

***Hang your thoughts up, shut up the index, it's time to impose a curfew.***

Friday 21 October 2022

Dear Everyone

Aunty is 100. Only weeks after the BBC was formed on 18 October 1922, the general election of that year returned a Conservative party with 55.9% of the vote. A year later, the 1922 committee was formed, a group of Tory backbenchers also much in the news of late.

One of the big thorny questions that returns from time to time is whether the funding of the BBC should remain as it is now through a licence fee model. I'll pin my colours to the mast on this one. There is something fundamentally important about having a public broadcaster that is principally funded by the people. At £159 a year, it is astonishingly good value.

One of the things we've done at home is to look at our annual cost of ogling at the telly box. *Amazon Prime*, *Netflix* and others, all soon rack up, and we'll be trimming or at least making tactical subscriptions. For instance, I subscribe to *ITV Hub* during the Tour de France, and then drop the subs. That said, *Netflix* is back to growth, after a challenging first half of the year. As *Fortune* magazine has it, 'Hollywood can breathe a sigh of relief'.

To see the extraordinary innovations from the BBC, you might enjoy this:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/bbc-100/timeline/>

This first half of term has certainly been eventful in matters of national moment.

And overseas, terrible atrocities continue, which serve to put things into context. In Pakistan the floods have left devastation. I am pleased to see *The Associated Press* continue to flag the plight of pregnant women in particular. <https://apnews.com/article/health-pakistan-c4d881d5b021d7a1517fcfe4c160a1ef> An edition of *Women's Hour* a few weeks back had a feature on this which was harrowing to hear.

We will all have seen what is happening in Somalia. Plus, continued aggressions against Ukraine.

In uncertain times, music and the arts become even more important. Never was this more true than during the Second World War. When Myra Hess gave a live performance in the National Gallery on 10 October 1939, the queue of people wanting to hear her play stretched around Trafalgar Square. The concept of the London lunchtime concert was born. From Bishopsgate Institute, to the now very famous St Martin's in the Fields, there remains a healthy lunchtime culture of music in London. This week, I had the joy of hearing a former pupil from my time at the Yehudi Menuhin School perform a collection of exquisite piano pieces at St Stephen Walbrook Church, only minutes from St Paul's Cathedral School.

What is less savoury about these wonderful features of London life, is that very often musicians are unpaid or underpaid. The idea that venues present opportunities for musicians to be heard, and therefore they should be grateful for the exposure, is something that must be challenged. You wouldn't do that to plumbers or electricians, to traders, or lawyers. Why, then, to artists?

The half term break comes at a perfect time. In the words of Ian Dury, 'a spirit to restore, a balance is due'.

From the album, *Do It Yourself*, one of the best lullabies ever written.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Cduyv9rHe8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Cduyv9rHe8)

May you have a peaceful break.

Best wishes

Simon

p.s. If you're interested, *The Blockheads*, old school iconic solid London rock band, are playing at Dingwalls (now the Powerhaus) 8 Dec 2022