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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, Squires Winery, Victoria, March 2024.

INTRODUCTION

As you will discover while reading this issue the presence of Leigh Edmonds looms rather large within its pages. At the back of the issue there's a letter from him commenting on **Perryscope 44**, he gets mentioned in an entry in my "Mooch of Life" log, and he is the author of the major book under review here, the review which also starts off this issue. You could almost say that, without him, this issue wouldn't exist.

While I don't comment about it in the letter column Leigh makes note of what how he sees **Perryscope** as "maturing" the longer it runs. I'm not exactly sure what he means by that though I will take it as a compliment. It is certainly changing over time: it seems to be getting gradually longer and has more people writing for it. Maybe that's what he means; maybe he sees it moving away from just me and my interests over to something else.

And, yes, I'd have to say that I would agree with him if that is his assessment. I started out with this little publication as providing me with a means to write about what I was reading and watching, to discuss what I am interested in now and what has been interesting me over the years. It will keep doing that. Every now and again I'll change things up a bit for some variety and we'll end up with something like **Perryscope 39** which only contained a trip report about my journeys through India with my wife last year. I enjoyed doing that, though it was a lot of work, and I hope to do it again. I'll have to keep thinking of changing things around every now and then to stop myself getting too complacent. That way boredom lies. Which is a territory to avoid rather than explore.

You'll see another change up next month as I lead into my travels around Scotland in August. Though I'm not going into any details about that now, better to wait till the publication of **Perryscope 46** where you can see for yourself. I think it's coming together quite nicely already.

Further ahead, as mentioned, I will be travelling through the whole of August and the first third of September. I have no idea of what I will be able to write and publish during that period so I'll make no promises. I doubt there will be an issue in August, though there should be one in September. This is just a forewarning in case you think I might have dropped off the twig in the interim. I really have too much to do to allow that to happen.

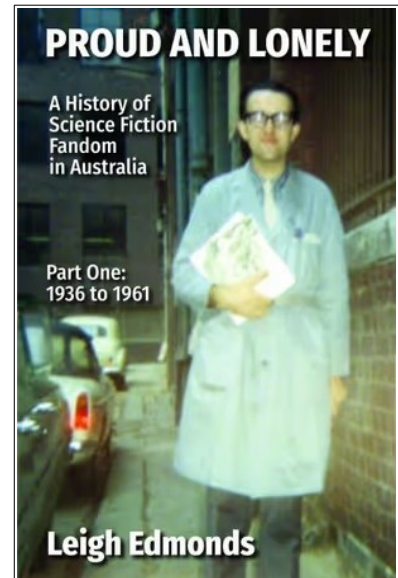
Cover notes: Squires Winery is technically not in the Rutherglen wine district though it might as well be given it is situated only 25 kilometres away, about halfway between Rutherglen and Yarrowonga. It isn't actually on the Murray River, rather the Ovens (which is the river you can see in the photo) just before it joins that bigger river. We had been told about this place and decided to drop in for a glass on a warm sunny day in early March when we were staying in the district. A beautiful spot with a lot of locals enjoying the day sitting under umbrellas on the lawn leading down to the riverbank, glass of wine in hand.

REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

Proud and Lonely : A History of Science Fiction Fandom in Australia Part One : 1936 to 1961 (2024) by Leigh Edmonds

Genre: Non fiction

There have been a lot of arguments over the years as to how the genre of science fiction first started. Brian Aldiss, probably in an attempt to stir the possum and to push a feminist line, put the argument that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was the true progenitor of what we now call "science fiction". He makes a very good point, whatever his reasons. Others have pointed back to *Beowulf* and *Gilgamesh* as possible starting points. All of these suggestions make for good argument starters but it really doesn't make much of a difference. Probably the best explanation lies in considering "science fiction" as a part of the larger "fantasy" genre; literature that includes mythology, horror, and all the various forms of fantasy (eg high, sword and sorcery, heroic, lost world, etc, etc) and science fiction (eg space opera, military, steampunk, hopepunk, cyberpunk, all the punks, etc, etc). And as that form has been around since humans first starting telling stories to make sense of the world around them there is really has no discernible "beginning".



What I do believe is that "modern science fiction", as we know it today, started when Hugo Gernsback produced the first issue of **Amazing Stories** in April 1926. That event was very important to the history I am looking at here.

This book by Leigh Edmonds is not about the history of "science fiction", modern or otherwise, but about "science fiction fandom" in Australia; about the way the Australian readers of science fiction came to find and acquire their reading material, how they came to identify other readers of sf, and how they formed clubs and organised "conventions" where they could meet and discuss their favourite genre of literature. It's fascinating stuff.

The community of science fiction fandom is like no other. Possibly the romance and crime genre readerships come close but they don't appear to me to have the same convoluted history of conventions and fanzines, feuds, quarrels, startling publications and ardent bibliographers and collectors. Why is this so? Why have readers of sf become so involved in their genre, and so strident in their defence of it? This book goes partway to helping us answer those questions, at least from an Australian perspective.

Partway because it takes us only up to 1961, some time before the first great event in Australian sf history happened with the staging of Aussiecon, Australia's first World Science Fiction Convention, held in Melbourne in August 1975 — incidentally the first sf convention I ever attended.

Leigh Edmonds originally intended this history to end in 1975, he thought he'd be able to encapsulate the history of fandom from its early stages in the 1930s to Aussiecon in 1975 in one volume. His extensive research in this country and overseas soon disavowed him of that target. The story was too big, had too many threads and needed way too much explanation to place it into its rightful context, for it to fit into one neat volume. So he decided to basically cut it in two. It was a wise choice.

The late writer George Turner once noted that he had seen that first issue of **Amazing Stories** on the newstands in 1926, though I'm not sure if he bought it and read it. The first Australian letter of comment to be printed in an American professional magazine (prozine) was published the next year, 1927. But it was not until August 1935 that the Sydney Chapter of the US-founded Science Fiction League was chartered with meetings beginning in 1936, hence the timeline in the title. The Science Fiction League was proposed by Gernsback in the 1930s as a means of drumming up support for his second prozine **Wonder Stories**. The first US chapter listed 10 initial members in July 1934, so the Australian chapter followed relatively soon afterwards.

From there "organised" fandom in Australia slowly grew. The first publication that could be considered a fanzine appeared in 1937, and things looked on the up and up. And then, in 1938, the Australian Government introduced restrictions on the importation of some publications on what were considered "moral grounds", though, like all such restrictions, these were ill-defined. Somehow Australian fans found their way around these constraints and fandom again seemed to flourish through the whole of 1939 up to the point when, with the World War II effort eating into their Treasury coffers, the Australian imposed restrictions on the importation of all fiction magazines from non-sterling countries in early 1940. The USA, by this time, was the prime producer of sf in either magazine or book form and this import restriction hit the local sf scene hard. It wasn't until later in 1940 that British reprints of the US prozines began to appear in Australian shops.

The Australian sf fandom of that time was dominated by young, white males who were much taken with this "new" literature and saw it as a way of seeing the future, of looking to a better world. The principal participants were also intelligent and headstrong, with some having firm opinions about the "proper" way sf fandom should conduct itself. This naturally led to a succession of arguments and feuds, with a number of organisations being formed as breakaways from the original groups as a result of irreconcilable differences between individuals. For such a relatively small group they had a number of major disagreements.

The manner in which the decisions of the Australian Government in the 1930s directly impacted sf readers is of vital importance to our understanding of the development of the fannish movement. Without due consideration of them this history would be a lesser work if it just concentrated on the debates and feuding, amusing as they were. Leigh Edmonds has done a wonderful job here of putting everything into its proper context, concentrating on the personalities but also showing the effect events in the outside world had on these little sf circles. The historian in the author shines through.

During the period of the Second World War Sydney fandom regularly tore itself apart in what, from this distance, seems like an almost self-destructive frenzy. And yet they were able to put together sf conferences from 1940 to 1942. But past that the war effort, abrasive personalities, and restrictions combined to push Sydney fandom into a quiet period until the early 1950s when the fourth sf conference was held in 1951 and the first Australian National SF convention in 1952. This National Convention became an annual event in Sydney until 1956 when Melbourne hosted its first event to co-incide with the Olympics. But organised fandom in Australia was already on the wane. Another Natcon would be held in Melbourne in 1958 and then nothing until the Melbourne conventions in 1966, 1968 and onwards. But that is material for the second volume.

Edmonds has led us through all of the twists and turns, the power struggles and interpersonal relationships concentrating mainly on Sydney, as that was where the bulk of the action was taking place. In contrast, fannish groups in Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne were far more interested in the social side of such gatherings of people and, while there may have been some altercations along the way they were as nothing compared to what was happening in Australia's largest city.

In Melbourne, the Melbourne Science Fiction Club (MSFC) had organised Olympicon, the 1956 National convention, and it continued to flourish through the rest of the 1950s and into the 1960s mainly due to the efforts of Mervyn Binns (who appears on the book's cover). He galvanised sf fans in Melbourne through his work at McGill's Newsagency in the city, ensuring that sf was openly displayed, that the MSFC was publicised and lists of books available for purchase were disseminated to sf readers who came to the shop. His work there, and his efforts in maintaining the MSFC, later led to the revival of sf conventions in Australia in the late 1960s, and from there to Aussiecon in 1975.

