



Jim Mowatt

Friday 10th April

Eastercon LX2009

My Convention

So, here we are at Eastercon. It's been a whole year since we were scurrying about in the maze of twisty passages that were the Radisson Edwardian at Heathrow. I must admit I'm a little apprehensive about this convention as the attendees are all scattered around the city and we're relying upon the trusty convention bus service to gather us all in and then fling everyone out again to their respective places of accommodation. There are so many possibilities for screw ups, cock ups and general mayhem that are brought into play with this extra layer of difficulty. Hopefully by the time we get to the end of the convention my prophecies of doom, gloom and misery will have been proven to be greatly exaggerated.

I'm also a little dismayed that Dirk Maggs has not been able to attend. I'm a great admirer of his work and consider him something of a magician when it comes to creating stunning works of audio. He's also a real bundle of energy who spreads sweetness and joy wherever he goes. He'll be sorely missed. I'd just like to make it plain here though that despite my effervescing enthusiasm I do not wish to bear his children. As far as I'm concerned, talent does not necessarily translate to shagging rights nor does it alter the laws of nature.

Looking back there that all looks a bit downbeat. I am, actually, looking forward this convention with hope, enthusiasm and a veritable amount of joy in my heart. Happy Eastercon to all.

Beeblebear Picnic

Over the past couple of years I've been organising meetings for the Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy Appreciation Society, ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha and I've infiltrated the convention with another of our meetings. We'll be bringing our cuddly 3 armed, 2 headed teddy bears (Beeblebears) to a picnic in the real ale bar, near the dealers room at 15:30 on Saturday. We've found they don't eat much so it's unlikely we'll be bringing them any food, but we're



convinced that they really do enjoy watching us drink beer so we'll be doing plenty of that. The proceedings then usually devolve into our talking complete bollox for some considerable time. We've never come up with a satisfactory answer for why that happens and decided it's probably a law of nature or something ... You're all welcome to come along. Our bollox is your bollox.

ZZ9 will also be manning a dealer table where you can buy your very own Beeblebear for the paltry sum of 23 pounds. There will also be wonderful and worthwhile membership forms on display for your delight and delectation.



What would you send into Space?

I was listening to a podcast recently and they were talking about the gold disc that Carl Sagan, Anna Druyan and many others made all those years ago to send on the Voyager spacecraft. It contained many beautiful sounds and music that were intended to give any alien who encountered it an audible vision of earth. This is obviously interesting, but it is very old news so you may wonder why I mention it now. Well, I was amused that in this

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podcast the interviewer asked Neil Gaiman what he would send into space if the opportunity arose. As you might imagine, Neil didn't disappoint and managed to produce some wickedly bizarre suggestions.

Neil Gaiman: "I like the idea that an alien race would try to find out what we were like by watching the Wizard of Oz. There's a strangeness and a hope and an oddness to that film – and some really cool songs."

Not content with bamboozling the aliens with the Wizard of Oz Neil continued:

"One thing I'd love to send the aliens just because I love the idea of thousands upon thousands of brilliant alien social scientists trying to decode it is the English television series, 'The Office'."

He's a cruel man that Neil Gaiman.

He also went on to suggest he'd like to send them Lou Reed's Street Hassle and the Arabian Nights.

"It would give them a very skewed view of the world as this place that is based around 11th century Baghdad but that may not be such a bad thing."

So that's lions, tigers, bears, robots, Kansas, insecure middle managers, prostitutes, drug addicts, 11th century Arabian fishermen and princesses. That's quite a world.

He did want to send them Shakespeare, and if he could only send one line it would be: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of."

He's awfully good with the quotes that Shakespeare guy.

Of course I couldn't help wondering what I might send to the aliens and came up with a few possibilities that I think might keep all those alien social scientists amused and intrigued for many millennia. The first in my list has to be a recording from the 1950's and 60's radio show, 'Round the Horne'. Decoding lines such as:

Horne: But did you manage to drag yourself up on deck?

Julian: Ooh no, we dressed quite casual... would be a feat indeed.

I'd also send them the film 'Queen of the Damned.' Even if they couldn't figure out what was happening maybe they'd enjoy the music.

And of course I too would want to send them Shakespeare and if I could send just a tiny snippet I would send them this:

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason. How infinite in faculty. In form, in moving, how express and admirable. In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god. The beauty of the world; the paragon of animals. And yet to me what is

this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me.

Hamlet I always find an intensely frustrating character. He can see the beauty of the world and yet will not embrace it. If the aliens can decode this play they would find a very vivid character in this conflicted Prince of Denmark.

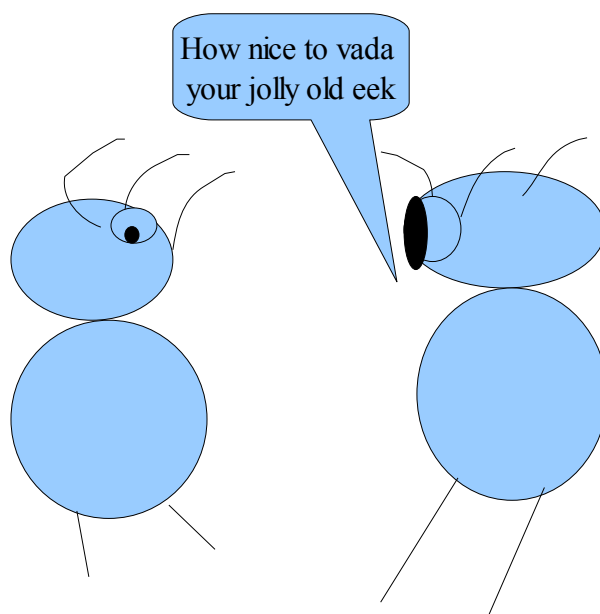
And what did we learn from this boys and girls?

Well, I think we learned that neither myself nor Neil Gaiman should be called up to deal with first contact unless we're involved in a deliberate policy of trying to confuse the aliens.

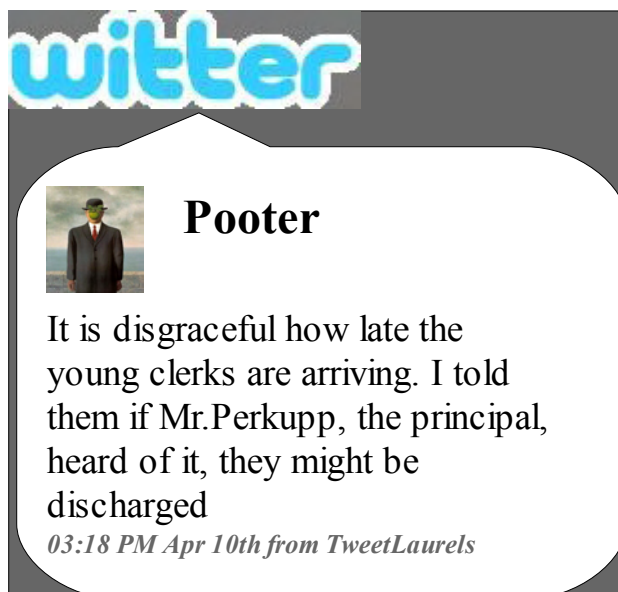
So, what would you send to the alien races?

I'd be fascinated to hear.

If you get the urge to leave me any correspondence then please do so at the ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha dealer table.



Until next time ...



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