

# PERRYSCOPE 47



**PERRYSCOPE 47**, October 2024, is an issue of a personalzine published mostly monthly by **Perry Middlemiss**, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3122. E: [perry@middlemiss.org](mailto:perry@middlemiss.org)  
Available for the usual or download at [efanzines.com](http://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 photograph by Robyn Mills, August 2017, Tallinn, Estonia.

### INTRODUCTION

Our main holiday this year was a five-week trip around Scotland and England. We left in early August and got back in mid-September. It was very enjoyable, though very tiring and it has taken me a month or so to get back into the routine of getting out and about around Hawthorn and Melbourne, seeing people and producing this fanzine again.

I had hopes, stupid though they were, of getting an issue completed by the end of September. How hard could it be? I had about half of the material written while I was away and I would have a couple of free weeks, with nothing major planned, to write what I needed to and put the whole package together. What I hadn't counted on was the overwhelming feeling of lassitude that I developed. I had no energy for writing, or reading, or for doing very much at all. That lasted for about ten days and then I had back spasms that disabled me for another week, and by the time I surfaced the end of September was upon me with nothing completed. So I scrapped the original plan and started a new one. And here we are. Finally.

What this whole episode has taught me is that I am taking longer and longer to recover from overseas travel. When I was younger it was a matter of landing in Australia and just heading back to work within a few days. Not any more. That may be because the long-haul flights back to Australia from Europe are becoming more and more onerous, or because the brain has hit its overload limits due to all of the new things I've seen and done during the journey. I'm tending to the view that it is a combination of the two, and it is something to be wary of in future. We're going to have to restrict the length of our trips and maybe throw in a few stopovers to break up the long flights. It might mean a little more planning before we leave but we can handle that part of the equation well enough.

A man just has to know his limitations. As I stare down the throat of seventy years of age my limitations are becoming more and more obvious.

That hasn't stopped us planning ahead, of course, and we have the bulk of a 2025 trip to South America sorted out already. We now just need to "top-and-tail" the group tour we are on to ensure we get to see a couple of cities that the tour just skims over. Hopefully we'll be able to get to Santiago in Chile on one flight and have a couple of days stopover in that city before we join the rest of the tour group members in Peru. More on that later. We still have a lot more to work out.

And so, after a couple of months' break, welcome back. I've got a few things I'd like to tell you.

#### **Cover notes:**

Two men with hats, only one of whom seems to know where he's going. That man is Jaan Poska (1866-1920), an Estonian politician. This statue is situated in Kadrioru Park, Tallinn, and was designed to show Poska, walking towards his home, as one of the people in the park rather than sitting on top of a pedestal. I like it.

### **WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN MY LIFE - A Trip to the UK : Initial Thoughts**

Our big trip for this year was to the United Kingdom; Scotland mostly, and England for about a week. I had always wanted to attend another UK World Science Fiction Convention as I hadn't been back for one since 1987 in Brighton. Having the venue for the 2024 convention in Glasgow opened up the Scottish islands to the west and north. Robyn and I hadn't been back to the country since our big trip around the UK in 1987 so this gave us the opportunity to go back for a last look. The fact that Scotland was also home to some of the world's best whisky distilleries didn't hurt either.

As usual it took us about 12 months of arguing and discussing and compromising and deciding before we had the bookings all in place. Back in 1987 the two of us were able to wing it, driving around with no definitive plan, turning up in a town with no room booking, and then heading to the local tourist office to find somewhere to stay.

We couldn't do that this time. Firstly because our daughter, Catherine, had decided to come with us so we now had three adults to cater for; and secondly because it became obvious fairly quickly that we would be traveling to a lot of places where the range of accommodation rooms was rather small and would likely be booked out in a hurry. So Robyn got stuck in and we had all of our stays booked by about February this year, some 6 months prior to departure. One of the things we had to think about was our intention to self-cater as much as possible and also to be able to do our laundry every three or four days without having to spend large amounts of time sitting in public laundries at night. That meant booking into houses or apartments with full facilities, which meant a further reduced stock on offer, which meant the earlier we booked the better.

Some of the travel requirements were a little harder as seats on trains in the UK don't usually become available until about 3 months before the date you want to travel. That wasn't a big problem as we only had a couple of train tickets to book. Ferries were a little better as they opened up their bookings when they released their seasonal timetables (they run different times in summer and winter) and, as I recall, one of the ferry companies released their spots a few weeks before the other. We booked all of those bar one which didn't take forward bookings (Islay to Jura and return); you turned up and took your chances.

In addition to the Scottish islands odyssey we also wanted to spend a bit of time in London. I hadn't been back there for nearly 20 years and there were a few people I wanted to catch up with, principally John Harvey, who is now living in Colchester in Essex. The question was whether to fly into London and then train it up to Glasgow and fly home from Edinburgh, or fly directly into Glasgow and out of London. When Robyn and Catherine decided they didn't want to spend a whole week in Glasgow waiting for me to finish up at the Worldcon, and Robyn realised that an AirBnB in London would be hard to come by in early August, we all opted for the latter option. London was still crowded even in early September, though we had a pretty good time of it all.

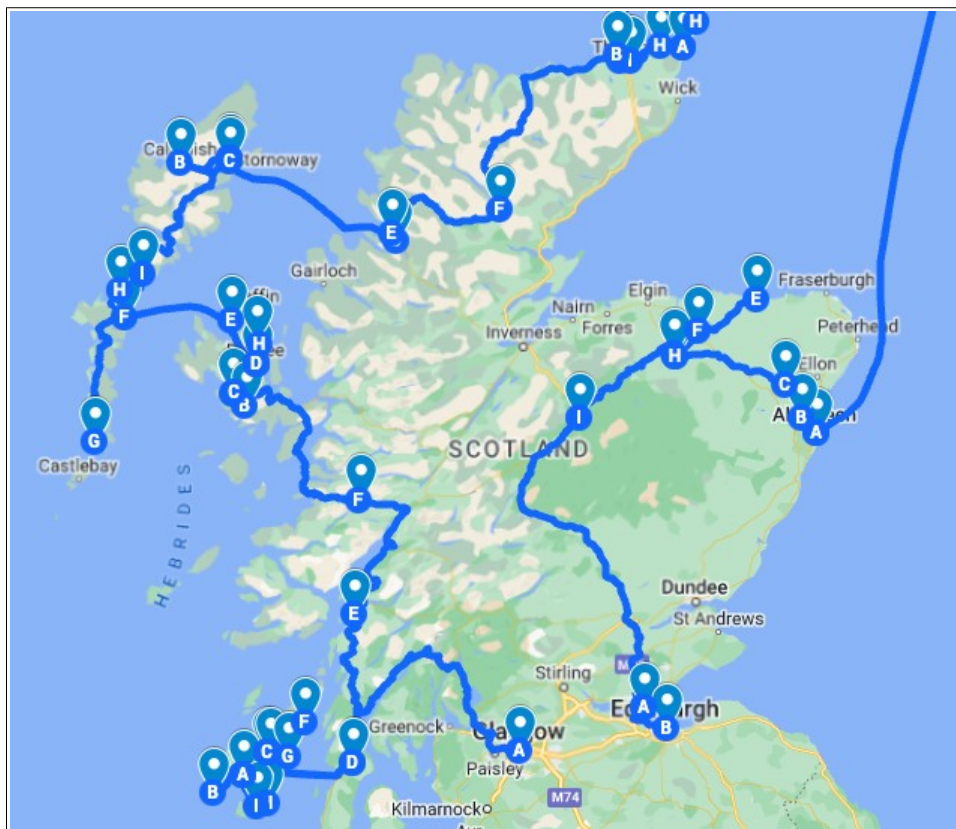
I'll work up a full trip report real soon now. In the meantime here are some initial thoughts:

#### 1. Driving in Scotland

According to the map it didn't seem that far (approx 150 miles/240 kms on the first day) nor that hard. But maps can be deceiving. What looks like a decent "two-lane blacktop" where you can tootle along at 60mph (100 kph) can easily turn into a single-lane road with passing points where

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you are lucky if you can average 30 mph/50 kph while dodging sheep and farm traffic. Everything slows down and takes longer, much longer.



Mainland Scotland travel section

And what I hadn't taken into account was the amount of concentration those single-lane roads took. On a freeway or two-lane road it is easy to drop your concentration levels down a touch knowing you will react when anything that might constitute a "problem" crops up. You can't do that so much on the single-lane variety. Every blind corner, every small hill, could mean another car coming the other way, or a wide truck or camper-van, which would be even worse. You have to be aware of where the previous passing spot was, and where you are in relation to it and the other car in order to carry out your part in this automotive *pas-de-deux*. Do I stop and reverse back? Do I pull off here and allow this car and maybe two or three others to pass? Or is that other bloke stopping for me? And why didn't he know I was stopping for him with a wave of the hand or a raised index finger (bastard)?

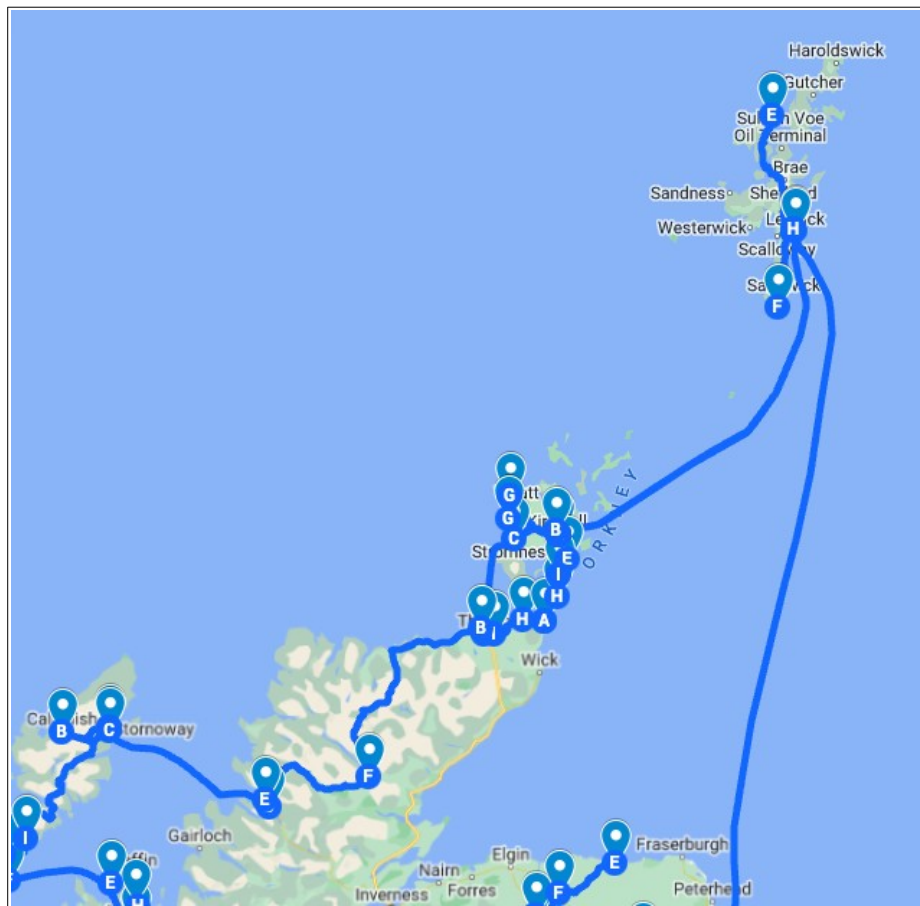
All up we covered 2,067 miles (3,307 kilometers) in 22 days. It was tiring. More than I had imagined.

