

FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH – May 2023. Edition No 101.



Hello. I hope you are okay and not suffering too much with anything.

This month's magazine has come together alright, but to be honest, I had a patch of low motivation after reaching the 100th edition last month.

This edition is a very eclectic mix of articles and includes the two winners of our recent poetry competition, and also, two lovely short stories.

If you think you would like to get involved with the magazine (in a non-sexist, non-racist and non-homophobic way) please contact us at: dean@fthm.org.uk Best wishes, Dean.

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MY NOT VERY SERIOUS STARS



Scorpio 24 Oct – 22 Nov

This week you will experience great insight into life and your world will be flooded with sunshine. Live for the moment as happiness is so fleeting. Romance will

knock on your door but will you be brave enough to open it and take a chance? Many people think you're a crazy old fool but at least you are managing to master this turbulent life. Invest in some ice cream.

Sagittarius 23 Nov – 21 Dec

You may feel as if life is unfair as you have put so much into it for little reward, but great times lie ahead for you. However, if your wife finds out what you've been up to with her from the library, she will throw the book at you and file for divorce. Your OCD may have been bad of late, but you will soon find some peace if you keep going. Believe in yourself.

Capricorn 22 Dec – 20 Jan

You are at a crossroads in your life and the choices you make now will influence the rest of your life – so take your time. Travel is on the agenda, so buy a new mobile phone to keep in touch with your loved ones. An email will make you an offer you can't refuse, so, take full advantage of this opportunity. Start thinking of things for your bucket list as time is passing.

Aquarius 21 Jan – 19 Feb

Today is the perfect time to start being more positive as only then will the seeds you have planted grow and then flower. Someone you love will let you down and disappoint you this month, but remember we are only humans and that you have made mistakes in the past. Think carefully about what you put in your mouth if you want to lose weight at some point.

Pisces 20 Feb – 20 Mar

A stranger will come into your life and completely change it for the better. You may be one of those people who has never done a hard day's work in your life, but thank your lucky stars that you don't live in a country where a revolution is likely. Love will find you this month so, don't blow it by playing silly games. Eat chocolate biscuits for tea and be rebellious for once.

Aries 21 Mar – 20 Apr

Stop dreading disaster occurring as it's unlikely that your fears will be realised. You have too much time on your hands at the moment, so, why not just have a good rest? Money is definitely coming your way so you will soon be able to buy that big possession you crave. Will you accept a ride from the woman in the little blue car who drives along your road?

Taurus 21 Apr – 21 May

This month someone with bad breath will make a pass at you, but how will you react? An acquaintance will become a good friend in the near future and will help you with some of your problems. Someone will ask you if you can spare any change today, but politely tell them you've given what you can – if this is true. Wear swimwear at home if you want to.

Gemini 22 May – 21 Jun

A God-fearing lady may shock you with her dedication to the bible, but she is to be respected as she has helped so many people and she farts a lot. A man who has many fingers in many pies will make you an offer that you'd be better to reject. A good time to plan a visit to Scotland as it's a beautiful country with amazing countryside. Diet if you want a long life.

Cancer 22 Jun – 23 Jul

You may find a drag queen hilarious this week, so, show your appreciation even if they will never rule your heart. You are a special selfless person, but now you should treat yourself to something nice as you deserve it. People adore you. Life has been difficult recently but your luck is about to change so hold in there. Have your bikini line waxed if you can afford to.

Leo 24 Jul – 23 Aug

A woman with few teeth will give you some food for thought and stop you making a meal out of your little problems. Listen to her carefully. It is time you also started to live more in the present moment as you only have today to work with. It might be cheaper to eat cat food than pay the high prices at the supermarket. Try a Manchester tart if you have a sweet tooth.

Virgo 24 Aug – 23 Sep

It is a great time to enter a competition or buy a raffle ticket as your luck is in and you might win big! Someone with more tyres than a four-wheeled vehicle will bluntly tell you they're interested in taking things further with you – but does size matter to you? A taxi fare may cost you the earth this week, but the blame lies firmly with your council who don't care.

Libra 24 Sep – 23 Oct

A man who looks like a walrus will declare his love for you this week. You will have lots of ideas for a new venture that won't make you a millionaire but will give you some satisfaction. Someone with a big fat arse will confide in you about something that means a lot to them. Maybe now is the time to consider becoming a cub or scout leader. Dream big.

GRAHAM TOWNSEND'S MONTHLY QUIZ

Questions:



- (1) Rebetiko is a term used to describe urban music originating in which European country?
- (2) The Great Snipe is what type of animal?
- (3) Mount Bromo can be found on which island, synonymous with coffee?
- (4) Who was King of England immediately prior to King John?
- (5) In which country will the 2023 Cricket World Cup be held in October/November?
- (6) Often used in text/SMS messaging, what does the abbreviation LMK stand for?
- (7) “Green Globe”, “Romanesco” and “Verde Palermo” are

varieties of which vegetable?

- (8) Latvian-American artist Mark Rothko was born in which country?
- (9) “Bluefaced Leicester” is native to the UK and is a breed of which animal?
- (10) Who wrote the music and lyrics for the 2003 musical “Wicked”?

- (11) The historical West Asian region of Mesopotamia occupies which modern day country?
- (12) The word “churl” describes what type of person?
- (13) What number is the octuplet of eight?
- (14) In which year will Halley’s Comet next be visible from the Earth?
- (15) “Phenomenal Woman: Four Poems Celebrating Women” is a book of poetry by who?
- (16) G15 is a gaming laptop model from which technology brand?
- (17) What nationality is West Ham footballer Nayef Aguerd?
- (18) Dodoma is the capital of which African country?
- (19) The term volcano comes from the name Vulcan, who was the Roman god of what?
- (20) Cory Henry is best known for playing which instrument?

