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Flicker, Harry, and the kittens: The saga

by Bruce Gillespie, with Elaine Cochrane

Photos by Elaine Cochrane

First there was an artist named Alan Robert Sumner. He lived round the corner in one of the oldest houses in Collingwood, Melbourne's second oldest suburb, on the corner of Wellington and Easey Street. He used to natter to Elaine when she went past. He enjoyed the company of Theodore, our ginger cat, who often slept or hunted in his side garden all day.

In 1994, Alan Sumner died, and his house was sold. The house had much historical interest, so Yarra Council refused permission to the new owner to knock it down, but arcane planning regulations meant it could not be reused as a house; nor could it be refitted as a commercial property, as the new owner had planned, because it did not have enough car parking spaces. The owner had little option other than allow it to decay. One set of squatters after another moved in, despite the surrounding cyclone wire fence, and were ejected. Each set of squatters cannibalised the interior of the house. The final set had even used the steep wooden staircase as fuel.

In late September or early October 2003, we were walking past the house one night and encountered a very hungry female torbie cat, who, from the feel of her belly, was obviously feeding kittens. Elaine went back with a small amount of food, which was promptly devoured. She went back again the next night, and



Flicker, when younger.





met a young fellow holding a can of cat food. He told her that the kittens were upstairs, in a hole in the floor. There was no sign of the female cat, that night or the next.

Since no good mother cat would abandon her kittens, Elaine set to work. She tracked down the current owner of the house, who told her to bring a ladder, and met her at the house. When they managed to clamber to the second floor the kittens were easily located by their squeaking. With the owner's assistance she fished the five kittens out of their hole, and took them up to our vet, John Sandford, for checking over. Their eyes were open, but only just; he estimated they were not quite three weeks old. Over the next few weeks John and his wife Kerrie patiently coached Elaine in how to take care of very tiny kittens.

Thus began the weeks in which Elaine worked the hardest she has ever worked. Every few hours she had to feed each kitten with formula from a bottle, and wipe its bum, just to keep it alive. Since it was still winter, the cats were in constant danger of dying of the cold, so at first they were kept in a large cardboard box, surrounded by blankets. They huddled together in one cat-bundle. They learnt about the bottle and to recognise Elaine almost instantly, but it was a few days before they



Top: Five kittens keep each other warm: from the top, clockwise, the kitten who became Miss Smith; the kitten we called Yoda; Titch, who became Sampson; Tas, who became Leila; and Rascal at the bottom.

Middle: Yoda and Titch (Sampson) warming up under the column heater.

Below: Harry and Flicker at Collingwood.



were developed enough to use the litter tray. About the same time, their purrs turned on. As they developed and became more active they were transferred to a large cage where they could be safe and have some room to move around. The other cats were very curious about them, but posed no danger. After several weeks John said they were ready to be weaned, and the kittens began to eat independently. Violet started stealing from the kittens. She was very puzzled when they all crowded under her, trying to suckle from her.

All this time, Elaine kept checking the old Sumner house in case the mother cat returned. There was no sign of the tiny torbie, but she caught glimpses of black cats' ears in the long grass.

During the next four weeks Elaine called in favours from friends and colleagues from the firms for which she was doing freelance work, lining up future homes for the kittens. Sarah Endacott took two of the kittens, the tortie Tas (renamed Leila) and the black-and-white kitten (who became Miss Smith). Charles and Nic Taylor took the black kitten, which they named Rascal. A work colleague of Elaine's took my favourite, Titch (a tiny tabby kitten). Renamed Sampson, he returned to us five years later, but that's another story. We have not kept contact with the people who took the ginger kitten.

Meanwhile, we gradually became aware that the very timid owner of the black ears was lurking in our garden. He would leap over the fence, then run, limping, along the back of our side garden. He was so timid that we could not approach him, but Elaine began to leave a lump of meat for him every night. He would hurtle over the fence, grab the meat, and jump back over the fence. We called him Flicker, because all we ever saw of him was a flicker in the grass. He was painfully thin.

One night several weeks later I took out the piece of meat instead of Elaine. A black cat came and rubbed around my legs. I was amazed. When this happened the next night, Elaine said, 'That's not Flicker. This cat's got white feet.' Thus on 21 November 2003 we found we were feeding two cats, not one. We called the second cat Harry. Although he was not timid like Flicker, we only saw him at night, briefly. Strangely, our three resident cats, Sophie, Polly, and Violet, were not phased by all these feline comings and goings.

Over the next months Elaine gradually coaxed Flicker closer with food, and in early February 2004 she was able to pick him up and take him to the vet for a check-up, neutering, microchipping, and formal adoption. When she released him from the box again he promptly shot over the fence, but he came back immediately when she called and did not leave the garden again thereafter. He realised that he really did have a home, but he was still very, very timid.

We also started to see a lot more of Harry. He was a puzzle, because although hungry he wasn't starved like Flicker, but enquiries among the neighbours brought no claims of ownership. A few days after Flicker's trip to the vet, Harry turned up during the day and was similarly boxed, snipped, and chipped. A few days later he turned up with a note attached to his new collar with the address of his owners. This was a family who lived on the other side of super-

busy Wellington Street and several streets down. Harry had only been pretending to be a very hungry stray.

When Elaine went to see Harry's owners, she found that their name for him was Socks. He was never allowed inside the house. The bloke said: 'We thought old Socksie was putting on a bit of weight, but it was a bit of a surprise when he turned up one morning wearing a collar and minus his nuts.'

They'd had him since a kitten, and said that his mother was a tiny torbie named Peaches and his father was a 'big black Burmese' (that is, Flicker). After some discussion it was agreed that Elaine could become his new owner.

At this stage neither Flicker nor Harry would come inside our house, but with further coaxing eventually both would come into the kitchen to eat, and then scuttle outside again. Flicker slept in a protected spot under bushes in the garden; Harry slept who-knows-where. The weather turned wet and miserable, so one night Elaine picked Flicker up, brought him inside, and pointed him to a blanket she'd placed on the kitchen floor. Flicker looked very doubtful, as if he didn't really believe this was permitted, but he crept onto the blanket and from then on he began to sleep in the kitchen. And one night, when Elaine was sitting on the couch, Flicker leapt onto her lap. He had finally found a home.

Flicker must have had a very favourable beginning. As soon as he felt safe at our place, he became very civilised. He decided that since he could trust us, he could trust anyone who came into our house; every visitor's lap was his by right. He also became the top cat of the household. Harry, meanwhile, was not willing to stay in the house for more than a few minutes at a time. He had been taught that he was not allowed inside houses and would disappear over the fence.

One night in May 2004 Harry disappeared. His previous owners had not seen him either, so when he had not returned for a week we assumed he had been hit by a car. (The cat owned by our next-door neighbours had been killed on busy Wellington Street not long before.) Flicker mourned. He sat in the back yard, and waited for his Harry to come home.

About six weeks after Harry disappeared, we received a phone call. The people from the microchip registry rang to say that 'your black and white cat Harry is in Werribee'. Werribee is a suburb 37 km from Collingwood, almost off the southern fringe of the city as you head down to Geelong. Harry certainly couldn't have walked there, so our guess is that he fell asleep in the back of a truck on Wellington Street, had woken up in Werribee, and had somehow survived.

Since we have no car, Elaine rang her sister Margaret, who happened to have a free day. Margaret took the cat basket down to Werribee and retrieved Harry. The woman who had phoned the microchip people said that she did not realise that Harry was a stray until he tried to steal her cat's food; she said, 'He's the only cat who has ever made friends with my cat.' Harry is a very cheerful cat, even when desperate.

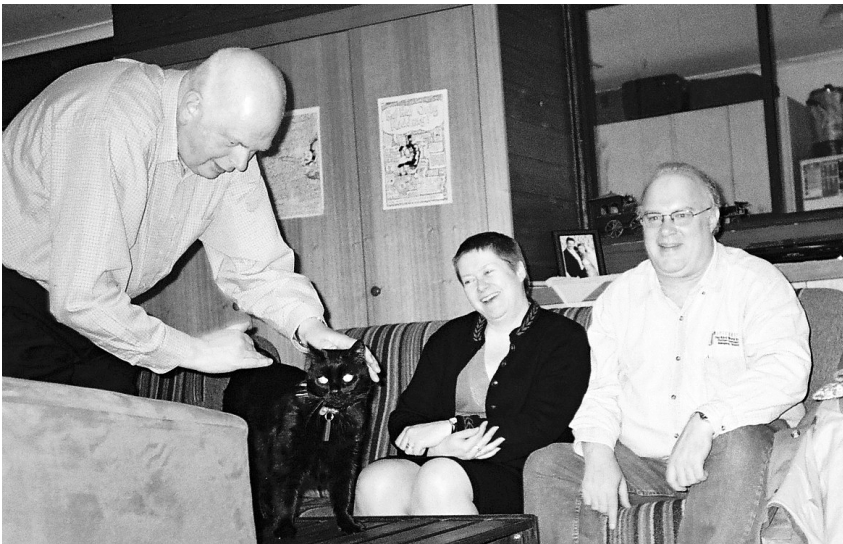
When Margaret brought Harry home, he stepped



We three kings of Greensborough:
(top;) looking through the back door: Harry, Flicker, and Archie;
(middle and bottom:) how to fill a garden seat: Harry, Archie, and Flicker.

out of the cat basket. Three of the other cats looked up, as if to say, 'Oh. So you're back, are you?' Flicker was totally delighted. He rushed up the Harry, and started licking him. Harry was very hungry and very tired. He slept for most of two days, ate lots, and purred while Flicker kept licking him.

If the phone call from the microchip agency had been made a few weeks later, we would have already left Collingwood for Greensborough. In October, the five cats were put in cages and taken up to the vet's (the ever-helpful John Sandford's) to stay overnight. We finished packing at 3 in the morning, and got up



Flicker liked to be the centre of attention. From left: Bruce, Flicker, Claire Brialey, and Mark Plummer.
(Photo: Yvonne Rousseau.)

at 5 in the morning as the removalist arrived. By mid afternoon we had moved to Greensborough. The next day John delivered the cats to their new home.

Harry was panic-stricken, and the others weren't too happy. Harry thought he had been left in Werribee again. It seemed as if he would howl all night, so Elaine got up and slept on the couch, surrounded by all the cats except Violet. (Violet had her own story; she had to stay in the front part of the house to avoid being slaughtered by Polly, who was half her size.)

