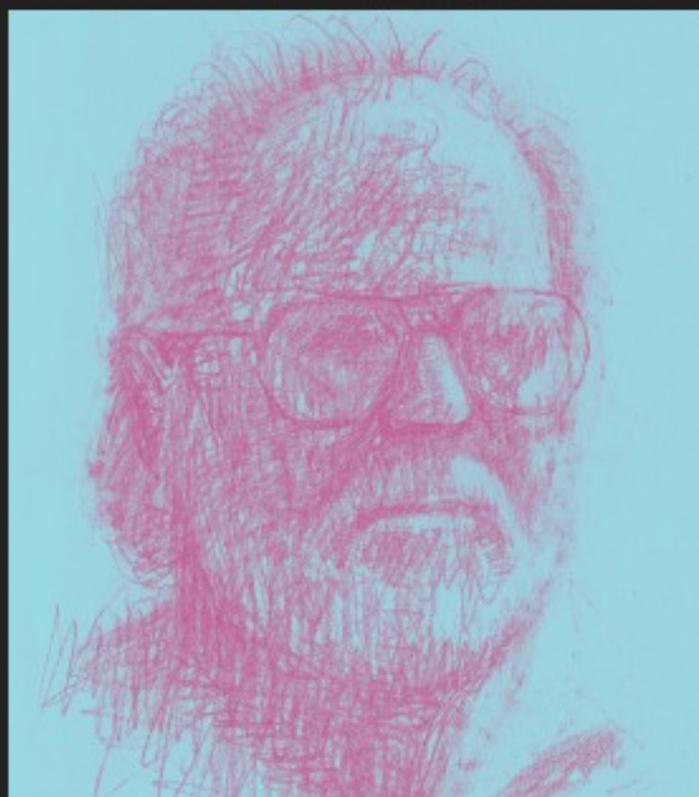
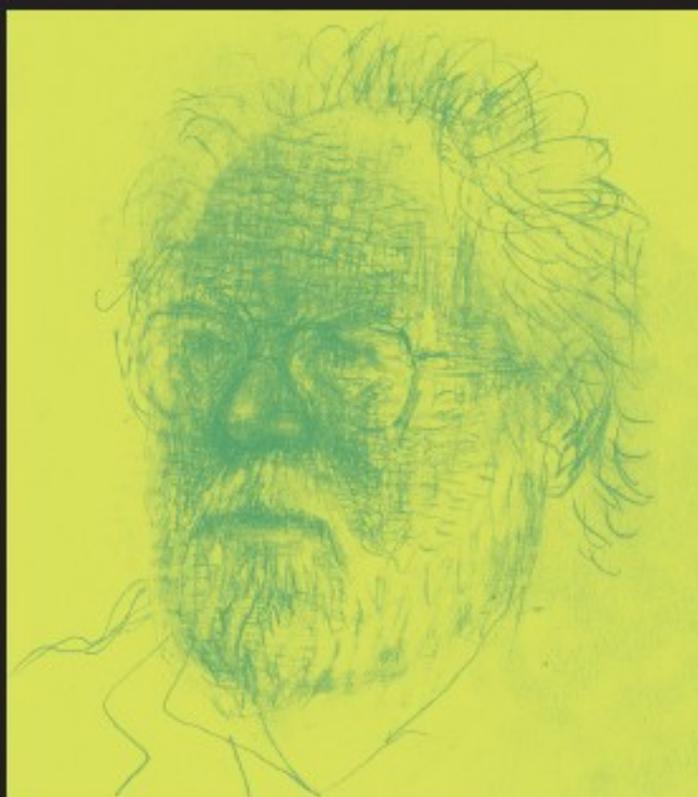
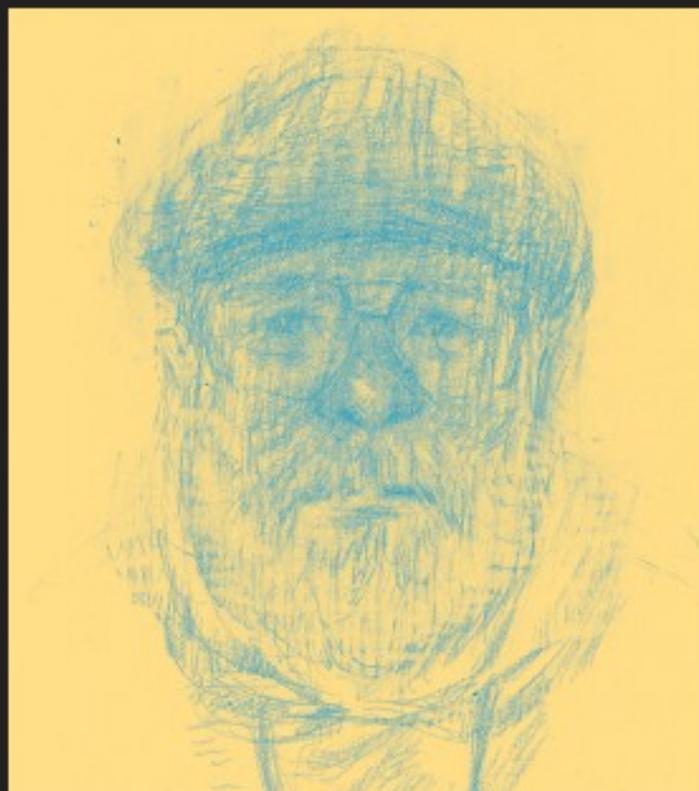
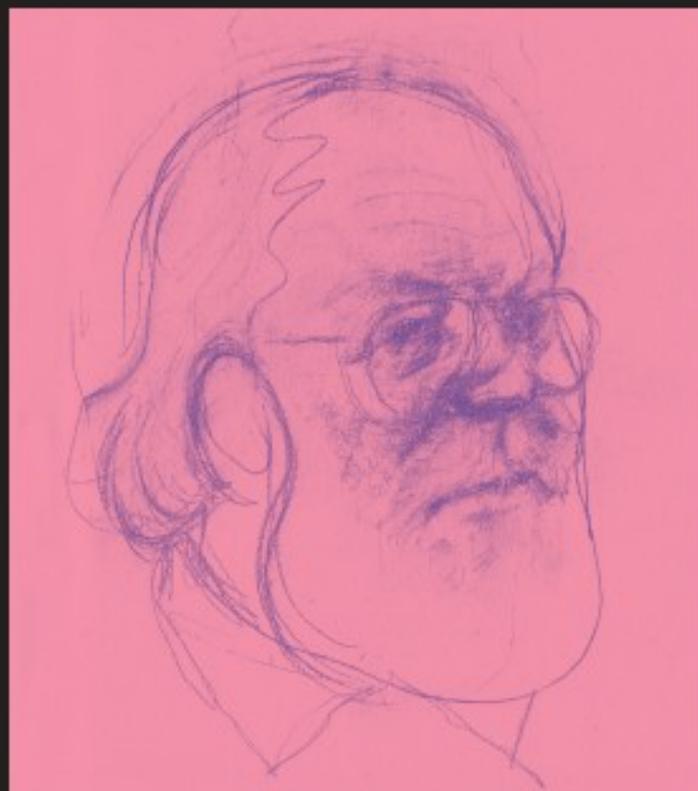


