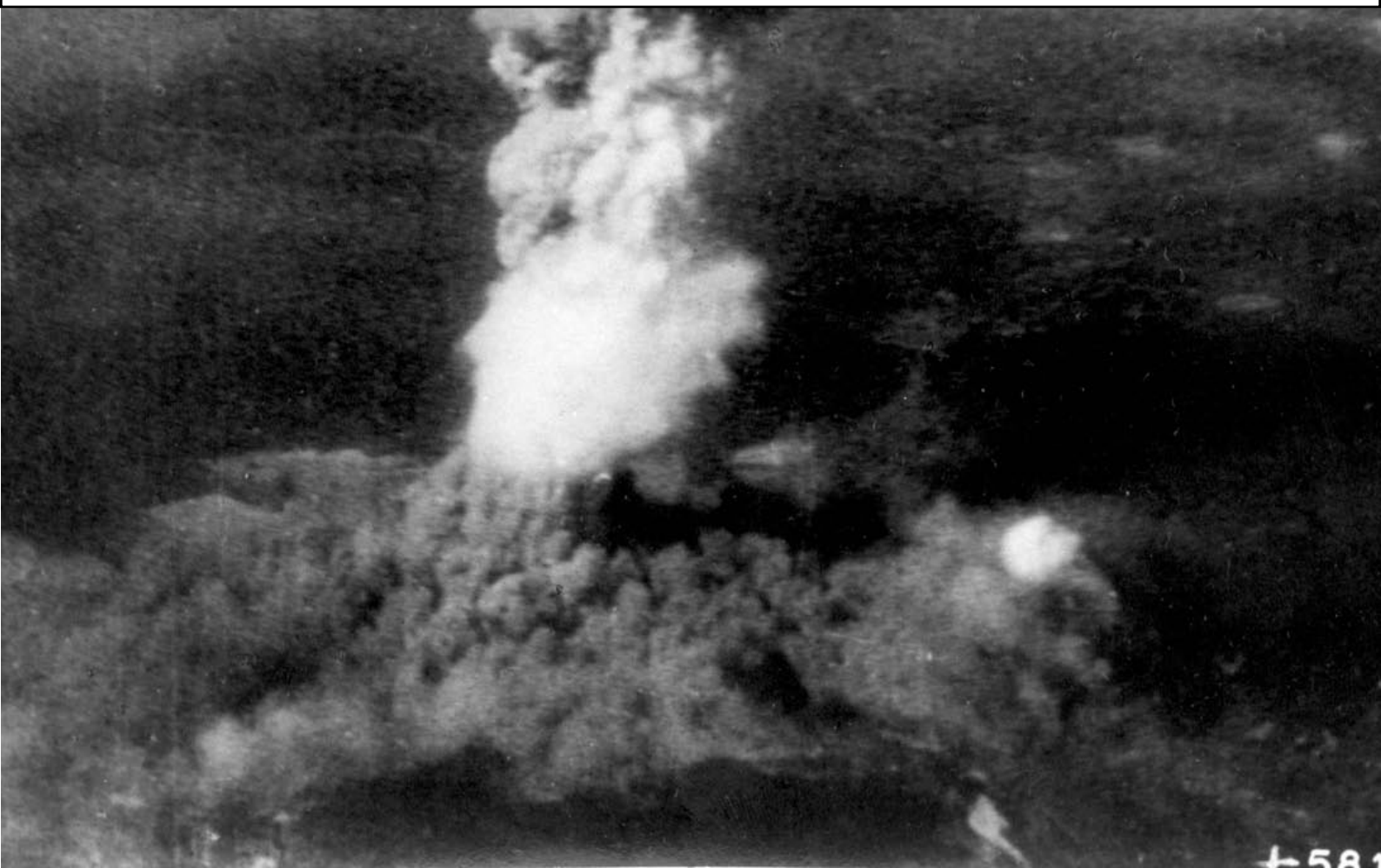




LAWKIT

Life
as we
know it

one



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The poster for the Valley Of Angels Festival features a large, stylized graphic of two figures, one in blue and one in green, appearing to be in motion or dancing. The background is a textured, brownish-gold surface. Text on the poster includes 'free gigs', 'angelic buskers competition', 'guerilla djs', 'exhibits', 'live events', and 'unique venues'. The festival name 'Valley Of Angels FESTIVAL • BANGOR' is written in a large, stylized font, and the dates '6th-7th May 2011' and the website 'www.valleyofangels.co.uk' are at the bottom.

free gigs
angelic buskers competition
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Valley Of Angels
FESTIVAL • BANGOR

6th-7th May 2011

www.valleyofangels.co.uk

LAWKIT

Life
as we
know it

A word from the editor

You may not realise it, but writing is something you spend most of your time on. You and I write paragraphs every day. Text messages, Facebook updates, tweets, shopping lists – tons of stuff. You just don't think much about it because you're actually interested in it.

The Lawkit is an attempt to right this balance. Anyone can submit, and anyone can write. There's no judgement on content. It won't get marked. There's only one real criteria – be interested in what you write about. Because if you don't care about it, frankly there's not much chance anyone else will either.

Maybe you should just get scribbling. Maybe you can tell us about something interesting. Something about politics, or the great outdoors; something about music or something about a gadget; something entertaining.

Something about Life As We Know It.

Holding Hiroshima
Matthew Gamble

What's His Name Again?
Graeme Smyth

You Never Really
Loved It Anyway
Jonathan Kirk

Play It Again, Sam
Peter Huey

Something Tasty
The Food Doctor

Budgeting Budget
Andrew Neill

Contributor's Guide

Thoughts and opinions expressed
inside are solely the property of
their respective authors.

Peter Huey

Holding Hiroshima

by Matthew Gamble

Tuesday 8th March 2011... a day that was to be a truly significant one for a young twenty-something with a keen interest in history, and its meaning in the present day.

As an employee of a heritage centre whose primary function is to educate the young on the need to remember the past, I was suddenly hit with an opportunity to make a connection and indeed relate to an episode of history that surely must never be forgotten.

