



<http://samuelgordonstewart.com/samuels-persiflage/>

Samuel Gordon-Stewart: This is Samuel's Persiflage Episode #6 for July 2006.

(Music)

Samuel Gordon-Stewart: Yes, hello, and welcome to another episode of Samuel's Persiflage. It's been a little while since the last one; but we're here now, and we're just going to have to see about making this a little bit more regular I think. Having two months between episodes simply isn't acceptable, and we are behind on the episode numbers. So, well, I've got a bit of scope there to improve on that; so I'll see what I can do. Let's start doing that by having today's episode.

Well, we've got plenty coming up today, Pia Waugh, one of the organisers of [Linux.Conf.Au 2007](#), will be joining us in a few moments. We've got plenty of feedback to go through. Some interesting information about some phone scams that are doing the rounds at the moment, we'll go through that. There's also a Persiflage Puzzle and plenty more, so stay tuned. You're listening to Samuel's Persiflage.

(Music)

SGS: And as I said, we've got a Persiflage Puzzle, and for those of you who are new to the show, I'll explain how it works. Basically, I give you a puzzle -- it's similar to Hangman or Wheel of Fortune or whatever -- and I give you some letters, I tell you where they are in the puzzle -- or if they're not in the puzzle, you fill them in -- and you try and work out what it is. It's a bit of fun to keep us going through the show, so I'm sure you'll enjoy it; I know I do.

Now, this time round, we have two words; so if you are new, you'll probably need to know that you do need a piece of paper and a pen or a text editor or something. Fire that up, and we'll put in the two words. The first word has seven letters, and the second word has four letters. And the clue for this puzzle, "You would be hard-pressed to find a shopping centre which doesn't have at least one of these." I'll start by giving you three

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letters, which I will draw out of this hat here. Okay, let's shuffle around in there. The first letter out is the letter 'M' for Mary, and as luck would have it, that is the third letter of the first word. We'll get out another letter, and it's the letter 'S' for Samuel, and that's the third letter in the second word. So that's looking good, and we'll pull out one more letter this time around. Having a look, here it is, it's the 'D' for Dog, and that happens to be the first letter of the second word. So, have a think about that. We'll see how you go. We'll have another update on the Persiflage Puzzle a little bit later on.

(Music)

SGS: In the previous episode of Samuel's Persiflage, we spoke with Margaret Phillips, the Director of Digital Archiving at the National Library of Australia. Margaret had been with the National Library for quite some time at that stage, and she has since retired.

Now, as is the general policy for guests on Samuel's Persiflage, I send out an audio CD of the episode that the guests appear on, and seeing as the National Library isn't too far from where I live, I hand-delivered it to her. Now, on Margaret's last day as Director of Digital Archiving, which was, in fact, Friday, June the 16th, she sent me an email.

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She wrote, "Dear Samuel, I am sorry that I have not been in touch with you before this to thank you for the CD that you delivered to me containing your interview with me. I've only today been able to listen to it, and then with only half an ear open. It's my last day in the library, and I have been finishing off many things; however, I shall take it home with me and listen to it with more attention next week. I must have been a bit tired the day you interviewed me, because I'm speaking slowly and with some hesitation. I did a little better when talking about PANDORA, because I'm much more familiar with it. Many thanks for the interview and your good wishes for my retirement. All the very best to you for the future, Margaret."

Well, as it happens, I did contact Margaret to wish her the very best for her retirement, and I'd just like to do that publicly, because Margaret ... Margaret is one of the main people responsible for PANDORA, the National Library's attempt at archiving the Australian websites that are out there on the internet. And in many ways, without Margaret, it probably wouldn't have happened, or at least it wouldn't be where it is now. So Margaret has had a very important part in the history of Australian ... well, the National Library, really. Margaret's done a number of things there; PANDORA's just one of them. And so I'd like to publicly wish Margaret the very best for her retirement, thank her once again for coming on the show. And maybe sometime in the future, we'll hear from her again; maybe she's listening to this. But it was wonderful being able to chat with Margaret, I really do appreciate it. And in many ways, her interview was one of her parting gifts as the Director of Digital Archiving at the National Library. So, Margaret, you will be missed, and thank you very much for coming on the show, and I hope you have a great retirement.

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(Music)

SGS: [Linux.Conf.Au](#) is on again next year. This time it's in Sydney, and it's in January. Pia Waugh is one of the organizers of [Linux.Conf.Au](#), Australia's premier Linux conference, I suppose you could call it. Pia, welcome to the program.

Pia Waugh: Hi, thank you for having me.

SGS: It's my pleasure. So, could you tell us a little bit about [Linux.Conf.Au](#)? What is it about?

PW: Sure. [Linux.Conf.Au](#) is one of the world's best technical Linux conferences. Basically, it attracts the likes of Linus Torvalds, of Alan Cox, Rusty Russell, Andrew Tridgell -- all the big names in the space. And the reason that they will come and keep coming back is because, quite frankly, it's extremely fun. It's very technical, it's very community-based, it's definitely not a corporate full-of-marketing-style conference. It really is by the community and for the community. And because every year it's actually run by different groups of volunteers -- usually some Linux user group from around the country -- it sort of has that feel, that community feel that's really comfortable and fun and interesting. So, yes, definitely one of the best conferences in the world; that's why -- I've been to conferences all around the world, and it has to be one of my favorites, definitely.