LET IT BE ME



PERRYSCOPE 37

PERRYSCOPE 37, October 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 efanzines.com with thanks to Bill Burns, and FANAC.org with thanks to Joe Siclari and Edie Stern. Unless otherwise specified all material is written by me.
Cover by W. H. Chong.

INTRODUCTION

As I write this, not yet halfway through the month, October seems to have been rather a busy time already. And there's more to come.

Over the first weekend of the month (actually September 29-October 2) I attended the 61st Australian National Science Fiction Convention in Canberra (Conflux 17) as their Fan Guest of Honour. I had feared that the plague years of COVID might have killed off the tradition of sf conventions in Australia but the Canberra crowd have kept the faith and look like continuing with their yearly con, and now it appears that a group in Melbourne is aiming to resurrect their annual Continuum convention. It's all good.

Conflux is mainly a writers' convention though this year there was a large contingent of readers and fans in attendance, and it was very enjoyable being able to see so many old friends and new face-to-face. I had a great time and hope I did enough to get a few laughs and generally entertain the masses during the three program items and the bar discussions I was a part of.

After all that excitement my wife, Robyn, and I are jetting off to India about the time this issue makes its own way out into the world. This Indian trip was brought about by a need to finish off some travel credits we had with a tour company. We'd purchased a package deal back in March 2019 for travel in October 2020, and we all know how that year turned out. We used a lot of the credit for our trip to Morocco in May and the rest for this one upcoming. In all we'll be away for about three weeks: half of that will be on the tour, plus an extension, before we head down south to Kerala and Goa for the remainder of our time in the country.

Why India? you ask. Well, why not? It's a place we've always wanted to visit and it's having a lot more impact on the world as it is now the world's most populous nation, having recently overtaken China. It's also a good time for us to go as we rate it as one of the "harder" places to visit; not because of the time taken to get there but more because of the cultural differences we are expecting to encounter. The food and architectural sights will be fine, though we are expecting the sheer mass of humanity to be rather intimidating. Having a number of similar people experiencing exactly the same thing might help us get over any minor difficulties we might encounter. So a guided package tour seemed like the best approach. The thought of travelling to Kerala just popped up a few years back, and, once it did, we seemed to keep coming across it as we read travel articles and watched cooking and tourism television programs. Goa was always on our radar for India as it provides a chance

to see a varied mixture of cultures all thrown together, and I've often heard how interesting the place is.

And in the future? Well, other than a few days here and there in various parts of Victoria we're not scheduled to travel anywhere until Scotland in August and September 2024. The aim is to attend the World Science Fiction Convention in Glasgow and then to head off round Scotland visiting the major island groups off the coast: Islay and Jura; Skye; the outer Hebrides; Orkney, and Shetland. Planning for that is already underway as we will need to book a lot of the ferry trips, the car and most of the accommodation. And a lot of that booking will take place after we get back from India. We hope to have the bulk of it bedded down before the end of this year.

So why do we look so far ahead? Because we find that the planning, the research, and the discussions all form a good part of the travel experience. And it always makes us step a little lighter when we have something major to look forward to. I suspect most people don't see it the same way. But it's the way we like to manage it.

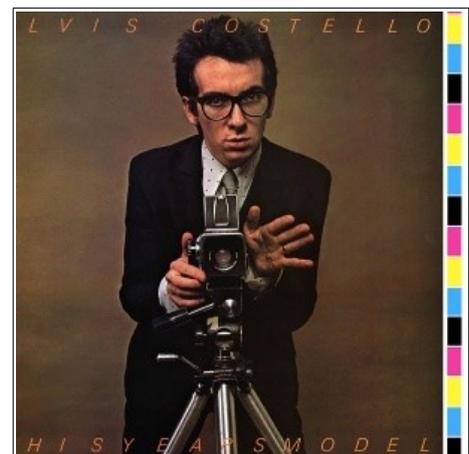
WHAT HAS IMPACTED MY LIFE – “Pump It Up” by Elvis Costello and the Attractions

I didn't buy 45rpm singles when I was a teenager, never saw the point. I always figured that for a few dollars more I could pick up an entire album, that way I'd have a better selection of songs and wouldn't have to keep getting up to change the record on the stereo all the time. Some might have had a “record stacker”, but not me. I couldn't afford much in the way of stereo equipment and what I had was rather rudimentary. It played albums, one at a time, and that was all I really cared about.

I probably first heard “Pump It Up” by Elvis Costello and the Attractions on the radio in the months after it was released in June 1978, though I have no firm recollection of where and when. Most likely it was while I was driving somewhere in my car. It didn't have a lot of impact at the time and it probably wasn't until after I'd purchased Costello's album *This Year's Model* in 1979 or 1980 that I got any sort of appreciation for it.

