

You can access the current, and all past podcast episodes at [twochairs.website](http://twochairs.website), or you can subscribe through any podcast subscription service.



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### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

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

Abbr – Aust; Australian; Nvla: novella

August 2023 books

| Title                       | Author         | Genre  | Date   | F | R   | Pub Date | Notes |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------|--------|---|-----|----------|-------|
| <i>Every Version of You</i> | Grace Chan     | Sf     | 17 Aug |   | 4.0 | 2022     | Aust  |
| <i>The Migration</i>        | Helen Marshall | Horror | 27 Aug |   | 3.8 | 2019     |       |

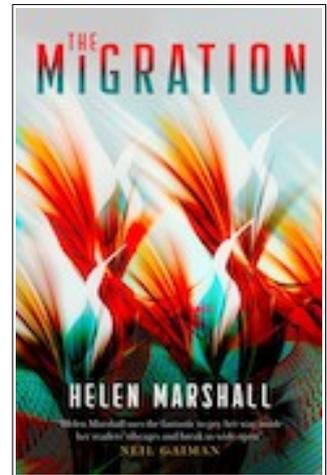
Books read in the period: 2  
Yearly total to end of period: 61

Notes:

*Every Version of You* (2022) – see major review below

*The Migration* (2019) – This novel was on the ballot of the 2020 British Fantasy Award in the categories of Best Fantasy Novel and Best Horror Novel.

As storms and flooding spread across the northern hemisphere of the world a strange new disease is infecting young children on the verge of puberty. Kira, the young sister of our protagonist Sophie, is diagnosed at about the age of 12 while they are living in Toronto. Not finding anyone in Canada who seem to be able to help them, the two sisters along with their mother move to England to live with their aunt in Oxford. As the disease progresses Kira becomes more and more erratic and difficult to control. News starts to spread of victims of the disease starting to display port-mortem movements – a Lazarus effect. The authorities star to get worried as the disease spreads quickly and order the cremation of all dead victims. But after Kira appears to deliberately drown herself in a raging river, Sophie steals her body from the morgue, and with the help of a friend, stows Kira in an abandoned building. Slowly the dead body starts to change, developing an outer hard casing, while other victims appear to be undergoing a similar rapid metamorphosis. This is a story of the power of the love between sisters and family in a time of deep distress. In many ways this reads like a standard Young Adult novel (Upper School?) with its main protagonists undergoing physical and psychological changes during their teenage years, yet, like all good novels in such categories it isn't limited by any genre boundaries that you might want to place on it, and can be read by anyone. Actually it should be read by anyone. R: 3.8/5.0



Cover notes:

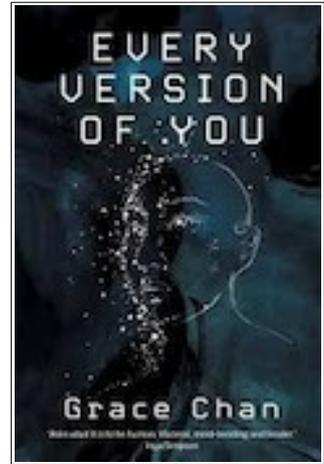
After my smug outing on the cover of last month's issue, this time I offer a grumpy version – some might even say my “natural face”. This was taken at the Cliffs of Moher on Ireland's West Coast. I'd just been asked to take someone's photo with the cliffs in the background. I did that, though rather reluctantly as I'm not a great fan of such setup photos. I handed the camera back to him and moved to walk away. He stopped me and asked if I would take another, more of a close-up of him. “But the cliffs will be out of focus,” I said. “That's okay,” he said. “Idiot,” I thought. I took the photo, and, yes, the cliffs were barely discernible in the background but he seemed happy. I stomped off and Robyn caught me a few moments later with my emotions written all over my face.

## REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

*Every Version of You* (2022) by Grace Chan  
Genre: Sf

In 2080, Melbourne, Victoria, and the rest of the planet is a mess: climate change has rendered most places uninhabitable during parts of the day; the air is polluted; the water toxic; most plant-life in the wild is dead; the Great Barrier reef is gone; and few animals or birds are in evidence (though I did notice a reference to a pair of galahs late in the book that reminded me that they really are as tough as old boots).

Tao-Yi and Navin have been spending increasing amounts of time in a Simulated Reality Matrix and now have decided to upgrade to the new Gaia matrix and purchase the new Neupods: submersive full-body pods that will allow the user to stay inside the matrix for extended periods of time. This is a novel of the transition period, the singularity, between part-time “meatspace” and full-time Simulated Reality existence. The question it asks is: if you could give up your flesh-and-bone body for a complete uploaded virtual existence, would you? The answer, of course is: “it depends on your circumstances”.



