

Andrew Fletcher (b. 1979)

Critic as artist in a post-truth era, 2017/18

Digital photograph series

Artist's statement

Brought up in a liberal household, Andrew spent much of his childhood wandering the mean streets of Gosforth, a rundown suburb in the northern industrial city of Newcastle. He spent many evenings in the municipal park, perfecting the subtle arts of micro-vandalism, night golfing and talking jive. In this milieu, he discovered an early love of alternative expressive forms.

Never having mastered a musical instrument, Andrew became involved in free improvisation. The genre amused him but did not feel authentic. This formed the basis of Andrew's philosophy that humour is integral to art (unless you're good – then it's optional). After being ejected from a cemetery for creating a particularly awful racket, Andrew spent a decade working in tedious administrative jobs and writing childish poetry. It was during these 'wilderness years' that one day, Andrew was asked to vacuum the stairs. He saw this as the perfect moment to commence an ambitious art project and so, grabbing whatever came closest to hand, ***AF's GIN and HAT reviews*** * was born. A lady now does the stairs every two weeks.

Andrew barely knows how to hold a camera. These photos were taken by balancing a Nikon D3300 on a pile of books on the toilet opposite the shower in the artist's bathroom. The shutter mechanism was triggered via a remote control, which is cunningly concealed in most of these pictures but not all of them. Like all artists, Andrew now writes in the third person. For sales, please reconsider your humour or contact the gallery.

* This work has been re-titled to appear more serious in case I ever have to include it on a CV. The formal title is the 'post-truth' component.

A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Opihr Oriental Spiced London Dry Gin

Not too shabby, this. Tastes like Aldi gin with a load of cardamom seeds dumped in it. The bottle is nice and heavy, with a sort of tassel around the neck – presumably so you can tether it to something if you go into a bar. For some gin. 7/10

The Hat: Mango woman's

This is a comfy hat and an excellent fit, despite the perplexing size (U – perhaps a female sizing). The wide brim implies some sort of sun-protection functionality which, combined with this mysterious 'oriental' gin, brought about a distinctly colonial vibe. 8/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gins: Cremorne Colonel Fox's and Gentleman Badger's

A double-header today. These remain unopened, but I'll review them anyway. Colonel Fox's is what Gordons' wishes it could be; clean, well-groomed and absolutely prepared for battle. Gentleman Badger's is the sloe-flavoured equivalent. Whimsically, both Badger and Fox urge pregnant females to "think of their cubs". 9/10

The Hat: RAF Warrant Officer peaked cap

Although nicely finished, this hat is not designed for air to air combat. What if I were doing a loop-the-loop in my biplane? Smart, but hardly practical. 4/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Half Hitch

This hipster gin is from Camden Lock. In fact, I'm surprised it's not wearing a cheap trilby and impossibly tight trousers. Its piss-like colour is from the black tea they use to flavour it - but that doesn't bother me; at least it's a *healthy* piss colour. 6/10

The Hat: Bowler

Bowler hats are worn by multiple types of characters, but mainly it's city gents, rogues or removal men. Colour-matching a batik shirt with this gin and hat enabled a rather pleasing Southeast Asian gangster look. 7/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and FAT reviews

The Gins: Vor premium and Vor barrel aged reserve

Two Reykjavik-based bad boys this time, made with a blend of traditional Icelandic psychopathy and shrewd marketing. The clear one is rhubarby and gentle, yet challenging – like Magnus Magnusson's aftershave. The brown one is the same, but... oakier, I guess. 8/10

The Hat: 'Kaldi' by Feldur Verkstædi

This beautiful number was bought from the maker, Heiðar Sigurðsson, in Reykjavik. It is extremely warm, but impedes vision and can be somewhat tickly. If Björk had a naughty little cat, it would feel like this. 10/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Beefeater London Dry Gin