Costello himself has stated that the song was inspired by Bob Dylan's “Subterranean Homesick Blues” though I didn't know it at the time. It didn't come to Costello's song via Dylan as I wasn't a Dylan fan back then, nor am I now. To me the song lives and breathes on its own and it had its major impact on me when I was going through a relationship breakup in the early 1980s. And it's through the prism of that experience that I hear the song now.

To me the song is one of those rare forms of pop songs, a conversation between two people: one talking about how he's reacting to his girlfriend having left, and the other giving him



advice on what to do about it. It's an odd reading of the lyrics but it works for me.

In the first verse our stricken correspondent lays out the communication problems he and his girlfriend have been having:

I've been on tenderhooks, ending in dirty looks
List'ning to the Muzak, thinking 'bout this 'n' that
She said, "That's that, I don't want to chitter-chat"
Turn it down a little bit or turn it down flat

You can read “Muzak” in the second line as being the mundane, flat conversations we have as a relationship starts to disintegrate. You're walking around on “tenderhooks” trying not to offend, but you do it anyway and your partner just doesn't want to talk about anything. And then your advisor steps in:

Pump it up, when you don't really need it
Pump it up, until you can feel it

telling you to do something, anything, until the emotion returns. And so on. One side of the conversation being about problems with the ex, the other about just getting on with it. It seemed like sound advice.



I am fully aware that this is not the usual interpretation of this song. It appears to have been written by Costello about the 1977 Stiffs Live tour which was notable, even at that time, for

its debauchery. But, like all good pieces of art, the message is in the eye, or in this case, the ear of the beholder.

Musically, the song is the epitome of a 3-minute pop song. It starts, as a lot of good songs do, with the combination of bass and drums leading into a staccato guitar and electric piano. It starts, and it doesn't stop till it gets to the end. There's no quiet bridge mid-song, no solos by drum or guitar, it's all of a piece and is all the better for it.

Elvis Costello (or Declan Patrick McManus as he was born) was working as a computer operator in the period leading up to the release of *My Aim is True* in 1977, his first album with the Attractions. And he played on that stereotype with his stage persona. You can see it in the official video of the song on YouTube. Costello, front-and-centre with the band spread around him, dancing like he's about to fall over, balancing on the sides of his feet like an overly sensitive introverted IT guy. The big glasses, dodgy haircut, sharp suit, loose tie and trouser legs ending way above his socks just add to the image. Again, it just works. I don't know whether Costello has ever been credited with starting this form of geek fashion style but he certainly perfected it.

It was easy to see that Costello was going to be one of those artists that appeared in the mid to late 1970s that was going to be around for some time. He had the lyrics, the music—the overall musical chops—to succeed. He's still going and I'm still listening to this song.

A LARRIKIN'S DICTIONARY OF SCIENCE FICTION

Planetary Romance – A planetary romance is a type of genre fiction which places its primary focus on the relationship and romantic love between two, or more, planets, and usually, though not always, has an "emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending."

According to the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of Terra, the main plot of a mass-market planetary romance novel must revolve about the two planets as they develop romantic love for each other and work to build a relationship. Both the conflict and the climax of the novel should be directly related to that core theme of developing a romantic relationship, although the novel can also contain subplots that do not specifically relate to the main planets' romantic love.

At times the romance that develops between two planetary bodies can get off to a rocky start, with misunderstandings and, sometimes, even violence threatening to undo the path of true romantic love (eg *War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells). These conflicts are usually solved by the exchange of biological entities or fluids of one sort or another.

In a display of diversity, later works within the genre have explored the wider implication of relationships between multiple planets and other large mass objects within the solar system (eg *The Expanse* series by James S. A. Corey), or between large dwarf-planet-sized artificial constructs (eg *The Culture* series by Iain M. Banks).

WANDERINGS AND READINGS – An Occasional Column by Julian Warner

Where the Spaces Between the Notes are Different

The JazzLab is in an unprepossessing building in a light industrial area in Brunswick. On Leslie St to be precise. Nearby is the Victoria Hotel, which does good craft beers and the Los Hermanos Mexican taco place which is very trendy. Around the corner is the Inner North Brewery, which supplies the Lab with interesting beers. There used to be a hostelry for very grumpy old men next door and a practice studio for dodgy bands. The grumpy men are gone. The bands are possibly less dodgy now.

The predecessor of the JazzLab was the Bennett's Lane Jazz Club, which was in almost equally insalubrious surroundings in the Melbourne CBD. I'm told that the Lab has been designed to largely replicate the Bennett's Lane venue but I can't comment because I never got to Bennett's Lane.

I'd never joined Jazz Clubs in the past, possibly because of a perception that they were peopled by men with white hair and red sports cars and a questionable taste in partners. Well, I've got the white hair now, so that's one eligibility criterion established. I'd met some very down to earth jazz aficionados but still had a sneaking suspicion that the clubs were a bit snooty.

Well, no such worries at the JazzLab. I've only encountered one musician, in many visits there, who I would regard as a bit pretentious. I think that he was also the only one who wore one of those 'ethnic' pill-box hats which were ubiquitous on the jazz scene in the seventies and eighties.



The JazzLab musicians are good at their craft but they don't hide away from the audience – except perhaps to tune up beforehand. They'll talk with people who want to ask questions. They'll sit next to you with a beer during the break. They're casual normally. Rarely do you see suits or ties – except on Vince Jones. Lucy grumbled about one of our favourite pianists, Andrea Keller, needing to frock up occasionally.

Many of the musicians are surprisingly young. I can't still work out how people in their early twenties manage to absorb enough of the history of jazz to be able to play with conviction – but they do. There are some nights where a large part of the audience are clearly fellow music students and some will be brought on stage for a single number. There is not a house band as such but there are regulars who are sometimes recruited at the last minute to fill in for an ill or travel-delayed musician. There is certainly a healthily promiscuous swapping of musicians between groupings so that you get to hear familiar people in new contexts.