Tao-Yi is Malaysian/Australian and her partner, Navin, is originally from the USA. He originally arrived in Melbourne to meet Tao-Yi, as they had been marked as extremely compatible in an internet survey, and then decided to stay on when he found that the medical system in Australia was better suited for his kidney replacement than the facilities in his home country, and vastly cheaper. They are both habitual and ardent users of the Simulated Reality options and so, rapidly take up the new Neupods. But there is a marked difference in the way the two react to the new equipment, with Navin spending days at a time in the pod while Tao-Yi flits in and out, spending time with her ageing mother.

And then the two hear of a new facility about to come onto the market, the opportunity to be fully “uploaded” into Gaia, to give up your flesh-and-bone existence to become fully virtual, and, by extension, immortal. Navin, who has struggled with his ongoing medical issues jumps at the chance – who wouldn’t? He no longer has any major physical ties with his American-based family and the opportunity to forgo his intrusive treatments is too good to refuse. But Tao-Y has other thoughts, and other commitments.

The new treatment is relatively cheap, and it soon becomes widely available around the world. Soon everyone seems to be uploading and we are told, at one point some years later, that the world’s population has dwindled to about 1.7 million people, with only 5000 or so living in Australia. The world, as we know it, has almost come to a grinding halt; supplies are dwindling, infrastructure is collapsing, and transport is failing.

It strikes me that there are two ways that an author might tackle such a scenario: at either the macro or micro levels. The macro viewpoint would look at the overall picture, the effect on government, law and order, and the planet; the micro option being the one that Chan

takes here, that of how this radical technological change impacts at the family and individual level. And I believe it is the right choice.

For a debut work Grace Chan has produced a novel of depth, at both the technological as well as the individual levels. It asks a lot of questions about the value of technological change, about how we as individuals react when all around us others are doing something else, and about whether we could consider ourselves to be truly human if we only live a virtual existence. It is a very engaging piece of work.

R: 4.0/5.0

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## WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

### Television

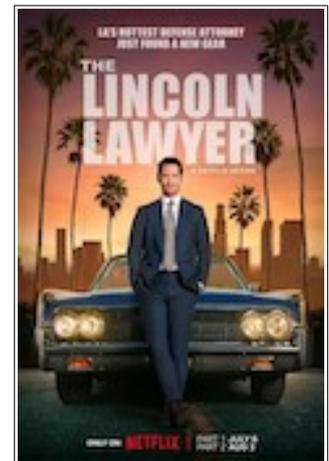
***The Lincoln Lawyer*** (Season 2 — 10 episodes) (2023)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Courtroom drama

Mickey Haller is back in this adaptation of Michael Connelly's novel ***The Fifth Witness***. He's now rather famous from the cases detailed in Season 1 but things don't start well for him as he is shown, at the start of the first episode, being beaten up in a car park. Three months earlier and Haller falls for the chef of a local restaurant who is later charged with the murder of a leading LA property developer. The two had been at loggerheads for weeks over the development of a building almost on top of the restaurant. Haller breaks off the relationship when she asks him to represent her but the evidence seems very heavily stacked against her.

Meanwhile Haller is attempting to get his rapidly expanding business in order, he's helping out other clients and trying to determine how he can set up one client, who has confessed to him that he committed a murder for which another of Haller's clients has been charged. It's all good dependable stuff; a classic US legal and courtroom drama with some nice twists and turns. R: 3.6/5.0



***Deadloch*** (Season 1 — 8 episodes) (2023)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Police procedural

Deadloch is a small Tasmanian town that has some dark secrets. First the town's football coach and then a wide assortment of other men, start turning up dead with their tongues cut out. The local police constable, Dulcie Collins (played by Kate Box) is an ex-Sydney detective who has shifted here to be with her lesbian partner, but the state's Police Commissioner decides she needs help and a female Darwin detective, Eddie Redcliffe (Madeleine Sami), is flown in. But still the dead bodies come coming. This is an engaging, swearsy and very funny police procedural. One to seek out. R:4.0/5.0