During the following days, Harry became used to the fact that this was his new home. The cats went out into the cat enclosure and made it part of their home. Harry's expedition had taught him that it was OK to be inside a house after all, but he never gave up his quest to find a way out of our house and go home to Collingwood ... or at least to explore Greensborough.

Flicker became truly head of the house, and guardian of us all. Only five months after we moved to Greensborough, I disappeared for four weeks. I travelled to America, thanks to the Bring Bruce Bayside Fund, enjoyed myself, but nearly kissed the ground when I finally got off the plane back at Tullamarine in March 2005. Elaine said that Flicker had missed me very much, and had spent the four weeks gazing mournfully out the front window.

The worst period of Flicker's otherwise very comfortable new life was when Archie died unexpectedly in 2013, only six years old, from kidney failure. For nearly a year, Flicker would search the house, hoping to find Archie somewhere around the place. He was quite sure we had done something horrible to his great friend.

When Sophie died in 2008, Polly, the oldest cat, had expected to become the top cat. She had waited long enough. She was sure that TC had handed the position to her when he died two years after she arrived as a kitten. Flicker disagreed. He believed *he* was top cat. This dispute was never resolved, until finally Polly died of old age, nearly 20, in November 2014. Again, Flicker missed her greatly. It was no

good being head of the house if his tribe kept disappearing one by one.

Because of the way that Flicker arrived in the house, we had no real idea of his age. John Sandford guessed he might have been four years old when we acquired him, but he could have been older. He began to show the signs of what we thought of us encroaching old age. He stopped eating more than a token amount of his crunchies each day, and he became thinner. Elaine took him to the Greensborough vet, but routine tests showed nothing obviously wrong.

However, in September 2015 he almost stopped eating altogether, and looked miserable. Elaine agreed that he should have an ultrasound. A small lump showed up, but hidden so deeply that it would have been too difficult to carry out a biopsy. The vet said bring to bring him back in four or five weeks for a second scan. After four weeks Flicker was very much more subdued, and the second scan showed that the lump had become very large. Flicker was dying of a very aggressive cancer. High-dose cortisone gave him another good week, but on 16 October, we took Flicker for his last visit to the vet. Elaine buried him in the back yard.

We had thought that if either Harry or Flicker died first, the other would follow shortly after. They had been very rarely out of sight of each other for the last 11 years, and they often slept curled up together, or licked each other. As long as Harry realised he was lieutenant, not boss, they had a perfect cat friendship.

Harry did look for Flicker for awhile, but not with the obsessive concern that Flicker would have shown if Harry had gone first. Perhaps that was because we had taken the vet's advice and shown him Flicker's body. Harry did need reassurance, though, and sought attention much more actively than in the past. And he decided to take advantage of the new situation. Instead of being pushed aside by Flicker when he wanted to sit on Elaine's lap, now Harry could sit on her lap. Indeed, for many years he did not like sitting on laps, but now he does. He is more affectionate to me than he has ever been. But he is lonely.

Sampson's reaction was the surprise. He did not get on with either Flicker or Harry, and has his own part of the house and garden. But he became frantic, rushing out into his garden and back again, clearly looking for the leader of his gang. He, like Harry, has become much more demonstrative. He's even making overtures of friendship to Harry, but as yet they are not reciprocated.

The house feels rather empty. We had five cats when we moved here, and now we have only two.

— Bruce Gillespie (with much help from Elaine Cochrane), 8 January 2016

Um. Er. Where was I? What were you saying?

Months and months ago you kind people made me Official Bloody President of this august organisation. Since then I haven't contributed a thing except the bimonthly Official Bloody Organ.

I've been hit by the Horsham Train effect.

In the middle 1960s I was commuting by train from Bacchus Marsh, 33 miles west of Melbourne, to the city so that I could take classes at Melbourne University. Two nights a week during several of those years I had to take the 'late train' home at 6.20 p.m. This was the latest train you could take then, because Bacchus Marsh was a country station, unconverted to a suburban electric train system station. It's still a country station, although it's not much more distant than Frankston station, to the south, and it's closer to the city than Pakenham station, out east.

I would get on the little rail motor (one carriage, divided in two by a diesel motor) at 6.20 and we would toodle out through the western suburbs until we reached Deer Park. That's where the suburban system — and double rails — ended. From then on it was single line all the way, with loops at Rockbank and Melton. We'd get to Rockbank, and pull over onto the loop line.

By then it was after 7 p.m., and I was very hungry. You think I get hungry these days. When I was at university, I was always *very* hungry. We might sit there for five minutes. We might sit there for an hour. We had to wait until the Horsham train, the main train that crossed the state, would pass straight through Rockbank station in a mighty rush. Then we would trundle on to Bacchus Marsh. My father would meet me at the station. My very dried-up dinner, carefully cooked by my mother some hours before, would be waiting for me.

On the current Bruce Gillespie line, the Horsham train is freelance work and *SF Commentary*.

SFC is perpetually late. Overall, most of the ma-

terial has been sitting on file for anything from a year to a year and a half. In July I decided to catch up. I would churn out an all-letters issue of *SFC* by September, then produce issues with the Big Articles by the end of October or November!

Hah! *SFC* 90 was finished at the end of November — finally, at last, by ghod, why didn't it finish earlier? — because it kept being held up on the way. I need to keep earning a living. I can't survive on the tiny bit of pension I can get from what is derisively called a federal government in Australia, plus a tiny bit of private pension from a fund that was reduced by one-third during the GFC. I can't retire, so I need to take on any freelance work that is offered to me.

Of course, there is one thing worse than having all one's plans held up by the need to carry out freelance work — it's not being offered freelance work. That's what happened during the last three months of 2014, which is why I was very happy when work started flowing in again in January 2015. But freelance work stops the fanzine train in its tracks. ANZAPA waits on the side track, mailing after mailing.

What hope to I have of catching up with mailing comments? Not much. I do sympathise with people who find themselves running further and further behind in their attempts to catch up with ANZAPA Mailing Comments. And I would follow my own advice — leave the old mailings and just comment on the most recent mailing — if it were not for the fact that the August mailing contained the 70-page contribution by Mark Plummer and Claire Brialey. I have spent six months burning up with embarrassment because I have not yet written comments on that issue.

Which is why I will start with the August 2015 mailing, and probably end there.

Mailing comments

Mailing 286: August 2015

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer: *Quoz* 43

Claire:

I doubt if I've ever been subject to 'odd sparkly and whirly effects' while walking down the street. I've also never had a 'fade-to-black' experience. So reading about yours has been rather disturbing. Thanks very much for your account, but I hope it hasn't happened

again. I'll have to read *Continuing Quoz* Episodes to see how your health is going.

I've never heard of Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage*. Tony Thomas could probably correct me here, if he were reading over my shoulder, but I doubt if it has ever been staged in Melbourne.

I like that phrase 'Without hope, they live in desire'. I've spent much of my freelance career hoping it might develop into something that might assure

me of an adequate income, but it never did. Now I feel like I'm swimming along financially, nearly drowning, with my nose above the water, just surviving.

Elaine used to talk to the cats of Collingwood. In Collingwood, we found when we went for walks that far more cats sat at the front of their houses to be talked to than happens in Greensborough. This is because people out here have large back yards, and far more people here walk their dogs in the street.

I suspect my seventieth birthday, in a bit over a year's time, will be a rather small affair. It's fairly easy to delete quite a few names: people who have over the years conspicuously failed to invite us to their birthdays, weddings, etc. I would include on the invitations list some family members who have been generous to us over the years. I would like to include all other people who have been unfailingly friendly during recent decades. This is all conjecture. I have to get to 70 first.

Reactions to *Dr Strangelove*: If you didn't actually live through the night in 1962 when it seemed very likely that World War III was about to begin, perhaps *Dr Strangelove* would not have had the same impact on you that it had on many of us when it first appeared in 1964. I've noticed that that 1962 night has been featured in several novels, most notably in David Almond's *The Fire-Eaters*.

Is it more pretentious to have read Suetonius and Tacitus or to have their books in the house unread? Elaine bought a large number of the black-covered Penguin Classics in the 1970s. She has read far more of them than I have, and is still reading a few every year. I don't have any background in Classics, so I'm not so tempted to open books by Suetonius, Tacitus, Cicero, and the others.

I think we have a copy of *Three Men in a Boat* in the house, but I haven't read that, either. I hope it is much more amusing than Willis's *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, which is based on the Jerome book.

I loved the *Magic Faraway Tree* books at the time, but 'the time' was 1956, the year I was in Grade 3. I haven't read any of them since. All I remember is my sensawonder at the inventiveness of the lands described by Enid Blyton in the series. My sisters enjoyed the school stories, such as *Mallory Towers*, much more than I did. I enjoyed the 'Famous Five', 'Secret', 'Adventure' and 'Five Find Outers and Dog' series.

I'm not sure why you need a Books spreadsheet. Why not a simple list? (I find spreadsheets near-impossible to manipulate.) I am still using the same list layout that I set up in 1962, at the age of 15, the first year I wrote out my Favourite Books of the Year.

Your stories about your work situation remind me clearly of why I quit five-days-a-week, nine-to-five work in 1973.

Your government makes ours look good, but our Social Security Minister is doing his best to become as ghastly as yours.

Your use of the word 'tartle' does not quite apply to my feeling for Australian fandom. I believe that the kind of fandom for which I have nostalgia existed until 1975, but disintegrated during the late seventies, never to return. I have more 'tartleness' for the world of cinema that existed well before I began to watch films regularly, and almost before I was con-

scious of the delights of cinema: the Golden Age from 1939 until the mid 1950s. All we were allowed to watch during my childhood (1947 to 1958) were British comedies and the occasional Disney film.

When I look around any Australian supermarket, I see mainly goods that are made up of sugar, fat and slat, peppered with occasional real food substances. I shouldn't eat most of them, so I don't. The only things we buy at the supermarket are products we can't get at the greengrocer, butcher, or delicatessen, such as breakfast cereal, soy milk, and detergent.

I'm sure we can find *something* to celebrate whenever you and Mark return to Melbourne. I'm just disappointed that nothing draws you back here these days, especially our conventions. However, Continuum in 2017 will also be that year's national convention (first weekend in June). My seventieth birthday is in February 2017, as already mentioned, but since that's the height of summer, you won't be travelling here then. But we will have some sort of celebration of the 50th mailing of ANZAPA in 2018.

