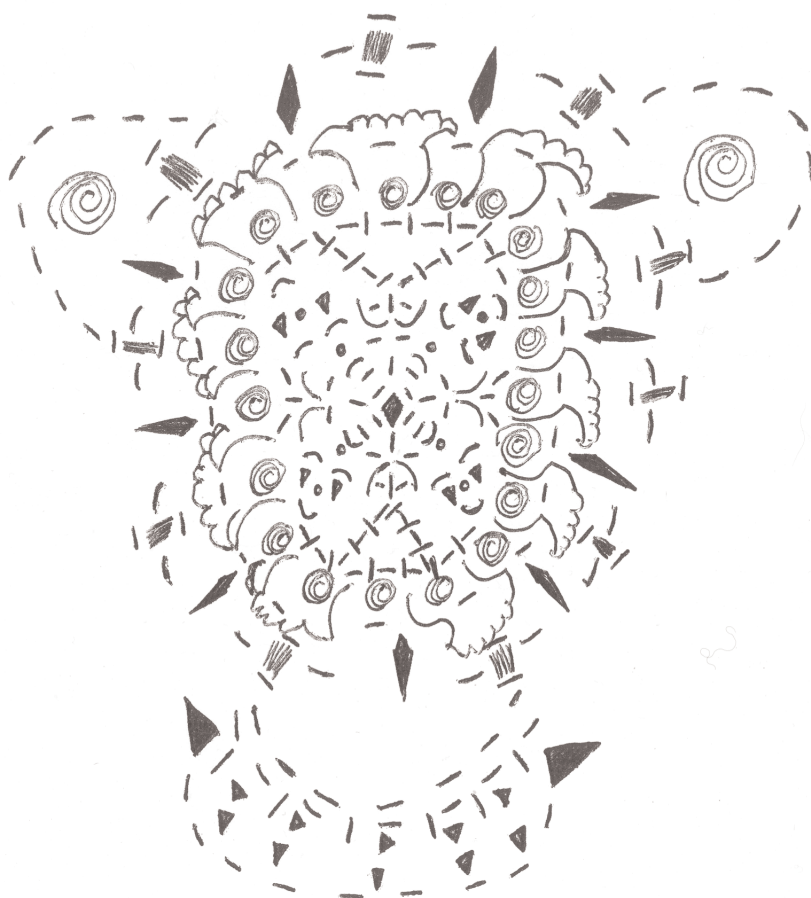


Produced by and for people with autism-spectrum conditions

Asperger

united

Edition **52** October 2007



I was in prism for a colour that I did not commit





Asperger United is a newsletter run by and for people with autism-spectrum conditions. The newsletter aims to put people with the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

Please note that *AU* receives over 200 letters each quarter so it is not possible to respond to every one, nor for every contribution to be printed.

Asperger United is free. We ask for a contribution of £6 per year from overseas readers and £10 from professionals and institutions to cover postage costs. Please make cheques made payable to the NAS.

Editor John Joyce

Additional support The National Autistic Society's Publications Department

Please send all correspondence and subscription requests to:

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Subscribing to *Asperger United*
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All we need is your name and address and we will add you to the mailing list — free of charge.

Thank you to George Cox who kindly produced the illustration included here and on page 6, and to Graeme Lawson for producing the *AU* logo.

Please note that the views expressed in Asperger United are not necessarily those of the editor, the National Autistic Society or those involved in the publication of the newsletter.

Contributions for the next issue should reach us by
20 November '07

Asperger United was founded in 1993 by Pamela Yates and Patricia Howlin, in association with the Maudsley Hospital, and Mark Bebbington and Judy Lynch of The National Autistic Society.

This was in response to a recognised dearth of services for people with Asperger syndrome and the potential for self help and networking as a means of support for this group.

The provisions for editor's and sub-editor's post was to develop a publication that was truly the voice of the people it was aimed at. This post also provided the possibility of work experience and responsibility and has benefited those who have held the position. These are Richard Exley, David Wright, Martin Coppola, Ian Reynolds and the current editor, John Joyce.

Pamela Yates provided support and advice to the editors until the publication was handed over to the National Autistic Society in 2000.

The name *Asperger United* was chosen by the group of original readers as the most 'appropriate name' for the publication. This was suggested by Anna Cohen.



Dear readers,

Hope you have had a pleasant summer holiday even allowing for indifferent weather.

May the only floods experienced in future be those from your "pens" to the NAS office.

