

GREATEST HITS VOL 35

"NO-ONE ELSE HAS
COMPLAINED, SIR."



 This is GREATEST HITS VOLUME THIRTY-FIVE, I think, and it emanates from the learned fingers of P.J. Birks, esq, often resident at Darwin College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, United Kingdom. Greatest Hits is all but a four-weekly zine that carries lots of Diplomacy games, letters, chat, Poker articles, Bridge articles, reams of personal abuse and extended ego-trip for its editor. It costs 1p per side plus postage (and has done for an incredibly long time) or 1/4 a side to Americans. Feedback is always appreciated, and this has been a rather long introduction.

EDITORIAL

Back to the two-column style this issue, just for a change, although partly prompted, I must admit, by the smartness of the new Ethil, which employs this rather pretty yet also rather space-wasting printing method (er, I mean layout method don't I? Yes.)

Since this is being typed up over a week before the deadline, I have no idea what the response to the last editorial will be, so I shall just have to assume that at least some of you are vaguely interested in it, and carry on on roughly the same tack.
 This issue.....

DO GOVERNMENTS GOVERN?

Well, yes and no. Last issue I theorised at rather excessive length on the theory that we were not really in a democracy. This issue I shall probably go on at even greater length trying to say that it wouldn't really matter even if we were in a democracy.

Who does run the country? The Unions! cries the Daily Telegraph reader. The Multinationals! cries the Morning Star reader. Anyone, in fact, but that lowly MP who you do or do not vote for. In fact lots of people 'run' the country. We all have our little part to play in influencing what happens to Britain in the future, and it is more a matter of degree than of absolutes. We first find real 'power', though, in the local councils, who probably have more effect on your everyday lives than almost any other branch of government. They decide whether a sewage works will or will not be built at the end of your road, whether your street will become one-way and how much it will cost you to park your car outside your own house. Etc etc. The people within the local Council have decisions foisted upon them by professionals, architects, planners, sociologists, simply because councillors are, in the technical sense of the word, amateurs. They know this,

the professionals know this. At times this is not a bad thing. Just as lay magistrates need a professional clerk of the court to advise on legal matters, so the councillors need professionals to advise them on the practicalities of certain matters.

Where the situation becomes disturbing is when the professionals start seeing themselves as powerful, which they undoubtedly are, and exploiting it. Thus architects build uninhabitable houses (witness the tower blocks), inhabitable houses are knocked down to join two separate green spaces (I kid you not, this is happening right now in Lambeth. St Agnes Place is being demolished so as to join two separate parks into one 'big' park. The logic is incredible.) It matters not whether the people want it, the councillors want it, and they want it because they have been persuaded of the beauty of the scheme by half-baked architects and sociologists who have probably never lived, and almost certainly never will live, in such an area.

This would not be so bad if it stopped at local government level, but it does not. The power of the 'faceless' bureaucrats in Whitehall is frightening. An ex-permanent under-secretary has revealed how the Ministry, in preparation for a change of government, spends time producing arguments that will cause governments to water-down their manifestos. Excuses such as 'impractical' or 'impracticable' are given, which may be true, but at least they should be given a chance to try!

That, then, is one facet of power which is often overlooked, the power of bureaucracy. Then there is the power of the Unions, representing only just over 50% of the workforce, but often going directly against the interests of even their own members (witness the Scanlon seal-out over the tool-makers, members of his own union who have become so sick at Scanlon's actions that they have become willing to bring British Leyland to the point of collapse.) The 'big men' in the unions, Jones, Scanlon, Buckton, Jackson, Greene, etc, have phenomenal influence over governmental decisions.

Then there is the power of the multinationals, and here it becomes positively frightening. Surely none of us can have forgotten the blackmail of Chrysler, to the tune of £100m to keep Chrysler UK in operation. Other companies, IIT, ICI, ICL, BP-Shell, ESSO, hold similar levers that can be used at any time. IIT played a large part in the overthrow of Allende, the same could be done here.....

It looks to me as if anyone is governing but Callaghan. We might as well close Parliament down and let the Civil Service try and run the country. Things would go on just the same.....

ARTICLE ONE:

DEATH OF A FRIEND

On Sunday, 6th March, 1977, the following was said of him in the Sunday Times,

'When he came to us, he looked like a herring. But he always had that charm, he always wanted to do his best.'

On Thursday 17th March he was dead. His name was Lanzarote, and his destruction is hard to explain, just as it is hard to comprehend, unless, of course, you love racing as much as I do.