Answers

- (1) Greece (2) Bird (3) Java (4) Richard I (5) India (6) Let me know (7) Artichoke (8) Russia (9) Sheep (10) Stephen Schwartz (11) Iraq (12) Rude or mean-spirited (13) Sixty-four (14) 2061 (15) Maya Angelou (16) Dell (17) Moroccan (18) Tanzania (19) Fire (20) Piano

POETRY COMPETITION WINNERS

Here are the two winners of our recent poetry competition:

S.W.16

Written by Alison Nuorto

Brick heaped on brick;

Grey terraces squeezed into wide Avenues,
like tombstones.

A parade of dismantled grandeur.

Idle office blocks leer at Edwardian rooftops,
Their glittering panes yearning for a city upgrade.

Lurid shop fronts preside over stores nobody needed.

Worn briefcases knock against weary knees,

As men as crumpled as the litter, shuffle towards the train station.

Disenchanted renters feed someone else’s dreams,

While slick Estate Agents beckon in the young,

With “up-and-coming” ringing in their ears.

Then, someone in a pub, parrots on repeat,

“Did you know, this whole area used to be parkland?”

Oh, we do love to be this side of the river.

It’s fun to live in the ‘burbs.

I used to be a romantic

Written by Maisie Bishop

I used to be a romantic.

Now, every other Saturday morning,

I hand over our children,

the babies we made together.

In return he hands me a bag of dirty washing,

remnants of their last stay.

Fair exchange?

‘Don’t you have a washing machine?’

I ask, acerbically and rhetorically.

‘Yes, but I’ve been away.’

Of course.

Doing the washing is boring,

and by association,

the person

who does the washing

is boring.

Now, going away:

that’s dynamic and exciting.

And by association,

yes, you’ve got it...

Our children have

a dynamic and exciting father

and

a boring mother.

But she used to be a romantic.

JUNE'S WORLD



Hello everybody. I hope you are keeping well.

Today (Saturday) the weather has been really good with sunshine all day long. It is now half past six in the evening and the sun is still bright and sunny though it's just starting to get a bit chilly. It was warm enough to sit in the garden for an hour or so after we had our dinner.

Tomorrow is Easter Sunday, so the young ones will be waiting patiently for their easter eggs. When the grandchildren used to come around for their easter eggs, we used to put them all the way around the garden (we have a long garden) and we used to hide little chocolate

eggs which the three of them looked for and tried to be the one who found the most eggs. Sometimes the eggs were too difficult for them to find so we gave them a helping hand to do so. Now the grandchildren are 23, 21 and 16 but still love looking for the chocolate eggs unless they are too tired from the night before!

Today is Easter Sunday, but the weather's duller than yesterday. However, it's only 9 am and looks as if it could be nice and sunny later on in the day. The weather's been good for April here in the north of England – not as much rain as usual. I don't know where we will be going today, for although we usually like to go to the coast, we think that the motorway may be busy with it being the Easter break. We decided to go to Lumby garden centre and had a meal in the lovely café there.

Tomorrow, Easter Monday, we will be going to Selby as usual. We have the attitude that we should get out as much as we can, whilst we are healthy, with us both being 85. We anticipate that Selby will be very busy with it being a bank holiday, and I suppose that there will be the usual stalls down the side of the streets so there will be lots to buy ranging from toys to clothes etc. There's a big van comes every Monday and lots of people buy teas and coffees from it and other refreshments.

We still enjoy going to Selby Abbey to see people we have met there before, and it's nice to have buns and cakes there. As you may have realised, we are creatures of habit but I'm sure lots of people have their own regular routines. After we've been to the abbey, we visit the park to admire all of the lovely flowers there. Finally, we go to the Hub café where I usually have a jacket potato with cheese.

For now, I'll close this article and hopefully write another one in a month's time. Thanks for reading. Love June.

WHY IS BASEBALL SO POPULAR IN THE USA ?

Written by Graham Townsend

Baseball has been played in the United States since the mid-19th century and has become an



integral part of American culture. The sport is played by millions of Americans, both young and old, and is watched by millions more.

So, why is baseball so popular in the USA? One reason is the sport's rich history. It has been a part of many historic moments in American history, including Babe Ruth's home run record and the 2001 World Series after the 9/11 attacks. Prior to all this, the game was played during the Civil War, and it provided a distraction from the hardships of

war. Baseball also played a role in breaking down racial barriers, as African Americans were able to participate in the game at a time when segregation was still the norm. Jackie Robinson, one of the all-time greats of the game, was one of, if not the first star player to come from this background.

Another reason for baseball's popularity is the fact that it is a sport that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and skill levels. From Little League to Major League Baseball, there is a level of play for everyone. The sport also has a unique pace that allows for fans to relax and enjoy the game, making it a perfect summer pastime. Additionally, the game was played in rural areas and small towns, and it provided a source of entertainment and community bonding. Baseball also became popular in urban areas, and it was played in parks and other public spaces.

The exact origins of baseball are unclear, but it is believed to have evolved from a variety of bat-and-ball games that were played in England. The game was brought to North America by British immigrants, and it quickly became popular among the colonists. The first recorded game of baseball was played in 1846 in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Over time, the rules of the game were formalized, and the National League was established in 1876. The American League was founded in 1901, and the two leagues merged in 1903 to form Major League Baseball (MLB). The game continued to evolve, and innovations such as the designated hitter and interleague play were introduced in the 20th century.

Baseball is more than just a sport in the United States. It has been referred to as America's national pastime since the late 19th century. The sport's popularity soared during the early 20th century, with the aforementioned establishment of MLB. It became a unifying force for Americans, transcending social, economic, and political divides. It was a sport that anyone could play or watch, regardless of background or status. Its status as a national pastime was cemented during the Great Depression, when it provided a much-needed escape from the hardships of everyday life. The sport continued to grow in popularity after World War II, as more and more Americans tuned in to listen to games on the radio or watch them on TV. Today, millions of fans attend games every season.

Baseball has been used as a metaphor for American life, with its emphasis on teamwork, perseverance, and fair play. It has also been used to showcase American values and ideals, such as democracy, individualism, and freedom.

