



MENTIRAS #10 - LS

J

The first publication I got from you was that large blue book titled *Revenge Fantasy*. It displays a collection of heterogeneous drawings and collages. The binding seems handmade and the pages are on different papers. The content is eclectic, but the whole object is generous and stands as cohesive. Could you tell me more about it?

L

That seems like a lifetime ago. I made that in my final year studying graphic arts in Leeds. What can I remember about it... I remember at the time I was just banging out so many disparate drawings and experiments. I remember the feeling of not wanting to produce a commercial portfolio, but still a desire to collect together something that was a picture of my interests and habits at the time. I remember being so grossed out at the idea of being an illustrator and pushing one distinct aesthetic, so I think I was pushing against that. That attitude has stuck with me, but maybe I don't really feel the need to express it so strongly anymore.

It was a collection of material I'd made that year, but there were definitely a few things I specially made for the book, like the collage with the "no girls allowed" socks, and I think I found some countryside-crafts paper that I wanted to print onto, so I made a comic for that.

We had really good print workshops at school, so I just ran off the copies there for free. I think I made only a small number of them, and was just sneaky so no-one told me I couldn't do that.

J

Revenge Fantasy is credited as the sixth book from Famicon Express and there are two dates: 2007 and 2008. When did you create Famicon? Was this a collective project? How exactly did you make it exist?

L

I just checked the Famicon Express website and I've definitely missed a couple of books from the archive section. So before this book, there were three Famicon Collection books (A6 zines with work from me and my brother Stef, GHXYK2 and Kitty Clark)

There were two comics by me and maybe another zine...

Famicon is GHXYK2, Kitty Clark, Stefan Sadler, and me. I think we are still a group. We've not done anything together in a long time though.

Originally it was the other three guys making animations and video games, and they let me join. I was making twee illustration stuff, so I'm not sure why they allowed me in, but whatever. It pushed me into making more weirder work. I still think I'm not as weird and interesting as those guys. So I'm relieved to be working again on a big project with my brother this year.

Basically I thought it'd be funny if we made this 'publishing house' to give a sense of legitimacy. I could contact shops to sell our books, and I would say that I was a representative working for a publishing company called Famicon Express, rather than "here's my zine I photocopied". It seemed to work, we got invited to be in book fairs and stuff under that name Famicon Express, as if we were Nieves or something.

I also wanted to make a chain to connect us all together, so if someone bought one of my books, they might buy one from the other guys too because it was from the same publisher. I wanted to increase the chances of all our books being seen.

I was going to be printing zines and comics anyway, and I thought the other guys ought to do that too, so I encouraged them to make books as well. The first way we would print things was from a laser printer I think GHXYK2 found on Gumtree. It didn't work very well. We almost bought a riso machine, this was before they were a 'thing' so they were dead cheap. Things might have been a lot different for us now if we'd thought bigger at the time. People charge a fuck tonne now to riso print stuff, we could have had a real business there, shit!

