

# The Anzaconteur

The newsletter that wants to be called Sheila

April, 2006

You are now holding the April, 2006, issue of The Raconteur, the unofficial newsletter of the Ritz Acoustic Club, a magazine so shamefully lawdry it changes its name each month to avoid being recognised. Inside, amidst reviews of recent club sessions, you will discover a veritable litany of weak jokes and general balderdash, plus several cosmic revelations of such heart-stopping beauty new readers are advised to have a pacemaker fitted before proceeding. Please note that, to boost circulation, each copy has been dipped in liquid warfarin, so don't eat them, no matter how peckish you become.

## Statement from the Committee

**The Committee would like to stress to all readers that this newsletter is a pack of vicious lies. There is no slush fund. There were no "loan-ations". No animals were harmed at the last Committee meeting. No club money has been spent on Botox treatment, hair transplants or golfing equipment. The Committee does not "swing", and our plan to go cottaging in Devon does not make us "just like George Michael".**

## Thursday, February 23rd

What a night. Beastly cold it was, yet still club members dragged their chilled and weary bones down to the Ritz for what was to be yet another corking session. The mood was good as, following the gratifying release of long-term hostage Norman Kember, news had just reached us that our own club regular Kev Puddy had also been liberated from the evil clutches of Iraqi dissidents. Long-time members will recall that Kev, unlike Johnny-come-lately Kember, disappeared back in 1985, dragged from the stage by an angry crowd during a gig in Baghdad. Apparently the audience had begun to grow restless as he performed I Shagged Iris By The Tigris and became increasingly volatile during Im Proper Mullah-ed (I Am). Matters came to a head when Kev ripped into the funky, upbeat Marsh Arab Gas and then a full-scale riot broke out as he burst in to a new number, Ramadan, with its catchy, singalong chorus "Ramadan-adan-adana-dana-dingdong". It was a depressing end to what had already been a rather disappointing tour of the Middle East.

Onstage, the evening was kicked off by GREG AYLMEER, playing the Blue Peter theme on a violin he perhaps made earlier, then the old classic Whisky Before Breakfast. He'd be followed by the irrepressible ROWAN NODDINGS with an a cappella In The Court Of King Caractacus, the song hilariously collapsing as it got ever more wordy, and a rendition of Right Said Fred, complete with kazoo solo. ROB CAREY would then lead us into the first interval with a tender take on Fly Me To The Moon and Billy Fury's Like I've Never Been Gone.

During the break, all the talk at the bar was of Dr Menzies Campbell's victory in the Liberal Democrats' leadership elections. His triumph, it had to be said, had been made a lot simpler by the controversy surrounding his rivals, what with Simon Hughes being forced to admit to bisexuality and Mark Outen having tearfully confessed to servicing rent boys (how much that costs the Raconteur cannot accurately say - one can only imagine what Mr Outen coughed up). So now the Liberals were led by a man proud to call himself Ming. That's Ming. *Ming*. For God's sake, who in their right mind is going to vote for a man happy to share a name with one of fiction's greatest super-villains? What chance do other Liberal candidates have if they follow this disastrous course? You can imagine the announcement of the results at the general election. Robert Ward . . . Labour . . . Ten thousand three hundred and forty-five. Edmund Slimely-Boothe . . . Conservative . . . Eight thousand one hundred and eleven . . . The Green Goblin . . . Liberal Democrat . . . sod all.

