

PERRYSCOPE 46



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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 Robyn Mills, Morocco, May 2023.

INTRODUCTION

The page counts for this fanzine seem to be getting bigger and bigger; this one runs to 32 pages. It's not all me this time, you'll be happy to learn. I've received a number of items from various friends regarding one particular topic which will be explained below.

This issue actually came about because I was thinking a lot about my upcoming travels in the United Kingdom and the various topics here sprang out of that thinking. Chief among them is what to pack. Not so much the clothing aspect, although that is always a major problem, but rather the smaller items that we take with us to make our travelling lives a little easier. I've got a list in my head and I was interested to see what other people came up with. Typically some people stuck to the brief while others absolutely did not. And that is certainly okay as it gives a range of perspectives and some rather unexpected choices; some practical and some just plain sentimental.

I also took the opportunity to write up a certain unpleasant travel experience that I had on my first overseas trip back in 1987. We all have them from time to time, and so long as we end up with a story to tell and something to laugh about then all is well. Thankfully that happened to me this time. I've been lucky as I haven't ever missed a plane or train. I've been close of course; I suspect everyone who travels a bit has had a close shave or two. And I've only ever been sick once, in Egypt, and that was probably my fault by drinking the wrong water or eating something not fully cooked. I didn't allow it to ruin too much of my holiday. No, can't be having that.

There probably won't be an issue of **Perryscope** in August. I'll be travelling and time will be short in the evenings. I'll try to get to the reviews of books I read and films I see (yes, I do that on holidays as well) and will be attempting to write something about what I'm doing on a daily basis. Most of that will initially end up on FaceBook as it's an easy way to get the pieces out there on a regular basis. The problem with FB is that it is transitory, and it can be hard to find something once it's been and gone. My travel issue for India at the end of last year seemed to work okay so I'll be aiming for something like that again. The difference was that, on that tour, I was in a group with a guide, so at the end of the day it was just a matter of checking into the hotel, having a drink and something to eat and retiring to the room for some writing time. When you travel with your family and have to do all of the driving and lugging of bags things get a bit more tiring.

So I'm hopeful but not overly.

Cover notes: Not grumpy! There's a change. I'm looking over the ruins of the city of Volubilis, the capital of the Roman province of Mauritania Tingitana in Morocco. It was a hot day so I was standing in the shade. The Romans ruled the city from the 1st century CE until it fell to local tribes in 285. The buildings here were devastated by an earthquake in the mid-18th century with a lot of them being reduced to rubble. This is some distance from the epicentre of the latest Moroccan earthquake that hit the country in September 2023. There are still a number of intact Roman mosaics scattered throughout the site and I can only hope that what was there remained relatively intact.

MY WORST TRAVEL EXPERIENCE by Perry Middlemiss

A few weeks back I was talking to a friend and the conversation, as it often does, turned to travel; and from there it moved on to India. I said that I'd had a good time there and recommended the place as a travel destination. He was a bit bemused. "I thought you didn't like the place," he said.

"No, not at all. It was great."

He didn't seem particularly convinced and later I got to thinking about his reaction and how it might have come about. I suppose he'd been reading my FaceBook posts and had taken his impressions from them. In which case I could see how he might have reached his conclusions. When it comes time to write about a day's activities, I tend to look for the thing that stands out, the thing that will offer a sense of drama in order to put across some sort of "story". And they, as it works out, tend to be those times when something goes wrong: a mix-up with a tour company, problems with airline or hotel bookings, late trains, that sort of thing. If I have written about these problems too often I suppose it can, rightly, give the impression that I'm not having a good time. The difficulty is that writing about how good things are, how smoothly the travel is going, tend to be rather tedious, and frankly boring. I never want to read about how wonderful the food is (well, okay a bit), how care-free the travel is, or how much sleep a person is getting. I want tales of Bali belly, of trains disappearing down the tracks just as you arrive on the platform, of run-ins with customs officials. Good times I can cope with easily, bad times I need to be warned about.

I do try to temper the "bad" with some attempt at putting the experience into context of the overall holiday. I don't want to be complaining all the time, I had that in Morocco when we had a world-class complainer in the tour group. Everyone stayed away from her and it started to impact everyone else's enjoyment. No, I don't want that at all.

Except when it gets so bad that it turns out to be almost funny. At least in retrospect.

Back in 1987 Robyn and I decided to take a long trip around Europe and the UK. I wanted to go to the World Science Fiction Convention being held in Brighton that year, and also wanted to see something of the world. At that time I had never been outside Australia, and I was already into my thirties. I'd never had the money, time or ambition all at the same time previously. In 1987 enough of them had come together and I was starting to get a bit twitchy about it.

We ended up with a good deal with Malaysian Airlines that gave us a return airfare from Australia to Europe, with 30 days' car hire in the UK throw in, and the ability to fly over into one airport and fly home from any other that the airline serviced in Europe. We purchased a two month EurRail Pass that gave us unlimited first-class rail travel across the continent and we were set. Well, almost.

Those were the days when you booked everything through a travel agent or by phone or letter. The big stuff like the airfares, rail pass, and car hire was easy enough. It was the smaller connections that were the problem. How were we to get from the UK to France, at the end of our car hire, to start our rail journey? Airline? Ferry? We didn't really have a preference or a booking and figured we'd work it out when we were in the UK.



Then, when we were back in London again after a month driving around the UK, I was drinking with a bunch of sf fans and happened to mention my need to get to France. (I think by this stage we had decided on a train to Dover and then a ferry across the Channel to Calais as the best option.) And then someone offered an alternative: "Have you thought about the hovercraft?" Well, no, we hadn't. Probably because we weren't even aware of it. "This might be the only chance you ever get to travel on one," we were told. Which seemed very likely, and also prophetic.

I pitched the concept to Robyn, she agreed and a couple of days later we took the train to Dover and checked in for our "flight" to Calais. The weather had been getting cloudy during the day and while the weather forecasters were predicting some high winds and rain we figured we'd be okay. There were a few delays in getting started but we eventually headed off. I seem to recall the Dover harbour as being rather sheltered which lulled us into a false sense of calm and by the time we got out past the breakwaters and into the open Channel the wind had really started to pick up and the rain was belting down. While all of that might have been okay in a normal ferry, a hovercraft is a different type of beast altogether. It rides on top of the water, on top of the waves, and when they pitch up and down so does the hovercraft.

All we could really do was strap in and hope for the best. About 15 minutes in and I was thinking that the pilot should be turning the vessel around and getting back to safety. "I don't feel very well," said Robyn. "I'm going to the toilet." There were already a few people making use of vomit bags and by the time Robyn came back she seemed a shade of light green. "There was vomit everywhere," she said. "in the sinks, and all over the floor." It sounded rather dire.

I grabbed one of the bags from the back of the seat in front of me and offered it to her. I barely made it before she started to throw up. A steward wandered past and I asked for a few more bags. Before long I was holding a vomit bag for Robyn in front of her and pressing a wet cloth, again from the steward, at the back of her neck. I'd never seen her this bad, ever.

The hovercraft seemed to be in freefall for half the journey, and when it wasn't it was trying to smash itself to bits on the waves. I kept changing Robyn's bags and waiting for that time when the smell, the sounds and the general thought of it made me want to be sick as well. Oddly, it didn't happen.

At one point a steward walked past with a tray of items offering them for sale duty-free. "Great," I thought. "I could do with some more film." But the logistics of getting out my wallet and completing the purchase seemed beyond me as my hands were busy doing other things.

Somehow I kept my lunch down, and somehow we made it across the channel to the French coast. Unfortunately we'd been blown so far off course that we needed another twenty to thirty minutes of travel to get us into the relative safety of Calais harbour. At least during this section of the trip we weren't attempting to enter orbit every 30 seconds or so.

The French customs officials took one look at us coming off the hovercraft and just waved us through. Probably hoping to avoid any encounters with vomitous passengers. A shower and an early bed in a local pensione was all we could face, before a train to Paris in the morning.

Over the next few days I would read reports of the storm in various newspapers. "Storm of the Century" some headlines said, and some even referred to it as the worst in 300 years. I also learned the next morning that our "flight" had been the last allowed to leave. Frankly I would have preferred an extra night in Dover, sitting in a pub, with a pint, in front of a raging fire.

Robyn was fine. I was fine, but I never wanted to do that ever again.

THE THINGS WE CARRY by Various Hands

INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year a travel writer in the local paper, **The Age**, wrote a piece listing the 10 things they always take with them when they travel. There was nothing there that really stood out to me as being something I didn't already pack for my travels though there were a few things not listed that I thought were essential.

So I got to wondering what my travelling friends considered essential. What follows is their take on the subject.

PORTABLE PAIN RELIEF by Leigh Edmonds

First, let me explain.

Back around 2002 I was mugged by a couple of youngsters while walking home from the station late at night after a day working in Melbourne. The only long term effect was chronic pain in my upper jaw which was smashed in several places, causing permanent nerve damage. I manage the pain by not thinking about it, using distraction therapy. What works best for me is keeping busy and my previously occasional hobby is making scale models.

Over the period of a year or two I learned that if I spend an hour or two in the evening working on models it puts me into a state of mindfulness which helps me get to sleep without taking strong drugs. (I do have some codeine tablets on hand as a backup but rarely need them.) The importance of making models to my wellbeing is demonstrated statistically; in the period of about 25 years before the assault I'd made about 150 models, in the following 23 years I've made over 700 more. So when I am staying anywhere overnight or longer I have to take some model making stuff with me.

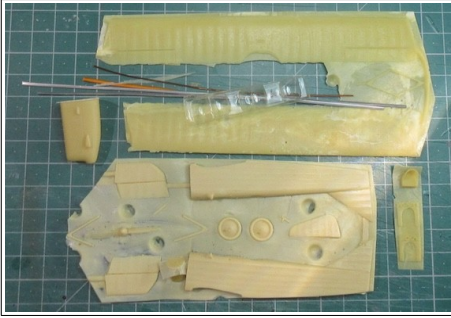


At home I have drawers and shelves of model making paraphernalia but I can't take it all with me so I have put together a small box of tools that are adequate for basic model making. I also have a small cutting mat because motel managers don't like knife marks and blobs of glue on their



furniture and a portable bright light to illuminate my work because many hotel rooms are quite dark. (This light is also useful for reading.)

Working on modern day complex kits while traveling is not a good idea because they are so fragile and break easily. Anyhow, my basic modeling tool box lacks many of the tools needed for advanced mode making. There are, however, many older kits that need a great deal of preparation before assembly so I take them. These are kits usually made by cottage industries for modellers who want to make more than the usual run of Mustangs, Spitfires, Messerschmitts, Zeros and etcetra.



