



ISSUED BY



UP ARON
THE BEN

"If they place us outside the law, we shall act outside the law"
(Peter Tatchell, 21 February 1994)

Further comment on this topic is not forthcoming from me, because it makes me angry, and you wouldn't like me when I'm really angry. REALLY angry, I mean. Here I am, I'm three weeks late and I haven't even the time to explain why, though as a teaser (I'm a born teaser) I shall just mention that almost being shock-horror-probe-exposed by the Daily Mail was part of it.

Be that as it may (as they used to say on Round the Horne), this is

UP AROUND THE BEND

(Issue 27. Coldcom Press 48. Pretend Family Fanzine.)
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(phone 0785 213259, work fax 0785 228317)
(answerphone finally defunct, so beware!)

Front cover by Fiona Campbell, what talent. Never mind the name, dig that issue number: Waiting Lists [* = preference list/setup received]

DIPLOMACY: Edward Ainsworth, Kim Head, Paul Cockayne*. 4 wanted.

GRANDMASTER DIP.: 7 wanted. See page 6.

BREAKING AWAY (GM me this time): Paul Cockayne, Rob Cullender. 4 wanted.

GRAND SLAM: Martin Draper, John McCoubrey?, Mark Stretch, Rob Moore, Kim Head, John Miller, Richard Walkerdine, Bob Holliday*, Dave Lomas, Alex Richardson, Ian Harris*, Denis Jones*, Geoff Brown*, Steve Guest, Paul Cockayne, Rod Tregale. 1-2 more will make a start; come along, guys and gals, I want this game to run. Rules available.

CHILD SOMETHING: Girl Duncan, Kevin Head, Kayley Harris, Samantha Harris.

SEISMIC DIP: Rules still forthcoming. Denies Jokes*, 6 wanted.

BUS BOSS: Paul Cockayne. 3-5 wanted.

SOPWITH: Alex Richardson, Rob Cullender?. 5? wanted.

ACE SOPWITH: Rob Cullender? 6? wanted. See page 6.

MARSHALSEA GAOL: the debtors' prison

Goodbye to: Andy! Kate!, Kern Dingsdale

The following are sailing close to the wind: THE BREAKWELLS, Pete Sullivan, Mark Wightman (really), Alan Coulthard, Gary Lyon, Rob Cullender.

Outside Deadline: Saturday April 2nd 1994 (Bank Hols, I know)

Inside Deadline: TUESDAY APRIL 5th 1994 (Buttwaemayybee away that week, so late orders may be worth sending anyway)

Outside GMS:

Geoff Brown, 65 Scotland Hall Rd, Newton Heath, Manchester M10 6RE

David Oya, 24 Kingsway, Banbury, Oxon OX16 9NY

Your remaining credit is I _____

EGOLAND editorial

Look, guys, this zine is far too late, if you wait around for me to do an editorial, things will be even worse. Come back this time next issue and I can get you a great little second-hand editorial, race runner, only one owner, little old lady who only used to write editorials once a year or so, to you, squire, fifty pee, and I'm doing myself no favours. Is that a deal?

Hope to see you at the house on

SELF EXPLANATORY by Haz Bond

What's the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?

Usually, I wish I could go back to sleep. Sleeping (and dreaming) is one thing I am incontrovertibly good at. I'm not bad at dreaming while I'm awake either, but it doesn't have the same quality of immediacy to it.

What was the first fanzine you received?

Depends on the definition. I actually did NOWHERE FAST 1 before I'd seen any examples of a fanzine, and quite understandably it was dire (photocopied single-sided and double-spaced, for starters). First other fanzine I saw was Leeds Univ SF soc's BLACK HOLE. First gameszine Dave Rowley's MICA, but that had a tiny circulation and rarely mentioned the hobby, certainly not presenting it as something I would be interested in at any rate. The one that really got me started in this crazy postal gaming life was, no prizes, Iain Bowen's Y DDRAIG SOCH. We don't often see eye to eye these days but I must admit that you owe the existence of this rag to Iani.

Which book do you wish you had written?

Most books I've enjoyed, as a matter of fact. And because I'm an idealist, the Bible. I can tell you, if I'd written that one, there'd be none of these bloody holy wars and religious intolerance and so on.

What zine do you most wish you had produced?

Again, most of them which I've enjoyed have made me think "I wish I'd done that" -- not necessarily all of them, just the odd stylistic trick or bit of layout or what have you. I have never produced a fanzine I've liked afterwards.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

"Never fuck anyone crazier than yourself". Now since I'm fairly wild myself I don't often meet anyone who is disbarred under this rule, but I've managed it at least twice, and regretted it twice. One of these, incidentally, was inconvenient enough to be much saner than I to begin with and change places with me as time passed.

What is your most treasured material possession?

Good question. In terms of sheer convenience, my car, which I don't know how I ever managed without. In terms of financial value, my stamp collection, which I really must try and get out of my parents' house one day. In absolute terms -- the thing I'd take to a desert island -- my zine collection. That really is irreplaceable in every meaningful sense. Oh, sure, if it all got burnt to ashes I might be able to get hold of another copy of MAD POLICY 88, but it wouldn't have Gary Piper's name scribbled on the back cover or the old stamp at an identically rakish angle.

