

Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit
Brian Cox covering for Mister Odom

December 15, 2010

Brian Cox: Hello. This is Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit. I am Brian Cox, covering for Mister Odom who is presumably taking it easy way down yonder in the Big Easy. Well, it being 4, it's time for the news.

For those who have a gift card to American Eagle, prefer to shop at American Apparel, there may be a solution. Online gift card marketplaces, such as Plastic Jungle, Card Pool, and Gift Card Rescue let consumers sell their unwanted gift cards for cash and buy new ones at a discount. Consumers are expected to spend close to \$25 billion on gift cards this holiday season. The National Retail Federation said 3 out of 4 shoppers will pick up at least one during the holidays.

A hormone-disrupting chemical linked to cancer, diabetes, early puberty, and neurological problems might now be lurking in your wallet. Twenty-one of the 22 one dollar bills tested in California, 17 other states, and Washington D.C. carried small amounts of the chemical, which is commonly used in plastic bottles as well as food can liners, adhesives, sports safety gear, and dental sealants. According to a report being released today by the group Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families. The findings from the Washington, D.C. Coalition of Public Health advocates, environmental groups, and green businesses stretch BPA's ubiquity even further. BPA has not been detected in paper, heat-activated receipts from cash registers, and dollar bills in 3 studies this year.

A proposal by Senate democrats to repeal the military 17-year-old ban on openly gay troops stalled Wednesday after a key Republican refused to sign on, and Democrats feared a critical test vote would fail. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid continued to talk with Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine about how he could win her support. Reid spokesman Jim Manly said Collins' vote is considered critical to the month's long effort by Democrats to repeal the 1993 law known as Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

Well, there's what's been going on. This is Pirate Cat Radio, and I am Brian Cox, and oh, looks like we've got a caller on the line. I believe they're calling from the Fun House.

Fun House – The Stooges

Brian Cox: That was The Stooges with Fun House from their 1970 album Fun House. This is a little bit of Brian Eno - Signals.

Signals – Brian Eno

Brian Cox: We have a lot of interesting surprises for you this evening on Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit... Ahhhhhh! Even with Mister Odom out of town, we'll be having some fascinating guests. Among them will be Roarshock in to do some poetry and prose, and some others... and some other holiday yuletide cheer. This is Gong with Oily Way.

Oily Way – Gong
Frosty the Snowman – The Ventures

Brian Cox: You're listening to Pirate Cat Radio. This is Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit. I'm Brian Cox filling in for Mister Odom. There be a few denizens of the pit this evening, bringing some holiday cheer, such like the holiday cheer brought to us there by The Ventures. That was Frosty the Snowman, of course, by the hard-to-imitate Ventures. Got a few other things going on. We can... we can talk about all of them. Let's talk about interviews we have coming up at Pirate Cat Radio. On Thursday December 16th, Gridlock from 12 to 2, DJ Sep, Maneesh the Twister, and Maga Bo. In the waiting room from 2 to 4, got Cajun Gems. Sounds from the Street, from 4 to 6 we've got Johnny Hickman of Cracker. City Spell from 8 to 10, we have It Takes a Village artists. On Friday, December 17th on Chris Orr's Biscuit Wheels, from 12 to 2 we've got Jacob Penya from Sweater Funk and the Magnificent Seven, and then on The League of Pissed Off Voters from 6 to 8, live guests discussing the week's political events. On Saturday December 18th, we've got the Deviant Ninja show from 8 to 10, Corinne from Give a Dog a Bone. Sunday, December 19th, The Bulkan Vulcan Show from 1 to 3 with the Symnira Creek Band, then Techno for Science. From 5 to 7, we've got Steve Silverman, science writer. Got some good stuff coming up. Later in the show here, we have a local poet who sometimes goes by the name Roarshock. He's going to read us some of his new works. Perhaps one of them will be in the spirit of yuletide, for all of those of you out there celebrating yule. One of my favorite yuletide songs, which isn't specifically a holiday song, is A Few of My Favorite Things, particularly as done by The John Coltrane Quartet, recorded live at the Village Vanguard in New York's Greenwich Village in November of 1966. A Few of my Favorite Things is, in fact, one of my all-time favorite things.