Lanzarote was one of Britain's greatest horses today, certainly not as great as Arkle, but, in hurdling, the equivalent of Red Rum in steeplechasing or Grundy on the flat. At the age of nine, Lanzarote had just graduated to steeplechasing. No horse had graduated from the Champion Hurdle to the Cheltenham Gold Cup in the latter's 53-year history. His battle with Comedy of Errors in 1974 will be remembered by all who watched it. At this time he was known for a casualness over ~~hurdles~~ which often proves disastrous if the horse is switched to steeplechasing. Hurdles are far less demanding. His trainer, Fred Winter, however, had schooled Lanzarote over fences in order to make him less 'lazy' over hurdles, and had been so impressed by his jumping ability over the tougher jumps that he had decided there and then to eventually transfer the horse to steeplechasing, overriding the original objections of the horse's owner.

Although rider of the winner of the Cheltenham Gold Cup twice, and champion trainer five times, Fred Winter had never trained a winner at Cheltenham. Indeed, the meeting at Cheltenham in mid-March had come to be something of a bogey for him. In 1973 Pendil was beaten by a short head (a miniscule distance over $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles) and in 1975 Soothsayer and Bula were beaten into second and third places by Ten Up. 1977 was going to be the year that the bogey would be laid - unfortunately it merely confirmed itself with vengeance.

Not that Lanzarote had always showed promise. As a two-year-old on the Flat in 1970 he did bugger all. As a three-year-old he won nothing but a mile and a half race at Edinburgh in highly mediocre company.

It was only as a four-year-old, being put over hurdles for the first time, that Lanzarote really began to show promise, eventually going on to win 19 hurdle races, and establishing himself as one of the best jumpers in Britain at a time when there is a mass of rubbish toddling round courses in novice hurdles, but all too few really top-class jumpers and steeplechasers.

Lanzarote started second-favourite at 7-2; there had been some late betting for the Irish horse, Bannow Rambler, which preferred the going. My personal fancy was Fort Devon, at 11-years old the more experienced horse of the three 'favourites', and for Lanzarote there was always 1978, or so I thought.

Zarib, a 9-1 shot, fell at the fifth, and a couple of flights later Lanzarote landed, began to run on, and then collapsed, bringing down Bannow Rambler in the general melee. His jockey, John Francome, relived the moment:-

'He crumpled on his near hind and I knew straight away that it was broken just above the hock..... I waited with him till the vet came. All I could do was to try and soothe him, hold his head down and keep him from trying to get up. Then the vet arrived and shot him, put him out of his misery.'

The emotional reaction amongst racelovers was deeply sincere, as if another member of 'The Club' had gone - for once, backing the winner held no satisfaction, there is more to racegoers than the notes in their pocket.

There were other disasters at Cheltenham. Bannow Rambler and Fort Devon (my fancy) both fell, and Summerville broke down with the race in his pocket, gamely hobbling on at almost a walk to finish third, never to race again, but the real disaster, the one that hurt, was the death of Lanzarote. The tattered piece of canvas that is unceremoniously hoist over what was a noble animal but a few minutes previously, but had become nothing more than a motley collection of muscle, bone, and skin, is little respect for a horse that had given many viewers great pleasure in seeing those matchstick legs bound along for those last two or three furlongs, outstaying the stayers. Cheltenham, the Extel commentary, the mug punters in the shop who could only cheer because they had backed another horse, the counterhands who only work in betting shops for 'pin-money', became nothing more than an intrusion into a world which perhaps half the betting shop, and probably 99% of the visitors to Cheltenham, felt part of. As Hugh McIlvanney said in The Observer on the following Sunday,

'Pleasure in the greatest of jumping race meetings died along with the best horse in the Gold Cup.'

Indeed it did.

ANOTHER GREAT ZINE REVIEW.....

Neatly sidestepping any possible accusations of 'Bias!', this should be appearing just after the closing date for the Mad Policy zine poll. Furthermore, I must emphasise that all that follows is no attempt at objectivism, but solely personal opinion. Objective zine reviews are boring.....

GUMMIBALLS:- Ron Rayner, 32 Wentworth Ave, West Finchley, London, N3 1YL and many others, including the infamous Doug Wakefield and the famously incompetent Martin Hammoh. Last issue received was No. 19, and Gummiballs, for once, consisted of paper all the same size (A4). Split into a gaming and non-gaming sections and quite enjoyable for non-players. Can't find the price, which isn't surprising! Out of 10 - 7.

DOLCHSTOSS:- Improved dramatically since it ceased to be a subzine to Toad, and an impressive new typeface adds to the generally favourable impression. It has a superb letters column, but game openings are sparse, usually restricted to 'special' (all winners, old lags, etc) games. At 25p a time, not cheap, but worth getting, especially if you are into Chess and (ugggh!) Scrabble. Oh, and 8 pages of incomprehensible wargaming stuff called Battleground in the middle. All from Richard Sharp, 27 Elm Close, Amersham, Bucks. Overall mark - 9.