Our latest exhibition - which is on course for completion at Easter - concerns the Korean conflict of the early 1950s. As part of this exhibition and its link to Northern Ireland, our team was sent to the north coast to interview veterans who served with the Royal Ulster Rifles, a truly fine class of servicemen. On their return from these interviews, I was informed by colleagues that amongst the artefacts donated to the museum for use in the exhibition were five fragments of debris.

Five small fragments of debris which had been lifted from the flattened ruins of Hiroshima, Japan - where, on one devastating August afternoon in 1945, a US Superfortress bomber dropped an Atomic Bomb. Needless to say, you don't need me to tell you what happened next.

Five small fragments of debris which had been lifted from the flattened ruins of Hiroshima, Japan

The dropping of these bombs undoubtedly precipitated the end of the Second World War, which in itself was a very good thing of course, but the cost of life - which has a very conservative estimate of 70,000 - is something which, by our own human nature, cannot be understood, let alone accepted. I have been fortunate to hear firsthand accounts by

On the 6th August 1945 as part of an allied action to end hostilities against the Japanese army the United States deployed the A-Bomb on the city of Hiroshima. Three days later they did the same to Nagasaki.



Image of a watch found in the aftermath of Hiroshima

"I am... the fields overseer, the agents of orange, the priests of Hiroshima, the cost of my desire, sleep now in the fire..."

ex-servicemen on how the continued fighting with the Japanese would have led to hundreds of thousands more deaths had the A-Bombs not been used. Still, the whole episode is one which I can't quite rationalise.

Obviously the veteran who donated these artefacts had acquired them from his active service. Whether he had served with the forces prior to Korea I am not sure, but seeing these items, nestled before me in bubble-wrap, and including ceramics and pottery.

I couldn't help but feel the need to touch what I believed was part of an event in history that we really should never forget

In holding these artefacts in my hands, albeit only for a brief time, I felt the need to take the time to think of those events surrounding the end of the Second War in 1945. Even though in a way holding them was a 'cool experience' the thought hit me that there was a far more important element to it all. These ceramic artefacts were inconsequential to the loss of life and the suffering which had impacted the lives of those who were affected.

For a guy who continually stresses the need to remember those affected by the trenches of the 1910s, it served as a poignant reminder that after One comes Two...

Matt Gamble is a history and archaeology specialist, working in the Somme Heritage Centre, Newtownards. He also harbours an active favouritism for loud, niche music and Swedish Princesses.

What's His Name Again?

by Graeme Smyth

It's estimated that over half the world has seen at least one Bond film – a phenomenal statistic, and one I'm quite certain Ian Fleming himself would never have believed. I want to briefly explore why I think the world's greatest special (he's hardly 'secret', is he?) agent, James Bond, has become the global phenomenon that he has. In order to do this as briefly possible, I will primarily dissect the cinematic Bond, as this is the medium most people are probably familiar with; that said, the source novels by Fleming are excellent, and well worth a go. I've read them all, some of them a few times, and they get better with every read – I suspect that's enough commercial activity.

First, a brief history of the cinematic Bond. After the success of the first novel, *Casino Royale*, in 1953, Fleming suspected that his creation had cinematic potential. He didn't do anything about this for several years. Some draft scripts in the late 1950s, where Fleming collaborated with Irish filmmaker Kevin McClory and British screenwriter Jack Whittingham, ultimately ended up in the courts after the publication of *Thunderball* in 1961, amid allegations that Fleming plagiarised the plot from a script the three co-wrote. (This was ultimately disproven, but only as recently in 2001.) Around the same time, the American film producer Albert R. (Cubby) Broccoli joined with the Canadian producer Harry Saltzman, who had taken out the rights to produce films of Fleming's books. To cut a long story short, they formed EON Productions, hired a young Scottish actor named Sean Connery to play Bond in the first film, *Dr. No* (much, it is rumoured, to Fleming's displeasure, although he later relented) and the rest is history.

That the films would be modestly successful was a natural enough hope – the novels themselves had been, and remain, very popular - but I doubt anyone could ever have foreseen the unparalleled success of the series. Fleming certainly didn't, and he tragically died in the summer of 1964, only weeks before the release of *Goldfinger* saw the series rocket

Bullets, Broads and Bond
Our love affair with 007.

to global success, a victim of his own dissolute living. In the autumn of 1962, *Dr. No* had proven to be a surprise worldwide hit, with a follow-up eagerly anticipated; this came a year or so later with *From Russia, With Love*, which was even more popular. *Goldfinger* in 1964 and *Thunderball* in 1965 pushed the series to epic proportions.

This has carried on more or less unbroken... we have to ask ourselves why?

As we know, this has carried on more or less unbroken since then, with one or two slightly extended periods in-between. We have to ask our-

selves why? After all, it's not that there was, or is, any particular shortage of espionage or action films, most of which also have their quotient of witty one-liners, slightly over-the-top villains and attractive female characters (not to mention the occasional 'vampish' one).

It's obviously a winning formula, and herein lies the rub. Bond films, at least at that time, gave the public what few other opportunities provided them with – genuine escapism. I don't believe anyone will hold it against me when I say that some of the the storylines may play a little with the boundaries of realism.

Bond was more than just another action man. When *Dr. No* and *From Russia, With Love* rolled off the production line in the early 1960s, he was a 'realistic superhero'. Harold MacMillan may have promised Britons that they'd never had it so good, and that was generally true – but it seemed that no-one had it as good as James Bond did. Not only that, but with the gradual weakening of the old certainties (including a rapidly diminishing empire), Bond quickly became a focus for nostalgia, for the way things used to be – he represents the best in British stoicism, illustrated perfectly in *Goldfinger*, when Connery's Bond plants explosives at a heroin plant somewhere in South America after swimming underwater. He then