The decision to treat each individual city as a separate entity with its own semi-detached history was a reflection of the isolation that each city's fandom groups felt in the period covered here. If an individual in a large city in Australia had trouble contacting others nearby, the problems facing them in contacting fans in other cities and in other countries were very major indeed. Telephone communication was both difficult and expensive, physically travelling between states was hard and took a major effort whether by car or train (forget aircraft), and travel overseas may happen once in a lifetime, if you were lucky and had the time and money to accomplish it. Fans in Australia mainly used the postal service, and communication between fans and between groups was carried out either by letter, postcard or small fanzine. They were left with no other option. Edmonds does an excellent job of bringing these difficulties, and the industrious ways Australian sf fans overcame them, to the fore.

Most histories of sf fandom are written with a level of bias on the part of the author, putting their own points-of-view to "set the record straight." There is none of that here. Edmonds doesn't appear in this history as he came on the scene in the mid-1960s. But he met and interviewed many of the major players in this volume and his research can only be considered as exemplary.

There is a major quote about sf fans which is used as the epigraph for this book, and which gave the book its title. Attributed to Rick Sneary by Bob Tucker it runs: "It is a Proud and Lonely thing to be a Fan." As a result of this book I think we can safely say that Australian fans can certainly be "proud" of their history though probably won't feel anywhere near as "lonely" because of it.

R: 4.4/5.0

"Science fiction and history have a great deal in common because the past is as unknowable to us as the future. History cannot be a statement of fact about what happened in the past because we might *know of* the past but we can't *know* it in the same way that we know the present because we live here and now and not there and then. No, history is stories told about what happened in the past to help us understand who we are and how we came to be here. It is cobbled together and interpreted from memories – fallible as they are – and scraps of information that have survived from the past into the present that are constructed into stories to make sense of the past to us in the present."

- ***Proud and Lonely : A History of Science Fiction Fandom in Australia Part One : 1936 to 1961*** by Leigh Edmonds, p5

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.
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WANDERINGS AND READINGS – An Occasional Column by Julian Warner

Completely Pickled

For a change, not about alcoholic beverages. We've been clearing out the pantry cupboard lately, ahead of having to move house temporarily. I haven't been able to reduce the collection of pickles and chutneys by much as I feel somehow bereft if I don't have a wide selection of condiments to add to food. There's about ten jars of different pickles or chutneys in the cupboard at the moment and that number is not likely to reduce in a hurry.

As a boy in England and Scotland, I grew up with – and very much enjoyed – the traditional Branston's Pickle and Crosse and Blackwell Piccalilli (which are basically made by the same company). A cheese sandwich was incomplete without pickle. A good pickle could make fatty, bland tinned meat slightly more approachable. My only experience of anything exotic was when we visited Indian friends of my father's. I was intrigued by an enamel bowl in the bathroom under the sink which was covered by a cloth. It contained a murky brown substance which I was told was a chutney, maturing I suppose, in the coolest room of the house.

It wasn't until we reached Australia that I became exposed to a wider range of non-English condiments. There'd always been Sharwood's Mango Chutney, which was more like a very mildly spiced mango jam. That was so widely available that it had lost anything but a hypothetical connection with India.



It was in Geraldton in Western Australia where I discovered Bolst's Mango Pickle. I'd bought it when the usual Sharwood's Chutney was unavailable. Bolst's was much less sweet and much more spicy. Just the thing for a cheese or liverwurst sandwich, or as a side condiment to an inauthentic curry.

Once I had tried one Bolst's pickle, I experimented further and found much to like and some things to use with caution.

There is a huge variety of pickles and chutneys out there, with names, recipes and ingredients changing from country to country and region to region. As it is, the Anglo and Australian idea of chutney is quite different from that of people from South Asia. Rather than a sweet fruit pickle, for South Asians, a chutney is most often a fresh,

uncooked preparation. The better Indian restaurants will serve little chutneys with their food. There certainly are pickles, as Westerners understand them, but they are much spicier and available in a much broader range. Strong mustard flavours feature in Bengali "Kas[a]undi", which can be made from tomato or mango or other fruits. 'Pickle' and 'Achar' are largely synonymous words but they are often used for quite different condiments. Achar in Malaysia and Indonesia may refer to quite fresh, lightly pickled vegetables.

While I'm thinking of mustard I should diverge briefly for Italy's 'Frutta di Mostarda' or Mustard Fruits. I discovered those courtesy of the local Italian shops. Visibly they look like various fruits — citron peel, pear, cherries and so on — in a heavy syrup. Except that there is a fairly strong mustard flavour to that syrup. Mustard Fruits are a good accompaniment to strongly flavoured ham. (Which brings to mind gammon and ham steaks. When did you last have a ham steak?)

An exploration of South Asian pickles also means an exploration of spices, herbs and vegetables that you might not have heard of before. Chalta or Elephant Apple (a fruit much enjoyed by elephants) is used for a pickle in India and Bangladesh. Gongura, a leafy green vegetable common throughout South Asia, is also made into a pickle.

And then there are also fish(y) pickles. Bombay Duck makes a fine pickle and there are several varieties of Prawn Ballichow available.

Use of the terms 'mild' and 'hot' in Indian pickles is rather haphazard. What they call mild you may regard as strongly spicy and acidic — or not. At least 'hot' really does mean hot. Usually. Something with an innocuous name like 'mixed vegetable pickle' may be quite fiery. Tread with caution. Also beware of things like stones still in plums when eating plum pickle or whole hard spices which are not edible.

I've previously mentioned (elsewhere) the jar of Naga Pickle I bought some time back at the recommendation of a friend. There are various chilli pickles available but Naga is the hottest I've had. Not all chilli pickles are hot. I also have a relatively mild green chilli pickle.

Pickles have been a point of common interest with my past workmates from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They have all been knowledgeable on the topic and either love them or rue the fact that they can't eat them any more.

If you are looking for interesting South Asian pickles I can recommend several brands: Bolst's; Mother's Recipe; Pran; Shan; Fern's; Priya ... and many more. An indicator of how popular pickles are is that some are sold in one kilogram tubs.



I still look for good European pickles. The German brand Kühne makes an acceptable 'Piccalilly'. Most 'mustard pickles' are too bland and sweet for me — particularly the sandwich pickles sold in Australian supermarkets. I'm intrigued by the fact that there are — apparently — many different forms of pickles and piccalillies made/sold in the USA which I have not encountered here. Maybe I'll find some next time I go there.

It's not a primary driver for travel but if I am travelling, one of the things I will be doing is looking for yet more good pickles.

SWINGING LONDON 1967 by Martin Field

In the 1960s, the Star Tavern in Belgravia was a famous, if not notorious hangout, frequented by the rich, celebrities, and the occasional aristocrat. Allegedly, the Great Train Robbery was planned there.

In the Star was an upstairs room, private and unnamed. It was here that the toffs and others gathered.

Around 1967, we must have read about the place in the **Sunday Times Magazine**, then a trend-setting publication. The usual crew, five of us, decided to visit the Star to see the action.

You walked into a pub, there was no signage indicating the whereabouts of the bar we were after. So, we just went up the stairs to a plain door at the top. We walked in, to see a crowd of people in a comfortable pub lounge, a bar and tables and chairs.

Nobody took any notice, we sat at the bar and ordered drinks.



People-spotting started immediately, *sotto voce*, as we were cool. One of the celebs I recall, sitting at a table with friends, was Peter Cook. But right next to us, seated on stools at the bar, were Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies.



In 1961, Keeler, then a 19-year-old model, and Rice-Davies, a dancer, had been major players in the Profumo Affair, a scandal involving illicit liaisons, politics, and espionage. The affair eventually led to the resignation of Prime Minister Macmillan, followed by the election of a Labour government in 1964.

Still newsworthy, Keeler and Rice-Davies were instantly recognisable and, naturally, we started chatting to them.

I can't say anything of consequence arose in the conversation over the next hour, but they seemed happy enough to chat to the brash Australian gate crashers. And we were quietly excited to be talking to two personable and amusing celebrities.

There was a juke box playing next to a cleared dance area, and my friend Gary, full of confidence, eventually asked Christine to dance, and off they went.

Gary has told the story countless times since.

And so have I.

THE MOOCH OF LIFE by Perry Middlemiss

LIFE IN JUNE

June 1-7

We've bought a new car. And it's pretty much the same as the old one.

Our previous motor was a Subaru XV 2.0 litre that we purchased a touch under six years ago. Since then we've taken it on numerous trips to Adelaide, around Victoria and into New South Wales, clocking up about 65,000 kilometres along the way. That may seem a lot if you live in a small country, though not in Australia. So it was mainly used in and around Melbourne but when we took it on longer drives into the country we found it to be the perfect size for us; not too big for Robyn and not too small for me. Suitcases, esky (portable cooler), and boxes of wine; it took the lot with not a single problem. It was, frankly, the best car we've ever owned.

But, like all cars, there comes a time when we needed to make the most of its trade-in value and buy something new. After six years we figured that time had come. As it happens Subaru in Australia was having an end-of-financial-year (end June) sale where they dropped a thousand dollars off the list price, paid for registration and compulsory third party person insurance, and added in a \$1,000 petrol voucher. It seemed like a good deal. So we went to take a look. The catch was that we had to order, pay for and collect our car before the end of June. That was doable, if one was available.