RATS LIVE ON NO EVIL STAR: Pete Swanson, 6 Welford Place, Wimbledon, SW19 5AJ. Without doubt by far the best new zine to have appeared for some time, probably since Chimaera. Items include 'Blasts From The Past', Tactics articles, gossip, general chat, zine reviews, letters, evrything, in fact, that a good zine should have, and plenty of it! Also contains an anonymous columnist in the guise of Smectonymous - better than most. Overall mark - 9.

MAD POLICY: Richard Walkerdine, 43 Chapel Grove, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey. Not, to be honest, as impressive as it was, but this is hardly surprising after 64 issues. Blank patches come and go (witness Greatest Hits last year) and with Claire rather ill at the moment, the IDA, Boardman Numbers and the Finishing Touch adding to the workload, ~~perhaps we should appreciate the clockwork-like appearance of MP over the last four years.~~ Costing 7½p plus postage per issue, and running the best GM'ed games in the hobby, there is no zine that I could recommend you to play in more highly. Overall mark - 8.

1901 AAT: Mick Bullock, 14 Nursery Ave, Halifax, West Yorks. Except, perhaps, this zine, which uses a three week deadline and a three-season game year. Despite some minor eccentricities, it is hard to deny 1901 its place as just about the best zine in the hobby today. Its only handicaps at the moment are these appearances of such games as Railway Rivals and Election. 76 issues in under four years, however, make it a great zine, since standards of production are not sacrificed because of the ultra-smart turnaround. Overall mark - 9

PUPPET THEATRE NEWS: Peter Mearns, 10 Moy Terrace, Inverness, IV2 4EL. A pleasant little zine, the last issue was 16 pages (foolscap) of mostly D&D, En Garde, and Games. Small amount on computing, letters, and chat. Not really my cup of tea, but I'm sure that what it sets out to do, it does well. Trouble is, I don't understand it..... Overall mark - 6

THE TINAMOU: Bob Brown, 141 Victoria Road, Fullwood, Preston (although about to move). Although rather game-heavy (but very well-GMed) I enjoy the 'chat' in Bob's zine. Having met Bob, he really is a most likeable chap, and this friendliness seems to come over in the zine. Nicely laid out on A4 paper, ½p per side plus postage, and a leisurely turnround of 4 weeks, but a fast production time, my ideal zine, in fact! Not a zine for non-players, however. Overall mark - 7

LEMMING EXPRESS: Bob Howes, 180 London Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 9ED. Up until now a zine for subscribers, but not for players, but apparently this will soon be changing as Bob will be doing the duplicating and distributing himself. It's a wonder that LE has managed to survive at all, but survive it has, and will almost certainly continue to do so, with a large number of sub-editors keeping the thing going. I really enjoy Lemming Express - it's lively, the reader knows who is writing what (Gummiballs mob could learn something here), Bob writes well, and interestingly, and with a lively letter column the zine makes a damned good read! Recommended. Overallly - ((is that a word? I hope not.)) - 8

TROJAN HORSE: Andy Evans, 36 Brynmill Terrace, Brynmill, Swansea, SA2 0BA.

Another zine that has 'gone over' to a more games-oriented style, but is still interesting (to me) in spite of this, and is probably a lot more interesting to some others because of it. I could lay into some of the GMing, but that would probably be prejudice - anyway, I know how difficult it is to GM some games! If you like D&D, subscribe, if not, well, there are other zines that do everything else better..... Overall mark - 6

JIGSAW: Roy Taylor, 63A St Nicolas Park Drive, Munceton, Warwicks, CV11 6DZ.

One of the most reliable zines in the hobby, one of the best GMed, and I don't know how he does it! Running almost twice as many games as GH, also En Garde, Soccerdross and all to a three week-deadline that would kill the likes of you and me. Aided and abetted by Martin Rundle with the non-Dip section, who seems just as efficient. One slight criticism is that too much seems to be cramped into too little space. Four extra sides for the same material would make the world of difference, but that's about all it can be faulted for. Overall mark - 8

GALLIMAUFRY: Marcus Umney-Foote, 3 Exeter Place, Guildford, Surrey.

Two issues produced so far, and the second one was late. Having met this stocky, bearded, swarthy young gentleman of indeterminate age (although I am assured that he is 33) I must say that he looks reliable. I remain suspicious of somebody producing a zine without having played in any games. Mind you, that's what Mick Bullock did.....

Zine is photocopied, and rambles on about some giant variant ('Cities of Nowhen') which I don't understand. The second issue had a brilliantly funny article by Pete Cousins, however, and I suppose it could develop. Give it time, though, I remain slightly sceptical.