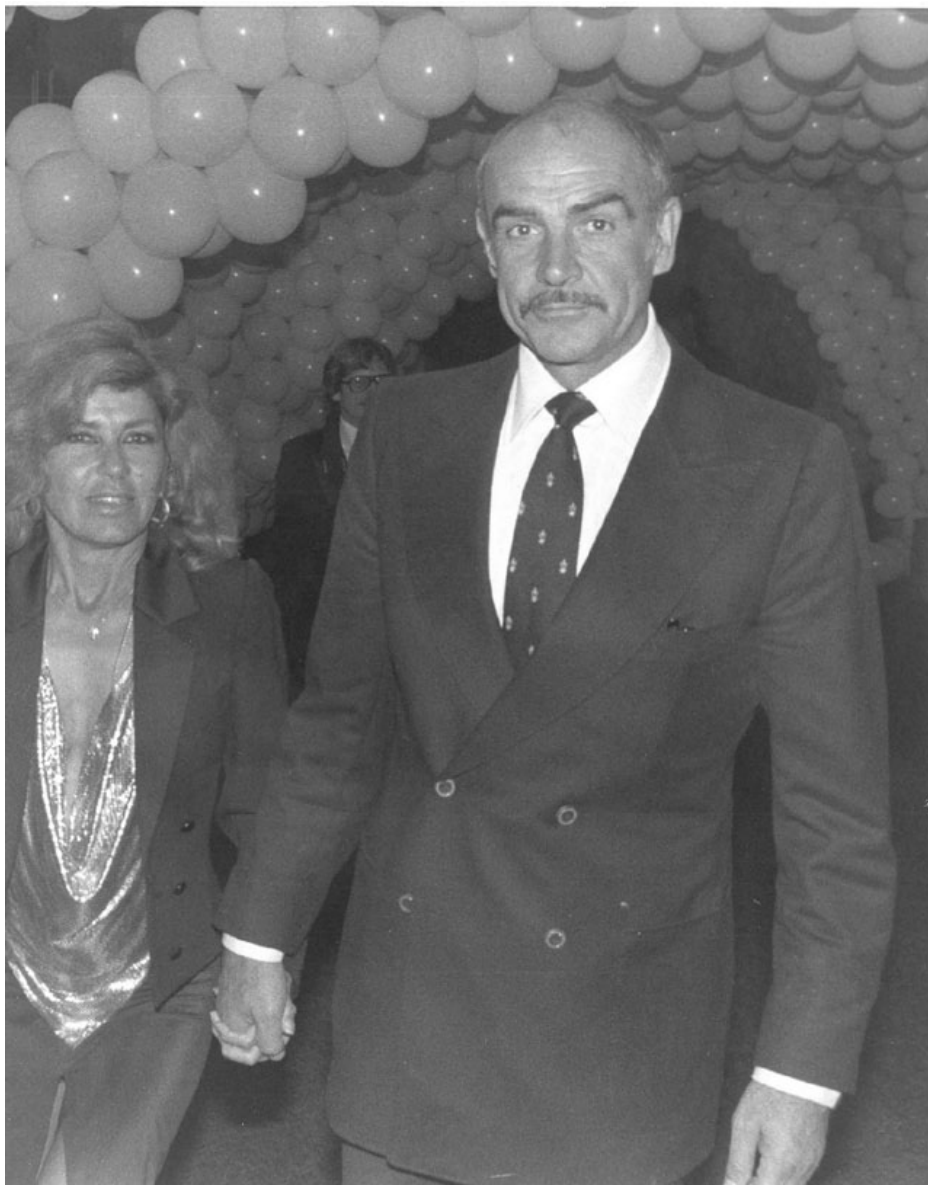
steps out of the water, unzips his wetsuit to display a white dinner jacket and carries on regardless.

So far, the commentary has been very 1960s heavy, but as with so much else in late 20th Century Western culture, that's the decade it all started. It's for the reasons outlined above, plus the much more underwhelming fact that he was the first actor to play the character on the silver screen that dictates why Sean Connery remains many people's definitive Bond, almost fifty years after Dr. No was released. The odds favour any actor impersonating Bond doing so with a Scottish accent, even to this day.

Bond continued his resonance into the following decades too. In 1969, after Connery tired of the role (but before he was tempted back for a one-off return in 1971's *Diamonds Are Forever*) Australian model-turned-actor George Lazenby played the character just once in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Contrary to popular belief, Lazenby put in a decent per-

formance, but was the victim of some duff advice, namely that Bond would never last in the 1970s – it was believed that without Connery, the series would encounter difficulties, and that the future lay with *Easy Rider* and so forth.

In the event, Lazenby walked out on a seven picture deal and never really achieved a career as a leading man. But his brief stint provided some modern cultural icons – the Louis



Armstrong track 'We Have All the Time in the World' has entered the popular imagination and will forever be associated with Bond and Tracy's love scene, which of course ends so tragically.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the character moved with the times, in terms of style, humour, even at times the calibre of violence employed; the series became much darker in 1987 when Timothy Dalton assumed the role for *The Living Daylights*, which also returned to the old Cold War theme. In Roger Moore's tenure as Bond (1973-85), the series settled into a routine of following trends rather than creating them. In the 1960s, Bond led the deluge of spy and espionage spin-offs which prevailed at that time (*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*; *Our Man Flint*; *The Avengers*, etc) but cometh the Seventies, cometh the new movie franchises, most notably *Star Wars*. Following the unparalleled success of that movie in the summer of 1977, pictures set in space took off in a big way – the coming years saw countless *Star Wars* inspired movies, and - there's no point in pretending otherwise – 1979's *Moonraker*. With its climatic battle in outer space as Bond joins US special forces in destroying the insane mastermind Hugo Drax's scheme to destroy earth and establish a semi-Aryan colony elsewhere in the solar system, clearly owes a lot to the space boom of the time. In my opinion, *Moonraker* is one of the weakest Bond movies anyway, but that has nothing to do with my dislike of space pictures

