

The Raconteur

The Arachonteur The Newsletter that's Not Afraid of Spiders October, 2005

Thursday, September 29th

Autumn was here, a tad early, and life was good in dear old Blighty. A bumper crop of blackberries hung rotting on the brambles, the sloes and damsons had been pricked and popped into the gin, and the Virginia creeper was raging red though the bushes. People were beginning to look forward to the fast-approaching frivolities of the fair and the carnival but, as ever down the Ritz, conversation had taken on a far more serious note. All the talk at the bar was of the Raelian cult in America and their recent claims that they have cloned an adult human being. Is it right, it was asked, for human beings to play God in this manner? Would your clone share your memories - are our memories somehow retained in our every cell? Is a clone a real human and if you farmed it for its body parts would that be murder? The crowd was split more or less down the middle, half thinking cloning is a heinous crime, the rest feeling they could probably do with a new liver, as it happens.

More controversial was a rumour now sweeping the club. One member claimed that the Raelians had been advertising worldwide for top-notch sperm with which to create their ghastly homunculi (or cheery organ donors, depending on how you look at it). Indeed, early in the summer an ad had appeared in the Burnham & Highbridge Times, an ad, it was said, to which several club members had responded. As ever when things get risqué, fingers were pointed at Treasurer **Doug Liles** who, wearing his usual cherubic expression, vigorously denied the accusation, explaining that he expended far too much energy on the driving range to ever be a professional monkey spanker. His argument, though, was near-fatally undermined by his better half **Trish** who remembered coming in from pruning the roses one day to find the bathroom door shut and bolted. Asking if Doug was OK, she'd received a garbled, almost unintelligible reply. At the time she'd thought it was "Yes, I'm fine, my darling chiquita, and bless you for asking. *Mwah! Mwah!*" But, thinking back, it could just have easily been "Don't interrupt me! Don't you realise I'm creating the new master race? Destiny! My *destiny!*" or even "Agh! Agh! Yes! Oh God, yes! *Aaaaagh!*" It sounded bad but the evidence was far too flimsy for a conviction. The RAC, after all, is about kindling the flames of local musical talent, not indiscriminate witch-hunting. Our motto is Provide Promote Perform, not Provide Promote *Burn him! Burn him!*" Besides, there's nothing wrong with masturbation. It is, as the man said, simply sex with the person you love best of all.

This being a theme night featuring the works of Bob Dylan and Donovan, the Raconteur was more than usually excited at the prospect of the evening's entertainment. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances (the pulchritudinous **Naomi Nicholson** wasn't *ready*) he arrived just as **Gary Day** was completing his glorious adaptation of Anne Briggs' Blackwaterside. Thus he'd missed Gary doing Dylan's Masters Of War, a performance that just *had* to be brilliant. Gutted, he was, *guttled*. Actually, let's strike that. He was disappointed. "Gutted" is a word you hear a lot these days, and it's usually used by Premiership footballers to describe their feelings when one league game out of 38 has been lost. Not being on the winning side, it appears, conjures a sensation close to having your stomach wall torn open with a serrated blade then having your innards ripped out and dropped in a bloody, steaming heap right before your shocked and soon-to-be-lifeless eyes. Crikey! No *wonder* they get paid so much money. But you

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do have to wonder how they'd feel if they lost, say, six games on the trot. "To be honest, Alan, it's like my hair is on fire, my teeth are being examined by Laurence Olivier in Marathon Man and my genitals are chained to wild horses who'd really rather be somewhere else". And what if they got dropped and loaned out to Bristol City? "To be fair, Trev, it's like thousands of nanorobots have targeted every nerve in my body and brain and turned the pain levels up to 11. I just can't *take* it any more. I beg you, Trev, as a pundit and occasional interviewer, as a human being, to shoot me in the face. For God's sake, Trev, do it, man, *end* it. Kill me! *Kill me!*"

Following Gary would come **Rob Carey** assiduously and mellifluously sticking to the script with The Times They Are A-Changin' and Jennifer Juniper. Next, following the first interval, we'd have special guests **The Boys From Melbourne Street**, a three-man band slipping lightly between blues, pop and light jazz, occasionally reminiscent of both Sting and Paul Simon. Strikingly, their bass player was a dead ringer for Robert Powell. Now, the RAC is famed for putting on top acts but Jesus of Nazareth? How cool was *that*? Well, not as cool as the next-up **Rowan Noddings** who, armed with big cap, curly wig and a guitar, launched courageously into Desolation Row. He faltered, he fumbled but somehow he made his way through, his outrageously ambitious contribution earning wild applause. Then came the excellent **Pete Stearn** with far more practised versions of You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go and Why Do You Treat Me Like You Do?