Baseball has also been a means of celebrating American diversity. The sport has welcomed players from all over the world, including Latin America, Asia, and Europe. These players have brought their own unique styles and traditions to the game, enriching its cultural heritage.

Moreover, baseball has been a source of inspiration for American artists, writers, and musicians. The sport has been the subject of countless works of literature, film, and music, from Ernest Thayer's poem "Casey at the Bat" to Ken Burns' documentary series "Baseball."

Baseball's gameplay is characterized by its unique pace and rhythm. Unlike other sports that rely on constant action, baseball has a more relaxed pace, allowing players and fans alike to savour the anticipation and strategy of each play. The game's slow pace also allows for more time to analyse and appreciate the nuances of each move, making it a more cerebral sport. Additionally, the rhythm of the game is defined by its innings, which allows for a natural ebb and flow of momentum that can shift quickly from one team to the other.

While baseball's gameplay may seem simple on the surface, the game is actually quite complex, with a myriad of rules and strategies that players must master. From the different types of pitches to the intricate defensive positioning, there is a lot to learn and understand about baseball. This complexity makes the game more challenging and rewarding for players and fans alike. Additionally, the strategic nature of the game means that each decision made by a player or coach can have a significant impact on the outcome of the game, adding to the excitement and drama of each play.

Media and marketing have also played a key role in forming and subsequently maintaining the popularity of the sport. Games are broadcast on national and local television networks, and radio stations covering the sport can be found in every city. This comprehensive coverage includes live matches, analysis and highlights. Player statistics, team standings, and other relevant information are readily available, all of which also helps to keep fans engaged.

MLB has made good use of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, to engage with fans too. It has also partnered with major corporations to promote the sport, such as the partnership with Nike, which has helped to increase the visibility of the sport's merchandise. Additionally, it has implemented various initiatives to attract new fans, such as the "Play Ball" program, which encourages youth participation in baseball and softball.

As you can see, baseball's popularity in the United States can be attributed to a combination of factors.

However, baseball's popularity is not limited to the United States, as the sport is played and enjoyed around the world. But the United States has a unique relationship with baseball, and it remains an integral part of American culture. It cannot be denied that the sport has faced challenges in recent years, such as declining attendance and concerns over pace of play however, as the sport continues to evolve and adapt, it will likely continue to hold a special place in the hearts of fans for generations to come.

BRENDA'S WILDLIFE CORNER



Boa constrictor

The boa constrictor is also known as the red-tailed boa and is often kept and bred in captivity. It is a large snake that is non-venomous and is native to South America with a colour pattern that is distinctive yet highly variable. There are four recognized sub-species which are all

referred to as “boa constrictor”.

It is true to say that although boa constrictors can vary greatly in colour, they are often brown, grey or cream in base colour with brown or reddish-brown “saddles” towards the tail. This colouring serves as good camouflage in its natural habitat of jungles and forests. In captivity however, there are sometimes pigmentary disorders such as albinism which are bred to create a different colour. Most boa constrictors have an arrow-shaped head which contains distinctive stripes on it.

These snakes can sense heat through cells on their lips and unlike most snakes they have two lungs with the smaller left one being non-functional. Many boa constrictors can be found in South America and on many other islands along its coast.

The boa constrictor can adapt to many environmental conditions ranging from semi-desert to tropical rainforests, but it usually prefers to live in rainforest where it has natural cover from predators and enjoys the humidity and temperature. There is also much prey available in this environment. Interestingly, it is often found in or along rivers and streams due to the fact that it is a good swimmer. They also occupy the burrows of medium-sized mammals in order to hide from potential predators.

Boa constrictors are usually solitary creatures only interacting to mate; they are normally nocturnal although they may bask in the daytime. Young boa constrictors may forage in trees and shrubs but become more terrestrial as they become older and heavier. They have a painful bite but this does not really pose a threat to humans.

Their prey includes small to medium-sized mammals and birds but mammals as large as monkeys and wild pigs are reported to have been consumed. When they are young, they tend to eat small mice, birds, lizards, bats and amphibians though the size of the prey increases as they get older and bigger. Prey is killed through constriction which starves the prey of blood to its heart and brain, and when consumed, it takes 4-6 days to fully digest the food. The snake may then refrain from eating for a week to several months as it has a very slow metabolism.

This type of snake gives birth to live snakes and the males may mate with many females during the dry season which is between April and August. A litter can contain between 10 and 65 young with an average of 25 although some may be stillborn. Sexual maturity does not occur until 3-4 years of age.

In captivity, boa constrictors fare well and become quite tame with life expectancy being 20-30 years of age. They are normally fed mice, rats, rabbits and chicken and today most captive boa constrictors are captive-bred.

* Ref. Wikipedia

BOILING POINT

Written by Kathrin Spinnler

Cora groaned, gazed down at her swollen ankles, and wiped her sweaty brow. She turned around on her lounge chair and spotted her family in the distance, laughing and chatting. The four children splashed in the surf, while Dan and Maria supervised them, arm in arm.

The happy scene bored her with its predictability.

When they first got here, the little ones had tried to involve her. “Come on, Gran,” one of them, she couldn't remember which one, had said. “Play with us.”

Cora had groaned then, too, and waved her hand. “Gran is too old for this.”

Now, she sighed as anger bubbled inside her. Why had she agreed to this idiotic trip? No old lady should be taken far from home, to a humid climate where her skin turns blotchy and her fingers puff up like party sausages.

“It'll be good for you, Mum,” Dan had insisted. “You'll get to see where Maria comes from. It's gorgeous in the Dominican Republic.”

Cora rolled her eyes and clicked her tongue. She'd been against the marriage from the start. Maria was too direct, too bubbly to fit into the traditional English family. And, worse, the grandchildren looked so foreign. No fancy holiday would change her mind about *that*.

“You unhappy, Gran?” a little voice piped up beside her.

One of the children had sneaked up next to her sunchair. Tania, was it? No, the girl was too tall. She must be the oldest, born almost eight years ago. Shania.

