

SP

Simon Baker's
Review of
1995 - 1996

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none!
this week

The State of the
Union
where do we go from here?



FELIX

The student newspaper of
Imperial College

Issue 1062
June 26th 1996



95
The year in review
96

Summer Carnival

LIVE MUSIC
FROM

SHOWGIRLS

SUCCULENT

live hard house from

JAMES **HOCKLEY**

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**CHANNEL
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The Bard (Starfish), Billy McClimenes

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7 COLOUR LASER

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**CHILL-OUT ROOM
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CLUB DECOR THROUGHOUT

STRING QUARTET, JUGGLERS ETC

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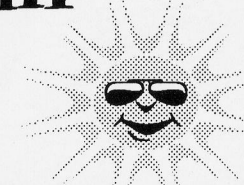
9 - 3am

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ROAR

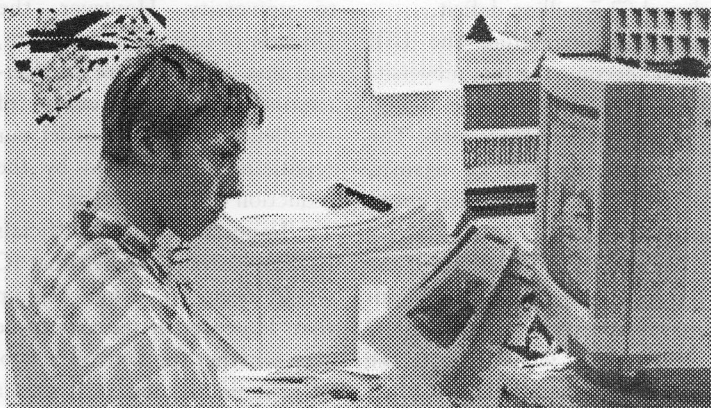
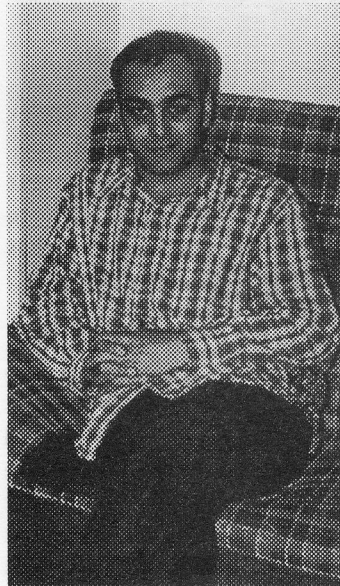


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FELIX



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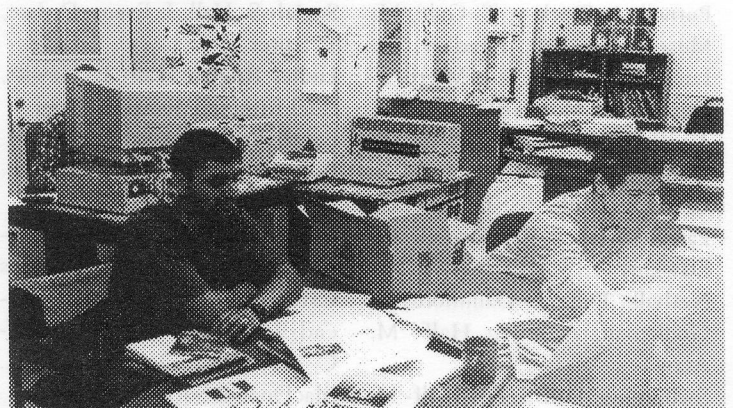
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Commemoration Day "blunder"

BY ALEX FEAKES

Imperial College's 1996 Commemoration Day celebrations were salvaged from disaster last week when they were rescheduled for the 31st October, instead of the 24th. The Registry Division responsible for the ceremony had overlooked a mistake in the booking of the Albert Hall in what was described by the Rector, Sir Ronald Oxburgh, as a "gross blunder."

Commemoration Day, when graduating students receive their degrees, is traditionally held on the closest Thursday to the 25th of October, which allows the Albert Hall to be booked for the event years in advance. However, this year the graduation ceremony is pencilled in for the 31st October instead of the 24th, a fact that nobody in Registry discovered until recently, when preparations for the ceremony and the Ball following it were well under way.

In particular, invitations to the event had already been sent out, and Imperial College Union

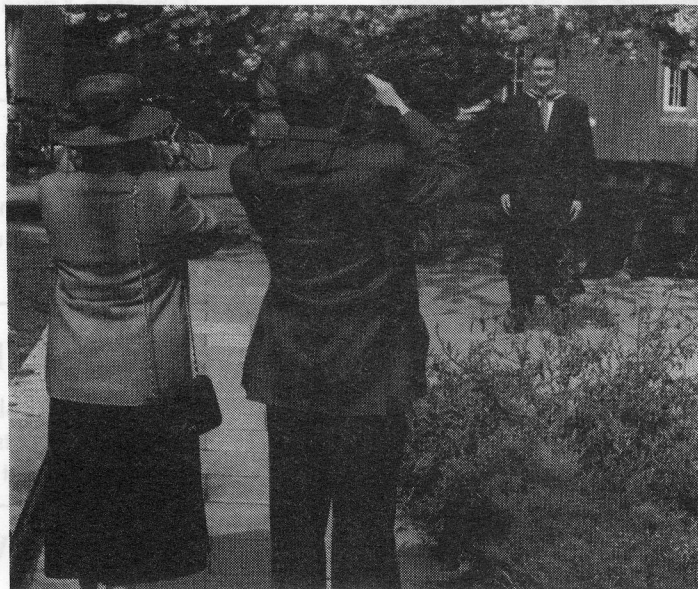


PHOTO: WILLIAM LORENZ

Proud parents photographing their son at this year's post-graduate ceremony. October's Commemoration Day for undergraduates has been the victim of a "gross blunder," nearly scuppering the event.

have had to move the £90 a pair Commemoration Ball forward a week. ICU narrowly avoiding a repeat of the May Post-graduate Ball debacle in which they incurred a penalty for cancellation at short notice due to another Registry mistake.