The earliest form of these less-well-known aeroplanes were vacformed kits in which the parts have to be cut out of sheets of formed plastic card and many happy hours can be spent on this process before I even have the parts to



start assembly. Later, resin moulding started replacing vacformed kits and, although they need less preparation, liberating and preparing the parts for assembly can occupy an evening or two of relaxing meditative work.

So if I disappear from your room party relatively early you may assume that I have retired to my room where I'm relaxing after the day's excitement by working on a little model aeroplane. This is what I did on my recent trip to the United States and here is a photo of progress on one of the little resin kits I took with me.

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL ITEM: MY SMARTPHONE by Jean Weber

I call my iPhone my "everything machine". I rarely use it for voice calls, but it's my camera, flashlight, and magnifier, and my Internet access device. I never leave the house without it, and usually have it on me while at home.

For travel purposes, in Australia or overseas, I keep apps for public transport, taxi/rideshare, translation, currency exchange rates, weather, entry permits to various countries, hotel and plane



bookings, and others. My "digital wallet" holds credit cards, loyalty cards, and vaccination certificates. I set relevant apps to give me alerts and notifications about flights and other time-critical events. My Fitness app tracks steps and collects additional info from my watch. I have Flightradar24 and MarineTraffic for interest, plus a few books and games, though they're difficult for me to see on the phone; I prefer to use an iPad for them.



When I'm overseas, I mostly keep the phone in flight mode (so I don't accidentally run up phone charges) and use wifi. My strategies for data usage when wifi isn't available vary, and the choices keep changing. Sometimes I buy a local SIM, or I buy a data pack from GigSky — which, btw, is a great resource in some situations. In some cases it's more economic to use Telstra roaming at \$10/day; on my

last 5-week trip I only needed four days of roaming access, two of them in the UK where I actually made or received phone calls. If I'd been staying longer, I would probably have bought a local SIM.

My current phone is an iPhone 15 Pro Max, purchased mainly for the camera; a lesser model would have done everything else I want. Three essential add-ons are a protective case and a wrist strap, so I don't drop it — especially overboard when on a ship — and a holster that clips on my waistband or a belt, so I don't worry about pickpockets or my own forgetfulness. I am considering getting a lanyard to use in addition to the wristband in specific situations where I want the camera to be immediately available but attached to me without interfering with using my hands to do other things.

MY FAVOURITE TRAVEL THING by Rose Mitchell

I recall a previous request from Perry for a piece for one of his fanzines with a strict word length. I agonised over that piece, refining and reducing the word count to more or less fit the brief and still convey my core point, not to mention be eloquent and interesting. When the zine was published, others had completely ignored the brief: one person had footnotes and another a bibliography. Needless to say I was a bit miffed as my piece really could have done with another 1000 words at least. This time around, I am going rogue.

So all the bibs and bobs I simply must take when travelling is rather an extensive list but most of it fits in my carry on bags: a **cross body or back pack style handbag** (Item 1), a must as these styles free up my hands when out and about at my holiday destinations and an (Item 2) **all purpose soft style carry all**, that also doubles as a foot rest as I can stuff it under the seat in front and thus not required to be stowed in an overhead locker or worse, confiscated and sent to the hold. I am quite short and my feet tend to dangle which can be very uncomfortable on those horrible long haul flights.

I always pack about my person an **emory board** (Item 3) - a good solid medium-fine emory board. No matter how short and sensible my manicure, inevitably I break my nails hauling my luggage on and off carousels or up and down from luggage racks. We all know you can't take a metal nail file on board since forever thus emory boards being cardboard pass the security check. Not only is it uncomfortable not to be able to file down and smooth the break, it can also get downright dangerous as one can sustain a nasty cut from sharp, jagged broken nails. And I suspect those immaculately groomed cabin crew would judge my unkempt nails that end up resembling brickie labourer's hands.

Item 4 on the Non Negotiable List is a **bright pink sleeveless puffy vest**. I bought it when I travelled to The Grand Canyon — a destination at the very top of my bucket list. Bright pink so that if I fell off the edge into the canyon, my body would be seen easily. However, people who are stupid



enough to fall into the Grand Canyon are not retrieved. Added bonus, it folds down to literally nothing and stuffed into the bottom of handbag/daypack (see above) just in case it gets a bit chilly AND it has lots of pockets, inside and out. However, the Nevada weather in September was too warm to wear it. Lucky I didn't fall off the rim. I never wear it at home as it's just too daggy.

Item 5: a **face washer**. I was given some very wise advice years ago from a Brit to always pack a face washer. Not every hotel, particularly in the UK or Europe, provides these essential squares of towelling. I was shocked the first time I stayed in a London hotel that there were no face washers in the bathroom, especially considering how much I was paying for a large cupboard. I am glad I took heed. It has come in handy so many times especially in transit! Bit of a splosh-down in the airport bathroom, having a face washer makes it so much easier than using paper towelling or toilet paper to freshen up. Also essential for shower gel which hotels always supply. I do need to ensure that it is hung out flat to dry between uses and washed if the opportunity arises. Of course it is small enough to fit into carry-on baggage.

Item 6, my **blow up neck support pillow** thingy which I bought in Narita airport for a few yen. Such innovation: a neck support pillow that folds down FLAT into my bag (see above). When it's time to settle down, I merely pull it out and blow it up to my preferred hardness. I have seen some weird looks from my fellow passengers nearby as I'm blowing it up. But I reckon they're thinking "I need one of those". When not needed, simply deflate and shove into my bag or seat pocket. It takes up no space what so ever. I've seen them sold in Officeworks since I purchased mine in that foreign airport.

STREETS OF NOT-MY TOWN by Irwin Hirsh

"Back-up hard-copies of e-vouchers, e-tickets and confirmations." Done.

"Sufficient medications for the time away." Checked. And re-checked.

"This, that, and the other thing." Yep, thumbs-up, and confirmed.



Last September I discovered my essential travel 'item'. In early August Carlton, the football team I follow, were playing with a confidence not seen in a decade. Two decades even. The previous weekend we'd beaten the ladder leader and moved into the Eight. Looking through the fixture my sons and I started plotting the near future. "We can finish fifth...." "... and can win the first final ..." "... and then we'll probably play Melbourne ..." "... and we can win that ..." "... which means we'll play a Prelim in Adelaide or Brisbane."

“We are so going to that,” Adrian said.

15th September we were playing Melbourne at the MCG. With about a minute to go we're behind. But then the Wattering to Hollands to Docherty to Acres goal happened. Properly harnessed the energy generated from the roar of the Carlton-fans would've transported us to Brisbane. But we took the alternate route, which involved gaining some expensive frequent flyer points. Flew to Brisbane on Friday, spent Saturday walking through Brisbane's CDB to the Botanical Gardens, crossed over Brisbane River, promenaded north along SouthBank, made a slight diversion to look at the Go Between Bridge, had a late lunch in West End, continued south-east, and a short while before dusk we took up our seats at The Gabba. When we were leading by five goals the bays of Carlton fans were rocking, but Brisbane came back and went on to qualify for the Grand Final.

The next morning Adrian flew back to Melbourne, but I stayed on, to spend the day at the Queensland Art Gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art. A highlight was a discussion with a gallery attendant about 'Shaping Space: 'The Field' and after', the name given to part of the QAG's Australian art section. 'The Field' was a 1968 exhibition held at the National Gallery of Victoria, and I was intrigued to find a named homage here in Brisbane. In our discussion I told the attendant that the QAG now owns one of the paintings exhibited in The Field. I described the painting, which is by Dale Hickey, and the attendant was delighted with learning of this connection. He was particularly taken with the news that in 1968 the painting was titled Yellow Square but somewhere before being acquired by the QAG it got its new Untitled title.

It was a short, sweet trip. At some point in its planning I was hit by the realisation that something was missing: my intrepid partner in travel, Wendy. Since we got together we'd always travelled together, sharing the experience of new things, places, art, views, and whatnot. I've never before gone interstate for a football game, an experience that doesn't interest Wendy. Over the decades we've had evenings apart, but they've been because of a hospital stays and the like. This was the first time one of us gone away on a 'holiday' and left the other at home.

A TRAVEL ITEM THAT I ALWAYS PACK by Lucy Huntzinger

My Beats Solo 3 wireless over-ear headphones are a must-have on flights. I need to listen to music to keep my anxiety in check when I fly. Despite 40 years of air travel I am still capable of having a heart-jolting realization that I am 30,000 feet in the air in a metal tube traveling 200 miles an hour and this is insane.

And yet it's also tremendously boring. I can just about get by without them on flights of less than two hours, which are the kind I take most. Reading will suffice for distraction. But when I head to Europe for 10-12 hours or South America for 14-18 hours music is what will let me remain calm and keep me amused. Perhaps I should try one of those newfangled "audio books" sometime.



Do I pack them when I drive long distances? I do not. That's what Bluetooth devices are for. Nonetheless, my headphones have been to almost as many countries as I have. They still haven't made it to Australia, though.

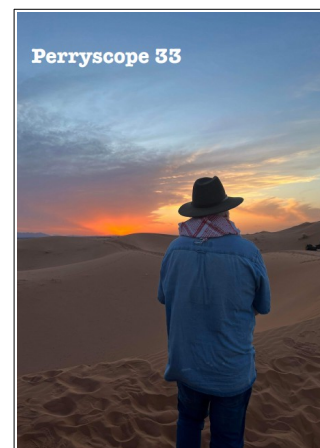
Need to fix that.

NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT IT by Perry Middlemiss

In his most famous novel Douglas Adams once wrote: “A towel, [The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy] says, is about the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitchhiker can have.” He then went on to list all of the useful things a towel can do for you, including, if it is clean enough, acting as a drying cloth. All very good and funny, and generally good advice. Well, nearly.

I always pack something similar, but it isn't a towel. Rather an Egyptian head scarf that I bought when my wife and I were travelling in that country back in 1990. Rather like Adams's towel I can use it as a head covering, a scarf, a tablecloth, a blanket and a drying cloth. If you look closely you can see me wearing it on the cover of **Perryscope 33**.

The square piece of cloth is about 1.5 metres on a side and, even though it's rather thin, it has worn very well over the years. I have no idea how much I paid for it, probably more than I should have and rather less than I expected. Whatever the cost it has been one of the first items packed each trip, along with the Swiss Army knife.