Subaru like a lot of other manufacturers seems to change its model range every few years and, for some reason, had decided to drop the XV and replace it with what they called a Crosstrek. Basically it looked exactly the same with some minor changes such as an enlarged application screen in the middle of the dashboard. It also felt slightly bigger, though a quick check seemed to imply the interior passenger space was exactly the same. We took one for a test drive and decided that the new model would do nicely. The catch: there was only one left in Victoria of the model, type and colour we wanted. We had nearly decided we were buying before we even got to the showroom so it didn't feel like we were being pushed into anything.

A week and half later we took delivery, big bow not included. A day after that we drove it to Adelaide, clocking up about 1500 kilometres in the next week. We are very happy with it. We'd better be, it may well be the last car of this type we ever buy.

June 8-14

The third in the continuing series of monthly Melbourne fannish drinks nights was held on 12th June; the second Wednesday of the month. This was a change from previous instalments as we'd

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decided to move the venue, which then also required a change of night as Thursdays in the new venue were taken up by a Trivia Quiz competition in which Rose Mitchell's team takes part. Instead of being at the rather noisy Platform 28 we moved a couple of doors west along Bourke Street in the Docklands to the Nixon and to Wednesday from the previous Thursday date. It seemed to go well even though we only had about 10 in attendance. It was certainly less noisy, we had a table booked and the food was quite decent. Until circumstances change radically I believe this will be our go-to place for the foreseeable future.

Leigh Edmonds was down from Ballarat again as he had spent the day out at Monash University Special Collections carrying out a first sort of the many boxes in the John Foyster collection there. John died about 20-odd years ago and his partner, Yvonne Rousseau, donated his papers, books and magazines to Monash in a large cache of archive boxes. The fanzines, magazines and convention material came to about 25 boxes of completely unsorted papers, and Leigh's initial aim was to separate the fanzines from all the other material as he will need them for the second volume of his history of Australian fandom.

I had offered to join him at Monash on the Thursday and it was pleasing to hear that the Special Collections Curator, who Leigh was dealing with, was also happy to see me. Leigh and I spent the bulk of Thursday doing a second sort of the non-magazine, non-book material and after about 5-6 hours had got it into a shape where we will be able to concentrate on getting out the fanzines that Leigh needs. It always makes things a lot easier when you have someone to chat to while you are doing this work.

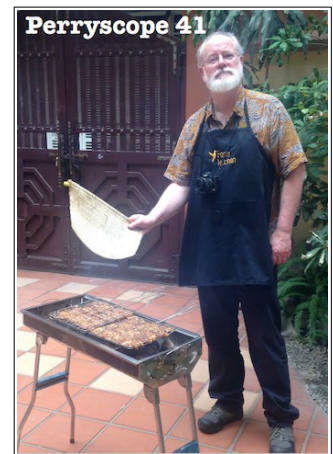
Oddly enough, we didn't come across any Foyster letters or correspondence. We will need to investigate that further. We're not sure where that material is located, if it still exists.

June 15-21

Back in **Perryscope 41**, while reviewing my film watching in 2023 I noted that I had only watched some 22 movies in that full 12 months. I went on to describe it as a "meagre total", which it certainly is, and vowed to do better in 2024. If my movie watching continues for the rest of this year at a similar rate to the past six months I should have watched somewhere in the vicinity of 65 films during this calendar year, against a target of 50. I feel much happier with that figure. And also with the fact that of the films that I have watched in 2024 to date, a touch under 40% have been in the local Hawthorn cinema. That was certainly something that I hadn't expected.

What I had anticipated though, was a commensurate drop-off in my reading. I read 90 books last year and set my target for 2024 as 100, as usual. This is now looking like being unachievable anytime in the near future. If I get to 75 books read by the end of this December I'll be happy. And if that happens it will be the lowest figure in about a decade.

I can only put this down to having only a certain amount of time in each day to devote to these sorts of activities; if one increases then the other decreases. It's just a matter of balance. Luckily this year, unlike last, I haven't been up all night watching the cricket being broadcast from England. It is still possible to read while doing that, a skill I seem to have inherited from my father who always seemed to be reading when watching television when I was much younger, but not to watch a movie at the same time.



I haven't mentioned my television viewing as that seems to be holding at a rather consistent level. I think I've noted before that my wife and I tend to watch the ABC news at 7:00pm, then move over to a one-hour episode of whatever drama we are currently working our way through, and then to a comedy of about 30-40 minutes if we can find one. That tends to wear my wife out and she goes off to bed to read while I either watch something else or read as well. I don't like reading in bed, just can't find a comfortable position.

Why do I mention this? So this series of Mooch entries makes a bit of sense to me as a diary of sorts. And also as an *aide-mémoire* to remind myself that I need to pay a bit more attention to things.

June 22-30

The pain started as a mild discomfort in my right heel as I was walking back home from the local cinema a few weeks back. By the time I got home that day it had progressed to being rather sharp, at the back end of the heel bone. I was limping, and by the next day the achilles tendon was starting to feel the effects. I figured out fairly quickly that it wasn't an attack of gout as the area wasn't painful to the touch, only when I put any weight on it.

After a couple of days I tried a series of anti-inflammatory tablets that I had to hand, hoping that might have some impact. It did, but only a minor one. I was staying off the painkillers as I didn't see much point in taking them.

This went one for about 10 days, some were good and some not so good. By then I'd decided I'd had enough and, with some prompting from a friend, decided that I'd better make an appointment with the doctor to try to figure out what the problem might be. I was due for a doctor's visit anyway so just decided to combine the two.

And the night I made the appointment, at about 3am as I was lying in bed staring at the ceiling wondering if I was ever going to get back to sleep again, the answer came to me. It was an attack of *plantar fasciitis*, something that I had suffered from about 15-20 years ago and which I had completely forgotten about. How could I have forgotten that? I was on crutches for about a week last time.

So, a course of the stronger anti-inflammatories that I had left over from my neck problem a few months back and the exercises which basically consist of placing 5cm diameter tube of wood on the floor, putting my instep over the wood, leaning my weight onto it and rolling it back and forth. The idea is to strength and strengthen the muscles in the sole of the foot so as to relieve the pressure on the heel, etc. If that sounds at all painful then I can safely assure you that it is. Very. But you get an instant sense of relieve once you finish.

Recovery is slow but it is shows signs of progress. I can mostly walk without a limp now after about a week of this treatment. I just have to make sure I'm right to go before I head off to Scotland.

“It's an irritating reality that many places and events defy description. Angkor Wat and Machu Picchu, for instance, seem to demand silence, like a love affair you can never talk about. For a while after, you fumble for words, trying vainly to assemble a private narrative, an explanation, a comfortable way to frame where you've been and what's happened. In the end, you're just happy you were there — with your eyes open — and lived to see it.”

— Anthony Bourdain, **The Nasty Bits: Collected Varietal Cuts, Usable Trim, Scraps, and Bones**

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

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

Abbr – Anth: Anthology; Aust: Australian; Edgar: Edgar Award winner; Gdn: Guardian Best 1000 Novels; Nvla: novella; PEN: Pen/Faulkner Award winner; Trans: translated.

May 2024 books

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>Termush</i>	Sven Holm	Lit	May 5		3.7	1967	Trans (Danish)
<i>Proud and Lonely</i>	Leigh Edmonds	History	May 16		4.4	2024	Aust
<i>Nebula Award Stories 6</i>	ed Clifford D. Simak	Sf	May 21		4.0	1971	Anth
<i>Honeymoon</i>	Patrick Modiano	Lit	May 25		3.3	1990	Trans (French)

Books read in the period: 4

Yearly total to end of period: 36

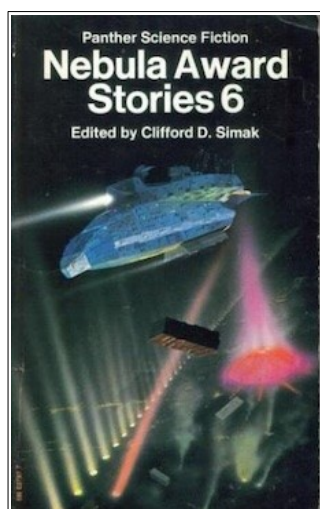
Notes:

Termush (1967) – Translated from the Danish by Sylvia Clayton

The “Termush” of the title is a hotel, situated near the coast of an unnamed country. This short novel is set in and around that hotel at a time after a nuclear holocaust has been unleashed, devastating the countryside and releasing vast amounts of fallout. The hotel had been converted into a safe refuge for a wealthy cohort for just such an event and the novel opens as the unnamed narrator moves in. For a time all is well, but then the hotel management starts censoring the news – what there is of it – and sick and injured survivors from outside start to break in. This is a very interesting “end-of-the-world” novel from the 1960s, leaning more towards the Ballard point of that sub-genre rather than the cosier Wyndham end. I had never heard of this before I happened to stumble on it in the library. It’s not a masterpiece but its steadily



building sense of dread, its sparse prose, and its distanced narrator makes it worthy of more consideration. R: 3.7/5.0



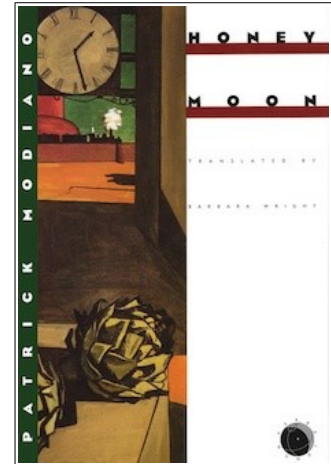
Proud and Lonely (2024) – see main review above.