Robyn and I had driven on a few single-lane roads when we first travelled in Scotland in 1987 and I'd been on few since then, but never as many in some many consecutive days. At the end of each day all I could do was have a drink, something to eat and go to bed early, before getting up and doing it all over again the next day.

It was certainly an experience, and not one that I would like to re-do any time soon. In fact, at the end of this trip Robyn and I had a chat about it and decided that this was probably going to be the last such long-distance driving we would do in a foreign country; maybe New Zealand aside. Driving trips in Australia would be okay as we know what to expect, mostly, and can regulate our

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travel times better. Plus Robyn could take a turn or two along the way. Neither she nor Catherine really wanted to do that on those Scottish roads. And I can't say as I blame them.



Northern islands section of Scotland travel

We might drive for a few days in a foreign locale if needed, though it certainly won't be for 3 weeks again.

### 2. Ferries

One of the major reasons behind this trip was the desire to have a look at a number of the Scottish Islands. We knew we were never going to get to them all (there are about 900 of them), just the major ones of Islay, Skye, Lewis and Harris, Orkney and Shetland. We figured that would be quite enough.

We ended up taking 11 ferry journeys to get to the islands, though for a while during the planning phase we didn't think we'd be able to do it at all. We'd started to hear rumours from acquaintances who had done similar driving trips that some car rental firms in Scotland, and some insurance companies, weren't very happy about you taking their cars on ferries of any sort. It reminded me of the time we were in Tasmania, renting a car and wanting to go across to Bruny Island. I foolishly mentioned this intention to the rental firm and was told in no uncertain terms that during the crossing the car would be uninsured. That seemed a little excessive, especially given the trip was only about 200 meters. But they were adamant, so I just ignored it and went on the ferry anyway.

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Robyn and I checked our Scottish car rental agreement and found it didn't specifically mention ferries, though it did note that we weren't allowed to cross any international borders. I wasn't intending to as all the islands we would be visiting were all parts of the United Kingdom. And the car insurance agreement didn't mention ferries either. I always go with the idea that if something isn't specifically excluded in one of these agreements then there is tacit approval. We did however add a "cruise" option onto our travel insurance just to be on the safe side.

On the day we came to pick up the car the rental guy gave me a detailed run-down on the vehicle and what I could expect to pay if I had an accident. "If the mark is greater than this (indicating about a centimeter) you'll be liable for ..., and if it's greater than this (indicating about a hand's-breath) you'll be liable for ...", and on and on he went. I have to admit I tuned out. Though I did become more attentive when he asked me where I was driving. "Up into the Highlands I suppose?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "And around a bit."

I was truthful, if not exactly complete. What he didn't know wasn't going to hurt either him or me.

We ended up taking 11 ferries in all. The shortest was between the islands of Islay and Jura (see below), which was about 300 meters (at a lazy £32 for the car and three adults, return), and the longest was overnight from Shetland to Aberdeen. All of them went



remarkably smoothly. There was a bit of roll from time to time but nothing really to worry about. Some of these ferries had a two-level car park inside the hull. They were wide and stable.



Something to be grateful for given my recent tale of an horrendous hovercraft journey across the English Channel in 1987.

I would certainly recommend them as a way about getting about. If you are traveling between the Scottish mainland and the islands your only other alternative is a plane. I didn't do any checking of the prices for airline tickets though if we had taken any flights between islands I would have also have needed to arrange for a number of car hires, in places where these seemed to be rather scarce. It seemed better to just stay with the car we knew.

I should note that the map on the previous page indicates that the ferry from Shetland went straight to Aberdeen. Actually this was not the case. It stopped first at Kirkwall Ferry

terminal in Orkney, and then went on to Aberdeen from there. The Google map facility I was using to draw this map wanted to show the section from Orkney to Aberdeen as land travel only. There is probably a way to force it to show the ferry but I couldn't work it out.

### 3. Food

I have to admit that I didn't go to Scotland for the food. It was okay but rather repetitious. Though I do have to admit that we ate better than we might have due to the presence of my daughter. She tends to be able to find far better places to eat than I can. I have a bit of a reputation in our family of picking exactly the wrong place to eat in. Adequate but certainly not the best place around.

We didn't eat out a lot when we were there, mainly due to the expense. If you disregarded the currency then, mostly, meal items cost the same number of units in the UK as they are in Australia. The trouble is that the Aussie dollar only buys about 50p, so everything is basically double the price of back home. We splurged a couple of times and the food bill was rather eye-watering. Mostly we stayed in houses or apartments with a kitchen and so made our own meals.

When we did eat out we stuck to pubs and cafes. Pub menus seemed to have been created by a central office and then sent out with permission to add a few variations, not too many: burgers everywhere; fish is always, always battered and deep fried; and salads are, well, interesting.

The two things we really wanted to try were haggis (not too bad if made fresh) and a deep-fried Mars Bar. This last we found, finally, in a fish and chip shop on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. It was, shall we say, a tad disappointing. The concept was okay – well, just – but the execution left quite a lot to be desired: they had used the same batter for the Mars Bar as they did for their fish, and had deep fried it in the same oil as the fish. So this whole thing had a slight fishy taste. Not what we were expecting at all.



### 4. The weather

It's Scotland so the weather is going to be ordinary at best, raining as the norm, sometimes heavy and sometimes, often, drizzling. It was not weather for shorts.

Everywhere we went we were told that Scotland hadn't had much of a summer. I wondered if they ever did.

### 5. Distilleries

I have no idea how many whisky distilleries we went to; I may count them at some point, not yet. We also dropped in to at least 2 gin distilleries along the way – one on North Uist and one on Orkney – so I'd need to add them into the mix as well. The major problem I had with sampling whiskies was the lack of an alternative driver. A lot of the distilleries were rather strict about Scotland's "zero tolerance" approach to drink driving. My aim had been to have a small sip of each sample and leave the rest for my daughter (Robyn has no interest here at all). We did that on a few occasions and I was also given a small one-dram sample bottle from a couple.

Of the others I could safely say that I walked to the bar at Glenfiddich and Bowmore, and we just walked around a few others as they either only allowed tasting as part of a distillery tour, or were so

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crowded it was going to take too long to get any service: Talisker on Skye comes to mind. Highland Park on Orkney, which was high on my list of places to visit, was found to be shut when we arrived, not just for a day or two but for a full year as they carry out major renovations. Sometimes you just can't help bad luck.

And, to top it all off, I had not done enough research prior to the trip, or had not thought things through to realise that Scotland is a rather conservative country with a lot of distilleries being shut on Sundays. I did get to look at the outside of a few and get an idea of the countryside they are located in. It probably didn't turn out as well as I might have hoped though I still think I got to enough to be satisfied with what I did get to try.

Lowlights:

In no particular order:

- i. the cost of everything – we had expected it but it's still a shock when you keep converting back to Aussie dollars and nearly fainting on occasion.
- ii. the food – generally bland and repetitive, though with some startling high points.
- iii. the one-lane roads (see previous notes).
- iv. the weather – especially on Lewis and Harris where it seemed to rain every day.
- v. how tired I got each day, this is probably a combination of not being fit enough, and not young enough; one of these I can do something about.

Highlights:

Again in no particular order:

- i. the scenery – all of it, the highlands, the western islands and Orkney and Shetland.
- ii. the ferries – I had expected these to be something of a problem, yet they turned out to be anything but.
- iii. the walks – both Robyn and I enjoyed the walks we did with Catherine through the countryside to the Old Man of Storr and the Fairy Pools on Skye, and the other walks we did on some of the other islands. We probably wouldn't have done these if Catherine hadn't pushed us into it.
- iv. catching up with people I hadn't seen for some time, on one occasion for thirty years.

Conclusion:

I enjoyed the trip immensely; though I do have to listen to the lessons it's taught me, namely: try to restrict long overseas trips to no more than 4 weeks; have stopovers to break up long flights; get fitter; and don't drive so much. About the same lessons I list every time.

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“In the remote towns of the west there are few of the amenities of civilisation; there is no sewerage, there are no hospitals, rarely a doctor; the food is dreary and flavourless from long carrying, the water is bad; the electricity is for the few who can afford their own plant, roads are mostly non-existent; there are no theatres, no picture shows and few dance halls; and the people are saved from stark insanity by the one strong principle of progress that is ingrained for a thousand miles east, north south and west of the Dead Heart—the beer is always cold.”

*Wake in Fright* by Kenneth Cook, pp. 8-9

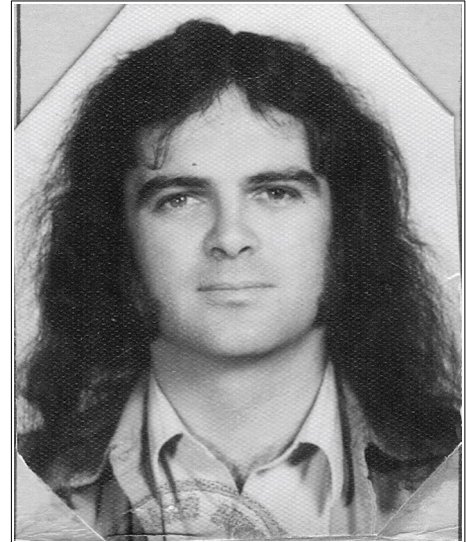


**SWINGING OAKLEIGH – The night Johnny Farnham came to jam  
by Martin Field**

There was no future in roadying I realised, so I'd come back to Melbourne in 1969. It turned out that jobs for men with very long hair were virtually non-existent. It's hard to believe now but people would curse you in the street, toot their horns and generally look horrified at your apparent degeneracy. Once I was even kicked out of Peter Poynton's pub. The manager said something like, "We don't serve no long hairs around here."

Eventually I found a job – at the PMG depot at Kew Junction – as a Lines Assistant Grade 2. We called ourselves the Kew Navy Gang, a wild bunch of long-haired, semi-skilled labourers. Some of them were musos, working to pay the rent in anticipation of future stardom. We wielded shovels and jackhammers. Our job was to install underground cables via trenches and asbestos pits as the old telephone poles were taken down.