TRAVELLING LIGHT by Martin Field

In 1971 I travelled the Hippie Trail from London to New Delhi, in an old bus with a bunch of hippies. The trip, maybe 8,000 kilometres, made travelling light a necessity. I carried just a shoulder bag and a small backpack containing a few clothes and medicines. These days I'm over sleeping by the roadside and want a little more comfort away from home.

There are only so many things you can pack when travelling. Luggage weight and volume are the main limiting factors, so we stick to the old rule: “Pack only the absolute essentials, then reduce that by half.”

To avoid carrying bottles of shampoo and conditioner we take in plastic containers, solid bar shampoo and bar conditioner. The same size as bars of soap, they minimise volume and avoid the mess of leaky containers.

It's inevitable that food and liquid spills will stain clothes on the road, so, for instant “dry cleaning” we take alcohol-based hand sanitiser and wet wipes. Just apply the sanitiser to the stain, rub in with a wet wipe, leave for a few minutes and dry off with a tissue.

A 10,000 mAh power pack for phone charging anywhere is a must.

Pick pockets are everywhere so I use a hidden money belt for cards and notes.

Lastly, we always pack our Aeropress coffee machine. We buy ground coffee at the destination and are guaranteed a decent cup at any hotel or Air B&B where there's a jug.



WHAT I DON'T TAKE WITH ME WHEN I TRAVEL by Nick Price

Negative Space: A design term for the area or areas of space left empty in objects e.g., the space between chair legs and digital design e.g., space between input areas. Sometimes thought of as the 'breathing room' for the designs.

When I travel, I put as much thought into the things I do not take as much as those I do. Having travelled for many years, I have to revise my legacy rules of things to take with me when I travel. Some of the factors to consider are:

- The ubiquitous availability of the basics in most non-war zone countries is covered. *No need to overpack toiletries.*
- The casualisation of clothing standards. *Smart shoes? really*
- The availability of digital entertainment on long-distance air travel. *Noise-cancelling headphones.*
- The challenge of air travel is more in the transit areas than the journey itself. *A book that I've been saving to read*
- Inconsistent scanner performance. *Empty water bottle to fill on the other side of security*
- Increased medication and supplements to carry. *Remember to carry them in their original packaging.*
- Budget airline travel where there is a micro-charge for anything but the air that you breathe and also the pressure to go minimalist on your baggage (often hand size only). *Look for small luxuries to take.*
- The amount of destination information available through the internet via official and forum-based. *Where is the nearest supermarket to stock up at my destination?*
- What do I value most? Rather than published content it is my records and notes. *Moleskine notebook that gathers any thoughts, a good pen to write in it and a crappy pen to lend someone for their landing card.*
- Digital documentation. *Cloud-based images of all important documents and a known way to access them if I lose everything physically.*
- Local currency availability. Digital means of cards and phone card access. *Emergency cash is available.*
- Knowledge of popular local crimes. *Not taking something of high monetary value that would hurt to lose.*
- Readiness to deal with the herding practices of any airport and the herd members' transgressions. *Patience and forgiveness.*
- Packing things with an understanding that they may acquire some 'patina' memories of their own. *Resignation*
- Books and maps of the travel destination rather than digital. *I enjoy analogue as you can add notes on discoveries.*
- Research the places that herd won't go to. *Avoiding Instagram-friendly places and experiences. Finding more managed and tailored experiences. Asking people who have been to the same place about what they discovered and enjoyed most away from the mainstream. The latter may be the manner of the staff in an everyday, family-run restaurant.*
- Researching the local sense of humour.

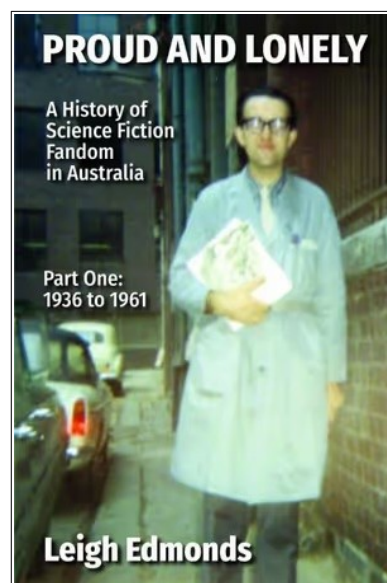
THE MOOCH OF LIFE by Perry Middlemiss

LIFE IN JULY

July 1-7

Most people will remember Merv Binns, if they recognise the name at all, as the owner of Space Age Books, Melbourne's first dedicated sf&f bookshop that was situated on Swanston Street for a lot of the 1970s and 80s. But Merv was more than that. He was also a stalwart of the Melbourne Science Fiction Club from the 1950s onwards and you can see a picture of him on the cover of Leigh Edmonds's book *Proud and Lonely : A History of Science Fiction Fandom in Australia Part One : 1936 to 1961*, which I reviewed last issue.

Merv passed away in 2020 and his wife, Helena in September 2023. The two of them had been renting and Helena's relatives needed to clear out the house as soon as they could. Led by Bruce Gillespie and Carey Handfield a number of us descended on the rental house one Sunday afternoon and extracted about 13 boxes of Merv's papers and magazines. They were destined for the rubbish bin the next day if we hadn't retrieved them.



After spending some time at Bruce's place the whole lot ended up at my house earlier this year. The aim was to slowly work my way through the material, getting it into some sort of order and scanning anything that needed to be scanned. There was a lot of that.

By the time I'd finished my first run through the papers I had nine full archive boxes which we hoped would be accepted by Monash University Special Collections. They were duly delivered and taken over by Monash and my wife is exceedingly glad they are no longer cluttering up our house.

I still have three boxes to go through which I aim to tackle later in the year. It seems a far less daunting task now than when I started.

July 8-14

Taking a break from all the holiday planning and the fannish activities Robyn and I decided we'd like a weekend away in the country and what better place than Bendigo in central Victoria, where I have a brother living and so does Robyn, and where we got the chance to see the Bendigo Art Gallery's winter exhibition "Paris: Impressions of Life 1880-1925."

We had given up any thought of dropping into Paris on the way through to Scotland as the Olympics would be on and the city would be crowded, lacking in accommodation and probably rather more expensive than normal. We can leave it for another day, especially as we were able to get a taste of life there from this exhibition.

But any weekend away can't just be one thing and one thing only. So on the Friday we met up with my brother and sister-in-law at a small winery in Heathcote (about 130km north of Hawthorn and about 45km from Bendigo) where we had a most pleasant wine tasting, charcuterie platter and

pizza as part of a lunch package that Robyn had arranged. Saturday morning was taken up with Robyn's family history research and the evening with dinner.



The Bendigo Art Gallery is one of the best in the country, certainly one of the top two or three outside any of Australia's State or Federal capitals, and it is always a pleasure to visit.

The exhibition had quite a number of painting, posters from various nightclubs, some period dresses in display cabinets, artisan street signs and general everyday items from the time. As usual the art gallery had done a terrific job on the display and it was a couple of hours well spent, on a cold Bastille Day.

July 15-21

July 20 2024 was the 55th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. And we have yet to go back.

I'm actually in two minds about that. Firstly I'm astonished that the USA was able to get all the technology lined up in order to achieve the feat when it did. You only have to watch Ron Howard's film **Apollo 13** to note that the bulk of the trajectory calculations for the spacecraft were carried out using pen and paper and slide rules. So I'm astonished they actually made it at all.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating any conspiracy theories here but showing my astonishment at the achievement. If you look back on the timeline of the space program you'd really think that the landing should have happened 10 or 20 years later. If, in some alternate universe, we were sitting here in 2024 looking back on a moon landing in 1989 rather than 1969 I think we might be far less astonished.

Secondly, I can see the reason why the moon wasn't such a major objective after the Apollo program. The Russian space program had basically ground to a halt after the death of Sergei Korolev in January 1966, and they had no-one to take his place who had the same drive, knowledge, management skills and ability to stand up to the Soviet leadership. He was probably the Soviet's counterpart to the US's Wernher von Braun. And who knows what might have happened to the US program if von Braun had died early.

That day in July 1969 was a momentous occasion and we even got let of school for the day to go home and watch it on tv. And that had never happened before. Strange days indeed.

And for me July 20 is also memorable in that it was my father's birthday. He would have been 94 if he was still alive.

July 21-31

The final period of this month has been taken up with final preparations for our extended holiday in the UK. My wife likes to have a printed copy of every ticket and booking which she packs away into plastic sheets stored in a folder. I like to have them available on some sort of electronic device

as well as having a copy in the cloud. I seem to be getting a bit more paranoid the older I get, thinking that something is bound to go wrong sooner or later so I'd better be well prepared.

The major thing is to remember to be carrying the right papers in the right place and at the right time. When we flew into LA on our last trip to the USA in 2022 we had neglected to have details of our flight out of Chicago into Canada with us at Immigration. It was obvious that the customs official was happy enough for us to enter the country but he did want to ensure that we were leaving as well. Luckily the Qantas ticket into the US also included details of our flight home from Vancouver to Melbourne. That seemed to convince him that we were leaving the US at some point.

I won't have that trouble this time round as we've just going to be in the UK the whole time, flying into Glasgow and out of London. I suspect UK customs will still want to check that we are intending to leave and have a ticket to prove it.

WHAT I'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LATELY

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

Notes from this month's podcasts

Episode 102: (22 July 2024) *Fanzines : the State of the Art*

I fly solo on this episode as consists of a recording of a panel I ran at Conflux, the National SF Convention held in Canberra in October 2023. On the panel with me were Leigh Edmonds and Alan Stewart. David Grigg, as always, provides the technical support. For which I am always very grateful.

Two episodes in two months should not be taken as an indication that we are back up and running. Just that a couple of ideas presented themselves.

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



“Science fiction has always had a wide readership, of course, but the past decade has seen a new audience emerge as prejudices about genre fiction lift. Yet it’s rarely acknowledged that genre fiction has its own forms of technical sophistication that a reader of literary fiction won’t necessarily grasp. (Perhaps this is a hangover of the old condescension.) Readers may, for example, need an eye for the profusion of new terms and concepts that often come with worldbuilding, and an ear for the allusive constructions beloved of science fiction and fantasy, or they’ll lose their way (and lose interest).”