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, swallowing Victory Gin is compared to "being hit on the back of the head with a rubber club". This description is almost certainly based on Beefeater. It does the trick like any other grain alcohol, but with a burly roughness. If it had any poetry, Beefeater would taste of Niobe's tears, but in the stark light of day, this is a 1950's housewife crying into the kitchen sink. Best drunk neat. And alone. 8/10

The Hat: Beanie

Perhaps I'm being unfair linking 'this type of hat' with 'this type of gin', but let's be honest, you'll not see either at La Scala. This is the most depressing pairing yet and, for me, redolent of a certain type of upmarket homelessness. 4/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Buss No. 509, 'Persian Peach'

This is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. It tastes of peach, but does not contain peach. It claims to be Persian but is Belgian. Is it Zarathustra or Poirot? Is it poison? Was that a hint of almond? The guy from the medina with the funny eye and the impeccable English accent has been following me... Do I confront him or run away? A suspicious 7/10.

The Hat: Tarbouche or 'Fez'

What better way to blend the ancient and modern worlds than by breaking out the tarbouche? This is a hat that says "culturally, we do not drink alcohol but we're more than happy to sell it to you idiots - oh, and while you're here, why not buy yourself a novelty hat? No really, all the ladies will admire your cultural sensitivity". 8/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Xoriguer

This dusky Spaniard, from Mahon, is traditionally mixed with cloudy lemonade and lots of ice to create a 'pomada'. Like many holiday flings, it's refreshing but you wouldn't want to be stuck with it forever. Most usefully, there is a little handle on the bottle, making it the ultimate portable gin. 9/10

The Hat: Straw

This has a peasant-like, rustic feel to it, so demands a more 'workman-like' gin. It also has a little 'loop', enabling it to be hung properly on a wall. Both hat and gin are therefore perfectly matched in their distinct pragmatism. 9/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Hendrick's Gin

This idea of the 'premium' gin, whilst not unfounded, is mainly a scam targeting the image-conscious. Therein lies a problem for Hendrick's drinkers since, once out of the bottle, the brand must be indicated by other means. Hendrick's promotes heavily the cucumber garnish. However, I for one do not require a big green schlong in my drink to show off in Wetherspoons. 6/10

The Hat: Top

Like the gin, this is black and cylindrical. Moreover, it's all about signalling a certain identity. Wearing it is actually rather nice – but that misses the point. In most social contexts, this isn't about the hat's intrinsic properties; it's about the class divide and alignment with power. Or being a dick at the races. 6/10

A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gins: Rock Rose Spring and Winter editions

These little monkeys were picked up on a road trip to Dunnet Bay. It's bleak up there and the Scots seem to have a thing for gin at the moment. Rock Rose Distillery is really milking this (they do all sorts of 'editions'). Spring is predictably fresh, zingy and full of midges; Winter is earthy and contains shards of bauble. 7/10

The Hat: 'Bula' bobble

I like my bobble hats stark and simple. This features a good sturdy cable-knit, which deflects radioactive fallout from the nearby Dounreay Nuclear Power Development Establishment (currently being decommissioned). Watch this space for Rock Rose Depleted Uranium Fuel Rod edition. 7/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Star of Bombay

When I look at this bottle, I think: Art Deco, exuberance, technology. I think of an age of optimism – just after the Great War and just before the Great Depression. I think of Jay Gatsby and shooting for the moon. Then I take a sip and think: Oh, Bombay Sapphire in a fancy bottle. 6/10

The Hat: Lego 'inspired'

Of course, you can't shoot for the moon without a rocket ship and you can't travel by rocket without suitable attire. This particular hat (more a helmet, but let's not split hairs) is inspired by the Lego spaceman. It imparts a sense of earnest heroism, which more than makes up for the gin. 8/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Drumshanbo Gunpowder Irish Gin

I thought the 'blue glass' trend had passed when Bombay Sapphire became usurped by the hipster gins – but hey-ho. The emphasis here on 'oriental botanicals' (gunpowder tea, hence the name), accompanied by Chinese script, a picture of a stag and "from the curious mind of..." waffle is all rather confused. Decent gin, though. 9/10