Who was the last person you slept with?

Strickly speaking, Lee Bond-Hibbert, who shares my bed every night and wakes me up far less than everyone said he would. The answer you were expecting, though, is Joy Hibbert. Surprise.

What do you think of the weather?

Don't really care, as long as the snow doesn't cut us off or the rain flood us.

When did you last cry and why?

Last time I had a row with Joy. I cry a lot. Good healthy thing to do in the right circumstances.

What characteristics do you think you've inherited from your parents?

My face, my propensity to overweightness, my short temper.

What's the biggest myth about fame?

The existence of the HobbyMasters. (Or am I just laying a smokescreen? You'll never know).

What are you like when you're drunk?

In younger days, I used to get very maudlin and weepy (see above). Nowadays I'm a generally happier person, and I just tend to become camp and giggly. And loud. And reckless. It's probably a good job I don't get drunk much nowadays.

Who would you have play you in a film?

Myself, for two reasons. One, I've always wanted to be in acting -- my strong accent puts the tin hat on that, though. Two, I don't know anyone who could get half way to portraying me accurately, and I don't want the truth bending when they make the film of my life; it must be warts and all.

Pick five words to describe yourself.

Dreamer, intellectual, volatile, idealist, worthwhile.

Is there one piece of criticism that sticks in your mind?

Not really, since you ask. This probably means I'm very pig-headed. I remember Marrkie Nelson devoting an issue of TMNX to me and my works, but it seemed to have no relation at all to me or my works as they exist in the real world.

What's your most unpleasant characteristic?

Weak will, I'm afraid. All too often I don't stand up for what I know to be right. It surprises me that a lot of people who know me well think I'm outspoken.

What is your greatest fear?

That before I die, or even grow, I shall start to fear death. I don't at the moment; indeed I have a quite unhealthy fascination with it and its courting. It's easier to do this when you're young, I'm told.

What ambitions do you still have to fulfil?

Getting a decent professional job, getting the qualifications so I can get one, writing something for professional publication, doing a zine that completely satisfies me or that I don't think I could have done better in any way.

Are you afraid of failure?

Sometimes. I was always dead scared of chatting people up, for example, in case it all went wrong and I got a knee in the groin or lost a friendship. I used to be very, very

scared of making any mistake at all because on some level I thought I would get shouted at. I'm glad I don't worry so much about that any more. Nowadays, laziness rather than fear is my main inhibiting factor.

What do you never leave home without?

I am dreadfully scatty and have on occasion managed to leave home without everything necessary for continued existence outside it, with the possible exception of clothes. And I never go anywhere without taking something -- book, zine, sauce bottle -- to read in case of spare time unfilled.

Who is your best male and best female friend?

Sorry to be so predictable, but the female one is Joy Hibbert. Male, I guess, would be Steve Johnson, who nobody reading this will know, but he is a fucking good guy nonetheless.

Who would you most like to meet?

Dunno, really. I've never thrilled much at the thought of meeting famous people. Mostly I'd prefer to meet people I used to like and have lost touch with once more instead.

What are the last three books you read?

COMING OUT OF THE BLUE by Marc E Burke -- big fat book about homosexuality in the British police, most revealing, most enlightening. 1066 AND ALL THAT by Sellar and Yeatman -- a reread, just as good as it ever was. THE ANATOMY OF BIBLIOMANIA by Holbrook Jackson, bloody heavy going and still unfinished, but some real nuggets to quote at the sort of litcrit parties I don't get invited to.

What are the last three records you played?

NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS. HERE'S THE SEX PISTOLS, by guess who. CROSSING THE RED SEA WITH THE ADVERTS, by guess who. WORKER'S PLAYTIME by Billy Bragg. I've been in an emotional crisis mood these last few days and the music reflects it, my god, doesn't it just reflect it.

What music would you have played at your funeral?

A nice mixture of classical stuff I like and pop/rock/whatever stuff I like, so people know it was me and not just any old corpse being buried, and please, please, nothing out of Hymns Ancient and Modern.

When you look in the mirror what do you see?

Oh, lordy, this takes me back. When I was sixteen or so I wrote a perfectly dreadful poem which went, in part, "I have still to discover my true face; every time I look in the mirror a stranger looks out". This is still the case, though I don't write horrible poetry about it these days.

[[This piece is a double ripoff; a gift from Greg Pickersgill's excellent SF zine RASTUS JOHNSON'S CAKEWALK 3, who in turn admits to having nicked it from Q magazine ("Q Magazine? What on earth is a Q Magazine?")]]

Readers are invited, nay, encouraged to complete this questionnaire themselves, and hold themselves up to public scrutiny, as it were. Go on, be bold; be bloody, bold and resolute.]]