Up at 5.30 in the morning to go to work! Never, never. I don't know how both of you stay as healthy as you do.

Thanks for the exemplary handling of the annual ANZAPA poll. If only everybody had matched your conscientiousness by taking the trouble to vote.

Elaine and I are a small company, for tax purposes, so we need to hire a tax accountant each year to complete our returns. Elaine and I always do our banking over the counter. And even then, things can go wrong.

18 September 1986, when you joined fandom? That seems hardly moments ago. It was 19 years after I joined fandom, and 17 years after *SF Commentary* began.

With the daily schedule you've described, and the amount of fanac that both of you do, how do you manage to binge-watch at all? I watch TV or films only after midnight, but even so, it would take me months to write the material that you and Mark produce regularly, week by week.

King Lear With Sheep? Sounds like a natural for Australia, but we haven't seen a production here yet.

It was an accident that I didn't read the Heinlein 'juveniles' when I was a kid. They were marketed as Gollancz yellowjackets, which meant they would have been placed in the normal SF section of the library I used. When I stepped out of the Children's section into the general section, I discovered a few Gollancz yellowjackets, but none by Heinlein. On the other hand, the Oakleigh High School library contained almost no science fiction books; certainly no Gollancz yellowjackets, just a few books by H. G. Wells and John Wyndham. When I began reading the SF magazines in 1960, I gained the impression that Heinlein was an *eminense grise* who had stopped writing years before. Therefore reading *Podkayne of Mars* in *If* magazine was my first experience of Heinlein. I found it very readable, but did not inspire me to seek out more Heinlein. Other new Heinlein novels published by Fred Pohl in *If*, such as *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, were also very readable, but also off-putting. I found the famous 1940s Heinlein short stories only during the late sixties and early seventies in collections of classic SF. It's many years since I

read it, but I remember *Double Star* as the only Heinlein novel I ever liked much — but that could be because I still have not read the Heinlein juveniles.

Feral Seagulls? I haven't met any of those. But I seem to remember that American seagulls are twice as large as ours, so maybe yours are too. Our fiercest seagulls are those that lurk on Flinders Street railway station or local beaches waiting for people to throw them bits of bread.

Print copies of Gillian's and James's GUFF reports have been sent by Gillian, but I haven't quite worked out how she is selling other copies. Both reports are beautiful objects, to be cherished and kept on the shelf. She does not like anybody to write to her street address, so suggests that payment be made for copies through the GUFF Account that is shepherded by Carey Handfield.

Thanks for the photo of the Temporary Cat. In our household, Harry wishes that Sampson would be the Temporary Cat, but he just stays on and on.

Mark Plummer:

I've very glad to see that coffe-making is such an important event in the Brialey-Plummer household.

I have never seen an episode of *Game of Thrones* and probably never will. The reviews make it sound most unappetising, with no central fantasy elements, and lots of main characters are killed every episode. But if ever there is a two-hour movie version I might watch it.

I have ignored all discussion of the Rapid Puppies debate, on the Alice-in-Wonderland grounds that I don't want to go among mad people (the Saddies, not their opponents), and I rarely like the Hugo fiction categories anyway.

Choosing meals is a bit simpler at our place than at yours. Given that Elaine cannot eat anything with beef or veal in it, our choice of protein at night is chicken, pork, or fish, with at least four accompanying vegetables. If Elaine has any spare time she will pick a recipe from her vast collection of as-yet-uncooked dishes (newspaper cuttings) and try it out on both of us. I might try this if I could follow a recipe, but I find most recipes are baffling because of their unstated assumptions. Our fallback night meal is a roast (which lasts two nights) or a dahl.

I suspect our election results also hinge on targeting a few hundred swinging voters in about 10 electorates, although in Australia the important thing is to get people to change their second preferences. If of three candidates, none of the three achieves 50 per cent of the vote, and the vote is divided fairly evenly, the third candidate is eliminated first, and his or her second preferences often place the winner of the second greatest number of votes over the 50 per cent line ahead of the candidate who would have been the first-past-the-post winner in Britain or almost anywhere else.

Thanks very much for your history of London fan gatherings, and your own beginnings in fandom. Also thanks for the background of the Glastonbury Festival. Nearly all the main Australian music festivals have become too large.

I can't remember a previous article by Kim Huett about his music preferences. He mentions many people from the eighties of which I haven't heard. The

eighties were when pop music went right down the tubes, and I've heard almost no hit parade songs from the nineties or beyond.

I can't remember the relationship between the Australian SF Foundation and government funds. It's my recollection that the 1979 Writers Workshop put in its own application for a grant, rather than asking the Foundation to do it for them.

What is Calibre? I don't have any capability on my Windows 7 machine for generating .mobi or .epub files, and I probably can't read them. But why would I, since I never download or read e-books?

If I thumped my pulpit mightily enough, I would pronounce that the interesting thing about a text is what's written in the text, not who wrote it. But that assumes I make a logical and well-considered choice every time I read a book. I certainly have no prejudice against women writers, but as you can see from my list later in this issue, only six of the authors of my Favourite Books for 2015 are women. I don't know why this is.

About best answer I can offer is: some women writers are very readable, and some men writers are, but most writers, men or women, are not readable.

I'm glad to see that you enjoyed *Predestination*. I also didn't quite catch how the 'Fizzle Bomber' bit of the plot worked in relation to the main Heinlein story. I got the impression that the whole purpose of the bizarre time travel exercise by a government or other organisation was to ensure that the Fizzle Bomber incident took place so that many other possible disasters might be prevented. Maybe. I just wish there had been a neat explanation at the end for simple people like me.

I support shops that have CD displays, but even Readings has reduced displays of the CD categories in which I am interested. Thomas's still has a good display of classical CDs, but Tony Thomas (long-time friend and leading music broadcaster on 3MBS) reports that many fewer new titles appear on the shelves than was once the case. Discurio, the other classical CD shop, disappeared after about 50 years of trading.

Thanks for telling me about Roger Robinson's habit of collecting first issues of SF magazines. I have a few: the first issues of *Isaac Asimov's*, *Worlds of Tomorrow*, and *Vision of Tomorrow*, but no others I can think of.

As I say, I don't read e-books, but I'm hardly attracted to the covers of print books these days. Book designers do not assign book covers anymore, but simply scramble some images taken down from the internet and place large-print text on top of the 'design'. Even so, American hardbacks remain much better made than British hardbacks, and sometimes have interesting covers.

We should have the Pita Pit chain in Australia. Most takeaway food in Greensborough is wrapped in pastry. Subway sandwiches look to be about 80 per cent bread roll and 20 per cent filling. We no longer have a salad bar in the Greensborough Plaza.

I'm glad that *The Metaphysical Review* 24/25 proved important in the life of at least one reader. I sent it to you because you were a member of Acnestis. I received little response from other Acnestids, except for Steve Jeffery, Andy Butler, and Paul and

Maureen. I trust you've enjoyed all the earlier copies of *Metaphysical Review* you've been able to accumulate.

70 pages — that's too many! I enjoyed them all.

Fiona Edwards: *Cloud Factory* 6

Don't worry about using black-and-white instead of colour for *Cloud Factory*. I can't afford colour from Copy Place (seven times the price of b&w per printed page), so I use it very seldom.

Thanks for your memory of Michael meeting Embers for the first time.

I also trust you are enjoying the use of your new glasses.

We are always being told by politicians that the employment situation is basically sound, but anybody looking for a job these days knows that there are no jobs around.

I was going to ask you how I can get onto Netflix, but I realise this would involve a long explanation. I would probably need a new internet account, or even a new server.

I love windfarms, especially because their output of electricity is replacing HORRIBLE DISGUSTING COAL. I've never been to Coal Creek, but that's because I don't drive a HORRIBLE PETROL-FUME-EMITTING CAR.

Of your Big Screen events, I've seen the new *Mad Max*. It's okay, but it has much less plot than *MM II* or *III*, and its photography has that horrible muddy look that is fashionable these days.

Thanks for the recommendation to read Max Barry's *Corporation*. That sounds like the kind of novel that made his reputation.

Many of our members like to store their ANZAPA mailings. I find that the older they are, the more valuable they become. If I scabble around in the huge stationery cupboard in the garage, I can find the very first mailing: APA-A 1.

Some members of ANZAPA are or have been professional editors, although I find this doesn't detract from their enjoyment of reading the mailings. Some of us also have encyclopedic knowledge of (pre-*Star Trek*) science fiction literature. (That doesn't include me. I know a bit about my favourite authors, but I've read a small percentage of the SF that appeared before 1960.) I can always look up anything in the *SF Encyclopedia* on the internet.

If you lived in the suburbs, I could suggest using a commercial printing service (Copy Place) that offers superb results, and collates, folds, and staples the copies, for about the same cost as operating your own home printer. But, as I've said, it charges a fortune for colour work.

Diane and John Fox: *Rhubarb* 56

Diane Fox:

Thanks for another episode of your American trip. Yet another reminder that I should write the full story of my American trip from 1973. *SF Commentary* featured only a sketch of the trip, but I've never returned to the main narrative.

When I visited Las Vegas in 2005 with Billy Pettit

driving, we whizzed around the streets to gain some idea of weird quality of the main strip, but looked closely at only a few of the huge casino hotels.

You've come across books I've never heard of by some of my favourite writers: Gore Vidal's *Sexually Speaking*, David Mamet's *Some Freaks*, and Doris Lessing's *Time Bites*. The only one of your list that I have read is Michael Heyward's very disappointing *The Ern Malley Affair*.

In the case *Dalziel and Pascoe*, the TV series probably diverged from the books because the actor playing Pascoe's wife became unavailable.

Brian Aldiss's other books based on his experience during World War II include *Forgotten Life* and *Walcot* — as well his autobiography *The Twinkling of an Eye*.

I've never heard of William Golding's *Double Tongue*. Must go and look it up in the biography.

John Fox

Thanks for the recommendation to Sophie Kinsella's *Remember Me?* and the lyrics of 'Joe Hill'.

It's all too easy to become involved in committees, isn't it? A bit less than 10 years ago I was asked to join the Australian SF Foundation and Meteor Inc. committees, and now find myself on the Melbourne SF Club committee as well. This is okay when you have agreeable people to work with.