The Hat: woven straw trilby

The confused Irish gin and the straw hat immediately put me into 'shady priest' mode. I felt right at home - like a bit-part player in some dodgy embezzlement scheme. Or worse. 8/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: The Botanist

A friend recently complained that modern gins suffer from an 'overabundance of botanicals'. I'm inclined to agree. The precise science of mixing bits of hedge together is beyond me, but the self-awareness that has sprung up around this particular exercise is becoming somewhat tiresome. Shrubs. Whatever. 7/10

The Hat: Sola Topee

Commonly known as a 'pith helmet', this is the perfect hat for foraging obscure plants for the perfect pretentious gin infusion. It also gives one a delightful sense of ownership of whichever country one happens to be in. 9/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and CAT reviews

The Gin: Ungava

You might think this Canadian gin would be better suited to a 'touque' or similar - but my pairings choose themselves. Ungava is a fine gin, leaving me with a clear head after extensive testing the previous evening. It is also strikingly yellow. This is because Canadian livers can only process yellow substances, due to their French origin. 9/10

The Hat: Firefighter's helmet (watch manager rank and above. Cumbria, 1992)

The firefighter's helmet or 'glans' is a favourite of little boys and strippers.

Firefighters spend most of their time rescuing cats from trees, but I keep this in case there's a fire. It sits well upon the head, but the strap tends to emphasise one's chins, making for a less than heroic look. 9/10

No animals were harmed in making this photograph. Test your smoke alarms regularly.



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Blue Bottle Dry Gin

This kind of autological nonsense should have died along with the Bloomingdale's 'brown bag' fad – but here we are. The gin is eminently drinkable, with an inebriation profile characterised by an unsettling sense of infinite regress. Made in Guernsey, it is pleasant yet demanding. 8/10



The Hat: flat cap

Perhaps the most postmodern of all the hat types, the flat cap can be worn just as comfortably in ironic or non-ironic settings. I wear mine when I wish to buy gin without getting checked for ID, when driving my tractor, or just shooting trespassers. 9/10

A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Plymouth Gin

Plymouth is known for its sailors, who traditionally drink rum – which is basically gin made from completely different stuff. This particular quaff is surprisingly nice. I had been expecting a 'bit of rough', but instead my taste buds were greeted with a toothsome little number. No need for any garnishes here; my new 'everyday' gin of choice. 9/10

The Hat: equestrian helmet

We're safely back in helmet territory this week – and in full racing regalia. These particular silks are a traditional design based on the 'furious kitten of Devonshire', which is said to have terrorised the Pilgrim Fathers, forcing them in 1620 to renounce alcohol and depart Plymouth for good. 8/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Poetic License Northern Dry Gin

Poetic License allows a certain 'latitude' in the creation of explanatory historical narratives. For example, it is widely known that the Romans never got much further than Northumberland because they became side tracked whilst touring this Sunderland-based distillery. Poetic License tastes therefore of defeat. 7/10

The Hat: Roman galea - centurion's helmet

"As long as mankind shall continue to bestow more liberal applause on their destroyers than on their benefactors, the thirst of [gin] will ever be the vice of the most exalted characters" (Gibbon, 1872:21) - and that's why we don't see Roman centurions walking the streets today. The hat? I think it speaks for itself. 9/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Bombay Sapphire

I have an amusing Bombay Sapphire-related anecdote but sharing it would implicate me in at least two crimes (not war crimes), so I'll just have to fall back on: Bombay Sapphire – the gin you *can* have too much of, mainly because it's always on sale in at least one major supermarket. Used to be classy; now just leaves you with a thousand-yard stare. 5/10

The Hat: M1 combat helmet

First they came for the whiskey.
And I said "fine – but lay off the single malt".
Then they came for the vermouth.
And I was cool with that for I have outgrown martinis.
Then they came for the Chartreuse.
And I thought: who the fuck drinks Chartreuse?
Then they came for the gin
So I put my hat on... For there were no other drinks in the cabinet.