DIPLOMACY PLAYER RATINGS

As kindly supplied by Richard Sharp. The table below requires the following explanatory text: Position (out of 4338), Name, Dates of career, Games played, numbers won, drawn, lost but survived, eliminated, dropped out, game abandoned, still in progress or 'lost'; and then the rating, where 100 is the score of a total novice and the top players achieve 350 or so.

Richard asks me to tell you rabble that anyone disputing their record should write to him at Norton House, Whielden Street, Amersham, Bucks HP7 0HU if they want to set things straight. I advise such people to give him 75p for a copy of Dolchstoß if they want him to act on their info.

These statistics are, of course, quite useless, but according to Oscar Wilde that makes them into Art (false logic there, Bond), so you should all admire them from a suitable distance. Here we go:

Position	Name	Career	P	W	D	S	X	d	a	ip	Rating
2573	Duncan II Adams	90-93	7	0	0	0	1	1	0	5	40.84
3728	Stephen Agar	76-93	25	1	3	4	4	9	0	4	11.72
952	Edward Ainsworth	85-93	14	0	2	1	7	1	0	3	130.76
980	Mike Allaway	76-92	32	1	4	11	14	2	0	0	128.98
2627	Andy Bate	85-88	7	0	1	2	1	2	0	0	36.17
219	Andy Bell	82-89	7	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	201.08
467	Pete Birks	73-92	31	4	7	5	10	5	0	0	168.12
2486	John Breakwell	85-92	9	0	1	2	2	3	0	1	27.40
1398	Fiona Campbell	92-94	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	108.42
1225	Peter Charles	87-91	23	0	4	6	9	1	0	3	115.66
63	John Colledge	79-93	37	4	17	4	6	0	0	6	255.38
931	Danny Collman	85-93	7	0	0	4	2	0	0	1	132.63
197	Kath Collman	85-88	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	206.55
1068	Malcolm Cornelius	79-93	6	0	1	3	0	0	0	2	122.93
1045	Damien Cosgrove	90	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	124.38
370	Alan Coulthard	85-90	5	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	177.59
601	Simon Cutforth	90-93	7	0	2	0	1	0	0	4	156.24
104	Stuart Dagger	74-79	6	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	232.49
3280	Kern Dingsdale Stewart	76-93	9	0	0	1	2	4	0	2	15.37
3264	Steve Doubleday	73-93	25	2	4	4	4	8	1	2	15.55
94	Martin Draper	84-94	8	2	1	2	1	0	0	2	237.53
269	Neil Duncan	90-93	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	192.15
131	Peter Dunnett	90-93	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	223.93
2159	Paul Dunning	86	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	71.06
143	Allan Gordon	87-93	19	3	4	1	6	0	0	5	221.05
809	Steve Guest	86-87	3	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	140.07
138	Vick Hall	83-93	17	3	3	2	0	1	0	8	222.24
442	Ian Harris	85-92	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	170.93
225	Toby Harris	92-93	22	2	5	2	5	1	0	7	199.62
12	Mick Haytack	83-92	6	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	311.07
1905	Kim Head	93	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	90.44
820	Keir Hodgson	85-94	9	0	1	1	2	0	0	5	139.15
1003	Bob Holliday	90-94	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	9	127.95
218	Stephen Jilks	84-87	5	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	201.11
2599	Denis Jones	84-92	10	0	1	0	3	2	0	4	38.27
1139	Dave Lomas	90	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	119.59
441	Tim Lomas	87-88	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	170.94
239	Andy Key	87-89	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	198.11
69	Madeleine Key	86-89	8	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	251.47
367	Gary Lyon	85-89	9	1	5	0	3	0	0	0	177.71

4076	John McCoubrey	91	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	10.33
58	John Marsden	77-92	26	1	10	8	4	0	0	3	259.04
328	John Miller	76-92	21	1	5	7	5	0	0	3	183.60
768	Rob Moore	87-93	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	143.06
1271	Edmund Morgan	88-92	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	114.07
1043	John Morgan	89-91	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	124.40
50	Kris Morris	85-89	9	0	4	4	1	0	0	0	262.19
2897	Tim Neale	85-94	4	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	24.93
761	Paul Norris	89-90	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	143.77
312	Bill O'Neill	85-91	7	1	1	2	1	0	0	2	185.40
834	David Oya	88	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	137.87
99	Nicholas Parish	89-93	12	1	7	0	1	0	0	3	234.91
3883	Michael Quist	72 (!)	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	11.52
847	Alex Richardson	86-87	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	137.45
2053	Peter Ritchie	91	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	80.55
483	Mark Stretch	90-94	10	0	1	1	1	0	0	7	166.74
689	Peter Sullivan	84-86	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	149.87
449	Dave Tant	74-80	17	3	3	3	8	0	0	0	170.39
9	Guy Thomas	82-93	13	5	6	0	0	0	0	2	314.63
1763	David Tittle	89-91	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	96.99
1027	John II Todd	89-94	10	0	1	1	3	1	0	4	125.84
339	Chris Tringham	77-92	18	2	6	2	6	1	0	1	181.79
475	Jeremy Tullett	77-92	18	2	2	5	7	0	0	2	167.21
293	Mark Underhay	91-93	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	188.59
20	Richard Walkerdine	72-92	26	3	13	7	2	0	0	1	283.23
1175	Kevin Warne	82	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	118.32
3049	William Whyte	84-85	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	20.40
940	Mark Wightman	89-93	6	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	132.17
186	John Wilman	79-93	44	3	12	10	14	1	1	3	209.13

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Sopwith ratings from Dave Tant are also out, which relay details of Nicholas Parish's elevation to Ace status. Well done, that TurboNick. These stats are published thrice yearly and are available, I believe, for a couple of stamps from Dave at 32 Nursery Avenue, Bexleyheath, Kent DA7 4JX.