Michael Green: *Abstractions* 10

If and when you recover from losing Embers, I would suggest (based on information from Elaine, who knows about cats) getting two kittens for your household, or two middle-aged cats that are already good friends. They will cheer up your household greatly.

Thanks for your conscientious Continuum notes, especially as I attended very little of the convention. At one time I might have asked for reprint rights for *SFC*, but now I'm so hopelessly behind on my own schedule I'm not asking for material.

I've just bought the huge Otto Penzler collection *Sherlock: Over 80 Stories Starring the Greatest Detective of all Time*: 899 pp.; \$39.99 (hardback). Only two of the stories are by Arthur Conan Doyle. Now to find time to read them, or even a few of them. 2015 was a good Sherlock Holmes year for me. I saw *Elementary*, Season 1, and the movie *Mr Holmes*, and have just read Dan Simmons's Sherlock Holmes (and Henry James) novel *The Fifth Heart*. The latest Cumberbatch *Sherlock* is expected this week on DVD/Blu-ray, but I haven't bought *Elementary* Season 2.

I found it difficult to read your description of Embers' last days. We've been through the whole process of hoping-against-hope far too many times in our lives. Thanks for the biography of Embers, and more photos.

I doubt if the third edition of the *SF Encyclopedia* could ever appear in book form. Last I heard, it had hit 4.3 million words, constantly expanding.

The main reasons why I would never buy a car, either secondhand or new, is that (a) I would not trust myself to drive it safely; (b) I would have no idea what to do if anything went wrong with it; (c) I couldn't

afford to pay for repairs.

'Do you have software for creating PDFs?' Yes, Michael. How else could I send my magazine to the printer? PDFs are the universal files by which people like me can transfer documents to printers. I did buy Adobe Acrobat many years ago when it was affordable, but there are plenty of much cheaper PDF-creating software packages available. I use Nuance Professional on the Windows 7 computer.

Your non-fiction books are much better organised than ours. Average-sized books go on the shelf in alpha order by author, along with the fiction. Tall books are stacked on the tall shelves that are still available. We need at least one other tall-books bookcase.

A friend recommended that we try reading David Deutsch's *The Fabric of Reality*, but Elaine found it unconvincing from a scientific point of view, so she discarded it. I suppose I should look it up on Wikipedia to find out what it's about.

If I'd known you have a photo of the ASFF panel from Continuum, I would have really liked it for my report on the panel for *SF Commentary*. Please always keep me in the loop with photos of fan activity, either for the ANZAPA OBO cover or for *SFC*.

Which Cyndi Lauper CD does 'World of Stone' come from? I can't find it on any of the six Lauper CDs that I own.

Jack Herman: *Necessity 125: I Never Saved Anything*

I don't go around Greensborough 'assessing real estate', but I keep an eye on house prices. The average house price was \$250,000 when we moved here in 2004. Now \$650,000 seems to be a minimum price for a house, and more than \$400,000 for a flat. The house blocks range from large to huge around here. Many of the houses that have been bought during the last 10 years have been knocked down to be replaced by flats.

You certainly eat at a much more up-market type of eating place than we do, even when you visit Melbourne. I haven't yet been to anywhere that has offered a chopping-board meal.

Thanks for the usual roll call of people lost in action. Of your list, Patrick McNee is the one I miss most. Yes, he did reach 94, so I shouldn't mourn, but I did feel that while he was still alive a bit of the 1960s was still around. Let's hope Diana Rigg lasts many more years.

I remembered *WAHF-full* as having won at least one Ditmar. If people *remember* you as having won a Ditmar, you might as well have done so. Now that Marc Ortlieb has vacated his role as Keeper of the Ditmar Archive, perhaps nobody knows anymore.

I haven't been to any Sydney conventions since early 1975, so I'll just have to take your word about the quality or otherwise of Sydney Guests of Honour. Memorable GoHs at Melbourne conventions include Ursula Le Guin, and Susan Wood and Mike Glickson, at the first Aussiecon in 1975, John Baxter in 1987, Bill Gibson in 1994, Gene Wolfe and Ted White at the 1985 Aussiecon, Greg Benford at 1999's Aussiecon 3, Kim Stanley Robinson at Aussiecon 4 (2010), Neil

Gaiman, Margo Lanagan, and Charles Stross from recent (post-2000) Continuums and Convergences, and ... there must be more. Most years I don't even attend the GoH speeches at Continuum because I've never heard of the writers. According to the buzz, the best GoH at any Australian regional convention in the last 20 years was Graham Joyce at Conflux in 2007.

I could see what Woody Allen was doing in *Stardust Memories* (making fun of Fellini movies), but I agree that the film was hard to *like*.

Any editor knows that she or he is more likely to pick up mistakes on paper copy than on screen. However, most publishers do not offer this option to editors. Time/money budgets allow only for on-screen editing.

To me the ideal science fiction novel is a realistic novel that happens to be set in the future (or alternative present or past) rather than in the present or past. Not that many authors have tried to stick to this definition. George Turner at his best is the author who comes to mind. Also Ursula Le Guin, Gene Wolfe, D. G. Compton, Brian Aldiss, Philip Dick, and a few others at their best.

I agree with you about *Inside Out*, but still had an uneasy feeling about it after the first viewing. The psychology seems simplistic to me, but many of the images are magnificent. Worth a second viewing.

I agree that *Snowpiercer* is not quite a success, but I enjoyed most of it. Tilda Swinton and Ed Harris were the highlights to me, even more interesting than the ideas and production design.

I haven't seen the other three films you review, but must look out for *Focus* at JB Hi Fi. (Note from the following day: I've just bought it).

David Grigg: *The Fretful Porpentine 4*

Your account of the saga of the Star Chorale/Zelman Orchestra performance of the Verdi *Requiem* is a magnificent piece of writing. I'm very pleased that you have been able to return to writing for ANZAPA. I've already written about the enjoyment that Elaine and I (and Carey Handfield) gained from the performance, one of the highlights of 2015.

Your account of behind-the-scenes problems (undetected by the audience) are very entertaining. Recently I've read the equally entertaining Charles Reid's biography of *Malcolm Sargent*, which includes many tales of behind-the-scenes near-misses and glitches as well much hagiography.

As I've written often, Barbara Vine's *A Dark-Adapted Eye* is one of the best British novels of the last 40 years. It might have won the Booker Prize if the Booker judges had not not prejudiced against genre fiction. (There are a few signs of a weakening of this prejudice in recent years.) Vine's most stylish novel is *Gallowglass*, but I've enjoyed many of the later books, especially *Grasshopper*.

Thanks for the additions to the list of Books That Are Really Science Fiction Although They Don't Wear the Label.

If we judged authors and other artists against one's own moral standards, we would probably never read books, look at paintings or films, or listen to a

piece of music. All artists seem to be naughty people, although some are naughtier than others. The only interesting thing about any artist is her or his work. This is my way of commenting on the peccadilloes of Eric Gill, which are hinted at rather than described in *Just My Type: A Book about Fonts*, by Simon Garfield. I knew nothing about Eric Gill until I read this book recently. At one time Gills Sans was a basic headline typeface throughout the Australian publishing industry. We used it at Publications Branch (1971–73) and at the VSTA (in *The Secondary Teacher*) in the 1970s. I'm pretty sure it was one of the *Age's* main heading faces for many years. But at that time few people associated typefaces with individual designers. Gill Sans has been replaced because it was beginning to look old-fashioned.

The main reason Elaine and I would never consider a house in a retirement village is that a move to such a place would lead to a reduction in shelf space. However, council rates and ever-increasing utility rates will probably eventually make it difficult or impossible for anybody but the rich to keep living in a suburban house.

I've seen the movie of *Perfume*, but not read the book. And I've seen the film of *The Martian*, but not read the book.

I was given the first biography of Steve Jobs awhile ago, but I still haven't read it. The new biographical film is receiving enthusiastic reviews.

I thought I still had a copy of Bob Shaw's *The Two Timers*, but it's not on the shelf. I suspect I gave it to a friend (who died a few years ago) because she read Bob Shaw, although she read no other SF.

Eric Lindsay: Kingdom of the Bland

If you've really gone off the Internet, how are we to make contact, except through ... gasp ... putting a letter in an envelope and putting a stamp on it and posting it?

The cheapest way to install solar power throughout Australia, of course, would be through the grid, with power generated by a square-kilometre piece of land in a very sunny spot in Australia.

Finally the postal fees have risen. See the OBO this mailing.

We have one last Gillespie & Cochrane Pty Ltd client who pays by cheque, for the same reason G&C pays by cheque: any payment by the company/partnership requires both our signatures. All our other clients are large publishing companies, who pay bank-to-bank.

After the large hot water tank disintegrated not long after we moved to Greensborough, we installed one of those little gas heaters that supplies only the hot water you need for the current shower or dishwasher. The disadvantage is that you have to run a litre of water each time before it becomes hot. Elaine solves this problem by saving in a bucket the cold water that pours out when you first turn on the tap. She uses this to water her pot plants.

I could no longer take part in FAPA or any other overseas apa even if I had the time to join one. A packet of apazines would go over the 500 gram postal limit. As soon as it does that, I would require (a) photo

ID to post it, but I no longer have any photo ID; and (b) \$25 to be paid on top of postage charges, to pay for the compulsory package-checking fee as it enters the USA.

Since the poor countries will suffer worse than any others from upcoming climate destabilisation, any immediate improvements in their lifestyle provided by coal-burning power stations will be obliterated by natural disasters within the next 20 to 30 years. And life won't be much fun in the 'rich' countries, either.

LynC: From the Lair of the Lunx 87

Now in February we know what happened to Tai. Thanks for your story of a much-missed pussycat.

Elaine was so disappointed by her recent visit to the Royal Melbourne Show that neither of us will visit it again. She said that the interesting farming displays have been reduced greatly. Nothing is left but show blitz.

Thanks for your verdicts on the items in the Hugo Voters Pack. My indifference to Hugo nominees was even more justified in 2015 than in any other year.

Of the books you mention, the only one I've read is *The Three-Body Problem*. I quite enjoyed it, mainly for the imagery, but its structure was a shambles.