Hope there is a hurricane of response to pen-pal letters!

By the time you read this I will have attended a European Autism congress in Oslo. I hope to be able to present a report or commission one from another delegate.

I wonder if any of you have received post or emails purporting to pay lottery prizes? The general advice is to ignore such, but I have been gullible enough to send the delivery fee, which meant having to obtain the cash and add a handling charge. The next thing I saw was a letter from a tax office stating I had to pay £950 tax, in order to allow release of the prize. No further action has been taken. I told them that I believed it was my right to decide how I should receive the prize. On the basis the customer is always right, I felt I should be able to request postal payment of the prize, but

continued on page 14 . . .

Apology

The Goth wishes to apologise for the incorrect contribution deadline given in the last issue: it should have read "27 August" not "27 September" as it is always about a month before the edition is due. Sorry. A note about themes can be found on page 13.

the humour edition

Please note that not every sentence in this edition is to be taken seriously!

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B**y eager worker**

by Petra

I was called this by one of my colleagues when I refused to go home at midnight because I really wanted to finish the aisle I was working on. I was not supposed to finish it as I was sent there shortly before the end of our shift. But I wanted to. It was so exciting!

I have been working in the supermarket as a replenishment assistant since 2005. I am still surprised that they employed me as I had not been able to find a proper job before. I only found some part-time cleaning jobs.

When I started we had an induction. They told us that in this workplace we have to be chatty. If we weren't they don't want us. It sounded scary as I am quiet most of the time.

The first few months were filled with anxiety. I had three months of temporary employment, after which I could have lost the job if they did not find me good enough. Then, after three months, I was asked to go to the manager's office. I was sweating like a piglet and shivering like a blackcurrant jelly. I entered the office and they asked me: "Do you know why you are here?" I thought they were going to sack me because I was not chatty or something. I only managed to whisper "no", waiting for my awful fate of losing the job.

Instead they said: "We can't have a better worker. You have never had a sick-day, and your department manager wrote an excellent review of your performance, so we decided to employ you permanently."

I could not believe that. I started to shiver even more, like a double portion of the blackcurrant jelly. They were satisfied with me? Nobody ever is.

Since that time I have gained more and more confidence and even started speaking to customers with confidence; my manager

started to praise me which unfortunately led to some jealousy among certain colleagues who were not that eager.

I find replenishing extremely exciting, especially when I work on the tea and coffee aisle, rice and pasta, or canned vegetables. These are my favourites. I love handling the objects there, with the exception of certain packets of sugar and sticky things.

I must say that despite my managers being happy with me, they had one problem: I refused to take breaks for over a year. I didn't understand what to do in break-time and found it frustrating. I was not able to chat and it made me feel embarrassed, so I decided not to go to the canteen at all, but worked instead, as I did not feel disabled while working, I find it so relaxing.

My managers, though, did not find it as relaxing. They started to chase me and force me to the canteen. I could not cope with that. Then I ordered some leaflets and books from the Autistic Society about break-time and employing people with Asperger syndrome. In one of the books it said that a manager could suggest that the employee who finds it difficult to socialise could do another activity, such as doing crosswords, so I took the book to my manager, so he could suggest that I could do something during the break, but he was busy. Then I got an idea that I didn't need to ask him, I could simply follow the advice myself. I did not want to do crosswords and instead I bought logical puzzles, like sudoku and kakuro. I love these. Voilà, suddenly I started enjoying break times to the extent that it was difficult for me to go back, as I was deeply engrossed in the puzzles.

Now I have to mention some funny things; at least, people often smile when these situations arise.

I have difficulty keeping track of time, so I usually miss the time change. When summer time arrived, I came to work as usual. My colleagues were already working, which was surprising. Then I clocked in and noticed the time was an hour ahead, which was strange: I came to the shopping floor and a colleague pointed at his watch, so I told him what the time was, wondering why he wanted to know. First, he had a watch, so he could look himself and secondly the shift had just started (or so I thought) so it was obvious what the time was. He said my manager was looking for me, so he had told him that I probably did not realise that it was summer time. I stayed an hour longer that day to make up for lost work.

Then there was the change back to winter time: I came to work an hour early; I didn't realise till I wanted to go home. A colleague asked me what the time was, and thought it wrong so he checked and informed me that I was an hour ahead. This was a problem, as there was a lot of work which I had to do, but I only had a few minutes left before going home. I had already promised to do the job, so they were relying on me. Then I asked my manager if I could stay one hour longer. I was allowed to stay which gave me an hour overtime, so my mistake paid off.