Daisy Hildyard reviewing *In Ascension* by Martin MacInnes, **New York Review of Books**, 18 April 2024

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

Codes – F: format (e for electronic, blank for paper); R: rating, out of 5.0.
 Abbr – Aust: Australian; Edgar: Edgar Award winner

June 2024 books

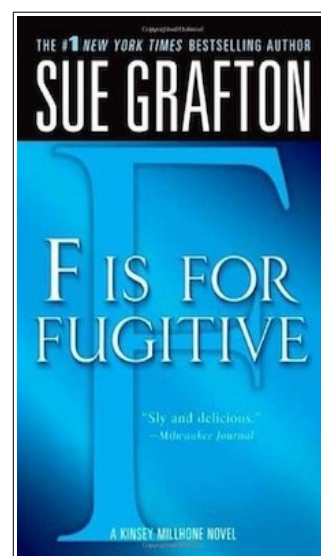
Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>F is for Fugitive</i>	Sue Grafton	Crime	June 3		3.4	1989	
<i>Sanctuary</i>	Garry Disher	Crime	June 17		3.8	2024	Aust
<i>She Rides Shotgun</i>	Jordan Harper	Crime	June 24	e	4.2	2017	Edgar
<i>One Corpse Too Many</i>	Ellis Peters	Crime	June 30	e	3.8	1979	

Books read in the period: 4
 Yearly total to end of period: 40

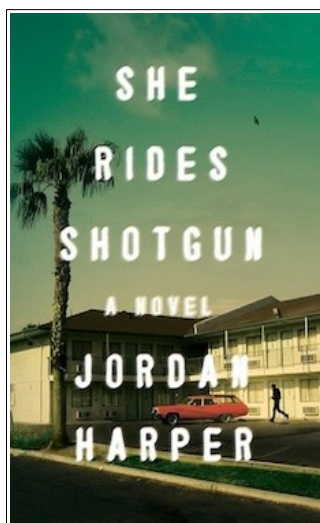
Notes:

F is for Fugitive (1989) – This is the 6th in the author’s Kinsey Millhone series of novels

Seventeen years before the start of this novel Bailey Fowler pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of his then girlfriend Jean Timberlake. A year later he was on the run and seemed to have disappeared forever. But now he’s been picked up by the police and is saying he had nothing to do with Timberlake’s death. Kinsey Millhone is hired by Fowler’s family to investigate the case in the hopes of freeing him. As Millhone starts to dig ever deeper into the mystery she discovers that the original police investigation was shoddy and that there are secrets in the Fowler’s family and the small town of Floral Beach that need to be prised open.



Grafton continues to impress in this wonderful series of PI novels. The plots are intricate enough without being so convoluted as to be incomprehensible, and the array of characters she presents are vivid and real. This is not the best of them so far but it shows the author’s talents and is worth your reading time. R: 3.4/5.0



Sanctuary (2024) – see main review below.

She Rides Shotgun (2017) – This novel won the 2018 Edgar Award for Best First Novel.

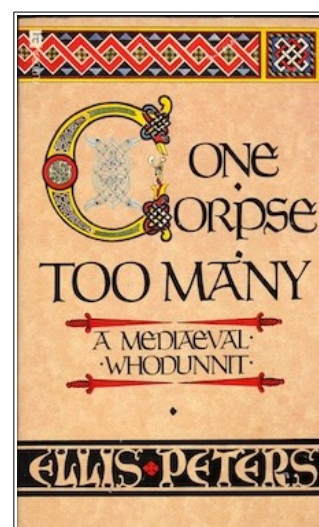
Nat McClusky kills a man in prison a few days before he is due to be released. That man had put a proposition to Nate that he really couldn’t refuse, but he did, the only way he knew how. Unfortunately the dead man was Crazy Craig Hollington’s brother, and Crazy Craig was the head of Aryan Steel, a violent criminal gang run by Hollington from behind bars. Nate is warned that Hollington has issued a death notice for him and his family, so, as soon as he is released, he steals a car, picks up his 11-year-old daughter Polly from school, and heads to his ex-wife’s house. But he is

too late and she and her new partner are now dead, and evidence has been left pointing the finger directly at Nate. So Nate and his daughter go on the run knowing that the Steel will do anything to catch and kill them, preferably slowly. What follows is a roller-coaster ride of action and violence as Nate decides to turn the attacks back on the Steel and hit them where it hurts. Along the way he tries to train Polly in the same way his late brother trained him, in a way that will hopefully help her to survive.

This is a wonderful debut, crisply written (adverbs? what are they?) and short. There is no fat in this story at all. Everything is geared towards the final outcome and if it doesn't fit the direct-line plot then it is discarded. I'm guessing he cut the original draft hard, and he cut a lot. What you are left with is a wonderful piece of crime fiction that indicates Harper as a writer to watch and one to put on your "must-read" list. R: 4.2/5.0

One Corpse Too Many (1979) – This is the second in the author's Brother Cadfael series of novels.

It is the summer of 1138 and King Stephen of England is laying siege to Shrewsbury which is loyal to the Empress Maud. She was the acknowledged heir of the previous king Henry I who died in 1135 without a male heir. Maud has married Geoffrey of Anjou and is out of the country in France at the time of Henry's death, so Stephen seizes the throne. The fight between Maud and Stephen will be an intermittent civil war known as The Anarchy, and will continue until 1153. Shrewsbury finally falls to Stephen's forces and he executes the 93 male defenders of the castle. He then allows the priory to give the dead back to their relatives and arrange funerals, but it is discovered that there are now 94 bodies; one corpse which should not be there. Enter Brother Cadfael who finds the body and determines that the young man has been murdered and dumped among the executed. King Stephen charges Cadfael with solving the mystery and we are off and running.



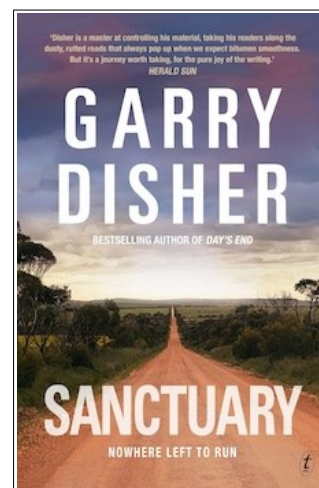
Ellis Peters writes an excellent historical detective story and this series of novels is considered to be one of the best ever. Cadfael is a full-rounded character, previously a Crusader who has seen action around the world and now is a monk at the Shrewsbury priory and its gardener and herbalist. Cadfael is not an infallible detective in these stories which is a bonus. He utilises his knowledge of plants and his worldly experience to be able to read the world and people around him and to come to conclusions that others don't. A number of characters are introduced in this novel who will surely make appearances later in the series.

This entry in the series continues the good work laid down in the first. R: 3.8/5.0

REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

Sanctuary (2024) by Garry Disher
Genre: Crime

By my count this is Garry Disher's 22nd crime novel. Generally he writes these as part of an ongoing series: Wyatt (9 novels from 1991-2018), Challis and Destry (7 novels from 1999-2016) and Paul "Hirsch" Hirschhausen (4 novels from 2013-2022). There is also the standalone



novel *The Way it is Now* published in 2021. And here we have his latest, another standalone, though you would have to think that with the effort Disher has put into this character that he has to be thinking of writing more. I can only hope that he does.

The protagonist in this novel is Grace, which is not her real name nor the only name she goes by in this book. She is a thief, trained for years by experts to be able to extract small, high-end items from the rich, either by means of sleight of hand or by simple break-and-enter. She tends to prefer the smaller, more easily transportable items such as jewellery, stamps and watches. She is also very good at her job.

But along the way she has made some enemies. So when she gets an inkling that she is being watched while she undertakes a lift from a man at a stamp expo in Brisbane she decides to go on the run, heading south through country New South Wales and Victoria to South Australia where she stops in the fictional town of Battendorf in the Adelaide Hills, modelled I suspect on the town of Handorf. Here she re-arranges her life and settles into a job as a sales assistant in an antiques shop, a job that her criminal past has prepared her for perfectly. She seems to have found a refuge of sorts, hopefully hidden away from the past, with Erin Mandel, the manager of the shop. Unknown to Grace, however, is the fact that Erin is also hiding out, and that person, her ex-husband, has come looking for her. And then, when Grace attempts to fence a stolen item, she is also betrayed.

This is a carefully crafted novel by Disher, as we've come to expect from his previous work. He slowly builds Grace's background from her orphanage upbringing to her criminal partnership with her foster brother Adam Garrett, using the flight from Brisbane as a way of showing the depth of Grace's understanding of how to change her identity and "disappear". She tends to fold into the background, trying not to stand out from the crowd and be noticeable in any way, unless, of course, that's part of the identity she creates when she sets up an operation. In many ways she is the female equivalent of Disher's earlier criminal character Wyatt. While he was willing to use guns and violence where necessary to succeed, Grace tends towards more cerebral and planned exploits. If, as hoped, Disher continues on with this series, we will start to see more and more contrasts and similarities between the two.

The novel is not concerned just with criminals and their exploits it also explores social issues, in this case domestic violence and lengths men will go to to control and terrorise the women in their lives. Disher has been doing just that for the bulk of his career and this goes a long way to raising the quality of his work to the top echelon of the genre.

If you want to know what is going on in Australian crime writing then you need to be reading this author.

R: 3.8/5.0

<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>

WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

Television

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

Abbr – Aust: Australian

June 2024 television

Title	Sn	Eps	Genre	Platform	R	Rel Date	Notes
Sugar		8	Crime drama	Apple	3.8	2024	
Ted Lasso	3	10	Comedy Drama	Apple	4.4	2023	

TV shows watched in the period: 2

Yearly total to end of period: 28

Sugar (Miniseries — 8 episodes) (2024)

Platform: Apple

Genre: Crime Drama

John Sugar (Colin Farrell) is a suave, sophisticated Los Angeles PI given to wearing bespoke suits and driving a baby blue Chevrolet Corvette Stingray convertible. He is engaged by a wealthy movie producer, Jonathan Siegel (James Cromwell) to find his missing grand-daughter Olivia who has had problems with drugs and has run-away previously. The rest of the Siegel family think Olivia has just run off and will turn up eventually. But Sugar starts to become fixated on the case and thinks there is more to it than meets the eye. Sugar is a film noir buff and scenes from various films are cut into the flow of this show highlighting some point or other. As the season progresses we start to get the idea that Sugar is not who he seems and this is finally confirmed with a big major twist in episode 6. I had this as one of two possibilities and wasn't so unhappy about it though my wife was really annoyed and felt it ruined the whole thing for her. I thought it was rather unnecessary and could have been handled another way but we can only review what we are offered. I enjoyed it. R: 3.8/5.0



Ted Lasso (Season 3 — 10 episodes) (2023)

