



# The wake-up call from hell

**H**ELL, declared Jean-Paul Sartre, is other people. I'd go further than that. Hell is other people who think they're better than the rest of us, and can therefore do what they want.

One such person angered me so persistently over a period of months that I found myself daydreaming about increasingly bloodthirsty revenge.

I started waking up in the middle of the night for no apparent reason.

This happened night after night, but only on weekdays. I'd find it impossible to get back to sleep, and would stumble around like a zombie during the day.

Weeks turned into months, and still it happened every weekday without fail.

I was dead on my feet. I didn't just have bags under my eyes, I had a 10-piece set of matching luggage on wheels.

I started checking the time I was woken up. It was always exactly 5.50am.

Every night, I'd crawl into bed early, desperately hoping to make up for lost sleep. But instead I'd lie there for hours, wide awake and fizzing with anger, trying to solve the 10-to-six mystery.

I had many theories. Maybe it was Avon and Somerset Constabulary's helicopter. Maybe it was the extra-loud alarm clock of a heavy-sleeping neighbour. Maybe Clifton had a secret pack of howling wolves ...

Or maybe it was all in my head.

Wearing earplugs in bed didn't help. I'd wake at 5.50am and freeze, listening for clues. But nothing. Silence.

I told my neighbour, who visibly buckled with relief that she wasn't going nuts. She, too, was inexplicably being woken at 5.50am every weekday.

This made me even more determined to find out what was waking us up.

The next day, I was woken up at 5.50am as usual, but this time while I was trying to get back to sleep I heard the sharp "be-beep" of a car horn.

I jumped out of bed, flung back the curtains and frantically rubbed off the condensation. I could see a car parked outside the flats nextdoor, lights on, the driver checking his watch. Busted.

Suddenly it all made sense. This was what had been waking me up all along.

His daily single beep at 5.50am had been loud enough to wake me up, but too fleeting for me to hear what it was. This second beep was his fatal mistake.

As months of sleep deprivation came to a head, I felt the red mist descend.

It was the closest I've ever got to that moment when Bruce Banner changes into the Incredible Hulk. Not a pretty sight. (Especially when you add in no make-up and bed-head.)

I was *beyond* incensed. What kind of selfish creature would drive into a residential street at 5.50am every weekday for months and beep their horn? Surely they must realise they're waking us all up every time?

What possible justification could there be? Clearly they were picking someone up, and were trying to hurry them along, but that's no excuse.

I was just about to stomp downstairs and confront him when I saw something that whacked up my anger dial from 10 to 11. The driver started talking on a mobile phone.

So why didn't he just *ring* the person he was picking up instead of beeping?

At that moment, the car drove off.

I paced menacingly like a pre-fight boxer (in bedsocks). I couldn't let him get away with it. But was it *really* safe to sit on the kerb at 5.45am in my dressing gown waiting to confront him?

As my aching brain struggled to find a solution, a few days later the beeper vanished as mysteriously as he had appeared. My full night's sleep was restored, and my joy was unconfined.

But if *you* were the beeper, and you're *still* doing it somewhere else - beware.

Next time it might not be a 5ft 4in girl in fleecy pyjamas waiting to confront you. It might be a 6ft 4in mountain-sick of you waking up his kids.

# Avon and Somerset has been missing out

**AVON and Somerset police lose out on more government cash than almost every force in England and Wales, a root-and-branch review of policing has revealed.**

Around £10 million a year allocated for tackling crime in the region ends up being shared out across other areas by the Home Office because of a quirk in the system.

Officials work out the grant based on needs but to stop some forces ending up with no increase they take top-slice funding from those in-line for the most.

It means that in the five years from 2006-7 to 2010-11 the authority's grant entitlement will have been scaled back by more than £50m.

Only the West Midlands misses out on more of the cash it is entitled to, according to government adviser Sir Ronnie Flanagan.

But in the *Review of Policing*, published yesterday, he recommended the system is scrapped so forces like Avon and Somerset are given their full settlement.

He states that no system of funding is "without pitfalls" but adds: "I also recognise the importance of the other side of the equation, which is that some forces are not receiving the funding they need to meet the risks they face".

Dr Moira Hamlin, chairwoman of the police authority, said: "We welcome this review as it highlights many areas that are a priority to us as a police authority.

