



Volume 1, Issue 9 – September 2010

'Greetings, greetings, fellow stargazers,' as Jack Horkheimer, *Star Hustler* and later *Star Gazer* used to say. He passed away on 20 August and I had already written quite a bit about another late, great personality for this fine issue, and thus I will talk more about him in the next issue. I've been fighting a battle with some local motorcyclists who have obviously illegally modified their motors to make as much noise as possible, joyriding around at all hours of the night. So it's been very frustrating, calling the police and then of course, the perps stop doing it when they see the cops; trying to get registration numbers when they whizz past you (and one of them doesn't have a registration number, indicating it's likely stolen), never sure it's the same person(s) doing it. My ward councillor has got involved, and the saga continues. The Hot August Nights (such as they weren't) have turned into September Morns so hopefully not much more leaving the windows open, anyway, but I'm telling you, in full 'Victor Meldrew' mode, it's the *principle* of the thing.

Now, in my sleep-deprived state, we soldier bravely on... SPOILERS are deffo a possibility here.

Dipping the Toe into Network DVD

The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club

Thanks to the wonderful Network DVD, I have been watching *The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club*. I wasn't really sure what to expect, but hubby told me to watch it and I have found I like it very much, for any number of reasons. I like looking at the 1970s haircuts and mutton chops in the audience; the ladies in their horrible shades of green; I like the variety show format and *The Gong Show*-esque alarm bell. I like finding out where I may know the song but not the artist, or the artist but not the song. The former happened when 'Try a Little Kindness' was sung, as well as 'Someone to Give My Love To,' which I know from Glenn Campbell and Johnny 'Take This Job and Shove It' Paycheck, respectively. The latter happened when I saw Lonnie Donegan jumping around and singing, and Gene Pitney singing a song I didn't know, but finishing on his 'Hello, Mary Lou.' Or even better than both, a twofer: Bill Haley and the Comets singing 'Rock Around the Clock,' and Bernard Manning singing 'The Lullaby of Broadway.' I like seeing how the balancing acts and acrobats contained women with much more hourglass-looking figures than today, who are quite able to balance perfectly without looking like anorexic waifs. I also like how everything has to be referred to the 'comMITtee' and a 'resoLUtion' passed – a bit like getting anything done in any organisation in real life, really. Then in the second lot of discs, Roy Orbison shows up!

I went an entire edition without knowing any of the artists or songs, except the last one: The Bachelors singing 'The Battle of New Orleans.' I was a little surprised and sang along, and quickly realised they were singing something different ... 'We fired our guns and the British kept a-comin,' it goes, by a wealth of Google search confirmations and my own memory of the Johnny Horton version. But The Bachelors, for some crazy reason, are singing 'the Rebels kept a-comin.' I thought, wow, some interesting revisionist history going on there, as it's about an historical

event in (wait for it!) The War of 1812. I was shocked indeed. Reading the Wikipedia entry on 'The Battle of New Orleans,' someone has written regarding the song: 'The version by Johnny Horton topped the Billboard Hot 100 in 1959, while the same version (with one profane word changed) by British singer Lonnie Donegan reached #2 in the British charts in the same year.' Why didn't someone sing 'Sink the Bismarck' instead, when we were all on the same side?

I also hate the ridiculously sexist content, with strippers in a club, when the audience contains a lot of women. I was more than a little shocked to hear some utterly racist comment coming from funny black man Charlie Williams, and he was laughing at it. I am quite able to figure out that it was the 1970s and this was a completely different era, politically and sexually, so it is now a period piece and so I takes the good with the bad. At one point there was a rather obvious edit, with a two-man group standing and playing their instruments. One was talking and suddenly the heads moved in a jump cut, which was so close to their original positions in frame that it suggested they were hoping you may not notice if you blinked. One wonders what it was that was edited out and why; political sensitivity or correctness? (They couldn't release any of this show if they were trying to be politically correct). Maybe it was a now poor-taste joke with a reference to a person who died in tragic circumstances? Maybe it was the reliable old stand-by, 'lawyers threatening because someone quoted the lyrics to a song and the royalty fee was too high so we'll just edit it out and avoid the problem altogether.' I was going to say, 'musta been a Beatles song they couldn't clear,' but then, bo and lehold, the second series of DVDs contained no less than: 'Can't Buy Me Love,' 'With A Little Help From My Friends,' and 'When I'm Sixty-Four.' Does anyone know who the editors are who've seen the masters (likeliest on U-Matics), so I can ask them what was edited out directly? ☺

