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“ Why should we not have the right to determine when and how we die? ” David Aaronovitch

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Times Online

From The Times
September 19, 2009

Guns, arrows and ear-cupping: a fan's torment

Giles Smith

1 COMMENT | RECOMMEND? (8)

I shall never forget the day Ruud van Nistelrooy shot me with a pump-action shotgun. It was a lunchtime, cold and bright, one of those cloudless, uplifting days when thoughts of being peppered with an illegal shooter by a professional footballer are farthest from your mind.



True, the pump-action shotgun wielded by the former Holland striker (who was playing for Manchester United at the time, now with Real Madrid) was an imaginary one. And I suppose it's the case that he didn't aim it at me specifically, so much as at me and several thousand other people in my vicinity in the upper tier of the North Stand at Stamford Bridge, the home of Chelsea.

Europa League's anthem crying out for a tuba

The Uefa Champions League has its own anthem, so it was only fitting that the restyled Uefa Europa League should get one, too. I heard it again this week, as the players of Everton and AEK Athens stood solemnly to attention, and my feeling is that, though it's still clearly early doors for the piece, it's bedding in quite well.

Lots of top-notch snare-work there, from the orchestra of the Paris Opera. Apparently Yohann Zveig, the composer, saw it as his task to "stay true to football's tradition while capturing the event's explosive energy". Good job, Yohann.

Even so, there is a small part of one that laments the decision not to go choral. Anthems are all about making a statement, after all. The Champions League theme openly declares, in several languages, thus ensuring pan-European clarity, that "these are the champions" — "die meister, die besten, les grandes équipes, the champions". Which isn't technically true, of course, in the case of most of them, but let's not split hairs.

The Europa League might similarly have benefited from a multilingual lyric, emphatically stating: "These are the teams who finished fifth or sixth in their leagues, or maybe won a cup.

Plus some are here for good behaviour."

While we're quibbling, the instrumentation could probably tie in more closely, too. A glockenspiel, a tuba, an accordion? Or what about rescoring it for solo trombone? It's something to ponder for next time.

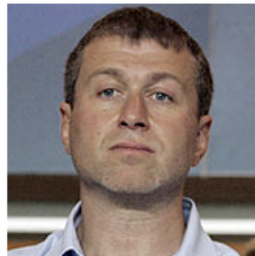


Giles Smith

Giles Smith is a former Sports Columnist of the Year. He is the author of a book about sport on television entitled *Midnight in the Garden of Evel Knievel*

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