ECLIPSOR: Paul Willey, 31 Burstow Road, Wimbledon, London, SW20 8ST.

A very well-produced zine, with much care put into the oft-neglected sector known as layout (Nicky Palmer take note). The chat is good, and so is the serialised story (written by Paul) and if you like competitions (I personally get enough of them in the Sunday papers and games and puzzles without having to read them in fanzines as well. If there has to be a competition, at least make it personalised.) then this is the zine to get. Also rather variant-oriented, which is a downgrader in the Birks book but quite probably an upgrader elsewhere. Overall mark - 7.

JAPHIDREW: Phil Stutt, 10 Muller Road, Horfield, Bristol.

Nowhere near as good as it was, and has recently gone mad on Soccerdross. Hell, not my kind of zine at all, now, to be honest, with the layout gone to pot (and containing Nicky Palmer's Monthly Bureaucrat, good grief!) and very little of interest to people in the hobby. Admittedly, Jackie is in hospital, and with a small some allowances must be made, but why take another game on, Phil? Overall mark - 4

TURN OF THE SCREW: Greg Hawes, 16 Crescent Road, Sidcup, Kent, or Rutland Hall, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2QZ. This is an excellent

zine, although turnaround, as is the case with most student publishers (including yours truly) occasionally suffers. Very much in the 'fanzine' tradition of Ethil, Rats, and, dare I say it, GH, TotS has an excellent drivelmongering anonymous columnist in Fetlock, who says enough controversial things to keep the letter column alive, and varied chat, a mixture of Diplomacy news and personal recountings ((bleeaaah!)) which all add up to a very interesting magazine. Highly recommended. Overall mark - 9.

BRUCE: Paul Simpkins, 104 Combs Hill, Dewsbury, WF12 0LQ, West Yorkshire.

A zine that has improved dramatically over the last few issues, with Paul trying hard to overcome the world-famous apathy of zine readers with chat on general topics such as films, politics, other zines, and just about anything that comes into Paul's head, which is just how it should be! Overall mark - 7.

AD NAUSEAM: Steve Pratt, 15 Craneford Close, Twickenham, Middx.

Masses of Soccerdross from Lawrence Parrott, who makes, I will admit, the best attempt of the lot to make this astoundingly luck-ridden game appear not only interesting but also to contain some traces of skill. The main body, however, is interesting, with a recounting of a Stab game, Scrabble, and chit-chat. Good fun. Overall mark - 7.

ETHIL THE FROG: John Cabalero Piggot, 15 Freeland Road, W5 3HR, London.

What can one say? I reviewed this last issue, so I will not add to what I said last time, the second issue being somewhat similar to the first. Just one thing, John, I seem to have left my copy in Godalming. Please? Pretty Please? Overall mark, 9.

AUT VINCERE AUT MORI: Steve Hill & Paul Harpet, 43 Cecil Crescent, Hatfield, Herts. Much-maligned zine by others who keep accusing me of slamming it! Nothing could be further from the truth - I think that it shows much promise and enthusiasm and that it should be supported to the full. Costing 4p plus postage for a small, yet interesting foolscap-sized zine, I quite enjoy the incessantly libellous attacks on myself, first by the editors, and lately from a Mr. V. Logan of Hitchin. Of such things are Diplomacy zines made! It doesn't look like a folder, either. Overall mark - 6.

CHIMAERA: Clive Booth, 71 Clara Mount Road, Langley, Heanor, Derbyshire. Though not exactly my cup of tea, you cannot fail to admire the effort and care put into this massive zine, comprising Chimaera, Chimaera Too, and Allan Owens En Garde! These can be obtained separately if required, and the logistics of such a production schedule make me shiver just to think of it.. All those subscribers getting different sections with different credit and different print runs. How does he do it? Certainly a zine for games players, but enough chat and letters to make it worthwhile to the occasional subber. You must get En Garde, though, the press in that is absolutely brilliant! Overall mark - 8

((And that's it. There are others, of course, but some I have only received a few copies of, some I have ceased trading with, and many are American. I have also not reviewed folding zines, in this case Caissa and Pendulum, since there doesn't seem much point. I know hhta Mick Bullock did all this far better a couple of issues ago, but I had been planning to do it anyway, and quite a few of you don't receive 1901aat, and those of you who do can compare opinions. Right, justification completed. Where shall we go from here?.....))

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I suppose we could do worse than..... LETTERS.