SGS: Okay. It started in Melbourne in 1999, didn't it?

PW: Yes. That was ... back then, it was called CALU, the Conference of Australian Linux Users; and the year after that, it ran -- well, then it missed a year, and then it ran in Sydney, and then they changed the name to [Linux.Conf.Au](#) after finding out that they could use the [Conf.Au](#) domain.

SGS: Right. So that's the entire reason behind the name or ...

PW: Well, I mean, it just sort of sounded cool, and they thought it was an interesting domain name to use, and they thought that it would be memorable. And as it is, it is something that people remember. Unfortunately, the [Linux.Conf.Au](#) domain is a difficult thing to keep, because the [Conf.Au](#) domain actually retires once a year; so we have to sort of -- we end up going through a period of a couple of months every year where we can't use the domain, which is very frustrating. But what we are trying to do is sort of stick to [lca2007.linux.org.au](#), so that people can always use that domain name.

SGS: Yup. I must say, saying LCA is much, much quicker and easier; so we might just go with that for now.

PW: No problem.

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SGS: Okay. So the call for papers is already open for next year. What sort of topics are you looking for?

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PW: We've actually got -- what we did was, we went and had a look back through the conference at the streams of -- and tried to sort of put things into the streams. And so we actually come up with six or seven core streams that we are trying to get people to think about, and they include sys admin, security, cool hacks, tools and stuff for programmers and free cultures. So there's a couple of other ones that are -- I'm awful sorry, I don't have the information in front of me, because I'm offline at the moment, which is most painful.

SGS: You are in Armidale at the moment, aren't you?

PW: I am. I am giving a talk tomorrow at a -- today at university here, and there is no wireless anywhere (laughing); so I'm a little bit starved at the moment.

SGS: That's something that ... wireless is something you should find at LCA, though, isn't it?

PW: Absolutely. Yep, it'll be fully connected, and we ... what we are also doing is making sure that the website delivers all the information people need both before the conference and during the conference. So every morning, including the days of the miniconfs, we are going to have an announcement. We are going to say everything that's happening that day. We are going to have the opportunity for people to find out about the cool stuff easily rather than having to just rely on ... even just the web side of it that they'll be getting in their packs. So it's going to be an opportunity for people to participate in various ways.

SGS: Right, right. So with the call for papers, coming back to that again; you've got -- you'll obviously end up with a lot of very technical speeches; but is that the only sort of speeches you want, or do you want some of the more general topics, as well?

PW: Well, the great thing about [Linux.Conf.Au](#) is, the demographic of that conference is changing a little every year. We still have a huge proportion of developers, whether that be coders or documenters or user-interface people or any of those sort of groups, or even translators and such; but mostly getting a lot more people that are interested in community and free culture. The miniconfs that we run every year are actually community streams; so they are actually run by people in the community that want to run a miniconf of a particular type. And watching the miniconfs change over the years is a really good indication of how -- you know, the different things people are interested in. So last year, for instance -- or, this year, 2006, we had an education miniconf. We had for 2007, some people who put in applications to run, like, a research miniconf and a legal miniconf and all this kind of stuff, as well as your traditional, you know, security miniconf or Debian miniconf, KDE miniconf and all those kinds of things.

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So the miniconfs really provide an opportunity for the community to create any sort of miniconf that they want that suits whatever they care about. And then the main conference, we sort of bandy around those streams that we have put together which are of most general interest. But even those do include free culture and cool hacks, so there are sort of a lot of generic talks, and the keynotes we try to make sure are broadly applicable to everybody.

SGS: Right. So just to clarify for the people who haven't been to LCA before, the miniconfs are sort of mini-conferences, really, that you just run in the few days before the actual conference gets underway?

PW: What we are doing ... so usually, the layout has been two days of miniconfs, one day of tutorials and two days of lectures with a sort of a last day of best of talks and such. What we are doing in 2007 is a thing -- okay. The entire conference starts on the first day of the first mini-confs. So we are trying to open it as the miniconfs open to try and encourage more people to participate in the miniconfs. So the Monday and the Tuesday will be miniconf days, but the Monday will be when the conference actually starts. Wednesday will be talks, Thursday will tutorials, and Friday will be talks. We originally put the tutorials -- moved it back to Thursday, so that people had a chance to be in talks, you know, stream-associated talks before they went into the tutorials the next day, so they had a chance to meet people and get the most out of the tutorials when they go into them.

SGS: Right, okay. Well, there would be a lot of my audience who are still very much Windows users, probably still using Internet Explorer or Microsoft Office, all of the proprietary software. One of the main topics, I suppose -- well, the real topic at LCA is open source software. A lot of people have heard a lot about it, but might not necessarily understand much about it. So would you like to enlighten us a little bit, I suppose is probably the wrong word, but never mind.