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Given all these stats it seems silly not to do summat with them. Ever full of unoriginal ideas, I hereby announce invitational games of Sopwith and Diplomacy for the highest rated readers according to the current lists.

In order of status, Sopwith aces reading this are currently: ROB CULLENDER, DAVE LOMAS, ALLAN GORDON, JOHN MILLER, DAVE TANT, NICHOLAS PARISH, MARK WIGHTMAN, ROB MOORE and KEVIN MCGOWAN. (Andy Bate would also qualify if I weren't about to give up my trade for Froggy as a dead loss). If six out of that lot volunteer we can have a tip-top game.

As for Diplomacy, my calculations are that the top seven are: GUY THOMAS, MICK HAYTACK, RICHARD WALKERDINE, KRIS MORRIS, JOHN MARSDEN, JOHN COLLEDGE and MADELAINE KEY. Given that the unlikeliness of all seven wanting to play is terrific, the next seven will also be invited to show interest, being MARTIN DRAPER, NICHOLAS PARISH (again), STUART DAGGER (unlikely), PETER DUNNETT, VICK HALL, ALLAN GORDON (again), and JOHN WILMAN. Quite frankly I reckon any seven from either of those list would make a damn fine tussle, so I have high hopes that we can scrape the requisite number of stars up. On the subject of all-star games, readers of Chris Tringham's Negalomania are about to have the chance of a good chortle as Haz (Austria) gets creamed by Sharp, Bowen, Harris T., Agar, Duncan and Morris K. Go on, watch, it'll be a scream.

GRAND HOBBY HISTORY QUIZ

HURRY HURRY HURRY! Yes, NOW is your chance to prove what a sad, pathetic, obsessed, duvet stuffing individual you are by demonstrating your knowledge of utterly useless trivia concerning the British postal games hobby. The winner will be officially named Brain of the Hobby and be mercilessly held up to ridicule by all and sundry. The idiot who actually compiled the thing has already been medically declared Pastimishly Challenged and has been sent to the Mark Nelson Rehabilitation Clinic for sad cases.

In a vain hope to tempt entrants out of the woodwork, five free issues of your favourite zine (all right then, five issues of U-Bend) will be awarded to the winner. Marks will be awarded not only for accuracy, but for making the examiner laugh. Note also that the last question in each section is even more of an absolute bastard than the rest.

A. Addresses Which of the following addresses is the most obscure?

- 1) 71 Clara Mount Road, Heanor, Derbyshire [1]
- 2) 15 Lineside Walk, Rhu, Dumbartonshire [1]
- 3) 1 Wellesley Nautical School, Blyth, Northumberland [1]
- 4) 100 High Street, Swanscombe, Kent [1]
- 5) 302 Lordswood Road, Harborne, Birmingham [1]
- 6) Bosworth House, Central Wall Road, Canvey Island, Essex [1]
- 7) 71b Gladsmuir Road, Archway, London N5 [1]
- 8) 115 Acre Lane, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire [1]
- 9) Luney Barton Farm, Sticker, St Austell, Cornwall [1]
- 10) "Elboreth", 123 Hollis Road, Stoke, Coventry [4]

B. Abbreviations Expand the following abbreviations. (1 each)

- | | | | | |
|--------|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| 1) BDC | 2) Zeeby | 3) Pzk | 4) Ode | 5) TROG |
| 6) FPO | 7) TRey | 8) SNorl | 9) DDTS | 10) NOSE |

C. Name themes Which of the following themes is the most obscure? (2 each)

- 1) French ordinals
- 2) German ordinals
- 3) Celtic deities
- 4) Characters from Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy
- 5) The editor's favourite foods
- 6) Wild West heroes
- 7) Tyneside pubs
- 8) Cambridge colleges
- 9) Towns on the Isle of Wight
- 10) Districts of Birmingham

D. Editors Name the editor of each of the following titles. (1 each)

- 1) Enigma
- 2) Overstop
- 3) Here We Go Again
- 4) The Norns
- 5) The Church Mouse
- 6) Queen's Lane Advertiser
- 7) Red Revolution
- 8) Jigsaw
- 9) Second Hand News
- 10) Screwy Louie's First Finesse