After a second interval, **Morgan** and **Steve** would deliver a countrified rendition of Dylan's You Belong To Me, Steve providing some flowery, slidey embellishment, and Going Down The Road Feeling Bad, a country blues track Dylan performed with The Grateful Dead. Then there'd be **Geoff** and **Dave**, adding sweet squeezebox to Vera Lynn's breakthrough hit Yours, Are You Lonesome Tonight? and Galway Bay. More raucous would be clubs faves **The Jockstrap Ensemble**, this week featuring **Pete Beach**, **Greg Aylmer**, **Jack Cobbe**, **Nigel Snook** and Rowan Noddings, who kicked robustly into Digging My Potatoes, Tom Paxton's Show Me A Pretty Little Number and John Prine's Blow Up The TV. Nigel would then end the session in grand style with Dylan's You Ain't Goin' Nowhere, Kevin "Bloody" Wilson's Amazing Grass and hilarious impressions of Dylan singing Happy Birthday and Frosty The Snowman, capping it all off with a heartfelt Lay Lady Lay. Superb.

Nigel's comedic success, however, would bring back bitter memories of the previous week's club AGM when the Raconteur had been controversially awarded the inaugural Laughter Cup, a trophy now presented to whoever's deemed to've brought the most humour to the club in the last 12 months. Objections to the Raconteur's victory were manifold, but two were shared by most people present, these being a) He's got an unfair advantage cos he writes the newsletter, and b) He's not funny, he's a twat. The argument grew animated, the atmosphere ugly. Peanuts were crushed in anger, tea-lights were maliciously extinguished, things were thrown (voices, mostly, it was all very bizarre). Cruelly, and not for the first time, the Raconteur's own musical abilities were brought into question. What right, it was loudly shouted, did this big-nosed, joke-free, cup-stealing wally have to pontificate about everyone else?

Well, now that everyone's little hissy fit is over and done with, readers might be interested to learn that the Raconteur did once earn an emphatic Yes from The X-Factor's notoriously picky Simon Cowell. Not many musicians can say *that*, eh? Mind you, it was only by asking if he'd like fries to go with his Egg McMuffin. Nice guy, that Cowell. Left an inappropriately large tip - which is more than can be said for that ungrateful cow Sharon Osbourne. No gratuity was forthcoming from *that* rich bitch, despite the fact that her McNuggets were among the finest

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the Raconteur ever prepared. Crispy on the outside, moist and tender on the inside, they were fit for the gods of Olympus (served with an ambrosia dip, of course). They were also, we had been informed, suffused with well over the daily recommended intake of several important vitamins and minerals. A McNugget a day keeps the doctor away, went the saying. As it turns out, so does a salary of £90,000. The big question is how to get the overpaid bugger to *turn up*.

As an aside, did you read reports that the number of kids eating school dinners has fallen 9% since Jamie Oliver launched his campaign to Stop Kids Eating Mashed-Up And Deep-Fried Animal Eyeballs And Noses? Conspiracy theorists claimed there was something secretly addictive in fast food and children were being forced to seek their daily fix elsewhere. Others reckoned the kids were simply embarrassed by their inability to pronounce *boeuf Chateaubriand avec champignons et jus de framboise* and found it easier to score a Pot Noodle from the local Londis.

Thursday, October 6th

By God, it was wet. A short Indian summer was drowned beneath the fizzing sheets of rain, the water penetrating even the most water-proof of water-proofs. You could see the strained look on people's faces as the rain soaked slowly downwards through their tops and eventually ran in a warm rivulet between their buttocks. One by one they thought the same thought - Oh no, I haven't . . . I haven't . . . - then rushed off to the loo to check. When in doubt, it's always best to check. Unless you're wearing Pampers, of course. Don't mock, they can come in very handy on a big night out.