(00:14:50)

PW: It all depends, I guess (laughing). Absolutely. So open source software ultimately is a couple of things. First of all, it's a development methodology, which is community-based. So most of your listeners would have heard about the concept of the commons so in Old England you had a patch of land that the community -- no one owned; but the entire community put a little bit work in, and then the entire community got the benefits of a good harvest, effectively. Open-source software is basically community-developed software. It's basically a common software. No one owns the software outright, and there is no single owner or single company behind it; but rather, there's a lot of individuals, a lot of companies and a lot of communities who participate in creating something which suits a variety of needs. And again, it's quite interesting, because rather than one company sitting down and doing the analysis of what they think their users want, you end up getting the actual users and developers getting in and creating what they actually need. And you might have one application, for instance, that you might have a thousand people developing on from all different walks of life; so you

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end up with an application which is very broadly applicable, rather than applicable just in one or two different key ways.

So what's happening is that open-source software has been around for some time now, something like Linux, which is one of the most famous open source projects, it's an operating system, and most people refer to it as GNU Linux. And it is a stack of -- it's basically an operating system with a stack of applications on top. But it's not even really right to just compare it to Windows, because Windows is really just an operating system with a few key tools; then you have to buy Microsoft Office, which is another application. And then most other applications are third party -- you know, Adobe Acrobat; you might use Photoshop; you might use all these other applications that are actually third-party, whereas in Linux, you've literally got thousands and thousands of applications sort of free and easily available to you, and a number of those applications have actually been ported to Windows. You can actually run Open Office, which is an open source Office Suite, which has been ported to Linux, Windows and Mac. You can use something like Firefox, which is an open source Internet Explorer equivalent, a browser, although it's, some would argue, better than Internet Explorer, because it has less viruses and more features; but that's been ported to Windows and to Mac. So even people that are running Windows and comfortable with Windows are able to take advantage of open source software and start using the software, even if they don't need to participate in it at this point.

The greatest thing about open source, though, regardless of this, really, next-generation development methodology is the community around it. So you have this huge global community, which is online 24/7, because it's all around the world. You have over a million people registered on one particular place called [SourceForge](#), where there is a lot of open-source software registered. So it's a huge community of people, and you can always find a group or an application or a community that suits what you care about. And so you have a backup, you have access to information, you have access to help and support that -- you really don't get that sense of community with propriety software, because the people at the core of it are sort of bound by these core values of personal freedom, of personal empowerment and of being out together and getting a job done in the open source community. So it's a powerful thing.

SGS: And -- sorry. I suppose that one of the main things about having the community there is that with all the software being in the open domain, you can really create something that suits your needs or suits the needs of a particular group. I mean, I don't know how many Linux distributions there are. There's too many to count. But there is a lot of what I would sort of call your desktop variations, and then you've got a lot of desktop variations for a certain specific group of people and you've got other versions for various types of servers and various other needs.

PW: And you also get things like Gnome is a Windows ... I'm sorry, a suite of desktop applications, if you like, for the stuff that you feel and touch and use when you log into a GUI user interface. And Gnome, for instance, has been translated into so many languages, and we even have ... they came out with one release, and there was a

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Mongolian full translation within a few days, because there are some people who -- in Mongolia who wanted to have it translated; and because the code is available for them to be able to do that, they could just get in and do it. So you end up with all of these translations for free.

The other thing I was going to say, your readers, if they do want to have a bit of a look, a bit of a feel and touch, I mean, they can download some of the software and play with it. The distributions of Linux that I would recommend for desktop users would be Ubuntu, Suse and Red Hat. And there is also another distribution called Mandriva, and between the four of those, you can define something that suits you.

(00:20:00)

The other thing is that at Linux.Conf.Au, at LCA, we are actually running a brand-new thing called Open Day. You can get details about Open Day on the website now. Open Day is a free event that we are running where we'll have lots and lots of cool technologies, robots, solar cars, all kinds of technology that runs on open source. We'll have all the people there behind this technology, so you can sort of look and ask and feel and have the people there to answer your questions. And you can get a feel about the community, because we'll be really showing off some of the coolest projects and coolest people in the community. So it's a free event. There is a sausage sizzle there, and it will be a fun, sort of family holiday event that people can come along to and see what this is all about.

SGS: Just having a look on the LCA website at the moment, there's a pamphlet on there for the Open Day, too.

PW: Yes.

SGS: So if anyone needs information about that LCA 2--

(Phone starts ringing)

SGS: -- oh, dear! The phone's going off in the studio.

I'm sorry just -- Someone should be downstairs ...

(Phone stops ringing)

SGS: ... they've got it, okay.

What was I saying?

This is something that happens all the time on this show. We either have dogs barking in the background, we have phones going off, it just all happens in here. But, yeah, lca2007.linux.org.au, there will be a link to it in the show notes. There's information

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about LCA 2007; there's the Open Day, the pamphlet there. I suppose I should also include some links to some of the Linux distributions and Office suites, as well.

PW: Sure. And, I mean, is if you need to find a lot of information, I can certainly email it through and send you all those links.

