



The Seventy Eighth issue of a sort-of letter substitute, fanzine kinda thing. Maybe weekly, maybe not. Available from:

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Available via the World Wide Web, or as an email attachment. I recommend the Portable Document Format (pdf) or, if you insist, a word or Rich Text Format (rtf) can also be emailed or posted. Get in touch and we'll sort something out. Please do email and respond – I will feature some bits. Another burst of fannish energy from Tommy. Blame the Corflu 50! Dated, already, 22/06/2020.

Back on the saddle and back in the groove.

“What the hell? A new issue of TommyWorld? What madness is this...?” ⁽¹⁾

Léon (aka Léon: The Professional) (1994) is a movie that has stuck with me all these years for many reasons. The acting is astounding, Jena Reno is outstanding as the dour and emotionless hitman – is there any other sort? A very young, but obviously blindingly talented Natalie Portman jumps out of the screen at you, for all the right reasons. And Gary Oldman doing one of his signature acting roles – he really inhabits the space, as actors say. Even Danny Ailelo doing the Voice of Reason character made me smile, though I was still a bit afraid of him. I was aware of all of these actors ahead of the movie from other flicks and seeing them together was simply a joy.

Luc Besson wrote and directed it with his classic flourishes and style. The long pan over open water as the back drop to the opening credits (how many times have we seen that now?). An amazing soundtrack – including Bjork for god's sake doing Venus as a Boy - as sound track to Natalie Portman's character's training regime. This on the back of Besson's breakout Subway – the moving Big Blue and a bit later La Femme Nikita. This was all before he became almost a parody of himself after the Fifth Element with movies like Transporter etc. However, the touches of camera work in both the highly emotional scenes at the end, as well as throughout the high-octane action sequences shows him at his best.

It is a joyous movie.

But the scene that elevated it for me, made it that bit above the norm and really sticks in my head is when Gary Oldman's corrupt cop is in the washroom having outwitted Portman's character. It's a pivotal moment where she sees the world for what it is, not her idealised version that Léon helps her create. The interplay between the two of them is mesmerising. But all I could focus on was Oldman (acting out of his socks here) washing and drying his hands with a paper towel from a mechanical dispenser.

Now this is back in the day when I was still wet behind the ears, hadn't watched as many good movies as I should have and never spent that long in men's toilets. Ahem. The push down lever that rolled the paper towel dispenser along the spool and then disgorged the paper towel roll below to tear off, was completely new to me. I'd never seen one before. I thought, how on earth does that work? Even now, all these years later I can still recall my amazement at seeing this, and then even more so the fact I did not know about it.

Nowadays we just have to wave our hands at these iTowel dispensers and they spit them out for us – much to the surprise and shock of my daughters when they were much younger. You've also got Dyson wash and dry units now with the T-bar handlebars, starting to replace the original air blade machines. Even the Excel hand dryers that are so powerful they add wrinkles to your skin where frankly I have enough already. And don't get me start on those infra-red heat things.

Back in the movie Oldman, as per his character, violently rachets loads of towels from the dispensers, dries his hand and disposes of them. Wasteful I remember thinking – typical of his character – even I could see that the mechanisms were meant to dispense a single paper towel at a time to dry your hands. It was a small thing then – but typical of his acting chops that he elevated it into such a thing that has stuck in my head all these years.

Now – as part of our work's environmental impact thingy – we've installed water blades on the taps on the office. This sprays the water in a fan, reducing the overall amount of water used – it even featured on The Dragons Den (bamfordswaterblade.com). I thought they should have had that in Leon. You can only imagine my amazement a few years ago when I came across a Ted Talk – "How to use a paper towel". Yes, there's a Ted talk on – how to dry your hands with a paper towel, I shit you not. (<https://www.goodnet.org/articles/ted-talk-week-how-to-use-paper-towel>). To save you the effort – it basically involves shaking the excess water off your hands for at least ten shakes (behave yourselves at the back there...) and then using a single towel to dry the nearly already dry hands. The focus is on reducing the number of paper towels used, and therefore having a significant environment impact reduction. All fairly sensible stuff and I've now found myself vigorously shaking my hands at every convenience.

The things that stick in your head, eh?

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So, what's next? More of the same – I've got the next half dozen issues lined up – talking about fanzines, conventions, the lockdown, movies, and even book reviews! Happy to receive feedback at the usual addresses above and will endeavour to publish snippets as a sort of coda to each issue.

(1) This madness is me getting back into the Fanzine game, after the recent Dublin WorldCon, Belfast EuroCon and my guest spot at Corflu Heatwave this year.