A Few of My Favorite Things – The John Coltrane Quartet

Brian Cox: Oh yeah, the deep, spiritual, religious music of John Will-I-Am Coltrane. We have our guest in the studio already. He goes by the name of Roarshock. He's getting set up right now, so uh, now dig this.

Public service announcement

Brian Cox: So, we have our guest in the studio right now. Talk into your microphone, there... see if we got...

Roarshock: Hello Brian, how are you?

Brian Cox: Hello there, Roarshock. That's what you're going by today, eh?

Roarshock: Yep, that's what I'm going by today.

Brian Cox: Any luck with setting you up with some headphones so you can hear.

Roarshock: Excellent.

Brian Cox: How'd you feel about that Coltrane song you walked in on?

Roarshock: I thought that was really cool, but uh, that's generally my reaction anytime I hear Coltrane.

Brian Cox: Yes, that is the reaction of many of us.

Roarshock: Alright, I've got some ears here.

Brian Cox: Got some cans.

Roarshock: Ah, now I can hear.

Brian Cox: Very good. Let me queue up some, uh, grooviness... *groovy saxophone plays.*
Now we're feelin' the mood.

Roarshock: Definitely.

Brian Cox: Gettin' ready for some prose or poetry.

Roarshock: Actually we're going to do a couple of poems here real quick, sort of uh poems of the season to get us started here. Uh, first...

Winter Solstice Poem

Shortest day of the year,
is nearly here,
Rain fuzzy darkening gray,
quilting San Francisco Bay.
Christmas shopping crowds
in quiet overcoats
filling the roads.
Lighted storefronts
twinkling in the streets
Smells of roasting foods
on the breeze
Head on home

to bundle in a small yuletide room
with a small and warming drink
a quiet candle flame
and a small pen in a book.
Long night gathers
on this the northern earth
gathers all
to semi-hibernatory sleep.

Brian Cox: Right. Very nice.

Roarshock: Thanks.

Brian Cox: Working in the yuletide cheer as I have been playing a couple of things, vaguely yuletidesque for all of us celebrating yule.

Roarshock: We're attempting to get our yule on and hopefully some other themes as well...

Brian Cox: Alright.

Roarshock: ...and uh, the second piece here is called...

Yuletide Cheer

In the early
gray morning light
the tail end of a year
reading a batch of poems
from ten years before.
Then my mind was on sex,
or lack of it,
Now my mind is on money,
or lack of it.
The snow and water
laden clouds
of this big
yuletide storm
swirl around
outside the windows
of my Nob Hill
apartment,
heading northwest
southeast.
A fresh hot cup
of espresso
from some ultra-impressive

taken for granted
new fangled machine
on my kitchen table wakes me up,
an early morning smoke
smoothes me out.

When I read those poems
I wrote back then
I think of my circumstances
back then
and see them reflected
in the work,
The same is true
of now,
but the common thread
is poetry
translating events
like a verbal camera
of unmechanical
ultra-subjectivity,
the emotional moments
of an individual
recorded through time
Good poetry
is accessible
to others,
others who
have lived/do live
on planet earth
(and beyond).
Back at my apartment
the gray light has turned
to blue white.

I hear streetcars
rumbling up Clay Street
people moving around
in the house,
a loud plane goes by
over the City,
breaks my concentration.
Back to consciousness,
I strive
to live the poet's life
about 0.23%
of the time

when I think
about it.
The rest of the time
I'm pretty confused
trying to find
my true life's path
through an ongoing
series of compromises
with all and everyone
around me,
but to stand
in a hillside
windowed room
in the morning
with a hot cup
of thunderous caffeination
in my grip
and watch
the cold
yuletide cheer
outside
rattle the windows,
then I feel
very keenly aware
secure in myself
ready to challenge
the odds.
ready to speak
my mind poems
to utter my poems
of emotional realities
risk boiling the blood
of some who may read them.
Let nothing hinder
the task
of raising fun spirits
as much as I can
and encouraging
good will
and good cheer
among every child,
woman and man.