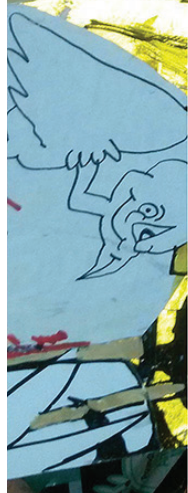
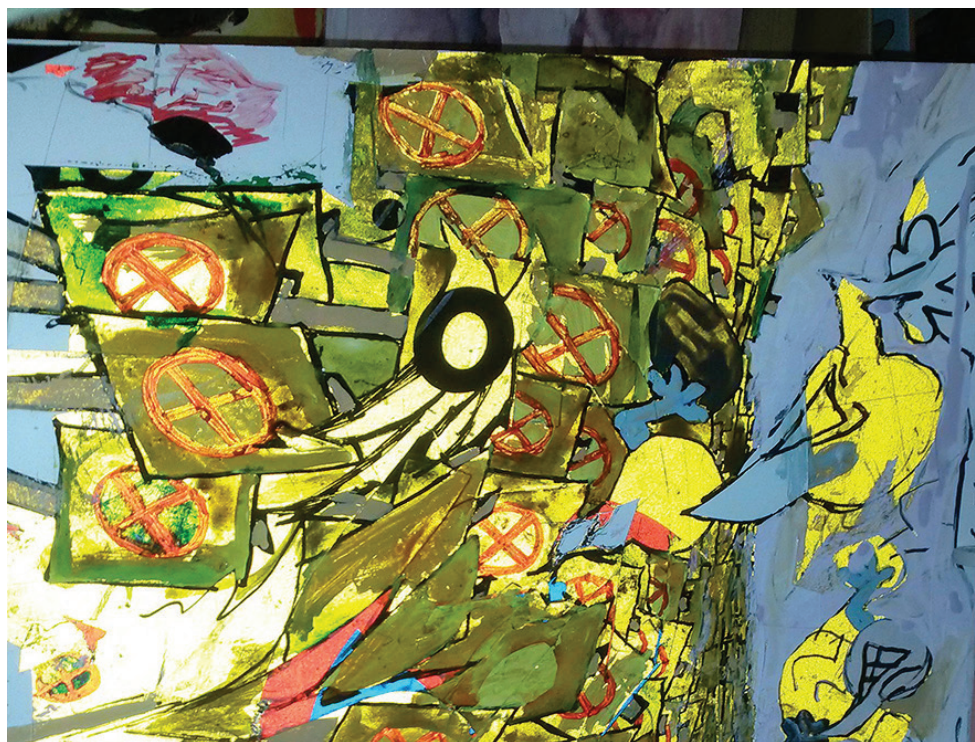
With Famicon there was also the appeal of anonymity, when it started, the other guys used nicknames, but I could never decide on one, which I still regret. Producing work under this group name Famicon is also so much more appealing than just a bunch of random human names.

J

How do you define your method for collaborations? There is Famicon, but you also co-authored some publications with Bomba or Val Gesto. I could also mention that collage zine you did with pictures I sent you...

L

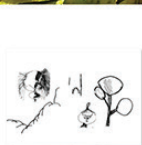
Working with Massimiliano or Yannick, one of the best feelings was that I could be free of my own artistic identity and play around in their shoes, try their techniques and lines and I loved that these hybrid pieces would come from it. Especially because we'd all have such distinct



bonus flower scan



bonus



bonus_Fuckaroundwiththeflowerant



garden 3



garden 4



garden 12



garden 13



YES_landscape1



YES_landscape2



YES_landscape3



YES2



YES3



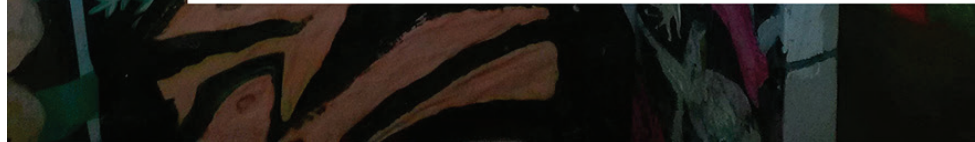
YES4



YES5



YES6





voices individually, you could learn a lot from being free from that. We would swap drawings and pieces of paper by mail or print out each other's work, and we'd be actively destroying/building each others stuff, and I would definitely get a kick out of seeing my drawings become so altered. There was a FLTMSTPC zine me and Yannick did, and what I enjoyed the most was, he had a very specific glaze to his work that I wanted to see on mine too. Obviously I couldn't just copy him, so in our collaboration it was so satisfying that I could have my own work glazed with his unique finish.

It took a degree of mutual disrespect to scribble on top of each other's artwork, but also respect that it meant my doodles could have the magic touch from an artist I admired, and vice versa.

At the end of one period of collaboration, we had generated such a massive amount of material I wanted to be rid of it so I built a scaffold to pin it to and set fire to it. It is a cliché when I reflect on it. I videoed it, I think that's a video no one needs to see. Lol I can use it for when I become a VJ.

I like how that kind of freedom also allowed for a headspace where you didn't even have to worry of what your making is even any good because your responsibility is diminished and there's less concern for how it fits within your wider catalogue or whatever. Doing that kind of work is so closely related to the ideas of play, and especially working with a good friend. So maybe the end result doesn't matter but it is a fun fun thing to do.