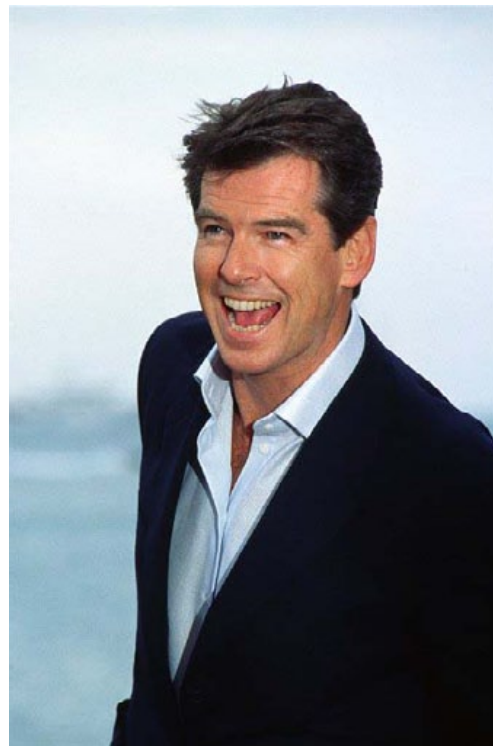
It was at this time that the series also embarked on 'shadowing' global news or fashion trends. Two examples stand out, both from the Roger Moore era, although eleven years apart. In *The Man With the Golden Gun* (1974), a significant sub-strand of the plot involves around the search for a 'solex agitator', which can harness the power of the sun to generate electricity. This is required urgently to combat the ongoing energy crisis at the time. Now, we all know (I assume) that there was indeed a serious energy crisis in the mid 1970s, a time which did indeed see serious attempts, really for the first time, to harness alternative energy supplies. But to my mind, such a plot has dated the film very considerably. One might argue that it has become timelier in 2011, but personally, I don't think it works.

In 1985's *A View to a Kill*, Moore's swansong as Bond, the plot ultimately revolves around the plans of billionaire Max Zorin to monopolise the microchip market by destroying Silicon Valley in California. Like alternative energy in the 1970s, microchips were big news in the mid 80s. These are

two examples of the Bond franchises shadowing popular news stories and themes, and this continues today, even on a low level – witness the mild controversy in 2006 surrounding the obvious ‘product placement’ in Casino Royale, Daniel Craig’s first outing as 007. Product placement wasn’t new, but Casino Royale did seem to carry it to new heights - or lows.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the franchise seemed to hit a brick wall. Licence to Kill in the summer of 1989 was a significant success, but performed poorly against other films in the series (it grossed over \$30 million less than its predecessor, 1987’s The Living Daylights) and did very poorly compared to 1989’s other smash hits, including Batman, Lethal Weapon and the third Indiana Jones movie. It certainly didn’t perform as well as Timothy Dalton’s gritty performance as Bond (quite close to what I imagine was Fleming’s original idea of Bond) deserved, and the following couple of years witnessed substantial internal wrangling between the production company and the studios.

Real political events later that year in eastern Europe, and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet empire made things even more difficult – most Bond films had a distinct Cold War undercurrent, even if the USSR or Communist China wasn’t Bond’s major enemy. The advent of democracy in Russia and its former vassal states ensured the common belief that Bond had faded with the passing of the 1980s, and that he was best left there – lest it be forgotten, this opinion was voiced by Judi Dench’s character, ‘M’,



in 1995’s GoldenEye, when she called our hero ‘a sexist, misogynist dinosaur – a relic of the Cold War.’

As should be obvious, 1989 did not witness the death of Bond – Irish born actor Pierce Brosnan assumed the role for the best part of a decade in 1996, commencing with the smash hit GoldenEye. Since then, every successive Bond film, starring both Brosnan and since 2006, Craig, has become the highest grossing entry in the series. The series has gone from strength in the post-Cold War era, and subsequent events have proven, the collapse of the global Communist order has not left Bond or MI6 with a dearth of enemies. The world still needs a slightly old-fashioned superhero, capable of saving humanity from itself (almost) single-handedly. 2012 will be the fiftieth anniversary of the premiere of Dr. No, and the sixtieth anniversary of Ian Fleming’s original musings in front of his typewriter at his home in Jamaica. The Bondwagon (forgive the pun) shows no sign of grinding to a halt just yet.

Graeme Smyth by day works in public affairs, but is known to enjoy long walks, Imperial Leather soap, and regularly pining for the good old days, when Thatcher and Reagan ran the show, and he hadn’t been born yet.

You Never Really Loved It Anyway

by Jonathan Kirk

I am at a friend's house. Boredom has finally kicked in, and we are left pondering what to do with our time. But that's okay, because out of nowhere my friend comes up with a brilliant and unique idea: "Hey, you wanna watch a DVD?"

"Sure. What you got?" as I start rumbling through the collection, but this statement comes next.

"I've got a better idea," he says, leading me into a separate room, and presented with a spreadsheet. It contains all the movies that this guy owns, in alphabetical order. "Pick one."

I love collecting things. Early items I collected have been keyrings, which I still collect from time to time, and those furry bug things that made the 80s so great. Lately I've discovered that my dad is an avid stamp collector. I never believed people actually did this, but he has managed to

collect thousands of them, from over 100 countries, including many that don't even exist any more. It's certainly a unique piece of history, not least as it contains some Hitler stamps.



Are Collections A Thing Of The Past?

They came collated nicely in a book, and it felt almost precious; a hobby that has resulted in something valuable, that not only can be passed on, but also expanded in generations to come.

While I still collect the odd thing here and there, the biggest collections I own are of movies and music. Space has become something of a major problem as of late, so I now possess several crates, which have become stacked in a bedroom. My plan is to one day have a media room, which I will call "The Library". It will shelve all my music and films, possibly contain a small sofa and TV, and hopefully a fridge. This is the dream anyway.

I will sometimes spend an age trying to work out the best method of organising my collection. I will never resort to alphabetical order. It is quite frankly just dull, and doesn't really work for movies. It works slightly better for music, but only slightly. Sure, it keeps all of a band's music together, and hopefully you would then order the CD's / vinyl in chronological order. But what about solo projects / side projects / supergroups - where do they fit in? Do you keep Rage Against The Machine and Audioslave together, along with Soundgarden and Chris Cornell's solo work, or do have them far away from each other? Do you group together similar genres? Where can your unique collection of ambient-acid-punk-bluegrass ever rest its head?

a hobby that has resulted in something valuable, that not only can be passed on, but also expanded in generations to come.