Brian Cox: Wow, I can dig it. I really, really enjoyed the imagery there...

Roarshock: Thank you.

Brian Cox: ... and the yuletide cheer, and the thunderous caffeination which is going on right out in our Pirate Cat studio café right now.

Roarshock: Absolutely.

Brian Cox: If you get here quick, you can still see this live performance by Roarshock.

Roarshock: It's amazing... it's... it's uh truly amazing to be here folks. I'm very, very happy to be here. And uh, this is, of course, The Bottomless Pit program, so...

Brian Cox: Yes... Ahhhhhhhh!

Roarshock: Ahhhhhhhh!

Brian Cox: We have another inmate that has fallen into Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit. Do you have a bottomless pitesque piece?

Roarshock: I do. This is... this is a prose piece. This is my cover piece of the, uh, of the set, here. It's concerning a bottomless pit and how to get back out of a bottomless pit.

Brian Cox: That can be good, uh, good advice, good information.

Roarshock: To do this, we're going to remain in San Francisco, but we're heading over towards downtown, and we're going back in time about, oh about 140 plus years...

Brian Cox: Far out... deep.

Roarshock: ...and uh, the words of Sam Clemens.

For a time I wrote literary screeds for the Golden Era. C. H. Webb had established a very excellent literary weekly called the Californian, but high merit was no guaranty of success; the paper presently died a peaceful death, and I was out of work again.

For two months my sole occupation was avoiding acquaintances; for during that time I did not earn a penny, or buy an article of any kind, or pay my board. I became a very adept at "slinking." I slunk from back street to back street, I slunk away from approaching faces that looked familiar, I slunk to my meals, ate them humbly and with a mute apology for every mouthful I robbed my generous landlady of, and at midnight, after wanderings that were but slinkings away from cheerfulness and light, I slunk to my bed. I felt meaner, and lowlier and more despicable than the worms. During all this time I had but one piece of money--a silver ten cent piece--and I held to it and would not spend it on any account, lest the consciousness coming strong upon me that I was entirely penniless, might suggest suicide. I had pawned every thing but the clothes I had on; so I clung to my dime desperately, till it was smooth with handling.

Misery loves company. Now and then at night, in out-of-the way, dimly lighted places, I found myself happening on another child of misfortune. He looked so seedy and forlorn, so homeless and friendless and forsaken, that I yearned toward him as a brother.

Finally we spoke, and were inseparable after that. For our woes were identical, almost. He had been a reporter too, and lost his berth, and this was his experience, as nearly as I can recollect it. After losing his berth he had gone down, down, down, with never a halt: from a boarding house on Russian Hill to a boarding house on Kearney street; from thence to Dupont; from thence to a lowly sailor den; and from thence to lodgings in goods boxes and empty hogsheads near the wharves. Then; for a while, he had gained a meagre living by sewing up bursted sacks of grain on the piers; when that failed he had found food here and there as chance threw it in his way. He had ceased to show his face in daylight, now, for a reporter knows everybody, rich and poor, high and low, and cannot well avoid familiar faces in the broad light of day.

This mendicant Blucher--I call him that for convenience--was a splendid creature. He was full of hope, pluck and philosophy; he was well read and a man of cultivated taste; he had a bright wit and was a master of satire; his kindliness and his generous spirit made him royal in my eyes and changed his curb-stone seat to a throne and his damaged hat to a crown.

He had an adventure, once, which sticks fast in my memory as the most pleasantly grotesque that ever touched my sympathies. He had been without a penny for two months. He had shirked about obscure streets, among friendly dim lights, till the thing had become second nature to him. But at last he was driven abroad in daylight. The cause was sufficient; he had not tasted food for forty-eight hours, and he could not endure the misery of his hunger in idle hiding. He came along a back street, glowering at the loaves in bake-shop windows, and feeling that he could trade his life away for a morsel to eat. The sight of the bread doubled his hunger; but it was good to look at it, any how, and imagine what one might do if one only had it.