The next time change was better as I knew about it in advance and my managers warned me about it. I came to work at the correct time, then later in the week my manager came to me and by way of a joke said: "Don't forget the time is changing this week." I stared at him completely baffled. How come they were changing the time again? It had been changed just days before; I was thinking maybe it had something to do with global warming. My manager noticed that I looked confused, so he said: "Petra, I am just joking, you came at the correct time this year." I did not get what was funny in that joke. For me it was incorrect information and I was not laughing.

Once, a colleague's shift finished two hours before mine, so as he was going he said

"Petra, put the knife down and go home, like me." I duly put my tool down and was about to leave, then I thought it was strange. Why should I go home? True, there had not been much delivery, so I thought maybe there was not enough work, but shouldn't a manager tell us about it? My manager was not at work that day and I did not understand who was in charge so I did not know if I was supposed to go or not. I decided to continue, but it felt strange and I was confused. At the end of the shift I realised that we were supposed to work as usual and that he just said something that was not supposed to be taken literally.

On another occasion I was smiled at by one of my managers when I begged to be allowed to work during my holiday. I heard that they were short of people so I volunteered to work. When I finally got permission I was smiling. So were my colleagues.

I used to work part-time and I found it difficult to find more work, despite the excellent references from my manager. I went to the jobcentre. The disability advisor did not ask about my education, nor help me with CV-writing or interview skills. Instead he found me cleaning jobs, none of which I got -- not even invited to interview. A replenishment job in my supermarket came up: he said I should not apply because I would not be able to do such a job, even though I was already doing it and had received an excellent review, which I had informed the advisor about. Did he think that disabled meant unable?

Well, my hours have been raised, but I need more to pay all my bills, and it would be nice to go on holiday, which I have never been able to afford. As soon as I mention my disability, people seem to think I am useless. I have diplomas and "speak" (read, really, as I hardly ever speak) a few languages, but it seems employers see a disability as a barrier. I wish they saw disabled people can make excellent employees if there is correct support and tolerance in the workplace. Meanwhile, I continue searching for more work.



Dear NAS,

My sister and I would like to know if there are any cool fanzines and magazines about Asperger's syndrome. We're looking for ones that are written by those who have Asperger's syndrome like us. But these fanzines and magazines have to also contain music and music reviews. If there aren't any then it's about time that someone wrote one or two.

I have had this fantastic idea whizzing around my Aspie mind for ages now. I'd love to start producing a fanzine or magazine. This would also be based on music from the 1980s, Goth, Punk, Indie, Funk, Fusion and Dance music too. It would also have articles on Gothic art, design, architecture, literature, fashion and anything else Gothic from the past to the present. I don't know why no-one else has ever thought of creating something like this! My sister and I have great knowledge and wisdom of music and the 1980s. We should be both working in a record shop! One of those places that sells physical CDs and records. You remember those places that existed before the internet ruined everything!

In our launch issue of the Aspie music magazine we'd have articles about: Five Star, Banarama, Haysi Fantayzee, Sique Sique Sputnik and an interview with one of our imaginary characters "Ping Pong Turkey" too. There would be articles on disability rights and sexual freedom for Aspies too. There's so much that we could put into a packed fanzine/magazine three times a year. What do you think about this amazing flash of inspiration?

We look forward to your reply very soon!

Mark and Maria (the Aspie Funksters)

PS. We're supposed to be a kingdom of united peoples. Why is the mainstream press constantly telling lies? What is really going on? Even the government seem to be fibbing a lot! It's all confusing.

Dear Sir,

I realize I should have done this sooner, but I hope this is not too late to be considered for inclusion in Asperger United

My name is **Laurie** and I have a mild form of Asperger syndrome with obsessional anxiety. I have given talks on my conditions; the first one was in 2002. I was lucky enough to be selected to give a talk at the world autism congress in Capetown, South Africa, in 2006. Our editor John Joyce was also there, whom I met up with.

Regarding South Africa, I did see real poverty, and I hope I don't forget that; I hope that the poverty will be eradicated.

Regarding my talk, the feedback I received was unspeakably good. (My talk was regarding how my diagnosis has helped me in work and life). I was diagnosed at 23, I am only 30 now. My working life has been better, and has seemed at least once to be in a different world, thanks to the diagnosis and, for example, the support I have received from autism.westmidlands. (However, to be honest, I still encounter difficulties and have bad days; also sometimes feel a bit ill with my obsessive checking. But get a sense of "all will be well.")

