



Picture yourself on a boat on a river with tangerine trees and something...

COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Volume: Zambesi Issue #9 March 28, 2004 Working today for a sillier tomorrow

State Your Case

*Penn a phrase
for Pennsylvania.*



As we apparently *never* get tired of mentioning around here, some time ago the Pennsylvania Office of Tourism held a contest in search of a new state slogan. Governor Ed Rendell was supposed to announce the winner on Tuesday, February 17. None of the five finalists were very funny. Some were downright lame. Here at *Completely Different* we asked our readers to come up with sillier suggestions, and we spent more time than is healthy reprinting them in these pages.

Then February 17 rolled around and nothing, no announcement. The Governor's press conference was postponed indefinitely. We smelled a rat. We suggested that Ed Rendell was scared to announce the winner—and, in fact, that the residents of the commonwealth might be genetically *incapable* of choosing a decent slogan

for themselves. We've supported wilder theories in the past.

Turns out, they were just biding their time. Maybe it took a month for the shock to wear off and for acceptance to sink in. We're not sure, but a month later, we have a slogan: [The State of Independence](#). Try not to let the excitement of it all overwhelm you. Our congratulations to Philadelphia native Tristan Mabry. Your winning slogan was precisely the shot in the arm of blandness that this proud state needed. "I read hundreds of the submissions and was extremely impressed with the creativity and understanding of our heritage that translated into some very clever ideas," said the Governor in his address. Which leads us to wonder: doesn't the man have *interns* to do that sort of thing?

Monster in a Box: A Sketch

by Fred Coppersmith

INT--DAY, SCHOOL CAFETERIA

NARRATOR (V.O.): Say, kids! Has this ever happened to you?

BILLY: Gee, I can't wait to see what Mom packed me for lunch today!

Billy opens the bag.

BILLY: Aw! A *cheese sandwich*?!

NARRATOR (V.O.): Tired of the same old boring cheese sandwiches?

Billy nods.

NARRATOR (V.O.): Then try new "Monster in a Box", the only brand-name lunch snack that comes complete with a terrifying rampaging monster inside every box!

A box with "Monster in a Box" written on it appears magically on the table in front of Billy.

BILLY: Wow!

NARRATOR (V.O.): Wow is right, Billy! That's new Monster in a Box—

As Billy eagerly opens it, a large hairy paw reaches out and grabs him. It tries to pull him back into the box.

NARRATOR (V.O.): —and from the looks of it, this one's Werewolf-Flavored!

BILLY: Thanks, Monster in a Box! This sure beats that lame cheese sandwich!

He continues to struggle with the paw as the narrator speaks. Blood begins to spurt. A crowd of teachers and students begin to gather. Billy collapses to the floor.

NARRATOR (V.O.): That's new Monster in a Box. Now in Werewolf, Frankenstein, and new Shub-Niggurath flavors! You won't have time to worry about Mom's cheese sandwiches when you've got Monster in a Box.

COACH: Oh my god! I think Billy's dead!

NARRATOR (V.O.) New Monster in a Box: It's what's eating you!

FADE OUT

Weekly Horoscopes

Aries: (March 21—April 19)

A new opportunity could get off to a rocky start later this week. Which is just a nice way of saying you're going to get pelted with stones.

Taurus: (April. 20—May 20)

You might feel jolted by a chance encounter this week, but don't worry: the batteries in the cattle prod can't last forever.

Gemini: (May 21—June 21)

Don't be afraid to stand your ground and fight back this week. After all, why should those third graders be the only ones who get to ride on the swings?

Cancer: (June 22—July 22)

This could be a good week to seek out the advice of others. But where in the world *is* Carmen Sandiego?

Leo: (July 23—Aug. 22)

Try not to be so rigid this week. Too much rigor mortis isn't fun for anybody.

Virgo: (Aug. 23—Sept. 22)

Sure, you can rock the boat this week, but you'll only have yourself to blame when you're shipwrecked on an island with no more than a handful of survivors and the occasional visit by the Harlem Globetrotters.

Libra: (Sept. 23—Oct. 23)

You might want to blow off some steam this week. However, that doesn't mean you really *are* a little teapot, short and stout.

Scorpio: (Oct. 24—Nov. 21)

You'll be determined to call the shots later this week—even though it's pretty obvious your firing squad already knows what to do.

Sagittarius: (Nov. 22—Dec. 21)

Don't be afraid to slow down later in the week. But remember, if you drop below 50 mph, the bus you and Keanu Reeves are driving will explode.

Capricorn: (Dec. 22—Jan. 19)

Horoscope Mad Libs: Your noun makes verb altogether adjective due to the amount of noun falling out of your article of clothing this week.

Aquarius: (Jan. 20—Feb. 18)

You might feel closed off and out of touch with your feelings this week. Confound you and your infernal Vulcan logic!

Pisces: (Feb. 19—March 20)

A last-minute decision could surround financial growth this week. The growth of those flesh-eating vines from outer space, however, surrounds—well, you.

Reader's Poll: What sort of questions should the Reader's Poll be asking?