It might be a little less crazy if the character's full title was Ming The Prudent, or Ming The Phenomenally Efficient, or Ming The Saviour Of The NHS. But it's not, it's Ming The Merciless, Ming The Destroyer Of Galaxies, a supremely inappropriate moniker for the leader of a democratic First World nation. That Campbell is furthermore *Doctor* Ming adds a yet more sinister aspect as doctors inflict extraordinary levels of pain and misery even when they're *not* homicidal maniacs. *Doctor* Ming can only conjure unfortunate images of Laurence Olivier in Marathon Man. Add to this the fact that Campbell will inevitably be nicknamed Ming-er, probably by Jacques Chirac and certainly by the English electorate. The man is clearly unelectable as Prime Minister, which means that the voters of Burnham, who were faced with a sorry-arsed choice at the last election, will now have only two possible selections. One, a gang of rampant incompetents who tax the bejesus out of us then fritter the money away in an unholy series of ill-conceived farragoes. And two, a herd of sleazy, salacious, self-serving creeps who, history has proven time and time again, unashamedly worship at the altar of Mammon (when they can tear themselves away from the temple of Bacchus). Has it always been this way? Did they have similar conversations back in, say, 1874? "Gonna vote for that Gladstone, then, Bob?" "Nah, I reckon he's taking backhanders off them industrialists, I do". "What about that Disraeli, then?" "No chance. Frilly shirts, tight pants - you know what *that* means".

Back onstage, NIGEL SNOOK would execute a groovy Chet Atkins instrumental, then perform the Jose Feliciano version of The Doors' Light My Fire. Next would be PHIL and DEBBIE BENNETT, with Debbie lending her classically gravely tones to Janis Joplin's Piece Of My Heart and Dylan's Knocking On Heaven's Door. Then there'd be the excellent DAVE CHAVE with Billy Holiday's God Bless The Child and Isaac Guillor's Swinging Little Guitar Man, and then LINDA BOND with an a cappella Ten Thousand Miles and, with the crowd gladly joining in, an exuberant Rolling Home.

As ever, the second interval brought the raffle, a tad more exciting than usual as it saw the first win this year by the mighty PAUL LAWRENCE. Paul, as members will know, is a raffle winner of international repute, known in Spain as El Raffolo, in Brazil as Raffledinho, in Portugal as The Special One (Jose Mourinho is just a sneaky little name-thief!) and in China as Yin Fang Yo, which roughly translates as He Whose Tickets Kick Ass. Yes, Paul's a lean, mean raffle-winning machine, a raffle Galactico, but since the turn of the New Year he's been in a terrible slump. No matter which colour ticket he bought - yellow, green, white with a hint of Appalachian cedar - he simply couldn't find the formula that won him no fewer than 496 prizes in 2005, including a Maserati, a total of six weeks in Bangkok and enough Lid's biscuits to kill every diabetic in the country. But now, as older members nodded sagely, secure in the knowledge that form is temporary, class permanent, he was *back*. From now on, it seems, the rest of us will be competing for the Cillit Bang and the counterfeit Twix bars.

Rob Carey would continue the entertainment with a gentle Try A Little Tenderness and Frankie Laine's Answer Me, before STEVE BROWN stepped up with his increasingly excellent version of Take Five. Debbie and Phil Bennett would now reappear with Fleetwood Mac's legendary Dreams, being followed by Nigel Snook with an amazingly fluent Latin instrumental and Gilbert O'Sullivan's genuinely touching Nothing Rhymed. Rowan Noddings then delivered an ode to his Apple Mac based on Widdowcombe Fair, and the evening was then capped by THE JOCKSTRAP ENSEMBLE - this week featuring PETE BEACH, Greg, Dave Chave, Rowan, Linda and JACK COBBE - who pined into joyous renditions of Maggie May, Show Me A Pretty Little Number, Ragtime Millionaire and a delicately trembling Sweet Sixteen, reaching a climax with Goodnight Irene. It had been another cracking sesh.