Similarly with films, alphabetical order simply doesn't work. It splits up connected films or distorts continuity - see the Bond films, or prequel-sequel combos such as Kiss The Girls and Along Came A Spider. If you want to group films by director, you can end up splitting franchises like

Die Hard up. Grouping by actor is nearly impossible; chronological order doesn't always work, nor does age rating, or genre. Even by release company can split up the works of someone like Clint Eastwood who has moved around studios. It's an age old problem for collectors, but one that is left down to the individual, and adds to the fun. Personally, I use a combination of different methods while never resorting to alphabetical order; pockets of order in an otherwise haphazard collection. I keep franchises together, have a section for TV shows, group certain films by actor, keep all my Chris Nolan and Whit Stillman movies together, and have a special place set aside for really bad movies. The Room anyone?

Collecting is fun, but so is putting them on display, and letting others enjoy them. I love going to houses and having a nosey through someone's DVDs or CDs, usually to heap abuse on the owner should I come across any monstrosities. But it's good to take a look at some of the artwork, find films you've never seen before, read the blurbs on the back of the box - or maybe even actually sit down and watch one.

The problem with collections however, is that you need a lot of space. If you have a lot of VHS tapes you'll know what I mean, but even DVDs aren't much better. However, with the onset of digital media, you no longer need anywhere near as much room. Movies can be streamed instantly; you can store thousands of songs on tiny devices, and store every single photograph you've taken on a small card.

But it's just not the same.

I will admit that I buy a lot of music as MP3. This simply because it's far cheaper than buying it on CD, and I listen to a lot of music in the car and when I'm at my computer. I rarely use my CD player anymore, and mostly as an alarm clock. So while I have all my music on a computer, and can find songs in seconds, it's just not the same as going to my collection and having a rifle through. Sure, I could burn the music onto a CD, and print off some dodgy artwork, but it would just look rubbish, and you wouldn't believe that I had legitimately bought it.

Similarly with movies - if you purchase digital copies, it might work out cheaper, but what if someone organises a movie night? It would be a bit weird if you brought your hard drive round. Showing someone a list of what you have just isn't very exciting or interesting, especially when you can't see important details like who the director is, the key cast members, a brief summary of the plot, or whether the box art contains any explosions or not. Even for things like photos, I would much prefer to leaf through a physical photo album than to observe thousands of them on a computer screen.

Sure, you are saving space and perhaps money. But technology gets outdated very quickly, and is quite unreliable; there is a big difference in getting a scratch on a DVD, and having a hard drive fail and losing everything in one go. You might have an awful lot of stuff, but it's not really a collection, is it?

In the end, my point is this: while collecting is fun for an individual, it can also be enjoyed by others. Part of the fun is in the actual display that can be produced, both for the creator, and observer. My fear is that as digital media becomes more prevalent, visual collections will become a lost art, and be replaced with boring, alphabetised lists.

Jonny Kirk is famous for many things: winning the Banter 500, owning an actual Simpson's arcade machine, and breaking his leg mid-Daredevil impersonation. We recommend googling 'Father Ted's House' if you want to see more.

Flashbacks of a Fool

by Peter Huey

It's three in the afternoon, and the man who apparently serves the roles of both sound engineer and backline supplier is recognisably Off His Face. There's still six hours before the first support act is due to kick off, but already that only-too-familiar mild panic is rising. Bassist is not particularly worried, but myself and Guitarist, both usually fairly edgy at this point on a day we're due to play anyway (though he'd never dare quite show it, for fear of breaking the laid-back persona I suppose) are on the verge of packing up and going home.

It's about six months into what, it would turn out, is the height of my musical career. After a fairly promising start, having recorded the mandatory dodgy first EP within a month and started making appearances out and about, this is supposed to be the big one - our first headline. We've booked one support act from a previous gig, found another on recommendation, and put together a night in a town we've never played before with relative ease. Even the fact that Drummer Boy is currently over-



If This Is Rock & Roll,
I Want My Old Job Back

seas (it's late June) doesn't worry us too much, as Guitarist has pulled in a friend to cover - more on that later. But now, this moron is threatening to ruin it all.

SoundMan manages to pull himself Off His Face - quite literally - long enough to reveal that (a) he's only just woken up, having been out 'on a session' until mid-morning, and (b) he has no idea where any of the backline for tonight is. He thinks there's some speakers and bass-bins stashed in someone's shed nearby. But he can't drive to find out in case he gets caught by the peelers. Again. Before anyone can get another word out, he pulls himself up and staggers out the door, leaving the rest of us - bar Substitute Drummer, who's yet to arrive - at somewhat of a loss.

PRELUDE

My first music lesson was on the fourteenth of September, 1994. My calculations tell me that made me eight years old. I learnt the first two or three pieces from a book by someone called John Thompson. I believe this mostly involved playing middle C a lot on the piano, probably for four beats. I must've done ok because I had another one the next week, and the next week, and another week after that. And so on for about ten years. I even learnt some other notes after a while, though I'd be lying if I said that first lesson didn't stand me in good stead, as generally middle C comes up a lot. Worth revising.

I tried to audition for trombone lessons in secondary school a few years later. I didn't much like the idea, but it was basically free so I gave it shot. It sounded like an obese clown having his stomach pumped.

At the age of 13, I had that seemingly common moment where I wanted to make as much noise as possible. Probably something to do with girls or repression or both, these things usually are. Anyway, for Christmas there

was a trip to a music shop to buy a rubbish drum kit. I was immediately in love. And loud enough to be heard some distance down the road.

A couple of years later though, and the magic really happened. The theory goes that boys have a linear relationship with music. We learn the piano or something because our parents want us to Further Ourselves. Around puberty, we want to make noise, so the lucky amongst us get drum kits. But shortly afterwards, we realise that girls don't like piano. Or drums. Or trumpets or violoncellos or xylophones or the french horn. No, girls like boys who play guitar.