Presently, in the middle of the street he saw a shining spot--looked again--did not, and could not, believe his eyes--turned away, to try them, then looked again. It was a verity--no vain, hunger-inspired delusion--it was a silver dime!

He snatched it--gloated over it; doubted it--bit it--found it genuine--choked his heart down, and smothered a halleluiah. Then he looked around--saw that nobody was looking at him--threw the dime down where it was before--walked away a few steps, and approached again, pretending he did not know it was there, so that he could re-enjoy the luxury of finding it. He walked around it, viewing it from different points; then sauntered about with his hands in his pockets, looking up at the signs and now and then glancing at it and feeling the old thrill again. Finally he took it up, and went away, fondling it in his pocket. He idled through unfrequented streets, stopping in doorways and corners to take it out and look at it. By and by he went home to his lodgings--an empty queens-ware hogshead,--and employed himself till night trying to make up his mind what to buy with it. But it was hard to do. To get the most for it was the idea. He knew that at the Miner's Restaurant he could get a plate of beans and a piece of bread for ten cents; or a fish-ball and some few trifles, but they gave "no bread with one fish-ball" there. At French Pete's he could get a veal cutlet, plain, and some radishes and bread, for ten cents; or a cup of coffee--a pint at least-- and a slice of bread; but the slice was not thick enough by the eighth of an inch, and

sometimes they were still more criminal than that in the cutting of it. At seven o'clock his hunger was wolfish; and still his mind was not made up. He turned out and went up Merchant street, still ciphering; and chewing a bit of stick, as is the way of starving men.

He passed before the lights of Martin's restaurant, the most aristocratic in the city, and stopped. It was a place where he had often dined, in better days, and Martin knew him well. Standing aside, just out of the range of the light, he worshiped the quails and steaks in the show window, and imagined that may be the fairy times were not gone yet and some prince in disguise would come along presently and tell him to go in there and take whatever he wanted. He chewed his stick with a hungry interest as he warmed to his subject. Just at this juncture he was conscious of some one at his side, sure enough; and then a finger touched his arm. He looked up, over his shoulder, and saw an apparition--a very allegory of Hunger! It was a man six feet high, gaunt, unshaven, hung with rags; with a haggard face and sunken cheeks, and eyes that pleaded piteously. This phantom said:

"Come with me--please."

He locked his arm in Blucher's and walked up the street to where the passengers were few and the light not strong, and then facing about, put out his hands in a beseeching way, and said:

"Friend--stranger--look at me! Life is easy to you--you go about, placid and content, as I did once, in my day--you have been in there, and eaten your sumptuous supper, and picked your teeth, and hummed your tune, and thought your pleasant thoughts, and said to yourself it is a good world-- but you've never suffered! You don't know what trouble is--you don't know what misery is--nor hunger! Look at me! Stranger have pity on a poor friendless, homeless dog! As God is my judge, I have not tasted food for eight and forty hours!--look in my eyes and see if I lie! Give me the least trifle in the world to keep me from starving--anything-- twenty-five cents! Do it, stranger--do it, please. It will be nothing to you, but life to me. Do it, and I will go down on my knees and lick the dust before you! I will kiss your footprints--I will worship the very ground you walk on! Only twenty-five cents! I am famishing-- perishing--starving by inches! For God's sake don't desert me!"

Blucher was bewildered--and touched, too--stirred to the depths. He reflected. Thought again. Then an idea struck him, and he said:

"Come with me."

He took the outcast's arm, walked him down to Martin's restaurant, seated him at a marble table, placed the bill of fare before him, and said:

"Order what you want, friend. Charge it to me, Mr. Martin."

"All right, Mr. Blucher," said Martin.