Nebula Award Stories 6 (1971) – The sixth anthology from the Science Fiction Writers of America (as they were then) highlighting stories that either won or were nominated for the Nebula Award in 1971, for stories published in 1970. This is probably the best of the series so far with only one lesser story out of the seven. Longest among them, as the only novella, is **Ill Met in Lankmar**, Fritz Leiber’s first story (chronologically) in his long-running Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser series. Here the two meet for the first time and decide to join forces to further their thieving adventures. It won both the Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novella that year. I’d always thought of Keith Laumer as a writer of sf adventure stories so his “In the Queue” is a departure from his normal style and possibly the best

story he wrote. Lafferty's "Continued on the Next Rock", Wolfe's "The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories", and Russ's "The Second Inquisition" are all excellent, interesting and entertaining pieces which give a good indication of the authors' abilities. But it is Sturgeon's "Slow Sculpture" that stands out for me, winner of both awards for that year, but for different categories (Hugo for Short Story and Nebula for Novelette). It is interesting to note that of all the stories on the Nebula ballot in 1971 the only story that was not from Damon Knight's *Orbit* series of original anthologies was Harry Harrison's "By the Falls", reprinted here, an uninspiring one-note story first published in *If* magazine. This anthology is a great indication of the way that sf was changing in the late 1960s and early 70s. R: 4.0/5.0

Honeymoon (1990) – Translated from the French by Barbara Wright.

This is another in the author's series of novels about middle-aged men being haunted by their memories and past relationships. Here, Parisian documentary film-maker Jean is passing through Milan when he decides to waste some time in a hotel bar. There he gets talking to the barman and hears that a woman committed suicide in the hotel a few days earlier. Something the barman says gets him intrigued and he tracks down a newspaper with a detailed report on the incident. He finds that he knew the woman having first met her by chance in the south of France many years before, and again several times over the subsequent years. When he returns to Paris to prepare for his next filming in Brazil he makes a major decision to write the woman's biography. So he decides to disappear, and instead of catching the flight to Rio, he instead flies to Milan and then back to Paris where he starts to live in the outer suburbs,



well away from his wife and home. This is an example of Modiano's "autofiction", a form of fictionalised autobiography. It has a very good setup and the reader soon comes to realise the extent of the narrator's mid-life crisis far more than he does. But the author doesn't land the ending and it peters out with little resolution which is a pity as this really seemed to be heading somewhere.

R: 3.3/5.0

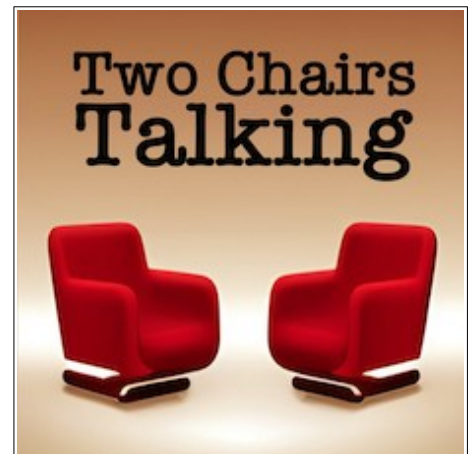
WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

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

Notes from this month's podcasts

Episode 101: (22 June 2024) *The Best SF Novels of the 1960s*

On the first Wednesday in May this year David Grigg and I gave a talk at Melbourne's Nova Mob meeting, which I wrote about in **Perryscope 44**. We recorded that discussion and it is now available as a special episode of our podcast, which generally remains in abeyance.



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 WATCHING LATELY

Television

Codes –Sn: season (blank for mini-series); R: rating, out of 5.0.
Abbr – Aust: Australian

May 2024 television

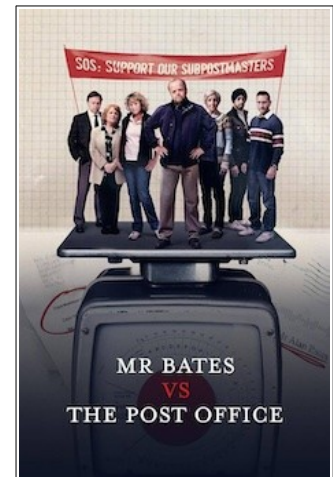
Title	Sn	Eps	Genre	Platform	R	Rel Date	Notes
<i>Mr Bates vs The Post Office</i>		4	Drama	Seven+	4.2	2024	
<i>Shardlake</i>		4	Historical crime	Disney+	3.8	2024	
<i>Ted Lasso</i>	2	12	Comedy drama	Apple	4.0	2021	
<i>The Expanse</i>	1	10	Sf	Amazon	4.3	2016	
<i>The Test</i>	3	3	Sports documentary	Amazon	3.7	2024	Aust

TV shows watched in the period: 5
Yearly total to end of period: 24

Mr Bates vs The Post Office (Miniseries – 4 episodes) (2024)

Platform: 7+
Genre: Drama

Based on a true story this mini-series follows the trials of Alan Bates (played by Toby Jones) as he takes on the British Post Office. In 2003 he had his contract as a subpostmaster terminated by the Post Office after five years and a considerable investment by him; no reason was given. Bates had always complained to the PO that their new Horizon IT system was faulty, that it incorrectly tallied a day's accounting leaving the subpostmaster liable for any and all losses. After a few years he discovers that he was not the only person in that position, after being told the opposite by the PO, and decides to mount a campaign to get justice. Not just for himself but also for all the other British postmasters who were dismissed, prosecuted and jailed, and vilified for no fault of their own.



The campaign took 20 years and a public enquiry is now underway into the scandal, partly influenced by the public reaction to this mini-series.



Toby Jones is excellent as the determined Bates, quietly getting support from other subpostmasters and various accountants and lawyers along the way. This story reminded me of the Australian Robodebt scandal that caused a large amount of distress and suffering among welfare recipients who were accused of “cheating” the system by not declaring income. Be warned that it is emotional viewing.

R: 4.2/5.0

Shardlake (Season 1 – 4 episodes) (2024)

Platform: Disney+
Genre: Historical crime drama

This historical crime series is based on the novel *Dissolution* by C. J. Sansom, the first in the author's Shardlake series of novels. The series takes its name from the main character, here played by Arthur Hughes, who has radial dysplasia affecting his right arm. The character in the novels is described as a "hunchback".

In the year 1537 barrister Matthew Shardlake is sent by Thomas Cromwell (Sean Bean) to a monastery near the fictional town of Scarnsea to investigate the death of one of Lord Cromwell's commissioners. This places the action of the series right at the start of the proposed dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. That policy permeates the whole of the plot, as Shardlake, accompanied by Jack Barak (Anthony Boyle), is stymied by the monks as they try to defend their monastery and faith. Before long Shardlake is confronted with three other deaths that need to be explained.

Although this is all a bit grim, with few characters you could actually like, the series is historical drama as it should be: gritty, grimy, dark and foreboding. Hughes is great in the lead role, exuding determination and intelligence as he sets about solving the murders. In a later period he might have just said "follow the money".

R: 3.8/5.0

Ted Lasso (Season 2 – 12 episodes) (2021)

Platform: Apple TV

Genre: Comedy drama

Richmond A.F.C. has been relegated from the Premier League to the Championship and their new season starts with a series of draws. Their main scorer Jamie Tartt (Phil Dunster) had left the club near the end of the previous season and returned to Man City and scored the goal that saw Richmond drop down a division, but now he wants to come back. The club's ageing captain Roy Kent (Brett Goldstein) – whose chant from the team's supporters ran: "He's here, he's there, he's every-fucking-where" – has retired due to a serious knee injury and takes up a role as a tv football pundit. The club's owner Rebecca Welton (Hannah Waddington) has decided to stay the course and work to get the club promoted again, and is looking for love in all the wrong places. And Ted Lasso (Jason Sudeikis) is still in charge but struggling to get the team to work together.



In other words we are back with the same cast, and many of the same problems as we had in season one. Maybe it's because the material is no longer fresh and new that I feel there is something missing here. It isn't a lot, just that it means this season isn't to the high standard of the first. Nevertheless it is still recommended. The football is again the framing mechanism of the stories rather than the main source of interest.

R: 4.0/5.0

The Expanse (Season 1 – 10 episodes) (2016)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Sf



Skimming the streaming services looking for something interesting to watch my eye was taken by this series which I watched when it was first shown eight or so years ago. It was great first up and my appreciation of it

may even have improved since. This is based on the series of novels by James S. A. Corey (of the same title) that my father thought was one of the best sf series he'd ever read. This first season is an adaptation of roughly half the first book, *Leviathan Wakes*.

It is set several hundred years in the future when humanity has colonised the Moon, Mars and a number of the smaller bodies and dwarf planets in the Asteroid Belt. The Solar System is now divided into three political factions: Earth-Luna, Mars and the Belt. A major part of this overall series concerns itself with the political manoeuvring that goes on between the three, with Mars trying to have more influence, the Belt protesting about the way they have been exploited for generations and Earth-Luna trying to keep it all together so they can maintain their position of dominance. And while all of this is going on in the background, the series starts when a ship hauling ice between Saturn's rings and Ceres is destroyed after it goes to investigate a distress signal. Only a small group of four survive (James Holden and his crew) and this series will feature them as some of the major characters in the story-line. The identity of the attackers is unknown, originally thought to be Mars but later discovered to be another, previously unsuspected group.