Platform: Apple TV+

Genre: Comedy Drama

At the end of season two of this series Richmond A.F.C. had won promotion back from the Championship League to the Premier League of English Football. The general consensus among pundits is that they, like many other teams before them, will be immediately relegated again at the end of the season. But their fortunes pick up when a major world footballer, Zava, decides to play for them rather than one of the other glamour teams in the league. Things start well, but like all good dramas they then start to falter and problems arise which must be solved. Again we have a sport-related television program which only really uses the sporting aspect as a framework for the more interesting aspects of the drama, the people. All of the main characters are here again and we get to



follow the ups and downs of their relationships against the sporting backdrop. The episodes here are longer, better written and more intricate than season 2 and take us back to the intricacies of season 1. Very definitely worth viewing. Forget the sport, that really doesn't matter. R: 4.4/5.0

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

June 2024 films

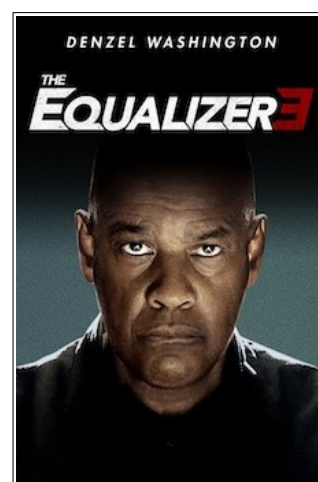
Title	Director	Genre	Date	P	R	Rel Date	Notes
<i>The Equalizer 3</i>	Antoine Fuqua	Action	Jun 1		3.2	2023	
<i>Furiosa : A Mad Max Saga</i>	George Miller	SF	Jun 5	c	3.7	2024	Aust
<i>The Conformist</i>	Bernardo Bertolucci	Drama	Jun 11	c	4.1	1970	Italian; 1001
<i>Once Upon a Time in Hollywood</i>	Quentin Tarantino	Drama	Jun 15		3.4	2019	1001
<i>Barry Lyndon</i>	Stanley Kubrick	Historical drama	Jun 20	c	4.3	1975	1001
<i>Perfect Days</i>	Wim Wenders	Drama	Jun 25	c	4.2	2023	Japanese
<i>The Shining</i>	Stanley Kubrick	Horror	Jun 27	c	4.2	1980	1001

Films watched in the period: 7
 Yearly total to end of period: 34

The Equalizer 3 (2023)

Platform: Amazon
 Genre: Thriller

We are back with Denzel Washington as Robert McCall, a retired US Marine and DIA field operative who now seems to pass his time acting as a vigilante working against drug and criminal cartels. The film starts in Sicily where we discover that McCall has infiltrated a vineyard/farm on an island off the coast of southern Italy and killed early everyone in the place. An old man and a young boy (his grandson?) arrive in a truck, survey the damage and discover McCall sitting in a chair with two men pointing guns at him. Soon it's everyone dead except for McCall and the boy who, unexpectedly for McCall, shoots him in the back as he tries to leave (shades of Jason Bourne here). McCall struggles back to the mainland where he is picked up by a local police officer and delivered to a small village and into the care of the town doctor. There he recuperates and starts to be accepted by the townsfolk. Peace at last! But wait on. The town is being terrorised by a gang of stand-over merchants working for the local Mafia, and it seems to be them who have arranged drug shipments from ISIS in Syria, or was it the other way round? Anyway they are all bad guys and McCall goes to work and the body count climbs and climbs and...Look on this as a version of the Reacher-style knight-errant



story with more blood and death. A time-waster but little else. I seem to recall the earlier ones in the series being much better than this.

R: 3.2/5.0

***The Furiosa : A Max Max Saga* (2024)**

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Sf

“Do ya have it in ya to make it epic?” So asks Dr Dementus (Chris Hemsworth) of Furiosa (Anya Taylor-Joy), and that might also be what we ask of director George Miller as he delivers this prequel to 2015’s ***Mad Max : Fury Road***. That film featured the character Furiosa, a hard-edged woman in the dystopian Mad Max world who works as a tanker driver for Immortan Joe, the leader of a large clan of desperate scavengers. Then Furiosa was played with remarkable strength and menace by Charlize Theron, with Mad Max (Tom Hardy) reduced to a secondary role; an interesting decision by the film-maker and one that was ultimately successful.



Here we are presented with Furiosa’s origin story, starting from the time when, as a young girl, she is kidnapped by a gang of motorcycle raiders loyal to Dementus. She had been living with her extended clan in an isolated spot that is known as the Green Place of Many Mothers, a land of plenty. Furiosa’s mother tracks her down and is killed by Dementus’s men as she helps Furiosa try to escape, though she later falls into the clutches of Immortan Joe. The film then becomes one long revenge saga as Furiosa develops her warrior fighting and driving skills so that she can avenge her mother’s death.

The character of Furiosa obviously intrigued Miller enough for him to work on this prequel – whether he had planned this one first or not is really beside the point, though it does raise the question of whether this film might have been better if it had been released first. Miller covers a lot of ground here, possibly too much, as the story features about 10-15 years of Furiosa’s life, ending this film just as the previous one starts.

There is a lot to like about this entry in the Mad Max saga though I think it does suffer from over-ambition. On the other hand some of the action sequences are as good as, and possibly better, than those in ***Fury Road***, and that is saying something. Taylor-Joy is adequate as the title character though she doesn’t have the gravitas and physical presence of Theron. But it is Hemsworth who steals the show, chewing the scenery and spitting it out in a theatrical performance that tends to dominate the scenes in which he is present. The film seems to be a lesser piece when he’s not on screen.

R: 3.7/5.0

***The Conformist* (1970)**

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Drama

[Italian, with subtitles. This film appears on the list of 1001 Films You Must Watch Before You Die.]

Bertolucci’s film is based upon the 1951 novel of the same name by Alberto Moravia and follows the life of Marcella Clerici (Jean-Louis Trintignant) from 1938 in Paris to 1943 in Rome, just after the resignation of Mussolini and the fall of the Italian Fascist regime. At the



start of the film Clerici has decided to ingratiate himself with the Fascist secret police by concocting a plan to assassinate his old university professor who is an outspoken anti-Fascist living in Paris. He has also decided to get married and take confession, even though he is an atheist, in order to be seen to be living a normal life, a conformist life. In a series of flashbacks we learn that as a child he believes he killed a man after a homosexual encounter, and we also learn that his mother was a morphine addict and his father was confined to a lunatic asylum. All of these incidents will have a major bearing on how Clerici lives his life, the way he treats others and the decisions he makes.

The film is a study of the way people living under a repressive, authoritarian government will adapt to conform, to fit in as best they can in order to survive. Although, it can be argued here, that Clerici does much more than that and is actually a willing participant in much of the repression we see in the film.

The film is beautifully shot by cinematographer Vittoria Storaro and I noted a couple of instances where he had utilised a favourite Hitchcock technique of the “dolly zoom”, with the camera physically moving away from the subject, in this case a character walking down a corridor, while simultaneously zooming in, maintaining focus. It’s a filmic trick that emphasises a character’s isolation. And if you play close attention you can see scenes which had a major influence on Francis Ford Coppola’s *Godfather* trilogy.

I saw this in the local cinema in the new 4K restoration, which is probably the best way to view it. It takes a little while to get into it at the beginning as some of the flashbacks are confusing as to time and place, though we are hardly watching this to be overwhelmed by plot. Very intriguing.

R: 4.1/5.0

***Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019)**

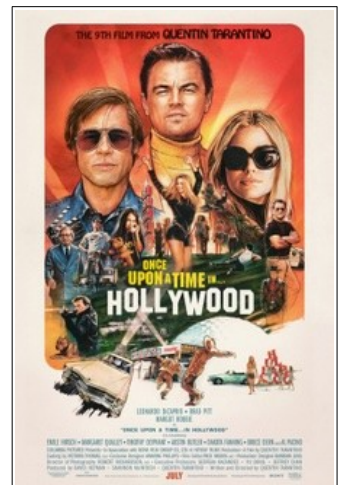
Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Drama

[This film appears on the list of 1001 Films You Must Watch Before You Die.]

This is Quentin Tarantino’s meditation on Hollywood in the late 1960s as it was making the transition from tv to film, and about to lose any sense of innocence it might have left due to the Sharon Tate murders.

Rick Dalton (Leonardo DiCaprio) is a middle-aged actor. Known for his long-running stint in the 1950s tv western “Bounty Law” he is now relegated to playing the “heavy” role in B-grade pictures. As Al Pacino’s “greek oracle” character tells him at one point, he is destined to never play a “good guy” again and will slowly fade away to nothing. Dalton is accompanied everywhere by his assistant/bodyguard/stunt double Cliff Booth (Brad Pitt) who provides Dalton with a drinking partner and a sounding board for his troubles. Dalton lives on Cielo Drive, next-door to the mansion recently rented by Roman Polanski and Sharon Tate (Margot Robbie), which gives us a major sense of foreboding about the future multiple murders in that house.



For the most part this film just meanders around Hollywood — with a foray into Italy so Dalton can star in a series of spaghetti westerns — technically exquisite but all rather shallow as Dalton slowly becomes more depressed and Booth just does what Booth does, including making a visit to the Manson family’s ranch where he beats-up a man who sticks a knife into his car’s tyre. There are plentiful nods to late-60s Hollywood all over this film, though I was completely non-plussed as to

why Tarantino treated Bruce Lee so badly, making him out to be a braggart and a bully. I had previously thought Lee was one of his cinematic heroes.

The film is somewhat redeemed in the last 20 minutes or so when we learn that this version of events is not historically accurate, and we enter an alternative time-line. Is this a cop out? Or innovative? Either might be applicable. Overall I found the film a little disappointing.

R: 3.4/5.0

Barry Lyndon (1975)

Platform: Cinema

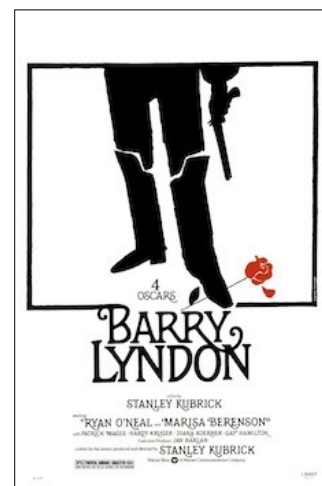
Genre: Historical drama

[This film appears on the list of 1001 Films You Must Watch Before You Die.]

Stanley Kubrick's **Barry Lyndon** was released in 1975 and sits, in his filmography, between **A Clockwork Orange** in 1971 and **The Shining** in 1980. A stranger grouping would surely be difficult to imagine from any other director.