Thanks for remembering the Hawking Brothers. I had heard on the radio a few of their singles that crept into the bottom of the Top 40 in Melbourne in the very early sixties, but I hadn't realised they had produced some LPs as well.

It certainly hadn't occurred to me that the SF magazines still accept only paper copies! I thought they would have switched to all-email-attachment submissions years ago, long before other magazines did so.

I'm calling for fan-historical photos of *any* fans or fan activities for the cover of the OBO. I seemed to have mined most sources of photos of ANZAPA members or ex-members, so I'll settle for photos from the wide world of Fan History.

If you've been to Readers Feast in Collins Street recently, you'll have noticed that the shelves have become very bare. As somebody said to me recently: 'You can't see the shop from the street.' If you don't know the shop is there, you walk straight past it. Dymocks in Collins Street is my main city bookshop. It might be in the basement, but the signpost on Collins Street is quite clear.

The suburbs were still littered with private lending libraries during the 1950s, and a few remained in the early 1960s. They needed to make a profit for their owners by charging a small fee for each loan, so the introduction of TV in 1956 killed off most of them by 1960.

It does seem to be possible to transform society for the good, with a combination of legislation and public cooperation. These days I rarely smell a cigarette in the streets, for instance. Only a few people still smoke in the streets. Remember the fugg of cigarette smoke that overlay Australian SF convention rooms, destroying the health and enjoyment of many attendees?

Thanks for the information for the method of meat-killing that is called 'halal'. Just shows: never

follow the instructions of ye olde religious books when preparing food.

I ask for a colonoscopy every five years because my father died of bowel cancer at the age of 69. Last time, I could not get an appointment at St Vincent's Hospital, so my doctor arranged for a private facility that I could afford. A colonoscopy does seem the most effective way of detecting bowel cancer for most people. During the last 10 years both my sister and my nephew gained a warning of pre-cancerous polyps during a colonoscopy examination.

Gary Mason: *Crash of the Hard Disk 19*

Thanks for the epic story of the Great Fanzine Heist. You carried out a nice bit of detective work to find the culprit. But you did not recover the valuable items, and did not even gain a conviction! When we suffered from burglary in 1997, nothing was ever recovered. However, we did have a list of all the valuable items in the house. Elaine recovered the cost of her camera equipment, but she has never been able to replace the actual equipment, which was much better than the items she could buy from the insurance settlement.

Thanks for letting us peek into your safe deposit box. I don't even know if we still have one, where it is, or how it is being paid for. I assume Elaine has this aspect of our lives under control.

Thursday night football is an extreme nuisance to any listener to ABC Local Radio. It obliterates the regular programs. Suddenly there is nothing to listen to if there is nothing interesting on 3MBS or ABC Classic FM. Even worse, the Bloody AFL snuck in a few Monday night football matches in the middle of the 2015 season. The best night of the week for listening to Lindy Burns on Radio 774 — gone!

Egg sales were so aggressively protected in the 1950s that our neighbour was breaking the law by selling us eggs from her hens. We liked her eggs much better than grocer's eggs.

That's not a bad price for the Fuji-Xerox CM305df. It sounded tempting until you described the difficulty of persuading it to obey instructions and print a page. I like my technology to be really really simple, especially the instruction manuals. I also raise a glass to your intellectual ability to solve the problem of slow internet speeds. I would have given up, or called the cheery bloke from Centre.com.

Nice to see news about Ryan scattered throughout the issue. This is the first I'd heard about his screen-print abilities. Sorry to see his bad employment news (pp. 24–5). And thanks for introducing us to Adam.

I don't recall John Foyster's '1960s Fanhistory' project, although he must have sent me the same prospectus he sent you. Surely all the activity leading up to Aussiecon in 1975 made him and us forget about the project?

Jeanne Mealy: *Land of 10,000 Loons*

Sorry — no comments on your contribution this time. Thanks, as always, for the Garrison Keillor cuttings.

Terry Morris: *Hold That Tiger!*

Thanks for the news of Gab. I wonder if he's met LynC's son Roger Newall around the gigs? Since there seem to be no jobs for young people (or old people) any more, it's good to see that he's so enterprising. I'm looking forward to tales of his visit to Japan.

The real star of *Mad Max: Fury Road* is Charlize Theron, so it's quite insulting that she is not up for Best Actress or Best Support Actress this year.

I detest the idea of superheroes, since there are none. And what interest can there be in a narrative in which the main character cannot lose? For a story to work, you need equality of destiny between characters, i.e. at any moment, any character could triumph or be knocked out of the plot.

John Newman: *Ping!*

Thanks for the information about the Bendigo Art Gallery. I'll show this to Elaine, since she was looking for an excuse to take her free train trip to Bendigo.

You derive more from art-gallery art than I do. I must admit I don't get much from simply standing in front of a painting and looking at it. I'm far more interested in animated art, i.e. motion pictures. I do enjoy looking at stills from movies that are superbly photographed, but I gain more enjoyment from seeing the same photograph as part of the narrative of the film itself.

Of the few paintings I really do like (usually seen in books rather than art galleries), I like the great abstract painters of the twentieth century (Rothko, Miro, Mondrian, etc.) rather than most of the painters of earlier centuries. It's the underlying aesthetic, abstract qualities that make any piece of art interesting. I also like the hyper-realist painters, such as Jeffery Smart or Edward Hopper, whose 'reality' seems much less important than the organising principles of the art.

Cath Ortlieb:

You Really Know You're Home When You Find a Wombat in Your Bed 159

The whole of 2015 seemed to be filled with stories (mainly on Facebook) of losses of favourite people's favourite pet animals, but each story affects me greatly. To lose Invida so suddenly that such a young age is rather shocking. Usually cats hang onto life until the last moment, and need to be taken to the vet to ease their pain. However, we still remember Violet vividly. She was about 11. While we were away for the day, it seems she used the cat tray, ate some food, then simply fell over dead in her room.

Lucy Schmeidler: *Oz SF Fan*

It was a bit disturbing to hear in August about your loss of energy, and then to miss you contributing in December. But I'm pleased to see you're back with us this month. How did you summon up the energy to contemplate a trip to the 2015 Worldcon, let alone

get there? I hope you tell the story sometime.

Gerald Smith: *Thymes Past*

Even if I had held down a job all these years, I would have had to face 'restructures' crap for most of the last 30 years. The anxiety level of freelancing is very low compared with that generated by keeping a job these days.

I trust Karen has recovered by now.

You lead an event-filled life, and keep more family connections that we do. My two sisters and I keep in touch via Facebook. Elaine keeps in touch with her sisters and their families in person and by phone and the Internet. Her sisters live quite close to us. None of our parents is still alive.

Bravo Achates, hurtling around on three legs!

Thanks for the story of the latter days of your friend Frances. All this lies before us, assuming we reach a great age.

Alan Stewart: *Ytterbium 108*

Thanks for telling us about the progress of your career. I hadn't realised that you had missed out on a Managing Editor's position before moving to your current employer. It doesn't seem very long since Elaine recommended you to Heinemann for your first proofreading work, but I suppose it must be 15-20 years ago now.

Very few of the 2015 Hugo fan awards had much to do with fandom, but at least a real fanzine won that award.

The *Leunig Calendar* used to arrive as a free insert in one of the last Saturday *Ages* for the year. I think you can still buy it, if you know where to find it. We receive the free *Banyule Calendar* from the local council each year, but prefer to put on the wall the *Big Issue Calendar*, which we buy.

Thanks again for saving ANZAPA members well over \$100 by taking the overseas August mailings with you to the worldcon.

I haven't even heard of Liz Grzyb's anthology *Hear the Roar*, let alone had a chance to buy and read it.

I used almost all the photos that LynC sent me of her wedding to Clive. I don't think I left you out, but I also got the impression that the photos covered only a small percentage of the people who were there.

I had no contact with *Asterix* when I was a kid. I was already a teenager in 1961 when the first collection came out. By then I had stopped reading comics and anything I regarded as a children's book.

Thanks for your usual Alan Stewart lists. I haven't even heard of Tehani Wessely's anthology *Phantazein*. I haven't heard of any of the anthologies you mention. Since nobody sends me review copies, I find

it hard to keep up with Australian titles. I had little money in June to buy books at Continuum, so immediately fell a year behind. I can't see how the Australian small press SF and fantasy publishers can succeed unless they engage in comprehensive publicity. For instance, somebody mentioned that Satalyte had published 50 books — but the only ones I know about are the Jack Dann titles (not yet seen) and LynC's *Nil by Mouth* (and I have that because she gave me a copy).

I hadn't heard of Good Beer Week 2015. Although the idea sounds good, I can't participate. Because of being diagnosed as diabetic 2 in 2009, I'm allowed one standard drink per day. Usually I stick to this, even at dinners and parties. I don't even keep any beer at home.

Now that ACMI no longer advertises in the *Age*, I miss seeing any of the films it exhibits.

You're a more adventurous man than I am. I felt no temptation to attend the White Nights Festival. Too many people; too little likelihood of seeing anything that might interest me.

Sally Yeoland: *Les chattes parties 139*

We in Victoria hope that parole boards have learned whatever lessons are offered by the Jill Meagher murder case. I doubt if I could do your job, if it includes cases such as the one you mention.

No wonder we don't own a car! \$1500 — just because of one accident that affects one door! Elaine and I cannot work out how anyone can afford to run a car these days.

Thanks for the reminder to buy the latest edition of Nick Hudson's *Modern Australian Usage*. We have the first edition, of course, but it will be interesting to compare entries in the two editions. Thanks to John for repeating those sterling words from Nick Hudson: 'An editor's main responsibility is to satisfy the reader.' Nick Hudson gave me my first freelance publishing assignment when he was head of local Heinemann in December 1972.