Down at the Ritz, the crowd was soggy but buzzing nonetheless. At the bar, all the talk was of the continuing furore surrounding supermodel Kate Moss, who was losing jobs left, right and centre due to tabloid revelations about cocaine and kinky threesomes with girls and boys, threesomes featuring Jude Law and that ex-wife of his who made such an arse of herself in Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula*. You could understand the fuss to a degree, what with Moss being so famous, cocaine being illegal and bisexuality being outside the norm. What was harder to justify was the almighty flak she was taking for failing to fulfil her alleged duties as a role model for young kids. *What?* Who elected her to *that* position? Was it us (it certainly wasn't her)? Why would we do that? Isn't her industry notorious for its narcissism and decadence? Shouldn't we *expect* her, and anyone else with a Life In The Fast Lane to behave just as The Eagles did at the time they wrote that song - ie. hang out with rock stars, dope themselves to the eyeballs and complain psychotically when the quilted Andrex in their hotel bathroom has been attached to the roller the wrong way round?

The thing is, Kate Moss isn't a poor role model, she's a fantastic role model. The misleadingly beautiful face of rampant materialism, she's an addict stepping out with a junkie, and a bug-eyed junkie at that. And if the sorry reality of her existence can turn our children away from the fashion industry all well and good. After all, do you want to have to tell your daughter that, due to your own genetic failings, she's way too short, dumpy or just plain ugly to ever be a supermodel? Of course, you don't. But, if the worst comes to the worst and she *does* reveal a flaming desire to be an elite clothes horse, why not follow the example of a pair of parents who had it happen to *them*? Cannily, they told their daughter, an ambitious girl bearing an unfortunate resemblance to Les Dawson, that she had every chance of following in the footsteps of Margaux Hemingway and Linda Evangelista. She just needed to learn to carry herself like a lady, by practising walking with a book balanced on her head. To perfect her balance, the book would be changed every week for five years and, in return for her parents'

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emotional and financial support in her big adventure, she would be expected to read each book before the next arrived.

What a fabulous plan! And how successful it was. By the time the girl was 15 she'd read most of the classics and many of the great scientific and philosophical texts. She was streets ahead of her schoolmates in every subject and, her personal parameters vastly widened by the knowledge she'd absorbed, she was wavering on the supermodel silliness and thinking of studying Russian literature and nuclear physics at Oxford. Maybe Rimmel was out and Nobel was in. Indeed, all was going swimmingly until the parents got cocky and introduced her to the 32 volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. With her spine depressed by a full nine inches and her back horribly crooked she now stood no chance of strutting her stuff on the cat-walks of Paris. Heart-warmingly, though, she did find a place in the entertainment industry of that very city - dressed in black robes and scaring tourists in Notre Dame.

Onstage, the evening was kick-started by inter-county man of mystery Greg Aylmer who decided against singing (a shame) and instead treated us to some serious mandolin magic. He's a bit of a club hero on the quiet, is our Greg. He's never afraid to try something new and, if he blows it, he'll just chuckle and move on to another track. You get none of the sorry excuses some of the other musicians trot out. "It's not my fault, the dog ate my tablature" Or "How can I possibly play when Tony Hadley from Spandau Ballet is being treated so shabbily by his New Romantic peers and the music-buying public in general?" Or even "Don't blame me, the doctor dropped me on my head when I was born, *and* he kicked me under the bed so no one would notice". We've heard them all down the RAC, believe us.

Following Greg would come trusty Rob Carey who continued last week's Dylan theme with Don't Think Twice It's All Right then delivered a gently romantic You Are Always On My Mind. Next up would be those Milverton minxes **Kathy Macmillan** and **Sally Pritchard**, lending their deliciously trembling harmonies to Jim Croce's I'll Have To Say I Love You In A Song and Sandy Denny's By The Time It Gets Dark. Then there'd be their friend, the super-talented multi-instrumentalist **Alan King**, singing Both Sides Now in a gruff Cockney accent in the mistaken belief that Joni Mitchell is Grant's sister. Actually, that's a lie. His version was quiet and meant and very powerful.