## Film

### ***The Meg* (2018)**

Platform: Foxtel

Genre: Sf action – monster

Jason Statham stars in this sf monster film about the re-emergence of a megalodon, a gigantic shark thought to have been extinct for millions of years. It seems – shock, horror – that several (many?) specimens still survive at the bottom of the Mariana Trench and a deep-sea submarine mission has somehow breached the thermocline barrier at the bottom of the trench. Mayhem ensues, blood is spilled, big fish are eaten by bigger fish, bad guys get their come-uppance, Statham survives, and there are teeth, lots of teeth – not just in the sharks. And all is right with the world. Actually this isn't a bad example of this sub-genre and the big shark is genuinely scary, though, of course, some of the narrow escapes are more than just a little bit ridiculous. But you're not watching these movies for logical consistency. So long as the bad guys get munched, and the good guy gets the girl do we really care? No, not much. Don't try to pay too much attention to this, you'll give yourself a headache. R: 2.2/5.0



### ***Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* (2023)**

Platform: Disney+

Genre: Marvel Superhero (MCU)

Each of the previous episodes in this Marvel Cinematic Universe sequence of films have been probably been the most family-oriented of all the Marvel films. I don't mean that the films are pitched specifically at families, like a lot of Disney material, but that the subject-matter and themes are generally based around families. In the first episode, Chris Pratt's character, Peter Quill, was abducted from Earth by alien space pirates on the day his mother died, and he was then forced to build his family from his fellow pirates. When that fell through he gathered a surrogate family around him (Bradley Cooper's Rocket, the sentient tree Groot, Dave Bautista's Drax, and Zoe Saldana's Gamora). In the second film, Quill discovers that his father is an all-powerful Celestial who abandoned his mother, so Quill has to work through all of his "father issues". Along the way the Guardians add Pom Klementieff's Mantis and Karen Gillan's Nebula to the group. And here in the third episode, we are told of Rocket's back-story, about his physical and psychological abuse at the hands of the High Evolutionary and how Rocket, as much as Quill, has come to be the centre of this strange assortment of beings that comprise the Guardians. This is a very sentimental film, with everyone pulling on all the emotional strands they can find. Certainly a better film than the second, though probably not to the level of the first, but that may be because the first was such a breath of fresh air. I think this series has now pretty much run its course. Any more films will just be re-hashing the same old themes and that will only lead to a re-evaluation of the earlier episodes. And that would not be a good thing in my view. Marvel just needs to know when something is over. R: 3.8/5.0



### ***Oppenheimer*** (2023)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Biographical drama

Christopher Nolan can be a very hit-or-miss filmmaker for me. When he's on song he's very good but when he misses (like with ***Interstellar***) it's a big disappointment. Luckily he's hit the high points with his latest film, and maybe he will soon come to the realisation that he's better at character-driven work rather than making grandiose attempts to explore huge themes which just seem to run out of control. I was going to say "small character-driven" films, but this is anything but a small film. Most of us would know of Oppenheimer's role in the World War II US program called the Manhattan project, the aim of which was to develop the first atomic bomb. What fewer of us would be aware of was the way in which his reputation was gutted and torn apart during the Cold War period in the 1950s. Running this film in two time streams (Oppenheimer's early life up to the time of Hiroshima in colour, and his post-war decline in black-and-white) Nolan has chosen a perfect vehicle and medium to tell his tale. Interspersing the two streams to great effect you get a sense of the great optimism and excitement of the early days of quantum mechanics in the US when the future seemed bright and colourful, and later on, the despair of the way he was treated by jealous and ambitious men who couldn't hold a candle to him, and who only saw things in terms of good and evil. In the lead role Cillian Murphy is sure to be spoken of when the awards' season rolls around in 2024, and Robert Downey, Jr. probably puts in the best performance of his career as the jealous and vindictive Lewis Strauss. Don't be put off by the nay-sayers who proclaim this film to be less than it should have been because it did not focus on the world-wide impact of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That is not what this film is about. The clue's right there in the title. R: 4.5/5.0



### ***Extraction 2*** (2023)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Action

In the previous entry in this possible-movie-franchise written by Joe and Anthony Russo and Ande Parks (who wrote the original graphic novel), our hero Tyler Rake (played by Chris Hemsworth), appeared to be nearly dead, having extracted the kidnapped son of an international crime lord and been mortally wounded in the process – naturally. Now he's been plucked from the river into which he had fallen, and been patched up and dropped off at a cabin in Austria to recuperate. But he isn't there long before Alcott (Idris Elba) shows up and engages him to find and retrieve his ex-sister-in-law, and kids. Channeling his Marvel superhero powers (well, no, not literally) to enhance his recovery, Rake is soon on the hunt in the Eastern European country of Georgia. And then...well, you can pretty much guess the rest: action sequences, betrayals, big explosions, unlikely coincidences, and lots of heroic anguish. Rake gets to the end of course, losing a colleague along the way, meeting his ex-wife who doesn't seem overly thankful that her sister is home safe, and being taken off to meet his "real" employer. Look for that in part 3. Better than most examples of its type. R: 3.4/5.0