Interstate and international performers are seen at the Lab frequently. Some are a notch or two better than the locals. Some are just different.



There's a reasonable breadth of jazz on offer at the Lab. I've never heard Trad Jazz played there, such as my father would have enjoyed, but that's not to say that a Trad group couldn't play.

Although many of the musicians make reference to improvisation, you rarely hear the more rarefied forms of improvisation which can be largely unrelated to jazz. You also would not hear music from the Rock end of Jazz-Fusion. I was told that the owner is not a great fan of "Euro Jazz" but we've seen visiting groups which would

definitely fit into that ill-defined sub-genre. I suspect (I should ask about this) that there is some sort of noise limit on the venue and hence you don't tend to get over-enthusiastic drummers bashing away.

We are frequent, if irregular, visitors to the JazzLab and are on chatty terms with the main barman – Jeremy. He'll let me know if he's brought in a decent whisky and will offer candid thoughts on the acts playing. Despite many visits, particularly on nights where the acts can be more experimental, we've never seen really bad musicians or had a bad night. Occasional fluffs or displays of inexperience perhaps – "Let's start that number again" – but no onstage antics or bad behaviour (so unlike the rock world!)

I've learnt new things from visiting the Lab and been inspired to investigate things I hadn't considered before. I'm still puzzling over the merits of live versus recorded music. We've heard music at the Lab which was definitely better as a live experience.

If you're intrigued enough to visit the JazzLab yourself, take a look at their website and read through the descriptions for each evening carefully. If you want to play safe, stick to the weekend acts which tend to be bigger names. You can always ask us for advice.

Editors note: The JazzLab can be found at 27 Leslie Street, Brunswick and their website is www.thejazzlab.com.au

Cover notes: Chong went through four or five iterations of the image on the front cover of this issue before deciding on the four sketches in colour. At first it was just one, in black and white, then four also in black-and-white, then the same four also in b-and-w but in a different order, then this order in various colours, before landing on the final design. I suspect he had the title of the piece decided well in advance, which then helped to finalise the design etc etc. I had the feeling, at one point, that I was going to have to drive over to his house and prise the pencil from his fingers, or his fingers off the computer mouse, whichever seemed appropriate. But he found his end-point before then.

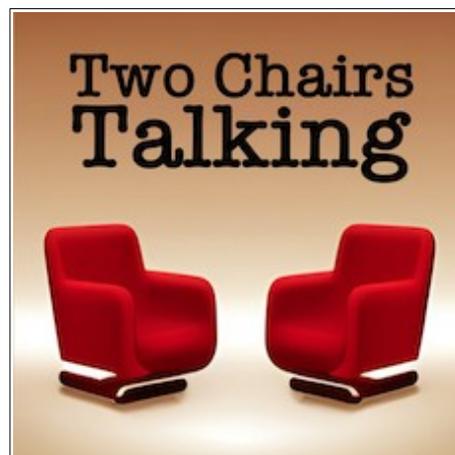
WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

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

Notes from this month's podcasts

Episode 96: (19 September 2023) *The manner of your vile outrageous crimes*

This episode we discuss the crime fiction we've been consuming lately: novels by Adrian McKinty, Lee Child and Andrew Child, Dervla McTiernan and Sue Grafton. And I review a couple of crime TV series I've recently watched (THE LINCOLN LAWYER S2 and DEADLOCH).



<https://twochairs.website/2023-09-19-1839>

You can access the current, and all past podcast episodes at twochairs.website, or you can subscribe through any podcast subscription service.

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

September 2023 books

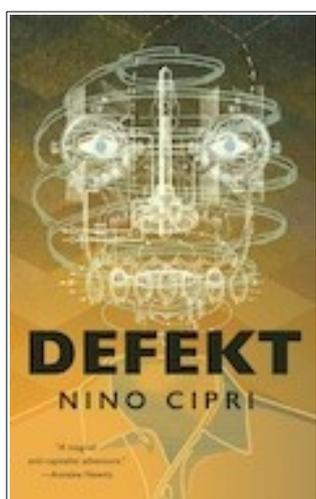
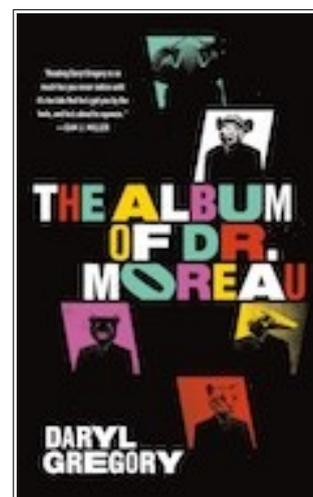
Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
The Album of Dr Moreau	Daryl Gregory	Sf	7 Sept		2.5	2021	Nvla
Defekt	Nino Cipri	Sf	10 Sept		3.4	2021	Nvla
No Plan B	Lee Child & Andrew Child	Thriller	12 Sept		3.2	2022	
D is For Deadbeat	Sue Grafton	Crime	15 Sep		3.4	1987	
All the Sinners Bleed	S. A. Cosby	Crime	24 Sep		4.4	2023	
The Odd Angry Shot	William Nagle	Literary	27 Sept		4.0	1975	Aust

Books read in the period: 6

Yearly total to end of period: 67

Notes: Slightly better than last month but still not back to where I would like it to be. Is it time to give up the targets? Maybe, but not for some time I think.