Paul Segal: (22.2.77)

I'm at the moment in charge (editor?) of a prospective IDA Diplomacy Handbook, 1976/77. I know that you are 'NGC' but asking never hurt. ~~Following on the editorial in GH-33, would you like to do an article on 'The Future of the Diplomacy Hobby', or something you would want to write on. If you don't want to, can you plug that I wan suitable articles? Thanks.~~

Glad you remembered Liz Jones at YorkDipCon - I vote that we replace Linda Pomeroy with LJ - much prettier, and quieter!

((Chauvinist. As to the article, the only thing that might prevent me from producing anything would not be that I am 'NGC' - I was in the IDA before you, mate! More pressing is the chronic lack of time that I am suffering from - there just aren't enough hours in a day! I'll se what I can do, though.))

((As for girls, give me one with personality and a loud mouth anytime of day (or night) in preference to the 'dumb blonde' type who makes no contribution to the conversation whatsoever. Won't go into personalities, though, people at University read this.....))

Andy Evans: (no date)

I'm surprised you can think as you do and still run a Dippyzine. Or maybe you and I have different definitions of what a 'games-only player' is. Don't you have any players who never say a word to you, just send in orders automatically every season? They show no interest in anything you write, and even if the game is held over show little effect.

These would disappear overnight if they could play FTF Dippy, difference or no difference.

((Funny you should say that - I've had players like that who have said nothing for ages, and suddenly explode into a cascade of print when somebody says something in which they have particular interest. I think that this kid of player would not vanish. Firstly because their lack of contribution does not indicate that they do not find postal diplomacy a different game from ftf diplomacy, and secondly because I think that their lack of feedback is not necessarily an indication of lack of interest, although I admit that there could well be a corellation))

((This is a strange hobby, and predictions are difficult, but I think that it's interesting that a large number of ~~ix~~ these 'new' players in America are subscribing to Diplomacy World, indicating, perhaps, that the new influx will be no less active (or, if you like, inactive) than the people already playing. Things will carry on as before, except on a larger scale. However, one effect is unavoidable, in the short-term there will be a larger number of newer publishers, and the 'traditions' will either have to be learnt all over again from scratch, taught to the newcomers by the oldtimers, or overthrown altogether. Only if the latter happens will the hobby split.))

Nicky Palmer: (14.3.77)

Pity you don't play En Garde - I could challenge you to a duel, no hitting below the kneecap.... who on earth is this American chap whose writing is as bad as mine??

Some miscellaneous comments on GH 33/34:

Politics:

You say you might still vote Labour but that you will let your membership lapse, and quote other disillusioned people interviewed in a paper who'll do the same. That's the most spineless attitude I've ever heard of - it'd make more sense to keep up your membership and boycott the vote, as the first allows you to do something: fight to get your views adopted. So what can a local party do? Well, it can put up a critical resolution to the conference, and amendments to other resolutions; it can select a candidate who suits their views, for both parliamentary and local elections, and it can make its views felt by writing to Labour Weekly or the press. OK, perhaps that's not going to have an earthshaking effect on its own, but it's an individualist pipedream to want to move mountains by oneself; if the support is there in other local parties, and pursued with sufficient determination, things will change - if not, it's still right to keep trying. Just sitting back and saying 'I don't like any of the party leaderships, so I'm not going to even try to exert any influence to the limited extent that I can do anything,' is just pathetic, and suggestive of a Zen Buddhist rather than someone who thinks politics is important. This is not to say that I agree with what you think is wrong - are restrictive practices still much of a problem? Most were phased out in the sixties, arguably with an effect on the current rate of unemployment (by making it easier to sack people when the going got rough, and getting someone else to take on the work).

On your point in issue 34 about democracy: well, yes, most people make up their minds about politics without looking all round the issue, and possibly are even unable to look all round it, because of environmental influences. But democracy doesn't claim to give government elected by sensible people; it claims to give government representative of the people who inhabit the country, absent-minded about politics as they may be. This it succeeds in doing, more or less. I must admit that I don't think that 'voting is a citizen's duty' slogan is helpful. If someone thinks that he really doesn't know who to vote for, he should abstain, rather than go by tradition or speaking manner or some other reason irrelevant to the current issues. The argument crops up again in the postal union ballot context: is it better to have votes in local meetings (which can be packed with fanatics) or by post (which can be dominated by people who don't care that much either way)? I lean towards the postal ballots, but there's certainly two sides to it.

Philosophy:

Adrien's argument seems obviously circular: put (ii) first and we get:-

- (ii) If A is necessary for B then A ≠ B
- (i) Assume brain processes are necessary for thoughts.
- (iii) Consciousness (thoughts) is therefore not a brain process.