One of the gang, Mick Elliott, was a talented guitarist and we became friends. Early one morning digging up Kew Junction, Mick and I, each wielding a jack hammer, struck up a



*The Kew Navy Gang – Plod, Noddy, Mick*

syncopated version of Sunshine of Your Love. A besuited commuter, reading the Sun News Pictorial while waiting for a tram into the city, applauded. He said "Do you know Spoonful?" we gave it a shot. Further applause was muted, due to the general din.

Later, in 1970/71, Mick and I shared a leaky-roofed flat above Mr Mazza's music shop at 8 Eaton St (now Eaton Mall) in Oakleigh. The lounge room was often used for band practice. It was said, (by a picky tin-eared council by-laws officer) that they could be heard a few blocks away at the Oakleigh Post Office when the wind was in the right direction. And even when it wasn't.

Back then, Mick was a member of arguably the loudest blues band in Australia, "Detroit". If my memory serves me correctly, Detroit included Mick (later Sid Rumpo, Western Flyer, Bo Diddley and Jimmy Witherspoon backing bands) on lead guitar, "Fat Wayne" on second lead, rhythm and vocals, Colin DeLuca (later Mississippi) on bass, and Steve Webb (later Blackfeather) on drums.

Yes, they were louder than Billy Thorpe at the time. For example, they were asked to turn down the volume at a Village Green gig one Saturday afternoon. That venue was known for loud.

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At one stage John (then Johnny) Farnham's management contacted the band in desperate need of a backing group for a couple of gigs. They asked if Johnny could come around and audition the band.

So, one night the lads assembled in the flat with their gear. There was a knock on the door and in came Farnham with his manager Darryl Sambell. Their entrance cued the band into a Deep Purplish version (11 on the Marshall scale) of Sadie the Cleaning Lady. Everybody fell about, and Johnny joined in for the chorus.

Johnny was rather clean cut, the band, tough looking long hairs, was definitely not. It was clear that the combined look wouldn't work on stage and that there would be no gigs.

But Johnny stayed on for a number of beers and jammed with the band. Songs included Chuck Berry's Johnny B Goode, and Little Richard's Long Tall Sally and Lucille. For a pop singer, Farnham's voice really cut the mustard as a rocker.

Detroit was short-lived and heard of no more. I thought they were great.

Mick and I are still friends.

In 1971 I returned to England to become a roadie once again. It didn't take.

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### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING LATELY

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

Abbr – 1001: 1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die; Aust: Australian; Gdn: Guardian's 1000 Best Novels; Trans: translated; YA: Young Adult.

#### July-August 2024 books

Title	Author	Genre	Date	F	R	Pub Date	Notes
<i>'Salem's Lot</i>	Stephen King	Horror	Jul 18		4.0	1976	
<i>Berlin Game</i>	Len Deighton	Spy	Jul 25	e	3.8	1983	
<i>The Ghost's Child</i>	Sonya Hartnett	Fantasy	Jul 28		4.0	2007	Aust; YA
<i>The Dancer at the Gai-Moulin</i>	Georges Simenon	Crime	Jul 31	e	2.8	1931	Trans (French)
<i>Contact</i>	Carl Sagan	Sf	Aug 15	e	3.6	1985	1001
<i>The Wasp Factory</i>	Iain Banks	Lit	Aug 20	e	4.0	1984	Gdn
<i>On the Beach</i>	Nevil Shute	Sf	Aug 31	e	3.4	1957	Aust

Books read in the period: 7

Yearly total to end of period: 47

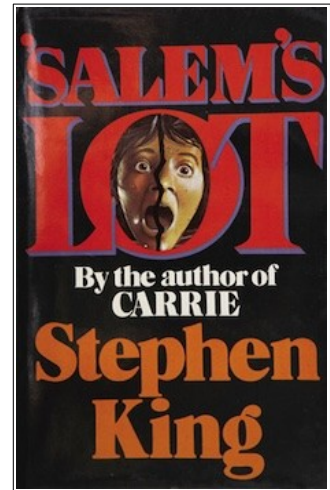
#### Notes:

Seven books in a two-month period is way short of what I had hoped to read. The August figures I can understand as I was travelling for the bulk of that month, but I think the lack of reading-enthusiasm started to kick in in July, or maybe even June. I hoping it's just a temporary set-back.

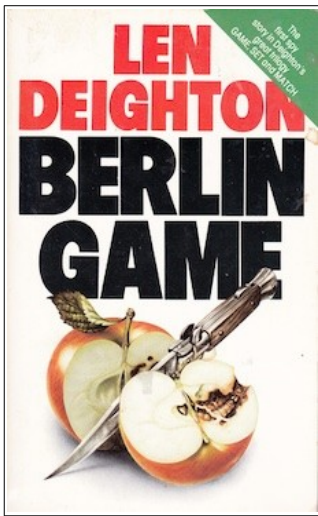
**'Salem's Lot** (1976)

With this, King's second novel, we start to see a number of elements that will become the hallmark of the author's future works: the small-town in crisis, a writer as protagonist, a vast array of characters distinctly and lovingly drawn, and the existential horror of an ancient evil.

The small town of Jerusalem's Lot, or 'Salem's Lot for short, experienced a major tragedy 25 years before the start of this novel when a murder-suicide was discovered in the Marsten House. Now writer Ben Mears, who was a young boy living in the town at that time, has returned to write about the tragedy. He wants to lease the House but arrives just after it has been let to two mysterious men and so takes up residence in a local boarding-house. Before long a dog is found impaled on the local cemetery gates and young boy goes missing. And we are off, the body count starts to rise, the bodies then go missing, and it soon becomes clear that the two new men in town are a vampire and its human familiar.



I found this book in a remainders pile in Adelaide around about 1978, read it and became hooked on King as a result. It doesn't get as much attention as it should, and nothing like that attained by such works as *The Shining* or *The Stand*, but I am of the view that you need to read this to get some idea of how King started it all, and how his writing developed so quickly. R: 4.0/5.0



**Berlin Game** (1983) – This is the 1<sup>st</sup> in the author's Bernard Sampson series of novels, and the 1<sup>st</sup> in his Game, Set and Match trilogy.

Bernard Sampson is a middle-level operative working for MI6. It is the early 1980s and the Cold War is the main game in play. Sampson is English but grew up in the immediate post-war Berlin where his father Brian was an MI6 man running agents in the field. Sampson is disillusioned about the intelligence services and his part in it as he is tired of field work and has been passed over by someone he despised. He is also married to Fiona, who also works for the secret services, though in a different department at a higher level.

Sampson hears about a possible mole in the service from his wife's sister and as he begins to investigate he is also informed that a long-running agent in East Germany wants out. This agent, Brahms Four, has been supplying excellent financial information about the East German economy but has started to get twitchy, thinking that his identity is about to be exposed. Sampson sees this as proof of the mole's existence and travels to Berlin to get the lay of the land. There he meets his old friend Werner, who also worked with his father, and it soon becomes clear that he is on the right track. But why haven't the East Germans given the mole a way out, an escape route to the East? Is there something else going on, something deeper?

Deighton writes a good story and Sampson comes across as an interesting character though we have to be wary of what he tells us, as it never seems to be the full picture. The only downside to the book is that it reads like a lesser *Tinker, Tailor*. There are a lot of similarities but enough differences to set up the rest of the series. R: 3.8/5.0

**The Ghost's Child** (2007) – see major review below



***The Dancer at the Gai-Moulin*** (1931) – This is the 10th in the author's Inspector Maigret series of novels. (aka ***Maigret at the Gai-Moulin.***)

Two young men, Jean Chabot and René Delfrosse, plan to rob the Gai-Moulin, a nightclub in Liege. They hide out on a backroom until after the nightclub closes down in the early hours but discover the body of a dead man lying on the floor of the club. Chabot has been working in the club and stealing money from the petty cash tin. He needs to replace it so the two rob his uncle's chocolate shop, only to realise they have been followed. They panic and are caught but deny any knowledge of the murder of the man in the club. The local police investigate and hope to find a Frenchman who has been spending nights in the club recently. When they finally tack him down they discover he is Inspector Maigret on a case. Eventually all is resolved.

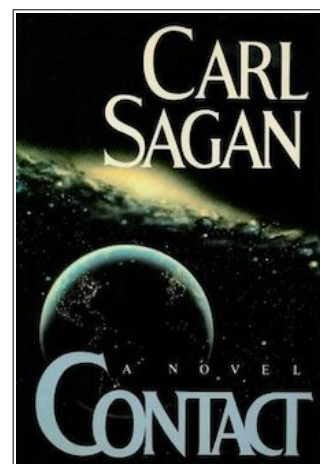
This is all pretty standard stuff for Simenon's Maigret novels. Short, with no padding, just enough intrigue and mystery to keep you interested but not enough of anything to be overly memorable. There is a report that Simenon wrote this novel in 25 hours. It certainly feels like it.

R: 2.8/5.0

***Contact*** (1985) — This novel appears on the list of 1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die.

The late Carl Sagan's only novel is an examination of one possible way that a more technologically advanced alien intelligence could get in contact with humans. It was adapted as a film, starring Jodie Foster in the lead role, in 1997.

Eleanor "Ellie" Arroway discovers a signal from outer space which is identified as having a non-natural background. Controversy ensues when it is discovered that the first signal shows a film clip from the 1936 Berlin Olympics featuring Adolph Hitler. Subsequent investigations reveal other messages in the signal, one of which appears to be instructions for the construction of a large machine which seems to have a five-seat capsule in its centre, suggesting some form of space travel will be the result. Both the Russians and Americans begin building the Machine though the Russians encounter some debilitating problems and it is left to the Americans to complete theirs. A terrorist attack renders the American Machine inoperable and all appears to have failed when Ellie is contacted by billionaire S. R. Hadden who reveals that he has secretly built his own Machine with the help of the Japanese, and invites her to take a ride.



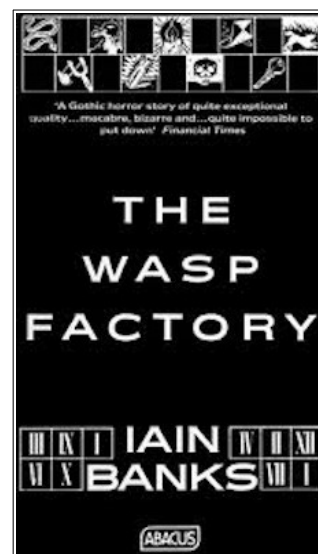
After this it all gets a bit hand-wavey and Sagan dodges any form of true resolution by making this a once-only contact between humans and the aliens. The author obviously based a lot of this book on his own work and the interactions he had with various governments. It ends on a hopeful but, to me, rather unsatisfactory note when humanity has been informed of other alien intelligences and then left to fend for itself. I've never really understood the logic behind that.