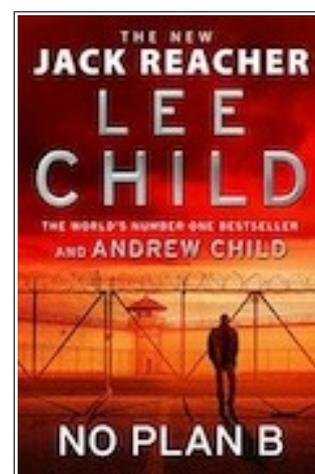
The Album of Dr Moreau (2021) – For some reason H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Dr. Moreau* has spawned a number of sequels and homages. Maybe it’s just the weirdness of the human-animal hybrid that does it. It beats me. Here Gregory has imagined a number of such hybrids as members of a boy band called WyldBoyZ who are products of a criminal Moreau like program on a barge off the coast of South America. After they escape and form the band the various members start to take on the standard roles of any such band: one romantic, one funny, one smart, one shy etc etc. Then, one morning, the body of their sleazy manager (Dr. M.) is found in the bed of one of the band members, and suddenly all are suspects in the brutal killing. I can’t say that this novella did much for me. Gregory writes with empathy about the various members of the band, and the way the work is structured is interesting – rather like an album – but I just didn’t find it involving. R: 2.5/5.0



Defekt (2021) – This is a sequel of sorts to the author’s earlier novella, **Finna**, from 2020. We return here to the large furniture warehouse of LitenVärld with protagonist Derek who is the epitome of the perfect employee, never late, never sick and never complaining. But one day Derek starts to feel unwell and so returns to his shipping container house to get better. In the morning his commitment to the task is questioned by his supervisor who decides to assign him to a special inventory unit, and special it is. The team he finds himself in is seemingly made up of four other variants on himself, all from different timelines that have been accessed by the wormholes that seem to appear in the store at random. Derek has to work out what they are doing, how he can help and who he really is. This is a better variant on the theme than the first in the series and seems to be more tightly plotted. An amusing novella that makes me

hope there will be more to follow.

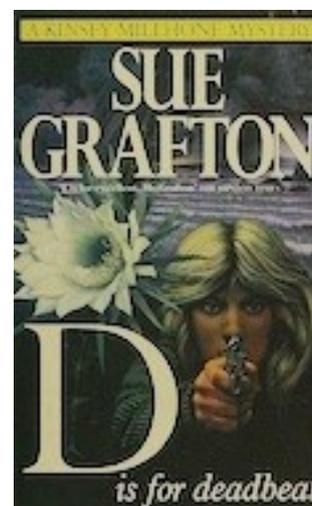
No Plan B (2022) – Jack Reacher is back in his 27th (!) outing, and the third to be written by Lee Child and his brother Andrew. I’d started to notice a drop-off in quality in the novels from around #23 and wondered if they would continue, but here we seem to have an improvement of sorts, and with this year’s instalment set for release in late October I suspect we’ll be seeing quite a few more to come. The set-up will be familiar to regular readers: Reacher witnesses a woman fall under a bus and be killed; he’s convinced she was pushed while other witnesses insist she jumped. We only find this out after Reacher has chased the killer into a dark alley, beaten him up, checked the woman’s handbag (which the killer had nabbed), been almost run down by a car driven by the killer’s accomplice and then been buried under the collapse of a building’s steel fire escape. The standard sort of stuff for Reacher in the first few chapters of a new novel. And after that we’re off and running. As a reader you get the usual stuff here, fights, mysteries that appear to be one thing but end up being another,



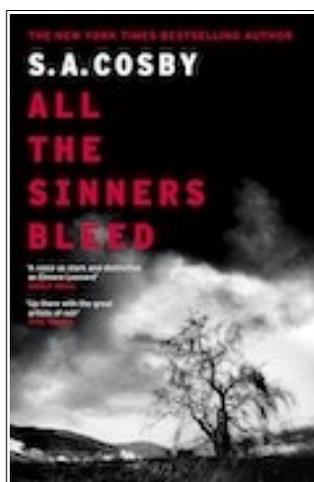
fight, long Reacher silences, short clipped sentences, and fights, yes, lots of them. I reckon there's probably about a handful of adverbs in the whole book. Probably not a good place to start reading the series, though it does whet the appetite while we wait for season 2 of the television series. R: 3.2/5.0

D is for Deadbeat (2022) – This is the 4th in Sue Grafton's "alphabetical" series of novels featuring her recurring private investigator character, Kinsey Milhone following: *A IS FOR ALIBI*, *B IS FOR BURGLAR* and *C IS FOR CORPSE*. Grafton has intended to write all 26 novels in this series but unfortunately died just before she began working on the Z entry.

As previously this novel is set in the fictional Californian town of Santa Teresa, originally created by author Ross MacDonald for his Lew Archer novels. These are all of the classic Californian hardboiled PI genre, generally known for their laconic and wise-cracking characters. Here Milhone is a 30-ish modern young woman, two married and divorced, and an ex-cop now working as a PI for hire.



This novel starts with a man identifying himself as Alvin Limbaro asking her to locate a young man and deliver to him a cashier's check (equivalent of an Australian bank cheque) for \$25,000. He writes her a separate check as a retainer for her services. A few days later the check bounces and when Milhone tries to get in touch with Limbaro she can't locate him and soon discovers that his real name was John Daggett. I say "was" because Daggett is found dead on a local beach a few days after seeing Milhone. Now in a bind about what to do about the big check Milhone tracks down Daggett's daughter from whom she learns that Daggett was in jail for the manslaughter of a number of people in a car – he'd been driving while drunk – and that the check was intended for the young man who was the sole survivor of that crash. The police think Daggett's death was just a drowning accident but Daggett's daughter hires Milhone to figure out what is going on, and so we are off. All classic stuff in terms of deceptions, deep secrets, lies and false representation. Maybe not as good as the first three in the series but still a very good example of its type. R: 3.4/5.0



All the Sinners Bleed (2023) – A year after Titus Crown is elected as the first African-American sheriff of Charon County in Virginia he is called to an "active shooter" incident at the local high school. There he is confronted by a local man, also African-American, carrying a gun and threatening police. After the shooter is killed by a police officer when he raises his gun, one victim is discovered in the school, the popular Mr Shearman. All seems inexplicable until Crown discovers disturbing images and videos on Shearman's phone and computer, featuring both Shearman and the other dead man. This leads to the discovery, in a nearby wood, of seven bodies of African-American children who have been tortured and murdered, and who featured in the videos and still images. Shearman and his killer are accounted for but there is a third person in the videos, the leader of the group, heavily disguised.