I would encourage any budding speakers to contact their local autism organization to see if you can perhaps share your experiences by giving a talk. Hearing from people with AS what its like to have AS I think is one of the best ways for people to learn about AS. If it helps anyone, you are actually probably more in control of what is going on (as you know what to expect and what you are going to say), than in day-to-day talking to people, as I have heard from others, eg. Ros Blackburn.

Who knows, you may end up giving a talk at the World Autism Congress in Mexico in 2010. With every good wish.



How to reply to Pen Pals

- Please remember to let us know the name and number of the person whom your letter is for. (All pen pals are numbered.)
- To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to *Asperger United*, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.
- We will pass your letter on to the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.
- Please note that all pen-pal letters sent via *Asperger United* are opened before being passed on.
- Those under the age of sixteen must have parental permission before placing a pen pal advertisement in *Asperger United*.
- If you prefer, you could try the pen-pal section of this NAS website: www.assists.org.uk/penpal.html

****Important notice — please read****

Asperger United is happy to publish pen-pal advertisements but we must stress that we are not a pen-pal or introduction organisation. We do not match people up and we cannot monitor letters (other than the first letter, that is sent via us) so please be cautious when releasing personal details in your letters. The National Autistic Society / *Asperger United* cannot intervene or be held responsible for any ensuing correspondence between letter-writers.

Pen pal number 8

Hello, my name is Michael. I am 35 years of age. I have Asperger Syndrome and am seeking a pen pal from 25 to 60 years of age.

My hobbies are collecting postcards, travelling and holidays. I also attend the local church every Sunday.

I have two part-time jobs. One is at Prospects for people with learning difficulties, as a data entry clerk and the other job is as a database assistant at Guide Dogs for the Blind, at Hillfields on the outskirts of Reading.

I live alone in a council flat which is situated in the centre of Reading. It is on the ground floor and I keep it very pristine. I also

have a garden border attached which is matted with gravel.

Thank you, I look forward to receiving any replies.

Pen pal number 9

Hi there, I'm Craig. I'm 29 years old and suffer from Asperger syndrome. I'd like a pen friend, male or female. My main interests are music, TV documentaries, travel, outings, cycling, going for walks and visiting places of historic interest. Hope to hear from some of you soon.

Many thanks.

Pen pal number 10

My name is Keri Dorrington. Am 23 years old. I live with my parents in Wales. I have Asperger syndrome.

My interests are WWE, watching war and action films, listening to pop, dance music and surfing the internet. I go to the social pub, twice a month and to VIVA project. I have been a member of the NAS for three years. I go to a daycentre on Wednesdays and Thursdays. On Wednesdays we do contract work like doing things for a major company and on Thursdays I go on the computers.

I would like a pen pal from the UK who has a disability. Sex and race are not important.

PS. All replies have to say *Asperger United* in the subject of the email/letter.

Pen pal number 11

My name is Astra and I am 21. I live in a small town called Stony Stratford. I have always lived in this area and enjoy what the town has to offer, such as the library, river and lovely walks to nearby villages and shops.

I have attended college, obtaining good AS- and A-level grades in arts-based subjects. I decided to opt for part-time work rather than university and I do not regret my decision not to go. I currently enjoy work as the Database Assistant for a children's charity.

I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome this year, but self-diagnosed about a year ago.

I have many interests including: listening to music, especially Ludovico Einaudi, reading (one of my favourites), clothes shopping, vegan food, recycling, animal welfare charities, and watching Eastenders and the Royle Family. I enjoy Stanley Kubrick films, word games, museums and art galleries. I would be keen to hear from anyone close to my age and with similar interests.

Pen pal number 12

Hey!

My name is Emma, but my nickname is Em. I am 10 years of age. I am a great animal lover and would like a boy or girl 8-15, if possible. I have some soft toys, so whoever writes could write to them, but it will be me writing really! I have MSN Messenger, Windows Messenger and Yahoo! Messenger.

I have AS and have some obsessions which I will mention in my letter to you!

I used to get bullied every day until my parents took me out. Now I'm home-educated.

My sister and dad also have AS.

I was diagnosed two weeks ago.