“Too hot,” Cora murmured.

The dainty girl held out a water bottle. “This helps.”

Cora hesitated. The child's large brown eyes and her black curls clustering her head reminded her of her beloved puppy, Toto.

She drank. The water felt cold, as if an ice cube had melted inside the bottle. Refreshing. Cora smiled at Shania, the first smile she'd bestowed on one of her grandchildren in years.

“Better,” she said.

The girl held out her hand. “Come. Let's go find a popsicle for you. And,” she raised her eyebrows and curled the corners of her mouth into a playful grin, “maybe one for me.”

Observing Shania more closely, Cora saw her son's dimples and determined jawbone. Dan had had a similar air of mischief about him as a child. Never before had Cora noticed the resemblance.

Before she knew it, she was up, her bare feet sinking into the sand. It felt good, like a massage.

She looked out at the vast sea, the azure sky, and the endless sandy beach. The place had its charms. If only it weren't so darned humid.

Cora became conscious of her granddaughter's little hand in hers. When had a child last touched her? She couldn't remember. For years, she'd pushed away her son and the young family who so longed to connect with her.

They reached the popsicle stand, and Shania confidently ordered two lollies. Cora took out her wallet, but the girl shook her head and dug some coins out of the pocket of her shorts.

"Daddy says I can't accept anything from you. You've dis... disin... disinherited us."

Cora humphed. "That's what Daddy said, is it?"

"Yes." Shania's innocent face drooped. "That's why we never get any birthday presents from you."

Cora's cheeks heated up and beads of sweat pearly on her forehead, but not because of the climate. Her granddaughter had held up a mirror, and Cora's soul was as rough and damaged as her skin.

She thrust some money in the vendor's open palm and walked away from his curious gaze.

"We'll have to see about that," she mumbled.

Hand in hand, the little girl and the blotchy red grandmother returned to their family, each sucking a bright orange ice lolly.

LETTERS PAGE



Dear Editor

Can I just say how much I am looking forward to the Coronation of King Charles III.

In a time when there is so much uncertainty in the world, it is good to know that the institution of the British Monarchy continues and will bring a smile to many faces around it. I for one think that the Royal family does a marvellous

job in promoting the UK. Long live the King!

Simon Knowles, Doncaster

Dear Editor

It is obviously good that people now feel more at ease about expressing their sexuality. However, I am fed up of hearing what other people get up to in the bedroom and would prefer

that some things stay private. I don't care if you're straight or gay or an it/bi/them/up/down or whatever - just leave me out of it please. I really think people should do what they want if it is consensual and doesn't hurt or exploit anyone else but I really don't want to know about it. I don't care!

Emily Castle, Birmingham

Dear Editor

Congratulations on reaching the milestone of 100 editions of this e-magazine. I have watched it evolve and progress over the years and am pleased there are now regular music and sport articles as well as the funny stars. Well done and good luck for the future!

Terry Brown, Aylesbury

Dear Editor

I am very grateful that the current British government has directed a small amount of money to help people with their energy bills. I don't however, think that people with capped energy prices should have received this money as they didn't need it to pay their bills. This is a waste of public money designed to be only political in nature.

George Stones, Manchester

Dear Editor

Like many people I prefer to frequent cafes rather than public houses. But one thing that annoys me is the presence of dogs when there is food sold on the premises, as this is surely unhygienic and should be stopped immediately. I understand that many dog owners will disagree with me but I really don't think dogs should be around human food.

Sian Cristal, Glasgow

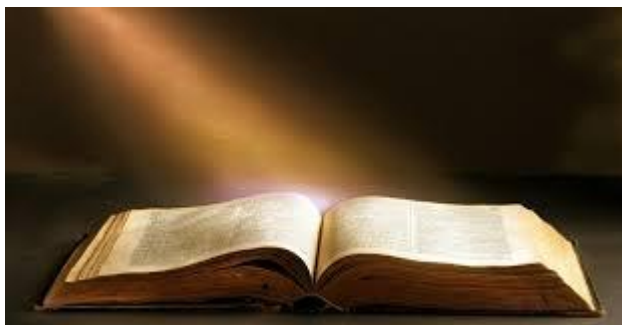
Dear Editor

In England, the price of a first-class stamp has risen to £1.10! This clearly indicates that public services should never be privatised as it only put more wealth in the hands of the few.

Unfortunately, reversing privatisation is a costly and time-consuming process and is thus difficult to achieve in one term of a government. This poses the question: why do ordinary people vote for right-wing governments that do not have their interests at heart?

Faith Giggs, Cardiff

BIBLE TALK



Sent by Peter Smith

The two letters by Peter in the New Testament are rich and uplifting.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

1 Peter 1:3,4 (NKJV)

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

2 Peter 1:5-7 (NKJV)

JUNE CHARLTON'S WONDERFUL RECIPES



Cottage Soup

Ingredients:

- 3 large potatoes
- 1 teacup of smoked bacon, small dice
- ½ oz of butter
- 1 medium onion
- 1 small turnip
- 1 carrot
- 2 pints of stock

Cheddar cheese, grated
Salt and pepper

Method:

Melt the fat in a pan, add the bacon and cook till brown. Add the grated potatoes, turnip, onion and carrot with stock. Season with salt and pepper. Boil gently till the vegetable and meat are tender for about ¾ of an hour. Serve piping hot and garnish with grated cheese.



Turkey and Sweet Potato Burgers

Ingredients:

- 1lb of turkey, minced
- 4 garlic cloves
- Zest of 2 limes
- 1 inch of fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 2-3 tablespoons of fresh coriander
- 2 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon of sesame oil
- 4 spring onions, thinly sliced

6 oz of sweet potato, grated

Method:

Using a food processor, blend the turkey and spices to a smooth paste. Add the sweet potatoes, spring onions, soy sauce and sesame oil. Blend for 1-2 minutes (the longer it's processed the smoother the mixture). Shape into 8 burgers either in a burger press or using wet hands and press firmly into balls and flatten. Place on the wire grid over the roasting/grill pan and cook at 170 F for 20-25 minutes depending on the thickness.