Cosby's latest novel is as much a police procedural as it is full-blown commentary on the current state of race relations in the American South. This a step up from Cosby's earlier novels in style, content, and intent. Some readers might find the high body count somewhat off-putting, or the fact that the novel fits into that rather out-dated "serial killer" sub-genre, but there is still a place for such books so long as they are well written and drag the reader along. This is certainly one of those. R: 4.4/5.0

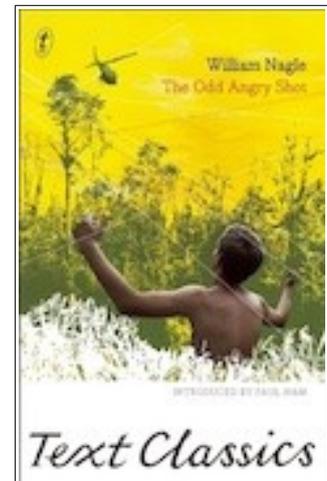
The Odd Angry Shot (1975) – see major review below.

REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

The Odd Angry Shot (1975) by William Nagle

Genre: Drama/War

By the time Gough Whitlam's Federal Labor Government was elected in Australia in December 1972 the number of Australian troops in the war in Vietnam had been reduced from a maximum of about 7,600 down to a few hundred. From 1964 all Australian males turning 20 had to register for the compulsory national service. Conscripts were chosen by means of a lottery, conducted each six months, that chose those who would serve for two-years based on their birthday. This "national conscription lottery" was stopped in mid-December 1972. I was 17 at the time and was happy to have missed it by 2 years; my brother missed it by about 6 months. In all, about 60,000 Australians fought in the war, with 521 killed and over 3,000 wounded.



The whole thing was ridiculous then, and seems only more so now.

William Nagle enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in 1964, qualified as a cook and was sent to serve in Vietnam in June 1966 at the age of 19. He left Vietnam in March 1967, and left the army altogether in September 1968. After his stint in the army he wrote this, his debut novel, based on his experiences in South-East Asia.

The book follows the lives of three SAS army personnel (Harry, Rogers, and the unnamed narrator) based in Vietnam, as they struggle to get through the daily grind of survival.

The book is told in episodic fashion which mirrors the war-time experience of the three men. Most of the time they are bored, sitting around their tents, drinking too much, playing cards, and getting into trouble. And then come the moments of sheer terror as they are involved in patrols or a fire-fight, with an enemy they cannot discern from the native population, in a climate that is a humid and raining version of hell, where foot-rot and sexually transmitted diseases are rife, and where they can only dream of going home.

There is no direct anti-war sentiment expressed in the book; there's no need for it, as the environment does all the talking. Before arriving in Vietnam each of the men would have considered themselves against the involvement of Australia there, but after their

deployment they just want to make it through to the end of their stint alive. And to be treated halfway decently when they return home. For a lot of them, neither of those things would occur.

Nagle's style is clipped, with sentences short, and an almost total-absence of adverbs and adjectives. It fits the requirements perfectly.

R: 4.0/5.0

WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

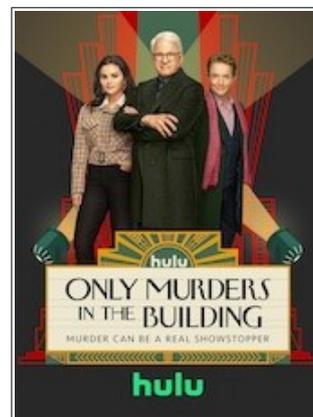
Television

Only Murders in the Building (Season 3 – 10 episodes) (2023)

Platform: Disney +

Genre: Crime/Comedy

Just when you think that the creators of this mystery comedy series won't have enough material for another season they come up with another winner, and, it seems, have set themselves up nicely for season 4. As previously three tenants of a New York apartment building (played by Steve Martin, Martin Short and Selena Gomez) combine to host a true crime podcast, dealing, as seems reasonable given the title, only with murders that are carried out in their building. Here the murder is of an actor (played by Paul Rudd) who is pushed down an elevator shaft on opening night of his new play – and this comes after he collapsed on stage with a case of rat poisoning. The play in question is being directed by Martin Short's character Oliver Putnim, and it appears to be his last chance to make it big on Broadway. Also involved is Meryl Streep who auditions for the play and becomes Putnim's love interest. The plot, of course, is ridiculous, but that is beside the point as we again follow along with the ever-changing relationships between the three main characters and the other residents of the building. This is all good stuff and is a lot of fun. R: 4.3/5.0



Film

A Haunting in Venice (2023)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Drama

Kenneth Branagh is back with the third in his series of films in which he stars as Agatha Christies' Hercule Poirot, with this one loosely based on the novel *Hallowe'en Party*. The time is now 1947 and Poirot has "retired" to Venice to see out his days where he has hired ex-policeman Vitale Portfoglio (Riccardi Scarmarcio) as a bodyguard – mainly to keep the general public from hounding him to help solve their "cases". Poirot isn't interested until his old friend, novelist Ariadne Oliver (Tina Fey) convinces him that he



really should attend a séance to help expose medium Joyce Reynolds (Michelle Yeoh). She has been employed by opera singer Rowena Drake (Kelly Reilly) to communicate with her dead daughter. Poirot tags along, and before the night is out there are two more deaths in the palazzo which is now been cut off by a fierce storm. A classic “country house” style murder mystery. Branagh is good as the very weary Poirot and the rest of the ensemble cast is fine without doing anything out of the ordinary. Better than *Death on the Nile* and not as good as *Murder on the Orient Express*. Amusing and enjoyable but don't expect too much. R: 3.3/5.0

Billy couldn't read Tralfamadorian, of course, but he could at least see how the books were laid out—in brief clumps of symbols separated by stars. Billy commented that the clumps might be telegrams.