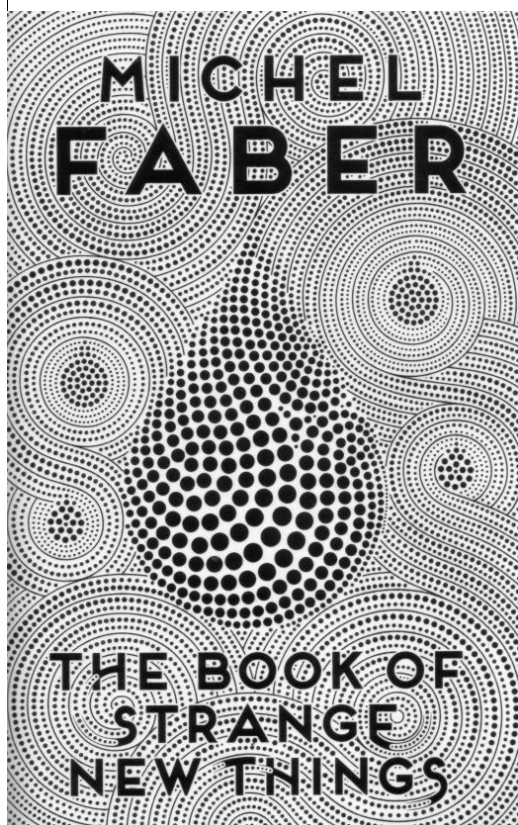
Merv Binns will be 82 in 2016. We celebrated his eighty-first birthday at the Rosstown Hotel in the middle of 2015. (Both of you would be welcome at these gatherings, organised by Helena, but I can't quite see John attending one of them. Should I tell Helena that you might like to attend the 2016 shindig?)

When Lee Harding and I first met, the first composer he urged on me was Gustav Mahler, followed closely by Carl Orff. 'We've been listening to nobody else for the last six months,' he said in December 1967.

— Bruce Gillespie, 2 February 2016

Favourites 2015

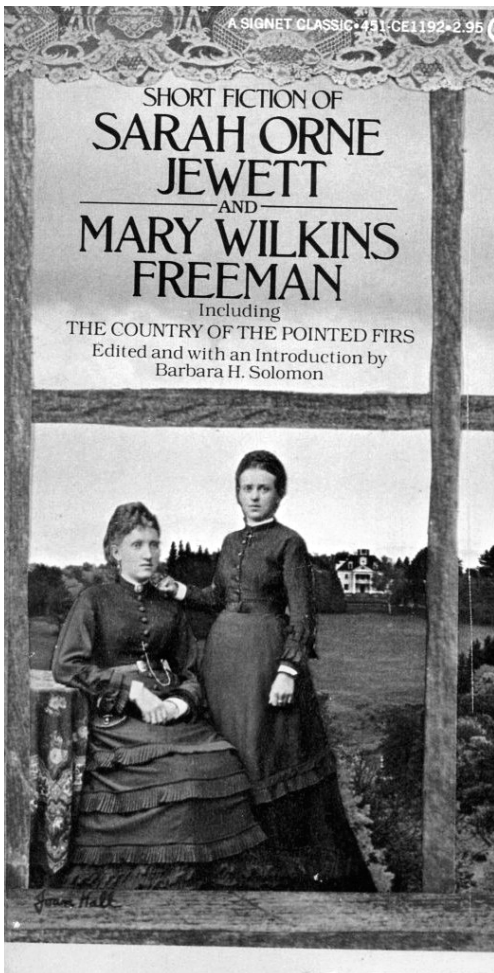
Favourite novels read for the first time in 2015



- 1 *The Book of Strange New Things* (2014) Michel Faber (Canongate)
- 2 *Black Swan Green* (2006) David Mitchell (Sceptre)
- 3 *The Edge of Running Water* (1937) William Sloane (Panther)
- 4 *Brittle Innings* (1994) Michael Bishop (Bantam)
- 5 *Roadside Picnic* (1972/2012) Arkady and Boris Strugatsky tr. Olena Bornashenko (Gollancz SF Masterworks)
- 6 *Hard To Be a God* (1964/2014) Arkady and Boris Strugatsky tr. Olena Bornashenko (Gollancz SF Masterworks)
- 7 *Mr Holmes (A Slight Trick of the Mind)* (2014) Mitch Cullin (Canongate)
- 8 *Station Eleven* (2014) Emily St John Mandel (Picador)
- 9 *Gillespie and I* (2011) Jane Harris (Faber)
- 10 *The Bone Clocks* (2014) David Mitchell (Sceptre)
- 11 *Orfeo* (2014) Richard Powers (Atlantic)
- 12 *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013) Karen Joy Fowler (Putnam)
- 13 *The Heat* (2015) Garry Disher (Text)
- 14 *Count Geiger's Blues* (1992) Michael Bishop (Kudzo Planet)
- 15 *My Real Children* (2014) Jo Walton (Corsair)
- 16 *A God In Ruins* (2015) Kate Atkinson (Doubleday)

Favourite books read during 2015

- 1 *Short Fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman* (1979) ed. Barbara A. Solomon (Signet)
- 2 *The Book of Strange New Things* (2014) Michel Faber (Canongate)
- 3 *Black Swan Green* (2006) David Mitchell (Sceptre)
- 4 *The Edge of Running Water* (1937) William Sloane (Panther)
- 5 *Brittle Innings* (1994) Michael Bishop (Bantam)
- 6 *Roadside Picnic* (1972/2012) Arkady and Boris Strugatsky tr. Olena Bornashenko (Gollancz SF Masterworks)
- 7 *Hard To Be a God* (1964/2014) Arkady and Boris Strugatsky tr. Olena Bornashenko (Gollancz SF Masterworks)
- 8 *Towards the Equator: New and Selected Poems* (2014) Alex Skovron (Puncher & Wattmann)
- 9 *Mr Holmes (A Slight Trick of the Mind)* (2014) Mitch Cullin (Canongate)
- 10 *Station Eleven* (2014) Emily St John Mandel (Picador)
- 11 *Gillespie and I* (2011) Jane Harris (Faber)
- 12 *The Bone Clocks* (2014) David Mitchell (Sceptre)
- 13 *Les Murray: A Life in Progress* (2000) Peter F. Alexander (Oxford University Press)
- 14 *Orfeo* (2014) Richard Powers (Atlantic)
- 15 *Something for the Pain: A Memoir of the Turf* (2015) Gerald Murnane (Text)
- 16 *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013) Karen Joy Fowler (Putnam)
- 17 *The Heat* (2015) Garry Disher (Text)
- 18 *Count Geiger's Blues* (1992) Michael Bishop (Kudzo Planet)
- 19 *All the Time in the World* (2011) E. L. Doctorow (Little Brown)
- 20 *My Real Children* (2014) Jo Walton (Corsair)



- 21 *Malcolm Sargent: A Biography* (1968) Charles Reid (Hamish Hamilton)
- 22 *A God In Ruins* (2015) Kate Atkinson (Doubleday)

Other four-star books, in order of being read:

- *Objects in Dreams: Imaginings Vol. 4* (2012) Lisa Tuttle (Newcom Press)
- *Jocasta* (2004) Brian Aldiss (The Friday Project)
- *Walcot* (2009) Brian Aldiss (Goldmark)
- *Comfort Zone: A Novel of Present Day Discontents* (2013) Brian Aldiss (The Friday Project)
- *The Dark Lighthouse: Tales of Speculation and*

- *the Fantastic* (2014) David R. Grigg (Rightword)
- *Storytellers: Tales of Hope, Humor and Heartbreak* (2014) David R. Grigg (Rightword)
- *Homeland and Other Stories* (1989) Barbara Kingsolver (Virago)
- *Victor Hugo* (1997) Graham Robb (Picador)
- *Collected Stories* (1982) V. S. Pritchett (Penguin)
- *Mannix* (2015) Brenda Niall (Text)
- *Not the End of the World* (2002) Kate Atkinson (Black Swan)
- *Yellowcake Summer: A Novel* (2013) Guy Salvidge (Glass House Books)
- *Cranky Ladies of History* (2015) ed. Tansy Rayner Roberts and Tehani Wessely (Fablecroft)
- *The Alienist* (1994) Caleb Carr (Warner Books)
- *The Paperchase* (2001) Marcel Theroux (Abacus)
- *The Wonders* (2014) Paddy O'Reilly (Affirm)
- *Close Your Eyes* (2015) Michael Robotham (Sphere)
- *Collected Memoirs: Am I Too Loud?/Farewell Recital/Furthermoore* (1986) Gerald Moore (Penguin)
- *The Girl in the Spider's Web* (2015) David Lager (Maclehose)
- *The Land Across* (2013) Gene Wolfe (Tor)
- *The Frog Who Dared to Croak* (1982) Richard Sennett (Farrar Straus Giroux)
- *An Evening of Brahms* (1984) Richard Sennett (Faber)
- *The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror: 25th Anniversary Edition* (2014) ed. Stephen Jones (Robinson)
- *Reckoning* (2015) Magda Szubanski (Text)
- *The Three-Body Problem* (2006/2015) Cixin Liu tr. Ken Liu (Head of Zeus)
- *Rich and Rare* (2015) ed. Paul Collins (Ford Street)
- *Slade House* (2015) David Mitchell (Sceptre)
- *Synergy: New Science Fiction Vol. 1* (1987) ed. George Zebrowski (Harvest/HBJ)
- *The Shadow of the Wind* (2001) Carlos Ruiz Zafon (Text)
- *The Best Australian Poems 2015* (2015) ed. Geoff Page (Black Inc)
- *Blockbuster! Fergus Hume and The Mystery of the Hansom Cab* (2015) Lucy Sussex (Text)
- *The Observations* (2006) Jane Harris (Faber)
- *No Man's Nightmare* (2013) Ruth Rendell (Scribner)

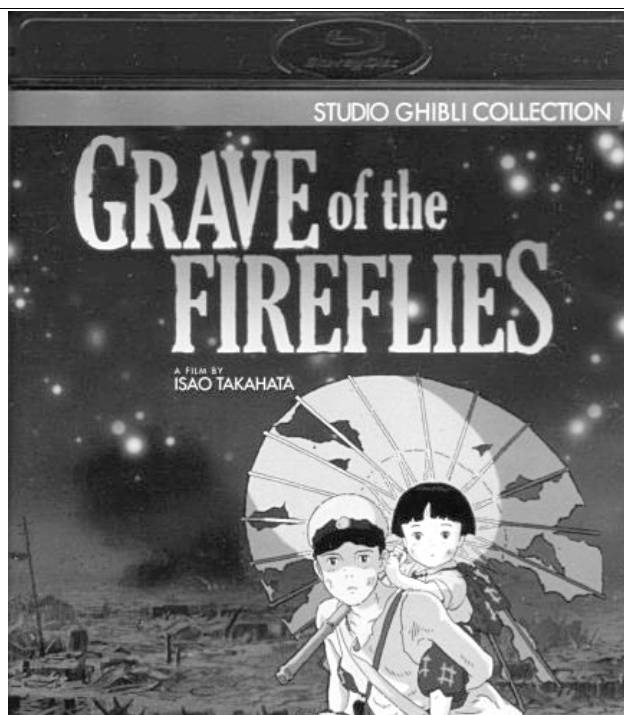
Favourite films seen for the first time in 2015