The Galton and Simpson Playhouse

The other thing I have Network DVD to thank for this month. It is great fun to watch, but one quickly realises that all of these stories are very formulaic: it's either an aspirational 'crank' which nobody can stand like *Hancock*, or the aspirational duos trapped in their situations like *Steptoe and Son*. It's great to watch Leonard Rossiter argue for a full half hour about whether or not a programme contained Burt Reynolds; it was like arguing with a *Doctor Who* fan for an age (but I would have given up much, much sooner!). It was painful indeed, but not modern painful, cringeworthy 'any real person wouldn't do this' excruciating kind of comedy like Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant. Everybody hates Rossiter's character and he drops in unannounced on a family gathered around the TV, drinking their beer and later eating their food. In another edition, Roy Kinnear is a husband whose wife has left him, and he cannot find any solace in any of his so-called friends, because it turns out that they all secretly hate him, too. In a little twist on the 'ostracised bloke' theme, poor Richard Briers is left out of the apparent 'swingers club' gathering, and the punchline is that his wife, who wasn't supposed to know about it, takes part instead.

Another play contains a couple of guys sitting together in the pub and one immediately assumes that they are a gay couple by their conversation and interaction, having lived together for years. It's just a variation on Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple*, without the familial relationships of *Steptoe*. They actually make light of this automatic assumption; one of the couple says that everyone thinks they are a gay couple ('poofers,' actually), and it's made clear that they are not. There was a part of me that was a little sad that any kind of ambiguity is removed in this day and age – it would just be assumed and understood by the viewer, and it would be so obviously correct that they were a gay couple, that nothing more would be stated about it. I guess assumptions are immediately made with human nature and confirmation bias at work. Surely there's such a thing as a 'man-crush' or a 'bromance,' right? - or even just the much simpler 'bloke housemates.'

The Truth is Stranger than Fiction by contributor, Anthony S.

Something happened to me a couple of days ago to make me re-think about the way we think about fame. I was walking down the street towards work. I turned the corner and there, a few steps ahead of me and heading in my direction was someone I recognised. We looked at each other, gave each other a nod and said 'good morning' before continuing. Yet there was something inside me that wanted to say that something significant had happened. For crying out loud, I just recognised someone in the street that I have seen on TV. So what is the big deal?

Programmes like *Doctor Who* give us a perspective in which to look at our world. Apart from being just mere entertainment, it gives us global points of reference, anchors around which interaction takes place. It's a force of change, both good and, unfortunately, bad. Many celebrities have much too much press concerning their bad points. But like an MP can influence the country in the way it works, the actor influences the way the country thinks. So to actually meet one of these influences excites us.

At the end of July, a few friends and I attended one of the new, adults only 'Lates' at the Science Museum. That night they had the *Bang Goes the Theory* team in doing some guest presentations. For those who do not know the programme it is described on the BBC website as such:

It is, says presenter Dallas Campbell, a show for 'anyone who is remotely curious about life, the Universe and pretty much everything.'

Now that's a pretty broad scope, but what Bang Goes the Theory aims to do is look at how science shapes the world around us, in an engaging and relevant way. It's about making science fascinating - and fun.

And the way the team achieve that, says editor Dermot Caulfield, is by rolling up their sleeves, sticking their hands in the dirt, and finding out 'why, what or where science is happening.'



*The presenters travel the world for scientific breakthroughs, whether they're in cosmology, zoology, medicine or any other field. And then it's back to base - a disused supersonic wind tunnel turned retro-futuristic workshop, **by the people behind Dr Who** - to show science in action.*

Anyway, as we moved around the Museum we walked into the forensics exhibition. We stood at the first table having a look at dye signatures. The person working at the table had her back to us and was hunched over her handbag. You always know a real handbag! You can never find anything in it any quicker than about five minutes. A handbag in which you can find stuff is not a real handbag.