The collages I sent including your own images; I really admire the work you and Hendrik do, I wanted to participate in that process somehow, but it seemed dishonest for me to do collage stuff like you guys, but your stuff really gave me such a strong urge. I felt that if I used your materials, it was a way to acknowledge "this is not a piece of work by me" it was a type of role playing. I think that's also why I'd get such a kick having my materials included in Nazi Knife, because the anonymity gave me that free space to negate my self and my signature in favour of producing more ambient images.

J

You have an obvious passion for the works of your fellow artists: you follow a lot of them on social medias, and you seem eager to engage in dialogue and exchange. From where I am, your willingness to start

discussions creates a sense of artistic community. Is this something you are actively looking for?

L

I was thinking about how I always want to reach out to people whose work I like. I never felt like anything could happen for me in my local area, no galleries to represent me or scenes that I felt a part of. Having no expectations for anything to happen, I naturally reached out to connect with people I felt a connection with, and these people were always in other countries, but whatever, this is the internet, this is how we do things now I think. I have no idea at all how people did it before the internet. Maybe it's different somewhere like Paris, New York, Shanghai, London, where there are already scenes and events to link up with people. But I'm not really interested in building something local, it becomes exclusionary or you end up softening your values or something.

So I dunno, don't want to overthink it. It's very much a reflex that when I see someone making art or something I like (also because I'm very picky and hardly like anything at all) but it's just intuitive to start joking with someone who I think might be similar to me.

I just want to say also how much I love to send books to people who live outside of the big cities. Sometimes I check google maps where some customers live if they address is curious, and it really makes me pleased when it's someone in the middle of nowhere, I connect deeply with that.

J

I think this is also related to the question of your work's reception. Some zines you did are of one single copy, that you give away to someone. This type of gesture does strengthen a mutual awareness and participate in the creation of that community I was mentioning.

Is it important for you to know who will look at what you do?

L

It's a bit hard to answer, I don't want to think about it too much. The only stuff I really try to put into shops is the comics, they feel like completed works, which I want to circulate and reach strangers outside of my personal network. With the drawing/collage zines, they're a lot more like byproducts of my process of making. I don't really feel like they need to be recorded as items in my life-catalogue of important works,



so I never really make many. I often just want to send them to particular friends who I feel an affinity with, and I want to give them like a DVD-extra. I don't want to be known for those casual books, I am my comics and my things that I'll put on a gallery wall. The commercial projects I do and contributions to publications etc, I think are quite superfluous material, and I think they have value as experiments and value as a conversation with I guess (cringe) visual culture. And they give some context to my 'completed' works, so actually, I'm wrong, they aren't superfluous at all. But do you know what I mean? There's a casualness.

J

But do you know from the start when you are working on comics and when you are working on something more 'casual'? Or are you somehow always working for comics?

And how does the whole process start? Is it by doodling, cutting up magazines, collecting adverts, or is it by writing a script, or a set of ideas?

L

Oh god this question is very big.

A neat way to describe this is like cooking. I start with my main ingredients, decide how to combine them in the pot, and as it is cooking you taste it and decide on the seasoning. You also decide what accompanying bits and pieces will enhance and what kind of dip you want for your crusts.

I've noticed a distinct process since I moved in the studio. So I am constantly doodling on all sorts of paper, and I used to spend a lot of time organising and sorting them into little collage books that would sometimes become zines. Now that I have the space, I'm continuing to sort and organize small bits of drawings and notes and found scraps or whatever, but instead of gluing them in books, I'm putting them into plastic packets and pinning those packets all over my wall. Each of those packets then holds potential for a project.

If I'm lucky, I can expand it into a comic, for me that's the ultimate 'form' that my work can take, but a lot of the time it's not possible to make comics. I've set myself an unrealistic standard for comics, which is very hard to ever meet, so it's very rare for me to make a comic.

It is interesting you use the word script because it really describes the nature of a lot of these collections. I think I'll start using that term to

describe the packets because they do act as a binding guide, there is a linearity to the logic in them, and there are sentences and phrases that the work has to speak. Thank you I'm very happy to use this term in future!

If I'm inside a project, I do find it quite tricky to be spontaneous and free, or as you say 'casual'. So I think this is why I like to use these scripts as a starting point, because they were made for their own sake in a state of very open mindedness without concern for what they'd become. I know that when I'm in that casual place i can have my freshest and most honest thoughts. Until I had this studio I hadn't noticed how much that sorting process had such a big role. Finding links between certain ephemera, and then filling in the gaps with new material, it really does activate ideas and a sense of satisfaction which gives me motivation. During that analysis procedure, I'm checking it all against my ideology so then I know what feels right.