But the action still wasn't over as Chairman GRAHAM COOK announced that Prince Charles, back in the press for sending e-mails to government ministers telling them how to do their jobs, had also sent a series of missives to the club. The easiest and quickest way of achieving targets set by the Kyoto Agreement, he said, was to pull down the Ritz and plant organic parsnips instead. If we insisted on continuing with the club, he demanded that we begin and end each session with a compulsory blast of God Save The King - to get in practice, like. The RAC's finest songwriters, furthermore, were to compose an anthem in celebration of his missus. And this, with no small degree of pride, they did, attempting to capture the spirit of Britishness past and present by drawing upon the works of both Edward Elgar and Dizzee Rascal. The Elgar-style music was a soaring, pounding orchestration, quite magnificent, while the rapped Rascal-esque chorus went:

Camilla, Camilla,  
We's at a loss  
Why everyone don't fancy you  
Like Kate Moss.  
Is it just cos you looks like  
A hoss?

#### **Thursday, March 9th**

Prince Charles was still in the news two weeks later, the furore this time concerning the greenhouse gas emissions he and his enormous entourage were pumping out on his official tour of the Antipodes. Carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, hundreds of tons of the stuff, enough to asphyxiate the entire population of Scotland, should we wish (And why not? Now we've burnt up all their natural gas they've clearly outlived their usefulness. AHAHAHAHA!). Charles diplomatically kept his princely gob shut, so the accusation hung in the air for days, causing all sensitive souls to question their own personal green-ness. Think about it, people - are you doing enough?

Now, the RAC is renowned throughout the South-West for its rigorous recycling. Pints of Blackthorn, bottles of cheap South African plonk, DOREEN's famous hot toddies, all of them are righteously quaffed then dutifully sent back into the water supply. Research has also shown that each month 98% of the copies of the Raconteur made available are used as toilet paper, usually without being pulped and turned into tissue first. Private emissions, though, have not thus far been at the top of members' agendas, and what to do about them caused an unseemly argument to break out at the bar. The Raconteur's suggestion that we neatly store them away in carefully numbered carrier bags was generally considered unhelpful and really rather creepy. Treasurer DOUG LILES then put forward the idea of a system of fines where members' emissions would be totted up on a weekly basis, each person having to pay, say, 50p into club funds for every cubic metre ejected. This plan was immediately scotched by TRISH, who stated quite vehemently that she wasn't having her emissions totted up by *anybody*. Except maybe that nice James Blunt.

Greg Aymer then went a step further, admitting that he wouldn't mind the authorities logging his stools, as it were, as long as they didn't take the piss. This caused Graham Cook, a student radical in his youth, to storm that it was utterly outrageous that any government should fit measuring devices to the bottoms of its citizens. Nothing, he warned, leads to fascist dictatorship faster than such totalitarian probing, prodding, shoe-horning and particularly flushing. We must beware, he concluded grimly, the enemas of the state. Steve Brown then brought up an interesting statistic. If everyone in the Western World stopped singing in the shower, thereby cutting down on the unnecessary sucking in of oxygen and bellying out of carbon dioxide, we'd slow down global warming by a staggering 45%. On the negative side, this would turn shower-time into a depressing contemplation of physical inadequacy. Far

better for the national morale to let folks roar out "If you want it, *here it is*, come and get it" or "*Wiggle it, just a little bit*", rather than descend into a sad, involuntary mumbling of Who Knows Where The Time Goes.

Onstage, MC for the night Rowan Noddings kicked us off with Bernard Cribbins' majestic Hole In The Ground, and Pop Goes The Weasel, then Rob Carey departed from his favourite decade to give us two numbers from the Seventies, first the M\*A\*S\*H theme Suicide Is Painless (it's not if you do it with pinkie shears, or a lawnmower) and Tom Between Two Lovers (again very nasty, especially if you happen to be dating a couple of wild horses). Rob would be followed by Steve Brown, also moving away from his more familiar material to give us an instrumental of Memory, from Cats. Everyone loves that one, the aged pussy recalling past romantic liaisons. But it's hopelessly unrealistic when you consider a genuine feline existence. How much more convincing it would have been had Andrew Lloyd Webber retained the original opening lyrics:

Whitebait,  
How I dream of the whitebait  
That we tore on our first date  
From the restaurant bins.  
Whitebait,  
That look of surprise in their glazed-over eyes!  
Oh, I dream of whitebait  
With their crispy fins.