Suddenly realising that she had people at the table she turned round. There, in the flesh, was Liz Bonnin! It took a lot of self-control not to burst into a crazy kid-like grin. Inside, something was going 'Aaaah! That's her! That's Liz!' After her demonstration and before turning to the next table I managed to get a 'You are all really great! Thank you for doing this!' out.

Apart from the uncomfortable unevenness of this social mix ('I know everything about your TV persona but you know nothing about me') there was something else that struck me. The people at the face of a programme are visible, but their greatness comes from the hundreds of people in the background sweating blood and tears. Yes – I know, they get paid to do that, but then, so do the actors themselves, so it should be no different. But you don't walk down the road and think 'Oh my God! That's the Sound Mixer from *Doctor Who*!' It just does not happen. The *Confidential* features lend a hand towards sharing some of that fame, but one wonders whether there is altruistic reasoning behind them, or is it just an attempt to get a piece of the fame cake?

Back to a few days ago; I walked past this someone who actually made a difference in the real world. Now there was no orchestra in the background playing the Imperial March from *Star Wars*, no dark clouds or Storm Troopers following this Lord. Instead it was just another ordinary soul who through circumstance and hard work actually did something that changes lives. Sorry, there is no room for debate here on whether the difference was good or bad, we'll leave that to *Private Eye*. But it did bring to light another point. He's just a human as you or I!

That means that you too can make a difference. It just needs a little sweat and motivation, and perhaps a fortuitous circumstance or two and you too can create that focal point around which society swings. And it does not matter really if you get noticed for it, or whether there is another face to that change. What matters is the end result.



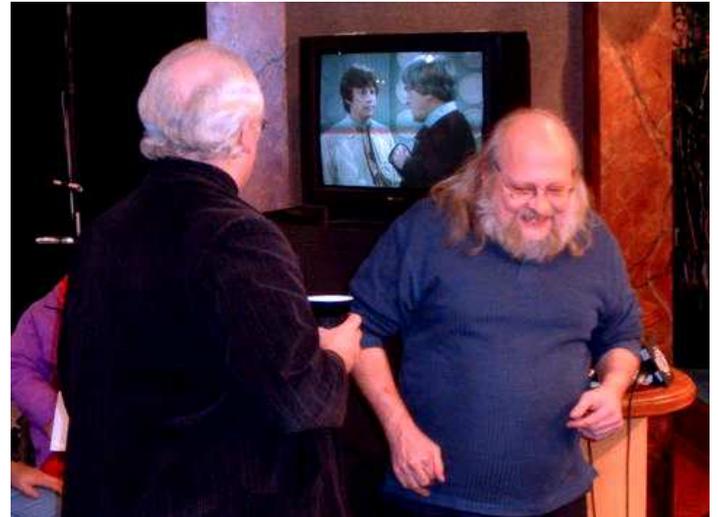
Perfect for that last meal

(before regeneration)

Shiraz Jek

Michael Frisbie

Who in the smeg is Michael Frisbie, you ask? I've mentioned him on occasion in this publication, and at the last Tavern, a displaced Midwestern fan asked me about him and I had to inform him that, sadly, Mike had passed away a couple of years ago. Therefore I thought it was high time I paid a little tribute to him in fond memory.



*Left: A screen grab of Mike Frisbie with Colin Baker, at Iowa Public Television (IPTV) for the Doctor Who 40th anniversary celebration and pledge drive in late 2003. Right: A photo of Colin Baker with his back to us, engrossed in *The Two Doctors*, and Mike Frisbie looking positively gleeful beside him.*