After the first interval, Rob Carey stepped up once again with Eric Clapton's grieving Tears In Heaven and a beautifully enunciated House Of The Rising Sun, before Kathy and Sally reappeared with Dylan's Make You Feel My Love (apparently the first song they ever sang together) and, with Alan King joining them on the new club bass, an especially beautiful At Seventeen. It's said that beauty comes in many forms and now it manifested itself in the shape of Pete Beach with a wonderfully sorrowful rendition of Christy Moore's Lakes Of Pontchartrain. Pete's a great entertainer but, to the Raconteur's mind at least, he's even better when he gets serious and draws on deeper emotions - then he's very special indeed.

Now would come another special performance as **Steve Holford** finally returned to us and, accompanied by Alan King on guitar, delivered a superb take on A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square. Steve may sing lovingly of these birds but his voice is so deep its almighty resonance would surely kill a nightingale, or indeed any other medium-sized avian, from 200 paces. In fact it's said that Steve gets so much work in old people's homes not because they love his smooth interpretations of the classics (though they do) but because his mighty rumble does wonders for their arthritis.

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During the second interval, as ever, Trish Liles' club-funding raffle went ahead. But this was no ordinary raffle as, for the first time ever, it was sponsored. Yes, the club has become so successful the corporate vultures are circling, eagerly eyeing the prey that is our beloved membership. And first to swoop was Teddy's Parlour - that's Teddy's Parlour - less a shop in the indoor market than a veritable cornucopia of high quality items. As one of the best-respected establishments in the whole of commercial history, Teddy's Parlour - that's **TEDDY'S PARLOUR** - has been fascinating and delighting customers for many years. Even its name is intriguing. Was it, as one business legend has it, named after the secret hideaway of President Theodore Roosevelt, a large cellar he kept well-stocked with an eclectic and tastefully chosen selection of disinfectants, shower gels, Velcro ribbon, knitting wool, liquid bleach, key-rings, safety-pins, bookmarks, stuffing for soft toys, and hemming? Or was it inspired by the only one of Edward Lear's nonsense poems to be banned for outraging Queen Victoria herself?

*There was a young man, Edward Spedding
Who sold liquid bleach at a wedding.
His Velcro was fine
But it stuck to his spine
And he couldn't escape the bride's bedding.*

Sadly, the answer is lost in the mists of time. What we *do* know, though, is that Teddy's Parlour - that's..

TEDDY'S PARLOUR

is a magnificent emporium, an Aladdin's Cave packed to the rafters with reasonably -priced products no sentient being can do without. Regulars call it Harrods By The Sea. So will you, when you visit

TEDDY'S PARLOUR

Onstage we welcomed back **Jerry Cahill** with two New Age psych-rock guitar instrumentals revealing his awesome technique. He'd remain up there to accompany **Gordon Campbell**, who gave us finely crafted renditions of Lyle Lovett's West Texas Highway, John Prine's Speed Of The Sound Of Loneliness, Lovett's Give Back My Heart, Ry Cooder's Across The Borderline and finally Hoyt Axton's Evangelina. The evening would then be ended by the latest incarnation of The Jockstrap Ensemble, led by Pete Beach and this week featuring Alan King, Greg Aylmer, Jack Cobbe and, on drums, **Malcolm**. They'd round it all off with boisterous takes on How Long Blues, Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavour, Digging My Potatoes and Show Me A Pretty Little Number.

It was the end of the music but not the conversation as an argument broke out at the bar over phone masts and the way the telecommunications companies have been exploiting legal loopholes to stick them up everywhere. Many locals are reporting cases of erratic and occasionally dangerous behaviour. Treasurer Doug Liles, for one, who lives within a three-mile radius of several such masts, claimed that while last MC-ing at the club he began to feel slightly dizzy, his face became redder, his jokes longer and ruder and he developed a strange thirst that no amount of Bass could quench.

On a more sober note, the Raconteur has come into possession of a letter sent to the local