Unperturbed by this catty inaccuracy, Steve now got mediaeval on our asses with Lina Boyd's arrangement of Greensleeves, as did Nigel Snook with another ancient and beautifully performed tune. Nigel would then lead us into the first interval with a fine take on Lonnie Donegan's deceptively jolly Times Are Getting Hard, Boys. At the bar all the talk was of Daniella Westbrook, back in the press and complaining about the price of fame. You must be careful what you wish for, it was decided, there being no better example of the perils of dreaming than the night of December 24th last year when Doreen caught a Chelsea Pensioner puffing and groaning as he frantically pleased himself on her roof. That was *not* what she'd meant when she said she was looking forward to an old fellow in red coming down her chimney at Christmas.

After the break, DAVE HARRIS would break out his squeezebox for George Shearing's much-beloved jazz standard Lullaby Of Birdland and then the tortured bluegrass of Man Of Constant Sorrow. Next, COLIN ROGERS, keen to jam and joined by Rowan on kazoo and Jack Cobbe on bodhran, took us back to Ye Olde Music with Dogs And Ferrets from the Copper Family catalogue, then took up his tiny banjo-thing for a spirited singalong of Can't You Dance The Polka. Steve Brown would then give us a jaunty take on The Bare Necessities before introducing the next in his series of pop tunes played in a classical manner, Cyndi Lauper's wonderful Time After Time. Rumours swept the club that Steve had actually intended to play Lauper's Girls Just Want To Have Fun but, fearing the scorn of our more macho members, had changed his mind at the last. This sexist pressure is simply unacceptable in a 21st Century acoustic club. Why can't GARY DAY play a suicidal goth-folk version of I'm Every Woman? Why can't Linda Bond grab her melodion and let rip into Whole Lotta Rosie, complete with suggestive clog dance? Why can't STEVE HOLFORD lend his deep bass gravitas to (I'm Just A Girl Who) Can't Say No? Why can't the Raconteur wear a silky camisole and Sloggi knickers if he wants to, in the privacy of his own home, or even in Somerfeld's for that matter? When did we, as a nation, become so blinkered, so set in our sexual stereotyping that a fellow could be banned from his skittles team for wearing a Givenchy evening dress (naturally accessorized with horn-rimmed sunglasses and cigarette-holder)? What was the true reasoning behind this monstrous betrayal? Did the six-inch stilettos scratch the pitchboard? No. Did the delicate whiff of Ysa's overpower the reek of roll-ups and cheap cigars? No. Surely the Raconteur's score of 23, occasioned as it was by Job-like misfortune and horribly unhelpful atmospheric conditions, cannot alone have provoked such a torrent of abuse. No, the root cause was sexism - pure, naked and ugly. After all, not one of those treacherous so-called funny-men had any conclusive proof that Audrey Hepburn was crap at skittles. And so what if she reduced everyone to tears in the alley at the end of Breakfast At Tiffany's. That's got nothing to do with anything. Bastards.

After Steve Brown, JOHN DIXON, increasing liberated on his sax, gave us Somewhere from West Side Story then, with Rob Carey on vocals and Nigel Snook on guitar, an impressive Blueberry Hill. Rob would return after the interval with original country pop star Skeeter Davis's End Of The World and, reunited with Nigel and John Dixon, Buddy Holly's Raining In My Heart. Nigel would then courageously back DAVE ILSLEY's pounding, growling take on The Wild Rover, before Rowan Noddings upped the emotional ante to tearful levels with a song to honour a friend who'd recently died of cancer. It was a brave performance and extremely moving - a fitting tribute.