Kubrick had attempted to make a film about the life of Napoleon in the mid-1970s but, after extensive research and development, the project fell apart due to the overall cost and the failure of a couple of other Napoleon offerings. Some of that research was incorporated into this film,

Kubrick's adaptation of the 1844 William Makepeace Thackeray, **The Luck of Barry Lyndon**. It is an early novel of Thackeray's, and not considered one of his best.



The story of Redmond Barry (Ryan O'Neal) (the name change will be explained later) starts in Ireland in the 1750s where he is a lowly farmer's son of a widowed mother. He falls for his first cousin Nora Brady who is also being pursued by British army captain John Quinn. Barry shoots Quinn in a duel, and, believing he has killed him, flees to Dublin. But he falls on hard times, joins the British Army, and is sent to Europe to fight in the Seven Years' War. He deserts and finds himself dragooned into the Prussian Army where he ingratiates himself with Captain Potzdorf (Hardy Krüger). At the end of the war Barry is brought into the Prussian Ministry of Police by Potzdorf. He is assigned to spy on Chevalier de Balibari (Patrick Magee) who is impersonating an Austrian diplomat and gambler, while spying on Prussia for the Empress Maria Theresa. The two become close — de Balibari is in fact an Irishman — and the two collude to escape Prussia before being arrested. In Spa Barry meets the young, beautiful and lonely Lady Lyndon (Marisa Berenson), seduces her and helps speed along her husband's death.

And here ends part one of the film. And we had an intermission of ten minutes in my cinema screening, an event that seemed to bamboozle most of the audience. Most of them had probably never had the experience previously. By this time we were about 120 minutes into a 208 minute run-time so a break was certainly welcome.

So far, so good. The story has been ticking along at a reasonable rate up to this point and although I was not impressed with O'Neal's work early on I was starting to warm to him a little.

Part two of the film is slow; very, very slow. Barry marries Lady Lyndon, takes her name and then starts to lavishly spend her money in a vain attempt to obtain a peerage by bribes and over-payments for goods and services. Lady Lyndon's son, Lord Bullingdon (played by Dominic Savage as a young boy, and by Leon Vitali as the older version), hates Barry beyond measure and after being attacked by Barry in public finally demands satisfaction by way of a duel.

Kubrick's film is certainly luscious to look at. Some critics have likened it to 3 hours in an art gallery, and in some scenes he does seem to be over-invested in the *mise en scene* to the detriment of the film and the viewer alike, holding a shot for way longer than seems really necessary. But this is a standard technique of Kubrick's and you need to be aware of it going in. I don't think that O'Neal was the right choice for the lead here, and Berenson's performance is barely animated at all. The choice parts lie with the supporting cast who generally do a wonderful job and, given the length of this film, get a fair amount of screen-time to display their wares.

I first saw this film when it was released in the mid-1970s and haven't seen it since, and yet some scenes remained in the memory like long-forgotten landscape paintings. I'm glad I saw it for a second time, but I won't be looking to watch it ever again.

R: 4.3/5.0

Perfect Days (2024)

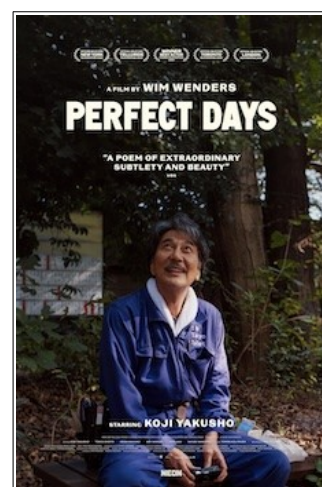
Platform: Cinema

Genre: Drama

[Japanese, with subtitles.]

Wim Wenders making a Japanese film? I guess anything is possible.

Hirayama (Koji Yakusho) is a single, middle-aged man living alone in a very small two-room apartment in Tokyo. By day he is a cleaner of a group of public toilets spread around the city. Each day he wakes to the sound of the street sweeper outdoors, folds up his bed, brushes his teeth, dresses in his work gear, collects his phone/keys/wallet etc on the way out the door, and stands, looks at the sky and smiles, regardless of the weather. He then buys coffee in a can from a vending machine in the courtyard outside his building, gets into his van and drives to his first stop while listening to 1960s, 1970s or 1980s music on the van's cassette player. He then cleans a succession of toilets, stops for lunch in a small park on his route, possibly takes a photo of the sky through the trees on his black&white film camera, and continues on with his work. At night he visits the local bathhouse for a wash and soak in a communal hot tub, and then has his evening meal at a cafe in a nearby railway station. Back home he reads Faulkner (and later Patricia Highsmith) in translation until he gets sleepy, then turns off the light and goes to sleep.



Over the course of this film we get variations on this daily progression, with some parts extended and some left out. None of his days are “perfect” though there are certainly many smaller parts of each day which could fit that description. The only variations he has with his routine involve such things as finding a lost child in a toilet, having a co-worker resign suddenly and being forced to do an extra shift to cover the loss, running out of petrol in his van, or having his niece turn up unexpectedly. Hirayama is a contented man, and it shows. He only speaks when he feels he has to and has something to say. He seems at peace with the world, and his place in it.

I saw this with my friend Chong and noted after the screening that the film certainly did not fit the standard Western model with its three-act framework, stating that it could really be described as a “slice-of-life”. Chong noted that if we have a name for it then why didn't I consider the “slice-of-life” option as another part of that western model. Which, in retrospect, it should be. It's just that we rarely get to see it, and if we do it is never as good as this. This is not a dramatic film in any sense, by which I mean that major life problems are raised and solved, or not. It's slow and meditative, rather like large sections of ***The Taste of Things*** that I reviewed last month. You have to allow it to wash over you. I enjoyed this, a lot.

R: 4.2/5.0

The Shining (1980)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Horror

[This film appears on the list of 1001 Films You Must Watch Before You Die.]

Stephen King, the author of the novel of the same title upon which Kubrick based this film, was rather scathing of the final version presented. He had written a screenplay for the film that Kubrick rejected and while that may have had something to do with King's attitude later it wasn't the only thing that bothered him. King has a right to that opinion and while we might want Kubrick's film to be closer to King's original vision we have to look at the film alone, as it stands.



The story is simple enough: Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) is an alcoholic writer, currently sober, who takes his wife and young son to live in a remote hotel which is to be shut over a long winter. Torrance is engaged as the winter manager to keep the hotel secure and stop it from freezing up. He wants to spend the time working on a new "writing project". His wife Wendy (Shelley Duvall) is happy enough to follow along, hoping that it will help bind the family together, but Danny (Danny Lloyd), the young son, has different ideas. He has a latent form of telepathic ability which manifests as an imaginary friend that "lives in his mouth", and he has very bad feelings about the move. We learn early on in the film that the hotel was built on the site of an old "Indian burial ground" and that a previous manager went mad and murdered his wife and family in the early 1970s.

As the film progresses we start to see Torrance suffering writer's block and gradually getting more and more angry with his wife as she tries to help him and offer encouragement. We also learn that, a few years before, Torrance injured his son when angry and very drunk. Danny starts to have visions: seeing twin girls standing in a hallway (the 1970s manager's dead girls); an elevator full of blood opening in front of him; and words written on walls. The sense of dread and impending menace slowly begins to build and we fully expect something bad to happen sooner rather than later.

And yet, when it does, it is not as bloody as we would expect. Violent, yes, as Torrance murders a hotel employee and takes an axe to a bathroom door, behind which Wendy and Danny are sheltering. I had forgotten here that Kubrick's camera does not act as a detached viewer in this scene, rather he swings the camera back-and-forth in rhythm with Jack's axe as he smashes it into the wood of the door again and again, empathising the violence. This is a genuinely scary moment in film history.

King's view was that Torrance was basically a good man overrun by the latent powers of the hotel; Kubrick's that Torrance was inherently violent and unstable and just needed the right environment to go full-on psycho. King also thought that Nicholson was the wrong choice for the lead role, considering him to be viewed by the public already as unstable due to his previous role on ***One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest***, and he really wanted someone who could make the transition from normal individual into madness without any preconceptions. If you follow Kubrick's view of the main character then Nicholson is the only one who could fit the part, and yet be about the worst possible choice as far as King was concerned. From all reports Kubrick treated Duvall very badly throughout the filming process, pushing her to the limits in order to get the reaction shots and performance he wanted.

Putting aside King's objections what Kubrick has delivered here is one of the best films of psychological, rather than splatter, horror ever produced. R: 4.2/5.0

PERRYSCOPE Responses

Perryscope 43-45:

Joseph Nicholas: “I’ve been intending to respond to **Perryscope 43** from the moment it arrived — I even thought I might compose a response while on my Danube cruise in April-May, but all I did with my laptop every evening was organise that day’s photographs; I barely looked at my email, except to delete vast swathes of stuff on which I was never likely to act. Then **Perryscope 44** arrived, followed today by **Perryscope 45**. I really must write, what what?”

[**PM:** I can certainly empathise with the time needed to arrange photographs at the end of each day’s travel. I’ve decided to leave that until I get home. Though, if I post anything to FaceBook during my travels I will have to add some photos to give some context. It certainly chews up a lot of time.]

“I wanted to comment on *Dune Part Two*, reviewed in the 43rd issue. As one critic (writing for *Private Eye*, which now has a cinema column alongside its TV column) pointed out, it has an unhappy ending, with Chani being rejected by Paul and going off on her own. This of course departs markedly from the novel, in which Paul takes Princess Irulan as his wife for political reasons but retains Chani as his concubine — but I imagine that departure was made for PC reasons, as to speak of concubines in the 2020s would be perceived as misogynist and demeaning. You’ll doubtless recall from the novel that Jessica, Paul’s mother, was Duke Leto’s concubine, which would make him illegitimate and thus not an heir to the title — a point which Frank Herbert rather glossed over. Also glossed over by Herbert is how, once one has successfully summoned and mounted a worm, it is (a) brought to a halt and (b) safely dismounted from. Since getting up onto a worm clearly requires great strength and violence, one immediate question is how Jessica’s palanquin was lifted onto one for the journey to the south. And of course there’s the technology to which the Fremen have such ready access, never mind all the heavy weaponry — the opening battle scene in *Part Two* is undoubtedly rather exciting and well-done, but (a) where did the heavy weaponry come from, and (b) why all that running around on bare sand didn’t bring a worm to gobble everything up.



“(The *Private Eye* review had other criticisms of the film, pointing out amongst other things that the meeting of the Bene Gesserit with Lady Fenring appears to take place in a municipal bus shelter and that Christopher Walken — now in his eighties — is too frail to impress as the supposedly all-powerful Emperor Shaddam IV.)