Apologies to Martin Niemöller



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Dà Mhile seaweed gin

This crazy little Welsh number is about as exciting as it gets. It is infused with seaweed and the manufacturer suggests: "for decadence, drink straight from an oyster shell". We don't do decadence here, so instead I've been sneaking furtive glances in the direction of this bottle only when I think the eyes are not upon me – which is almost as good. 6/10, probably.

The Hat: Poke bonnet

I do love my bonnet. It makes me feel so sexy and feminine, which is exactly how I want to feel when I'm looking longingly at my Welsh seaweed gin, thinking of bivalves. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to try alcohol, but then I remember that it's wicked and bad and slutternly. On the plus side, this hat really keeps the sun off. 9/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Steam Punk Gin

This 'steam punk' thing: it's bollocks really, isn't it? Shallow, culturally naïve, faux-intellectual (they always *love* books) bollocks. Nevertheless, the gin isn't too bad. Made in Northumberland, it's not – as the manufacturer claims – 'extremely rare' (you can get it on Amazon), but despite being carefully marketed at fetishistic novelty-obsessed children, I can't deny that it's reasonably tasty. Garnish with cogs. 7/10

The Hat: Motorcycle helmet

I avoided the tediously obvious 'augmented top hat' and opted instead for this dashing little number. It works well with the gin but has a distinct waft of mid-life crisis about it. 8/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Stolichnaya 'vodka'

The Russians have their own form of gin, which they call 'vodka'. It doesn't taste much like gin; in fact, it's more like a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. Let's be honest here: gin is essentially vodka with botanicals – so really, the only difference is that the Russians don't fuck about. Okay... I ran out of gin. 5/10

The Hat: Ushanka

When Russian people say 'ushanka!', the appropriate response is 'bless you'. Its literal translation is 'ear flap hat'. I don't know what the crest on the front signifies, so wearing this is like taking part in an ideological lucky dip. 8/10



Let the ruling
classes tremble at
a Communistic
revolution.
The proletarians
have nothing to
lose but their
chains.
They have a world
to win.
Working men of all
countries, Unite!
The Communist
Manifesto
Karl Marx &
Friedrich En

A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Darnley's View Spiced Gin

Heavily flavoured gins often seem to be 'reaching' and their novelty fades pretty quickly. However, this stuff strikes a pretty decent note. It actually seems like some thought was put into it, rather than just an 'essence' of whatever happened to be lying around in the lab. It's certainly a winter gin, which doesn't bode well for the hat - but I like to play fast and loose. The outfit? We all have our kinks. 8/10

The Hat: Bee keeper

Necessarily an 'all in one', this outfit nevertheless incorporates a distinct hat. The brim is firm yet light, in keeping with the apiarist's countenance. Unfortunately, the mesh component presents an immediate problem, for which I have yet to devise a solution.

Nevertheless, the full ensemble makes me feel both invincible and honeyed. 10/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Hortus Rhubarb & Ginger, and Raspberry

After heavy promotion from Lidl, I thought I'd give these little bastards a go. Big mistake. They are sweet beyond belief and distinctly artificial tasting. The rhubarb can be tamed by the addition of ginger ale, but the Raspberry has no such salvation. Never again will I be seduced by the font on the label. 3/10

The Hat: Gladiator's helmet

'Hortus' is the Roman god of horticulture and so we must return to that particular empire. This is an incredibly uncomfortable headpiece, with most of the weight bearing down on the bridge of the nose. It is also impossible to drink from a normal glass without using a straw, which should be illegal for various reasons. Nevertheless, I have suffered so you don't have to. Thumbs down. 5/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Roku 6

After conquering the world of whiskey (a bit), the Japanese have started on gin. This stuff represents the four seasons using six botanicals (hence the name), with the addition of a further eight botanicals to "create the authentic gin taste". This is clearly a numbers game, so to maintain that pattern, a wily 10/10.

