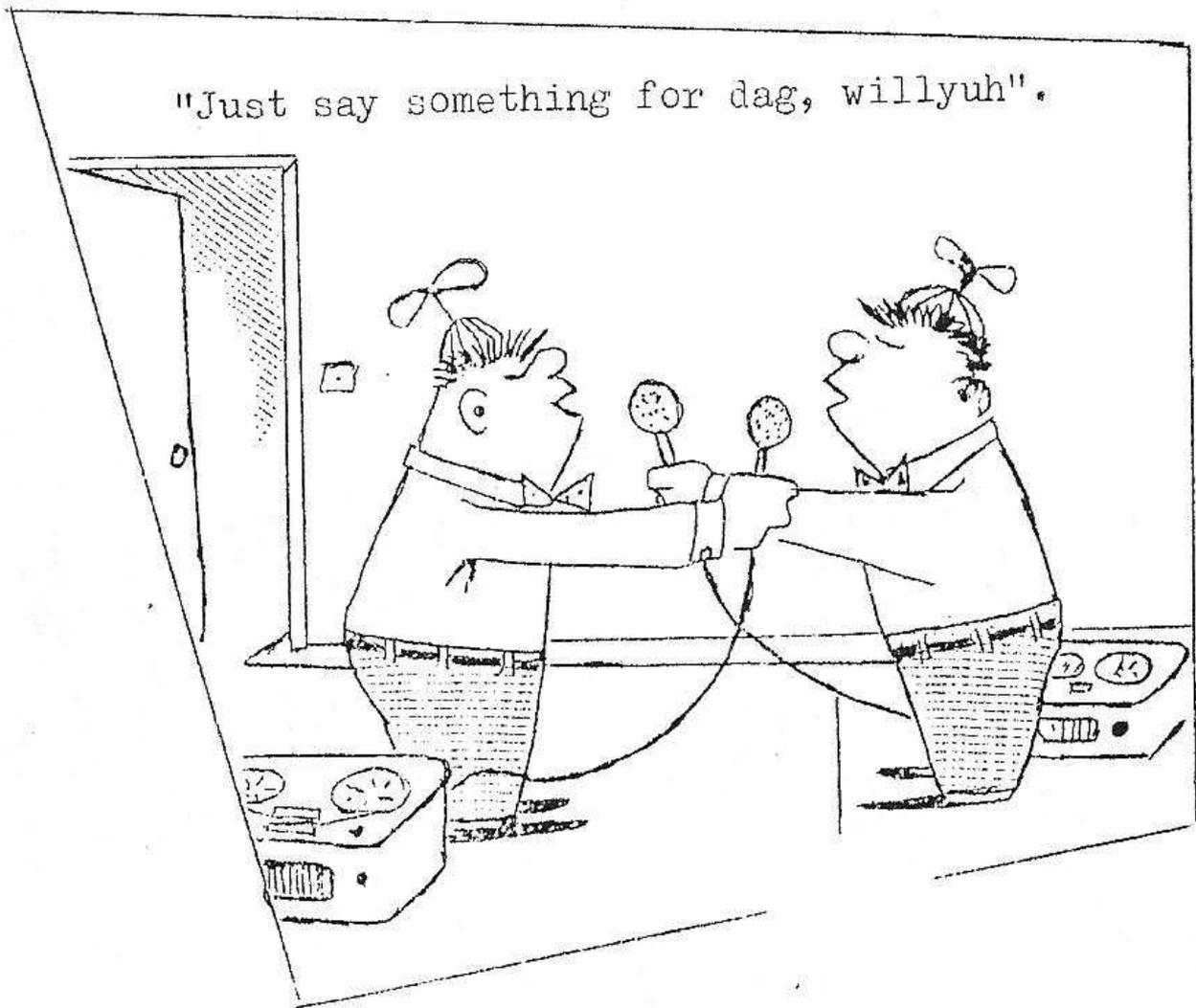


Virtual Tucker Hotel



(21st century caption: Bill and Peter trying out the ustream co-host feature.)

Issue Three

<http://www.ustream.tv/channel/the-virtual-fan-lounge>

From: Peter Sullivan ("ceemage"), peter@burdonvale.co.uk
Boring webpage at <http://www.burdonvale.co.uk>
Slightly less boring livejournal at <http://ceemage.livejournal.com>

VTH is primarily an electronic fanzine, available on <http://www.efanzines.com>. Paper copies of this fanzine do exist, however, and will be available for the fannish usual. In any case, e-mails and letters of comment are, of course, welcome.

Thanks to: Bill Mills ("FanLounge"), without whom The Virtual Fan Lounge wouldn't exist. Also to those who took part in the Cohosts testing this weekend. And to everyone else who's played a part, great or small, in getting this fan project to where it is now.