With many of our regular musicians mysteriously absent, Nigel would then dig into his enormous repertoire to entertain us with a hilarious Chastity Belt, Wanderin', a comic talking blues medley, a burst of the Harry Lime theme and, finally, a sweet cover of Dylan's Lay Lady Lay. It was great, thankfully taking our minds from the Commonwealth Games. You know those, where every four years we get together with our chums from across the planet and let them beat us at running, jumping and throwing things. In a small but significant way it makes up for our ancestors killing their ancestors and stealing all their stuff. These games also set a new sporting precedent when our women's 4x400 team were stripped of their gold medals for interfering with an Australian. Well, *really*.

Yet, though the music was over, the evening was not yet done. More rumours abounded, this time concerning master guitarist ROB ELLIS who, it was said, will be returning to the club just as soon as he's completed his new concept album. With a classic Fleetwood Mac feel and exposing the cruel international trafficking of African antelopes, it's to be titled Second Hand Gnus. He's a strange one, is Rob. As a child, unlike his schoolmates, he didn't want to be the first man to land on the moon, he wanted to be the first person to shoot past it screaming "STOP!!!"

At the bar, a final argument broke out as to the innocence or guilt of one Linda West, on trial at Winchester Crown Court for shooting her husband of two months dead with a shotgun. According to West, on the evening of May 9th, 2005, the couple had enjoyed a lovely evening, drank some wine, got in the mood. She'd run him a relaxing bath and, when he emerged in his bath-robe, she'd danced provocatively for him to the music of Shania Twain. He'd then gone into the bedroom and brought out his BSA500 shotgun (he was a gun enthusiast) and asked her to use it as a prop in her dancing, which she did. However, when she went to lay the gun down, it went off and killed him as he sat in his own armchair. Two pieces of evidence were deemed to be key. First, the safety-lock was found to be faulty, so the gun could've gone off at any time. Secondly, the neighbours claimed they'd heard shouting that night, casting doubts on West's description of a lovely evening.

It was a bizarre case, partly because it made Shania Twain's music interesting for the very first time, but mostly because there seemed to be no motive. Unless, of course, you look more laterally at the facts, as the Raconteur has done in true Poirot fashion. Discounting the "faulty safety-lock" theory on the grounds that it makes for a very tedious story, what could have driven this woman to blow away her husband (don't answer that, ladies)? Remember, she's 49, she's found love late in life and surely appreciates it after years of loneliness. Her husband is younger, at 45 a bit of a by-boy. They're in the midst of their honeymoon period and enjoying an adventurous love-life. But then she's discovered something, some shocking fact, some awful betrayal. Ladies and gentleman, I suggest to you that on that fateful night it was *not* Linda West dancing provocatively to the music of Shania Twain, it was her *husband*. When Linda entered the living-room to find him clad only in a skimpy bath-robe, grinding his hips and suggestively pouting along to Man, I Feel Like A Woman, she recognised the ghastly truth and flipped. Her love was a lie - BANG!

This is not the first time the Raconteur has solved a problematic case baffling the police. And yet the misguided fools at Scotland Yard refuse to answer his letters and phone calls, as if he were a common crank, or an idiot, or something. Another light reluctantly remains under a bushel. Life is so very sad . . .

**The Ritz Acoustic Club holds open mic nights every Thursday at the Ritz. To read about upcoming gigs and club history and to peruse the last 20-odd editions of this newsletter, visit our website at:**

<http://www.ritzacoustic.com>

**Also, read about the onrushing Bumham-On-Sea folk festival at:**

<http://www.folkfest.co.uk>

## **BREAKING NEWS . . . BREAKING NEWS . . . BREAKING NEWS . .**

Gig news. At the Princess Hall on Thursday, May 4th, the Ritz Acoustic Club will be presenting **JOHN RENBOURN** and **ROBIN WILLIAMSON**, founder members of **Pentangle** and the **Incredible String Band** respectively. Two icons of British folk in a very rare performance together. And you could be there. Tickets are £12 and available at the club, or from GC Music (01278-794-434)

Will the member who keeps telepathically communicating with Treasurer Doug Liles, telling him he's going to miss when he's lining up a putt, please stop it.