SGS: I think the other thing that I was going to say about having the open source community there is that, with most of them, there's so many people there that if you do get stuck, you just have to go to a forum or to a mailing list, and within a few moments, you'll probably have an answer to your problem.

PW: Absolutely. I mean, that's the fantastic thing. There is a user group in most places in Australia, as well -- not most places. There's about 35 user groups around Australia, which is actually quite a lot for one country. There are many countries that only have one or two. We've got a thing called Software Freedom Day coming up on the 16th of September, and there will be information about that on the linux.org.au website very soon, and that's another opportunity to just get some information from a user group near you about open source. And there ... yeah, there's plenty of opportunities to find information, to get help, to get assistance, And you also find that the documentation freely available on the web is very, very easy. So, for instance, my distribution, personal distribution choice is Ubuntu. I find it very easy to use, and there's actually an Ubuntu user guide online, which is very comprehensive, easy to read, very easy to implement. So there's a lot of help out there, and it's just such a fantastic world to get involved in.

SGS: All right. Okay. Well, going back to LCA, what are some of your personal favorite highlights of previous years?

PW: Oh, there's so many. A couple of years ago, Linus Torvalds came to LCA. And Linus Torvalds, for those who don't know, is sort of one of the people who started ... he started writing the Linux kernel, like, and started the whole thing off. Anyway, he came to our conference, and when he was asked to come back the next year, he said only if we could get a dunking tank. And we thought, "Oh! This sounds like so much fun." And the team of the time, which was Adelaide, said, "Sure," and they organized the dunking tank; and then what they did was had an auction where people bid for the rights to dunk their favorite developer. And all of that money went to charity. Every year, we have a charity running that goes to a charity of the choice of the team running it that year. And so the ... basically, Linus got dunked, my husband got dunked, Keith Packard, Bdale Garbee, loads of big names in that space. All had to, you know, don their swimmers and get on top of a big tub of water and be dunked. So that was a lot of fun. And those -- I mean, every year, again, we try to do fun stuff, because it really is that kind of thing.

Every year, there's great talks. I think one of my favorite talks was actually back in Melbourne in CALU in 1999, where a guy called John "Maddog" Hall spoke. And he spoke about, not ... just about technical stuff, but about freedom and about all the things that make open source important beyond just the technical scope of what it can do. And that was really inspiring, and that really sort of got me involved to the point that I'm

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involved now. So, yeah, I mean, there's lots of highlights. It's such a fun culture that I go every year.

SGS: I suppose the other thing that I probably should ask is, if people just want to know more about Linux, they might not have used it before necessarily, would you think if they have time off in January and they are planning on being in Sydney, do you think perhaps they would gain something from attending LCA?

(00:25:16)

PW: I think that it is a very technical conference. The best thing that they could do would be to come along to the Open Day. Come along, say hello, see what they think. And I think that that will give them a taste of the community, a taste of what's possible. We'll make sure that there's plenty of software and information available at that day, so that people can just pick it up and take it home. But the conference, unless there is a particular mini conf that they are interested in; so, for instance, teachers interested in the space or who want to know about this space, should go to the education mini conf, and that will give them two days or one day of finding out how it's relevant to their space without delving into the more technical stuff that we will in the main conference.

But, yes, definitely worth checking out. Keep an eye on the website as we start posting what the miniconfs are and what the schedule is, and certainly come along to Open Day. We'd love to see you there.

SGS: That website again, lca2007.linux.org.au. There will be a link in the show notes.

Pia, thank you very much for coming on the show.

PW: No, that's not a problem. It was lovely. Thank you very much.

SGS: Pia Waugh is one of the organizers of Linux.Conf.Au.2007, being held in January in Sydney.

(Music)

SGS: Samuel's Persiflage listener feedback coming up in just a moment, but how are you doing with the Persiflage Puzzle? Would you like some more letters, perhaps? I think I can help you with that. We will draw out four letters from the hat this time, and the first letter out is the letter 'X' for x-ray, and ... well, that's not in there. So let's draw out another letter. What have we got? It's the letter 'R' for Roger. That one's not in there, either. All righty, then, let's try another one, and there we go. It's the letter 'F' for Fred. No, that's not in there, either. And we'll try for one more, see if we can get this one to be in there. So we get it. It's the letter 'B' for Bulb. That one's not in there, either. Four letters that aren't in there. But the letters that aren't in there, they are very important, too, because if you know some of the letters that aren't in there, it helps you work out which letters are in there. And the clue again, in case you missed it earlier, which you shouldn't

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have, because this is a podcast, so it would be ... most people listen to all of it, or at least start from the beginning. The clue for this puzzle, "You would be hard-pressed to find a shopping centre which doesn't have at least one of these."

(Electronic Noises)

Voiceover: Samuel's Persiflage listener feedback. Send your emails to podcast@samuelgordonstewart.com.