“Exactly,” said the voice.

“They are telegrams?”

“There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you're right: each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message—describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvellous moments seen all at one time.”

—*Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, p72

PERRYSCOPE Responses

Perryscope 36:

Martin Field: “Good to hear the skin treatment is progressing – I've been lucky so far. As an English-born fair skinned/haired child, and young adult, I spent too many hours on Melbourne's beaches without any skin protection.”

[**PM:** I'd still be getting myself checked out. It's the small indistinguishable ones that will end up causing trouble. Robyn told me that she could barely see the one behind my left ear.]

Joseph Nicholas: "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." The young lady on the right of the image is very clearly wondering *why* you look so grumpy!

“Tedious correction to your review of *Extraction 2*: Georgia isn't in Eastern Europe — it's

in the Caucasus Mountains, beyond the Black Sea. There is an argument that Europe ‘ends’ at the Ural Mountains, northeast of the Caspian Sea, and that ‘Greater Europe’ therefore includes European Russia and the Caucasus but, given that Putin's Russia is now striving to re-assert itself as an essentially Central Asian power, I think this argument is losing (has lost) traction. (There have even been suggestions that, if and when it successfully re-absorbs Ukraine, Russia will turn its attention to re-absorbing the republics of what used to be Soviet Central Asia. But I'll believe that when I see it.) It's known that Georgia would like to become a member state of the EU at some future point, and has officially been added to the list of candidate countries. But the chances of that ever being progressed, beyond some alignment of its laws on agriculture, food labelling and employment practices, are zero.”

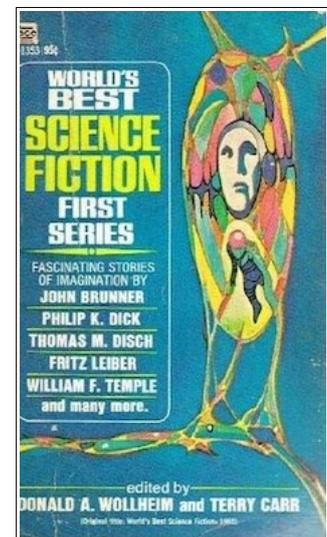
[**PM:** “We don’t need no stinking definitions.” Doubtless you are correct, but from an Australian perspective? Nah. It’s a bit like saying that Asia starts east of Aden. Nope, Asia starts east of Bangladesh as far as I’m concerned. You are probably right that Russia will look further afield if it takes Ukraine. I am hoping that doesn’t happen. My worry is that Putin will realise that he’s on a hiding to nothing by invading and might decide to drop a few small tactical nukes in the eastern provinces of Ukraine. He’ll work out some spurious justification for it but the long-term damage will be done.]

Bruce Gillespie: “Trip to Carlton yesterday. I looked in at the newsagent in Lygon Court, and found the latest copies of **Uncut** and **Mojo**, with almost identical photos of Bruce Springsteen on the cover, although slightly different stories about his current concert tour (interrupted by illness, as I saw on Noise11 a couple of days ago). Worth buying, or even downloading. I find if I download a magazine (e.g. **Locus** or **Limelight**) I don’t read it on screen. And I do read **Perryscope** in black and white from the printout in my copies of each mailing of ANZAPA.”

[**PM:** I’ll skip the Springsteen magazine issues. I’m trying to keep the number of printed products that come into the house to a minimum. These days I only subscribe to a couple of print magazines, and both of them are book-review related. When I was subscribing to a number I tended to find that they built up into a great pile without being read. I’d skim through them when they first arrived assuming I’d get to them in depth later. And never did.]

“Am currently wincing my way through the first volume of Wollheim and Carr’s **Best Sf** (1965, all stories published in 1964), which you gave to me. Thanks very much for the volume, and it will look good on the shelf, but I hadn’t realised how much my taste had changed until I started reading the stories. Even the Philip Dick story (‘Oh to Be a Blobel!’) is very ordinary, although I had remembered it as one of his best late short stories.

“Nearly all of the Wollheim/Carr BESTs are based on dull explanations, clunky dialogue, and even clunkier working out of plot assumptions. I had remembered Norman Kagan’s ‘Four Brands of Impossible’ as one of the comic highlights of the whole 1960s, but now I don’t even understand his basic premise, let alone the ‘comic’ working out of the concept. I also remember John



Brunner's 'The Last Lonely Man' as one of his best short stories, and one of the highlights of the 1960s. It's a kind of riff on 'All You Zombies', but without Heinlein's conciseness. But Brunner feels the need to explain the change in world situation, by which time the fate of the main character seems very predictable. (It was adapted to make a good episode of the BBC's **Out of the Unknown**, which I saw by accident (not having my own TV) at the end of 1969.)

"I haven't reached the Tom Disch story yet. I hope Tom Disch doesn't let me down as well.

"So full marks to you for going back to 1966, but I wonder how many stories from that era you really enjoyed. I'm becoming very wary about re-reading 'old favourites', especially SF and fantasy stories."

[**PM:** Although I haven't actually read that first volume of Wollheim and Carr's **World's Best SF**, a quick check tells me that they must have rushed it out as all (or the vast bulk) of the stories appear to come from the standard American prozines of the time, with the odd **New Worlds** story thrown in. (Seems odd to call it a "World's Best".) Judith Merrill spread her interests far wider and her **Year's Best Sf** anthologies tended to be much, much better.]