E. Subzines Give the title of each of the following subzines. (1 each)

- 1) The Art of Deviance
- 2) Heimsstringla
- 3) Sequences
- 4) Realgaming
- 5) Reuters Reports
- 6) Serendipity
- 7) Serendipity [sic]
- 8) The Amnesia Express
- 9) The Brilliance of Massed Violins
- 10) I Hate Geraniums

F. Where? At what location did the following take place? (1 each)

- 1) Koancon 1
- 2) Toucon
- 3) Midcon 1
- 4) Toastcon 1
- 5) DesConTent
- 6) Stakiscon 1
- 7) Linercon
- 8) Games Day 1981
- 9) Dangling Geordiecon
- 10) I'm Joanna Lumley Week

G. Imprints WWboppoddoeedzimeesundeertheefoblowwnggaeggseeB?[[leaabB]]

- 1) Astral Press
- 2) Primal Press
- 3) Snugglebug Press
- 4) Revolutionary Penguin Press
- 5) Putkin Press

H. Datelines WWbouseedthheefoblowwngGMPleesdaeebiomeB?[[leaabB]]

- 1) League of Nations, Amersham (LONA)
- 2) The Heretic
- 3) Rabbi
- 4) Z
- 5) Dirk
- 6) Agrajag
- 7) Eyrie
- 8) Ui
- 9) Strider
- 10) Euler

I. Quotes A@tkrbttéaaendeæppááááñthheefoblowwnggoqubees.

- 1) "This is a game of chance." [2]
- 2) "Smocnoc turns round in a weekend -- play in Smocnoc!" [2]
- 3) "UDI for the Isle of Wight." [2]
- 4) "This has been a fuck issue of [zine name]". [2]
- 5) "What are you doing in that ditch?"
"Goin' shleep."
"Well, get up -- people don't sleep in ditches in Oxfordshire." [3]
- 6) "Blow the air-horn again, would you, Kinzett?" [2]
- 7) "Steve McQueen Used To Have Coffee Enemas" [2]
- 8) "Can I get 100 for anti-honours?"
"Do you want your privy member inserted in a plug socket?" [3]
- 9) "SEA (Not safe as ships run you down)" [2]

J. Pot Luck WWaatittsaxxx-f@ckes.

- 1) No less than three zines folded into The Road Goes Ever On. Name the three, the zine that TRGED folded into, and the zine that that zine folded into. [5, and you'll deserve them]
- 2) What was remarkable about Filibuster game 6? [1]
- 3) ... and about Fall of Eagles game 6? [1]
- 4) ... and about issue 23 of ATU XVIII? [1]
- 5) ... and about the initial issues of Down Alien Skies? [1]
- 6) ... and about the initial issues of Court Circular? [1]
- 7) Name the first two British zines to fold. [2]
- 8) ... and the first British zine poll winner. [1]
- 9) The 1982 zine poll saw a fake set of results circulated a few days in advance of the real ones. Who produced the fake, and according to it, which zine won? [2]
- 10) Why are Macha and It not to be considered as proper zines? [1]
- 11) Who accused whom of "hippocracy"? [2]
- 12) What was peculiar about the numbering of Will It Lead To Trouble?! ? [1]
- 13) ... and of DJ? [1]
- 14) Why was Phil Stutt's zine Japhidrew forced to change its name? [1]

K. This is utterly ludicrous

- 1) Name as many "Warwick zines" as you can. [up to 9, plus 1 bonus for whoever gets the most]

And if I can count, that comes to 150 marks maximum, which I am sure nobody will get. (Tempting fate there, Bond).

Answers will be in next issue. My thanks in advance to that ever-helpful, ever-ready, ever-faithful fellow Kay Dekker for helping me out with a few questions whose answers even I wasn't quite sure of.

And now, we have an article from a fellow editor rathertoo long for his own worthy mag:

I DON'T WANNA GO BACK ON THE BOX

by Alan Farr

I didn't see whoever sold Channel 4 the idea of live chess appearing on the New Year Honours List, but his name deserves to live forever. At one fell swoop he's rendered obsolete all those saying about selling refrigerators to Eskimos. This must have been the only time in the history of televised sport where the honours went not only to the channel who didn't have live coverage, but didn't have any pictures whatsoever of the event itself or the contestants.

Let's face it, the idea of live chess gave a lot of cheap laughs to all the smart types who write the TV schedule snippets for newspaper columns - I even noticed the Sunday Times (I've been sent some strange papers of late) column making ever-so-funny references to watching snowflakes melt. In the Channel 4 afternoon programmes only a single move might be played, or perhaps none at all, so the usual visual image was of a single guy crouched and looking worried over a chess board. You got fifteen minutes of this, then a commercial break, then another fifteen minutes, etc, until the end of the programme. I can't imagine either Channel 4 or Times Newspapers will be at the front of the queue when the next big chess event appears (and I notice that the traditional classic event at Hastings is yet again in dreadful financial trouble - a few thousand quid spread in their direction would do a fair amount of good).