On Ceres Station Detective Joe Miller (Thomas Jane) is asked to carry out an off-the-books investigation into the disappearance of a young woman, Julie Mao, who happens to be the daughter of the one of the richest men in the system. He becomes fixated with the search and is fired when he is warned off and refuses to give Mao up for lost.

Meanwhile Holden discovers that the Canterbury was destroyed to stop it finding out about some illegal biological research featuring a "proto-molecule" which seems to have originated from outside the solar system. His quest to find those responsible for the destruction of the Canterbury intersects with Miller's search for Julie Mao and the two join forces as they try to figure out what is going on.

This really is a wonderful piece of sf television, operating on many levels, with multiple plot-lines, interesting characters, and wonderful special effects. If you don't like sf then it probably isn't for you but it is still worth having a look to see what can be done when sf is done properly. Wonderful stuff, and I'll certainly be moving on to the following seasons as soon as I can.

R: 4.3/5/0

The Test (Season 3 – 3 episodes) (2024)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Sports documentary

In the northern-hemisphere summer of 2023 the Australian Men's Test Cricket team travelled to England, firstly to face India in a one-off Test to determine the winner of the ICC Men's Test Championship and then to play against England in a five-Test series for the Ashes. Hefty assignments both. India thought they were favourites for the Championship, and maybe they were. But they made some rather poor personnel choices leaving out arguably their best bowler and, as a result, got outplayed by Australia rather comprehensively. The Ashes were another matter with about as many controversies as you could cram into the matches. This behind-the-scenes documentary (the third in the series) gives us a look at what it means to the Australian players, coaches and staff as they ride the ups and downs of a long campaign. It was fascinating to watch live during 2023, and it's just as interesting to see these programs a year later. For a cricket enthusiast like me there just can't be enough of this sort of stuff. R: 3.7/5.0



Film

Codes – P: platform (c for cinema, blank for home); R: rating, out of 5.0.
 Abbr – 1001: 1001 Films You Must See Before You Die; Aust: Australian

May 2024 films

Title	Director	Genre	Date	P	R	Rel Date	Notes
<i>Finch</i>	Miguel Sapochnik	Sf	May 2		3.6	2021	
<i>The Phantom Menace</i>	George Lucas	Sf	May 5		2.0	1999	
<i>Mad Max : Fury Road</i>	George Miller	Sf	May 7		4.2	2015	Aust; 1001
<i>Evil Does Not Exist</i>	Ryusuke Hamaguchi	Drama	May 8	c	3.8	2023	Sub-titles (Japanese)
<i>The Taste of Things</i>	Tran Anh Hung	Historical drama	May 11	c	4.8	2023	Sub-titles (French)
<i>French Connection II</i>	John Frankenheimer	Thriller	May 21		3.6	1975	

Films watched in the period: 6
 Yearly total to end of period: 27

Finch (2021)
 Platform: Apple+
 Genre: Sf

Some 15 years after a cataclysmic solar flare has destroyed the Earth's ozone layer and rendered the ground a parched waste-land, Finch Weinberg (played by Tom Hanks) spends his days scouring the deserted city of St Louis searching for caches of canned food or other supplies. He lives in an underground laboratory, once owned by the company he worked for, with his dog Goodyear and a small rover robot called Dewey. He is working on building an advanced humanoid robot, which, we later learn, will be trained to look after the dog after he is gone. While it isn't explicitly stated at the beginning we learn that Finch is dying, probably of radiation poisoning, and he realises he needs to make preparations before that happens. But his plans are thrown into disarray when he discovers a vast storm front approaching the city, a weather pattern that he believes will likely destroy everything around him. So he makes the decision to pack up and head out west towards California. Unfortunately he hasn't had long enough with the new robot, which takes the name Jeff, to train it properly, so the road trip becomes a voyage of discovery and learning for both of them.



This is a sentimental, moving, emotional and rather peaceful film that reminded me of some Pixar movies I've seen. And that is not a bad thing. It doesn't aim to do a lot but what it does do it does very well, just like its animated counterparts.

R: 3.6/5.0

***Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* (1999)**

Platform: Disney

Genre: Sf

I started this on May 4th, as you should, but could really only stomach an hour first up. I came back and finished it off the next night.

I'm guessing you've either seen it already or have decided not to so what I write here might be a spoiler or a warning, your choice I guess. The story-line, what there is of it, is put in place to get two Jedi Knights (Qui-Gon Jinn played by Liam Neeson, and his apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi, played by Ewan McGregor) to the planet of Tatooine where they meet, for the first time, the eight-year-old Anakin Skywalker. There are other things going on in the background but frankly this all appears to be so much window-dressing. It's the discovery of Anakin, the death of Qui-Gon Jinn, the elevation of Obi-Wan and his taking on of Anakin as his apprentice. So it's actually all just backstory for the main trilogy of films featuring Luke Skywalker etc.



This really is a woeful film; the dialog is clunky and the acting wooden. And the plot! Maybe the less said about that the better. There is no tension and no fleshing out of the character's backstories. And there is "sense of wonder" to be found here anywhere. It's almost as if Lucas thought that he could get by on a flimsy story, reasonable set production and a few highlights. Forget about characters, they're just there to move the story along after all.

There are a few bright patches: an interesting light sabre fight between the two Jedi Knights and Darth Maul, and the pod-car race which I enjoyed more than a lot of other critics it appears. But not a lot else.

Oddly enough I came to realise after a while that I had never actually watched all of this film previously, only some snippets here and there. I've seen it now, and I won't have to watch it again.

R: 2.0/5.0

***Mad Max : Fury Road* (2015)**

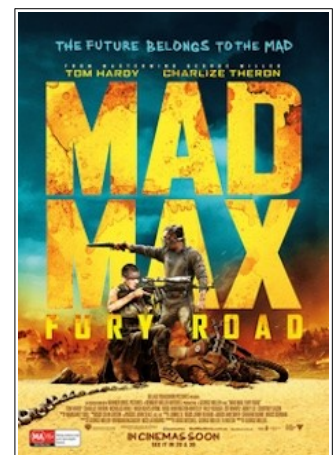
Platform: Amazon

Genre: Sf

This film appears on the 1001 Films You Must See before You Die list, and is ranked #6 on the list of Australia's Top 50 Movies by The Nightly website. It's also the fourth film in the Mad Max franchise.

I somehow missed this when it was first released. Maybe that was due to my not going to the cinema very much when my kids were younger. This isn't a film for a six-year-old.

Max Rockatansky (here played by Tom Hardy) is alone at the start of this film, roaming the devastated Australian landscape in his souped-up V8 Pursuit Special when he is ambushed and captured by a gang of marauders loyal to a despotic overlord called Immortan Joe. Also loyal to Joe is Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron) who is sent in an armoured "War Rig" (a tanker carrying "mother's milk", literally) to trade the produce for petrol and ammunition. But Furiosa has other ideas and heads off course. Joe realises that she has taken his five wives with her and sends a force out to re-capture her



and the rig and his wives. Max is dragged along to act as a “blood bag”, literally a live blood transfusion unit.

By this time we’re about 15 minutes in and I’m starting to think I might be wasting my time with this film. The setup of a post-apocalyptic world reverting to a “Western” scenario with evil overlord and sadistic minions seemed more than a little boring and time-worn. Fifteen minutes later and I had completely changed my mind. The chase sequence kicks in – frankly this whole film is a “chase sequence” told almost in real time – and the action kicks up to 11 on the explosions-death-and-destruction dial. And it doesn’t let up until near the end.

This is a stunningly intricate piece of work. It could have descended completely into cliché but George Miller never allows it to get too out-of-hand.

R: 4.2/5.0

Evil Does Not Exist (2023)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Drama

Language: Japanese with subtitles

This film won the Grand Jury Prize at the Venice International Film Festival.

I was very taken with Ryusuke Hamaguchi’s previous feature ***Drive My Car*** (2021), finding it my favourite film of 2022. The Hamaguchi style is evident here again: long, slow sequences (he loves to hold a single camera shot, perfectly still at a middle distance, and have a character walk from one side of the shot to the other and out of sight before cutting to the next shot); lots of smoking and driving cars; and long scenes where people just do ordinary things, like cutting wood.



Widower Takumi (Hitoshi Omika) lives with his daughter Hana in a peaceful village outside of Tokyo. Their idyllic life is threatened when an entertainment company decides it wants to build a large glamping site near the town. This will impact the local wildlife as it is situated on a deer path, and possibly the local water supply, for which the town is renowned, due to the inadequacy of the sewage system proposed. After the initial public hearing ends in disagreement, the company’s two representatives, who seem to know nothing, are ordered by company management to get Takumi onboard by offering him incentives. Then Hana goes missing and a frantic search is undertaken.