Then Blucher stepped back and leaned against the counter and watched the man stow away cargo after cargo of buckwheat cakes at seventy-five cents a plate; cup after cup of coffee, and porter

house steaks worth two dollars apiece; and when six dollars and a half's worth of destruction had been accomplished, and the stranger's hunger appeased, Blucher went down to French Pete's, bought a veal cutlet plain, a slice of bread, and three radishes, with his dime, and set to and feasted like a king!

Brian Cox: Very nice. The words of Samuel Clemens there, right?

Roarshock: Better known as Mark Twain.

Brian Cox: (*laughing*) Indeed.

Roarshock: That's, that's from his, uh, first, uh, major work, *Roughing It*, which I highly recommend to anybody, especially to San Franciscans.

Brian Cox: Of course, wonderful San Francisco imagery of, uh, of those days. So do you have one more for us?

Roarshock: Yes.

Brian Cox: Very good. This will be one of your own?

Roarshock: This will be one of my own, and uh, this one is uh, this one is, uh, from almost 30 years ago yesterday, and uh, it is dated Martinez, California, December 14, 1980, 11:23 a.m., and uh... here we go...

Silence for John Lennon

There is no silence
In a sunlit room
There are songs that come unannounced
From voices long unheard
At the moment of tranquil despair
There are eyes that mirror infinite love
There are thoughts that are the key
To immortality
There are tears that flow like spring torrents
Sobbing like tornadoes
Cryings like hurricanes
There is silence shared and savored
There is aloneness and quietness
There is a moment of lucidity
And gone as soon as you become aware of it
There are many distractions
There are many paradoxes
There are many hidden places hitherto unexplored
There is much to be said for sitting in a seat of silence

Awaiting the moment, the moment I can't remember but can remember.

Brian Cox: Wow, heavy. (*clapping is heard*) Got some clapping out there. Now uh, you've requested a song. Would you like me to play that now, or would you like to tell us more about yourself or have any publications to plug or any other events?

Roarshock: I don't currently have any other events. Thanks Brian so much for having me in. What fun! What a blast! It's great fun! Ummm, I can be reached via email – Roarshock@aol.com... That's R-O-A-R-S-H-O-C-K. I have a website... It's kind of more a bund right now – www.roarshock.net R-O-A-R-S-H-O-C-K dot net, and if you click the Roarshock Pages link there, and that has facsimiles of the Roarshock Page, which was a street flyer which I did around this town for a number of years, right around the turn of the century, which was, uh, which was a decade ago.

Brian Cox: A whole decade has gotten into this century. It blows my mind every time.

Roarshock: Mine too.

Brian Cox: And 30 years has elapsed since he wrote that last poem about the death of John Lennon, and the song you've requested is, of course, a uh, a Beatles song which has a tiny little voice at the end that you can hear coming through the radio static that goes "ohhhh untimely death."

Roarshock: Is that what it says?

Brian Cox: Oh yeah, from King Lear.

Roarshock: Alright, let's listen... let's listen.

I Am the Walrus – The Beatles

Brian Cox: Sit ye down father, rest you. That was, of course, The Beatles with I Am the Walrus. I've been accused of that before as well as being the egg man. We've got a lot more music coming up and a lot more fun. Now, uh, why don't you have a little bit of a public service announcement.

Public service announcement

Brian Cox: Just like the man said, you are listening to Pirate Cat Radio, and this is Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit... Ahhhhhhh! You've fallen into Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit. Mister Odom is in The Big Easy, taking it easy, presumably. I am Brian Cox, filling in for him. Sometimes people have called me the groovy delivery boy. Yeah, I know. Here is music by De Vol with Groovy Delivery Boy.

Groovy Delivery Boy – De Vol

Brian Cox: Sometimes that might turn into my theme song. Okay, you're listening to Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit, and Mister Odom, if you're out there somewhere listening to us, due to the fact that you so enjoyed my, uh, Danny Ben-Israel track called Bad Trip last week, I had something else in the same vein for you called Dante's Inferno, a little 45 single by the Blues Magoos, yet however, I realize both of these turntables are missing their little 45 adapter, and I didn't bring mine, so in the spirit of stuff that Mister Odom likes, I have had this song stuck in my head from when I interned with him a few weeks ago, by Einstürzende Neubauten, the song Stella Maris. I highly recommend going on Google and looking up Stella Maris and looking at the English translation of these words, and do it quick so you can listen along.