(Music)

SGS: Oh, I love this time of the show. It's where you get to take part in the show and send in your feedback. podcast@samuelgordonstewart.com is the email address, as you have just heard, or you can send audio feedback. Go to the link on the Samuel's Persiflage website. From memory, it's odeo.com/sendmessage/samuelgs or something like that. Can't remember the exact address, but that doesn't really matter, because there is a button on there that says, "Send Me a Voice Message," and if you click on that, it will take you to the good people at odeo.com, which will guide you through recording the whole thing. It will even send it straight to me, and that makes it easier for everyone. Of course, you can also send a spoken feedback via .wav format, .mp3 format or Ogg Vorbis format to that email address, podcast@samuelgordonstewart.com, or you can do it the good, old-fashioned way and send it in text form, again, podcast@samuelgordonstewart.com. All of those forms are highly appreciated, and I'd love to get your feedback and get it on the show.

So let's start off the feedback for this episode, and we've got one from JohnB1_B5. He sent in some audio.

John B1_B5: "Hello, Samuel, JohnB1_B5 here. Congratulations on your best Persiflage so far. And congratulations also to Margaret Phillips for clearly explaining what PANDORA was all about."

(00:30:10)

SGS: Thank you very much for that there, John. Actually, I had an opportunity to convey your message to Margaret Phillips, and she wrote back, "Thank you very much for this positive feedback." So thank you very much for that, John. I appreciate it, and so does Margaret, so that was very thoughtful of you.

Chuck writes, "Do comments appear in PANDORA too?" Now, Chuck is referring to the comments on my blog, or on any website, for that matter. The answer to that is, yes, they do, because when the PANDORA robot comes in, it goes and indexes the entire website, and it plops it all into PANDORA right there. It's pretty much a carbon-copy version of what you would see on the website. The only difference with some websites is, you can't log into them on their PANDORA copy, because they don't have all of that backend stuff; it's just what gets rendered on your screen, that's what they are going to get at

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PANDORA. So you can't log in, and you can't leave new comments, etc., on the PANDORA copy; but, of course, you can still leave them on my website, so that's fine.

Clayton has sent us in a very long email, so we will read this out: "Samuel, Samuel, Samuel, in your latest Persiflage, you didn't show much appreciation for the new display device that you brought up through the single example of public transport." On second thought, maybe we should play that segment from the last episode. We will play that, and then we will come back and read the email.

SGS: According to ee-Times, an Israeli company has developed a personal video display device that looks like a simple pair of glasses. You can use these glasses with various sources, such as a portable media player or your cell phone. Well, why? Just thinking about this, if you're on public transport, for example, and you are wearing headphones to listen to music or even a podcast, such as Samuel's Persiflage, that's not too bad, because if you've got the volume down low enough, you can hear your surroundings, and you can still see your surroundings quite easily. Now, if you have video glasses on and you are watching something, well, you are going to need the sound, as well; so you are going to have to have the earphones. So not only are you eliminating most background noise, so eliminating the noise from your surroundings, you're also eliminating the visuals of your surrounding; so not only can you not hear what's going on around you, you can't see what's going on around you. So, to start with, I don't know how you're going to see your stop if you are on the bus or the train, and I certainly don't know how this is going to work in terms of personal safety, because you will occasionally get unscrupulous people on public transport or just in general day-to-day out in the public, and I don't think I would really want to be blocking out my surroundings with those people around. I mean, some people would, but not me. I'd be interested to hear what your thoughts are on that one.

SGS: Okay, so now that we've refreshed your memory about that, let's go back to Clayton's email: "If you had widened your view to include further examples that are not and cannot be tailored to your subjective view of this issue, you would not have inadvertently slandered the name of the poor Israelis and the new technology they have created. As a well-traveled person in flight and road, travel in excess of 20 hours on an international flight to London, a little less to Paris and Rome, not including compulsory stopovers, usually overnight to Singapore, Jakarta, Dubai or Hong Kong, also taking into account, though it's not as well off as some like myself who can afford first- or business-class seats and must buy economy class, the mere opportunity of watching and listening to a movie that you choose from your own personal collection of DVDs rather than having your selection dictated to you by the flight company is certainly worth the cost difference between an economy class and a business class. Similarly, as a regular passenger in long road trips across Australia or internationally, you may note, next time you're in a car, that there is no video-audio setup for cars made prior to the past two years and that if you indeed wanted one, you would have to fork out a significant amount of money to afford such a system in older cars. This could also be dangerous, in that it provides a substantial amount of distraction for the driver. whose primary objective is to concentrate on the road ahead. This new invention would eliminate all distraction for the

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driver while enhancing the experience for the passenger. Note, young Samuel, that not everyone is enamoured with radio.

(00:35:00)

Perhaps in your further podcasts, you could refrain from passing judgment on a well-thought piece of technology before you consider all its uses, rather than one that you choose to give. Objectivity is the key to being a successful reporter.”

Well, Clayton I must admit, I didn't think of the long trip example, probably because the article that I was basing my story and my opinion on, it seemed to really just talk about it more in public-transport terms, and I personally catch public transport a lot; so it didn't really occur to me at the time. It should have. It should have. But it didn't. So, yeah, look, you're right, you're right. The long trips, long road trips, whatever, it's a great idea for that; but you'd have to agree that in a public environment such as a bus or a train or something like that -- I'm talking suburban buses and suburban trains here -- maybe it's not such a great idea on them, because there's people coming and going all the time; so you never really know who is going to be on there or what's going to happen, and having something expensive on that that's blocking out all of your main perceptions isn't really going to be great for your own security. But, certainly, certainly for the long trips on planes or trains or buses or whatever, even car trips, certainly a great idea; very, very good idea. So thank you very much for that, Clayton. I much appreciate it.