Are you playing a gig somewhere, or organising some event? Tell us, and we'll gladly publish details. Also, do you have anything you'd like to say to our readership? Any message you'd like to get across, jokes you'd like to tell, advice you'd like to give? Your stuff can be printed in the Raconteur at zero expense. Just ask.

Will the member who "borrowed" the kazoo from Rowan Noddings' bag last week please take note - Rowan recently smuggled it out of Thailand in his anus.

Members are reminded that the buffet is back on the third Thursday of every month, and the food is better than it's ever been. Come along, and scoff to your heart's content.

September 2nd and 3rd, 2006 will see the first annual Burnham-On-Sea FolkFest. Hot, hot music will be played throughout the town all day Saturday and most of Sunday. There'll be all manner of kids' entertainment, morris and clog dancers, loads of groovy stalls and arts and crafts stuff, a ceilidh for kids and another for adults. And almost all of it will be free. The Ritz Acoustic Club is right behind this venture and we need volunteers to help out during the two days. Anyone who can spare any time at all, please make yourself known to either Jack Cobbe or Graham Cook.

Will the member who put the empty biro, the old and frayed tissues, the small Euro change, the out-of-date tampon, the solitary stick of chewing-gum, the ancient Somerfield receipts, the mysterious phone number, the broken lighter, the torn Computers For Schools voucher and the bits of fluff in Laura Smith's bag please come forward and apologise. You've made it very difficult for her to find her keys.

## **The Ritz Acoustic Club's Famous Prize-less Quiz**

Welcome to the toughest quiz in the South-West, perhaps even the world. Recent research has shown the average monthly score of RAC members stands at a paltry 4. Can you do better? Well, *can* you, punk?

- 1) Who was the electronic pioneer behind the psych band White Noise?
- 2) Name the seed from which strychnine is extracted.
- 3) Of which north-eastern punk band was Pauline Murray lead singer?
- 4) Which murdered Roman emperor was succeeded by Claudius?
- 5) Which band originally released the folk classic The Garden Of Jane Delawney?
- 6) Which scholar and mystic received a pension from Henry VIII, drew up Queen Mary's horoscope and helped establish the British Museum with a donation of 4,000 books?
- 7) What is the name of Morrissey's new album?
- 8) Who, in 1928, won the first ever Best Actor Oscar?
- 9) Of which band was US singer-songwriter Nina Gordon previously a member?
- 10) What's the title of the supplementary chapters to the Book of Daniel officially declared to be part of the Bible in 1546?
- 11) In which year was the fatal plane crash involving Lynyrd Skynyrd?
- 12) Which body of foot soldiers was established by Henry VII to protect the Royal Person?

- 13) Who was the original bass player in Black Sabbath?
- 14) Which Premiership football manager has the shortest surname?
- 15) What is pop star Pink's real name?
- 16) Who directed the hit kids' movie The Railway Children?
- 17) Which female singer formed a long folk partnership with Clive Gregson?
- 18) Name the Roman road that led from the Channel ports, through London, to Shropshire.
- 19) From which hit 1984 album was Sade's single Your Love Is King taken?
- 20) What was Lord Byron's Christian name?

**Answers to last month's quiz were as follows:**

1) Nick Cave 2) Arachne 3) Mr Fox 4) Mao Tse Tung 5) Strawberry Switchblade 6) Evelyn Waugh 7) Jerome Pomus and Mort Shuman 8) Anarchism 9) Gene Clark 10) Nitrogen 11) Phil Lynott 12) Uranus 13) Johnny Depp, he starred in Edward Scissorhands and partnered Vanessa Paradis 14) Conclave 15) The Cramps 16) General Franco 17) Neville 18) Mau-Mau 19) Bobby Gentry 20) Içeni