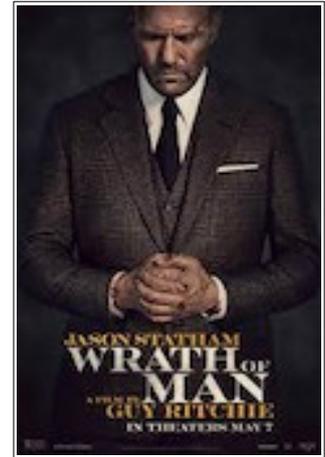


**Wrath of Man** (2021)

Platform: Prime Video

Genre: Action/Thriller

Jason Statham reunites with Guy Ritchie in this effective, but, essentially, paint-by-the-numbers heist action/thriller. It is loosely based on the 2004 French film **Cash Truck** and I'll be interested to track down the original version to see how it holds up. Here Statham plays "H" – that's all we get of his name – who has joined a cash truck company in LA who are involved in the transportation of very large sums of money across the city. As he barely passes the firearms and fitness tests to join the company we can be sure that he is hiding something. And that something is slowly revealed in a series of flashbacks where we discover that he was caught up in the robbery of one of the company's trucks, during which someone close to him was killed. So it's basically a revenge plot and all we have to worry about is how he's going to get through them all. He shoots who he can, kicks the others and generally walks through the part as only a good action actor can. This is not high-level Ritchie material, but it's reasonable enough. R: 2.8/5.0



**Wild Target** (2010)

Platform: SBS On-Demand

Genre: Action/Comedy

You would think that with a cast featuring Bill Nighy, Emily Blunt, Martin Freeman and Rupert Grint in a film that's advertised as an action/comedy, with you'd get something reasonable to watch on a Saturday night. Unfortunately that wasn't the case here for me. The concept is okay: Bill Nighy plays an ageing assassin who fails to kill his latest target as he starts to have "feelings" for her, and as a result finds the two of them, plus Grint who has stumbled into the action, being tracked by Freeman's character, who is intent on usurping Nighy's position as preferred killer-for-hire in the UK. This one is based on the 1993 French film of the same name and I can only assume that one had something going for it. Here we are offered comic situations that just aren't funny, and dramatic situations where you don't care about the outcome. It's silly and, frankly, not worth your time. Even Bill Nighy's classic laconic turn can't save it. R: 1.9/5.0



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And when I tried to write about my own life, I kept discovering that for the most part it was much too much like anyone else's. I didn't want to set down a lot of dreary dates and places, only the interesting things, but how tell about those honestly without bring in the rest? Moreover, it began to seem to me that all the really interesting subjects, like sex and money, feelings of guilt, worries about one's courage, and concerns about one's selfishness were things one wasn't supposed to write about, either because they were too personal, involving others, or because they were common to all men and women and so unexceptional. – **"The Button Molder"** by Fritz Leiber, *Fantasy Annual III* edited by Terry Carr 1981, p160

### PERRYSCOPE Responses

#### Perryscope 33:

**PM:** The following note should have appeared in issue 34 or 35. The fact that it didn't is completely my fault as I explain later in this letter column (see my notes on Joseph's letter under the **Perryscope 35** section). Got that?

**Joseph Nicholas:** "You ask what counts as 'small' for a small group tour. The upper limit for a Travel Editions small group tour is 25, but they don't always meet that – there were only 13 people on the Albanian tour, for example (excluding the tour manager and the guide), but 24 on each of the Macedonian and Bologna/Ravenna tours. I forget exactly how many were on the Athens tour, but it was less than 20. The Vermeer tour topped out at 30, but that was an exception because of the demand for tickets – the company in fact laid on three such tours, and then bent the itineraries of some of its other Netherlands tours to include the exhibition: it's a once-in-a-lifetime, never-to-be-repeated show, which in fact sold out all its tickets in the first few weeks after they were put on sale in December last year. (The company presumably found some way of sourcing extra tickets for those tours.) The Rijksmuseum then laid on some evening openings to cater for the unmet demand, and all those tickets sold out within a week.