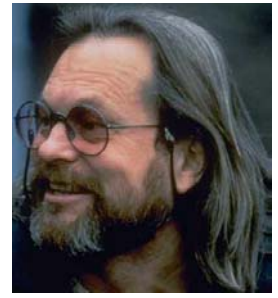
"The first rule of Reader's Poll is you don't *talk* about Reader's Poll!"
- George Iguana-Smythe, grad., Undecided



"I think you should replace the Reader's Poll with completely gratuitous pictures of nude ladies."
- Carl Ocelot-Jones, soph., Nuc. Eng.



"The Willard Preacher: Boxers or briefs? The world needs to know."
- Andrew Kangaroo-Harris, jun., LARCH



"Would you like to come back to my place, bouncy bouncy?"
- Norman Orangutan-Hyphenated, sen., Russian

From "Dedicated Idiocy" by Alyce Wilson

The following is taken with permission from Alyce Wilson's personal history of the Penn State Monty Python Society, "Dedicated Idiocy" (alycewilson.tripod.com/python). Wilson is currently the editor of the online quarterly literary magazine Wild Violet (www.wildviolet.net).

As part of my research for my undergraduate honors thesis, I had sent out letters to comedians on both sides of the Atlantic, who were members of the two comedy schools I was contrasting, the Oxbridge Mafia (U.K.) and the Second City Players (U.S.).

Much to my surprise, I received a letter in February from Terry Jones, agreeing to an interview. This makes sense when you consider that he's a scholar himself, having written a book on Chaucer's Knight.

I secured an engineer, Don Klees, a MPS member and WPSU compatriot. I called Terry Jones' office to set up a time, and then all was go. The interview took place in the old WPSU production studio, in Sparks Building.

Tuesday, February 18, 1992

I was up early and arrived at the station before Don Klees, but I didn't set up anything until he got there. Once we'd set it all up and checked levels, I went over my questions and fought off the pre-interview jitters. At the appointed time, I made the call. A woman answered, and I told her who I was. She got Terry on the phone. But before we could go any further, I found out from Don that I was on the wrong phone line! I told Terry what had happened, and I hung up and called back on the right line. Then I put it on hold while I went into the other room.

Originally, I'd planned on letting him know a little about what I was doing, but he told me he had to leave in 20 minutes and encouraged me to "fire away" with the questions. Once I got rolling with the questions, it went very well. I think my big problem was worrying about how much time we had left and whether I could cover all of the important questions. As such, I'm afraid I didn't listen as well to his responses at the time as I should have.

Well, at about 20 after, with the meat of the questions covered, he excused himself. But remembering my promise to Don, I asked him to say hello to my engineer first. He did so, much to his credit. I suppose he could have been really rude and said he had to rush off. I felt like a cretin asking him to stay on, when he had an appointment and had to be going. But Don only spoke to him for about a minute, so I guess he wouldn't have been too upset with me.

All in all, the interview went very well. In fact, Terry said that if I need anything else, I can just "ring him up."

Like I said, it was a relatively good interview, even including the minor things that I always kick myself about later. I feel very privileged to have spoken to him, as well as elated and proud and relieved that it's over.

Make With the Funny, Monkey Boy!

by Fred Coppersmith

A few weeks ago, I saw an advertisement online: "Learn to write like Monty Python." Apparently, the website planetcomedy.co.uk is hawking a 90-page e-book called *From Monty Python to Ab Fab: How the Brits Make Us Laugh - A Comedy Writer's Workbook*. Supposedly, "[i]t has been developed in order to help new comedy writers focus their funny bone in a very British style, and use tried and tested formulae to fine-tune their comic ideas, to get past that dreaded 'blank page'."

Well, golly, it must be worth it if they've got *formulae*! $A + B = \text{funny!}$ And for only \$36? It's a steal! (For the humor-impaired amongst you, that was sarcasm. Although, if you're *really* humor-impaired, maybe this e-book *is* for you.)

Not that my stints writing for the Monty Python Society and a campus sketch comedy show qualify me as any kind of expert, but if you're serious about writing funny, I think there are easier ways to go about it. Maybe I'm wrong, but I'm not sure I'd qualify someone who "has scripted *Scooby Doo* for British comic strips" as any kind of comedy expert either. And that money would probably be better spent towards the purchase of a copy of Final Draft software, which more than anything will ease the process of writing scripts. That or massive amounts of caffeine. Caffeine is the comedy writer's friend.

The rest is just sense of humor and paying attention to what works. Comedy, like everything else, does have rules. But I doubt you can learn them from a 90-page PDF, much less learn how to use them, or when to break them.

Although I *am* somewhat curious about their "101 Great Ideas for a Sketch". If I had more disposable income, I might buy a copy just so I could make fun of it.



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Completely Different is the mostly weekly newsletter of the Penn State Monty Python Society. An argument is a connected series of statements intended to establish a proposition. Back issues available at www.clubs.psu.edu/Python. Submissions always welcome. Prizes possible. For more information, write to different@unreality.net