By (ii), (i) and (iii) are not just assumption and deduction, but based on the same assumption - in other words, (i) is an heroic assumption, which looks trivial until you make the hair-splitting assumption in (ii)

Game players vs Drunken sots:-

Although I occasionally pretend otherwise for the sake of lively debate, I don't really think that a useful distinction exists here, and don't accept that I represent the 'game' extreme while Richard Sharp represents the 'sot' one. About 90% of my friends were made through the hobby ((Good Grief!!)) and I should hate to play with a bunch of anonymously dressed figures who silently sent in computer-printed orders and circulated robot-like diploming letters, the ultimate 'gamer' caricature! I, and those whom one can loosely identify as your 'game-players', concentrate on games as a whole because we are more starved of good opponents than we are starved of good company; after a long game, the position reverses itself, and I would rather talk than play. I wouldn't just as soon meet people through a lonely heart's get-together, a cycling club, or a Mediterranean cruise (I should be so lucky.....), because the common interest is a good start to any social contact, but no matter how many fanatical players lived in my area, I'd still want to keep in touch with the hobby at large, as, I suspect, would most 'game-players'. In general, I think, this supposed division of the hobby is one of the facile distinctions which people love to make and cause unnecessary trouble: 'There are two sorts of people, black/white, rich/poor, men/women, and the other half are not half as good as my lot'. There was an experiment in the Scientific American a couple of years ago, in which kids were asked to count the number of blobs on a screen, and were then told whether they were 'overcounters' or undercounters'. They were then given \$5.00, and asked how the others should be rewarded. Despite the altogether piffling nature of the division thus created, the majority felt that 'their group' was more worth of reward than the other, and typically suggested giving 7 dollars to them and 3 dollars to the other group.

In reality, there are 3,500 million distinctive groups, and Vive la difference.....

You may be wondering what the hell has happened to the Three Wise Men Committee, which you wanted to work on agreed house rules et al. I hereby inform you, as chief returning officer, that you have been elected a Wise Man (what can the others be like, for chrissakes?). What's more, you're the only one - no-one else bothered to stand! I'm trying to get Howes and Walkerdine in - cf Monthly Bureaucrat when I get their replies.

Do you want to vote in the Pimley Poll? Four of the candidates have voted so far; one voted for himself as first, another put himself 7th, and two more didn't mention themselves at all! You can try and guess which is which, though I'm no saying. (The one who put himself first said he was only doing so because he assumed all the others would, so I suppose this shouldn't count.....)

((The trouble with Nicky's letters is that, though rare, they come like the monsoon, in bucketfuls of prose that is meaty at the worst of times and solid-packed protein at the best.....))

((There's so much in this letter than an attempt to reply to it all would be construed by most as suicide. Kill me it may, but I'm in that kind of mood at the moment, and after I've watched Porridge I shall make a go of it. Bye for now.....))

((Back again. Politics: Maybe you're right - I should stay in my local party and try and get things changed, but experience breeds cynicism and apathy. To be honest, I just don't really see the point any more. Maybe I should take up Zen Buddhism.....

But that isn't to say that I don't think that politics are important - they are. In fact it brings me onto the second part of your argument, that democracy doesn't demand 'rational' voting, simply that people have the right to vote, rationally or irrationally. It brings to mind an old saying at University - 'The masses are stupid, and they get the government they deserve.' Which could be interpreted as an argument against democracy, and almost certainly as an elitist point of view, but isn't it really the case? I'm afraid that I don't see democracy like that. If the government is not elected for on the basis of its policies instead of on the basis of the accent of the leader or what colour tie he wears or how one's parents vote or how a newspaper biases the news, then we aren't in a democracy, and I stand by that interpretation, and stuff what the dictionaries say!))

((Philosophy: Uhhhh, I'll leave this to Adrien....))

((Game Players vs Drunken sots: You must realise by now (I'm referring to all of you, not Nicky in particular) that for me to interject on another person's letter is an unusual occurrence indeed, but I did so here. Do you mean to say, Nicky, that 90% of your friends are in the games hobby? That's practically your whole life! I reckon that no more than 20% of my friends, and about 5% of my 'acquaintances are in games. This does mean that, of the people I do know in games are more likely to be friends than are people in the outside world, but I'm damned if I could live in such an isolated 'friendship' community as you do Nicky. You must like games a hell of a lot more than I do!))

((Did I volunteer to be a Wise Man? Shit. Well, I suppose that I should go through with this - it's something that I've always been pushing for, so to back out and cry 'no time!' would be a cop-out. Get a couple of others and I suppose a couple of weekends could be found to thrash something out. I quite like the idea of three people producing their own 'all-encompassing' version independently, and the three being thrown together one weekend for six or seven hours of solid discussion, at the end of which we would all have a draft of the final product. Then we stroll off and write it, only to meet again a couple of weekends later to compare 'final' versions, looking for errors and anomalies, and gradually writing the final version through the discussion. Sound okay?))