The Hat: Memar 'ladies'

The label on this hat states boldly: DO NOT IRON – so if that were an issue in the past, it shouldn't be one now. I love this hat. In combination with the Roku 6, it inspires a fantastic 'Tokyo Vice' vibe. 9/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Dillon's Unfiltered Gin 22

Curiously, the label of this gin (which I've helpfully de-focussed), states, underneath the title: "[gin]". Perhaps Canadians need that extra bit of reassurance. Despite being 'unfiltered', this is a refined beast (when you're neighbours with America, anything seems refined). It's a bit moose-y, but I like that. Goes well with tonic Ottawater. 8/10

The Hat: Columbia 'trapper' hat

This is probably my most well-used hat, having served me well for many years in various cold environments. One thing I notice after drinking too much gin is that I sometimes get one hot ear, so the ability to pin up the earflaps is essential. 9/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Glendalough Wild Botanical Gin

That's not Jesus on the bottle – it's a guy called 'St. Kevin' (no, me neither), the patron saint of blackbirds, apparently. But what about the gin? Well, it's 41%, which isn't quite Molotov strength, but suitable for a Martini McGuinness. Me? I drink it neat and angry. 6/10

The Hat: Balaclava

The traditional headwear of the indigenous Northern Irish people, balaclavas were popular in the 1970s-80s, which I believe were quite nippy. The gin under review here is actually from the Irish Republic, but the two countries are essentially the same. Although not the friendliest looking of hats, this evokes a delightful 'paramilitary-chic' vibe. Tends to squash the nose a little. 7/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Gordon's London dry gin

This stuff takes me back – and possibly explains a lot about my childhood (but I shouldn't really get into that here). Most people will be familiar with Gordon's; it's the Vauxhall Astra of gins – reliable but dull. This is what people drank before gin started getting ideas above its station and arriving in poncey blue bottles. 8/10

The Hat: WWII-era 'Brodie' helmet with tin foil

I've already done a combat helmet, but this has tin foil on it, which plays a vital protective role. By reflecting cosmic rays and other malign forces *away* from the brain, I can retain a rare sense of objective sanity. I'd never stoop so low as to use the phrase 'wake up, sheeple' – but if you want to know what's *really* going on... Get a hat. 9/11



The Gin: Brainstem Gin

My contact in Bhutan acquired this from 'the mountains'. He doesn't drink alcohol, so has formally donated the bottle to yours truly. Very little information exists; a single 23-litre batch was made and each 500ml bottle is hand crafted. No one knows where the other 45 bottles are. There are apparently 'ethical questions' around this, which my contact refuses to discuss. The gin is cloudy and slightly pink. It tastes chalky with a hint of meat. Despite a lingering sense of unease, I wanted more almost immediately. Recognising this as a danger sign, I put the bottle down. 10/10

The Hat: Fedora

Truly the potato of hats, fedoras are the most versatile item in any enthusiast's collection. Most looks can be achieved using a fedora. I favour the 'creepy German unregistered pathologist' look. Paired with Brainstem gin, this hat engenders a splendid sense of mystique. The fedora is named after a Swiss tennis player, who ironically does *not* wear the eponymous headpiece on centre court. 9/10

A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Ancient Mariner

I am an ancient mariner
Behatted and besieged
By alcoholic paramour
And warranted prestige

These gins, I have a matching pair
And mixers – Schweppes, I think
There's tonic water everywhere
And that's because I drink

The gin, you ask?
It's not so bad
Small batch
(they always are)
Its benefits
are myriad
Its side effects
bizarre
7/10

Apologies to STC

The Hat: Crêpe paper 'crown'

This standard issue hat is present in all Christmas crackers except the posh ones. It is iconic of the season but rarely a great fit (a small tear in the right place will help those with a more girthly noggin). Being so light, it is easy to forget one is wearing this – like when you affix a fruit sticker to your forehead. Doesn't perform well in the rain, so not recommended for ancient marinating. 4/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Dillon's Rose Gin