Member fwa. Startling Press Production number 270. Today is Wednesday 14th May 2008.

What We've Been Up To

Just one session to report on this time – the "Regular Weekly Chat Session 2" on the Sunday. A summary of the transcript is further on in this issue.

Join the Party

To use the chat-room, just go to <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/the-virtual-fan-lounge>. On the left hand side of the page is the live video feed – replaced by a slide show when there isn't anything happening. On the right is the actual chat-room. You can see what everyone else is typing in the top window, and add your own contribution in the smaller box at the bottom.

You will be assigned an initial user name in the format "ustreamer-12345." If you'd rather change this – to your real name, livejournal name, or whatever – you can do this by clicking the "Sign Up" link at the top to register for free. Some people have been slightly put off by the amount of information that the registration form asks for, which I can empathise with. But registration is entirely optional – you can simply stay as "ustreamer-12345" if you prefer.

IRC Clients also supported

NB: The preceding paragraph was one of those, (quite common when talking about computers, I fear) where, if you didn't understand it, you almost certainly don't have to... The web version of the chat-room will always be the primary focus, I'm sure.

Thanks to Kat Templeton, who tipped us off that the chat-room part of The Virtual Fan Lounge is just a web front-end to the long-established Internet Relay Chat (IRC) system.

The practical upshot of all this is, if you ~~stick one in your ear~~ already have an IRC client installed, you can by-pass the web page and just log in directly. Why would you want to do that? Well, some IRC clients have extra functionality that the web version does not. Or maybe, being a fan, you just like being contrary. To connect via IRC, set your parameters to:

- Server: chat1.ustream.tv
- User name: {Your ustream user name}
- Password: {Your ustream password}
- Channel: #the-virtual-fan-lounge

(This is, as far as I can tell, the only place that "ustream-12345"-style logins don't work.)

The Naming of Cats

Just to clarify a point of terminology. The Virtual Fan Lounge is the name of the website, and the chat-room itself is #the-virtual-fan-lounge. But Virtual Tucker Hotel is the name of the fanzine that discusses The Virtual Fan Lounge.

This means we can distinguish between The Virtual Fan Lounge itself, and Virtual Tucker Hotel as the fanzine that talks about/supports The Virtual Fan Lounge. I'm sure that the expensive marketing consultants would tell us that, by doing this, we are "diluting our brand," or somesuch. But fandom ain't run by expensive marketing consultants!

So Why 'The Virtual Fan Lounge'?

Think of it as being like a real-life fan lounge at your ideal convention. Yes, there will be scheduled events taking place – fandom-related panels, and so on. But, because the room is open 24/7, it's also just a place to hang out & find people. Even if, when you go in, the room is empty, you can do some solitary fanac by

reading the fanzines on the table (or, in our case, looking at the pre-recorded videos). And it's the most likely place to run into another fan or fen, and just start chatting.

Yours Sincerely, Wasting Away

((I must admit, I do like the Earl Kemp phrasing – “We get letters. Some parts of some of them are printable.”))

Curt Philips writes: I've just read the first two issues and am impressed by the work you've put into transcribing (is that the correct term?) the chat transcript. Considering the disjointed nature of Chat conversations I think you've done a great job of summarizing them and I, for one, am certainly going to try to sound more erudite in those chats now that I know that they're being preserved for posterity...

((**Peter replies:** Well, I used to do something similar for a free software project called GNU Enterprise. Most free software projects tend to use e-mail lists to co-ordinate and communicate, but they tended to use Internet Relay Chat (IRC) – they compared it to having a virtual whiteboard at the end of the office that they could stand around and work things out together, despite being on separate continents. My IRC summaries are still on-line at <http://www.kerneltraffic.org/GNUe/> – although I doubt they'd be of much interest to anyone here.))

Curt continues: Peter, is that your West Highland White Terrier in the photo in VTH #2? How old is it now? We have a Westie that's about 4 1/2 months old; and yours appears to be about that or a bit older. Great dogs, aren't they? Liz and I got one shortly after we were married 29 years ago and we've always wanted to have another. Ours is a female named "Ivy" (My daughter picked the name - I call the dog "Puppers" when no one else is around...)

((**Peter replies:** Oscar was about 4.5 months at the time the photo was taken – he's almost 6 months (and growing rapidly) now. He is indeed a wonder dog. I've never had a dog before, and wouldn't really have described myself as a doggy person, but Oscar has completely converted me. You'll have to excuse me if I sound a tad gushing at times.))