The novel was famously adapted for the screen, directed by Robert Zemeckis with Jodie Foster taking the starring role of Elie Arroway. There are a number of changes between the two versions and I tend to lean a little towards the film as the superior of the two. The film only has Ellie travel in the Machine, while the novel has a full crew of five, and there is a lot more lecturing in the book as a form of info-dump, which can get a little tedious. R: 3.6/5.0

***The Wasp Factory*** (1984) — This novel appears on the list of the Guardian’s 1000 Best Novels.

Looking back on Iain Banks’s writing career you wouldn’t expect that this novel would have been his debut. He’s more usually known in the sf field for his Culture novels, stories of a utopian Galactic Empire, “post-want” and full of huge AI mind-ships, or his non-sf works which don’t really fall into any particular category or sub-genre.

The Wasp Factory is a novel told in the first-person by 16-year-old Francis Cauldhame who lives on a small Scottish island with his father. As the novel progresses it quickly becomes clear that “Frank” is something of a psychopath as he details his upbringing, his genital mutilation when he was mauled by a dog, and his murder of three other children before the age of ten. Everything about Frank is peculiar (he builds and maintains a variety of weapons with which he kills small animals on the island, he collects skull and body parts of dead animals and places them on poles as a form of protection, and uses the death of wasps in his home-made Wasp Factory as a means of foretelling the future), and the novel has the feel of a modern gothic tale.



Back when I first read this book in the 1980s the final twist and reveal was something of a shock, and it is far better for each reader to encounter that with no pre-warning. There are a lot of things in this book that point to major aspects of Banks’s later work, including his rather black sense-of-humour. R: 4.0/5.0

***On the Beach*** (1957) — see major review below.

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### REVIEWS OF AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

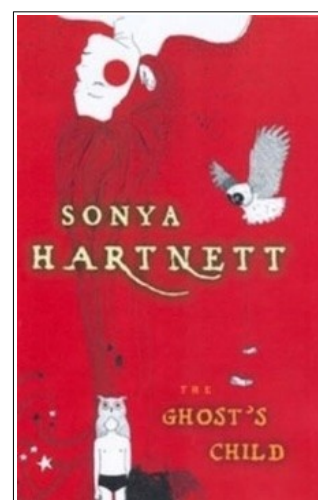
***The Ghost’s Child*** (2007) by Sonya Hartnett

**Genre:** YA Fantasy

[This novel won the CBCA Children’s Book of the Year Award for Older Readers in 2008.]

Australian author Sonya Hartnett is generally considered a “children’s author” or a writer for “young adults”, but if you were only to think of her as such, and maybe dismiss her work because of it, then you would be doing yourself a disservice.

Hartnett began her publishing career writing her first novel at 13, she was 15 when it published, and then went on to carve out a career as one of Australia’s finest young novelists, being named as such by the *Sydney Morning Herald* in the early years of this century. But her publishing seemed to peter out around 2014 with only a couple of children’s picture books appearing under her name since then. I can only hope that this break is a temporary one and that Hartnett can make a full return to the writing she does so well.



***The Ghost’s Child*** starts with an elderly woman, Matilda, returning home from a walk with her dog to find a young boy sitting in her lounge room. She doesn’t recognise him and is rather wary of his presence, though she is pleased he knows his manners (he says “please” and “thank you”). As

they settle over a cup of tea, with biscuits, she begins to wonder what to say to the boy, yet before she has the chance to begin he announces “I have bad news for you.” Matilda, of course, asks him what that news might be only to have the boy ignore that question and slowly turn the conversation back to her, to her old age and what she thought of being old when she was young. And Matilda gradually begins to tell the boy about her life, about the time she met the mystical Feather on the beach and fell in love with him, and about that love that could never be.

As the novel progresses we learn what a full and rich life Maddy (as she was called when she was younger) led, even though her choices alienated her from her parents. We learn about the love she wanted but could never have, and how she came to live with that loss without regret. And we also start to learn about the child and come to guess what he is there to do.

For such a slender book this is a wonderfully elegant novel, fantastical in only fleeting ways, and richly endowed with the life of Matilda in all its phases.

R: 4.0/5.0

***On the Beach*** (1957) by Nevil Shute  
**Genre:** Science Fiction

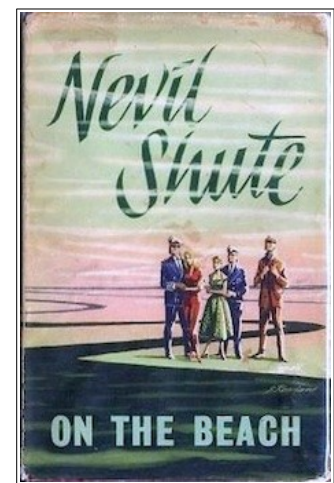
Thirty years after this novel was published the American rock band R.E.M. released a song titled “It’s the End of the World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)”, and I couldn’t get that song’s title out of my head as I was reading this quasi-sf novel by British-Australian author Nevil Shute.

The novel’s scenario is well-known: a nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere has rendered all areas there uninhabitable, covered by a spreading layer of radioactive dust. That dust is slowly working its way south, crossing the equator and heading towards Australia. The last ships of the US Navy, a submarine and a few surface vessels that were south of the equator when the war began, have now travelled to Australia and placed themselves under the command of the Australian military. The Australian authorities decide to use the US submarine to investigate a radio signal they have been receiving out of Seattle but find nothing when they get there other than malfunctioning equipment. The world is dying.

And all of the people in Melbourne, where the bulk of the novel is set, are aware of this, yet they tend to continue on as normal, as if nothing had happened or will happen to disrupt their lives; they keep going to work, ordering toys in the shops, and planning their garden planting for months ahead. I found this extremely odd. Maybe Shute was attempting to channel and describe the fundamentally optimistic, or maybe simplistic worldview of Australians in the late 1950s but I would have thought at least one of them, or maybe one of the Americans, would have shown some sense of anger or rebellion about their impending fate.

This is the first novel of Shute’s I’ve read and he appears to stick to a rather journalistic style of novel-writing: everything is reported in a flat, matter-of-fact tone, and there isn’t much in the way of character development or inner dialogue happening to allow the reader to see deeper into a character’s motivations. I suspect it was the thought of total apocalypse at a time of very imminent, real-world nuclear threat that captivated readers and filmmakers about this book. Some 65 years after it was published it now reads like a newspaper account of a world that never existed.

R: 3.4/5.0



## WHAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING LATELY

### Television

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

Abbr – Aust: Australian

#### July-August 2024 television

Title	Sn	Eps	Genre	Platform	R	Rel Date	Notes
<i>Stuff the British Stole</i>		8	Documentary	ABC iView	3.8	2022	Aust
<i>The Bear</i>	3	10	Drama	Disney +	4.2	2024	
<i>Troppo</i>	2	8	Crime	ABC iView	3.8	2024	Aust
<i>The World's Greatest Paintings</i>		10	Documentary	Amazon Prime	4.0	2020	

TV shows watched in the period: 4

Yearly total to end of period: 31

#### *Stuff the British Stole* (Season 1 – 8 episodes) (2022)

Platform: ABC iView

Genre: Documentary

Hosted by Marc Fennell, this co-production between the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation looks at a number of controversies surrounding historically and culturally significant artefacts that were taken by the United Kingdom during their periods of colonial rule. Not all of the objects ended up in the UK however. In episode 3 the object under examination is the Shellac mosaic, lifted by Australians from an area of Ottoman-held Palestine during the First World War. This is now permanently embedded in the wall of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra,

well, most of it. It seems that parts have ended up in a number of different locations around the country. How it got here is a fascinating story, but the reason why it was taken in the first place was spurious at best, and like the rest of the objects here needs to be returned to their country of origin. R: 3.8/5.0



#### *The Bear* (Season 3 – 10 episodes) (2024)

Platform: Disney +

Genre: Drama

At the end of Season 2 The Bear restaurant had been transformed from a family diner into a fine-dining establishment in Chicago. This season looks at how Carmy Berzatto (Jeremy Allen White) and Sydney Adamu (Ayo Edebiri) and their crew work to get the whole operation working efficiently and profitably.

After the phenomenal success of Season 2 any follow-up was going to struggle to maintain the same level of excellence and I have to say that this season doesn't seem to have hit the same heights. Occasionally it does and then it is wonderful, but I got the feeling that this outing was being used to setup a fourth season.

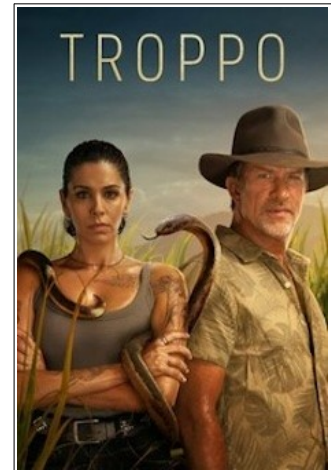
Even so the work here is way better than the average television program so we have much to be grateful for. It is still highly recommended. R: 4.2/5.0

**Tropo** (Season 2 — 8 episodes) (2024)

Platform: ABC

Genre: Crime

Thomas Jane and Nicole Chamoun return as Ted Conkaffey and Amanda Pharrell, two PIs working in far North Queensland, in this second season based on the novels of Australian crime writer Candice Fox. The first season was based on Fox's novel **Crimson Lake**, and while this season is mostly based on the sequel **Redemption Point**, it also appears to incorporate elements of the third novel in the series, **Gone by Midnight**.



When the head of a family healing retreat is murdered police initially suspect the victim's son Raph. But he denies any wrongdoing and his girlfriend engages Conkaffey and Pharrell to solve the case and prove Raph's innocence. Hanging in the background are the charges laid against Conkaffey back in Sydney where he was accused of the abduction and murder of a young girl. The story-line hangs together quite well, though the solution to the initial murder seems a little trite and the outcome of Conkaffey's charges a bit rushed. Anyway, this was quite enjoyable in spite of a few misgivings. R: 3.8/5.0



**The World's Greatest Paintings** (10 episodes) (2020)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Documentary

British journalist Andrew Marr presents a 10-part documentary concentrating, each episode, on one of ten great paintings of the world. Are these the greatest? Well, that will depend entirely on your taste though it is safe to say that each of the paintings chosen have certainly had an impact on the art world. Da Vinci, van Gogh, Turner, Picasso, Monet, Constable, Velaquez, Rembrandt, Millais and Botticelli all have an episode devoted to one of their

works, which examines the painting, the artist, the time in which it was created and its impact on the world of art. It's a very good introduction to each piece. All males you'll notice; which probably says as much about the art world as anything else. R: 4.0/5.0

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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.