"You say in reply to me that there were 17 people on your Moroccan tour, but elsewhere noted that was only one of the two buses deployed for it, with a total of 32 people. The only time I've ever been on a tour where the group had to be split between two buses was Jordan in 1992 (or was it 1993?), and we were lucky in being on the bus that had the guide, so we got the commentary. I never found out how the other busload coped."

[**PM:** This is yet another example of me not being completely clear. The full tour contingent for our Moroccan trip was 32. This was split into 2 groups: ours with 17 and theirs with 15. The two buses started and finished together, and we crossed over a couple of times, but rarely saw the other bus on the actual tour itself. The two buses loads were accommodated in different hotels and they always seemed to be running about 15 minutes ahead of us. So it seemed like we were on a much smaller tour than might otherwise have been. I was told that this tour company likes to keep the groups to a maximum of 16. We just stretched that upper limit by a touch.]

#### Perryscope 34:

**PM:** The postal service is messing us about again. This following letter from John Hertz was posted in LA on 6<sup>th</sup> July but didn't arrive in Hawthorn until 18<sup>th</sup> August. And later, I received another letter from John posted on 16<sup>th</sup> August which arrived on the 30<sup>th</sup>, asking what had happened to the first one. It is what it is.

**John Hertz:** "You're lucky, or we all are, that there are good pictures of you for front covers of **Perryscope**."

[**PM:** I put this down to the fact that my wife finally ended up with a smart phone a few years back, one with a camera. And I'm fairly sure that you might be the only reader of this fanzine to use the word "lucky" in that context on that subject.]

“The ‘floating world’ of Japan arose three centuries earlier than the period between the World Wars. Try Donald Keane.”

[**PM:** My research on the matter was obviously imperfect. I’ve just had a check on Wikipedia for Donald Keane; he was nothing if not prolific.]

“Flanders & Swann performed *At the Drop of a Hat* in 1961 in Chicago. My parents got the album. So I know the ‘Song of Reproduction’. For years, relocating often, I had a KLH 11, portable with good sound quality. KLH made the speakers; the turntable was by Garrard, the cartridge by Pickering.”

[**PM:** Frankly, I know nothing, or less, about sound and stereo equipment. I’ll leave that for Julian to comment on.]

“The title *1,001 Books You Must Read Before You Die* roused suspicion in me; using an Internet-access machine I found the ‘core list’ at <<http://bucketlistbookreviews.com/the-lists/differences-between-the-original-and-current-1001-lists/#core>>. To no surprise it contains many I’d read only because they were currently talked of and I found little other merit in. A few I was pleased to see.”

[**PM:** Which is pretty much the conclusion I come to about all such lists. I keep track of these purely as a means of ensuring my reading lists are spread as wide as possible. I have no expectations of ever finishing the full set. I note that I have currently read only 72 of them, since I started to record my reading about 10-12 years ago. I’d need to read about 45 a year for the next 20 years to get through them all, and I can’t see that happening.]

“I heartily disagree with whoever said on some mailing list that Stout’s later *Nero Wolfe* stories drop off in quality. Of course they are all ‘out of fashion’ now. The last was written in 1975, impossibly long ago for the mundane mind. Or even some fannish ones, alas.”

[**PM:** The other major list of books I keep track of, the *Guardian 1000 Novels* list, features only one Rex Stout novel, *The League of Frightened Men*. But at least it’s got one. There are so many books being published these days that very few older novels are mentioned anywhere. Which is a pity, as it’s hard to fully appreciate something new if you aren’t aware of its antecedents.]

“Your ‘Look at what SF can achieve that other forms of literature can’t’ is the best I’ve heard from you yet. Thanks.”

[**PM:** This probably comes from a long period of attempting to convince non-sf readers of what they were missing by totally dismissing the genre. After a while I just gave up. Now I think that the rest of literature is starting to catch up. The trouble is they think that when they write something that has been around in sf for ages, that they have invented something new. And the uninformed just accept that statement as fact.]

**David L. Russell:** “I read *Perryscope 34*, I understand you’ve put out another one recently. [**PM:** Yes, I know the problem, even I have trouble keeping up sometimes.] John Hertz’s query about how you avoided burning your fingers on *b’srilla* & Moroccan food caused me to laugh involuntarily at your ‘I used a knife and fork,’ in the June 2023 issue.

“After watching *Reilly Ace of Spies* with Sam Neill in it I saw *Death in Brunswick* at the Warrnambool Cinema because I really liked his performance in the series. Completely different take on his character in the Brunswick movie but still very enjoyable to watch. I never even considered that it might have been a book before it was turned into a movie.”