J

From what I understood, you worked for a while in an office job. Can I ask what it is, or what it was? And how it did impact your artistic work?

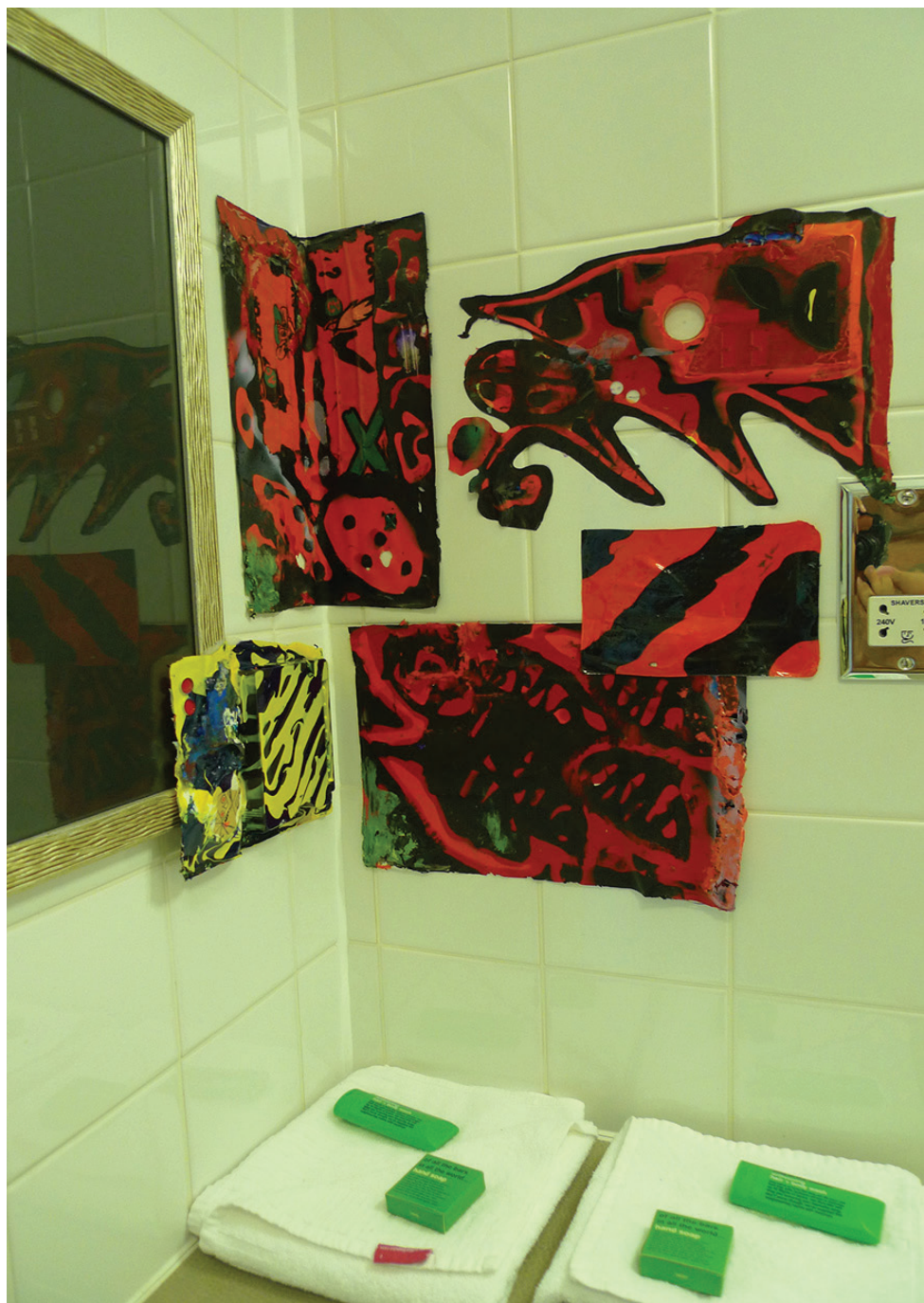
L

Since I left school I was working in many different temporary office and administrative jobs, it was purely just for standard survival, because I was never eligible for state welfare support.