Please write,

Em

I really enjoyed Laura's article. I felt much better after reading it. I have given presents too and it has been seen as "suspicious". The person I gave it to had a bunch of friends who ridiculed me and when I went to buy a drink to take home (they make fun of me not staying in the pub too) the man I gave the present to, who was with his partner, started asking me for things while their friends laughed.

I wish there was an Asperger planet where only AS people lived. That would be a *really* peaceful place.

Marianne

So Odd a Mixture:

Along the Autistic Spectrum in Pride and Prejudice

by Phyllis Ferguson Bottomer (no sniggering at the back!)

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (ISBN: 978 1 84310 499 5)

£12.99/US\$19.95

Review by **the Goth**

As this is the humour issue, I'm reviewing a serious book about a humorous — no, a very funny — book: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

Whether you are just interested in portrayals of autists or love Jane Austen, this is an interesting book.

Pride and Prejudice is a wonderful comic novel, full of irony and sarcasm, verbal sparring and wry observation. To make matters worse for those of us on the spectrum, it is all about personal relationships. Some critics say it is the finest example ever written of the psychological novel. However, these very facts make it a great book to both enjoy and learn from — pore over it trying to find every last quip and barb, and with Bottomer's book as a companion volume, learn about the relationships as well. The fashions and customs have changed, but human nature is still the same.

It provides character studies which shed light on how we are seen by others, and well as de facto tips on how to behave and on the rules of conversation. The eight characters which she believes have an ASC each get a chapter, though the author overlooks that the narrator, Elizabeth, may be on the spectrum herself, but unaware of her oddities, so then

Elizabeth ascribes any misunderstandings to other people. It's a shame: I would have enjoyed a discussion of this possibility. If you have enjoyed reading *Pride and Prejudice*, or if you think you would, then this is an entertaining book, especially if you could benefit from a guide to what some of the characters are thinking and feeling.

The writer's Canadian, so her definitions of "Regency" and "Georgian" are execrable, but this is a very small thing. The book is well written in a page-by-page way, but it lacks a sense of pace or climax, which is disappointing, but typical of an academic writing style. It may seem odd to want pace from a factual book, but all but the most cyclopaedic texts — such as dictionaries — have some sort of narrative, and therefore flow towards a conclusion. Good writing makes it feel like eagerly climbing a hill to this conclusion, makes you want to keep reading on the train and miss your stop.

Despite small flaws, this is a very good book.

So Odd a Mixture, as well as various editions of Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen, are available to buy or order from any good bookshop.

Letter about people with Asperger's becoming novelists, lyricists and songwriters

The staff in my care home who wrote my care plan believe that people with Asperger's can't become novelists or lyricists, when this is exactly the opposite of what is true. A care plan is a legal document that all people who live in care homes have written about them and the staff wrote about it being unreal for me to be any kind of writer. This is completely incorrect.

People with Asperger's mostly find writing music and singing very hard because of their concentration and I wouldn't recommend anyone with Asperger's to try being a songwriter or an opera singer or a pop star as they'd find it much too much work and all the work that went into practising singing and writing music might make them ill.

However, the most common career for someone with Asperger's is to be a writer, whether it be a novelist or a lyricist. Luke Jackson has Asperger's and he's written two books and I am not sure if they are fiction or fact but he found it best expressing his thoughts in writing as he, me, and most people with Asperger's do. Claire Sainsbury wrote a book about Asperger's and she completed a degree in philosophy, politics and economics at Oxford University and for both of those, there is a huge deal of writing involved.

I want to be a lyricist for pop songs as I'd love my poems to be sung to music on the radio and like most people with Asperger's I find writing the best way to express how I think and feel. I wish I could live in a care home in Oxford for people with Asperger's instead of the home in Kent I do live in, as I know quite a few people who live in Oxford who like writing like me. I hope that all readers of Asperger United find this letter interesting and remember that the fact that this magazine is full of letters proves that people

with Asperger's are often writers and that they shouldn't strain their concentration by practicing singing or music, but concentrate on writing lyrics and novels which would get them the best careers for people with Asperger's.