## Film

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

### July-August 2024 films

Title	Director	Genre	Date	P	R	Rel Date	Notes
<i>Le Samourai</i>	Jean-Pierre Melville	Crime	Jul 2	c	4.4	1967	French; subs; 1001
<i>The Lost Leonardo</i>	Andreas Koefoed	Documentary	Jul 12		3.8	2021	
<i>Kinds of Kindness</i>	Yorgos Lanthimos	Drama	Jul 23	c	2.3	2024	
<i>Deadpool &amp; Wolverine</i>	Shawn Levy	Marvel CU	Jul 30	c	3.6	2024	
<i>Everything &amp; Nothing</i>	Nic Stacey	Documentary	Jul 30		3.7	2011	
<i>Road House</i>	Doig Liman	Action	Aug 2		1.3	2024	
<i>The Treasure of the Sierra Madre</i>	John Huston	Drama	Aug 6	a	3.8	1948	1001

Films watched in the period: 7  
 Yearly total to end of period: 41

### *Le Samourai* (1967)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Crime

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

The term “neo-noir” gets bandied about a bit in film reviews, probably too much. It refers to that style of film, starting in the 1960s, that followed the accepted *film noir* period of dark, gritty US films from the 1940s to about 1960; films such as *The Maltese Falcon*, *Double Indemnity* and *The Third Man*. The newer term is applied to films by such people as Scorsese, De Palma and later to some films by Peckinpah, Lumet and the like. But it was the French directors like Truffaut who came up with the “film noir” term and who then adapted the techniques they discovered in their own films of the later 1960s. Prime among those would have to be this offering from director Jean-Pierre Melville, featuring all the major elements of noir aligned with a more sophisticated 1960’s look and feel.



Alain Delon is Jef Costello, a hit man for hire, who is contracted to kill the owner of a nightclub in Paris. He takes meticulous care in his preparation, stealing a car and getting its plates changed, obtaining an untraceable gun, and setting up his alibi with precision. The only problem is that he is seen by the nightclub singer as he leaves the club after the event.

Once the murder is discovered the police round up twenty or so likely suspects from each Paris arrondissement who are paraded before the nightclub staff for identification purposes. Costello gets swept up in this, but he is allowed to leave once his alibi is checked and the nightclub singer states, categorically, that he is not the man she saw, though we and Costello know full well that she is lying.

Costello then attempts to collect the rest of his payment for the hit but things go badly wrong and he has to stay ahead of the police while also working to get the money he is owed.

The plot is rather simple but we're not really here for that; we're here for the look and feel of the film. I was quite taken with how still this film is in many scenes. It's as if a tableaux were set up with the main characters in the foreground and bit players standing at the back and on the sides, with no milling around. Those supporting actors are as interested in the central action as we are and stay very still, unless, and until, they are required to move to a specific point. It seems very different from an American film where people are moving all over the place trying to give an impression of energy and action.

The colour palate used is also an indicator of the film's noirish nature. Even following its recent 4k restoration it stays mainly in the darker end of the spectrum: blues, blacks, and dark browns, with white and cream (of Costello's trench coat, naturally) being the only points of contrast. A lot of the film's action seems to take place at night or at twilight. It enhances the sense of gloom and foreboding.

I didn't count the number of lines Alain Delon spoke as the main character though I suspect it was very few. He looks and acts like a man of few words. It is an astounding piece of work and, given the dude isn't that bad-looking, it gives a sense of a man in total control of his profession.

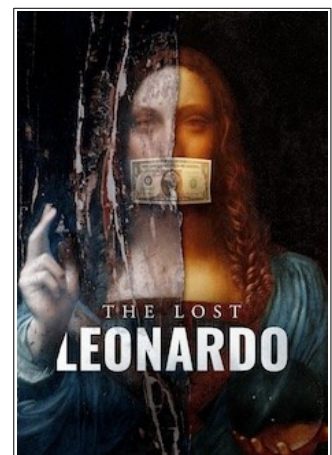
A number of directors (John Woo and Tarantino among them) have cited this film as a major influence on their careers. If you look closely you can also see scenes that appear to have been adapted by other directors as well, including William Friedkin with *The French Connection*. If you're going to take any work of art as a model for your own productions, you might as well make it one of the best of its type. R: 4.4/5.0

### ***The Lost Leonardo*** (2024)

Platform: Netflix

Genre: Documentary

In 2005 two New York art dealers spotted a painting, known simply as "After Leonardo", in a New Orleans auction catalog. Something about the piece sparked their interest and they bid and paid \$1,175 for it. After they shipped it back to NY they engaged renown art restorer Dianne Modestini to clean it and fix it as it was in very bad shape. A number of poor restorations and a large crack in the walnut wood panel had made a mess of the original. During the restoration Modestini started to notice some peculiar aspects to the artwork which she believes were unique to Leonardo himself. In 2008 the painting was flown to London and shown to a number of Leonardo experts who remain rather unconvinced. Is this the missing *Salvator Mundi* that was believed lost? Or a later copy? Is it by Leonardo, one of his pupils, or from a generation later? Who knows?



Shortly afterwards the painting is listed for \$200 million as "by Leonardo". It is sold in 2013 to a Russian billionaire who, after realising he has been conned by his art dealer, puts it back on the market again in 2017, willing to take a loss to ruin his dealer but in fact sells it for a world record price of \$450 million to a Saudi prince.

This documentary follows the artwork all through this process, providing a very interesting view of the art world, the crooks and con men, the chancers and the experts, the flim-flam men and the genuine art restorers. It doesn't attempt to state that the painting was definitely by Leonardo, its

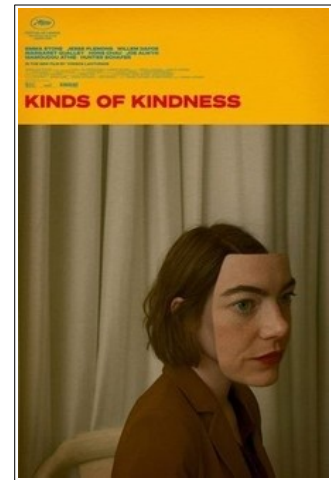
aim is to show you how some people can come to believe this and, when enough people do, how the existence of such a painting can become a pawn in global politics. It's fascinating stuff. R: 3.8/5.0

### ***Kinds of Kindness*** (2024)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Drama

This, Yorgos Lanthimos's follow-up to 2023's ***Poor Things***, tries hard but it doesn't gel into a film you can get your teeth into. It's a triptych, a set of three short films stuck together with the same cast playing different characters. There appears to be only one character who appears in all three, and that is R.M.F. (otherwise unnamed) who really only plays a silent bit part in each story's action. Emma Stone, Jessie Plemons, Willem Dafoe, Margaret Qualley, and Mamoudou Athie form the main cast, taking major or minor roles in each of the three sections.



In the first Jessie Plemons plays a man totally under the sway of his businessman boss played by Willem Dafoe. He attempts to break out of this life when he refuses to crash his car at high speed into another vehicle driven by R.M.F. In the middle piece Plemons plays a policeman whose wife (Stone) is lost at sea. When she is found and returned (in a helicopter flown by R.M.F.) Plemons begins to imagine that she is not his real wife. In the third Plemons has a minor role as support for Stone's character who is searching for a woman with strange powers who is destined to become a great spiritual leader. R.M.F. only plays a corpse.

Each story feels like it was the start of something possibly bigger but I got the impression that the writers found they didn't have enough material to stretch each work out to 90 minutes or so, leaving each at around 45. They all feel unfulfilled, incomplete and rushed.

An anthology film such as this is a reasonable concept so long as it is possible to see at least some sort of connection between the stories. The character of R.M.F. isn't really enough; each section could have included its own character in his place and it wouldn't have impacted the story at all. I thought for a while that the title might give me a clue, but if there is any level of "kindness" in this film then I missed it. Dafoe, for example, plays a controlling boss who specifies when certain employees can eat, sleep, have sex, what they wear and what they read, in the first story; a domineering and cold father in the second; and a power-mad guru in the third. None of them are very likeable. Which is what could be said for the rest of the characters as well.



I was disappointed by this. After the heights of ***Poor Things*** this one feels like it was just thrown together out of leftovers. R: 2.3/5.0

### ***Deadpool & Wolverine*** (2024)

Platform: Cinema

Genre: Marvel CU

Ryan Reynolds, who plays Deadpool and who co-wrote the screenplay for this film, has wanted to team up with Hugh Jackman's Wolverine for some time. The problem he had, other than Jackman's reluctance to go through all the vigorous body-shaping again, was that Wolverine was dead (see ***Logan*** (2017) for details of that. Deadpool doesn't believe that Wolverine is really dead of course until he digs up Logan's grave and finds only the adamantium skeleton. What's a superhero to do? Especially after the Time

Variance Authority (TVA) has told him that his timeline is due to be destroyed because Logan was his world's "anchor being". Find another Wolverine naturally. And the only way he can do that is by travelling to the various different Earths in the Marvel Multi-verse looking for a Wolverine he can drag back to his time-line to save it.

Got that? Well that's good because things move pretty fast in this film, other than when the characters have to explain to each other, and by extension us, what is actually going on.

After that things just start getting even weirder. Deadpool and Wolverine are zapped off to the void by the TVA where they run into a number of "forgotten and discarded" heroes from various Marvel films and Charles Xavier's sister. Okay, weirder and weirder. But also funny.

And that's what we've come to expect from **Deadpool** movies, this is actually the third. There's the weird, and the strong language, and the in-jokes, and the breaking of the fourth wall, and the digs at Marvel and Disney and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox that Deadpool delights in engaging in. So we end up with something that is quite amusing, if you can stick with it long enough to figure out what is really going on.

Maybe you need to have seen the two previous Deadpool movies (well, yes), and **Logan** (that would help) and the **Loki** Marvel TV series (definitely) to get the most out of this. I suspect if you're not at least familiar with these then you might struggle. Then again, if you like smart-arse characters mouthing off while they engage in bloody, choreographed mayhem then maybe you will like it. I did.  
R: 3.6/5.0

### **Everything & Nothing** (2011)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Documentary

Jim Al-Khalili is an Iraqi-British theoretical physicist who has presented a number of documentaries about physics for the general public. Here he tackles the very big (stars, galaxies and the structure of the cosmos) in **Everything** and the very small (quantum mechanics and vacuums) in **Nothing**. This documentary is now 13 years old so you could be excused for thinking that research must have changed a lot of the information presented here but I suspect the basic ideas have changed less than we think. Al-Khalili's approach is enhanced by a clear and engaging style, enhanced by some spiffy graphics and demonstrations of difficult concepts. He doesn't talk down to the viewer, nor does he assume that



they have a university degree in the subjects under discussion. It's very interesting and informative stuff. (Odd note: when I was researching him I discovered he's a university colleague of an old high-school classmate of mine.) R: 3.7/5.0

### **Road House** (2024)

Platform: Amazon Prime

Genre: Action

This is listed as being based on the Patrick Swayze film **Road House** from 1989. The plot, such as it is, follows Elwood Dalton (Jake Gyllenhaal), an ex-UFC fighter, who takes a job as a bouncer at a roadhouse bar in the Florida Keys. It quickly becomes fairly obvious that someone wants this roadhouse gone, and is willing to engage any number

of unsavoury characters to start fights, cause mayhem and damage and generally force patrons to leave and for the place to shut down. Simple really.