Stella Maris - Einstürzende Neubauten

Brian Cox: Oh that is such a beautiful piece of music. This is Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit, and I am Brian Cox, filling in for Mister Odom. We're going to go into a little bit of new music, or uh, actually it's from a new compilation of old Peruvian music or mid 60s Peruvian music. It's from The Roots of Chicha 2, Psychedelic Cumbias from Peru. This first song is Constellation by Los Destellos.

Constellation – Los Destellos

Brian Cox: That was Constellation by Los Destellos from this brand new compilation called The Roots of Chicha 2, Psychedelic Cumbias from Peru. I've been noticing lately that there has been a resurgence of interest in music collectors for Peruvian music just lately. When I saw this on the new shelf, I figured that was, uh, part of that thing I'm noticing. Uh, a number of friends of mine have recently started collecting, uh, other Peruvian and South American music, I've noticed. I'm going to stay with the new release category here. When I played this new band, uh Betty White, last week, I got a couple of compliments from it, so I'm going to play a different song by the band Betty White. I'm going to play Bathroom Mat.

Bathroom Mat – Betty White

Brian Cox: This is Pirate Cat Radio. I am Brian Cox. The show is Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit. The music you just heard was Betty White. The song was Bathroom Mat. We're going to get into some other older stuff now.

Lost Island – Duane Eddy

Brian Cox: That was Duane Eddy. That was Lost Island. That's actually recent too. That's a Tom Moulton mix in genuine stereo from the original session tapes. That has only recently come out. A few things going on around Pirate Cat Radio and the Radio Café Studio here, Friday December 17th The Common Thread Collective

open mic with Diamond Dave from 3 to 6 p.m., Pirate Cat Radio standup, live comedy showcase 10 p.m. to 12 p.m. Saturday December 18th. There's on the Torrential Dissonant show from 2 to 8 we have a special in-studio appearance by Kera and the Lesbians. Sunday December 19th Sanguine Soul from 3 to 5, hosts T.O.N.E-Z. Monday December 20th, Notes from the Underground from 4 to 6 p.m. He has a special guest Lizzy Ryder. C'mon down and check out Lizzy Ryder in the studio. Pirate Cat and Big Al Gonzalez present Live at Deluxe Comedy Showcase, Club Deluxe 9 p.m. That would be also Monday. Wednesday December 22nd on Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit, we have Deena MaCabe doing a performance in the café here. Friday December 24th The Common Thread Collective open mic with Diamond Dave again. So, lots of stuff goes on down here at the Pirate Cat Radio Studio. You should c'mon down, get caffeinated up. There are excellent baristas here to get you that drink, to get you that little bit of love that you need going. This is Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit. I am Brian Cox, and this is Jingle Bell Rock.

Jingle Bell Rock – Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass
Air – Kelly Watch the Stars
Blue Christmas – Elvis Presley
Moon Mist – Duke Ellington

Brian Cox: That was Duke Ellington, and that song was Moon Mist. Before that we heard Elvis with Blue Christmas from the Elvis Christmas album. Before that was Air with Kelly Watch the Stars from Moon Safari. Before that we heard Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass doing their rendition of Jingle Bell Rock from their Christmas album. We have time for one more, just barely one more, and it's a weird one, and it's about radio, and this is radio. This is Pirate Cat Radio. In case it's over the airwaves anywhere, somebody might get a weird chill up their spine, feeling like there's somebody out there trying to communicate something to you... but what is it?

Numbers Station – The Conet Project

Brian Cox: This concludes another installment of Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit. You're listening to an obscure numbers station recording from the compilation called The Conet Project. It's been fun. This is Brian Cox saying thank you for listening to Pirate Cat Radio. Mister Odom will be back next week to, uh, tend to the inmates and denizens of Mister Odom's Bottomless Pit. It is time for us to go.