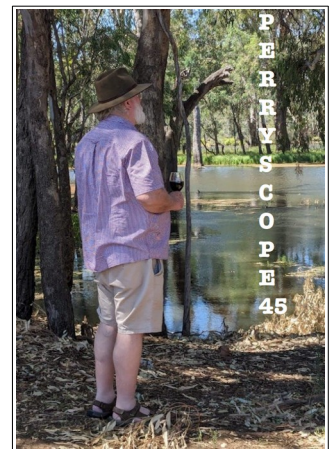
“But these are generally questions that arise afterwards; for the duration of the film itself, disbelief is suspended. I look forward to *Part Three*, whenever it arrives, which Villeneuve has said he wants to make, presumably using *Dune Messiah* as his base text but perhaps also adding elements from *Children of Dune* and later novels....although I think most of us would agree that the works subsequent to that third volume are successively disappointing and best forgotten about. (I know that I never read the seventh and last volume.)”

[**PM:** You certainly did better than me as I didn’t get past the first book. Not sure why. All of the criticisms you raise are certainly valid but, as you point out, “disbelief is suspended”. I think Villeneuve has done a splendid job with the material at hand, adapting it as required to fit the screen, the run-time and modern audiences’ expectations.]

“Various people comment on Warren Zevon, prompting me to throw in my two-pennyworth: I was aware of him, and had heard some of his songs, but never bought anything by him until I heard ‘Splendid Isolation’ played on the radio late one evening in late 1989, and brought *Transverse City* a few days later. That was the only album of his that I owned until after he died, when I latched onto *Genius: The Best of Warren Zevon*, which I see from the date of its actual release came out the year before his death.

“(Although Julian Warner says in **Perryscope 44** that he's never seen an album of outtakes and unreleased tracks, Wikipedia's Zevon discography lists *Preludes: Rare and Unreleased Recordings*, issued in 2007. But I wonder whether this, and indeed any of his other recordings, remain in the catalogues. Dying may be tipped as the best career move, but that doesn't always mean that an artiste's output remains undeleted.)

“Skipping ahead to **Perryscope 45**, I note your lament to yourself that you don't seem to be hitting your reading totals, but you're doing a bloody sight better than me. My reading fell off a cliff with Judith's cancer diagnosis in the autumn of 2020, and hasn't recovered. I'm lucky if I now manage more than one book a month, and as for films....I saw *Dune Part Two* when it was released in the UK (as you'll have gathered), but the last film I saw before that was *Dune Part One*. And the last film I saw before that was Sam Mendes' *1917*, released in 2019. A total of three visits to the cinema in five years! In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I usually managed one visit every weekend: there was always something interesting to see. I'm not sure how or why I fell out of that habit: I'm tempted to say ‘gardening’, but I didn't start to become interested in that until many years later. But a habit once dropped is difficult to pick up again — I read the film reviews that appear in every Friday's Guardian newspaper, but rarely feel moved to want to see any of them.”



[**PM:** I've also noticed the ease with which habits can fade away if you're not careful to keep them running. Maybe I'm just not finding much that is as interesting as the films I've been seeing lately. I certainly need to keep an eye on it. I also find it peculiar that, in retirement, I can be coasting along and suddenly realise we've hit July and get to wondering how that actually came to be.]

“Anyway, I shall stop here. I dug up the first dozen of my first early potatoes at the allotment yesterday, and need to turn them into potatoes salad for dinner this evening and tomorrow. After that, I have industrial quantities of blackcurrants to turn into jam: a big harvest from the allotment yesterday, and several tubs of last year's harvest in the freezer. As the gardener and diarist John Evelyn put it, ‘The gardener's work is never at an end; it begins with the year, and continues to the next: he prepares the ground, and then he sows it; after that he plants, and then he gathers the fruits’. No wonder I now can't find the time to visit the cinema!”

Perryscope 45:

Martin Field: “Another cracking edition Perry. Spot on with your reviews of *Fury Road*, and especially *The Taste of Things*, a succulent repast of a film if ever I saw one. As for William Breiding calling me ‘A cad about town,’ I'll see him at dawn, with pistols, if only I can find a second.

“I sympathise with you re the pain of *plantar fasciitis*. Last year a pain in my right heel was diagnosed in a trice by my GP after I started limping. He had suffered from it and said that

expensive orthotics hadn't helped him but recommended buying arch support inserts for my shoes. Coles had some in stock and yes they gave immediate relief, the pain was gone. I'm still using them daily. Walking around in bare feet is forbidden by Dr Copilot, who also recommended thongs with arch supports incorporated."

[**PM:** My doctor said the same thing.]

Mark Olson: "The only hook that grabbed me was your comment about Churchill being pretty useless in the SW Pacific. Not just there — his strategic sense was terrible *everywhere.* If you look at the offensive schemes he proposed, they were either of questionable strategic value or valuable mainly for preserving the British Empire (but not for defeating Hitler).

"OTOH, his role in keeping Britain in the war during those two crucial years when they were alone is more than enough to justify all the praise he's been given. It would be a very different (and much worse) world without him."

[**PM:** I was being very parochial in my views about Churchill. I am certainly willing to admit he was one of the great British leaders of the 20th century, mostly centred around WW II. I just find it hard to reconcile that with his willingness to bleed Australia dry of resources if that was required to achieve his aims.]

"I take your point about not being too judgmental about the failings of an older book like *Dune*, but if I'm going to forgive weak science, I'll go all the way and defend the Lensman series. Who can forget the sublime elegance of destroying Ploor by firing two planets at it (from opposite sides, just to be sure) out of hyperspatial tubes at five times the speed of light? Now *that's* how you trample on science right and proper."

[**PM:** If you're going to make a mess of it go large.]

Nic Farey: "A few sarky notes:

Cover: Subtitled 'A Larrikin on the Piss', or possibly 'A Larrikin About to Have a Piss', or even more terrifyingly 'A Larrikin Actually Having a Piss (urine stream photoshopped out)'?

"Do not under any circumstances attempt to conjecture where this man's left hand is and what it is doing. Swivel-eyed insomnia will result..."

"More seriously (perhaps not much, but it's all I got mate), a fine review of Leigh Edmonds' tome which I hope will sell a copy or two for the sleepy old bugger. He does deserve it..."

[**PM:** Yes, he has done an amazing piece of work with the first volume and I can only assume he will do the same again with the second.]

"I'm with Julian Warner on the pickles. I miss a decent piccalilli, but being 'sans teef' (as Dave Hodson so succinctly put it in **oXLIp**) I can't have that these days. The Indian pickles brand we get here is Patak's. I've always deemed 'chutney' to be sweet and mildly spiced, whereas 'pickle' is sour and in ranges varying from 'Oo that's got a nice little kick' to 'Oh Christ me poor arse'..."

"Martin Field's nice tale had me questioning the likely presence of Peter Cook at the Star, although I've no reason to doubt the account — after all, Martin was there and I wasn't. I'd have thought that Peter's more likely hangout would have been the Coach & Horses in Greek Street, but ey, what do I know?"

[**PM:** I think that’s also where Jeffrey Bernard used to hang out. I wandered in there once when I was living in London in the early 1990s and noticed him sitting propped up in the corner of the bar. Frankly, he didn’t look all that well at the best of times.]

“Movies: In step with you on both *Fury Road* and *Phantom Menace*, not surprisingly. We clocked the former a couple of weeks ago in preparation for when *Furiosa* is streaming for free.

“Engaging loccol with much nodding of agreement round here, although I’ll disagree with Leigh that **Perryscope** is ‘getting better’, since yer ish has always been this good. There’s yer ‘boo...

“Good arrers!”

William Breiding: “Another good issue. I agree with Leigh that your zine is ‘maturing’ and morphing away from its previous limited scope into a wider full-interest fanzine.”

[**PM:** I have no plan and no idea where it is actually heading. I’m just letting it find its own way really. There are more writers this issue about one particular topic. And that might happen again sometime.]

“Regards our discussion about creating structure in retirement: I’m finding a year and a half into it I not only try to avoid structure, but when I witness the daily rat race of people running off to work I have a nauseous ‘yuck’ reaction—even watching a neighbor getting out and running every morning at 6 AM like clockwork creeps me out. Though I started working at sixteen I’ve tried to arrange my life with a lot of free, structureless time—what John D. McDonald referred to in the Travis McGee novels as taking retirement in installments—hence I never had a career. I do bounce around sometimes wondering what to do now that all the days and all of the nights are mine. Usually I settle back into reading again, or writing (or thinking about writing) and the restlessness abates. Gail, my wife, inquires if I am bored, but I never am, it’s just a matter of settling. Once we get our pickup truck we will be able to start traveling again and seeing the back country of the American West, our favorite thing to do. At some point I may need more structure and that will probably manifest first with an exercising regimen. Since retirement I’ve slowly started gaining weight. I will have to return to exercising to control that.

[**PM:** It really doesn’t matter what you do, so long as you do something. And sometimes it’s just a matter of getting started, the rest tends to follow.]

“I think my approach to classical music is much the same as wine. I beat myself up for years feeling I didn’t appreciate it, or even know *how* to appreciate it. Certain pieces and composers I find compelling (Mozart’s 23rd Piano Concerto; Ravel’s String Quartet in F Major, just as an example of two) but too frequently boredom or a lack of a good ear just throws me off. So when Leigh Edmonds or Bruce Gillespie go on about classical music I feel like an absolute dummy. But then about 15 years ago I discovered a program on NPR called ‘Performance Today’ hosted by Fred Child <<https://www.yourclassical.com>> and found someone whose taste in classical music aligned with mine. Without fail I find the works Fred Child presents to be absolutely riveting whenever I tune in. So now I don’t suffer as much about my shortcomings.

“Speaking of Leigh, the day after **Perryscope 45** plopped into my inbox Leigh’s *Proud and Lonely* arrived at the PO Box here in Albuquerque. I look forward to delving into it at some juncture in the near future. Your review was interesting. Whetting the appetite!”

[**PM:** It is certainly worth the read. I haven’t seen any reviews of it yet from non-Australians so it will be interesting to see how it is received elsewhere.]

“Congrats on the new car! As mentioned above Gail and I are purchasing a pickup truck. We’ve been treating our Honda Fit like a Jeep ever since we bought a used 2011 model in 2015. Neither of us are now comfortable taking the Fit on backroads. After years of threatening to do it we finally made the plunge. We purchasing a Ford Maverick XL, currently the smallest truck on the American market, and the cheapest, and with pretty good ratings. You can’t buy pickup trucks off the lot anymore. So ours is scheduled to go into production in early August. We are hoping for a delivery in October. Possibly sooner, so we can start getting out into the desert!”