I have to admit I've never seen the original film but by the time of the first fight in the car park I was starting to think it was very familiar. And that first fight confirmed for me that this is essentially a Jack Reacher plot: lone guy enters a situation where some good people are being harassed by bad people and he sets it all to rights. That's it. The trouble is that this film misses all of the nuance, characterisation, emotional appeal, and sense of audience involvement that are needed to flesh out that basic knight errant/western plot. The film makers seem to think that if they can introduce more and more grotesque characters (eg Conor McGregor's dumbass muscle man) and have Dalton beat up on them, or vice versa, then all will be forgiven. No, it won't. It just becomes tedious.

This is probably the dumbest film I have seen in many years. It, frankly, has no redeeming qualities at all. By halfway through I couldn't have cared less if the road house burned down and everyone was eaten by crocs. I had no-one to like and no-one to really hate. Some of the fight scenes were okay, otherwise it was two hours of my life wasted. R: 1.3/5.0

### ***The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*** (1948)

Platform: Airline

Genre: Drama

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

In 1925 in the Mexican town of Tampico a number of Americans have found themselves destitute and out-of-work. Fred C. Dobbs (Humphrey Bogart) gets by begging for money from other, wealthier Americans. There is a nice sequence early on in this film where Dobbs hits up one American, played by director John Huston, three times in three days. It's a nice cameo and leads directly to Dobbs meeting up with Bob Curtin (Tim Holt) and then Howard (Walter Huston) in a doss-house. The three pool their money together to go prospecting for gold in "bandit country" and the film follows their search for a suitable gold-bearing site, and their subsequent mining adventures.



There is more to it than that, of course. Their time on the mine is not easy. The work is hard and it starts taking its toll on the men, especially Dobbs who goes from someone only wanting to make a small amount of money to a man who wants it all, and who then becomes paranoid that his two partners are attempting to swindle him out of his earnings. This is an interesting study of greed and paranoia and you can see how Bogart channelled his work here on later roles, such as Queeg in ***The Caine Mutiny***, to good effect.

An interesting note about this film is that both Hustons (director John and his father Walter) won Academy Awards, becoming the first father-son duo to win such awards for the same film: John won for Best Direction and Best Screenplay (based on the novel of the same title written by B. Traven in 1927), and Walter for Best Supporting Actor.

I nearly laughed out loud when I heard the kookaburra's call on the soundtrack. There was a period in US films when it was considered mandatory to have a kookaburra call during any sort of jungle scene. I had just forgotten about it.

And the treasure? Is it the gold or loyalty and companionship? Good question. R: 3.8/5.0

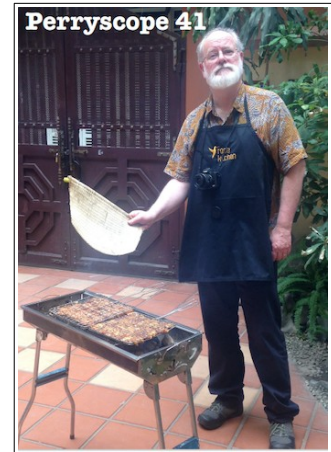
### PERRYSCOPE Responses

Bruce Gillespie sent a long letter of comment on various issues dating back to **Perryscope 41**. Bruce used to get issues of this fanzine as part of ANZAPA but I stopped including it in the apa a few months back which seems to thrown a few people.

#### Perryscope 41:

**Bruce Gillespie:** “I enjoyed the article about The Sentimental Bloke and his watching Shakespeare with Doreen at the theatre. I’ve seen almost no Shakespeare on stage, but am gradually catching up with various movies made from his plays (Olivier’s highly imaginative **Henry V** most recently). He would have had a great career as a screen writer.”

[**PM:** I have to admit that I find Olivier’s work as a director to be too mannered; too much in the Sir Walter Scott medieval knights tradition. It comes across as an idealised variation. I prefer Brannagh’s gritty mud, blood and guts version which strikes me as being much closer to the mark in terms of historical accuracy and to the version that would have been performed in Shakespeare’s time.]



“Le Carre’s **Call for the Dead** (novel) became **The Deadly Affair**, as you noted. A great movie, one of Sidney Lumet’s best, and one of James Mason’s most powerful performances. But you say nothing about any movie based on **A Murder of Quality**. I’ve never run across the book, let alone any movie based on it, so you might have further information.”

[**PM:** There is a 1991 television film based on the novel, directed by Gavin Millar and featuring Denholm Elliott as George Smiley. I haven’t seen it, but probably should. Elliott as Smiley is an intriguing choice.]

“I’ve read some of your January 2024 books, but have been looking for Thornton Wilder in bookshops for a long time. I suspect there were plenty of them around in the 1970s. I knew nothing about Wilder so didn’t buy them.

“I read a rave review for a new Amanda Lohrey novel at the weekend, but it wasn’t **The Conversion**.”

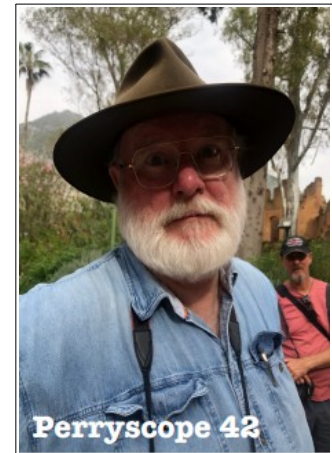
[**PM:** The review was probably of Lohrey’s novel **The Labyrinth**, which won the 2021 Miles Franklin award. I really do have to go back and catch up with her backlist.]

“Films: Somebody once said that **Galaxy Quest** is the movie with the most perfect plot. Dick Jensen agreed with that judgment. So does Elaine, who usually hates movies. I can see it again and again, but many movies have more interesting plots.”

[**PM:** I would have no idea how to judge is a movie, or book, plot was perfect. **Galaxy Quest** succeeds on all levels so I can see how people might try to fit it into the “perfect” category. It certainly sets out to do one thing and succeeds at it very well indeed. Others I might like to put into that category would be **The Godfather** and **Seven Samurai**. And I can’t think of any others at present. There is usually one little thing that stands out as needing improvement though not with those two films.]

### Perryscope 42:

**Bruce Gillespie:** “I had stopped listening to most Top 40 radio somewhen in the mid 1970s, and didn’t take an interest again until I started watching Countdown in 1980 (for the weekly Top 10 chart, naturally). I had no idea there were hit singles taken from *Excitable Boy* or any other Warren Zevon albums. I had bought *Excitable Boy* because of a review in the American **Rolling Stone** magazine, which I was able to buy at Pop Inn, a little import record shop on Flinders Street. *Excitable Boy* was hailed as ‘the future of rock and roll’. **Rolling Stone** said the same thing about Springsteen’s *Born to Run*. Neither fits my idea of rock and roll, but that’s only because of the rather thuddy beat on both those albums. As Nik Cohn wrote in 1972, ‘Rock and roll should carry its implications lightly.’



“I finally saw what Warren Zevon was all about when I heard *Stand in the Fire*, his first live album. (The later CD of *Stand in the Fire*, much expanded, is even more exciting.) Needless to say I became more a fan of Zevon with each succeeding CD.”

[**PM:** I’m fairly certain that any definition of “rock and roll” that I might come up with would contain examples and artists that you would consider outside the range, and vice versa. I’m not even sure, as I haven’t spent any time thinking about it, if rock is a sub-genre of rock-and-roll, or the other way round. And let’s not get into the various versions of “pop”.]

“Glad to see you are writing CD reviews.”

[**PM:** I’m only reviewing them as examples of pieces of art that have had an impact on my life. I gave up buying new music some time ago so I really have no idea of what is happening out there now. And it certainly won’t be something that I’ll be doing on a regular basis.]

“February 2024 books: The only one on this list I’ve read is *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, but I did not know there were later Cordelia Gray novels from P. D. James. *Unsuitable Job* is by far the best P. D. James novel I’ve read, but that doesn’t say a lot. I’ve read a couple of Dagleish novels. They are rather boring, especially because they are twice as long as they should be. (I blame P. D. James for the epidemic of bloat in the British popular novel.)

[**PM:** I haven’t read any of James’s Dagleish novels, though he does make an appearance in *An Unsuitable Job*. I will get to them at some point. That is a rather sweeping statement regarding James’s impact on bloat in the popular British novel. I had thought that it was imported from America dating from the time of Puzo’s *The Godfather*. A quick check shows me that the Dagleish novels are all under 400 pages until *A Taste for Death*, which was released in 1986. I think we have to look elsewhere for our culprit.]

“Television series: I agree: I could watch *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* over and over again because of Alec Guinness’ performance. The movie version, by comparison, would be incomprehensible to anyone who had not read the novel first; it didn’t excite me, although it did introduce me to Benedict Cumberbatch, who jumps out of the frame compared to the grey performances of all the other grey characters.”

[**PM:** Having read the book a couple of times, and having watched the original tv series of *Tinker Tailor* before seeing the 2011 film version I have no way to judge if this is correct

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though I suspect it is true. There is so much going on in the book that attempting to cram it all into a 2-hour film was stretching things a bit. You might get the gist of the story but not the nuance.]

“I agree with Rose Mitchell that **The Naïve and Sentimental Lover** could still be considered Le Carre’s best novel, much as I enjoyed **The Perfect Spy**. I have a vague memory that I read Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy only because I had read **Naïve and Sentimental Lover**.

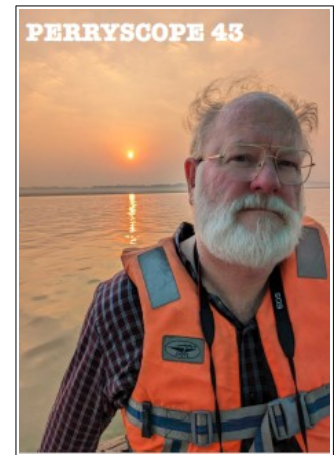
“Films: **Force of Nature**, the novel, is a severe disappointment as a sequel to *The Dry*. From what I’ve read, the film is just as dull.”

[**PM**: Harper’s second novel, **Force of Nature**, suffers from that ailment peculiar to a lot of second acts, in being nowhere near as good as the first. I think the film ironed out some of the book’s problems and bedded it more into Aaron Falk’s family history which helped.]

### Perryscope 43:

**Bruce Gillespie**: “You might have liked the colour palette in **Dune Part Two**, but I thought it just on the slightly bright side of deathly gloomy. And it would have been much darker when seen in the cinema, because that’s how cinemas stuff up movies these days. Also, the dialogue would probably have been unlistenable to me. I’ve seen this movie only because I’ve been able to watch and listen to it on Blu-ray in my own home. I enjoyed the David Lynch version much more, if only because it fits Villeneuve’s five hours of story into a couple of hours.”

[**PM**: I’m not finding films in my local cinema to be that gloomy. And I’m not a great fan of the Lynch version of **Dune**. Good in parts, terrible in others.]