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|---|
| 1 | <i>Grave of the Fireflies</i> (1988) directed by Isao Takahata | 8 | <i>Contraband</i> (1940) Michael Powell |
| 2 | <i>Ex Machina</i> (2015) Alex Garland | 9 | <i>Midnight's Children</i> (2012) Deepa Mehta |
| 3 | <i>Birdman</i> (2014) Alejandro Inaritu | 10 | <i>Salaam Bombay</i> (1988) Mira Nair |
| 4 | <i>Mr Holmes</i> (2015) Bill Condon | 11 | <i>Gertrud</i> (1964) Carl Theodore Dreyer |
| 5 | <i>Pickup on South Street</i> (1953) Samuel Fuller | 12 | <i>The Martian</i> (2015) Ridley Scott |
| 6 | <i>Moontide</i> (1942) Archie Mayo | 13 | <i>Je t'aime je t'aime</i> (1968) Alain Resnais |
| 7 | <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> (1939) William Dieterle | 14 | <i>Winter's Tale</i> (2014) Akira Goldsman |
| | | 15 | <i>Dark Places</i> (2015) Gilles Paquet-Brenner |
| | | 16 | <i>Storm Boy</i> (1976) Henry Safran |

- 17 *The Drop* (2014) Michael R. Roskam
- 18 *The Congress* (2013) Ari Folman
- 19 *Valentino* (1977) Ken Russell
- 20 *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* (1985) George Miller and George Ogilvie
- 21 *Ida* (2014) Pawel Pawlikowski
- 22 *Woman In Gold* (2015) Simon Curtis
- 23 *The Swimmer* (1968) Frank Perry
- 24 *The Story of Three Loves* (1953) Gottfried Reinhardt and Vincente Minnelli
- 25 *Interrupted Melody* (1954) Curtis Bernhardt
- 26 *Enemy* (2013) Denis Villeneuve
- 27 *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961) Val Guest
- 28 *The Imitation Game* (2014) Morten Tyldum

Other four-star movies seen for the first time in 2015, in order of viewing:

- *The Ninth Configuration* (1980) William Peter Blatty
- *Always* (1989) Steven Spielberg
- *God Rot Tunbridge Wells: The Life Of George Frederic Handel* (1986) Tony Palmer
- *The Wind Rises* (2013) Hayao Miyazaki
- *Hawking* (2004) Philip Martin
- *The Darkside* (2013) Warwick Thornton
- *Tangled* (2011) Nathan Greno and Byron Howard
- *A Man about the House* (1947) Leslie Arliss
- *The Night My Number Came Up* (1955) Leslie Norman
- *Inferno* (1953) Roy Baker
- *The Roots of Heaven* (1958) John Huston
- *52 Pick-Up* (1986) John Frankenheimer
- *A Walk among the Tombstones* (2014) Scott Frank
- *Big Hero 6* (2014) Don Hall and Chris Williams
- *Red Garters* (1953) George Marshall
- *Arietty* (2010) Hiromasa Yonebayashi
- *You'll Find Out* (1940) David Butler
- *Cosi* (1995) Mark Joffe
- *Broadcast News* (1987) James L. Brooks
- *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962) Robert Aldrich
- *Destination Moon* (1950) Irving Pichel; prod. George Pal



- *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (1986) Leonard Nimoy
- *Shaun the Sheep* (2014) Mark Burton and Richard Starzak
- *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1934) Rowland V. Lee
- *Lupin III: Castle of Cagliostro* (1979) Hayao Miyazaki
- *Automata* (2013) Gabe Ibanez
- *My Afternoons with Margaritte* (2010) Jean Becker
- *Beau Geste* (1939) William Wellman
- *Peter Ibbetson* (1935) Henry Hathaway
- *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) George Miller
- *The Jungle Book* (1967) Wolfgang Reitherman
- *Blind Chance* (1981) Krzysztof Kieslowski
- *The Satan Bug* (1965) John Sturges
- *Inside Out* (2015) Pete Docter
- *Bridge of Spies* (2015) Steven Spielberg
- *Knight of Cups* (2015) Terence Malick
- *Self/Less* (2015) Tarsem Singh
- *Devotion* (1946) Curtis Bernhardt
- *Oddball* (2015) Stuart Macdonald

Favourite films seen again in 2015

- 1 *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951) Michael Powell and Emric Pressburger
- 2 *Citizen Kane* (1940) Orson Welles
- 3 *The Third Man* (1949) Carroll Reed
- 4 *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) John Frankenheimer
- 5 *Predestination* (2014) Spierig Brothers
- 6 *Being There* (1979) Hal Ashby
- 7 *The Dead Zone* (1983) David Cronenberg
- 8 *Springsteen and I* (2013) Baillie Walsh
- 9 *Charade* (1963) Stanley Donen

- 10 *Day For Night* (1973) Francois Truffaut

Other four-star movies seen again in 2015, in order of viewing:

- *The Knack* (1965) Richard Lester
- *The Outer Circle: Melbourne's Forgotten Railway* (2014)
- *Interstellar* (2014) Christopher Nolan
- *When Worlds Collide* (1950) Rudolph Maté
- *Quiz Show* (1994) Robert Redford

- *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing* (1942) Michael Powell and Emric Pressburger
- *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis) 1985
- *Back to the Future II* (Robert Zemeckis) 1989
- *Back to the Future III* (Robert Zemeckis) 1990

Favourite documentaries and music films seen for the first time in 2015

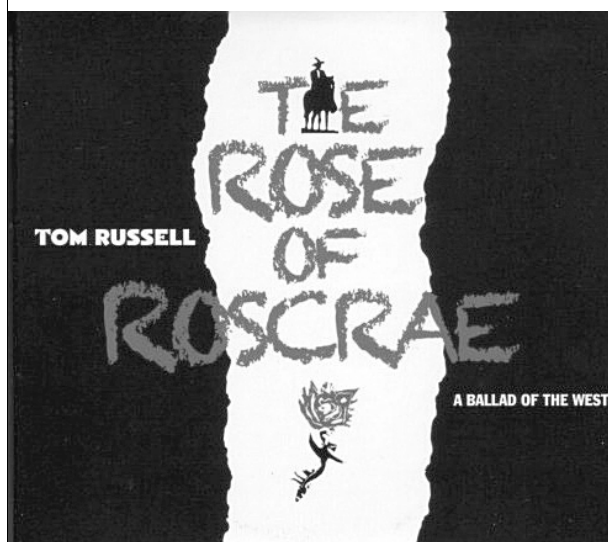
- 1 *Benvenuto Cellini* (2015) Terry Gilliam; cond. Edward Gardner/English National Opera
- 2 *Tosca* (2011) Jonathan Kent; cond: Antonio Pappano/Royal Opera Orchestra and Chorus Covent Garden
- 3 *Jazz on a Summer's Day* (1958) Bert Stern and Aram Avakian
- 4 *Life Itself: Roger Ebert* (2014) Steve James
- 5 *Hard Working Americans: The First Waltz* (2014) Jason Kreutzman
- 6 *The Monsanto Years* (2015) Bernard Shakey

Other four-star documentaries and music films seen for the first time in 2015, in order of viewing:

- *Sweet Blues: A Film about Michael Bloomfield* (2013) Bob Saides
- *A Tribute to Stevie Ray Vaughan* (1996) Gary Menotti & Terry Lickona
- *Carole King and James Taylor: Live at the Troubadour* (2010) Martin Atkins
- *Particle Fever* (2013) Mark Lewinson
- *Edward Hopper and the Blank Canvas* (2012) Jean-Pierre Devillers
- *Going Clear* (2015) Alex Gibney
- *Joe Bonamasa: Radio City Music Hall* (2015) Philippe Klose

Favourite popular music CDs heard for the first time in 2015

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Tom Russell: <i>The Rose of Roscrae</i> (2 CDs) (2015) | 7 Rhiannon Giddens: <i>Tomorrow Is My Turn</i> (2015) |
| 2 Neil Young: <i>Blue Note Cafe</i> (2 CDs) (1988/2015) | 8 Joe Brown: <i>More of the Truth</i> (2006) |
| 3 Iris Dement: <i>The Trackless Woods</i> (2015) | 9 Ruth Moody: <i>These Wilder Things</i> (2013) |
| 4 Linda Ortega: <i>Little Red Boots</i> (2011) | 10 Black Keys: <i>Chulahoma</i> (2006) |
| 5 Hardworking Americans: <i>The First Waltz</i> (CD + DVD) (2014) | 11 Courtney Barnett: <i>Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit</i> (2015) |
| 6 Kimmie Rhodes: <i>Cowgirl Boudoir</i> (2015) | 12 Roy Rogers: <i>Into The Wild Blue</i> (2015) |
| | 13 Josh Ritter: <i>Sermon on the Rocks</i> (2015) |
| | 14 Ray Wylie Hubbard: <i>The Ruffian's Misfortune</i> (2015) |
| | 15 Bettye Lavette: <i>Worthy</i> (2015) |
| | 16 Sonny Landreth: <i>Bound by the Blues</i> (2015) |
| | 17 Gurf Morlix: <i>Eatin' At Me</i> (2015) |
| | 18 Tony Bennett and Bill Charlap: <i>The Silver Lining: The Songs of Jerome Kern</i> (2015) |
| | 19 Neil Young and Promise of the Real: <i>The Monsanto Years</i> (2015) |
| | 20 Black Sorrows: <i>Endless Sleep: Chapters 46 & 47</i> (2 LPs + 2 CDs) (2015) |
| | 21 Sam Outlaw: <i>Angelena</i> (2015) |
| | 22 Pokey La Farge: <i>Something in the Water</i> (2015) |
| | 23 Shane Howard: <i>Deeper North</i> (2015) |
| | 24 Susannah Espie: <i>Mother's Not Feeling Herself Today</i> (2015) |
| | 25 Chris Russell's Chicken Walk: <i>Drive</i> (2015) |
| | 26 <i>The Watkins Family Hour</i> (2015) |
| | 27 Mark Seymour: <i>Mayday</i> (2015) |