Now, Best Friend played guitar. Sure, he played it in a soft, folky way, but his guitar teacher was a rocker so I knew he knew some of that too. And he'd just gotten a new semi-acoustic, so his battered, cheap nylon six string was somewhat available, despite the large hole in the back due

Ironically, those Punks who beat us to the Grand Final would re-surface a few years later with a Top 30 album and a legion of teenage fans. But that's not for now

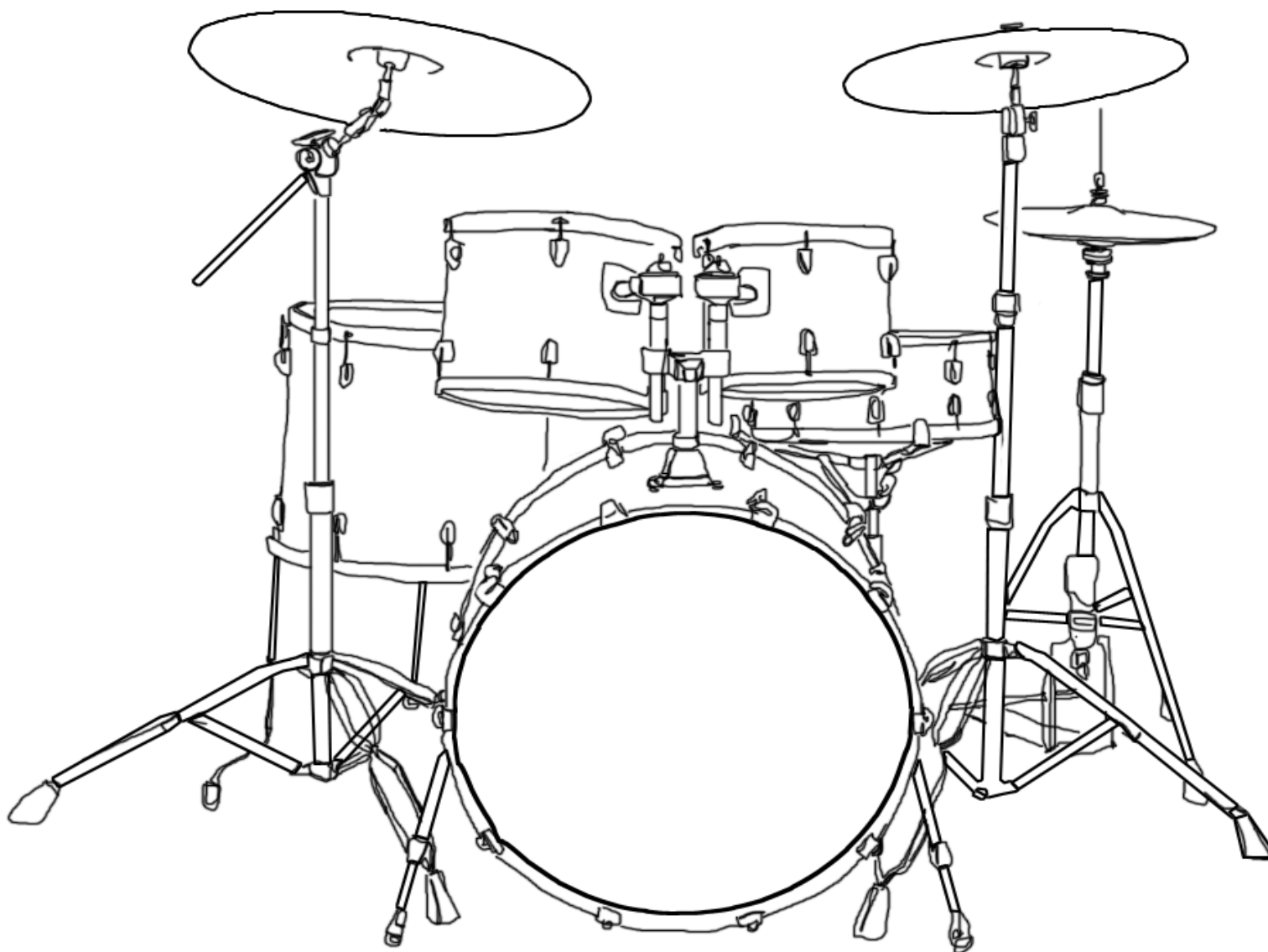
to his older brother's propensity for humorous violence. I persuaded him to teach me.

FIRST MOVEMENT

It's the spring of 2004, and I'm standing on stage in the most ludicrous t-shirt you could ever encounter. It's got a cartoon character on the front that I drew, and I got a website to print it for me. Don't ask. I'm shaking like a leaf, trying not to show it. Not that I would know, because my disposable contacts are giving me gyp as per usual anyway so I can't see a flaming thing. This man is politely mocking me as I explain that tonight, Sir, we're going to be a band no-one's heard of singing a song you might recognise only if you listened to chart radio for about five minutes in the late nineties. Best Friend is off to my right, playing the opening riff.

We made it to the regional finals, before losing out to some Punks from my little sister's school year, as well as a girl - and I'm not making this up - blacked up to look like Aretha Franklin. I was raging. Having tactically picked a band that no-one had heard of, I was banking on the fact that we actually played the song pretty well. And if no-one knew the band, they wouldn't know that we didn't look anything like them. Apparently the sponsors figured that one out though. I was bitten though. I would have my day in the sun.

I would get better. I had to. I was off to university and more single than the Pope. My satisfaction with life depended on it.





SECOND MOVEMENT

It's two years later. I've just apologised to the audience, mid song, for hitting the wrong foot pedal. Someone in the front row gives me a look that says I haven't really understood this whole putting-on-a-show concept yet. I would argue, but the massive pair of baggy jeans I'm wearing would probably contradict me.

Five months earlier, I had received my second term student loan payment. I immediately repaid the kindness of Her Majesty's Government by blowing the lot on a new, left-hand custom Mexican Stratocaster.

A month later, I drop said left-hand custom Mexican Stratocaster on a concrete floor.

Having realised the best way to get to play it in public was to organise a gig a recurring theme of my musical career: if you can't get a gig, organise one I pulled a few friends together and did just that. And it paid off in a way: this particular night would contribute three of four future band members, albeit at this stage, playing in separate acts.

Things move on. We're back with SoundMan, who returns and manages to cobble together enough of a backline to get us going. Support Act are self-proclaimed saviours of metal They're loud. The guitars crunch. The sound crashes. The lead singer roars in that throaty metal voice, demanding that the watching crowds "stand the **** up!"

The crowds being mostly a crowd of elder gents, rather annoyed at being hustled into the back bar to listen to a 15 year old goth swear at them. They go back to their drinks.