Sandra writes: “What was wrong with Margaret's phone? I could understand her, but the sound quality was terrible.”

Well, you know, I'm not really sure that there was anything wrong with Margaret's phone, because I could hear it just fine when I was recording the interview. The problem there was that we were using our old phone system. The old phone system consisted of a standard computer modem with voice capability, and the sound quality wasn't great. There is also the problem there that because I was using that, I also had to use a real phone to talk to Margaret or whoever else I happened to be interviewing. This meant that my voice came through a lot louder on the recording of the phone and, therefore, they were much quieter. It also meant I had to run a separate recording for the studio microphone, I had to try and line the things up, I had to try and remove sections of the phone line audio where my voice was, because it just sounded absolutely ridiculous having that echo and trying to line it up when computers, due to their clocks, tend to run at slightly different timing speeds; so it was just a mess, basically. It's amazing that it worked at all, to be perfectly honest with you. We have put up with it for long enough and, you know, you are not the only person to send me emails about it. I didn't particularly like it, either, and you might have noticed that Pia Waugh, who we spoke to not long ago, was actually much clearer. That's because we were using the new phone system.

Yes, we've got a new phone system at last, and it's great to have it. The new phone system makes use of Skype; so, basically, it's just Skype, a computer and another

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computer recording. It's great! It's brilliant! It means we don't have to worry about it. It also means there's less editing, because it's just one audio file. I can easily mix it on the fly, so I don't have to try and do too much post processing.

It also means that the phone signal is clearer from multiple reasons. Basically, with Skype, because of the way they have all of their phone system setup, I'm using the closest phone line I can with Skype to the person that I am talking to. So if I was using the old phone system and I wanted to talk someone in London and I'm in Canberra, it would be standard phone system right all the way through. That's copper wires all over the place.

The new phone system, it's digitally preserved from pretty much -- if they are on the phone, it's digitally preserved from here to the Skype... the Skype call center in London -- phone center might be better. Datacenter perhaps? I don't know -- in London, and then it goes copper wire from there. But, basically, you have a much clearer signal and, well, it's cheaper, too, and it works really well.

Pia, incidentally, was on a mobile phone in a very noisy place; so it was actually amazing that it came through, and I really don't think you would have been able to understand a word of it on the old phone system. So I'm really happy that we have that new phone system in there.

(00:40:08)

Let's see, who's next? We've got JohnB1_B5 again. John actually sent in a second email. He said: "Interesting to hear that ScreenSound Australia has gone back to calling itself the National Film and Sound Archive. I can remember when the National Library used to keep film in the library itself, and in 1988, I went there and watched the full version of 'Triumph of the Will', a 1934 movie, on a small console viewer in the viewing room. It cost me nothing. That film is no longer held at the library, and I would have to go to the National Film and Sound Archive to watch it. Problem is, it would now cost me \$21.50 per hour viewing, plus a \$21.50 retrieval fee to get it out of storage at Mitchell, a total of \$43. Oh, well, I guess it's a user-pays environment these days."

John, you're right. It's a user-pay environment these days. Mind you, you have to wonder how much money the National Film and Sound Archive have spent on the administrative matters of changing their name to ScreenSound Australia and then back again, so that's an interesting one there. I would actually be very interested to find out how much that did cost. But, yeah, I suppose -- I don't know ... these are sort of essential parts of our history in many ways, and I know they have to preserve them. Perhaps it's because it is such an old film that it costs more; but you would think that for at least standard films in good condition that aren't likely to corrode or whatever, you'd think that perhaps you could have a threshold of free viewings of things per year for people. I mean, it is our history, after all; surely, it should be freely available to all of us. What do you think? Send me an email or a voice message, podcast@samuelgordonstewart.com, or click on the 'Send Me A Voice Message' button on the Samuel's Persiflage website.

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Anyway, that's the feedback for this month. We will have more next month.

(Music)

SGS: All righty, then. Time for a thought for the month: "Why is it that a surplus is a surplus, but a deficit is not a sur-minus?"

(Music)

Voiceover: You're listening to Samuel's Persiflage.

(Music continues)

SGS: Time for another update of the Persiflage Puzzle, I think. The clue again: "You would be hard-pressed to find a shopping centre which doesn't have at least one of these." So, let's continue pulling letters out of the hat. We'll pull five out this time, and then we will see if you can work it out before the end of the episode.