Becky

PS. Everyone with Asperger's has their own level of concentration and they should never be discouraged from trying to be novelists. Anyone with or without Asperger's can become a lyricist if they get accepted, and you just have to be lucky if you get accepted but no one with Asperger's is unintelligent and everyone with Asperger's can try to be a lyricist. With being a novelist, everyone with Asperger's can try this, and, like with being a lyricist, anyone can try it and if they get accepted they're very lucky and the only reason a very small minority of people with Asperger's couldn't become novelists would be those who could only work at something for ten minutes and not a week, but everyone with Asperger's has their own level of concentration, whether they are like me and have very poor concentration and can only work for a short space of time on something and not go back to it, or whether they're like Claire Sainsbury and can get a first-class degree at Oxford. However, people with Asperger's are usually some of the most intelligent people around and even someone with Asperger's who has poor concentration can try at being a novelist, and if their concentration doesn't allow it they should leave it and try again in the space of about a year, but they will get there and everyone with Asperger's can try it.

Point of information: The Vines' frontman, Craig Nicholls, has AS and is their songwriter. They rarely go on tour because of the stress it causes him. The Goth

I recently saw an advert in *Front* magazine, for unusual T-shirt slogans. One which I really love because it's true to me says:

you laugh at me because I'm different,
I laugh at you, because you're all the same!

How many Aspies/auties can say the same?

To see this T-shirt and other great ones write to:

Shock Horror Ltd
PO Box 1471
London
N5 2LY

A first-class stamp (loose) to the above address gets you a catalogue showing 300-plus designs. See it on the net at

www.shocktees.com

Here are a few jokes for your "humour theme" in the October 2007 *AU* issue.

A new cheese factory in Israel:
Cheeses of Nazareth.

A Transylvanian doctor has finished seeing a patient — what does she say next?

Necks please.

Transylvanian doctors' favourite sweets?
Haribo Horror Mix.

A Transylvanian doctor's favourite food?
Steak.

Believe it or not, my own GP is a female from Transylvania. No hard feelings, doc, if you read the jokes in *Asperger United*.

Having a VGSOH has got me through some very difficult times, colorectal cancer in 2002 and being left with a colostomy and incontinence and impotence. Having gynaecomastia (breast development in males), being sterile and being on hormone replacement therapy for twenty-eight years all due to a chromosomal abnormality at birth. Also I have an extra X chromosome. My karyotype is 47XXY. Also my home was flooded in 2002 (not a good year).

Humour has got me through school bullying and awkward social interactions in work (I loved work, but grew to hate the social interaction that comes with every job).

One of my "skills" is animating teddy bears and other soft toys. I have two called Honey and Marmalade. I have voices for each and they have their own personalities. Most people love it when the bears "talk" but one youth said "It's scary". One nasty female threatened to "rip them to bits", but she had attention seeking difficulties.

I'm sure I wouldn't be sat writing this letter today, alive and 95% clear of cancer, without my sense of humour.

Tom (47XXY)

Further to the Aspie Funksters' letter to the editor (page 6), I would like to ask if they or anyone else would like to pen reviews of all kinds of music, not just their favourites. (Unfortunately, there was no room for commenting immediately after the letter.)

Also, in response to Becky's letter on the facing page, I think these make fine careers for ASC people. Ed.

Would anyone like the opportunity to play golf, snooker, ten-pin bowling for a dirt cheap price, go to open-mike acoustic nights or meet up for a possible friendship in what I'm sure would be well worth the time and effort?

I'm aged 27 and stay in the North Lanarkshire area of Scotland and I hope to teach and perform music for a living.

I'm desperate to find someone that won't let me down and can have a laugh and a lot of fun together.

If there's anybody out there who feels nobody is able to spend time with those that they can trust then I might be able to change your life for the better, if you just give me a chance.

I promise that I won't renège on my plans, be able to keep in touch when it matters and most of all, have the decency and courtesy to be there for others to give and take when doing things for fun.

If anyone would like to respond could they send an email to **digimaestro@hotmail.co.uk** and I'll do me very best to make things happen and who knows, you may never see your life in the same light ever again. Let the good times ROLL!!

I hope this article is shown in the magazine as I think it's a great way to make friends in the best possible situation.

Thanks for your help. It means so much.

Regards,

B Drummond

Transformers (12A)

Reviewed by **Rick**

Loud, empty and spectacular to a fault, *Transformers* is an incoherent mess and must go down as a major disappointment. For centuries two races of robots aliens — the Autobots and the Deceptions — have waged a war, with the fate of the universe at stake.

When the war comes to Earth, all that stands in the way of the Deceptions and ultimate power is young Sam Witwicky (Shia LeBeouf), who holds a clue, that will help him save the world, with the help of his friend Mikaela (Megan Fox). *Transformers* isn't a total disaster. If anything, the CG effects are amazing and seeing the iconic "Robots in disguise" transforms from machine to robot is breathtaking.