There were some good ones: a maintenance helpline for a hospital in Brighton, a postroom worker at a big advertising firm, security guard at a University. The best ones were when I was paid to just be present somewhere, without many tasks to do, so I could just get on with personal drawing or emailing. Also good when there were things I could access like a photocopier or mail-service, so I could facilitate my own practice, whilst being paid a wage.

I had a graphic design job in a chemical factory for a few years, and that also afforded me opportunities to do my own thing.

Maybe this way of coping with the jobs was also a way of coping with my lack of belief in the ideologies behind these employment structures, so it was a way for me to reclaim some of my own power. You're so helpless as a temporary worker, and so grasping hold of extra-curricular benefits



helped to soften the edges of the hierarchical controls.

I try not to think how these could have gotten in the way of my artistic practice, I just see that it was part of survival at the time. I met lots of nice people and got lots of inspiration I may not have otherwise had. It's just totally normal to me to have a job and make art at the same time.

I've got myself into a nice situation now where my living costs are very low, I get a bit of welfare money, and I only have to work part-time because I get enough private commissions to enhance my income. I really really hope I never have to go back to a full time job ever again, but who knows what will happen in the future? I don't like to think what support will exist when I'm in my fifties, or what I'll be having to do for money. It's too frightening to consider.

J

You told me recently that you now have a studio, and you enjoy that. How did it change your art, and how did it change your way of working? How did you organize your working space before?

L

Yes I've been in my studio for about nine months now. I won a prize where it was free for three months, I immediately filled it with all my possessions that had been in storage, so then I had to stay. I want to keep it for at least a year, I'm hoping by that point I will have figured out which materials to keep and which is junk. I've got a feeling I'm not going to use any of the paint I've hoarded. I don't think I'm really a painter in the way I used to think I was.

I'm kind of disgusted by the amount of books I have too, but I don't know how to get rid of them.

The space has helped me to configure several outputs for the images I want to make:

- Superdense collage paintings on A3 sized dibond boards (which process slowly over several years)
- Comic Books
- Zines
- Lumpy jesmonite/ceramic reliefs (I found the maximum size standard storage box, which serves as a scaling threshold so I'll always be able to pack them safely)

- Large digitally printed soft sculptures (they're balloon like, so they can be easily vacuum packed. They're also easy to maintain without getting damaged)
- Straightforward drawings or aquarelle paintings on paper

The studio means I can hop between these outputs whenever they become tiresome.

Living in a compact way has prevented my from thinking in large-scale terms, but generally speaking I'm a hopeless person who sees the need to keep everything I make in a way that's easy to transport and store. I appreciate large scale work, but it also represents something disgusting related to capital, and related to the idea of 'trying to be impressive'. I don't think my work will ever sell, so I need to make sure I can store it safely. Throwing it in the trash doesn't feel like an option.

J

Speaking of capital, I was wondering how you decide to accept commissioned works? You recently produced some designs for a big fashion brand. How did it go? To refer to something you said earlier, do you consider those to deserve "being recorded as items in [your] life-catalogue of important works", or are they more of side projects?

L

I don't have an agent or anything, sometimes people just contact me out of the blue with their ideas of working with me. The only commissions I've turned down have been when a stranger is expecting me to do something for them for free. I will work for free sometimes if it's a project of a close friend, or if it's something I really believe in.

The commissions you asked about; In 2017 I was invited to make a design for Medicom Fabrick which I found a lot more difficult than expected. I ended up making a tonne of variations because I just couldn't decide what would work best. In the end they picked my first idea.

A person working for Nike found out that I had done a little series of drawings inspired by old Nike ACG stuff. It was just this little whim I had followed for myself a few years ago after feeling really inspired discovering a stash of ACG stuff in a discount shop, a friend had seen them and I guess through a natural fated chain, the news reached the Nike person. They approached me to buy the drawings, the way they spoke about everything was very positive and good feeling. They ended





up reconfiguring the drawings into a psychedelic animation, which I never could have predicted. It just appeared one day, pretty mental!