“Thanks, Lucy Huntzinger, for raising a glass to Corflu. If only Corflu would come to Australia — I can’t see myself attending another one in USA or Britain or Ireland.

“Thanks to Marc Ortlieb for reminding you of the last time you, me, and he saw Andrew Brown, if only from the other side of a concert venue at the Warren Zevon concert.

“March 2024 books: I must have read Lawrence Block’s **On the Cutting Edge** when a few years ago I was reading as many Scudder novels as I could find, but I don’t recognise it from your review. Block now self-publishes, and announces his latest books on Fictionmags. I still have **The Resurrectionists** sitting in a box waiting to be read. I’m pretty sure I’ve bought all Bradley’s books because they sounded interesting, but have read none of them yet.”

“March 2024 TV and films: I enjoyed **Smiley’s People** nearly as much as **Tinker Tailor**, and for the same reason: Alec Guinness’s performance. I assume you noticed Patrick Stewart in a non-speaking role towards the end. I would also give four stars to **The Lady in the Van, A Matter of Life and Death**, and **Dune Part Two**. I haven’t seen **American Fiction** because it hasn’t appeared on disc.”

“Warren Zevon is pretty much as good as Excitable Boy, but it’s only because of Brian Wise often referring to it that I ordered it when it was released on CD.



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“I agree with Rose Mitchell that Linda Ronstadt is the great glorifier of many songwriters, whose careers might have never happened if they had not had their songs featured on one of her albums. I’m sure it was Linda’s recording of the McGarrigle Sisters’ ‘Heart Like a Wheel’ that kept them afloat financially for years, since none of their own LPs became a bestseller.

“I must admit I don’t know what a music app is, or how to use it. Nobody surely would listen to anything through the shitty little speakers on smartphones? And nobody would want to ruin their ears by listening through earphones? The only way to listen to music is through a decent amplifier and good speakers.”

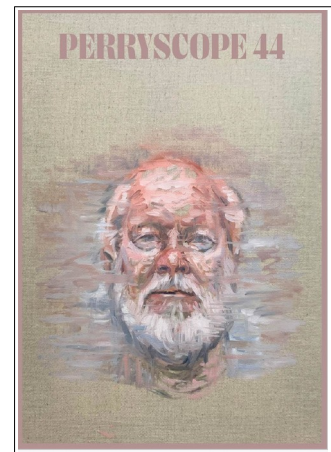
[PM: We do what we can Bruce.]

### Perryscope 44:

**Bruce Gillespie:** “Happy birthday, Will! I hope the both of you will find a BYO restaurant for his next birthday. If you ever find a good BYO restaurant, please tell me the good news.”

[PM: The Waiters Restaurant in the city is probably the best of them.]

“The first meeting of the Nova Mob was in August 1970, at the flat of Tony and Myfanwy Thomas, a week or two before they moved to Ferntree Gully. I was able to attend the September 1970 meeting held at the palatial flat of John Bangsund. I gave a talk about Philip K. Dick — who else?



“Best novels of the 1960s: I have been waiting for you to publish the results of the ‘Best SF Novels of the Sixties’ Nova Mob. Since that hasn’t happened, I’m grateful to nice Mr Handfield and nice Mr MacLachlan for their lists of the results.

[PM: Too busy doing other things I suspect.]

“What are my Favourite SF Novels of the 1960s? That’s a hard question. I enjoyed the great short stories of the 1960s more than almost all the serialised novels I read in the SF magazines. Later in the decade I was able to afford a few novels in book form. By far my favourite SF novel of the decade is Brian Aldiss’s *Hothouse*. That’s also my favourite SF novel, because of the power of the writing as much as the subject matter or power of the story itself. I could name a number of Philip K. Dick novels. It’s only during recent years I’ve appreciated the quality of *The Man in High Castle*, Dick’s only Hugo winner. My favourite, though, would be *All We Marsmen*, as it appeared as a serial in Pohl’s *Worlds of Tomorrow*, and *Martian Time Slip*, as it was renamed in the Ballantine paperback. There was a time when both *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *Ubik* came in second to *Hothouse* as my favourite SF novels of the period, but I found them a bit disappointing on re-reading.

“The only four from either your list or David’s that I recall with great pleasure are *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, *Camp Concentration*, and *Way Station*, but only *Wizard* might sit on my Top 10.

“Thanks for setting me a brain-teaser.”

[**PM:** My top five sf novels of the 1960s: 1. *The Left Hand of Darkness* – Le Guin; 2. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* – Miller; 3. *The Man in the High Castle* – Dick; 4. *A Wizard of Earthsea* – Le Guin; and 5. *Dune* – Herbert.]

“I’m pleased that Julian has finally written about his experiences as a radio announcer in rural Western Australia. I’ve heard him natter about his experiences a few times, but what’s good talking compared to an interesting article?”

“It’s hard to remember all the magazines I’ve bought over the years. I bought the SF magazines, either from McGill’s or Space Age Books or from local newsagents, from 1960 until 1975. I became so far behind in reading them that I gave up buying.”

[**PM:** That was also my experience. I wasn’t getting through one month’s issue of a music or computing magazine before another rolled in and I just got further and further behind. At least in retirement I can now set myself time to read each magazine as it comes in.

“The incoming fanzines quickly became a flood after I started sending out **SF Commentary** in 1969.

“My favourite magazines since the 1960s have been mainly music magazines, starting with **Go-Set**, which was very cheap, available at any newsagent, and published the National Top 40 chart every week. In 1971, I began buying the Australian edition of **Rolling Stone**, and later discovered the US edition at Pop Inn, a little import record store on Flinders Street. Pop Inn also became my main source of imported LPs. I can’t remember when I discovered the British music magazines **Q**, **Uncut**, and **Mojo**, but they’ve been my main source of CD reviews since the 1990s. I also subscribe to **Rhythms**, Brian Wise’s ‘roots music’ magazine.

“Film magazines I remember buying from time to time include **Films and Filming**.

“Classical music reviews I could find in **Gramophone**, which used to be easily available from a few shops in the city. The Australian equivalent was 24 Hours, the official magazine of ABC Classic FM. It folded, then was revived as **Limelight**, to which I subscribe. I don’t read any of them on screen.”

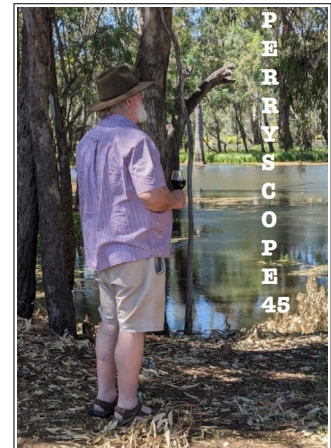
[**PM:** Of those you list I only used to read **Rolling Stone** and then mainly if I saw something on the cover that caught my interest.]

“Books May 2024: Wilson Tucker’s *The Year of the Quiet Sun* is one of my Top 10 SF novels of all time. Disch’s *Camp Concentration* is fairly high on the list, but I haven’t read it since it first appeared as a serial in **New Worlds** in 1968. I agree with Mark Olson about *Dune* the Novel.”

### Perryscope 45:

**Bruce Gillespie:** “That’s a great review of *Proud and Lonely*. It’s worth sending to one of the weekend colour mags or to one of the literary magazines.”

[**PM:** I briefly contemplated the idea but it was just as I was getting ready to travel overseas so I just didn’t have the available time. I think my opportunity has well and truly passed now.]



“I was struck by plantar fasciitis in my feet after I began walking as daily exercise in 1992. (I had been swimming regularly, but the chlorine in the local pool stuffed my sinuses.) For several years I went walking in my normal dress shoes, but eventually the pain in my soles became dire. It was solved after I began going to the Carlton Health Clinic in 1988. My podiatrist prescribed orthotics, which cost a fortune. They helped a lot. My physio carried out solid muscle work on the soles of my feet. Completing the therapy was the suggestion from my chiropractor that I buy Scarpa mountain boots and tuck the orthotics into them. From 1999 they have supplied excellent support for my feet and ankles, and the fasciitis pain has finally disappeared.”

[**PM:** That has been my experience as well. The arch supports work a treat.]

### Perryscope 46:

**Joseph Nicholas:** “Reading of your experience in a cross-Channel hovercraft reminds me that we once rode in such a thing, on our first visit to Paris in February 1990. The journey out from Dover to Calais was very fast, over a calm sea; but the journey back, a few days later, had to be by ordinary ferry, because the sea was — you're ahead of me here, I'm sure — too rough for a hovercraft to handle. If the surface over which they're travelling, land or sea, isn't flat then they're pretty useless — as (I think it was) the US Marine Corps found out when it trialed a half-dozen or so smaller hovercraft for amphibious landings in (probably — this was a long time ago) Vietnam. The cross-Channel hovercraft have long since been retired from service (and probably sent to be broken up for scrap), their theoretical value in shortening the journey time beaten by high-speed rail through the Channel Tunnel.



“Your journey in a hovercraft was affected by the Great Storm of October 1987 (which has its own Wikipedia page — <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>). Weather forecasts for the day in question were for strong winds, but were thought likely to have most impact in northern France; forecasting models then not being as sophisticated as they are now, the impact on southern England was wildly underestimated. The nightly forecast following the BBC's 9.00pm TV bulletin was presented by a man called Michael Fish, who famously (or infamously!) said that he'd been contacted by a woman worried that a hurricane was on the way; don't worry, he said, there isn't. We didn't have a television at the time, so only found out about that famous mis-claim later; but we were woken during the night by the sound of something falling down the chimney void and, on inspection, found items knocked off the mantelpiece onto the floor. We put them back, went back to bed, and only found out what had happened when turning on the radio for the news the following morning. Underground services were suspended due to lack of power (large parts of the National Grid had been taken out) and I had to go to work by bus, a journey which took me the length of Hyde Park, past whole lines of toppled trees which emergency crews were beginning to chainsaw into pieces. That weekend, we went for a walk around Pimlico (where we were then living, in a cheapo rented flat above a shop), smirking a bit at all the expensive motor vehicles (Bentleys, Jaguars, Mercedes, BMWs) crushed by fallen trees. (I still have the photographs.)”

[**PM:** It was a rather nasty and harrowing time.]

“Speaking of photographs....I note your statement in response to me that you save organising your holiday photographs until you've returned home, but that is something I could never do, as I take so many and it's therefore less work to sort them as I go. Even on day-trips, I blast away furiously at every interesting piece of architecture or landscape. (For example, this week just past I had a day out in Canterbury, and came home with — once the duds and duplicates had been eliminated, and

the panoramas assembled — a total of 428 images.) Thus the great advantage of digital over film: one never has to worry about the number of frames left on the roll.”

[**PM:** I don't seem to be taking as many photos as I should, especially given, as you say, the advantages of digital over film. Storage isn't a problem, it's more a matter of the time it takes to get them in order each evening. I'd prefer to spend that writing up my report for that day or, as is usually the case, a day or so previously.]