[**PM:** I’m always interested in figuring out if a film’s screenplay was original or adapted from another source. Sometimes I seek out the book, and sometimes not. In this case I was aware of the original novel just hadn’t read it previously. I remembered all the hype about it when it was released as it seemed to herald a new inner-Melbourne hipster style. I’m not sure that ever eventuated.]

“It was news to me that Continuum conventions weren’t continuing. I’d just assumed that after covid had done it’s worst that we’d go back to attending a convention in Melbourne with the only change being it’d be held on King Charles’s birthday instead of the Queen’s.”

[**PM:** The way I heard it was that, when they had to cancel a convention only a couple of days out due to a COVID lockdown, the stuffing was knocked out of them both financially and emotionally. They were the only ones running sf conventions in Melbourne at that time and without them we now find ourselves in a convention desert.]

“I’ve recently read Wil Wheaton’s book *Still Just a Geek*, an annotated memoir which is up for a Hugo in 2023. He wrote *Just a Geek* 16 or 17 years ago and this is his revisiting of his book with apologies and endless footnotes about how politically incorrect he was to women and gays.

“Anyone who is suffering withdrawal symptoms from not having a new Terry Pratchett with its humorous footnotes should get *Still Just a Geek*. It’s an unusual page that doesn’t have some addenda or true-back-then but no-longer-true-now notification.”

“He writes well.”

[**PM:** I’m not one of those who misses a new Pratchett book each year as I never really got into him. Everyone tells me that you have to read the first three or four before the humour really starts to kick in. Maybe, but I really don’t have the energy. If I read those and I still don’t enjoy his humour I will feel that I have wasted my time. Better to just let it slide I reckon.]

### Perryscope 35:

**Paul Voermans:** “I have to say *The Bear* is one of the best pieces of TV I have seen. This is down to a little experience in hospitality. Also, the public place wish fulfilment after lockdowns and the intimate chaos not available then at the same time as claustrophobia from having to be with the parts of our families and friends all the fucking time. Long winded way of saying the right show at the right time. Unbelievable performances of course, around a simple plot.

“Worth multiple views for the dialogue.”

[**PM:** I think it will be some time before I tackle the Christmas party episode again. That one was just a bit too harrowing for repeated viewings. But I expect I will watch it again before the next season rolls around.]

**Mark Olson:** “I toyed with Wikipedia 10-15 years ago, but quickly decided it was not for me. My impression (based on my own limited interactions and possibly not a good picture of what others saw) was that Wikipedia editors satisfied the old engineering rule that H/HA is always less than 1.0. (Horses/Horses Asses)...

“But given that editing is open, there may be no other way that it could work. There's \*got\* to be a barrier of some sort to keep out random scribbling and malicious crap. Still, I found it too annoying to deal with.”

[**PM:** The annoyance level can be quite high if you allow it to get to you. I'm starting to think of this as an exercise in stress management – not allowing the pissants to get to me too much. It seems to be working, mostly.]

“It's an interesting story of your schooling days and the difficulties finishing your high school education at home. The population density when I grew up was, I guess, significantly higher which made things easy. The town I lived it was a small manufacturing and county seat city of 10,000 (though the rest of the county was entirely agricultural with a few towns around 1000 people.) Our school district was just the city so our 12-year high school had few farm kids. Like where you grew up, it was still common in the more rural areas for kids to leave at 16, though as far as I know all school districts offered 12-years – in the rural areas they were correspondingly larger and kids might spend most of an hour on the bus as it wound its way around a section for pickup and drop off.

“It's hard to imagine living my last three high school years away from home, though once I got to college I certainly enjoyed the experience.”

[**PM:** It certainly wasn't the greatest time for me. High School years are bad enough without adding in the trauma of living away from home in a strange environment where no-one seems to understand you, what you are doing or what you might be interested in. But I made it through. I hope to have some more pieces about my time there which might go some way to explaining how it all worked out for the best in the end. You do realise this is all pseudo-therapy for me I hope.]

**Leigh Edmonds:** “Your explanation of the circumstances of your cover photo may be valid to you, but to me you look like the headmaster of my primary school waiting for me to answer the question, ‘What do you have to say for yourself, Edmonds?’”

[**PM:** I get the feeling we have been here before Leigh. It makes me start to wonder what sort of student you were at your High School.]