[Unfocussed due to 'whirling']. This fine gin ranks among Canada's best exports, sitting somewhere below poutine and above Justin Bieber. Unlike the aureolin Ungava, the yellowy tinge of Dillon's rose-flavour version is entirely explicable. I haven't tried it yet but am anticipating greatness and to that end, will speculatively award a score based on the mean of the previous two Canadian efforts. 8.5/10

The Hat: Sikke

On a recent visit to Istanbul, I witnessed the 'whirling dervish' ceremony. In the symbolism of that ritual, the camel's hair 'sikke' hat represents the tombstone of the ego. Here (and in many similar practices), the ego is seen as a hindrance to reaching higher states of consciousness. So, being an 'enlightened' type, I simply had to get one of those hats. Now, any time I need to achieve a state of *wajd* (a trance-like state of ecstasy that has been described as 'spiritual drunkenness'¹), I just pop on my hat, take a draught of the yellow stuff and twirl. 10/10

1. Langlois, T. (2004) 'Reviews of CDs on music from Fez and Niger'. Ethnomusicology Forum 13:2, pp. 309-312.

A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Thomas Dakin

'Shifty' Thomas Dakin is claimed to be "the forefather of quality English gin" and the substance itself as being "enlivened by an infusion of distinctive red cole". First, what the fuck is 'cole'? Second, it's not red. This sums up everything about Manchester: not to be trusted. It tastes okay mixed with Stella and drank in a factory with some pills but there is an uneasy tension between the post-Fordist 'small batch' ethos and the emphasis on an 'industrial' heritage. 6/10

The Hat: Fishing

This hat articulates all that was wrong about the 1990s; the general floppiness, the insouciant swagger and the tiresome claims to being 'madferri'. On the other hand, it does have a little pocket for hiding contraband or fishing paraphernalia. It works well with the gin but is somewhat prone to falling off whilst running away from, e.g. a police officer. 5/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Various

This selection is made up of recent gifts. I'm saving them up for a tasting session, so will instead review the 'concept' of miniature gin. Miniature gin was invented for air travel and thus works extremely well with diazepam. Just like dwarfs, it is *technically* the real thing. However, it takes several bottles to achieve the same effect, just as it takes several sheets of newspaper to make a real hat and several dwarfs to make a real person. Nevertheless, I am very grateful for my gifts and will enjoy them when the time is right. 8/10

The Hat: Newspaper hat

The traditional newspaper hat is essentially a newspaper boat - but those are for losers, as we know from the opening scene of 'IT'. You may correctly infer that I'm running short of hats and have begun to

improvise. This hat is nevertheless excellent (and cheap, although you'll need a respectable broadsheet to get a decent fit). It works very well with miniatures, which can be stored in the folds. If you run out of gin, just open up and read. 7/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Muskoka Legendary Oddity

Many gins trade on the 'quirky', 'eccentric' or 'peculiar' aesthetic, but this one's actually quite weird. Made with hops, it has a beery vibe but is much stronger. Waking up with beer burps and a gin brain is unsettling - like some parts of rural Canada. You can return the bottle to any LCBO store for a 20 cent refund (or four tickets to a Celine Dion concert), so the more you drink, the better a person you are. Eh plus.

The Hat: Campaign hat

Most commonly associated with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and popular rap singer, Pharrell Williams, this fine chapeau imparts a sense of exceedingly polite authority. On one hand, these guys pack heat and are at least 10 feet tall (on horseback). On the other, can anyone imagine being intimidated by a Mountie? They only drink maple syrup and always smile in photos. This hat made me feel like a good human being but sat oddly with the beer / gin combo. Eh minus.