"It is particularly pleasing to see a recommendation to phase out the current damping system when allocating funding, as this mechanism of taking money from some police authorities to ensure all areas receive a minimum grant increase has seen Avon and Somerset lose some £50m in the years from 2006-7 to 2010-11.

"We are the second most adversely affected police authority in the country and have campaigned for several years on this subject.

"The police authority also supports the recommendation for there to be a more entrepreneurial approach by exploiting 'business opportunities', but feel it should not just fall upon chief constables.

"We support the debate on local accountability.

"The police authority has made a substantial investment to support neighbourhood policing because we know how important it is to people to have visible policing in our communities.

"We are also working with our



**Assessing the implications:** Councillor Peter Hammond, far right, and chairwoman of Avon and Somerset Police Authority, Dr Moira Hamlin, with, from left, Assistant Chief Constable Steve Mortimore, Chief Inspector Andy Bennett and Police Community Support Officers Neil Spiring and Danny Ball. Below, government adviser Sir Ronnie Flanagan

# Review calls for change in police funding



**by Sam Lister**  
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local authority partners to increase funding and joint working in neighbourhoods.

"The police authority will now look at this report in greater detail and consider further the recommendations."

The long-awaited paper proposes sweeping changes to bureaucracy which could save millions of police hours a year but warns that the current number of police officers in

England and Wales is unsustainable and will have to fall.

Sir Ronnie said it was not necessary to have 140,000 officers, adding that many jobs could be done by civilians instead.

He believes that if levels of red tape were stripped back it could release up to seven million hours of police time every year - the equivalent of 3,500 officers.

He also said that sustaining police officer numbers at their current level would not make the most effective use of resources.

Shadow Home Secretary, David

Davis, said: "The difference between the Government and the Conservatives could not be clearer. Labour see slashing red tape as a means to cut police officer numbers. Conservatives will cut red tape in order to put more officers on our streets."

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**REVIEWS** ★ Poor ★★ Average ★★★ Good ★★★★ Very good ★★★★★ Classic

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**Songdog - St Bonaventure's**  
THERE is something that is definitely unsettling about the skewed songs of this Welsh trio fronted by singer and songwriter Lyndon Morgan.

Their tunes were invariably beautiful, delicate and even soothing, but not the words, which were terribly dark and full of loss, pain, anguish and horror.

Many of the people who inhabit their world live on the edges of society. *Fairytale*, for example was about a prostitute and her lover, "the Sonny and Cher of crime", who murdered and robbed her clients.

Morgan is an established playwright, and his powerful narratives and relish in the use of language reflect this, although he has a poet's ability to paint graphic images.

After Songdog, even the songs of Leonard Cohen will now seem positively jolly.

**Rating: ★★★☆☆**

**KEITH CLARK**

## A night of loss, pain, anguish and horror

**Laura Veirs: Thekla**  
IF Woody Allen and Suzanne Vega got together and had a child, there's a fair chance she'd be a lot like Laura Veirs.

The Seattle singer may look like she would be most at home in a library but that masks sharp intellect and a clever songwriter whose albums are showered with praise.

Veirs turned her back on a career as a geologist to be a musician but a love of nature is clear in many songs, full of caves, meteors, mountain streams and minerals.

She may sing about rock but she didn't really rock out, instead weaving sweet acoustic songs and occasionally using pedals to build the sound up in layers.

She also showed her vivid imagination with a rambling, charming monologue about what she thought might happen to us all if the Thekla came away from its moorings and floated out to sea.

**Rating: ★★★☆☆**

**PAUL DALLISON**

## Singer's sharp intellect on show

**Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra: Colston Hall**

IN one of his rare appearances with the orchestra, Andrew Litton returned to the Colston Hall in the first of two programmes marking the 50th anniversary Sibelius's death.

Sandwiched between this composer's two works was the mighty Rachmaninov Third Piano Concerto. It is one of the most taxing and demanding in the long first repertoire.

This performance by the young Canadian pianist Stewart Goodyear was simply gargantuan.

There were at times one or two harsh notes. However, the soloist showed us his tremendous ability with incredible power and imagination in the long first movement cadenza, where the piano seemingly shook.

There was an excellent support from the orchestra, who came into their own in Sibelius's First Symphony.

**Rating: ★★★★★**

**JOHN PACKWOOD**

## Pianist makes a powerful statement