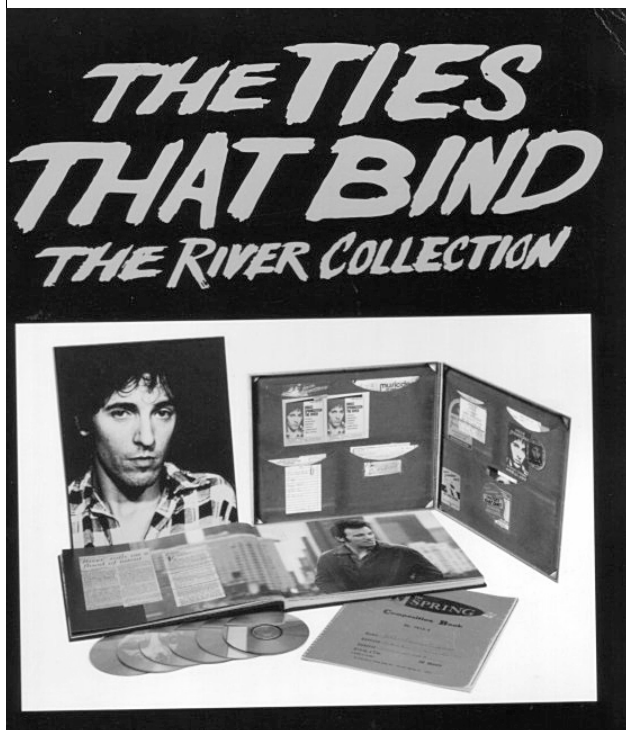
- 28 Steve Earle and the Dukes: *Terraplane* (2015)
- 29 Tom Jones: *Long Lost Suitcase* (2015)
- 30 Paul Kelly, Viki and Linda Bull, Claire Browne, Dan Sultan and Kira Parr: *The Merri Soul Sessions* (2014)

Other four-star popular CDs, in order of listening:

- Jack White: *Lazaretto* (2014)
- Black Sorrows: *Certified Blue* (2014)
- Various: *Another Day Another Time: Celebrating the Music of 'Inside Llewyn Davis'* (2 CDs) (2015)
- Mark Knopfler: *Tracker* (2015)
- Various: *Avalon Blues: A Tribute to the Music of Mississippi John Hurt* (2001)
- James Taylor and Carole King: *Live at the Troubadour* (CD + DVD) (2010)
- Emmylou Harris and Rodney Crowell: *The Traveling Kind* (2015)
- Perry Keyes: *Sunnyholt* (2015)
- Mark Seymour: *Seventh Heaven Club* (2013)
- Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard: *Django and*

- Jimmie* (2015)
- Sinead O'Connor: *I'm Not Bossy, I'm the Boss* (2014)
- Joe Brown: *The Ukelele Album* (2011)
- Jefferson Airplane: *Surrealistic Pillow* (1967)
- Santana: *Woostock Saturday August 16 1969* (1998/2009)
- Ryan Adams: *Ashes and Fire* (2011)
- Jason Isbell: *Something More Than Free* (2015)
- Dawes: *All Your Favourite Bands* (2015)
- Richard Thompson: *Still* (and *Variations EP*) (2015)
- Kieran Kane: *Somewhere Beyond the Roses* (2009)
- Black Keys: *Rubber Factor* (2005)
- Keith Richards: *Crosseyed Heart* (2015)
- Larry Campbell and Teresa Williams (2015)
- Joe Ely: *Panhandle Rambler* (2015)
- Various: *Vanthology* (2003)
- Jim Keays: *The Boy from the Stars* (1974/1999)
- Wainwright Sisters: *Songs in the Dark* (2015)
- Kinky Friedman: *The Loneliest Man I Ever Met* (2015)

Favourite popular music CD boxed sets or collections bought during 2015



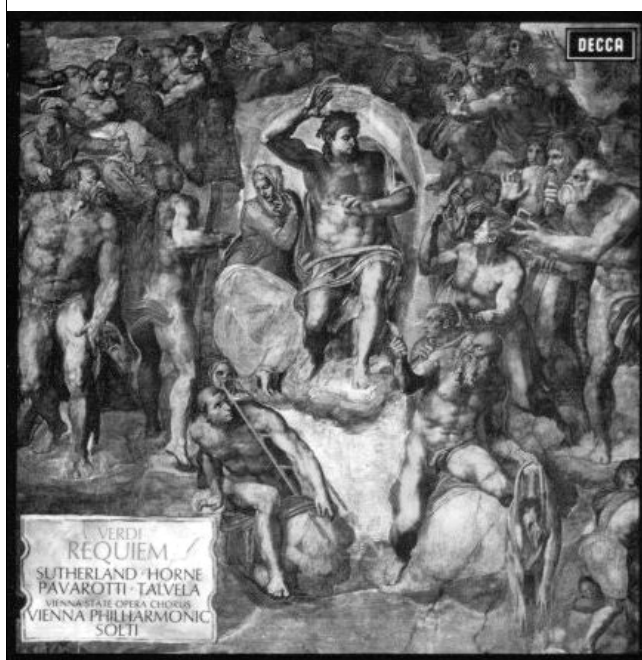
- 1 Bruce Springsteen: *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection* (4 CDs + 2 Blu-rays) (2015)
- 2 Faces: *1970-75: You Make Me Dance, Sing Or*

- Anything* (5 CDs)
- 3 Rolling Stones: *Sticky Fingers* (reissue plus extras) (2 CDs) (1971/2015)
- 4 Archie Roach: *Charcoal Lane: 25th Anniversary Edition* (2 CDs) (1990/2015)
- 5 Richard Clapton: *Best Years 1974-2014* (3 CDs + DVD) (2014)
- 6 Mental As Anything: *Essential As Anything: 30th Anniversary Edition* (2 CDs) (2009)
- 7 Various: *Buried Country 1.5* (2 CDs + Book)
- 8 Son Volt: *Trace* (remastered plus extras) (2 CDs) (1995/2015)

Other four-star CD boxed sets, in the order I bought them:

- Ornette Coleman: *Original Album Series* (5 CDs)
- Normie Rowe: *Frenzy! The 50th Anniversary Collection* (2015)
- Chet Atkins: *Chester and Lester/Neck and Neck/Sneakin' Around/The Day Finger Pickers Took Over the World* (2 CDs) (2015)
- John Hartford: *Life, Love and Music: Essential Albums 1962-1969* (2 CDs) (2015)
- Bob Luman: *Let's Think About Living* (2015)
- Kevin Johnson: *The Ultimate Collection* (2 CDs) (2015)
- Van Morrison: *Astral Weeks* (Remastered) (1969/2015)
- Glen Campbell: *Classic Campbell* (3 CDs) (2006)

Favourite classical CDs heard for the first time in 2015



- 1 Georg Solti (cond.)/Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra: **Verdi: Requiem** (1967/2013) (*Decca Analogue Sound* CD 29)
- 2 Michel Corboz (cond.)/Vocal and Instrumental Ensemble of Lausanne: **Monteverdi: Vespro Della Beata Vergine** (1966) (3 LPs)
- 3 Kodaly Quartet: **Haydn: String Quartets Op. 76: SQ in G major/SQ in D minor ('Fifths')/SQ in C major ('Emperor')** (1989)
- 4 Ton Koopman (cond.)/Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra/Konrad Hüdeler (flute)/Tini Mathot (harpsichord): **C. P. E. Bach: Flute Concertos W169/W1666/two harpsichord concertos W46**
- 5 Noel Edison (cond.)/Jurgen Petrenko (organ)/Elora Festival Singassom: **Arvo Pärt: Cantata Domino/ Canticum Novum/ Berliner Masse/De Profundis/Summa/The Beatitudes/Magnificat** (2004)
- 6 David Porcelijn (cond.)/Adelaide Symphony

- Orchestra: **Sculthorpe: Memento Mori/Sun Song/Sun Music I, II, III, IV/From Uluru** (1996/2014) (*Sculthorpe ABC Recordings* CD 4)
- 7 Herbert von Karajan (cond.)/Berlin Philharmonic Orch.: **Sibelius: Symphonies 6, 5, 7** (1967/2012) (*Karajan in the 60s* CD.)
- 8 Fitzwilliam Quartet: **Shostakovich: String Quartets 15, 8, 9** (1975/1977/2013) (*Decca Analogue Sound* CD 14)
- 9 Fabio Biondi (cond. and violin)/Europa Galante: **Vivaldi: Concerti Del'addio (Farewell Concertos) (violin concertos) RV 390, 273, 371, 189, 367, 286** (2015)
- 10 Gustav Leonhardt (cond.)/Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Anner Bylsma (cello): **C. P. E. Bach: Cello concertos B major W172/A minor W170/B flat major W176** (1990/2014)

Other four-star contenders for favourite classical CD heard for the first time in 2015, in order of listening:

- Angela Hewitt (piano): **Liszt: Piano Sonata, Sonetto S161/Dante Sonata S161/7** (2015)
- Alfred Walter (cond.)/Budapest Symph. Orchestra: **Spohr: Symphony No 4/Faust Overture/Jessunda Overture** (1987)
- Christian Lindberg (cond.)/Norrköping Symph. Orch.: **Pettersson: Symphonies 4, 16** (2014)
- Herbert von Karajan (cond.)/Berlin Philharmonic Orch.: **Rossini: Sonatas for Strings 1, 2, 3, 6** (1968/2012) (*Karan in the 60s* CD65)
- Kodaly Quartet: **Haydn: String Quartets Op. 71 Nos 1-3 ('Apponyi Quartets')** (1989)
- Christian Lindberg (cond.)/Norrköping Symph. Orch.: **Pettersson: Symphony No 9** (2013)
- Nikolaus Harnoncourt (cond.): **Schubert: Symphony No 2** (2015)
- Joe Chindamo and Zoë Black (piano): **Bach/Chindamo: The New Goldberg Variations** (2015)

Favourite television shows/series 2015

In no particular order:

- *Lewis*: Series 8
- *Elementary*: Season 1
- *Foyle's War*: Seasons 8 And 9

- *New Tricks*: Series 11 And 12
- *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*: Season 3
- *Bosch*: Season 1
- *Love In A Cold Climate* (1981).