**Leigh Edmonds:** “Thanks for another issue of **Perryscope**. You're right that you don't really look grumpy in your cover photo this time. More a kind of 'yet more old stuff to look at' kind of look. I'm sure all tourists wear it from time to time.

“Your 'My Worst Travel Experience' across the Channel in a hovercraft made me think of my own worst travel experience which also involves the Channel and bad weather.

“In 1992, or it might have been '93, I got invited to talk at an aviation history conference in Switzerland, all expenses paid with Valma at half price. To add there was a history of technology conference in Uppsala the week before. So we went to that too. So we went to two four day conferences with only a couple of days between them and ended up after the conference in Lucerne with an invitation from Director of the Deutsches Museum in Munich to pay him a visit. Armed with our Eurail passes we planned to zip down to Rome, then up to Munich and then over the Reading to stay with Dave and Hazel Langford for a bit.

“It actually started to go wrong in the train station at Lucerne when we discovered that there was a rail strike so the train would only get us as far as Milan (I think) in the middle of the night with no where to stay. After a bit of a drama we ended up on a train to Paris on which we got next to no sleep. We then stogged around for the day in Paris, seeing Le Musee d'Orsay, etc, as you do. Later in the day we looked at each other and realized we just lacked the strength to go to Munich and then Reading so rang Dave and asked if we could arrive there the next day. No worries, he said. (Would Dave actually say that?) Around the same time Valma broke a tooth so Munich was definitely off the agenda. So we found out that we could catch the overnight ferry from Calais and worked our way around the Paris Metro (another drama there) to the appropriate station for the train the Calais.

“The train was stuffed full, not a seat anywhere and standing room was packed. What we learned later was that the Channel has been closed for a couple of days with bad weather and it was not certain that the ferry we had tickets for would depart at all. Anyhow, we got to Calais and they packed us onto the boat, it was the first one to make the crossing for a few days so there were a lot of desperate people wanting passage. So there were no vacant seats and very little room for anything else. The weather was still bad and even just out of port the going was very rough and the sea sickness started everywhere. Valma, however, was so tired that she found a vacant space on the floor, lay down and slept for virtually the entire crossing.

“Fortunately for me I discovered that there must be some mariners in my past and the pitching and turning of the ship didn't worry me so I didn't get seasick. In a fog of tiredness I wandered around the ship looking at everything and all the people looking unwell and sick. I tried to go out onto the deck a couple of times but the howling wind and the water dashing over the decks kept me indoors and dry. I had my Walkman (remember them?) which happened to be loaded with a tape of Handel's Messiah, which we all know well, of course. I must have been singing along with it because when I was feeling thirsty I went into a bathroom, found a hand basin that people weren't throwing up into and gave myself a few handfuls of water. I realized that I was singing along to the chorus which goes, 'Glory to God, Glory to God in the Highest' and others must have heard it because, as I was leaning down, two bilious faces, one on each side of me, looked at me very

strangely and went back to their chundering.

“Looking back on it now, it was an interesting experience, even enjoyable for me though it might not have been had I been inclined to sea sickness too. Eventually we disembarked in England, caught the train to London and found our way to a train to Reading where Dave and Hazel put us to bed and found a dentist for Valma. All’s well that ends well, which is surely the main thing.”

[**PM:** As long as we can live to laugh about it.]

“The ‘Essential Travel Items’ section was interesting. Jean is right in that a smartphone is essential traveling equipment these days and I could not have done what I did in the US this year without it. Irwin is also right, ‘Sufficient medication for the time away. Checked and rechecked’. Lucy too, though she doesn’t say whether hers are noise cancelling headphones or not. I have two sets, some Sennheiser earbuds and some Sony over-the-ear headphones. Both are linked to my mobile and play me whatever I like from there. Even on the hour and twenty minutes trip from here to Melbourne they are great for cutting down on the noise of the train which makes travel much less wearing. Unlike some of your writers, I am not yet confident enough in my mobile phone to use it to store travel documentation so I have two paper sets, one on me and the other in my case. I will leave Rose with her bright pink puffer jacket and Martin with his portable coffee machine.”

[**PM:** I often take along a plastic, one-cup coffee plunger which weighs next to nothing and doesn’t take up a lot of room in the suitcase. I can’t stand instant coffee so a plunger-brewed cup is the only thing I can really put up with.]

“Your reviews of books, movies and tv are all good but I know nothing of any of them, so no comment. On the other hand, Mark Olson’s defence of the Lensman Series had my agreement. I had entirely forgotten the destruction of Ploor by such extravagant meant, which suggest that I might have to go back and read the series again. Like William Breiding I’m giving *The Expanse* a go, the audio books that is. I’m finding them a bit slow in terms of the description and action, rather than the ideas which are interesting. So perhaps I’m going to have to get around to seeing the tv version in which a lot of what it described would be the background.

“William also set me thinking when he wrote about driving around the back country of the American West. Looking back, some of my happiest traveling experiences were when I went with my father driving around the back-blocks of the Wimmera and Mallee areas of Victoria on the dirt and gravel roads surrounded by open paddocks of scrub all around. I wouldn’t mind doing that again. However, finding the time would be something else, I assume that you saw that Bruce launched three fat issue of **SF Commentary** on efanazines at the same time. How am I supposed to find the time with that kind of competition.”

[**PM:** I think we are all pretty much in agreement that Bruce’s output is something for Bruce alone. He keeps asking me how I can possibly keep up a monthly publication schedule and I can’t figure put how he gets to complete such huge tomes. Each to their own. Even if I do get back to my sercon publication, **The Alien Review**, I will ensure the issues don’t get to be too big.]

“I’m also in agreement with William about classical music which I’ve only learned about through listening to it a lot, no formal training. Perhaps it’s something that gets transmitted from generation to generation with me having got it from Harding and Bangsund. Though I must say that anybody who finds Mozart’s K.488 (gotta learn the jargon), with its sublime middle movement, and the Ravel String Quartet has got taste. Add the Ravel Piano Trio and you’re well on the way.”

**Rose:** “The opportunity to traverse the English Channel by hovercraft would have been exciting; pity the unholy storm that spoiled the adventure. Were there any eels on board your hovercraft?”

[**PM:** I couldn't tell from all the vomiting going on. I basically got to my seat and stayed there for the whole journey.]

“Still an historical and memorable event given this mode of public transport no longer exists except for a route between Portsmouth and Isle of Wight. I looked it up!”

[**PM:** I'm fairly certain that Robyn would not be interested in another such trip. Not sure I would be either.]

“The cost of running the service and the lack of passenger comforts, plus the advent of Channel Tunnel and the luxurious Eurostar, put paid to this mode of travel in 2000. But you and Robyn can say you travelled it back in the day, despite it being a chunder-fest. That has to be a bit spesh.”

[**PM:** I can only point out that that is a very strange way of looking at it!]

“Loved reading about what people consider a Must Pack item when travelling, but Irwin Hirsh wins! His piece had me dabbing gently at my eye as I welled up a little. So sweet that he considers his wife, Wendy, an essential travel partner. What a wonderful husband. And Lucy Huntzinger definitely needs to bring her 'phones down to Australia, perhaps in 2028 if that Brisbane in '28 worldcon bid succeeds. I tried Martin Field's tip on stain removal using hand sanitiser and wet wipes. It works! However, I was not aware of bar shampoo and conditioner and looked these up as well. While there are some good brands producing them, not sure if I would risk replacing my Label M hair products with these. I am so risk averse.

“Joseph Nicholas is a kindred spirit — his comments about *Dune* (all iterations) struck home with me. I too have pondered about how technically savvy the Freman were; how did they know about let alone make thumpers? And yes, how did they get off worms? As we all know, better not think about it too much but I missed a great opportunity to discuss with him at length and in great depth about this conundrum at the Glasgow Worldcon.”

[**PM:** As you well know Rose, Worldcons are not the place to be discussing sf and the like. No, no, they're places for socialising and eating and drinking.]

**Rich Lynch:** “Issue 46 is a good read. Concerning bad travel experiences, as you mentioned they usually have a faint silver lining in being the topic of fanzine articles. That's certainly been the case for me — getting sick in Delhi from eating (at the urging of my in-country guide) freshly cut and seasoned raw vegetable of some kind from a street vendor (it was indeed delicious, but I paid for it for the next couple of days with some severe intestinal distress); being 'taken for a ride' (an expensive one) by a pirate taxi in Prague (around and around the outskirts of the city we went, when all I wanted was a 5 minute ride to the airport shuttle bus station); having my pocket picked in a Warsaw train station (I lost cash and credit cards, and it was only the heroic intervention by my late friend Piotr Rak who saved the day by giving me unlimited access to his mobile phone so I could contact the credit card companies and to arrange for replacement — I didn't have an iPhone back then); being very nearly arrested by the Russian military during a business trip out to the middle of Siberia (I'd been taking a few photos of a hydroelectric dam, and someone apparently thought I shouldn't be doing that and called it in. My in-country guide intervened and after a lot of back-and-forth in Russian, which I understood none of, the soldiers went away looking unhappy)... and these are just the ones that come immediately to mind. The worst travel experiences of all, for me at least, were the times when my immediate supervisor was in a testy mood and nothing me and the rest of the team could do would please him. But that's a topic for another day. Suffice it to say that I'm living a happy retirement.”

[**PM:** Ah, your recollections bring to mind my other bad experiences over the years: almost losing Robyn in a European train station as our train moved from one platform to another

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when she was off getting something to eat; nearly drowning in Vietnam; having a knife pulled on me in Bourdeaux; and also having my pocket picked on the Rome underground train network. And yet we keep on going back. Some might say that this is just foolhardy, and they are probably right. Still going to keep doing it though.]

**William Breiding:** “I mainly wanted to say what a cool idea it was to ask a bunch of folks what might be indispensable to them while traveling. There were a lot of interesting and unexpected answers. Since I don't do any international traveling my indispensables would be quite different. And since we do mainly desert explorations and wilderness camping, the two obvious indispensables would be water and gas (petrol). Others might be good coffee and wood for an early morning fire to go with the coffee before the day starts. For me there's nothing I savor more than a desert landscape in the cool of the morning with a good cup of Joe and a campfire. I've reconciled that I will never do any international traveling, and won't whine about not having made it a priority in my younger days. Honestly, the idea of international travel exhausts me and I marvel at the energy all you guys have for it. My daydreams as a kid were to see Iceland and Australia. Never made it to either, but never made it a priority, either. But truth be told we could spend the rest of our remaining lives exploring the American Southwest and see one amazing thing after another, and that's what we intend to do, and why we purchased a pickup truck to forge into the desert wilderness.”

[**PM:** I get a number of people asking me when I'm going to be seeing more of Australia, and my usual answer is something like “When I get sick of travelling overseas.” That will happen as it's getting harder and harder to get up the energy to take the long-haul flights over to Europe or North America.]

**I also heard from:** **Nic Farey**; **Heath Row**; and **Martin Field**; thank you one and all.