By this point I had no idea where this was heading and, looking back on the film, only a few hints here and there are dropped as to the final outcome. And that all happens in the last 15 minutes or so when the film heads off into “WTF-territory”, rather blindsiding me and leaving me wondering about what took place and why. The final sequence is a repeat of the opening, though this time in twilight rather than the original’s daylight. Is there a clue there? The audio over this sequence should tell us something, even if the visuals do not. It’s hard to know and I suspect the director wanted you to have that exact reaction. Do I understand what actually went on? No, not at all, but then it actually doesn’t matter. Any explanation will do, so long as you provide it.

This isn’t up to the level of ***Drive My Car***, as I think it is let down somewhat by its obscure ending. I have to admit though that I do like this director’s style. It isn’t for everyone and I know that my wife would have been snoozing after about 20 minutes but I liked it.

R: 3.8/5.0

The Taste of Things (2023)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Drama

Language: French with subtitles

In 1889 wealthy French chef and gourmand Dodin Bouffant (Benoît Maginel) is living in his manor house in the French countryside with his cook Eugénie (Juliette Binoche) and her assistant Vilette. For twenty years he has been designing menus and she had been helping him prepare them. They have been in a long-term romantic relationship and although he has asked her to marry him on numerous occasions she has always refused. One day Violette brings her young niece Pauline along to the house to see how a large kitchen works and, during the day, Dodin and Eugénie notice Pauline's talent for taste and smell and resolve, later that evening, to ask her parents to allow her to join the kitchen as an apprentice.



The life in the manor house seems idyllic until Eugénie starts experiencing fainting spells, with the local doctor being unable to determine a cause. There is a lot of foreshadowing here so we know where this will eventually end up. Eugénie finally accepts Dodin's proposal and they decide to marry in "the autumn of their lives".

The film is set mainly in and around the manor house with only a few scenes away from the property, and it takes a slow meditative approach to the storytelling. All of which might indicate that this is a boring, uninteresting film. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are many scenes set in the kitchen while food is being prepared and the choreography of the three, or sometimes four, people working in the kitchen is perfect. And the food! I haven't seen anything on a screen to match it since maybe *Babette's Feast* in the late 1980s. I could hear groans of culinary lust coming from other patrons in the cinema at our screening, or maybe that was just me. Be warned: don't go to see this film hungry.

Two scenes stand out for me in particular. The first is set away from the manor house in the temporary residence of a visiting "Prince of Eurasia" who has invited Dodin and his "suite" – his four closest male friends – for a meal. The Prince's chef begins to announce the menu: "There will be three services. The first will consist of.." and he then goes on to list a vast number of courses and dishes and wines. He pauses. "And for the second service..." There was laughter in the cinema, not at the clumsiness or stupidity of the scene, but at the ridiculousness of the excess. We later learn that the meal went for eight hours, with the guests not being happy about the flow of the meal, the way the tastes were constructed and the attendant wines. We might have thought that some of the earlier meals were excessive but compared to this they were mere fly-by snacks. Dodin is always interested in quality over quantity.

The second scene occurs right at the end of the film as the camera revolves around an empty kitchen with the components of the room changing with each revolution as if moving from one season to another to finally fix on the two main characters sitting at the kitchen table talking. A wonderful piece of cinema magic.

I think I will struggle to see a better film all year. As we left the cinema my wife said to me: "You know, only the French could have made that film. Everyone else would have messed it up." And I think she is perfectly correct. It's films like this that will always keep me going back to the cinema.

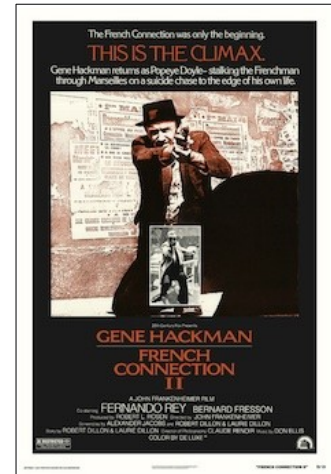
R: 4.8/5.0

French Connection II (1975)

Platform: Apple+

Genre: Thriller

In this sequel to 1971's ***The French Connection*** Popeye Doyle (Gene Hackman) is now in Marseilles, France, looking for Alan Charnier (Fernando Rey), the main villain who escaped in the first film in this series. He's been sent by his superiors to act as a liaison with the French police as he's really the only one who got a clear view of the drug-dealer in New York. But Doyle doesn't take long before he's made a nuisance of himself with the French authorities and the French police put a tail on him to follow wherever he goes, ostensibly to keep him out of trouble, but actually he's been set up as bait. And the trap is sprung when Charnier sees him out of a restaurant window. Doyle is nabbed off the street, and taken to a small hotel where he is injected with heroin over a period of several weeks. Charnier wants to find out what he knows and uses Doyle's addiction to extract it before disposing of him. This sequel to the 1971 film doesn't have the same qualities as the original, substituting the iconic car-chasing-train sequence for one on foot. It's also not as gritty and the conflicts between Doyle and the French seem rather forced. Reasonable, but a fair step down from ***The French Connection***.



R: 3.6/5.0

PERRYSCOPE Responses

Perryscope 44:

Nic Farey: “Not much intersection with this'un for me, except for mostly Julian Warner and his magazines, although back in the day I was all about **Private Eye** and **Sounds** meself.

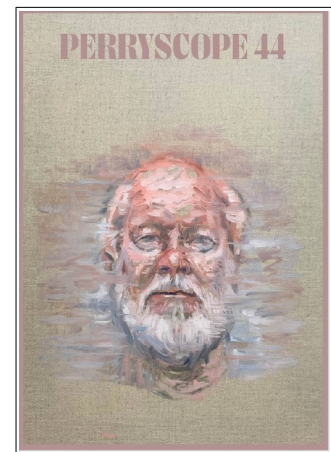
“Fuck me, though, that Chong cover is well good innnit?”

[**PM:** I suspect he's done a few of these now and will probably have another exhibition at some point.]

Mark Nelson: “Two nice things that I discovered after moving to Australia were BYO restaurants and that everyday dining places had reasonable wine prices. Talk of \$16-18 a glass makes me want to say ‘When I were a lad...’ But it's not just the cost of a glass of wine. The cost of going out for lunch has shot up. That's inevitable, though it's not due to progress; it's due to inflation. On the infrequent occasions on which my wife and I go out for lunch mid-week we can't help but compare the prices to those when we both moved to Wollongong, over twenty years ago. But that's not a fair comparison.”

[**PM:** But it is one of those things we all do all of the time. It may not be fair but it's just the way things go.]

“I have really enjoyed reading the podcasts that David put into **The Megaloscope**, so I hope you can persuade him to put in your talk of SF novels from the 1960s. (Though David has recently



informed me that issue 12 might be the last.) A subject for next year? I don't know, how about SF novels from the 1970s..."

[**PM:** All I can say is that David and I are having discussions about the novels of the 1970s. Discussions only. In order for us to feel comfortable with a talk such as that we'd have to do a LOT of re-reading. I can pretty well assure you, at least from my point of view, that isn't something we are contemplating deeply just yet. Maybe some time in the future, but don't hold your breath.]

"Aah. Sparkling reds. Another nice thing I discovered after moving to Australia. Australia's most important contribution to wine? Maybe not, but surely one of the most important. As my wife does not drink alcohol, except perhaps for a small sip on special occasions, it's not something that I drink these days. Unless the bottle I've bought for the special occasion is a sparkling red, but it's more likely to be a bottle of Champagne or sparkling. Still, I suppose I might be able to buy a glass if we go out for a meal. But how much will that cost me?"

[**PM:** If a restaurant had sparkling red by the glass I suspect it would be in the same price range as Australian sparkling white. But unless I knew the winemaker or the label I wouldn't touch it. There are far too many such sparkling reds in Australia which are at the sweeter end of the scale, and I like mine rather dry.]

"I enjoyed reading Julian Warner's column on magazines. For most of the 1980s, although starting in 1979, I read **Jazz Journal**, which I ordered from the local newsagent. A few years ago I wondered what had happened to it. Print production ceased with the December 2018 issue, at which point it moved online. I have thought about subscribing, it's 15 pounds for five months access which includes access to everything published since its first issue in 1948. I have thought about it. Maybe I'll subscribe when I retire... but I much prefer reading magazines in hard copy. Perhaps it's a case, as Julian wrote about the on-line **Wire**, that the online version doesn't feel right. There are a number of other publications that I'd liked to read when I retire, but how many of them will still be available as a printed publication?"

[**PM:** You bring up one of the major bonuses of subscribing to an online edition of a magazine if it has an extensive back catalog of material available for reading, research and perusal. But not all do. Some only have the material from the time when they started putting out both printed and online editions and aren't making any concerted effort to digitise their historical paper issues.]

I gave up reading magazines some time back when I came to realise that I just didn't have enough time to read them, and as one unread issue was placed on an ever-growing pile of their unread predecessors, I came to the view that I was never going to be able to get through the backlog. But now that I have retired I've re-subscribed to **The New York Review of Books** and **Australian Book Review**. I find I can generally get through all of what I want to read in each issue about the time the next one lands in the letterbox. Though it's only two magazines. Anything more than that and I reckon I'd struggle.]

"Your review of **Shogun** brought to mind a previous adaptation of James Cavell's novel, the miniseries that aired in 1980. I remember that being a big deal when it was shown in the UK. Have you seen it? [**PM:** Yes, but a long time ago, probably around the time it was first broadcast.] I see from the wikipedia page that the 1980 version downplayed the struggle between Toranaga and the other warlords. I remember the subplots dealing with Blackthorne's relationship with Mariko, though not the names of the characters. I strongly remember John Rhys-Davies appearing in it, though not who he played. (**Raiders of the Lost Ark** was the year after, 1981.)"