The overall problem with the film is that its far too long; it's really noisy; it makes no sense whatsoever and there is so much going on and too many different stories happening, it's enough to give you a neck-ache trying to work out the film's logic.

Transformers is still an enjoyable, flashy and action-packed thrill ride. After seeing the spectacular trailer, I was so looking forward to seeing it and having high hopes, as it showed a lot of promise, but delivered very little.

No matter how awe-inspiring and cool the robots are; it isn't thrilling enough to make it an exciting blockbuster, despite its innovative ideas, which is a real shame. Director Micheal ("Master of Disaster") Bay's *Transformers* is definitely his best film. The only area where the film truly scores is in the special effects department, not the brain-dead action or endless mayhem on display. A spectacular failure.

Competition

for brothers or sisters of teenagers with autism or Asperger syndrome

The National Autistic Society is planning to publish a new book for the brothers and sisters of teenagers with autism or Asperger syndrome.

We would like to hear what they have to say!

Please ask your brothers and sisters to let us know their experiences, both positive and negative, of having a brother or sister who has autism or Asperger syndrome. Please ask them to send us their thoughts in no more than 250 words by email or post by 31 October to:

Teenager sibs
Publications Department
The National Autistic Society
393 City Road
London
EC1V 1NG

Email: **publications@nas.org.uk**

Three lucky winners will receive a copy of *Asperger syndrome: an overview* by Christopher Gillberg and Stephan Ehlers, translated from the Swedish by Charles Olsen.

The theme for January will be either **work** (including unemployment) or **mental health**, depending on what is sent in. Both themes will appear next year, so it doesn't matter which you want to write about, and, as usual, contributions on any subject are welcome, including any further comments about humour. Once several themes have been covered, the popular ones will be repeated.

. . . continued from page 3

that is not the way these people operate. I have also many missives from Las Vegas, some with return envelopes for an address in the Bath area. A number of these state a multi-million prize is to be delivered but require payment of £20 every time one answers. In addition I have received letters from alleged clairvoyants foretelling much fortune but really trying to make such for themselves.

Letters binned and emails deleted is the best solution but I have sometimes failed to follow it.

In fact one such, called *Delices and Gourmandises*, hooked me by selling sweets and cakes and now claim to have a £5,000 cheque and a laptop computer waiting for me. It is all a marketing ruse. Every letter they send includes more material, but I have not purchased any more food and have returned their claim form.

I hope this is worth knowing. Is there any truth in these claims? Has anybody actually received a prize in cash or kind?

I believe those working by computer to be scammers.

May I request a continuation of the high standard of presentation.

Your editor

John Joyce

A humorous thought: in which Indian city are many things prohibited? For those who cannot work it out the answer is printed on the next page.

Working in the Basement

by Paul

Ah! The supreme joy, the extraordinary privilege, of working in the National Autistic Society itself. From the dizzyingly lofty heights of Human Resources on the top floor, to the lowly depths of the subterranean stock cupboard, it is my privilege to beetlingly traverse the mighty space that is the nerve centre of this truly unique, vital and magnificent charity.

Words can hardly express the daily thrill of entering the car park, knowing that those five steps will lead to entering the building. The very possession of my white card is exciting enough, but to use it to enter the building — still sends shivers through me. There is the reception desk, behind which I have had the infrequent privilege to ensconce myself, barely able to break the spell of amazement to allow others to enter with the door button.

In changing the CCTV, I am defending a sacred realm. In carrying milk downstairs, I am nurturing and sustaining a Heavenly Host. In carrying the mailbags to the post room — I am serving all autistic people and associated members of the society.

A heavy burden — but a day of looking into the inspired, magic-filled eyes of my colleagues and I never cease to leave full of wonder. How can such a place exist on the face of the tired old cynical earth?

At home, I dream of the profound silence of the first-floor Finance department, the whispered mercies of the Helpline and the wisdom of Information. The profundity and mysteries of the IT department, and the never

ending happiness that is the Press department. Ascending higher, we find the Office Resources desks and the enclaves of our Managers and Highest Masters. Finally, above all to the Human Resources department. Superhuman if you ask me.

It is as if an unearthly glow fills the rooms, and the beings of celestial light float around the spaces, dealing graces of beauty and love through their paperwork and computers and telephones to an outside world, so often starved of the white light of higher powers and infinite beauty.