Mike Frisbie was a local Iowa DJ and arts appreciator who somehow fell into hosting Iowa Public Television's Sci-Fi Friday (later Saturday) Night, aka, SFFN, which I've discussed many-a-time now, containing *Red Dwarf*, *Blake's 7*, *Doctor Who*, *Neverwhere*, *The Invisible Man*, *Star Cops*, and various other sci-fi and British things. (Unofficial fan site for posterity: <http://www.sffn.com>). At its height, this block of programming would consist of: one episode of *Red Dwarf*, an episode of *Blake's 7* and 2 episodes of *Doctor Who*. Mike was a part of a fine American tradition of local TV late-night hosted horror theatres; ours just happened to be a slightly different genre than horror. He would write a little bit of banter to introduce the programme editions, usually being 2-4 episodes of various programmes per block, as explained. Long before I met him in person, I was pretty well convinced he owned *The Doctor Who Programme Guide* by Jean-Marc Lofficier, and *The Discontinuity Guide* by Cornell, Day, and Topping, as he would often be able to reference the production notes and mistakes contained. Having said this, there is no doubt he knew exactly what he was talking about. He would float around the screen in front of an *After Dark* screensaver in various interesting costumes, looking a bit like Tom Baker or Sherlock Holmes in tweed, or, later on in his tenure, suits provided by a local vintage clothing shop. Sometimes he was standing, but most often he was sitting, sometimes cross-legged, in front of a green screen. I am not sure when he started doing this, but it had to be at least 1995 or 1996, as he announced on air when Jon Pertwee had died, and I probably wouldn't have found out otherwise because I lived down in the

boondocks. (I have some moles digging around for this 'start date info' for me but alas 'twas not available at press time.) He also worked at Borders Books and Music bookstore in West Des Moines, and my mother and I would shop there from time to time. She would politely wrangle for a teacher discount with him at the till and he would graciously provide.

I didn't know Mike very well personally and he didn't take too active a part in our Iowa *Doctor Who* fan groups. Despite numerous invitations to our fan group meetings, he never attended, and I got the impression he didn't want to be seen to be 'fraternising with the natives' a little too much when we fans came together and saw him at IPTV studios. Still, I never had a bad word to say about his behaviour toward us as fans or about his customer service at the bookstore, and he'd go for a fag break outside with the fans who smoked.

A fan of his from a former incarnation when he wrote an underground publication entitled *Daily Planet*, Mark G, wrote a very good blog post about him when he heard about his passing, and he re-posted an obituary alongside, with a rather upsetting picture of Mike. (Notice the obit capitalised all of 'WHO,' methinks someone was confusing it with the Des Moines news station, WHO Radio, or WHO-TV, the local NBC affiliate!) I had a nice warm feeling to learn that even Mike wrote for underground/amateur publications. As follows:

11 July 2008

Mike Frisbie was the defining voice of Iowa counterculture in the '70s, holding our hand, assuring us we'd survive the trip from rock to disco, Reagan and beyond. He was *the* writer at *the* countercultural alt weekly in Iowa. Each week I awaited his next column, never was I disappointed. In person and on paper Mike had a dry wit, sly smile and a fantastical grasp of the sh** we were in, politically, sociologically and culturally.

It saddens me I can't find anything of Mike's to share with you. All I've found online are the wrong Mike Frisbies. My Mike was a dead tree guy. He had a cunning Welsh face, and despite being generations removed from the old country, he acted as if he'd escaped the mines by the skin of his teeth.

For what it's worth, the Mike Frisbie I knew had a huge influence on my writing, putting him on a short list with Donald Kaul, Erma Bombeck, Art Buchwald, Tom Wolfe, Molly Ivins and Mark Twain. Not on the wee end of that list either — Mike did great radio and I don't think Mark Twain could make that boast.

It humbles me to know that millions of my blogged (i.e., first draft) words could survive on the internet for aeons in various digital archives even as the number of surviving *Daily Planets* drops from the hundreds to the dozens to maybe an elaborately preserved lone copy at the Andy Warhol Museum of Endowed Museums.

If you've still got some *Daily Planets* please scan them into digital files. You have no idea how many people would love to spend a rainy afternoon browsing through old issues of underground newspapers, alt weeklies, zines, APAs, etc., etc.

The last time I saw Mike was the mid-80s. Over the years I thought of him now and then — he was a good guy to hang out with. Back in the day we were both chimneys. I quit in the '80s but I'm guessing Mike didn't. Frankly, seeing that picture with the oxygen tubes hurts more than a little.

Mike was living in Clear Lake, but his passing reminds me that I need to get back to Des Moines to catch up with a hell of a lot of people I haven't seen or talked to in a long, long time.