[**PM:** I’m not familiar with that model, but a quick search on the web shows me that I’ve seen vehicles of that type around where I live. They are probably too big for the suburban streets of Hawthorn but I can see that they would be a good choice for your plans.]

“I was happy to see that you have enjoyed *The Expanse*. Fan artist Joe Pearson steered me towards this series. I believe without a doubt it is the best sf series ever made. Somebody will have to work very hard in the future to top it. I found your dad’s comment interesting, as well. When I first started watching, it was so good I decided the written series must be even better. I did some reading and decided to stick with the TV series. It was good, but they seemed to be literally translating the books to little screen. The SciFi channel has made so many cheesy, if not out right bad, series that I’m astounded they produced such a good show. Perhaps all the streaming channels with high production values and great acting pushed them to up their game.”



[**PM:** I note that the SciFi channel canned the series after three seasons, so you have to wonder what they’re drinking over there. Luckily Amazon picked it up and continued for another three. As you say it is one of the best sf series ever produced for the small screen.]

“I gave up on the Star Wars universe with *The Phantom Menace*. Jar Jar Binks was just the last straw in an altogether crappy movie. (The beginning of Liam Neeson’s many bad films!)”

[**PM:** I sometimes wonder why Neeson keeps on acting, especially in the bad ones. Maybe he can’t tell the difference from the scripts he’s sent. Michael Caine used to accept everything he was offered, it didn’t matter if it was a bad film so long as the salary bought him something nice. And I guess, the more films you act in, the more chance there is that one of them will come out okay. It’s just that he’s made so many bad choices over the past twenty years or so it’s past time I can just give him the benefit of the doubt.]

“Don’t have much to say about Julian Warner’s pickles, except I’m one of those boring trad types that like my pickles on the sedate side. Martin Field apparently had endless fun back in the day. I’m jealous! What does he get up to nowadays?”

[**PM:** Martin still has vast amounts of his life to cover, including working in the public service – where I met him – to his time as a wine writer for a Melbourne newspaper, and even when he found himself with a gig as a speechwriter for a local government politician. These days he’s living in Noosa in Queensland staying away from the cold Melbourne winters.]

Leigh Edmonds: “Thanks for **Perryscope 45** and for the long write-up about *Proud and Lonely*. Much appreciated. I’m hopeful that others like is as much as you do. Interestingly, a historian friend wrote nice things about it too in a review yet to be published, but being a historian

rather than a fan, she was interested by quite different things and processes in the book.”

[**PM:** It just goes to show that the book works on many different levels. And that can only be a good thing.]

“You are probably right that I’m enjoying **Perryscope** more these days because the focus is a bit wider than it used to be. [**PM:** Not just about me you mean.] Julian is a keeper, who would have thought that a column about chutney and pickles could be so interesting. It’s something I had not paid much attention to though Julian did remind me of the relish that my Grandmother made which was unique, shall we say. Julian’s exploration for new and interesting condiments made me wonder what it would be like to follow him around the shops in the places he visits, and I wonder if he looks in the local supermarkets or in the ‘craft’ shops which seem to populate most tourist towns these days.”

“Thanks also to Martin Field for his reminiscences. So things like that really did happen! In far off Australia they were the kinds of things one imagined might happen, but suspected it was all concocted to make us think we were missing out on something. So I’m reassured that it did happen, to somebody.

“I don’t know if I am envious or not that you just live around the corner, so to speak, from the cinema. As I wrote somewhere, I took myself to the local picture palace to celebrate my birthday and was rather underwhelmed by the experience. Partly because the movie was nothing to write home about (I couldn’t even tell you the title now) and partly because I missed out on the whole cinema going experience as people have complained about it. People talking loudly, treating the theatre like their lounge room, etc, etc. Instead all I got was some mild chat during the interminable ads and after that it was all peace and quiet so I may as well have stayed at home where I get the added bonus of cats to nurse and cuddle.”

[**PM:** You and I probably visit a cinema for different reasons then. My aim is to see a film on a big, wide screen and to basically immerse myself in the experience. The best time for me is around lunchtime on a Tuesday when I can usually get the cinema to myself or with just one or two others. We are all mostly on our own, sitting in different rows, so there isn’t any talking. The only possible problem is being distracted by a mobile phone screen that lights up as someone checks their mail or messages or whatever. I am certainly not keen on that. The other bonus is that, as a concessional member of their cinema club, I can get to see a film for \$8. If it’s great then I think I’ve done every well, and if it stinks I can just be happy that I didn’t pay much for the experience.]

“Despite that disappointment I’m glad that I went. The Regent in Lydiard Street was one of the picture palaces built in the interwar period since converted into a multiplex. A couple of weeks after I went the owners suddenly announced that it was being closed forthwith. This no doubt leaves a large hole in the patronage of the nearby restaurants and watering holes. This leaves Ballarat with only one cinema complex right out in the burbs (as much as Ballarat has burbs, by Melbourne standards) where the parking is probably difficult at times and the surrounding night life non-existent. Consequently I’m unlikely to be going to the cinema again any time soon.”

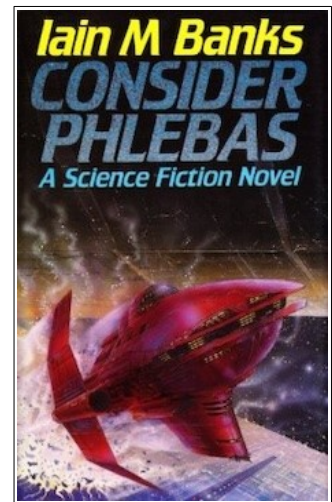
[**PM:** As I’ve discussed previously, the cinema being located where it is is one of the reasons why I now don’t want to move house. Just one of the reasons, there are many, but it is an important one. And I was very sad to read that one of the major Ballarat cinemas had closed its doors. I had thought that cinemas were having a resurgence but maybe I’m just being lulled into a false sense of things due to the local cinema. Even there many screenings during the day have very few patrons.]

“Your reviews of *The Expanse* and *The Test* makes me think that there might be a subscription to Amazon Prime some time in the future. As you probably know, Le Tour is on at the moment so I’m not watching much else on the box right now.”

[**PM:** I tend to watch Le Tour as well, though I don’t stay up to the bitter end (around 2am) like some I know. I like to watch the start of each race and I can have it running in the background as I’m reading a book so that’s an added bonus. I was joking with my wife this year that Le Tour is probably the only sport she ever watches on TV and then it’s really only for the scenery. She may watch a bit of the Olympics highlights over the next few weeks, just to show me she’s interested in more than just one thing.]

“Rose had me putting on my rose tinted glasses for a moment when she reminded me of *Go Set*. The good old days, probably much better in the remembering than in the living but, as Rose said, a must-read in Melbourne at the time.

“Rose’s mention of Iain Bank’s ‘Culture’ is timely because I’ve just begun to dip into that universe and am half way through the first book in the series. I’m finding it a somewhat ponderous process and could live without a lot of his long action sequences, but the idea of the Culture is a fascinating one. I came to this book after exposing myself again to what are now called Asimov’s three Galactic Empire novels, which are set in the period before the Trantorian hegemony. Apart from being very slight stories with too much dialogue of people being clever, the idea of a galactic empire bringing peace to a galaxy wide civilization seems rather hopeful, but then perhaps that was the world of the early 1950s and the conversations going on in John W Campbell’s office.”



[**PM:** The first of the Culture novels, *Consider Plebas*, is not the best of the series. But it certainly picks up after that. Hopefully you’ve decided to persist with the books and moved on to the second, *The Player of Games*, which I thought was much better.]

“How strange that I should be sending you an email of comment when tomorrow and the day after we shall be spending the next couple of days sorting out Foyster’s fanzines where we could talk about all this in person. That’s fanzine fandom for you I guess, it never really happened unless it was written about in a fanzine.”

Jerry Kaufman: “I enjoyed the issue quite a bit — especially Julian Warner on Pickles and Chutneys. He introduced me to ‘piccalilli,’ of which I had never heard. I looked it up in Wikipedia. Of course, within a day or so we watched an episode of British cozy tv series *Grantchester*, in which a character insisted she had to get her supply of piccalilli to go with someone’s lunch. I was so smugly happy to know what she meant.”

[**PM:** As we all know, all knowledge is contained in fanzines, sooner or later.]

“In the letters, William Breiding mentioned meeting Irwin Hirsh’s parents. I stayed with Irwin and his folks way back in 1983, and was extremely impressed by their art collection. That visit was certainly one of the highlights of my trip to Australia.”

Rose Mitchell: “Martin Field’s reminisces of his adventures in London in the Sixties just keep on giving and each episode reveals another Wow anecdote. Chatting up Christine Keeler and Mandy

Rice-Davies in a bar is priceless (Wink, Wink). That's 2 people in fannish circles I know that have direct contact with those two famous Ladies of the Night. Although I am not sure that the moniker is correct as I don't think they were prozzies *per se*."

[**PM:** Which leaves open the question of who was the other one? Lewis Morley's father took the iconic photo of Christine Keeler naked on the chair, so maybe it was Lewis? I saw George Best in a pub in London in the early 90s. But I'm guessing that doesn't really rate.]

"And the things you find out about people from reading fanzines! I now know that Leigh Edmonds chose to study history further because history students were boozers who liked to have fun. If he had chosen Political Science instead, we would he may never have produced his Magnum Opus of Aussie Fandom ***Proud and Lonely ...*** itself a revelation of fannish politics in the early days before and post Second World War. It appears fannish behaviour largely remains unchanged over these years and I find that strangely comforting to know that fan feuds are normal occurrences in Fandom."

[**PM:** I have a feeling that Leigh left out a lot of the bickering and feuds. Otherwise it would have become rather tedious. I think he made the right choice.]

I also heard from: **Mark Linneman**; **Lucy Sussex** (mentioning that John Foyster had shown her a letter from Samuel R. Delany at some point, indicating that there were a lot of letters at one point); **Bernadette Gooden**; **Lilian Edwards**; **LynC**; and **Barbara O'Sullivan** (with recommendations for film and theatre offerings around town)— thank you one and all.

...Oh, the passenger
He rides and he rides
He sees things from under glass
He looks through his window's eye
He sees the things that he knows are his
He sees the bright and hollow sky
He sees the city asleep at night
He sees the stars are out tonight
And all of it is yours and mine
And all of it is yours and mine
So let's ride and ride and ride and ride

—"The Passenger" by Iggy Pop