Of itself, the slow pace didn't matter too much, particularly to the BBC2 team, who never had the chance to show anything approaching a live move and hence planned their programmes differently. Both channels had a range of experts on hand and by the end of the match we must have seen at least a dozen of them who could talk fluently - here, as in most aspects, I thought BBC2 had the edge. I saw two reasons for this - the C4 team were clearly working to play up chess as a sexy activity (the younger better-looking experts, the fantasy title sequence, and the quality of the technical comments like 'rip his head off'). On the other hand the BBC2 team offered a less glamorous presentation - and wouldn't you if Bill Hartston was your anchorman and Dominic Lawson standing in the rain in front of the Savoy Hotel was the outside personality?

The female team members fitted the profile in the same way. In all her myriad TV performances Carol Vorderman can never have been seen to such disadvantage. She's an attractive and clever woman with lots of experience, but somebody should have realised that not having the faintest idea what chess is about was likely to be a small handicap. In one of the early programmes she was amazed to discover that the different pieces move in different ways! I can understand her amazement, because I remember making just that observation myself, but I was 11 at the time, and not being paid to host a series of national television programmes about the world championship. On BBC2 Francine Stock and Peter Snow had no pretensions to being expert players, but they were competent enough not to disgrace themselves and took a low profile and kept out of trouble.

If C4's problems included the fact that the whole afternoon session might not feature a single move, the evening session - live or not - had an even bigger one. As the games reached their climax both players were frequently in such time trouble that moves were being made almost faster than the eye could see, and certainly faster than either screen or brain could follow. Paradoxically, the game that's so slow that grass grows faster is actually so lightning fast as to be totally beyond comprehension.

And the incomprehensibility isn't just restricted to the likes of you and me. There were several occasions during games (and here I'm talking about the leisurely openings and middlegames, not the frantic endgames) when every single expert was agreed that one player or the other (usually it seemed to be Nigel Short) had only to play a particular move and he'd have an easy win. He didn't make the move, and the experts were distraught that he'd thrown away certain victory. But on more than one occasion in

their post-game discussion Kasparov and Short made clear that both had seen the line of play, and both had realised that it was in fact hopelessly flawed. More than anything else it was this that brought home to me the levels at which both players were operating; under the unimaginable strain of playing the match for the world championship they could see things that not one of a bevy of other top players, complete with every technological aid, even suspected. Wow - what manner of people are these?

If other players in the top twenty or so in the whole world can't see what's happening, how can any programme hope to communicate across the entire range of viewers? Plainly neither channel had the answer, so in the same programme we might have explained how a knight moves, through why isolated pawns are weak, right through to how a particular minor inaccuracy at move 15 led to inevitable defeat at move 50. But other sports can be televised so that people of any experience or none can appreciate and enjoy them - you don't have to be a runner to understand what Linford Christie's doing, and you don't have to be a golfer to get some appreciation of what goes on in golf.

The BBC, with considerable experience of televising chess, must have known all these problems, which I guess was one reason why it came out better - and certainly got more for its money - than Channel 4. C4 chose to throw in its lot with people who were heavily involved in promoting and hyping (and presumably lining their own pockets) the whole contest - a startling level of naivety from a channel that's made a success of televising all sorts of unlikely games.

But clearly chess isn't just another game. It's the moves themselves, rather than the physical act of moving pieces, that make the game, and once made, the game can then be re-created by anyone. Once played, an entire game immediately becomes totally accessible to everyone (I presume the moves are technically copyrighted, but whether that's either feasible or practicable may be another matter entirely). On the other hand, reading a scoresheet (or even the scorer's notebook) in cricket gives me no understanding of the player's style or abilities, and even in my fantasies I can't repeat David Platt's last-minute goal against Belgium in 1992. So whereas in many sports the home viewer gets a far better view of the action than the spectator at the event chess is going to offer precious little for the £30 or so admission fee. Even with all the manufactured hype chess simply isn't much of a spectator sport. The organisers introduced all the hoopla you can imagine short of actually dressing up the players in coloured costumes and introducing troops of cheerleaders, and still people failed to turn up - and who can blame them? (By the time you've counted travel and food, anyone planning on attending every session would have been looking at coughing up £1000 or more, and that's not counting lost earnings from a whole working month or so.)

Any other points? Well, I guess organisers and TV people alike were horrified at how one-sided the contest was, so that by halfway the commentators were reduced simply to hoping that Short would win a single game. Eventually he did, but even the deeds of great gallant British losers of history paled into insignificance at the feeble nature of the target - could Short win one game out of 24!

I'd like to move on a bit to a related point, and one that's a bit more relevant to you and me and everyone else in a games hobby. Of all the games in all the world chess is the only one that can call upon total respectability going back for generations. When I was child in the 40s and 50s schools and libraries might not offer any indoor games opportunities whatsoever apart from a chess club and a chess book or two. And yet our society can produce an intelligent and educated person like Carol Vorderman who's totally ignorant of chess (and she's the best they could find to front a chess series!) How many times in films and on do you see chessboards set up incorrectly, and no-one at all connected with the production is able to point this out? So what hope do you and I (and for that matter Gibsons or Spears or Waddingtons) have of getting people to appreciate Diplomacy, 1829, or even Railway Rivals?