Chicken and Leek Pie

Ingredients:

10 oz of cooked, boned chicken
1 oz of butter
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon of plain flour
½ pint of chicken stock
½ pint of white wine
Salt and ground black pepper
3 medium leeks, thickly sliced
8 oz of puff pastry

Beaten egg for glaze

Method:

Cut the chicken into bite size pieces. Brown the onion lightly in the butter. Stir in the flour and cook for a minute. Add the stock and wine and bring to the boil stirring and simmer for 2-3 minutes. Season.

Mix the chicken and leeks into the sauce and pour into a deep-sided pie dish with about 1 ¾ pints capacity.

Roll out the pastry slightly larger than the size of the dish. Cut a 1-inch strip from the edge of the pastry, dampen and place around the edge of the dish. Lay the remaining pastry over to make a lid. Decorate with pastry leaves, knock up the edges and glaze with the beaten egg. Cook until golden brown at 400 F – 450 F.



Pancakes

Ingredients:

5 oz of self-raising flour
¼ teaspoon of salt
1 egg
2 oz of margarine
½ pint of milk

Method:

Mix the flour and salt in a basin. Make a hollow in the centre and drop in the egg (previously broken into a cup). Stir with a wooden spoon and add the milk gradually until the flour is all worked in (keep some milk back). Beat well and add the remaining milk. For each pancake melt about a teaspoon of margarine in a pan, on a fairly brisk heat. When it starts to smoke, stir in the batter and spoon in 2 tablespoons. When brown underneath turn, and cook the other side. When done, turn it out on to a sugared paper. Sprinkle with sugar and roll it up. Place on a hot dish and serve immediately with sugar or syrup, lemon or orange.

THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE SUMMER

Written by Marian Myers

Helen gazed out of the window, impatient for the minutes to tick by. It always seemed to be a warm summer's day or evening when she was this eager for an event to begin and, inevitably, she would be standing by this window. Actually, that probably wasn't so surprising now she thought about it, because didn't everyone always put on these special occasions on the (hopefully) warm days of summer?

She looked down at her perfect lilac dress and ran her fingers over the material. It felt silky to the touch, with raised pearls scattered over the bodice, contrasting with the flimsy fabric. It was a treat to be able to dress up and this dress was particularly special. After all, she had bought it to wear to the highlight of her summer – her school prom.

In her silent bedroom, Helen laughed to herself as she looked at the jacket her mother had also insisted she bought, in a matching shade, so she would have it with her if the weather turned.

“You can never be certain about summer weather,” she'd argued with Helen in the shop, who'd insisted that no one else would wear a jacket. “You'll be the only sensible one.”

Helen thought back to that day. She and her mother had gone shopping in town and bought the dress from the small boutique which seemed to provide prom dresses for almost all the schools in the area. In the years leading up to her prom, Helen had often stared at the various mannequins in the window, wistfully trying to decide which of the glittering dresses she would choose. Finally, the day had come when, excited beyond measure, she and her mother had been able to buy Helen a dress to wear to her very own prom - the event to celebrate her last term at the comprehensive before heading off to sixth form college.

The lilac colour of the dress was perfect for her brunette hair and olive complexion and it had been love at first sight, as far as Helen was concerned, from the moment she and her mother had walked into the shop. She had decided months earlier exactly what style she wanted - a tight bodice, with spaghetti straps, leading into a fuller skirt - but her mother hadn't been convinced and had insisted she should try on a variety of other styles as well.

“You won't be sure unless you see yourself in lots of different dresses,” she'd told Helen. “One day, it will be exactly the same with your wedding dress, you'll see.”

“That’s true,” the assistant had agreed. “Many brides walk down the aisle in a gown they’d initially insisted wouldn’t suit them at all.”

Helen had gone along with them, trying on dresses of various lengths and styles and in all the colours of the rainbow, before returning to her first choice. After that, she had endured an agonising wait, whilst the shop manager had consulted her black book. Every girl had heard about the famous black book.

“This is where I keep a record of every dress I sell. I note the style and colour, and to which prom the girl will be wearing it,” the manager had explained grandly. “That way, no two girls leaving my shop will head to the same prom wearing identical dresses.”

Helen had been convinced the manager would emerge from behind the pages of her book to announce that one Lila Fletcher had ordered the same dress. Helen wouldn’t have been surprised. Lila had made her life a misery since the first day of senior school. Only the week of the shopping trip she had announced she was now going out with David Lynwood and she tormented Helen with that piece of information at every opportunity. Helen was sure it was because Lila knew that Helen herself had secretly been in love with David since she was eleven. Therefore, having stolen Helen’s dream date, it would be typical for Lila to have also picked Helen’s dream dress. Eventually, however, the manager declared that no one else from their school had chosen the dress and Helen was free to wear it!

Now, as she waited upstairs, she thought she heard her father complaining to someone about how much dresses cost. Helen couldn’t believe that he was still going on about it, although he sounded mild compared to how he’d been when he had first seen the prom dress itemised on his credit card statement!

“How much?” he’d exploded with rage. “How could one young girl’s dress cost that amount?”

“It’s actually a very good price for a special dress like this,” Helen’s mother had pointed out reasonably. “You really have no idea about these things, do you?”

Her father had continued huffing and puffing over the next few weeks.

“I don’t see why they need school proms,” he’d moaned on more than one occasion. “They didn’t have them in my day.”

“Stop making a fuss,” her mother had retorted. “Times change, you know. You should be pleased your daughter’s going to have a wonderful time.”

Helen had let most of the arguments wash over her, preoccupied with her exams and, of course, David. She’d known he would accompany Lila to the prom and, of course, they were to be driven there in a stretch limousine. No one could imagine what a quiet, rather shy, boy like David had in common with someone as loud and sure of herself as Lila. It was obvious what Lila saw in him, though, since David was just about the best-looking boy in the whole school. However, until Lila, he’d shown more interest in playing sport than having a girlfriend. To be fair, he probably hadn’t had much say in the matter, once Lila had set her sights on him, but Helen hadn’t had a chance with him after that.