“I'm looking forward to further revelations about your young life in Unley. There must have been interesting, exciting and possibly slightly illegal things you did while living there. Fortunately for me Dimboola had both primary and high schools, both within ten minutes walk of my parent's house. This meant going home for lunch, a ritual which lasted until the day I left for far off Melbourne where I spent the first few weeks living with my grandparents. That was not one of the highlights of my life.”

[**PM:** I'm sure there will be other pieces coming up in the future. Though I'm not sure about the “illegal” stuff.]

“Thanks for the recommendation for *The Bear*. Being on Disney it is something I can look at without any further expense. I'm assuming that the Indiana Jones and Mission

Impossible movies will turn up on a streaming service so that I won't have to spend anything or go out to see them, which I will no doubt do one of these days."

[**PM:** I believe they are out there already, although only in the pay-per-view streaming services as yet. Look for them around Christmas time.]

"It is clear that Julian reads **Perryscope** as soon as it arrives because I got an email from him very quickly after you sent it out giving me a couple of recommendations for places to go to get some new headphones. I will make a journey down to Melbourne in the coming couple of weeks to see what they have to offer. This involves going to the shopping Mecca that is Richmond so I wonder how my credit card will suffer from this journey."

[**PM:** It is certainly a rare day when I read that Richmond is described as a "shopping Mecca". I think there used to be some high-end hi-fi stores in the suburb at one time but can't remember seeing any for a while. So I wish you luck.]

"Your discourse with Chong about the origins of stf set me thinking. I'm sure I can't be the first person to think that science fiction has two beginnings. The first, as you both agree, is probably *Frankenstein*. The second, I reckon, is the publication of the pulp magazine **Amazing Stories**. The contents of that first issue demonstrates that there was science fiction before **Amazing**, the difference is that that magazine picked the genre up from where it had been in the general swarm of literature and put it in a place which highlighted it and found a specific readership for it that forced its development in a particular direction. That shaped the direction for genre science fiction for the next fifty or sixty years and developed many of the ideas that became commonplace in the genre and have now leaked out into the rest of literature. You will, of course, remember what Le Guin said in her GoH speech at Aussiecon which was not, as I read it, about sf merging with the rest of literature but rather welcoming literature into science fiction."

[**PM:** If we run with the idea that there are two "starts" then you are perfectly correct about the influence of *Amazing Stories* in 1926. That was very certainly the beginning of what we might call "modern" sf. I'm guessing that Aldiss might have been able to pick any number of starting points for the genre but decided on Mary Shelley to give it a feminist beginning and also to ensure that those damn pesky Americans didn't attempt to usurp the European tradition of "scientific romances".]

**William Breiding:** "I was delighted to see your review of the first of James Sallis' Lew Griffin novels. My mom turned me on to these books and I read them all in 2001-2002. They are indeed masterful: arty, intellectual, emotional, frequently meta-character driven, sensory-dense detective novels. And all in about 190 pages each! The series is an incredible achievement. Mom was unaware of Sallis' reputation as a new wave sf author. When she wrote to tell him her son knew him as an sf author he was amused. I recently picked up a book by Sallis, *Guitar Players*, a series of essays on influential guitarists. Looking forward to plowing into that at some point."

[**PM:** Sallis, as an sf writer, is one of those authors that seems to have slipped past me. I note from ISFDB that he's has been writing and publishing short sf since the late 1960s, and yet I doubt I could name a single title. It looks like there is only one sf novel but four collections of shorter works. I also haven't been paying enough attention to the prozines so have missed his stint as the book reviewer for **The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction**. However, I will be following up on his crime fiction, which, as you point out, is rather masterful.]

“My mom was profoundly literary and like many literary types she loved her crime novels. She corresponded with both James Sallis and Ian Rankin, and very early on with the actor/writer Sterling Hayden. If mom loved an author’s work she let them know about it. It usually ended up with a decades long correspondence with them. At one point Rankin was sending her the British first editions of his Rebus novels as they were being published. And Sallis was sending her his small press editions of essays and poems.”

[**PM:** Sounds like the start of a very interesting collection. You chose your mother well!]

**Nick Price:** “I like the ‘How much longer is this fucking Tagine going to be?’ cover photograph.

“I also like the schooldays piece. I still find the age of people living a long way from the rest of the world and discovering science fiction romantic. Having a background in people’s lives makes that later discovery more meaningful. It’s like having a prequel to the history of Australian fandom pieces that you did on Two Chairs. Even though you know the ending it’s interesting.