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Ableforth's Bathtub Gin

There is lots of very small writing on this bottle, which describes making cheap gin in a bath and how baths have got expensive but that hasn't stopped this plucky manufacturer, blah, blah, blah... It sounds like bullshit provenance to me – and style over substance. Luckily, the actual gin is zingy and fresh tasting, although mine had a rubber duck floating in it. 7/10

The Hat: 'Beret' by Laulhère

You cannot beat a classic French beret to epitomise the 'Onion Johnny' look – but onions and gin do not pair well and why should we let the French ruin everything? If we ignore its military and revolutionary connotations, that leaves artists, beatniks and whores, who all love gin. Goes well with jazz and a goatee. 7/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Needle Black Forest Gin

I saw this bad boy in Aldi. The pine needle idea intrigued me. It is an eminently sensible botanical but runs the risk of making your gin taste like one of those hideous car air fresheners. I am pleased to report however, that this could not be further from the truth; it's a fine little number albeit another yellow-un, so be prepared. 8/10

The Hat: Renaissance Plague Doctor's

I should also explain the mask: the protuberant nose was filled with herbs, spices and flower petals to 'protect' against miasma. The hat, which resembles some sort of weird academic cap, indicates high educational status - although in my case, as with plague doctors generally, these credentials are somewhat shaky. A fun hat nevertheless. 9/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Bloom

I've had this kicking around for a while now. It always reminds me of Leopold Bloom, who was also a prolific hat-wearer (a bowler, I think). As I recall, Joyce spent a great deal of time describing the hats worn by his protagonists. But I digress. Bloom gin is sweet and fragrant, unlike ladies' day at the races. 6/10

The Hat: Ladies' hat for ladies

This darling little number is perfect for a summer's day at the races, sipping overpriced prosecco with like-minded socialite wannabes. If I'm lucky, I'll get snapped by the Daily Mail and end up on page seven, toppling on my high heels and flashing my gusset. One isn't sure which way round the hat must be worn, so we went asymmetric to add a dash of kink. 6/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Shepherd's Purse

Shepherds are notoriously oblivious to gender stereotypes, so they aren't bothered if you call it a purse or a wallet; it's just where they keep their spare change. The gin tastes of bracken and bestiality, and comes in a handsome bottle. Ahem. 7/10

The Hat: Clone Trooper Helmet

Fun fact: no such helmets were made for the Star Wars film; they were all CGI. Not that I care - I've never seen it. On the flip side, this can be styled into a sort of makeshift Daft Punk ensemble. Only one flaw remains: how to drink the bloody gin. 6/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Von Haller's Gin

Remember Gunpowder gin? This is its more expensive cousin. Instead of being all Chinese/Irish, this one's all German/Irish. Same confusion; same blue glass; same great taste. I've got to hand it to Drumshanbo distillery: they make lovely bottles. The gin is pretty good, but save yourself a tenner and go for the Gunpowder. 8/10

The Hat: Generic Scandinavian Helmet

This style of helmet was worn by the Vikings, the Saxons and probably the other lot, too. I am reliably informed that the nose plate is designed to prevent the wearer's shield from hitting the bridge of the nose when buffeted. The chain mail 'mullet' makes a delightful jangly sound, which brings a sense of calm to the pillaging and raping. 8/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Bols Corenwiin Jenever

This bottle reminds me of a thermos flask. Or a brick. I could take it on site for lunch with no questions asked. The substance within is extremely weird – possibly the weirdest yet – like a sort of rum. It's yellow (I'm used to that now) and somewhat aggressive, like a jaundiced bricklayer. The bottle was open when I received it, so it might not even be gin. 5/10

The Hat: 'hard hat'

The 'hard hat' is a no-nonsense descriptor for what posh people call a 'construction helmet'. This has many connotations, which run the spectrum from pot-bellied British misogynist to ultra-butcht Village Person. The hat under review belongs to an archaeologist, so most of my offensive stereotypes fall down right there. Time to throw in the trowel? 7/10



A. Fletcher's GIN and HAT reviews

The Gin: Death's Door

To review this aptly named gin, I paid a visit to a 'very high place'. The more draughts I took, the closer I got to death's door, so it pretty much does what it says. 9/10

The Hat: Tudor bonnet

This remarkable beast kept me warm all day. I've never been keen on pomp and ceremony, preferring instead to slip into the shadows (yet here we are). It was actually rather comfy, with plenty of extra space for sweets, USB sticks and other sundry items. However, it does rather look like a cushion.

8/10