[**PM:** Rhys-Davies played Vasco Rodrigues in the 1980 mini-series that featured Richard Chamberlain as Blackthorne. The Rodrigues role was played in the latest adaptation by Nestor Carbonell but is only on screen in three episodes. As I recall the filming of the 1980 mini-series led to the falling out between Arkira Kurosawa and Toshirô Mifune. Kurosawa thought the whole western production of *Shogun* was something to be avoided but it seems that Mifune thought otherwise, or maybe needed the money. The two never worked together again.]

“I had not realised that Clavell's first novel was *King Rat*. I've read neither of these novels. However, I did watch the movie many years ago. How about this for a SF connection? Clavell worked on *The Fly* (1958) as a writer. I suppose I must have seen the 1958 film at some point in time, but I don't remember. I have watched the 1986 film a few times. And for an Australian connection, Clavell was born in Sydney.”

[**PM:** My father was a big fan of Clavell's books, probably starting with *King Rat*. I remember it being on his bookshelf when I was younger.]

Nick Price: “How about a ‘Thoughts while cleaning the barbecue’ column to capture all the miscellany and disconnected thoughts that pop up (or is that the implicit subtitle anyway?).”

[**PM:** I don't think I'm very conversant that that activity you refer to as “cleaning the barbecue”. If it's the gas one the procedure is: turn it on, set temperature to cremate, come back in 15 minutes, turn it off and brush down. If it's the charcoal big green egg (though mine is red) then just use a steel brush where required. Either way, it tends to allow little time for contemplation.]

“On painkiller-induced indigestion, if you are having that much trouble you could ask your friendly doctor what they think about Lansoprazole or omeprazo. The NHS dishes them out at the drop of a hat here because they have so many people on painkillers due to the long waiting lists. I suggest only staying on it short term. Also, cold compresses I find are very good for back/neck issues.”

[**PM:** It's actually not the neck that hurts. The pain and discomfort occurs in the fingers.]

Leigh Edmonds: “In my humble opinion *Perryscope* is getting better with every issue and this one was, for me, highly entertaining. Partly, I think, it is the way in which the fanzine has matured, like an old vin rouge that's aged well with just the right tones and accents starting to emerge. And because you've got yourself a couple of well aged and mature columnists too who can write a bit.

“Talking about writing, I don't know whether or not I should be flattered by your comment about my writing as being like a professional. If pushed to it I might agree with what you've written except for the final two words, that I write text ‘with ease’. Don't know about that! Writing a letter of comment involves actually reading the fanzine in question and then a lot of blank gazing out the window at the passing world while my subconscious comes up with something to write in response to what I've just read. (For example, it's taken the entire first movement of Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto, and a good part of the second movement, to get this far with this letter of comment.) And as for what might be called actual professional writing ... As they say, the trick is to make it look easy and that takes effort, most far from easy.”

[**PM:** And that's where the art is: in making something look and read as something effortless which somehow hides the hard work and time put into it.]

“Slipping on my ‘easy’ jacket, I was struck by your comment about the disappearance of BYO

restaurants. I had not noticed, probably because various circumstances had meant Valma and I stopped frequenting restaurants for the past decade or two so when I started again of late with our fannish friends, every restaurant we went to had wine lists instead of BYO. So I just took that for granted and didn't think about it. It was only a week or two back that I went out with a bunch of historian friends to a BYO Chinese restaurant in Howitt Street that I found myself in a BYO again. I had not thought to bring anything and had to rely on the generosity of others who apparently knew a thing or two about wine so that was good.

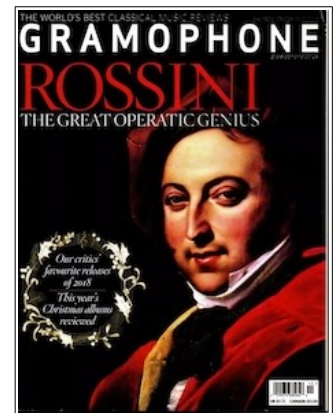
“Which reminds me, they must still have BYO in Canberra because I recall one evening during last year's convention when somebody turned up at our table (it might have been young Justin) with a bottle of something. You looked at it, trying to keep the look of disdain from your face, and then disappeared off to a nearby bottle shop to come back with a couple of bottles of something you considered drinkable. Not that I know much about that kind of thing these days, having reverted to my original setting of ‘if it's red and got alcohol it's alright by me’ setting that I got from years of drinking Henry's very rough red in Degraives Tavern in the 1970s. And then, now that I think about it, drinking liberally of cheap cask wine as a post-grad student at Murdoch uni in the 1990s. And after that circumstances of what Valma called ‘genteel poverty’ and work and ill health did nothing to educate my palate in the years that followed. Consequently, I'm imagining myself at the dinner you report with Howard Anderson, Julian and Lucy in which Julian spoke knowledgeable about wine. To me that conversation would probably have been equally as intelligible had it been in Lithuanian.”

[**PM:** Actually I think you'd be surprised by how interesting the conversation was, especially from my end of it. I briefly discussed when I'd first come across Howard's wines (back in 1994 or thereabouts) and we talked about the weather in Rutherglen over the past year or so, what vines Anderson's was growing and planting, the future of the winery and also about Howard's upcoming trip to Georgia in eastern Europe. All good stuff.]

“(On the side, all the above about drinking grog reminds me that at the end of my first year as an undergraduate at ANU in 1980 I got letters inviting me to enter the honours streams in both Political Science and History. I decided to do history because, from my first year experience, I knew that historians drank more and had more fun. Amazing how a good young Methodist boy from the bush should have his life so shaped by the evils of the demon drink.)”

[**PM:** I have absolutely nothing to say to that.]

“Julian writes well, doesn't he? Apart from that, his column this time set me wandering down memory lane with his mention of the **New Musical Express**. That too was compulsory reading for me for several years, bought at McGills as it happened. The other music magazine that Julian doesn't mention was **The Gramophone** which was almost as important in certain circles of Melbourne fandom at one stage and on the tables of John Bangsund, Lee Harding and probably Bruce Gillespie and I at least. The reviews were very literate and gave a very good idea of what you were getting if you invested your money in those recordings. One particular investment I made was the new release of Busoni's **Doktor Faustus** which I've only played once but still remember parts of vividly. There was also a period under the influence of **The Gramophone** that I bought lots of ‘bel canto’ opera that you'd have to pay me to listen to now. Unlike Julian, my main weakness was the scale modelling and aviation magazines, around 5,000 of them that I've lugged around the nation for decades.



“Interesting reviews, as usual. Your review of *Camp Concentration* took my attention and reminded me of your comments about *Bug Jack Barron*. (It was you, wasn't it?) [PM: I reviewed the book in **Perryscope 34**.] Both books were highly regarded at the time as good examples of the 'New Wave', but don't look so impressive with a few years behind them. At the time they seemed to me like the flashy shop windows of the 'New Wave' but lacked the substance of other writers. I wondered also if they were not only promoting the 'new' style of writing but also promoting **New Worlds** which was struggling at the time so that sensationalism was an important part of the deal. Meanwhile others like Aldiss and Ballard were doing the heavy lifting in the 'New Wave' - which makes me think that I should go back and reread some of their work. Oh no, now you've got me thinking and writing about science fiction. Almost got me! That's Bruce's job.”



[PM: Just read the books and don't tell anyone. But even Bruce isn't reviewing much any more. He seems to be leaving that to Colin Steele from Canberra and his other correspondents.]

William Breiding: “I've really been enjoying Julian Warner and Martin Field's columns. And didn't want to let go unmentioned Irwin Hirsh's adventures from issue 43 about visiting an art gallery. I followed the links to John Wolseley's art and found it of some curious interest. I kept thinking how unusual his parents must be to have bought this work of art. I met Irwin's parents when they swung through San Francisco on a trip and wanted to thank me for letting him bunk at our place while Irwin was on Walkabout in the US. I really don't remember much about them. I do remember the restaurant they took me to as a thanks, and how I felt—I was a rather shy fanboy in my early twenties and had no idea how deal with another fan's parents all on my own. Hopefully they didn't come away with too horrible of an impression of me.”

[PM: I remember both of Irwin's parents fondly and I suspect they would have been quite used to dealing with young sf fans.]

“Compared to Martin Field I have lived a very dull life. I'm enjoying his memoirs from the swinging sixties as a roadie and cad about town. Poor Lorraine!”

[PM: He certainly seems to have landed in the right place at the right time. And landed there with a zest for life and just the right set of electronic skills that were in high demand in the new technological world of 1960s' UK music.]