This is not going well. But fear not. Confident we can turn things around, we swing in for the headline slot. Miraculously, everything works. We canter through the first song, a few heads nodding and a bit of energy stirring, right up until the final suspended pause...

...whereupon Subsitute Drummer keeps drumming. And it transpires he's only ever heard the set once. In a car.

THIRD MOVEMENT

It's a couple of years later. The rock band - sorry, the piano driven alternative rock band has been and gone. Myself and Drummer take to the stage in a battle of the bands with our new, acoustic alternative and crucially, upbeat material. With some funky bass and a tricky lead violin to supplement our now long-term partnership, we reckon we're on to a winner.

Except violinist has lost the keys to her car sixty miles away, and New Bassist has taken ill. The winners that night were I kid you not a bagpipe-led rock band.

Somebody backstage says we should do one of our old songs. It's the same one we usually get asked for. It's the only one anyone can remember, to be honest. Except it's also the only one we didn't write, having come from Guitarist's previous band.

It's time to give up. But we don't.

It's another six months down the line, and we're playing at a New Year's event. Great stage, great setup. Several hundred people have made their way in. Soundcheck went great. We even got some free dodgy-looking pizza. We make our way to the stage to kick off.

Whereupon really dodgy-looking pizza decides to make a rapid reappearance. I just about make it to the toilets. It's a mess. There's no way I can go on stage feeling like this. MC is getting impatient. We have to go on. I can't. I can't physically speak, let alone sing. There's no way I'm standing up there, playing and blasting out anything.

There's nothing to stop me being propped up on a stool though. We get through a verse. There's a high bit coming in the chorus though. My eyes are screaming at violinist. She makes a stab at it, and it's ok. I shuffle towards the side of stage. There's no way I can keep going. I leave mid-song, and return five minutes later to finish the set, seated.

It's time to give up.

FINALE

In the wardrobe in the spare room, there is a box. It's got a few setlists, a few passes. Not much to show for nearly a decade of practices. Of course, this is the bit where I say that it wasn't all like this. Much of it was (particularly the being sick just before going on part) but not all. Music contributed a few things: a few boxes of badly-compressed EP recordings; a lot of household clutter in the shape of things that can be plugged in to make noise.

It also sealed the deal on a relationship that became a marriage. Which is a bit of a result.

In the end, music is life. My musical career hasn't ended when Drummer moved to Cambridge and Violinist to France. The fact that the audience is now the spare bed and the listening public a set of Behringer cans doesn't stop it. It can't.

Maybe some day, these fingers will do their bit on stage again. And who knows, the sound guy might even be sober next time.

Peter Huey read Film at Queen's University before collecting a PGCE from The Polytechnic's cereal token scheme. Nonetheless, he was able to get a job in youth work before foresaking it all for a life in the Big Smoke, being married, making videos and learning how not to break expensive gear.

He also wrote a fairly good song. It's about kites.

A Contributor's Guide

Apparently, you should never read a book by its cover. It's not strictly true. You should hopefully be able to tell a lot about the tone of the Lawkit from its appearance alone. It's maybe a little minimalist, but that's because the words take priority. People have given of themselves to write things, and we recognise their effort by letting the words tell much of the story.

Lawkit should read like a collection of well-written blog posts. Pithy, self-contained articles which are accessible but assume interest.

We accept articles about pretty much anything. So you can write on a topic of your choice. This might actually seem even worse than being given a set subject. Well, we do have a list of suggested subject areas to get you started. These include: politics, technology, outdoors, film, music, faith, science, sport, gadgets or food.

Or any combination of those.

What's the point of Lawkit? It's about Life As We Know It. It's about sharing knowledge. But you don't have to be an expert to write on something, as long as you have an interest in it - because if you are interested in something, then you will almost certainly want to 'discuss' it with others.

To that end, don't try to argue for something you don't believe in. You will fail.

Don't be afraid to be specific or niche. Everyone likes geeking out every now and again.

Be clear about your topic from the start: 500 words and no waffle is highly preferable to 1500 with - and it'll get cut down anyway. Slaughter your babies - omit needless content or someone else will. A good place to start is usually whatever bit you've spent the most time on. It'll be the weakest.

If you only have twenty minutes to bang out something, you should definitely go for it.

So knowledge is king, but clarity is the Grand High Poobah; you can speak a bit academically and still say accessible to the casual reader. It's a fine line to walk, but you can do it. Because there's nothing more irritating than being obtuse for the sake of it, and you know it.

Don't use Lawkit to sell stuff, unless you're willing to pay a little for it. If you are, thank-you for giving us all a little something for our efforts. That said, if you are involved in something that you feel people might like to hear about, please tell us - the worst we'll say is 'maybe', and then probably get you to do it anyway.

And if you're willing to contribute by doing more than just writing, we'll love you forever.

Got all that? Get scribbling.

e-mail submissions to info@lawk.it

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Prescribing Happiness In Every Bite

by The Food Doctor

White chocolate and raspberry muffins

I picked this recipe up a while ago but its recently become a big hit after I made a few alterations. White chocolate and raspberries go fantastically in scones, but they also work just as well in muffins.

You will need:

- 120g butter
- 80g white chocolate (plus more for decoration)
- 150g caster sugar
- 1tsp vanilla essence
- 2 medium eggs
- 1 tsp bicarbonate soda
- 200g self-raising flour
- 160mls water
- 1 tub of fresh raspberries

TOP TIP:

A Baker once told me you should always have a falling heat when baking - so preheat the oven twenty degrees higher and then turn down just before you put the buns in.

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees Celsius.
2. Melt butter in glass bowl over a pot of boiling water. Break white chocolate into small squares and add to butter. Remove the bowl from the heat. Allow time to cool.
3. Add the sugar, eggs and vanilla essence and mix well.
4. Sieve in flour and bicarbonate. Beat the whole lot until smooth.
5. Stir in water, adding a little at a time. The mixture will be quite runny at this stage, but don't panic.
6. Put twelve muffin cases into a baking tray. Pour two tablespoons of batter in to each case. Place two raspberries in the centre of each. Then divide the remaining batter over the cases.
7. Reduce the heat of the oven to 180 degrees. Put the muffins in and bake for twenty minutes.
8. Remove from oven and place individual muffins on a wire rack. Allow to cool.
9. When cold, you can top with (more) melted white chocolate and another raspberry or two to decorate.