First out of the hat this time round is the letter 'P' for Peter. It's in the puzzle. I'm glad we finally have a letter in the puzzle. It's the fourth letter of the first word. Let's go in and get out another letter. It's the letter 'U' for Unicorn. That one's not in there, I'm afraid. Let's go in and see what we get out this time. That would be the letter 'Z' for Zebra, and that one's not in there, either, I'm afraid. Hmm, let's see if we can pull out another one. Let's go in there. What have we got? It's 'N' for Nathan, 'N' for Nattie, I suppose, Nattie, of course, being my lovely little doggy; but, no, I'm afraid not. There are no Ns in this puzzle. Oh, dear. Let's see if we can find a letter this time. Here we go. It's the letter 'C' for Cat, and there are three of them in the puzzle. The first letter of the first word is a 'C', as is the sixth letter of the first word, and the fourth letter of the second word. "You would be hard-pressed to find a shopping centre which doesn't have at least one of these." I'll tell you what the answer is at the end of the episode.

(00:45:04)

(Music)

SGS: There seems to be a few interesting telephone scams going around at the moment. Michael sent me an email: "Hi, Samuel, I listen to your podcast and read your website occasionally. Suggestion for your podcast: possibly look into the current return-call mobile phone scam that has been running in Australia. It might be a little off-topic from what you report on. I, and people from my office have been hit almost daily this month. Just a suggestion."

Well, thank you very much for that, Michael. It's a very good suggestion, actually; so I've been hit by it, too.

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Now, I was going to have someone from Telstra, Australia's largest telco, I suppose, on the line to talk about this; but I forgot to send the email, didn't I? The other day, I think, "I don't think I am going to hear back from them," and then I looked in my email, and there it was; it was a draft, and by that stage, well, it was Friday, wasn't it? So it was late on Friday, so it was a bit late. Doesn't matter. There's plenty of information about it on the web, so let's see what we can do.

We'll start with the Missed Call scheme. That's an interesting one. Basically, companies ring your mobile. They ring for a half a second or something, just long enough for your phone to pick up the number and lodge your Missed Call. You don't really have time to answer it, and that way it doesn't cost them a thing, does it? They just automatically dial all these numbers and, well, people see, Missed Call on their phone. What are they going to do? They are going to call back, aren't they? Especially people in business or people who keep in contact with other people all the time, that, they are just going to call the number back to find out who it is. And what happens when you call the number is that you get through to -- most of them here in Australia, or at least up in Melbourne are Sydney numbers; so basically, it's the standard call rate from the mobile. And they say, "Oh, congratulations, you've won a prize of some sort. Please ring a 1900 number," which is Australia's premium number. According to Telstra, the company was trying to get people to call the 1900 number charged at \$2.97 per minute, and that way they would have a chance at winning a prize -- just a chance. They hadn't necessarily won it; they just had a chance.

Of course, some people then went and rang that number, didn't they? So they got charged a fortune for it. And, well, I suppose, really, they deserve what they get. I mean, if you're stupid enough to go and call the 1900 number for something from a Missed Call from a recorded message which you have even had to call just to do it, then why? Why would you do that? I mean, it's obvious that it's a scam; but some people just don't seem to be able to register scams, for some reason.

Anyway, there have been reports that this happening in many places: Australia, the UK, the U.S., many others, as well. Basically, the telcos are saying, "Ignore the Missed Call unless it's from a number the customer recognizes," a number you recognize. That's fine if you're not in business or if you don't have to take calls from lots of people all the time. If you're doing that, then, yes, you are going to get those Missed Calls, and you're going to want to return them. Fine, return them; just don't dial the 1900 number.

Okay. There's a few other ones. I've picked these up from the Telstra website. I'll put a link to that particular page in the show notes. According to a viral email, people are charged \$100 if they call the Missed Call number. Oh, sorry, that's the same story. No, that's not true. Basically, why is it ... this is something that bothers me. Why is it whenever there is a scam like this, it's mysterious -- it's one of those Missed Call scams or whatever -- people suddenly say, "Oh, well, let's just send out an email saying, 'Yeah this costs \$100 if you call the number back.'" Why do people do this? What possible motive could you have for doing this?

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The bottom line is, you're not going to be charged \$100 for calling the Missed Call number; you're going to be charged the standard call rate. If you call the 1900 number, well, you're taking your life into your own hands, aren't you?

There is another one from the Telstra website. This is actually #2. This time, it's the right one. If you send this text message on to ten other Telstra Prepaid Plus users, you will receive \$200 credit that will expire in a month." Again, not true. On Telstra's website, though, they do actually say that, "Telstra puts 'Service Message' at the start of messages, so you will know which messages are from us." Anyone could write "Service Message", surely. Is there something in the phone system that blocks people from sending messages that start with "Service Message"? I would have liked to talk to someone from Telstra and asked them that question, actually. It would have been very interesting.

Now, here's one that's turned up all over the place, a few variations of this one, the one on the Telstra website, dialing 90# allows another person to access your mobile service via your SIM card. No, it's not true. There are other variations of that where they say dialing a certain number will, when someone rings you, give them access to your phone system or some other nonsense. It's not true. Well, okay, it's not true generally. If you are really concerned about it, then contact your telco; but I don't think that security flaw has existed in phone systems for ages. I remember Telstra said once that their old PABX systems did have a flaw of some sort like that and, in fact, there was a story either earlier this year or late last year where one of the private hospitals here in Canberra got ... well, they had an old PABX system, and someone found their way in and started making all these strange international calls, and it cost them a fortune. But, yeah, it's generally not true. The only time I have ever heard of this happening is on the PABX system; so if you have got a PABX in your business or your office, whatever, just check up with your telco if you are concerned.

