

Pe Chronique Of Primordiyall Z/Yen

For Anniversary Event, Old Bailey, 10 December 2019

MICHAEL: All self-respecting religions and cults need a creation myth; to position the origins in space and time. Unfortunately for Z/Yen and for this chronicle, Ian and I do not share L Ron Hubbard or Boris Johnson's talent for fiction, so *Pe Chronique Of Primordiyall Z/Yen* will be, as far as possible, factual rather than mythical. As far as space is concerned, The Old Bailey is an ideal location for this event, as many of Z/Yen's originating events took place in Old Bailey – over the road in 20 Old Bailey. I'll let Ian explain about time.

IAN: In the beginning...yes, there has to be a beginning, an actual beginning. But how do we define the beginning? Some might argue that the very beginning, a very good place to start, the pre-history, was in December 1988, when I started working for Binder Hamlyn Management Consultants and first encountered Michael Mainelli. Unwittingly, I had been hired as canon fodder against Michael by other partners. The initial Herculean labour that resulted is recorded in my cryptically entitled [Ogblog](#) piece, "[Reduced To Tears By My First Consultancy Assignment](#)". But in truth, Z/Yen began in 1994.

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My earliest diary note of the events that actually led to Z/Yen are in the week of 28 March 1994, which has a 9:30 call with Michael Mainelli (at 20 Old Bailey) that day and the evening of 30 March booked out "MRM" (that's Michael) for a Park Inn Chinese meal at my place. It was on 28 March that the rumour broke in the press that Arthur Andersen was in the process of taking over Binder Hamlyn.

MICHAEL: My memory records a couple of "two bottles of wine" evenings with Ian, but actually I don't think 30 March was one of those. I think the first "two bottles" evening was a couple of weeks later, after a consultancy team meeting at which it became clear that the so-called "merger" was going ahead and that BDO Consulting (as we were then known) was going with it. We ate and drank in a place along Craven Road, near to my place. Spanish, perhaps, but possibly Italian – I think now [Il Gusto](#).

The date of the "two bottles of Rioja" evening during which the name Z/Yen emerged is lost in the mists of time, but I am guessing late spring and I specifically recall the name emerging towards the end of another Park Inn Chinese meal at Ian's place. By that time we had colleagues Stuart Otter, Steve Taylor and Kate Carty lined up to join the new venture, together with the elusive John Thompson, who had formerly been a client of ours. No-one was entirely comfortable with the name Z/Yen, a combination of Zen & Yen, because of a book (eventually [Clean Business Cuisine](#)) provisionally entitled Zen Things You Wanted To Know About Business But Were Afraid To Ask. So with no better suggestion, Z/Yen it was.

[Pe Chronique Of Z/Yen – Pe Second Part: Mirie It Is while sumer ilast](#)

IAN: I left BDO at the beginning of August with a view to most of the others joining at the start of October 1994. Michael was not permitted to join until early 1995. So for seven or eight weeks, I was technically on my own, setting up Z/Yen.

In Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy, there is a story about [Golgafrinchans](#), a race of humanoid beings on another planet, who were the true ancestors of humanity. The Golgafrinchans divided their society into three distinct groups; thinkers, doers and middle-folk, the latter group of which were deemed useless

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and so were launched off into space, purportedly to be the advance party for a relocation of the entire society, but in reality to enable the thinkers and doers to stay put and thrive on their own planet.

Now I like to think of myself as part thinker, part doer, but there were times during that late summer when I wondered whether I has been launched as a Golgafrinchan-style advance party.

Not that I was entirely on my own. My diary shows an evening session with Michael on 9 August, which resulted in a massive “to do” list for establishing Z/Yen, [“Z/Yen Notes”, available for inspection here/tonight.](#)

MICHAEL: In addition to the tasks on that list, Ian wrote an initial [Business Plan, also available for inspection here/tonight,](#) while finishing off several client assignments on an associate basis after leaving the old firm. Ian’s diary for those weeks looks ridiculous – it was a ludicrously busy time for both of us.

It was hard to get businesses started in those days. It was impossible to find premises without 12 months or more trading record, but how were we supposed to get a trading record without space. Thank you, Nick Pickering of Rochester Partnership for helping us.

It was a similar “Catch 22” with start-up business finance in those days. Elisabeth, Janie, Ian and I took Z/Yen’s initial business plan to the South of France late August – we had to pitch it to our prospective external investors at [Eli Wallitt’s](#) villa in [Saint-Cézaire-sur-Siagne](#), near Grasse.

IAN: We all stayed in Nice and I especially recall the convoy drive up to Saint-Cézaire; Michael and Janie had very different ideas on driving speeds on unfamiliar mountain roads in little hired cars; I expect it looked like a latter-day version of the car chase scenes in [Monte Carlo or Bust!](#) or [The Italian Job](#). That initial financing arrangement did not end at all well, but that debacle is part of Z/Yen’s Book of Exodus, whereas this primordiyall chronique is Z/Yen’s book of Genesis.

[Be Chronique Of Z/Yen – Be Third Part: Windes Blast & Weder Strong](#)

At several points, I thought the business wouldn’t be ready to start trading on 1 October 1994, but of course we were able to open our doors (or I should say one door, for one room in Gresham Street) that day. Kate Carty got something akin to cabin fever in those early months, as so few of us went nigh nor by the place. Yet somehow Kate and Steve got it together during that early period of Z/Yen’s life, such that our tiny business of just six people; the other four of whom were attached, managed to yield an office romance and then marriage which, like Z/Yen, has endured to this day.

MICHAEL: Z/Yen had its first seasonal event on 16 December 1994. We might have held this anniversary event on 16 December, but that day this year is the Gresham Society event celebrating the 500th anniversary of Sir Thomas Gresham’s birth, which I suppose puts our mere 25 years into perspective.

IAN: I wrote the first of many Z/Yen seasonal songs for the 1994 event; a strangely slow and thoughtful number which I only recently rediscovered and which I would like to share with you all now, segueing neatly from chronicle to canticle. In case you didn’t realise, you are the choir, but feel free to join in as much or as little of the song as you wish.