Rich Lynch: "Read and enjoyed the new issue of **Perryscope** (#36). Like you, skin cancer has been a part of my life. And like you, it's always been Basal Cell Carcinoma. The first time it happened, way back in the 1980s, yeah, it scared me a bit. But then I found out that it's so slow growing that it would not be a health risk unless I quit altogether going for dermatology visits. (Once or twice a year I go in for a full body check, even though my three instances of BCC have always been on my head.) So like you, I always wear a hat when I'm outdoors during the day. I've got a genuine kangaroo leather wide-brim hat I bought at the Queen Victoria Market in Melbourne back in 2018 (which I like a lot) but my hat of choice, ever since the 2019 Dublin Worldcon, has been a Paddy Hat that I bought at the Teeling Distillery. After four years it's showing some wear, but I'm not yet ready to donate it to a charitable clothing drive."

[**PM:** Once you start wearing them hats just become part of your out-of-doors wear, like trousers; it's always a good idea to have them on. And the older a hat gets the better it seems to fit. Akubras have the problem of having a leather band on the inside of the hat which tends to shrink a little over time. The solution to that it to buy one a size or so too big and pad out the inner band during the hat's early years and slowly remove the padding over time. By about the time they hit the ten-year mark they are developing a hole in the top front of the crown and start to look a little shabby. That's when they get relegated to garden-wear.]

"As for all the TV reviews you share with us, **The Lincoln Lawyer** is on the list of series that Nicki and I will watch, once we clear away some series that are starting to approach their finales. Thanks for pointing out **Deadloch**. Never heard of that one before. We've got a good record with recent Australian TV series — we quite enjoyed the first season of **Black Snow** — so I'll be looking forward to this one as well.

"And as for your movie reviews, I think we'll give **The Meg** a pass. Nicki and I haven't watched all that many movies recently (there are just too many good streaming series). Usually Saturday is a movie night and the one we saw this past weekend was **Guardians of the Galaxy 3**. I agree with your largely positive review, but I do wonder how you come

up with such a precise rating (in this case 3.8 out of 5). Care to share your scientific approach with us?”

[**PM:** Ratings are calculated using a very precise but moving set of rules and feelings, and, frankly, if I tried to explain them they'd all fall apart. In the case of **GotG V3** I felt it was better than V2 and not quite up to V1, so...]

“And finally: There's one obvious omission in your reviews of recently released films. You saw and enjoyed **Oppenheimer**, but what about the *other* movie that debuted in theatres that same day? C'mon, Perry! After all that hype, you've gotta be at least a *little* bit tempted to see it!”

[**PM:** I have to leave something for the streaming services! I'm guessing I'll get to it some time after all the hype has died down and I can watch it at home, alone.]

Nick Price: “I liked the Henry Lawson quote. It's a pity working on the land has less visibility today.

“At least you can get into a hospital in Australia.”

[**PM:** All of my skin cancer stuff was done in a day surgery at the dermatologists' offices. So I just need to book in a time at the receptionist's desk. That was the painless part.]

“No mention of the 21-minute one-shot in **Extraction 2**? You'd have to blink many many times to miss it. Worth a rewatch once you know it is there — even if there was some liberty taken with it — as you mentally work out how much rehearsal a lot of the long scenes must have taken.”

[**PM:** I must have been asleep at the time. I do seem to recall a long shot as they escaped the prison. Must go back and look at that again.]

Garth Spencer: “Good cover picture; didn't look like you were grumpy so much as contemplative of the landscape. Perhaps a little reminiscent, perhaps a little judgmental.

[**PM:** trust me, I was grumpy.]

“Your experience of the seasons in Australia, of course, is reversed from my experience in British Columbia. August and September are still transitional months, though: in six weeks we went from overheated days when it was nearly impossible to sleep at night to chill rainy days when it was nearly impossible to sleep at night, for fear of suffocating due to congested sinuses. Sometimes I wonder where to move to.”

[**PM:** You'd feel right at home in a Melbourne spring then: 26C one day and 12C the next. It was hotter at midnight than it was at noon.]

“Quoting Henry Lawson's 1899 description of urban ignorance of the bush appears as though you suggest it is just as applicable today. Which I presume it is. And it may be equally applicable here, and across Canada, although I am sufficiently out of touch not to be sure.”

[**PM:** Current political discourse in Australia would lead me to believe there is a great divide between “city” and “country”. And that is not to say that one side is always right and the other always wrong. There is good on both sides, but, frankly, “city” people need to get out more, and “country” people need to consider all sides of a discussion..]

“Your medical adventures were surprisingly readable. In fact you remind me that I have to monitor my health more closely, as I proceed deeper into the last third of my life. Time to schedule a checkup soon.

“Julian Warner’s article on fans with hats at first recalled the scene at the Very Big Corporation, in *The Meaning of Life*, in which some corporate character states “people are not wearing enough hats” and goes on to talk about the development of the soul does not proceed *ab initio* but from a process of introspection ... Or something like that. It dawned upon me eventually that I generally did not wear hats, unless they were woollen toques (a piece of headgear you can’t avoid in Canada). Hats are one of those unremarked, arbitrary social norm markers that no one bothers to explain in colloquial culture, but which seem to be important somehow on social occasions.”

[**PM:** I like to think I am completely ignorant of social norms when it comes to clothing etc. It all comes down to getting to that time of your life when you really don’t care what people think of you. I don’t “dress to impress” any more other than to ensure that the missus doesn’t think I’m a total mess. If she thinks what I’m wearing will pass then that’s okay with me. Though we do still have the odd “interesting” conversation: “You’re not going out wearing that old thing!” being the most common critique.]

“Your podcast sounds like an enlightening one, and I really must list it when I revamp my website. I seem to be getting serious about doing so this fall; it is about time to document contemporary activities, such as literary and fannish blogs and websites, and not just hoary standard club-and-fanzine-and-Man, your zine offers a lot of comment hooks, doesn’t it?”

[**PM:** I always seem to have a lot to talk about, most days. This fanzine is a distillation of lots of stuff that I may have been thinking about over an extended period. I suspect I am much more boring in real life.]

I also heard from: Nic Farey; and Barbara O’Sullivan; thank you one and all.

<p>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.</p>