((Of course, Oscar has already become a source of faanish lore, by delaying my first webcam broadcast when he came in from the garden absolutely filthy and needing an emergency bath. I understand that “I'm just nipping upstairs with the wife to wet my Oscar”_ (which I never actually said) now appears to be the latest faanish euphemism.))

Geri Sullivan writes: Thank you for the =Virtual Tucker Hotel=. It was especially fun and interesting to read #2 since it covered a conversation I wasn't present for. Reading it, I could feel the zippy excitement that made the Virtual Con Suite at Corflu so compelling.

It was a true pleasure to read that the Rotsler you used on the cover of #1 was your SFFY DIY Fanzine Rostler. That one page continues to yield significant egoboo -- I'm delighted so many SFFY readers actually *did something* with the DIY Fanzine kit beyond just looking at and reading it.

((**Peter replies:** I've seen several new fanzines mention the DIY Fanzine kit as an inspiration - do you have a full list?))

Geri continues: You're right -- my workload is heavier than usual right now. (That's a good thing, indeed!) My plate is also overflowing with fannish commitments, not to mention the stairs and hallway that's been waiting for me to paint it for...oh...darned near 4 years now. Eep. Elaine Brennan helped me strip the wallpaper a few weeks after I moved in, before my furniture and other belongings arrived. Last summer, other friends helped me finish the scraping and scrubbing. All of the glue residue has been removed, but there's still a bit of wall prep -- filling in nail holes and little dings then sanding that, a final wash since it's now been most of a year, taping the wood trim all around (5 doorways plus stairs) and *lots* of tricky painting.

All of that and more make it unlikely that I'll be even an occasional visitor to the Virtual Fan Lounge. Which is a shame, because I loved the chat all through Corflu. It was such a rush.

((**Peter replies:** I can fully relate to that - both The Virtual Fan Lounge and Virtual Tucker Hotel have proved huge time sinks for me over the few weeks since Corflu - but I wouldn't have it any other way!))

Ned Brooks writes: Thanks for the zine! I have never been to a Corflu, and only one Ditto (but when I got there I discovered I was GoH, like it or not). The camera feed from Corflu Silver didn't work very well for me - when I tuned in it was off or the camera was aimed at an empty room. But it's an interesting idea. I've never tried any of the chat rooms - I'm probably too old for that - but perhaps I will try it.

((**Peter replies:** One of the things I like about The Virtual Fan Lounge is that it's a comparatively gentle introduction to chat-rooms for people who haven't tried them before. There's no software to install – just go to the web-page. And the conversation and company can be guaranteed to be fannish.))

Ned continues: Sunderland - I recently read the ponderous ALICE IN SUNDERLAND and commented on it in IGOTS. I don't generally care for the "graphic novel" format, but that was excellent.

((**Peter replies:** It's on my "to-read" list – I should really have got myself a copy at Eastercon, but I never got around to it.))

Art Credits

Front cover: Arthur Thompson, from Ella Parker's Atom Anthology.

This page: Bill and Peter as co-hosts in real life. Screenshot by me.

Schedule for this week

Vegrants Party

The Vegrants in Las Vegas, Nevada meet the first and third Saturdays of the month and invite you to join them here for conversation, music, live web cam feed and possibly the first of Arnie Katz's 30 minute presentations entitled "The Wasted Hour".

- Saturday 17rd May, 8.00 pm PDT (Pacific Daylight Time)
- Saturday 17rd May, 11.00 pm EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)
- Sunday 17th May, 3.00 am UTC (Co-ordinated Universal Time)
- Sunday 17th May, 4.00 am BST (British Summer Time)
- Sunday 17th May, 11.00 am WAST (Western Australian Standard Time)
- Sunday 17th May, 1.00 pm EAST (Eastern Australian Standard Time)

24th/25th May Weekend

There will definitely be an event on the weekend of 24th/25th May, but we don't know exactly what just yet. Check the next issue of Virtual Tucker Hotel for more details.



Regular Chat Session, 11th May

The main purpose of the session was to allow Bill Mills and Peter Sullivan to do some public testing of the "Cohosts" functionality in ustream.

ceemage announced "OK, here's the plan. And, before anyone asks, it *is* as cunning as a fox that's just been elected Professor of Cunning at Oxford University. ustream has a feature called "Cohosts" which allows someone other than the 'main' broadcaster to broadcast. Either audio or video or both. You can have up to 3 co-hosts on same show. Bill & I want to understand how this works for future possible use (e.g. remote interviews). So we'll be footling about between the two of us to see how it works And will be looking for some volunteers to help if you have a webcam (for video) or mic (for audio). The rest of you can tell us what it looks and sounds like from your end." FanLounge went live as the main broadcaster, with ceemage as a co-host, 'picture in picture' in the top left of FanLounge's video feed. DianCrayne commented "Neat! It's like that "rabbit" program we have that lets you watch two TVshows at once." but noted "The only thing I notice that's odd is that Peter's resolution isn't as high as Bill's." Tee reported "I can't hear Peter; can hear Bill." ceemage asked "bill - can *you* hear me?" rocmills confirmed "yes, you are coming through on his headphones perfectly." ceemage wondered "bill - do you have to "accept" my audio?" rocmills joined as a second co-host, also 'picture-in-picture': ceemage noted "it's the brady bunch!" rocmills said "it may be that we can only get audio from one source since it is not letting me have audio either." ceemage said there was "no obvious switch to pass audio over."