She glanced at her watch, aware of the time, and shook her head to get rid of the memories of how she had missed her chance of attending the prom with David. Anyway, it was all water under the bridge now, although she was pretty sure someone would be sure to bring it up after one too many drinks. They'd probably all have a jolly good laugh about it! Well, maybe not David - he didn't like people laughing at him.

"Come on, love," her father called up the stairs. "We'd better go if we're going to be on time. All the others left ages ago and the car's ready for us now."

Helen pulled herself out of her reverie and smiled to herself. Her father, Brian, was a stickler for punctuality, even on a day like this one. She hung the prom dress back in the wardrobe and put her memories to one side.

Nervously, she took another look in the mirror at the dress she had chosen to wear. The boutique had come up trumps once again – the dress was absolute perfection. She walked back to the window and looked down at the car waiting for her in the driveway. It wasn't a stretch limo, obviously, since she wasn't like Lila. Still, it looked very impressive as it gleamed in the glorious sunlight of a late summer's day.

It was time to leave. She walked carefully down the stairs, in her rather too-high shoes, and met her father in the hallway.

"I thought you'd got lost," he muttered. "You know I hate being late."

He sounded brusque, but Helen wasn't fooled – she could see the tears glistening in his eyes, even if he was trying to surreptitiously wipe them away.

"But you scrub up very well," he added, his voice cracking. "I have to say that dress is worth absolutely every penny."

"Dad! I never thought I'd hear you utter those words!" Helen exclaimed. "You didn't think that when I bought my prom dress, did you? I've just been looking at it and it brought back a lot of memories."

Her father had recovered his composure and he held out his arm to her.

"I bet. You called that prom the highlight of the summer," he smiled. "It was certainly the highlight of my credit card's summer."

Despite the butterflies that she could now feel swirling around in her stomach, Helen giggled.

"Thank goodness, I've got my real Dad back - I was worried I might be stuck with an imposter!"

"Now, you just watch it," her father chided. "It might be a special day, but there's no call for cheek."

They left the house together, with Brian checking twice that he'd locked the door, and settled down in the car. He leant over to Helen and whispered in her ear.

“I’m glad we’re off - that driver might be on the clock, you know.”

“I don’t think it works like that, Dad,” Helen shook her head. “Just relax.” They drove off in style and, only ten minutes later, pulled up at the venue for this summer’s special event. Helen picked up a beautiful bouquet from the seat of the car and took her father’s arm.

They entered the building and then walked together slowly, surrounded by friends and family, but the only person Helen was aware of was the man waiting for her at the other end. When he turned around to look back at her, she gazed into the hazel eyes of the extremely handsome face before her - her fiancé.

Later that evening, Helen and her bridegroom took to the floor for their first dance. As they held each other close and moved easily around the room, Helen whispered.

“Today has been absolutely perfect! How did I ever think that the prom would be the best day of my life?”

She thought her new husband looked a little uneasy at the mention of her prom, but she still grinned at him cheekily.

“I was looking at my prom dress just before I set off and reminiscing.”

“You looked amazing in that dress,” her husband smiled. “But you look even more beautiful in this one. You look like a princess.”

Helen felt like one. Earlier that summer, when she had been back to the boutique that had sold her the prom dress, she had again been advised to try on a lot of different dresses, despite having picked her perfect dress after only a few minutes in the shop.

“This time, it actually is for your wedding dress,” her mother had pointed out. “You really must be sure.”

So, Helen had agreed to a fashion parade of dresses, if only to keep her mother and the assistant happy, but she had always known her own mind. She had remained loyal to her first choice, just as she had with David! That was why today, ten years after that school prom, they had made their wedding vows to each other.

“I think I deserved to feel like a princess, since my prom was such a disappointment,” she teased him. “Although, you probably can’t really be blamed for that.”

“Please don’t remind me about Lila and her antics,” David grimaced. “You know Lila just made everything up and that she and I were never really going out with each other. There was someone else I wanted to take to the prom – I made the biggest mistake of my life.”

Helen loved how David, even after all these years and as they danced at their own wedding reception, still regretted not having escorted her to their prom.

“I’ve known ever since you told me on our first day at sixth form college, silly, but I don’t mind if you tell me again,” Helen laughed, hugging him, as all the other couples joined them

on the dancefloor. “And I’d say you’ve put it all right now, because today isn’t just the highlight of the summer, it’s the highlight of my life!”

CD REVIEW – MEMENTO MORI BY DEPECHE MODE



Written by Graham Townsend

This is the fifteenth studio album by the band from Basildon in Essex. It is also the first since the sad passing of keyboard player and founding member Andy “Fletch” Fletcher at the age of just sixty in May 2022.

The album contains twelve tracks and the running time comes in at just over fifty minutes. It debuted at number two on the UK Albums Chart. “Ghosts Again” was released as a single in February 2023 to give us a taster of what was to come on the album. As soon as I heard it for the first time, I knew who the artist was without

having to be told. The band’s style has changed significantly since they first burst on the scene in 1980 however, there are certain hallmarks of their music that have endured right up to the present day.

The brooding and somewhat haunting opening track “My Cosmos is Mine” was subsequently released to streaming platforms a month later notably, with no accompanying video. It is the longest track on the album. It is engaging enough to not become boring like some songs do that run for over five minutes.

There is a lighter feel to “Wagging Tongue”. Something more akin to their eighties stuff I’d say. “Ghosts Again” is certainly radio friendly and, I think, their best single for many years. It just seems so accessible. “Soul with Me” highlights Martin Gore’s vocal abilities so well. Many people probably overlook this in favour of front man Dave Gahan’s distinct style. This is a nice ballad.

My favourite track is probably “Caroline’s Monkey” although, I have seen comments on the internet from people saying they don’t like it because of the perceived view of what the song is about, i.e., addiction to drugs and the threat that it is always in the background for someone who has managed to get themselves “clean”.