I was also invited to be part of an artist capsule for Givenchy in collaboration with my friend Gasius. It was a lot of fun because they had an exact idea in mind about what they wanted and provided really carefully collected moodboards for each garment, and quite specific specifications for how they wanted each piece designed. Knowing that they were confident for us to then just go a bit wild within those boundaries was so affirming, and I ended up pouring a lot of love and ideas into my designs. I produced things that I never would have otherwise considered doing, which feels so fresh and fun for me. Even though it's a significant project, it still does feel like a bonus material in the context of my 'serious' work.

It's also pretty amazing having that stuff produced at such high quality level, I realised that the commissions I get give me access to infrastructure and facilities that I'd never otherwise be able to touch. I'm very very pleased this facet of my practice is opening me up to these opportunities. I've got so much satisfaction gazing at the samples they've sent me.

In the last couple of years my thoughts have really opened to the power of clothing for it's oppression and empowerment. In my private life I've gone through some big changes in relation to this, and there seems to now be a lot of synchronisation and natural connections happening, opportunities opening up and all these commissions lately, I dunno it feels like I've really done something correct and it has activated certain switches in the world. It probably seems so dumb to say this though. I've wanted to design clothes for a very very long time and now it seems to be happening. I want to continue to be sensitive and open to the curious and surprisingly friendly stream of Nen-like energy I seem to be flowering through.

J

Those questions of power and oppression are obviously specifically related to clothing but I also remember some stickers you designed about the relations between UK and Europe for instance. More generally, do you purposely load your work with politics?

L

Hmmm

Regarding clothing design, the clothes and accessories I want to make, I want to steer very clear of anything toxic, and carefully use the right imagery that will have a positive, psychic-ly empowering effect.

I wish I could make more work that communicates my political position, but honestly I'm still so confused myself, that it's toughy coming up with something that says something important with the purity I aspire to. As I was saying before, I try to put down ideas in a carefree way, and unless I'm particularly angry or have a very clear opinion in mind, that stuff doesn't manifest often enough. I'll make a specific effort if I feel guilty for making too much self-indulgent stuff though.

I'd say I have a fairly strong ideology, and I try to feed that and keep it updated, and I try to check my work always against that ideology. The ideology is not just political though, it also drives my feelings on things like colours, faces, levels of ugly and what new types of ugly I want to embrace. It's also the thing that I use when considering other people's art and objects in the world.

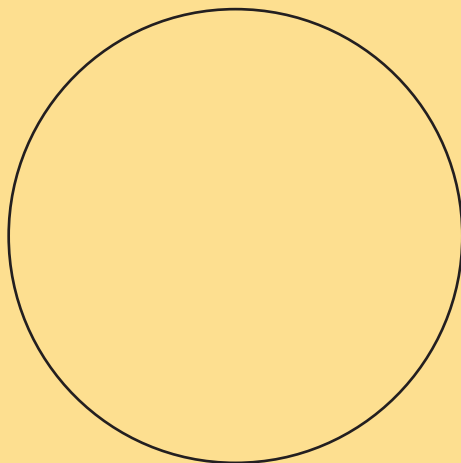
I think my politics come out most obviously in my comics work because it's my least abstracted stuff. The way that my characters communicate and treat each other, I'm quite a surface person, and I think you can see that I try to wear my heart on my sleeve.

Where I work at the moment there's an exhibition of abstract sculpture by an artist called Rana Begum. I've got very mixed feelings about her work, I'm a part-time invigilator so I spend a lot of time gazing and wondering about the stuff we show, and looking at it today, I was wondering if I could make work that is totally meaningless. Then I remembered a book I read this year called *Chromophobia* by David Batchelor. It did that thing of putting your complicated ideas into very clear simple terms. So if I did try to make something meaningless, that nagging ideology in the back of my head would have still imposed itself somehow or another.

So yes, I do purposefully make political work, it frustrates me when I see people making work which isn't. It's just that the intensity and clarity of my message varies depending on how emotional I am when I get that little inspiration twinkle. I want to make more political work, and it's one of the things that keeps me motivated for future projects.

MENTIRAS (2014-)

#1	HP	2014	#14	AM	2020
#2	HH	2014	#15	AB	2021
#5	RS	2017			
#6	JW	2018			
#7	OV	2017			
#8	P*S	2017			
#9	AB	2017		cancelled	
#10	LS	2018	#4	IT	
#11	JH	2019	#?	JC	
#13	PB	2020	#12	CF	



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