Meanwhile, ShelVy asked "Anybody wanna play Fannish Jeopardy? No board -- we just toss answers back and forth." ceemage said "go fo it shelvy - i suspect bill + i are gonna be geeking" to try to resolve the sound problems. ShelVy asked "this fannish legend was renowned for saying 'Smooth!'" rocmills got in first with "who is tucker!" ShelVy replied "Now, 'The profession of the character who was always saying, 'He's dead, Jim!'" rocmills was once again first with "what is doctor!" She felt "easy questions for me... wait til he gets to the tough

ones."

FanLounge could hear both rocmills and ceemage on his headphones, but no-one else could. He re-routed the feed for his headphones through the audio mixer as a workaround. ceemage reported "i think i can hear roc now - but much backround rumble." DianCrayne confirmed "I can hear both Bill and Roxie!" DianCrayne felt "Three pics doesn't work too well, because it cuts off Bill's head." rocmills reported "i can hear peter! peter, do you have birds chirping in the background?" ceemage, who was in his back garden (via wifi), replied "yes - also an oscar somewhere - so apologies for any barks." He offered the webcam a treat - doesn;t work with the dog - might work with you." Cochtayle confirmed "I hear everybody." rocmills could "hear peter's birdies chirping - peter must be very far north for it still to be daylight at this hour." ceemage said it was "getting dark." ceemage and rocmills tried testing the latency on the link (i.e. the delay between the video and sound). rocmills reported "wow... i actually got the audio about 1 second BEFORE the raised hand - so the audio is ahead of the video." ceemage reckoned "we have anything up to 20 secs latency." rocmills said "that's okay, i don't read lips anyhow." jzak suggested "Just pretend you're watching a Jap. monster movie."

ceemage said he was "going inside now - it *is* getting dark now." rocmills reported "i got bill chattering away, but peter seems to have locked up or frozen..." ceemage replied "i've disconnected - but bill hasn't swictehd me off yet - so i'm frozen in time." DianCrayne felt this was "Better than cryogenics." DGaryGrady recalled "watching one of the first transatlantic television links via Telstar. This seems remarkably similar!"

ceemage and FanLounge swapped logins, and tried co-hosting the other way around, with ceemage as main broadcaster and FanLounge as co-host. Burbank396 confirmed "There's bill." DGaryGrady confirmed "We're hearing both now." rocmills felt "peter looks a bit dim, though... the lighting, that is, not peter personally." Burbank396 wondered "Shouldn't some tell bill that he is not on audio right now?" He confirmed "Peter had him turned down." ceemage explained what he thought the

previous problem with the audio had been - the main broadcaster had control over the co-hosts' audio, and could turn it up or down - but "by default the audio is witched off" from co-hosts.

FanLounge and ceemage swapped back again, DGaryGrady wondered "Is Peter's audio possibly very low rather than off entirely?" This proved to be the case - FanLounge turned up the audio on ceemage's feed, but there was then an echo. rocmills deduced "aha! dean, of course, we are hearing peter through bill maybe." FanLounge switched off his previous workaround of feeding through the audio mixer, and everything finally worked as expected - rocmills reported "i can hear and see both of you, no echo." rocmills re-joined as a co-host and icemonkey confirmed "seems I can hear all three as well." He asked "peter can you say something to make sure I still have your audio." ceemage replied "i'll say something

when bill is quiet... so might take some time <g>."

ustreamer-75196 felt "This is pretty underwhelming -- it would work better when there's an actual subject or some context. It's all wonkery as it stands." DianCrayne said "It's testing!" ceemage agreed - "content to follow next week."

FanLounge tried adjusting the size of the co-host's window. icemonkey reported "roc is shapeshifting again, moving and changing size, is this intental ?" DianCrayne surmised "It's her true nature." rocmills felt "smaller is better, sharper image too - typical of thumbnails." icemonkey said "at that size we could get nine fans on line, audio seems to have gone away though." DGaryGrady was "impressed. You may have inaugurated a whole new mode of fandom." DianCrayne feared "Next they'll be lining up set designers, make up people, etc. etc."