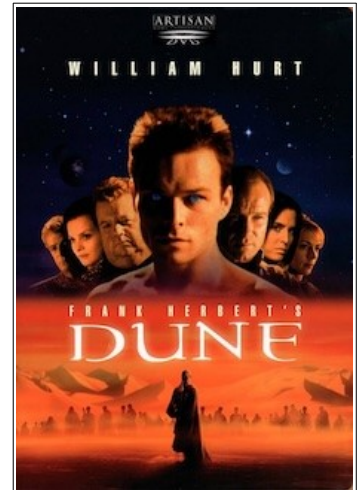
“I was intrigued by Julian Warner's piece on magazines. I rarely bought magazines, and subscribed to but a few—**The New Yorker**, **Interview**, **Details**, but oddly, never any music magazines, until much later, when it became essential, with the explosion of independent labels, to keep up with the kind of indie pop that I love. I subscribed to **Paste**, **Magnet**, and **Alternative Press**. These guideposts helped at the music stores (by then CDs), and I kept a list of albums recommended in my wallet, always on the lookout.”

[PM: That was the only way to build and maintain any sort of collection back then, or to ensure that you were listening or reading what everyone seemed to be talking about. None of this “hold on I'll just check Google for it.” The thrill of the hunt as you tracked down that missing item you needed or wanted appears to have disappeared now.]

“I find the discussion of wine by yourself and Julian interesting, even though I don’t have a discerning palate. I used to feel like a total schmuck because of this. Until it was scientifically proven that some people just don’t have the ability discern the nuances that a wine aficionado does. So I stopped feeling like a loser and embraced my crude tongue and learned to love the wines that I do like—cheap, middle of the road vintners with a smooth swallow.”

[**PM:** My wife has a far better palate than I do. It’s just a fact that I am quite willing to acknowledge. If I’m looking to buy a few bottles at a winery I ask her to try it first, and if she doesn’t like it then I don’t buy. Oddly she is much more of a white wine drinker than red, yet still has an excellent palate for the nuances in red wine.]

“Mark Olson’s amusing attack on *Dune* was thoroughly entertaining. I read *Dune* when I was 16 and absolutely adored it. I’ve had it on my to reread list for decades but with Mark’s fine argument against it I’ve become afeared to do so now! I have to say that I’ve not been impressed with any of the films made of the book, including the underwhelming (and rarely referred to) SciFi Channel version with William Hurt: booooring!



“Your ‘Mooch of Life’ entries made for good reading. I understand your desire to ‘show product’ in your retirement, but for the life of me I can’t see how you and your fellow monthly publishers have the energy for it, year after year. I salute you! I liked getting an inside view on local Melbourne meetups, too.

“Keep on reading, watching, and writing.”

[**PM:** Activities of the sort required to produce these monthly issues has now just become a part of my everyday life. I try to review everything I read or watch within a few days of experiencing it so I get to it fresh. Sometimes that doesn’t work but I do try to ensure it isn’t too long before the review gets written. The work I do here also gives some level of structure to my life in retirement. I’ve spoken to far too many people, men in particular, over the years who had no idea what they were going to do when they no longer attended work outside the home every day. They seemed bereft of ideas for inspiration about how to pass their upcoming extensive free time. That way boredom and madness lies.]

Rose Mitchell: “Another solid read Perry, congratulations on putting together such interesting pieces and penning some of those yourself. I’m intrigued why you didn’t buy two pillows so they match your bed styling. I shouldn’t imagine Robyn would have odd looking pillows dressing the bed. I encourage you and David Grigg to follow up on your excellent talk on ‘Best Of The Decade’ with doing the 70’s and onwards making it an annual Nova Mob event, similar to Ian Mond’s ‘Mondy’s Year in Review’.”

[**PM:** I generally leave interior design decisions with Robyn, but didn’t consider that this was one of those. The issue of pillows on the bed is rather a vexed one in our house, with, at last count, a total of nine on our bed alone. Only two are used on each side at night. The others? Well, decoration mainly. It is a subject I do NOT discuss.]

“Martin Field has led a colourful life, I envy him. Young and let loose on Swinging London. What an accolade for any self-respecting Aussie: being the first person to be chucked out of a posh, exclusive and pretty famous London club. Sybilla’s was where all the cool rich, very rich, people hung out. Hat’s off to Martin.

“It never ceases to astound me Julian Warner’s depth of knowledge of music. Some of those magazines I recognised, some (not many but some) I had bought and read myself. I recall **RAM** took itself pretty seriously and a must read in the 70s not only for the articles but for the Gig Guide. **Go Set**, an earlier weekly ‘pop’ music magazine, probably before Julian’s time and pitched to a Melbourne readership, was a must-have every week due to a pretty comprehensive Gig Guide.”

[**PM:** You had the advantage of living in a rather cosmopolitan Melbourne during your youth. I was relegated to the sleepy backwater of the suburbs of Adelaide or the even more moribund mid-North of South Australia. Music? What was that?]

“Mark Olson’s gripes about *Dune*’s science and galactic governments being dodgy gave me pause to ponder. Good science fiction causes the reader to suspend their disbelief and embrace the story and at the time, Frank Herbert did that. Looking back 60 years later, it is impossible to do that anymore, given the advances in science and technology that we have lived through but weren’t known or invented in 1968. I myself have always wondered how the Fremen invented a pretty sophisticated piece of tech to call the worms. Galactic civilisations have appeared in many seminal science fiction works — Iain Bank’s *Culture* comes to mind. I believe that this is because we all aspire to harmonious, stable and benevolent governments that lead to its citizens having ‘Living Their Best Lives’. Yes, it’s all about Us.”

[**PM:** We do have to be careful, looking back on a book over a period of 60 years or so, not to be too judgmental about its “failings” in the light of our new knowledge. The best books, of course, can handle the passage of time and still remain fresh, but they are rare. I see *Dune* as a book with a number of problems, none of which are so big as to destroy my enjoyment in its reading.]

John Hertz: “Thanks to Brother Warner for the **Janus 9** front cover. With ‘do younger people read any print magazines at all?’ let’s beware of ageism; ‘the young are no good’ is as tempting and dangerous as ‘the old are no good’. Different media do different things. Right tool for right task.”

[**PM:** I didn’t read Julian’s comments as heading anywhere near ageism. I’m sure he would agree with your last two sentences here. His initial question is just that. As a response we should also be careful not to read an observation about something as being an inherent criticism. I’m sure if Julian meant it as such you would have been aware of it. He’s not averse to putting his points across as forcefully as required..]

“Having just returned from the 59th Nebula Awards conference – I’m not a pro, and SFWA (now the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers Ass’n) has no ‘friends of’ memberships, I was a member’s guest – I think the annual Nebula Awards anthologies are valuable as historical documents. They show what the members who troubled to vote voted for.”

[**PM:** Yes, I agree. My concern is that without context, and without knowledge of what was left out (for whatever reason) we don’t have the best view of what the members of SFWA actually liked in a particular year. I don’t have a problem with an editor noting that, for example, a particular very popular story of Ellison’s one year was excluded because the author considered it had already been exposed enough, or the rights weren’t available, or whatever. I might not be happy about the situation but will have had a reason for a glaring omission. As you will read in my review of *Nebula Award Stories 6* on page 12 above I note that I think it is the best of the series to that point. And even then I have reservations about some inclusions, and some omissions. Overall I’m generally happy with the series and the anthologies are all worth reading; at least up to number 6. I can only suspect the run will continue with the following volumes.]

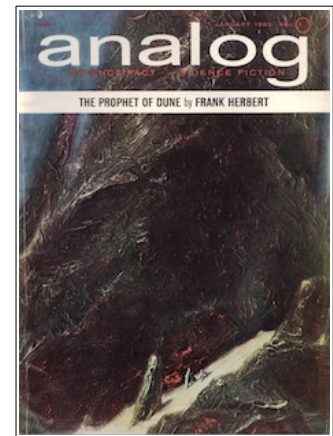
“I try to read through the Shakespeare plays every few years. I’ve even read *Venus and Adonis* and *The Phoenix and the Turtle* — that’s turtledove in case you didn’t know. Sometimes the price of greatness is that after you’ve gone, or even while you’re alive, others have to run you down. As it happens I just read a review by Edward R. Murrow of Churchill’s *Hinge of Fate*, alas.”

[**PM:** I take it from your “tone” that Murrow got stuck into Churchill a bit in this review. I must try to track that down. I am not a fan of Churchill much. He was not much use to Australia in either the First or Second World Wars. He was of great benefit to the UK of course, but as far as Australia is concerned we would have been better off if he had kept his nose out of operations in either the Middle-East or the Pacific.]

“Liking the new television mini-series *Shōgun*, you being electronic could go on to the substantial <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Adams_\(samurai\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Adams_(samurai))>, WA the historical person beneath Blackthorne.”

[**PM:** I have seen and read it, yes.]

“I actually agree with Brother Olson – about the Schoenherr covers for *Dune* in *Analog*. I’ve read *Dune* three times. The first time I thought ‘What a lot of claptrap.’ Some years later giving it another try I thought ‘How could I have misjudged this fine book?’ I’m a re-reader, so a few more years later I read it again. I concluded I was right the first time. But it’s had ardent applause.”



[**PM:** I am quite sure our assessments of books and films and other forms of art changes over time. We are not the same person at 60 as we were at 16. And there is nothing wrong with that. I just wish I had reviewed everything I consumed when I was younger so I could now go back and see what I thought of a book I originally read decades ago. But that ship had sailed and I can only see what I have for the past ten years or so. *Dune* is a big, divisive book, loved by some and hated by others. I appreciate it and think I’ve had quite enough to say about it of late.]

I also heard from: Heath Row; Bruce Gillespie; LynC; David Grigg; and Murray MacLachlan; thank you one and all.

