

54G, Retro crisis and terrible teens.

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How is it that you never see anything on eBay that is advertised as Medium-Rare or Well-done? Everything is Rare or R@RE or R@R3, one of kind (the kind of 10 million more that have been produced by a knock off factory in deepest darkest China). Rare indeed. If it's so rare how come every man (or woman, got to be PC in this day and age) and his (or her) dog (or bitch... wait, that was the ex-wife) is selling them? As rare as a dose of athletes foot.

I must be approaching the age of mid life crisis, I have yet to buy a Porsche but I have bought lots of retro gear from eBay to bring back the flavour of a misspent youth, disassembling spectrum and commodore games, Grandstand table top games, failed microdrives and thermal printers, Prestel and 1200 baud. How far has it come in just 20 odd years, from squeezing a totally addictive HUGE game into 48k to the eye candy, snore inducing, over bloated, gigs of code that come to the Xbox. Long gone are the days of making every byte count, "byte high, no limit". Developers these days take the abundance of memory and resource for granted, squeezing in as much bloat as is humanly possible. Indeed, I've seen comments on a function well over 48K! It wasn't a comment, more of a novella, and before you go on about comments removed at compile, this was JavaScript. Ah well, back to Jetset Willy and sabre wulf, ultimate play the game and imagine the possibilities of gremlin graphics, typing in a basic loader followed by pages and pages of hex only to have the spectrum overheat or a granddad unplug it to pass by and plug it back in again on the other side of the wires, wondering why I looked about ready to burst. Oh yes, those were the days my friend. Summers always seem brighter and warmer and winters always came with snow. Halcyon and on and on.

This week has been a sort of non-event. Although I did get a refund on a parking ticket as mentioned in some previous spurious blog. I've been stuck with some development problems in PL/SQL and Java that have been driving me crazy. Arrays as JDBC params and more loops than hula factory. I did receive a call from a friend, she had just bought a new wireless card and was struggling to get it connected. The Knoppix I installed on her laptop is running fine but something I have generally found with Linux is that once it is working, leave it well alone! I asked why she had bought the new card. "It's a 'G' and it's faster than my 'B', Internet has been slow'. Hmmm, Internet slow. How do you explain this one?

"Tracey, you know it won't make a difference on your Internet speed?"

"Yes, it will, it's a faster card".

"Erm, no, it won't. You have a 2 MB Internet connection, the maximum you can download is 2MB".

"But this is 54G, so I'll get it faster".

"No, you won't, you'll get 2MB if you use that card or your old one".

"No, my cousin has a 'G' and hers is faster than mine".

"You know speed depends on... nope, you're right, this is how you connect the card...."

Yep, I gave up. She got it connected and BELIEVES it's downloading faster from the Internet. With either card she gets around 128/150. Frame of mind and perception, amazing what people see when they want to believe. I wonder if I could use the same technique with the tax office. Jedi mind trick, "you don't need to see my tax return, you need to give me a refund".

I managed to crowbar in a couple of movies this week. I'm not sure what it is but as I get older the less patience I have with the drivel pouring out of Hollywood. Poseidon and Sentinel, those were the two culprits this week. Couldn't they have just sunk the boat in the first ten minutes and have done us all a favour? And what? This is the CIA, shoot first, ask him later, he passed the lie detector test in Basic Instinct... or maybe take him to some god forsaken place in eastern Europe, Romania... a few hours in torture... erm, detention would have done the trick. How is it when there is some disaster they always manage to squeeze experts into the party of survivors, ex-fireman, boat designer (how convenient), Olympic swimmer and token screamers. Oh and the hero dies, how Armageddon of you. What happened to having a party of say, street cleaner, checkout girl, wanna be deaf DJ, unemployed social sucking bum? Real people. And Russians? As villains? In an American movie? Well who would have thought that! I was expecting more from Sentinel and less from Poseidon (which was exactly what I got in the terms of Poseidon!). There was nothing of merit in the two, apart from the end titles and a sigh of relief that the ordeal was over. Yes, I could have turned it over or off but I'd left the remote next to the DVD player and couldn't be bother prising my backside from the big, comfy, leather sofa and putting down my Guinness.

So what do I have to look forward to this weekend? A rare (r@re/r@r3) work free weekend? Well, I have a daughter from a previous marriage that is coming to visit and you know what? Even though she is the apple of my eye she is the biggest pain in the ass I have ever had to endure! Maybe it is because she is spoiled. Everything she ever wanted she got (almost, I don't do donkey's, pony's or horses but if I did they'd probably be the best). Maybe it's because she is in the troubled teens. No matter what you do, where you go, who or what you see, nothing is ever good enough. She has one expression for all occasions, one face for all purposes, anyone with kids this age will know, they've seen it, it's the "bored, can't entertain me" expression, never smiling, the "too much trouble" looks, and it infuriates me!

We go to Blackpool, home of the record setting rollercoaster, up we go on the big one, my ass so tight coals could be turned to diamonds in seconds.... fingers ripping into the seat in front, it's over, sighs of relief, back on terra firma and does she smile? As if her face will crack the moment her lips curl up at the edges. Does she rave on in an over excitable manner, "again, again, again"? Do they serve ice-cream in hell? Not one emotion, and when asked, "did you enjoy that?", the default answer is selected and brought into play "it was alright"... complete with shoulder shrug and a look of such disdainful indifference. "It was alright".

We go on another ride, turned upside down, flung out to all extremities, whizzed, jolted, flipped, screaming, shook and spun... "It was alright". What do I have to do to get some emotion out of the girl? Instead all I ever get is "it was alright" in between her staring at her phone, thumb moving so fast it's almost on fire. This girl spends waaaaay too much time on that thing and what does she want for her birthday? Yep, another bloody phone. Why? Because she's worn out the buttons on this one, it's only 6 months old too. Was I ever this obnoxious and indifferent when I was 16? Ah, rubber key Sinclair z80/81/spectrum, Z80 assembler and many dark hours... perhaps I was.

She comes over to my place about twice a month and I want to spend some time with her but she comes in, dumps the bag on her bed, switches on the TV, phone out, and flaming thumb into play. I get a few words occasionally wedged in between her staring at the phone or TV. Usually it's just a one syllable affair, like "food", "drink", or "Remote". Sometimes I wonder why she comes over at all!

The other problem is that the current Mrs W thinks it's something to do with her. This adds a layer of ice over these visits and sometimes you can chew on the atmosphere. Basically this means that I'm caught straddling between the two camps, one foot in daughter camp trying to get a little closer and 1 foot in the other trying to reassure the current Mrs W that it isn't her, all teenagers are like this (apart from ALL of our friends who seem to have perfect kids and that totally destroys my ALL teen myth). When did life get so complicated? Long gone are the days of clubbing the woman over the head and dragging her back to my place (hmmm, that must be at least 4 years ago now, between marriages). Is it too much to ask for some social discourse from my teenage daughter? Surely something has to be happening in her life that she could talk about. Click click click goes the thumb, grunts go the replies. What do you want to do Kaz? - Not bothered. Did you like that movie? - It was alright. What do you think of the current trading on the gold standard? - Eyes lift from phone, thumb continues, nasty look, eyes down for a full SMS.

Ho hum, back to work I suppose. The 20-minute tirade is over. If you made it this far you are to be congratulated. In fact, I'm sure we'll give you a Mutley medal.

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