Part of the problem is the one we've all lamented for years - that the profile of indoor games in this country is so low compared to others. When I was in Germany a couple of years ago I was browsing in a station bookstall and found something like eight different chess magazines on display. And those were just the chess magazines - my son recently gave me a copy of a general games magazine - 70+ pages of news and reviews, selling for about £2.50. There's yet another brave soul attempting to set up a British games magazine for the general public, and I wish him luck - I reckon he's going to need it.

Mind you, however high the profile of chess in other countries, I have to say that I do think the very game is its own worst enemy - there are so many things wrong with it that anyone who invented it today would be hard pushed even to find a zine to give it houseroom. A game for two people with no sensible versions for three or four. Six or seven different types of pieces, all with different moves. Several examples of crude fixes to make the game a bit faster or solve bugs (castling, pawns taking differently from the way they move, two-square initial pawn moves - but not the taking move, en passant, pawn promotion). A game flawed enough that it can end in two moves or is more likely to go on for dozens, and which has every chance of ending so aimlessly that you need another two rules in case you need to put a dying game out of its misery. A hugely steep learning curve, and no real chance for two players of rather different abilities to give each other a fair game. An opening procedure so formalised that anyone who bothers to learn a few standard openings gets a huge advantage over someone who wants to play on skill alone (I've long advocated a game where, for example, the backrow pieces are arranged anew each game).

Like most of us, I'm better at raising problems than offering solutions. Does the huge popularity of trivia games and pub quizzes mean people would be more or less receptive to a decent boardgame or cardgame if they met one? Fantasy games of various forms have been hugely successful for nearly twenty years - but do young people move from these into more general games? If The Daily Telegraph, no less, (excuses needed here - I have The Telegraph on Mondays for its sports section) can offer a fantasy football game surely that's a good thing? And if wonderful computer games like Railroad Tycoon and Sim City are viable then not only does that prove there are people (i.e. programmers investing thousands of hours) out there even more nutty than zine editors, but there are a lot of players there as well. Whether you and I will ever get them playing Beat the Black Ball in U-Bend is another matter entirely.

~~~~~  
Last week, I'd've agreed with you there, Alan, but since then Kate n'ha Ysabet (que Dieu la sauve) has provided me with a fascinating piece from the Independent for Saturday 19 February, with news of the latest trend on the night club scene in London; if it can be believed, there are two clubs whose patrons like nothing more than an evening full of boardgames and good company, and the craze is spreading like wildfire.

"On a busy night, four Twister mats are joined together, and up to a dozen players will join in...." The hostesses hand out free lollipops, grapes and condoms, these last presumably for those who become a little too entangled in Twister.

Other games popular include KerFlunk!, Escape from Colditz, Battling Gladiators (sounds ominous), and Terry Venables' The Manager (cue for Alan Parr to bite the carpet here). Nothing more complex than chess or backgammon seems to have occurred to these high livers yet, but this is plainly a vast market waiting to be tapped. Do I see John Dodds popping in to deliver novice packages? Richard Walkerdine trying to sell World Dip Con memberships? Perhaps David Watts in the midst of the grapes and condoms with "Two more wanted for a game of Railway Rivals"?

The bind, as they say, moggles.

[[Something is stirring in the depths; something old, and eldritch, and very horrible, is about to emerge from its loathsome pit to once more trouble the world, and lay waste vast swathes of land in its path as it rampages through the country.

Meanwhile, dear old **Steve Howe** pops up again in Hadleigh with his poetry just the same as he ever was and nobody takes a blind bit of notice:]]

You'd better have a poem I suppose. Except that I have something of a confession to make: every so often I feel the urge to write Poetry (capital P) as opposed to my usual doggerel. The following was first penned some years ago and forgotten. Then a few months ago I suddenly thought of a nifty title for it. I read it to the writers circle recently and no-one saw the point. Perhaps it needs a better-read audience?

CONCERNING THE NEED FOR A MAN FROM PORLOCK by Steve Howe

Beneath the waves did Mrs T  
A continental link decree:  
The Franco-British gulf to span,  
The longest tunnel built by man  
Beneath the raging sea.  
So swathes of fertile Kentish ground  
With cranes and 'dozers will abound  
And diesel fumes will belch from mighty drills  
To rot the blossom from many a shapely tree  
Where once a village, ancient as the hills,  
Did nestle in a tranquil cloak of greenery.

A workman with a power-saw  
In a vision once I saw:  
An oaken forest waste he laid  
In one short morning as he played  
His lay of desolation.  
And he and all his fellows  
Played each the self-same song -  
Discordant notes from howling bellows  
Cacophonous and long.  
And they will make a desert there  
Of barren concrete, steel and tar  
And all who would not see them there  
Should loudly cry Beware! Beware!  
Lest choked be soil and fouled be air  
And maimed be hill by six lane scar;  
Lest field and woodland soon be dead,  
Cold asphalt blossom in their stead  
And Mammon feed in Paradise.

[[If we're going to have one pastiche in this issue we may as well have two, so here's one of mine. No reference is intended to any pop stars living or half-dead.]]

The 1950s saw me first,  
A lad with a guitar, sir,  
I'd play for coins to quench my thirst  
In every coffee bar, sir.  
The craze took off, assured my fame,  
Though critics called it piffle,  
The teenagers all knew my name  
And raved about my skiffle.

The connoisseurs may sneer at me  
But in my heart of hearts, sir,  
I know whate'er the trend may be  
I'll still be in the charts, sir!

When Liverpool took centre stage  
I was not unaware, sir;  
I artfully disguised my age  
And grew some Beatle hair, sir.  
My accent I developed so  
It made my parents worry;  
But then, my fans must never know  
That I was born in Surrey.

But then once more the fashion changed  
And psychedelia came in:  
With bangles and with beads arranged  
I kept my hand at fame in.  
To be a millionaire I hoped,  
And yet I lived in fear,  
For though I sang of drugs and dope  
My strongest vice was beer.

A teeny-bopper I was next  
And though my hair was greying,  
My movements looked so oversexed  
It made them keep on paying.  
Such soppy verses I wrote then,  
Enough to turn your belly;  
And that's how I fulfilled my yen  
For endless spots on telly.

To disco, reggae, punk and ska  
I all have turned my hand, sir;  
The lists of my successes are  
Enough to beat the band, sir.  
I wrote a Christmas song, what's more,  
It too a surefire winner,  
It rode the charts at number four  
As I ate Christmas dinner.

The connoisseurs may sneer at me  
But in my heart of hearts, sir,  
I know whate'er the trend may be  
I'll still be in the charts, sir!

--- Haz, Jan 1994