I guess I never realized that the friends you make are friends for life, even if you go a quarter-century without talking to them. I can't tell you how much I'd like to be able to read some of Mike's old columns right now. I was, and am, a huge fan.

Michael Charles Frisbie



CLEAR LAKE - Michael "Mike" Charles Frisbie, 60, of Clear Lake, formerly of Des Moines, passed away Wednesday (July 9, 2008) at Mercy Medical Center-North Iowa in Mason City.

Due to his wishes his body was cremated. Memorials can be directed to the family or the Clear Lake Public Library.

Mike was born Jan. 4, 1948, in Chicago, Ill., the son of Charles H. and Ila Jean (Walker) Frisbie.

Mike graduated from Clear Lake High School in 1966. He attended Drake University in Des Moines, where he was very active in theater. Mike wrote and helped publish an underground newspaper called the Daily Planet. He

taught the history of rock 'n' roll at Drake and also worked for public television and hosted the Dr. WHO Show.

Mike was a disc jockey on Des Moines radio station KFM6 FM. After retiring from television he worked for Bordes' Bookstore in Des Moines. Mike moved back to Clear Lake in 2007.

He enjoyed his books, music and old movies, and was the founder of the Nosferatu society, and was president of Nosferatu Productions.

Mike is survived by his parents, C.H. and Ila Jean Frisbie of Clear Lake; sister, Diane (Bruce) Rich of Sacramento, Calif.; two daughters: Megan and Brahwen of Des Moines; nephew, Nick Frisbie; uncle, Bob Walker, Mason City; cousin, Nancy (Chuck) Conroy; and good friend Dennis (Lillie) Keith, all of Clear Lake.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, brother Dave and sister Jill.

Ward-Van Slyke Colonial Chapel, 101 N. Fourth St., Clear Lake, www.colonialchapels.com.

Back to me, your editor. When Mike Frisbie passed away, IPTV had long since dispensed with 'Sci-Fi Saturday Night.' But they paid a very short tribute to him after *Doctor Who* (also illustrating the green screen and screensavers), which I think is a very fitting end to this fond reverie.



The Very Last of the Summer Wine

I made a special point to watch this – being a massive sitcom enthusiast and self-appointed expert, there is no way I'm going to miss the last episode of the world's longest running sitcom, nor any chance to smack a self-absorbed American enthusiast or self-appointed American expert with the fact that it *is* the world's longest-running sitcom and it's not American. It was very poor. It wasn't even a good episode of the programme, let alone a good final episode. My understanding is that it wasn't written as the final episode, which isn't too shocking. But it was just painful, really, to see a lot of older actors looking ill or too far past it or both – Trevor Bannister, Josephine Tewson, regulars Frank Thornton and Brian Murphy all play, and it became almost a sitcom purgatory. Lest you accuse me of ageism, it certainly wasn't the artistes' fault – a gig's a gig's a gig – and one wonders if someone didn't look at this episode and decide that enough was enough, as it was faaaar too depressing to watch anymore. To give you an idea of the level: the only funny bit was Trevor Bannister getting whacked in the 'nads. Even more upsetting was the way *The One Show* pretended to care on Bank Holiday Monday, hardly giving it a mention before giving the *American* statistic for the most-watched last episode ever – *M*A*S*H* – before the UK's *Only Fools and Horses* (and we all know how that didn't stay dead). Then, rather than giving the record-holder for the longest-running *scripted* show in history – *Guiding Light* – they give *Meet the Press* in the USA and *Panorama* in the UK, both news and current affairs shows. What do *you* think would have been more appropriate in context?

Farewell *Last of the Summer Wine* (most of all the much missed late cast) and sorry the welcome was so desperately far overstayed. Oh, and goodbye to *The Bill*, too. Actor hubby didn't make it onto that one in the end, but he did make it onto the spinoff show, *Murder Investigation Team*.

Now it's just another show / leave 'em laughin' when you go...



...It's Herb Darlek!

In an effort to try to keep from ending on two sad notes, and with Eddie Izzard's 'aoh feeling,' here is a pic which I'm sure will be ever-so-mildly amusing to American sitcom fans, and any British fan who has ever heard an American mispronounce the word 'Dalek':

For the Regal Beagles and Legal Eagles

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