“I’ve just been on holiday and visited one of the locations for the pedestrian *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Also if you watched *The Last Kingdom* series, the stronghold was known as Bebbenburg in viewing distance of Lindisfarne Holy Island. I almost didn’t recognise Antonio Banderas in the Indiana Jones movie.”

[**PM:** You’re not the only one who didn’t recognise Banderas. I thought he was rather wasted in the role. I suspect he just wanted to be in the series somewhere and was willing to take on anything.]

“In regards to *The Bear* have you seen the articles about Carmy’s t-shirt? That’s a deep rabbit hole almost as bad as pens and notebooks.”

[**PM:** I have seen them and tried my best to ignore them. It’s just a bloody t-shirt after all. Some people are easily distracted is all I can say.]

**Joseph Nicholas:** “Many thanks for **Perryscopes** 34 and 35. In the latter, you wonder what “pigs in blankets” may be, and although you say that you don’t wish to know I shall rock your world by telling you that it’s chipolata sausages (always chipolata sausages — never any other kind) wrapped in bacon: a staple ingredient of Christmas dinners here in England. (I stress England: they may do things differently in Scotland and Wales.)”

[**PM:** Okay, I could actually enjoy one of them.]

“I was slightly confused by the reference in your educational memoir to primary school alongside mention of the fact that one could leave it at age 15 to enter the workforce. Here in England (and Wales), primary school covers ages 5 to 11, after which one moves on to secondary school. The break-point used to be marked by the 11-plus exam, which notionally weeded the brightest from the dullest: the former went on to grammar school to learn how to run the civil service while the latter went to secondary modern and careers in practical and technical subjects. The 11-plus exam was largely and gradually abandoned during the course of the 1960s in the wake of continuing complaints by parents to their MPs that their children were being unfairly discriminated against; comprehensive education, as it’s called, has been the standard ever since, although those parents who can

afford it pay extra to send their children to the few grammar schools still extant. There's been a move, over the past ten years, by the most nostalgic (or do I mean most reactionary) elements of the Conservative Party to re-introduce grammar schools across the country (meaning England alone; education in Wales and Scotland is devolved, although I'd caveat that by saying that Scotland has always had its own educational system), but this has gained little if any traction with the wider public. The obvious response to people who say that they did well out of life because they went to a grammar school is, of course, that anecdote is not data. Indeed, there's no data at all to suggest that a grammar school education is superior to any other.”

**[PM:** Sorry for the confusion. In my day, in South Australia, we had seven years of primary school and then five of high school. Here in Victoria, where I now live, the split is six of each. I hadn't meant to imply that students were still in primary school at the age of 15 (though there was one kid in my Grade Seven class who was 14 – but that's a whole other story). The Intermediate Certificate, taken in year 10, in the middle of High School was usually reached by students when they were 15 or so.]

“While I'm here, I might ask what happened to my response to **Perryscope 33**, in which issue you asked me what counted as a small group on a small group tour, and I gave you a detailed response. Possibly too detailed, which might explain why it didn't make the cut. (Not even to be WAHFed.)”

**[PM:** That was my fault entirely. My usual process for letters-of-comment is to enter the text of the letter into the draft issue as soon as it arrives, then edit and comment on it later. Somehow yours slipped through the net. You'll find your earlier letter at the top of this column.]

“In three weeks from tomorrow, I'm off on another small group tour, this time to Bulgaria. I have the tour itinerary and I have the Bradt guide to the country; I need to start studying it so that I thoroughly familiarise myself with what I'm going to see and mark the guide up with highlighters and coloured tabs. So that's my reading sorted for the next week or so, what what?”

“Then, a fortnight after my return from Bulgaria, I'm off for a week in Rhodes. History and archaeology, of course, rather than lying about on a beach, although I understand that on one of the days we'll be taken off for a drive in the country and a visit to a vineyard for some wine-tasting; I'll probably skip that, and stay in Rhodes Town for a fuller look at the museums. A much more better use of my time there, I think.

“Then, suddenly it will be autumn! Time to plant out the purple sprouting broccoli plantlets and hope for a bumper harvest of same come spring and summer 2024. (A week of below-zero temperatures in December last year did for a fair proportion of my gardening efforts; I hope there will not be a repeat!)”

**I also heard from: Jerry Kaufman** (who is working his way through the Slough House series, slowly); **Joe Siclari**; and **Barbara O' Sullivan** (who thought that my living away from home “would have helped to make you more independent and mature from an early age” – I don't think that worked out); thank you one and all.

