

FANZINES 10

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By Ted White

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PLOKTA (Steve Davies, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, Berks RG30 2RP, UK & Alison Scott, 24 St Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, UK editors of the paper version; Mike Scott, 9 Jagger House, Rosenau Road, London SW11 4QY, UK editor of the web version at www.plokta.com; e-mail: locs@plokta.com; available for letters of comment, fanzines in trade, contributions, “editorial whim, or for a baby-proof reset switch for Steve’s computer;” no price given)

Plokta is a clever fanzine. It flashes its cleverness at you visually with studio-professional-looking design and layout, taking full advantage of the potentials of DTP. The cover of the latest issue, #24, is a clever mockup of a cereal box – perhaps more recognizable in its parody to British readers, since this *is* a British fanzine – and chock-full of clever puns and allusions (starting with “Universal Cereal Bus” and the USB symbol and including “With Added Thionite” and “Free! Plokta Action Figure writes! prints! collates! staples! Nine to Collect!”). The two *Plokta* children, in Teletubby guise, are the central figures under the motto, “Wireless Networking for Kids,” with lightning striking their head antennae.

This is carried over into a box on the contents page which tells us that “Serving size” is “16 pages,” “Servings per packet: 1,” and a list of percentages: “Bollocks - 100%, Babies - 120%, Strontium-90 - 50%, Angst - Trace.” Thus are life’s domestic joys – babies, children – mixed in with computer-cleverness, a fair indication of what this fanzine is made of.

The actual written material would read well in any fanzine, but seems almost incongruous in this setting. The editorial describes life in a tent at a music festival – complete with photos of the tent being erected. Jaine Weddell describes acquiring a bread machine, likening her cooking to alchemy. Alison Scott writes about the invasion of her house by a mouse and pigeons. Sue Mason tells three short anecdotes about long-lost items returning to her via circuitous routes. Steven Cain writes about bicycling. Steve Davies describes getting lost in Hyde Park. And amid these close-focused, personal pieces the issue’s centerpiece is Alasdair Mackintosh’s “If Life Gives You Citroens, Make Lemonade.” This piece reads like it was written for a professional magazine – *Time* or *Newsweek*, say – and is an excellent (if brief) story of the invention and history of the Citroen DS, a revolutionary car of the mid-’50s which is now obsolete but still fascinatingly unique. I have no idea what this piece is doing in *Plokta*, or indeed in any fanzine, but I was glad for the opportunity to read it.

There are in addition clever little bits scattered through the issue under the title of “Bollocks,” three and a half pages of letters (in four narrow columns of type per page),

and the backcover presents captioned photos from the wedding of Jo Walton and Emmet O'Brien in Hay on Wye.

In past issues *Plokta's* cleverness has included CD-ROMs and its website has always been an active adjunct to the paper fanzine. For what it is, *Plokta* is probably the most accomplished fanzine I've yet reviewed in this column.

—Ted White