~~~~~  
Pond, you're a dork. Who forgot there was a space that needed filling on this page, then? Eh?

Quick, think, man. Okay, usual solution, fill up with news snippets.

Into the Night has officially folded and subs/games are officially going to YDdG. James Nelson blames business at Univ for the delay in a proper announcement. Hmm.

Stephen Agar has finally taken a tumble by being foxed by a new WP system that ate all his adjudications. Tee, hee, hee. Touch wood.

And that takes care of that little gap. Love and kisses, everyone.

stichomythia
the letter column

Paul Cockayne
Nottingham

Thanks for the 2 complimentary copies of U-Bend and glad to see that you decided the article was worth a reprint. One of these years inspiration will strike again, but don't hold your breath.

U-Bend itself is not as I remember it, and improved very much for the better in my view. I used to find it interesting, amusing, but in an artificial sort of way. Now I have the feeling that it's you being yourself and no longer worrying about making an impression or creating impact. But still interesting and amusing, and it's nice to see that Guy Thomas isn't the only person in the hobby who can write - I thought your mini review of Realpolitik was spot on. The mix of games is now much more to my taste, and so you get me back, you poor sod.

As for Electric Monk, when Andy and Madi got married, I remember writing that I gave the Monk no more than a year. I sort of had this theory that producing Monk was some sort of subconscious courtship ritual, without which Mr Key and Ms Smith would have been painting their bottoms red and dancing naked through W H Smith's canteen, or whatever natives of Swindon usually do. But what's it all about - I don't think they really lived for the games side of Monk, they'd won the Zine Poll, they'd outlived ASFO, which always seemed to be some sort of objective, was there anything more to live for. And having said that, it'll probably pop through the letter box tomorrow and go on until the end of the century.

[[Later:]] How's about that for a prediction: the Monk arrived this morning!

[[And at the moment, despite its reduced frequency, it's walloping me in the quickness stakes. Oh dear, I am not doing very well, me oh my, no.]]

Steve Howe Look, I don't mind you reprinting one of my poems (I use the term
Hadleigh, Essex strictly as a convenient shorthand) but did you have to pick such a
 rotten one? Digging it up again after all this time and separating it
from the debate it referred to... ah well.

[[Sorry, gov'nor, the issue of NMR it came from is an isolated one in my archive. What was the debate?]]

I do still write the occasional poem, and since you ask nicely I'm quite happy to send you one now and then. I should make it clear, however, that this is likely to be an irregular service at best. One of the main reasons I stopped doing the things for NMR is that I couldn't handle the pressure of churning them out every month. Er, does the New Statesmen really pay for verse? Must investigate this.

[[Put it this way, those literary competitions that Iain Bowen was doing were a direct steal from the Staggers. Check it out, it's just inside the back every issue. I really reckon it'd be up your alley. (If you do start entering and winning I reserve the right to charge you commission on your earnings for putting you onto this).]]

Many (rather belated) congratulations on the arrival of Lee David Frederick (why do kids all get three names nowadays? We couldn't afford three in my day tha' knows; we had to make do with two. But we were happy then, although we were poor. "Son", my father said, "a third name can't buy you happiness". We lived in a tiny...)

ASFO 52? I should cocoa. But a zine from Mr Oya -- that I'd very much like to see.

[[Looks like you only get a letter:]]