Serve.



A Budgeted Budget?

by Andrew Neill

Unless you've lived in an alternate universe for the last few years, you'll have noticed that we find ourselves in somewhat of an economic Jam Sandwich.

You will also have heard over this time both major British political parties spin their rhetoric in a quest for the ultimate title of heavy-weight championship of the United Kingdom (a.k.a forming the new Government).

And in the aftermath, regardless of how funny you find the acronym ConDem, you can't help but feel a little sorry for Cameron and his lackey...sorry I meant Deputy Prime Minister. They've come up against Students, the media, and as previously mentioned, the rather deflated economy. In particular, a massive deficit which the previous Government had chosen to treat like an Eton college student's monthly allowance. Or an unlimited credit card.

Before you switch off, I would like to suggest that this was much more interesting than you think

It has been the economy that has dominated all things news for years now, and this was no more obvious than in recent weeks as the country awaited the Chancellor's Budget.

The key issues dominating the Chancellor's speech were tackling the deficit, the growth forecasts for the UK economy, and most importantly for us struggling motorists, the price of petrol - and whether or not he would implement the now famous Fuel Duty increase.

The Budget itself contained a few surprises (all of which you can read about on any reputable news website.) All things considered, the Chancellor did a reasonably good job of devising a budget on a budget. There was never going to be anything truly groundbreaking in the speech -

there wasn't the money to do it. It may or may not interest us to read the details.

However, it is the fluff around the substance that I figure is actually the stuff we want to read

However, it is the fluff around the substance that I figure is actually the stuff we want to read about and provides us with the most entertainment.

Students up and down the country were delighted with the chancellor's apparent ill-health as he made the speech, and the "Cough-Up Osborne" drinking game resulted in many a sore head the following morning. George's sore throat did, however, come in second in the fluff scale, with the first prize going to the opposition leader, Ed Milliband. He may have been thinking on his feet and that he was in a high pressured situation, but my underlying problem with his performance was that he seemed to be saying that the government were performing badly, without ever offering suggestions for viable alternatives.

We are, of course, all used to politicians avoiding questions and issues, but in this instance, his rebuttals felt particularly futile and irrelevant. We all knew that growth was going to be lower than forecast, but to have it garbled on repeat that the coalition were useless because of this issue and this alone seemed to be a little short sighted. Surely if he wanted to attack the jugular, he could have learnt a few names and places of those hit hardest by the spending cuts. He could have



attacked the futility of a penny deduction on fuel prices when in all likelihood they will be up by a penny or two in a week anyway. He also could have gone further with the attacks on Tory tax breaks and welfare cuts.

Instead the whole rebuttal was built up on a one-liner: referring to George Osborne as “Norman Lamont with an iPod.” Now this is amusing, undeniably, especially given that comes from a politician with the personality of an unsalted peanut. However, one feels that this may have been scripted on paper long before the Chancellor even got up to speak. I would like to state now that this is not intended to be a partisan piece. I have neither particularly fuzzy or harsh feelings about the economic policies of either side of the House. I do however, have a problem with the sheer laziness of Milliband’s reply.

Had he looked around him and gauged the reaction of the House, he may have noticed Charles Clarke napping in his seat, or an uncomfortable Business Secretary. He could have been more eloquent and wide-

ranging in his arguments. It all felt as if when preparing things he was going to say, Milliband himself was on a budget. It just felt amateurish... Tesco Value, not Marks and Sparks if you will. It lacked the gravitas of someone commanding respect among his peers. Like the quiet kid who feels they have to pick on the weaknesses of others in order to be allowed to join the ‘cool’ people.

In the next few days and weeks, it will be the Chancellor who is scrutinised and analysed to within an inch of his political life. If he fails to deliver on his promises, the coalition government will be hit again in the polls. The latest MORI/Reuters polls, taken prior to the budget, show that Labour (41%) lead the Conservatives (37%) with the Lib Dems (10%) lagging far behind. It shall be interesting to see if and how those numbers change in the coming days.

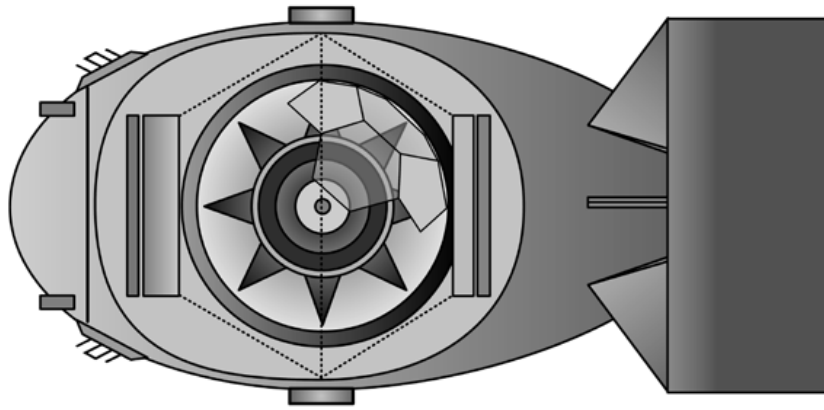
I would like to hope, however, in the interest of fairness, that Ed Milliband is as closely scrutinised. Some say that Cameron wasn’t ready to be Prime Minister. I think it can be safely said that Milliband is even less so. He does have time to get his act together, but lets hope he does so soon. It really would be nice to hear something fruitful coming out of the Labour camp occasionally.

Until then have some fun with the budget. The BBC have a helpful budget calculator on their website to see how the budget affects you. It is possible i’m feeling slightly more favourable towards the Chancellor due to this calculator telling me i’m going to be nearly £250 better off.

Cheers, George.

Andrew Neill read Law at university, before going on to throw it all away and work with kids and teenagers instead, which is arguably much more interesting. He currently resides in County Down, and enjoys spending most of his time driving the length of the province to visit his other (better) half.





Life as we know it.

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Your comments and contributions are welcome. Please see p26.

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