Leo Gareth Adanson: (no date)

With your continual exhortation to get involved in Greatest Hits, you have finally stimulated me to respond, and since my passion is music it is about that I shall write.

Not so long ago, you classified music according to 'soul' and 'depth' and said that Bach had depth but little soul, which I agree with, that soul music had soul but little depth, with which I agree, and that the true greats, like the Beatles, have both. Well, what about the TRUE greats, like Schubert and Mendelssohn. Schubert has soul and depth, and very good quality soul and depth, and plenty of it. But Mendelssohn seems to lag behind slightly in both. How can your system classify Mendelssohn's music as inferior? Well, I think it might be because you have missed one fundamental classification, beauty. This gives us the following table (scores out of ten)

| | <u>Beauty</u> | <u>Soul</u> | <u>Depth</u> |
|--------------------|--------------------|--|--|
| <u>Bach</u> | Definitely - 8 | Lacking in much of his music - 5 | Perfect - 10 |
| <u>Schubert</u> | Ditto - 8 | Abundant - 9 | Certainly there - 8 |
| <u>Mendelssohn</u> | Unequaled - 10 | Slightly lacking - 8 | Simple, but good - 8 |
| <u>Jazz</u> | Rather lacking - 6 | Can be there if it wants - 7 | Originality in jazz tends to lean towards beauty rather than depth which is not only simple but also unoriginal - 5 |
| <u>Soul</u> | Rather lacking - 6 | Definitely - 10 | No - 4 |
| <u>Beatles</u> | Rather lacking - 6 | Comes out in the words rather than the music, but then the same could be said, in some measure, for soul, so - 8 | I don't like the direction depth is taking in modern music, as characterised in the Beatles. They were the best, but still not terribly good - 7 |

Which gives a final count of Mendelssohn, 26: Schubert, 25: Bach, 23: Beatles, 21: Soul, 20: Jazz, 18: (Jazz is used as a sweeping generalisation because I have not heard much. There may be better or worse. I can only comment on what I have heard. The same goes for soul.

And yet, to listen to each of them, the scores that I would have expected the perfect system to produce would be Mendelssohn, 30: Schubert, 30: Bach, 29: Beatles, 20; Jazz, 16: Soul, 14:

For me, this last set of figures is the most valid. You would probably heartily disagree with them. How can Mendelssohn get full marks without being terribly deep or soulful? The answer is that this represents the overall effect of the music on me. In my opinion, he has enough depth, soul, and beauty to provide a perfect combination. Who is not moved by the beauty and originality in the Scherzo from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' Incidental Music? Yet this possesses little depth.

So there is no perfect system for telling how inherently 'good' music is, except its effect on you, and so, since the same music has a different effect on ~~you~~ different people, there is no universal perfect system.

Reply to this letter at your peril, for if you do I shall counterreply and an argument about the relative merits of Schubert and the Beatles could become a permanent feature of Greatest Hits.

((I don't scare that easy! I think that you misinterpreted what I was trying to say, and your classification system tends to prove it.. Of course one cannot enumerate on how 'good' music is. One has to assume, as you do, by definition, that the more 'soul', 'depth' or 'beauty', the better, whereas it is quite possible, nay, probably, that an excess of all three becomes counterproductive. The right 'balance' is what matters, and this is totally subjective. Thus, to use your numbering system for ease of discussion rather than agreement with its principle, perfect music for you might be 10/7/9, whereas mine may be 6/8/10. I have a hunch that 10/10/10 would be unbearable, there would be so much to take in that the mind wouldn't appreciate it!))

((Quite a coincidence. Schubert's 5th (C Minor? I can't remember offhand.) was on Radio 3 earlier this evening, during page 5 or 6, and while I was typing the Beatles classifications, what should come on but the Beatles (Nicky Horne's brilliant 'Yer Mother Wouldn't Like It'). He's playing The Who at the moment, and how would you classify them? 10 out of 10 for soul ('See Me, Feel Me, Touch Me, Heal Me,') 10 out of 10 for depth (Have you heard The Rock on their Quadrophenia album? Unbelievable!) and absolutely zero out of ten for beauty - it has no place in their music and they go out of their way, I think, to suppress it. Hmm, interesting.))

Adrien Baird: ((you though Nicky's was long? Er, no, I'll rephrase that.....))

I was interested to read Barry McManus's article in GH. The area covered was so large and his exegesis so stimulating that I thought that I would write a rejoinder.

