

The Convertible Bus Has A New Garage

The title inspiration comes from Steve Green, whose response this was to learning that I've moved (address in the indicia at the end). I now have space to put up all my books (my academic ones that is — my SF collection still largely resides in my mother's loft, but they're mostly embarrassing *Star Trek* novels anyway) but worry constantly about whether I can actually afford the rent.

Apologies to anyone who should have got *Convertible Bus* 3 but didn't; my laptop died in the New Year, taking irretrievably with it my mailing list (and a half-written LoC to *Banana Wings* that will now never see the light of day).

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No, no, break the mould!

I feel terribly 'fannish' at the moment, in that I'm actually producing this in order To Have A Fanzine For Eastercon.¹ Normally I produce these after cons, since cons provide me with the material (and I may well do another *Convertible Bus* for the May First Thursday). But for reasons even I can't entirely fathom, I thought I'd get one ready for Easter, and dole them out to all the people I can remember are on my mailing list, just like Proper Fans do. (Hmm, that all seems a touch cynical. Sorry, it must just be the mood I'm in.)

Having seen the programme for Paragon, I'm looking forward to it even more than I already was. Not only will I get to renew lots of old acquaintances, but there are **actually programme items I want to go to**. I shan't name them, for fear of disappointment all round, but I don't think I've ever seen such an interesting Eastercon programme.

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¹ I also feel as if I'm fannish name-dropping like there's no tomorrow. That may just be me worrying at my own presumption, but there is at least one bit in here that will make no sense to anyone who doesn't read a particular set of UK fanzines.

I saw two shooting stars last night ...

I was lucky enough to hear the *Today* programme's interview with a New Zealand fisherman who had been in the area of the Pacific that *Mir* had come down in. The gist of the conversation was as follows (jazzed up for comic effect):

TODAY: So, did you see anything when *Mir* burnt up?

FISHERMAN: No, it was foggy.

TODAY: Did you hear anything?

FISHERMAN: No.

TODAY: So did you take any special precautions?

FISHERMAN: No, I left New Zealand in January. First I heard of *Mir* coming down was last week.

You couldn't make it up (and I didn't).

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Oh, spooky

I have a ghost in the new flat that opens the kitchen door late at night while I'm working in the living room on my computer (it's done it just now). I wouldn't mind, but it lets in a draught.

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(In)Fame at last?

I appeared for the second time in the pages of *Parakeet* last Christmas. This leads me to wonder: now that enough people have been given conclusive proof of the existence of Noel Collyer, Pat McMurray and even Tobes Valois, am I the next person to become part of what Dave Hicks describes as "the *Banana Wings* sitcom cast"? Will people refuse to believe that Mark and Claire haven't made me up? Will they be suspected of writing *Convertible Bus* pseudonymously in a sort of Paul McCartney/Bernard Webb/Peter and Gordon scheme?² Time

² Oh, all right then. Paul McCartney wanted to see if Beatles music would sell if people didn't know it was Beatles music, so wrote a song called 'Woman' for Peter and Gordon under the pseudonym Bernard Webb. Doesn't everyone know that? (It sold okay,

will tell. Of course, I fully understand that I will never be more than The Dull Guy Who Dates Phoebe to Noel's Chandler. I know my place.

But I deny that I ever do anything "sternly".

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'Please return to your seats ...'

Fiumicino airport is possibly the least efficient I have ever come across (and I've been through JFK!). Not only did it take an unconscionable time to get my luggage after flying in, but it took them *one and a half hours* to find the in-flight catering for the return trip.

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Yet these people built an empire

Largely as a result of a conversation with Tanya Brown, I'm re-reading Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Lantern Bearers*. The gist of the conversation was that I took the view that *The Silver Branch*, the second of the *Three Legions* trilogy that begins with *Eagle of the Ninth*, was the best, whilst Tanya upheld the claims of the last, *The Lantern Bearers*.³ Just under halfway through, and I rather have to admit Tanya was right. It's delightfully written throughout, but I have to mention the way Sutcliff presents the Saxon raiders one-dimensionally through the eyes of a young Roman, and then, by having that Roman spend two years as thrall to a Jute, shows that the picture is not as simple as the hero had thought.

but sold much better when it was revealed that McCartney had written it.)

On consideration, perhaps it would be more of a Stephen King/Richard Bachmann thing, i.e. adopt a pseudonym when you don't want to write well.

³ Pedantry compels me to mention that her adult (and sadly rather unreadable, I thought) Arthurian novel, *Sword at Sunset* shares some characters with *The Lantern Bearers*, and descendants of the central family of the *Three Legions* sequence turn up in two later novels, *Dawn Wind* and *The Shield Ring*. (*Sword at Sunset*, a depiction of the Arthur story stripped of all romantic elements and set against a background of mid-fifth century Britain should not be confused with her Arthurian trilogy, *The Sword and the Circle*, *The Light Beyond The Forest* and *The Road To Camlann*, which retell the story with all the Malorian romantic trappings. And which I haven't read.)

Of course, the historian in me wants to quibble at the details (a major plot point in the novel is the withdrawal of Roman troops from Britain, whereas what actually happened was simply that the Empire stopped paying them, and I could fill a whole fanzine with things that are wrong in *The Eagle of the Ninth*), but as my friend Robin said to me, Sutcliff has a fine sense of *Romanitas*; the books just *feel* right. Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* is much the same — the story is complete historical nonsense, and many of the details are incorrect, but the sense of the arena is spot-on.

(I think Tanya and I agree that Sutcliff's best work of all is the tremendous *Mark of the Horse Lord*.)

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Vectoring

I'm being pedantic *again*, I know, but do you think the *Banana Wings* crew meant to write in their review of SF Fandom in 2000 that "*Tortoise* slipped to triennial from its former quarterly schedule"? That's a biiiiig slip. Trouble is, I don't think there's anything better than "thrice-yearly" for what I assumed they intended to say.

Did anyone else get a special edition of *Vector* 216 with pages 3 and 34 totally blank?

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Final thought: why, just as I am assailed by doubt as to whether Pat is 'McMurray' or 'MacMurray', does it suddenly become impossible to find anything with his name printed in it?

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<p>The Convertible Bus No. 4 comes from the word-processor that still works of Tony (or "Terry", as my niece insists) Keen, 15 Heathbridge, Heathbridge Approach, Brooklands Road, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0UN (note COA), and is inconsequential even by my standards. E-mail: keentony@hotmail.com. Thanks to Alison Freebairn for kind comments. Any resemblance to a drunk Ian Sorenson is purely coincidental. Doug, you'll get your fiver at Second and not before. The <i>Convertible Bus</i> is not a Croydon fanzine, as it doesn't want to win a Nova anyway.</p>
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