“People Are Good” has strong similarities to their classic 1990 single “Enjoy the Silence”. If you like that track then you’ll love this. “Never Let Me Go” has pulsing beats. Perhaps a nod to The Prodigy and possibly Gorillaz. Album closer “Speak to Me” is a nice melancholic way to finish things off.

There are clear references to mortality throughout the album, in fact, memento mori translates from Latin as “remember you must die”. This is not really surprising following Fletcher’s death, but there are still a few upbeat moments. For fans of their early new wave synth pop material, who are not familiar with their more recent stuff, the music on this album may come as something of a surprise, but not that much. They have had a darker tone to their music

from probably as far back as, and maybe even before, “Blasphemous Rumours” in 1984. Having said that, there is no reason why anyone wouldn’t like what they hear here as it is very good all round, in my opinion.

This is probably the best album I have reviewed for the magazine to date. It is everything I hoped it would be, and probably a little bit more. MY STAR RATING: ****1/2

AN INTERVIEW WITH STAN ICON

First of all, can you please tell us a little bit about yourself? Yes, I’m Halifax born and bred. I’ve lived in Halifax most of my life. I spent a couple of years living down in London. I’ve been in a few bands. The last one being ICON 13. I’m married to Sharon and I have a step-daughter Grace. We run two shops in the Piece Hall in Halifax, Jitterbug Jean and BEET13JUICE (pronounced Beetlejuice).

As a young man, what were your interests, did you enjoy school? School was ok. I enjoyed music, art and biology, I wasn't a natural academic scholar. I went to Highlands like yourself Graham and our mutual friend Marcus.

Were there any teachers who helped you or inspired you? There was a music teacher called Mr Smith and an art teacher called Mrs Stansfield. They encouraged me to do other things, be more creative. The deputy headmistress Mrs Younger, she taught me English. She came across as very stern. I kept failing at English but I had one-term with her and, I passed with flying colours because she got through to me what I needed to do.

Did you know what you wanted to do at this stage? I just wanted to be in a band. I had no inclination to go out in the big wide world and get a job. My dad wanted me to go into banking because he thought it was a steady way to make a living, which it was back then.

So, what actually happened when you left school? Initially I worked in sales through the Youth Opportunities Scheme. I worked in customer service for a furniture company. I was there about six months. Then I got a job at a business supplies company where I worked for about five years. I enjoyed it and developed my patter and got more confident I suppose. Then I was headhunted by a metal finishing company. I worked in the office there but, I wasn’t there very long.

Why was that? I received a letter from a friend called Dooj, He had just moved to London and he was in an eponymously named band with his mate Julian. They had been using drum and base backing tapes for their music. They had a recording session booked and they needed a drummer. So, without any forethought or hesitation, I just said “yeah I’ll do it” and I packed my job in, packed my drum kit and off I went to London. I slept on a few floors for a few weeks and then I got my own flat. It was an interesting and hedonistic time.



Living in London has got to be a very different experience for a lad from Halifax? It was but, as glamorous as it sounds, I found it to be a very insular place. None of the locals wanted to speak to us. As soon as they heard our Yorkshire accents that was it. Any girls we might have been interested in, as soon as they heard us speak, they didn't want to know. It was quite tough at times.

Overall, did you enjoy your time in London? Yes. It was a good learning curve. It taught me a lot about the music business. Some of it not so good. It was rough in some places where we played. I remember a couple of dodgy pubs in places like Camden and Sevenoaks. But we had a good time and whilst we were there, Marcus came down on the coach and did a couple of rehearsals and a gig with us before coming back up here on a Sunday to get back to his regular life.

Have you got any advice for up and coming or budding musicians? Just get out and play and be true to yourself. Try and entertain people. I consider myself an entertainer rather than a singer. I was influenced by people like Alice Cooper, he was an entertainer, it was all about his show not just the musical talent he had. Get people involved and get them dancing.

At what point did you decide it was time to move back to Halifax? I'm not sure if there was a specific point. We had a manager and she told us we needed to go to Europe, Belgium, Germany and the like and play gigs there but for some reason we didn't get there. We'd be playing somewhere like Caernarvon Castle in Camden and Bruce Springsteen, for example, would be playing up the road and we were wondering "why is no one coming to see us?". It was a mix of feeling demoralised and just the harsh reality of the situation really.

So, what did you do when you came back? I came back for one weekend with the intention of getting a job. I applied for a job as a mortician's assistant, as I had a keen interest in biology and I had always been fascinated with stuff like that. Then, I had a friend who told me to apply to the place where he had been working. I applied for a job working nights just to get my foot in the door whilst I looked for something better to do during the day. At the interview, the girl doing the interview offered me days, so, I took it. At the time it was a good job.

At what point did you get involved with music again? I was on the bus, on the way to work, and this guy called Joby got on and he knew who I was and he knew I'd been down in London playing with Dooj. He asked me what I was doing now. I said "nothing really" and he just said "do you wanna start a band?" I'd been in a band called Bleeding Hearts before I went to London and so, I got hold of the bassist and lead guitarist from back then and we got Joby to sing vocals for us. I also got Shane, a friend of mine, involved at this point. We did a few gigs locally at places like North Bridge Leisure Centre before we disbanded.

What was next? Shane wanted to do something else so we got that up and running. It was me, Shane and two guys from Wakefield, a singer and a keyboard player. We were called Barbed Wire Kisses.

How did that go? We were due to do some recording before some gigs we had lined up. At rehearsals and then also at the recording session, our singer just froze so, we ended up getting Joby back in. He came over the next day and sang it all with literally no rehearsal whatsoever! Going forward, me, Shane and Joby carried on under the name Kill City Kill until probably the late 80s/early 90s at which point, Sony Records came in and said “we’ve just signed Shed Seven, to be honest, you’re probably too old now!” This was the final straw for me, I’d had enough!