Here is another one: computer email viruses can affect mobile phones. That's not true. Telstra say that in mid-2000 a rumour surfaced claiming that a virus called Timofonica or Virtual Basic Script was causing damage to mobile handsets after being transmitted by email. No, afraid it's not true. Symantec, I can't stand their antivirus software; but they have very good information on their website about viruses and virus hoaxes. Personally, I use Avast Antivirus, but that's just a personal choice, in Windows, anyway. They have actually got two variants of it from 1999, one saying that "if you receive a phone call and your mobile displays "ACE-?" on the screen, don't answer this call, end the call immediately; if you answer the call, your phone will be infected by the virus. The virus will erase all IMEI and IMSI information from both your phone and your SIM card, which will make your phone unable to contact with the telephone network."

The other one, "all mobile phone in digital system can be infected by this virus. If you receive a phone call and your phone display 'Unavailable' on the screen, for most of digital mobile phones with a function to display incoming-call telephone number, don't

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answer the call, end the call immediately, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” The similarity between the two emails is that on both, they tried saying that CNN were covering the story. Well, it’s not true, ignore it.

The one that is true, though, and it is possible for mobile phones to be infected -- don’t pretend for a moment that it’s not -- but this is from BBC News on the 16th of June 2004. “The first-ever computer virus spread by mobile phones has been sent to antivirus firms. No infections have been reported, and the worm is harmless; but it is proof that mobiles are at risk from virus writers. The worm known as Cabir infects phones and devices running the Symbian Operating System. Antivirus firms are divided on whether it will open the floodgates to similar viruses. “It is a milestone in the timeline of viruses, but technically is not that special,” said Graham Cluley, a Senior Technology Consultant at Sophos Antivirus. When the infected file is launched, the mobile phone screen displays the word “Caribe”. Every time the mobile phone is turned on, the worm will launch itself and scan the area for other phones to infect, sending a copy of itself to any it finds.

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Mr. Cluley sees it as an interesting first rather than something that needs to be of great concern to phone users.” I really should read this before actually trying to read it out. Yeah, basically it was a proof-of-concept worm; so they wrote something, they proved that it was technically possible. But, I mean, this one was limited by Bluetooth technology, so other capable phones -- phones capable of receiving the thing -- had to be within 30 meters, and even then they’d get a security alert saying, “Unknown file coming in” or something to that effect.

Where did I put that bit of paper? Going back to the Telstra list for a moment, if I can find that bit of paper -- there it is -- Answering a call displaying the ID S-? -- well, saying “ID Unavailable” will damage your mobile phone. Again, not true. It’s just because the person is withholding their Caller ID. And then the usual nonsense, “If you send this message to eight people, you will receive one month’s free SMS,” it’s not true. I mean, there are emails like this that have been doing the rounds forever. It’s not true. Just don’t believe it. And basically, if you see something that you are a little bit suspicious of, but it looks legit and it looks a bit like this, contact your telco, contact your ISP, contact whoever; but most of the time, these things just are too good to be true, and they are. That’s the Golden Rule, really: if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. So, yeah, just keep an eye out on that. So I don’t know why people do this; it’s silly.

I’m shuffling papers here and misplaced this paper, and I haven’t misplaced it; it’s just over here. I found it. That’s good. I thought I’d lost it, and if I had lost it, I’d be in trouble, because then we wouldn’t have the Persiflage Puzzle in front of me, and that wouldn’t be any good.

Anyway, seeing as this is a shorter episode of Samuel’s Persiflage than usual, I think we might play a song.

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(Music)

SGS: Well, that would have to be one of Nattie's favorite songs, I'd have to say, Nattie wouldn't mind the cat being in the kettle; but ... well, I don't think I really want to have that, for dinner, personally.

Anyway, that's the show for this month. We will have to catch up on an episode somewhere, which we are supposed to be at Episode 7 by now; but we're only at Episode 6. So I suppose I've got some room to catch up there.

Before we go, did you get the Persiflage Puzzle? Well, it's a "compact disc", or CD, as some people know them. Strangely enough, I asked a few people if they knew what CD stood for, and they didn't; so if you are wondering, it stands for compact disc. Yeah, I mean, there aren't that many shopping centres. I don't think there ... well, it would be very, very, very few that don't have at least one compact disc in them somewhere, whether it be running the music on the PA system in one of the stores or in the shopping centre or whether there is a music store selling CDs, it's ... I know that the clue was cryptic, but you have to do that sometimes.

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed the show. If you've got any feedback, podcast@samuelgordonstewart.com is the email address. And of course, there's also the Send Me A Voice Message button on the Samuel's Persiflage website and in the show notes. Look forward to hearing from you, and I will see you again for the next episode, I hope. This has been Samuel's Persiflage. I am Samuel Gordon-Stewart. Until next time, tada.

(Music)

(Duration: 1:00:41)