It seems that most of the letters written about prejudice aim to show somehow that it is unjustified in this or that case. I would be wise, therefore, to lay down the ground for when prejudice would be justified, if ever. The starting point would be to note that if 'prejudice' is to be meaningful then we must dismiss determinism. By this I mean to say that if it were the case that all our actions, beliefs, etc, were predetermined by a host of causes (social and physical) necessarily, then prejudice would be a trivial assertion of a matter of fact.

The meaning of 'impartial' decision would be replaced by some public norm criterion of the form, '....X is impartial in his opinion about Y if and only if X's opinion about Y is significantly similar to the populations' opinion about Y.' Consequently 'prejudice' would only mean that someone differed from most people over an opinion about someone or something.

To escape determinism and to prevent the meaning of 'prejudice' telescoping into triviality, it would seem that a notion of responsibility has to be brought in. Prejudice can now be seen in two ways. Firstly, 'prejudice' might mean that an irresponsible decision has been made; secondly the meaning might be referring to the fact that we have made a decision on irrational grounds when we are quite able to have made another, more rational, decision. I believe that the first meaning is just an argument in semantics and therefore, if this is true, any justification of prejudice must come from the second.

Consider a 'moral fanatic'. By this I refer to someone who holds a moral opinion about someone or something whatever the consequences and irrespective of any future changes in circumstances. For example, you would be a moral fanatic if you thought that all Hinckley lorry drivers should be maimed and you would be prepared to be maimed if it turned out to be the case that you were a Hinckley Lorry Driver.. Now it seems that if prejudice were to turn out to be a moral fanaticism in some instances then that would be moral justification for the prejudice so long as the morally fanatic belief cannot be shown to be inconsistent with some supreme principle.

Such a supreme principle ~~namely~~ could be a utility principle (although I doubt whether Barry McManus would agree to this - and he would be right). Utilitarianism is not only discredited but extremely difficult to formulate in any rigid way. However, if a Kantian type of principle is taken (of the form that people should be treated as ends in themselves) then moral fanaticism is indeed inconsistent on most occasions. As a consequence prejudice on the whole is unjustified because unless prejudice is moral fanaticism then it becomes no more and no less than wholly irrational, non-empirical metaphysics on a par with beliefs in a logical proof for the existence of God (i.e. unsubstantiated dogmatic rubbish.)

A short reply directed at Glyn Palmer: ((This is more of Ade.))

Arriving home one night I sat down in my favourite chair (repaired for the fifth time this year) and proceeded to glance at GH. I was very annoyed to find that Glyn Palmer should still remain adamant in his philosophical stance. He believes that I have had access to the notebooks of Rilke and therefore to hitherto unpublished articles containing arguments directed against Glyn and other notable logical positivists. Rankow, of whom Glyn refers, was a very mediocre philosopher who spent most of his time in the local brothel at Köln. However, he believed that he had found a logical argument against the use of transcendental deductions (especially those directed against the metaphysical ontology of the eighteenth century). This, so called 'logical', proof is found in Rankow's book 'Twenty-two Positions Of Epistemological Refutation: A Groundwork Of A Critique Into Ontology', (1774). Here he develops what is known as 'Isoventionism'. Rilke read this book in his youth and was profoundly affected by its drivel, and was reported to have said at one Gaudy dinner at Christ Church that his notebooks once and for all prove that Isoventionism was '.... a load of logical positivist crap.'

I trust that this will make the position clearer - and is it doesn't then don't despair because the arguments which Glyn wants to use are also as opaque as a Pontefract Cake.

((Why me, why me?? My dear Waird, the first part of your article spent a whole page stating what would have taken me one line - a habit enjoyed by no small numbers of budding philosophers. Adrien, universal truths (if there are any, and I don't want to get into an argument about that!) can be expressed succinctly and beautifully in a few lines by only the greatest philosophers - the poor ones take up a number of words in reciprocally direct proportion to their talent as philosophers. I hope that I have made myself clear.))

((The second part, however, was amusing, informative, and a rightful condemnation of that cur Palmer, who shelters behind a myriad of anonymities in his slanders of the honourable likes, Adrien, of you and me (and that is correct grammar, I think.) If more people like yourself, my dear Baird, had the courage to stand up to the likes of Palmer then I remain in little doubt that the world would be a better place to live in. Admit it, Palmer, stand out from behind these Latin masks and show your true self! Were I not an officer and a gentleman we would have fought on Hampstead Heath many dawns ago. I further restrained myself with the fear that you would probably break one of Ravi Tikoo's windows with your pistol shot and brought about the automatic H-Bomb self protection system that he had installed last year, guaranteed to leave the house safe and destroy London.))

((I've gone daft, haven't I? Ahem, the next page will be serious, perhaps....))