You went on a musical hiatus at this point then? My drum kit was down in the cellar at home. Somebody came and asked if I’d still got it and whether they could have it. I said “fifty quid and it’s yours”. That was it for about fifteen years!

What brought about the comeback then? Our singer was turning forty and he wanted to get all the musicians he’d played with over the years together for a big gig to celebrate his birthday. He asked me and Shane if we’d do just maybe three or four songs. We did it and it went down a storm. Shane said “shall we do it again?” but Joby couldn’t as he was already in a band. So, we needed a singer and a bass player. One evening we were in WCs (pub in Halifax) and Dunc, our original bass player from Bleeding Hearts came in. He agreed to join but we couldn’t find a singer. The lad, who lived next door to me Jamie, knew I played drum and had asked me to teach him to play drums. So, I taught him and the others guys said “why don’t we get Jamie in on drums and you sing?!”

Do you prefer drumming or singing? I’ve got to say singing. Because drumming is such hard work! I was asked if I could drum and sing at the same time but I said “no chance” ha-ha.

Was this where the name ICON13 came in? Yeah. Shane is very good with promotional stuff and he just came up with the name like he had with Barbed Wire Kisses and Kill City Kill, I bet he has loads of these names in his head!

What kind of music were you playing? We were just playing covers. Jamie left after a few gigs, so, to allow us to carry on until we found a replacement, I had a drum program on my laptop and I started programming it to work just like I was playing it. We got four or five songs and thought “oh that was good” so I just kept programming more and more so we had a good set.

Did you start playing gigs with the drum machine? Yeah. The first one was at The Sportsman in Halifax. I don’t think the people there were convinced about it cos their clientele liked proper bands with a full complement of musicians but, it worked. One thing we did realise was that we had to be on the ball with our playing as the machine doesn’t stop and there was no room for errors.

Did you consider hiring another drummer? We did. We had a few who thought they would do better than the machine but, it just didn’t work out and we did about ten years with a drum machine.

And is ICON 13 still a thing? It's not a thing, if that makes sense. We don't do it anymore but, we never officially split up or fell out or anything like that. We may do something in the future but, there is nothing in the pipeline as we speak. I think the other guys in the band would probably be more up for doing something else than I would and, that feels a bit strange because it's all I've ever really wanted to do for most of my life. To be truthful it took over my life and it had started to take its toll on our social life with all the machine programming and promoting the band on social media etc. We did about twelve years and tried to make it to thirteen, due to the obvious name connection. We were quite popular, probably due to our song choice. We played the music that we liked to listen to and it went down well. People said we were a punk band but, I'd say we played pop music. We did all sorts including Motown stuff and rock n roll. Every now and then we'd chuck in a couple of our own songs from back in the day.

Was that a catalyst for moving away from music again? It was but also you get older and priorities change. Sharon opened Jitterbug Jean and she was spending pretty much every day working there and I'd help out at the weekend as I was still working full time in screen printing.

Tell us a little bit about the shops? Sharon had worked in retail. She loved the rock n roll/vintage style and decided to open her own shop. The shop opened in August 2017. It was tough going at first as we were learning how it all worked but we figured it out and things have been going well. We stock mainly ladies wear, rockabilly clothing, dresses, bags, shoes etc. We started getting more and more dark clothes from our suppliers, which were selling well and we found ourselves running out of space. Subsequently, we opened BEET13JUICE just before Christmas 2022. That sells mainly Goth and alternative clothing. Fingers crossed we've hit the ground running there. I think it's because Halifax doesn't have anything else quite like it. Our customer base is very diverse. We like to be able to accommodate everyone.

You clearly consider these ventures to be a success! Yes, very much so.

Is there anything else you would like to add? Just that I'm still passionate about music and fashion and put all my time and energy into BEET13JUICE. I feel this is what I'm meant to be doing at this point in my life, it makes me happy and I go to work with a smile on my face.

Thanks for your time, Stan. We really appreciate it! It's been great I've really enjoyed it. Cheers!

ANOTHER FUN QUIZ FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH



Questions:

- (1) Who is credited with inventing the electric kettle?
- (2) What is the capital of the Falkland Islands?

- (3) What is the official currency of Ecuador?
- (4) What is the French word for 'rope'?
- (5) Where was the first UK motorway built?
- (6) What are the lines that musical notes are written on?
- (7) What do you call the study of plants?
- (8) What is the German word for 'man'?
- (9) What is a sponge?
- (10) Where was the first 4-minute mile run?
- (11) What is the third highest mountain in the world?
- (12) What was the second Carry on Film?
- (13) Who composed the music for West Side Story?
- (14) Who designed Castle Howard, in Yorkshire, England?
- (15) When did the first oil flow to the British mainland from the North Sea?
- (16) What is a carbuncle?
- (17) Who played Sergeant Blaketon in the TV series Heartbeat?
- (18) What does cornucopia mean?
- (19) Where was the naturalist David Attenborough born?
- (20) Who plays Sam Dingle in the soap Emmerdale?

Answers:

(1) Arthur Leslie Large (2) Stanley (3) US Dollar (4) Corde (5) Preston (bypass) (6) Musical staff/stave (7) Botany (8) Mann (9) A animal with a dense skeleton that is highly adapted to its environment (10) Oxford, England (11) Kangchenjunga (12) Carry on Nurse (13) Leonard Bernstein (14) John Vanbrugh, Nicholas Hawksmoor (15) 1975 (16) A dome-shaped cluster of boils (17) Derek Fowlds (18) A symbol of plenty of a goat's horn overflowing with flowers, fruit and corn/An abundant supply of good things of a specified kind (19) Isleworth, England (20) James Hooton

Editor's Final Word: Thank you for taking the time and trouble to read this free e-magazine (www.fromthehorsesmouth.org.uk) and I hope you enjoyed at least some of it. If you want to advertise/donate to the running costs/be interviewed or submit something for consideration, please contact us at: dean@fthm.org.uk Best wishes, Dean, Brenda, Robert and Graham.