My rôle is but a humble one, so appropriate of my need to show my appreciation and admiration of something so beyond my weak flesh and disabled mind. So I assume my lowly status with relish, going about my simple tasks with the fortitude of one truly lucky to be picked. I move desks with the reverent care they deserve, and fill tea urns with the knowledge that their boiling secretions will sustain those who are mightier than I, and assist them to achieve greater and better things than I am capable of.

I set out the Marks and Spencers meals with humble awe, both sandwich and Scotch egg, and could almost kneel at the sight of the fresh fruit baskets. But truly, my greatest honour is the duty of freeing blocked drains. For only then can I truly express my total, heartfelt love of the National Autistic Society — by plunging my naked arms down blocked toilet bowls, to allow the mighty bowels of the staff to be released and freed of burden with a working toilet.

The answer to the editorial poser is Bangalore

The no asshole rule

by **Robert Sutton**

Published by Sphere Original, £9.99

ISBN: 978 1 84744 000 6

Review by **the Goth**

In response to people's desire for more book reviews, as stated in your responses to the readership survey, this issue I'm giving you two instead of one. I realise that this may seem unfair that I have contributed two pieces to the magazine, but, unfortunately, no one else has sent in any book reviews for this edition. If you have read a book which you think the readers of *AU* might enjoy, then please send in a review describing a little of what it's about, and what it was you liked. Please remember to include the publisher's name and the ISBN (International Standard Book Number) which is usually printed on the back cover of paperbacks, as well as a couple of pages in, on the same page as the publisher's details, in almost all books. Most reviews should be between 100 and 500 words.

Now, I'd like to apologise for the title of this book, as I realise that it may offend some people, and that hearing or reading swearing causes some of us a lot of stress. However, the author makes a good case for his use of the word and his reasons for not finding any

alternative suitable. Nevertheless, in order to minimise offence, wherever I mean "asshole", I will be saying "idiot" (I'm even avoiding the English spelling of the word, as apparently this is much more offensive).

This is actually a book about management but as all workplaces have management and employees, in a way, this is a book about work, and a very good book at that. He looks carefully at the problems caused by idiots and the reasons why people behave as idiots. He is careful to distinguish between temporary idiots and "certified" idiots: everyone can be an idiot at times, have a bad day or a meltdown due to accumulated stresses, but he feels that, as a rule, workplaces do not need any certified idiots. He notes that, amongst other reasons, some people show idiotic behaviour due to Asperger syndrome.

Most of the book is spent looking at the damage that can be done, how to prevent yourself from being an idiot, and how to survive idiots and idiotic workplaces.

Speaking for myself, having been a prize idiot in previous jobs, having worked for at least one certified idiot, and having worked in an endemically idiotic workplace, I found the book gave me enormous insight into the problems and pitfalls, and most importantly insight into how to avoid them. For a little book about management to be so helpful is quite remarkable.

The much-scarred giant octopus
loomed up from the depths to grab
those foolish enough to read
incidental lines in *Asperger United*

Free workshops on interpersonal and communication skills based on business communication

A Manchester Business School (MBS) workshop based on the book: *A strategy of Conflict*
by 2005 Nobel Prize winner Thomas Schelling

Adults with high-functioning autism or Asperger syndrome

Colin Ingleton, a chartered psychologist at Manchester Business School, has taught communications skills advocated by Professor Schelling since 1989. Colin is committed to giving you access to relevant ideas from this recent Nobel Prize winner.

Since August 2007 we have offered, at MBS, a short series of workshops sponsored by the National Autistic Society, and subsidised by the University of Manchester.

The workshops will use experience and adapted developed through the teaching of interpersonal and communication skills to students on business administration courses.

Your progress is monitored and the programme will be evaluated by a team from the University of Northumbria, funded by the Government Department of Work and Pensions, working with Research Autism.

Your participation is for a minimum of eighteen hours, with two trips to Manchester for each workshop.

Please email Colin at

Colin.Ingleton@mbs.ac.uk

for further details, including how to apply.

Collections exhibition

We are thinking of sometime in the future holding an exhibition in Manchester where people can exhibit a collection of any kind.

The date and venue will be arranged at a later time.

If anyone has a collection they would like to show to others please contact Max Horne or a member of staff at Mainwaring terrace, Manchester — **0161 945 9282**.

Or email: **Lesley.martin@nas.org.uk**



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