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press, a letter that, despite its sensational and controversial contents, suspiciously did not find its way into print. It was written by one Raymond Besley, a father of four who lives near the BASC ground, site of many of the offending masts. Since the arrival of these ugly erections (you can stop that right now), with their allegedly mind-bending frequencies, Mr Besley's life has, in his own words, "gone to Hell in a hand-basket". First his son Darren, 13, began to exhibit a serious mental disorder. He became surly and uncommunicative: he began to cackle at inappropriate moments for no apparent reason: vile yellow pustules sprang up on his chin and he took to loitering in the ornamental gardens on the sea-front, drinking stolen Bacardi Breezers with other disturbed children. Raymond's daughter Candice, meanwhile, began to decorate her hair with aggressively tasteless blonde highlights and had the antisocial motto "Big girls have more fun" tattooed in Sanskrit just above her buttocks. If this wasn't enough, Raymond's youngest son began to wet the bed, while his wife would often burst inexplicably into tears. Raymond himself had become increasingly irascible as his gambling debts and drinking span out of control. He would be applying for a second mortgage, he said sorrowfully, as soon as his financial advisor stopped laughing. Angrily demanding £1.3 million in compensation from the phone companies, he claimed this turnaround in his fortunes had left him feeling "gutted". And you know how bad *that* is.

BREAKING NEWS . . . BREAKING NEWS . . . BREAKING NEWS . . .

Members are reminded that the club's next concert will be by STEVE ASHLEY, who's played with Richard Thompson, Anne Briggs, Ragged Robin and the Albion Country Band. The gig's on November 3rd, tickets are £6 and available in advance from GC Music (01278-794-434)

Musicians! The next theme night will be on October 27th and you will be required to perform comedy songs. Yes, comedy songs. Please do not simply fall back on the ones you play already. Do something different. You know you can.

Please note that it's October and you should have already paid up for your membership of the Ritz Social Club and the Ritz Acoustic Club. If you aren't a member of the Ritz Social Club you cannot attend the Ritz Acoustic Club more than once a month.

Following a ruling at the AGM, students will now be given free membership of the Ritz Acoustic Club.

Following a second ruling, all members must hand in a copy of their front-door key to the committee; just in case we're wandering past and feel like a coffee and a good rummage through your drawers (stop it!).

The Christmas party is still booked for Friday, December 16th. It still looks like Fastest To Canada will be playing and it could well be the greatest thing that ever happened to you in your whole life. Sadly, Secretary **Steve Brown**, still seeking a celebrity to play Santa for us, has had more bad luck. Thinking that he'd secured the services of the Krankies, he was mortified to discover he'd actually only booked the tall one. He remains hopeful, though, that Clint Eastwood will soon be in touch. That, he added in an early attempt to wrest away the Raconteur's Laughter Cup, would make his day. Ho ho ho.

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The Ritz Acoustic Club's Famous Prize-less Quiz

Here we are again. Another month, another quiz, another set of embarrassingly low scores. What's the point? No one wins anything. No one enjoys it. Why do we do it? Eh? EH?

- 1) Who joined Fleetwood Mac for their 1975 album, interestingly titled Fleetwood Mac?
- 2) Who won the 1994 Best Actress Oscar for her part in Blue Sky?
- 3) In which Andrew Lloyd Webber musical did Jason Donovan take the lead in 1991?
- 4) Who was the second President of the United States of America?
- 5) Who played keyboards in The Doors?
- 6) If you drove from Land's End to John O'Groats how many miles would you travel?
- 7) What was Woody Guthrie's real name?
- 8) In bingo, which number is called as Stop And Run?
- 9) What did jazz star Charlie Mingus die of?
- 10) Whose horse was called Copenhagen?
- 11) Which singer did Paul Simon marry in 1992?
- 12) What does the American military term DEFCON stand for?
- 13) With which group did the German World Cup soccer squad score a Euro hit in 1994?
- 14) Which is the London Underground's longest line?
- 15) Who released the 1971 album Black Moses?
- 16) What was the name of Jane Seymour's character in the Bond film Live And Let Die?
- 17) Which band had members called Licorice and Rose?
- 18) Whose catchphrase was "Hello, my darlings!"?
- 19) In Cockney rhyming slang, what are Lionel Blairs?
- 20) Which band was originally known as Dean Ford & The Gaylords?

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Answers to last month's quiz were as follows:

1) Oscar Wilde's Salome 2) Enrico Caruso 3) Honour thy father and mother 4) 9 ladies dancing 5) Teddy's Parlour - no, it's Fortnum & Mason 6) Jack Bruce 7) FitzRoy 8) Billericay 9) Monkey 10) William Booth 11) Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude 12) Tony Hatch 13) China 14) Reg Presley 15) they're golf clubs 16) Malcolm McLaren, New York Dolls 17) George 18) Norma Waterson 19) Inter Continental Ballistic Missile 20) Warren Zevon