Efforts were made by the

Registry to solve the problem, but they were unable to move the date to the 24th October. Speaking to *Felix*, Vernon Mclure, head of the Registry Division since the beginning of May, confirmed that they had made efforts to "sort it out," but plans to move the event to the 24th were scotched when

a pop group booked into the Hall for the week before were unable to move. Questions remain, though, as to why three weeks went by after the blunder's discovery before Registry notified anybody of their mistake.

The Rector was told last Wednesday, and apparently unimpressed by the situation declared that "those who [made the mistake] would have to sort it out." Sarah White, ICU president, described the affair as "very unfortunate" and said that it was "lucky that it happened in time for the students that were leaving," though it was too late for overseas students.

ICU sources put the cost of the Commemoration Ball in the region of £15,000, which is normally covered by the double ticket price of £90. However, it is now doubtful whether or not the overheads of the Ball will be met from ticket sales alone. Sarah White, incredulous that the Registry had made yet another mistake, suggested that some of the cost of the Ball may be passed on to the Registry.

Athletic Clubs Committee Colour Awards

The following people have been awarded colours for their sporting achievement.

Boat: Full- A. Kershaw, J. Purnell, A. Trickey, T. Gale, M. Mesenholler, A. Hindley, R. Lucas, K. Jourdan, S. le Miere, S. Dennis, A. McDonald, N. Tan, A. Warnock, S. Frackowiak, P. Wilson, A. Smith

Cricket: Half- S. Trussel, G. Parry **Social-** J. Isherwood, M. Dawkins

Netball: Full- J. Dallimore, S. Godleman, A. Dyrce **Half-** M. Ataw

Swimming: Full- J. Fox **Half-** M. Yung, C. Davies

Hockey: Full- K. Jabbour, I. Crampsie **Half-** M. Robertson, S. McTavish, S. Thomas, C. Bryan, J. Groenendaal, G. Thompson

Social- E. Wratten, R. Curran, S. Baron, B. Arnold, S. Chaturvedi

Rugby: Full- T. Oldham, J. Pert **Half-** B. Maddison, A. Mayes, Jean-Phillipe Oesterle, S. Fuller **Social-** S. Hall, J. Evans, D. Lee, T. Salter

Ladies Rugby: Half- L. Hewitt, Adel Kirkman **Social-** E. Friel **Football: Half-** R. Herris, M. Farina, M. Jarvis **Social-** P. Siverns, N. Hemsley

Ladies Football: Half- E. Bernrud **Social-** H. Brindley, T. Locks

Cross-Country: Full- A. Overend, L. Kipling, E. Collins **Half-** C. Fishlock, G. Johnson, K. MacDonald **Social-** C. Burge

Fencing: Full- N. Manton, Yuen Kai Chan, E. Rysdale, S. Saba, R. Kalam, C. Cooper, A. Davies

Orienteering: Full- M. Halligey **Half-** D. R. Nutt

LSE moves to top-up fees

BY ALEX FEAKES

In a move marked as a "sad day for students," the London School of Economics' academic board voted to recommend the principle of top-up fees to its governing body as a way to reduce a predicted £3.7 million deficit.

If implemented, the LSE would become the first university in the UK to charge top-up tuition fees for EU students. The vote, 43 for and 12 against, reverses an earlier decision not to support the fee.

Estimates for the size of the fee have ranged from a preliminary figure of £850 to a £3500 charge which would recover the School's budget deficit. Other, short term measures had also been agreed by the academic board, including raising the fees for overseas students and reducing staffing costs by 4%.

Claire Lowrie, LSESU's treasurer, commented that "Tuition fees should be an option of the very last resort," and suggested that poorer students and those from less privileged backgrounds would be put off coming to university. However, the Director of LSE, John Ashworth, said that "as [LSE] are an internationally renowned centre of excellence, we must not let our reputation be damaged by the reduction of state funding."

Imperial College officials have consistently denied that IC would begin to charge top up fees. However, it remains to be seen whether the London School of Economics' move will start a domino effect of high-flying universities succumbing to top-up fees, and whether or not Imperial College will be able to resist these pressures.

Karian resigned to no confidence

ULU President quits to preempt QMW motion

BY ROBIN RILEY

The University of London Union president Ghassan Karian tendered his resignation in a letter to the University of London Union General Union Council on Tuesday, pre-empting a vote of no confidence in his presidency.

Mr Karian had partially withdrawn from the presidency much earlier, on May 17th, when he accepted the offer of a position as West London elections campaigns co-ordinator for the Labour Party. Ghassan was continuing his administrative duties as president, but was no longer drawing a salary from ULU. The apparent conflict of interest led delegates from Queen Mary and Westfield College led to the proposal of no confidence in the president.

Dissent was strongest at QMW following an incident earlier in the year when Ghassan fiercely criticised their NUS conference delegates, who had been mandated to support his New Solutions (for funding higher education) proposal, but ignored their mandates and voted against.

In retaliation, QMW students voted to ban Mr Karian from their Union premises.

Speaking to *Felix*, QMW sabbatical Anthony Hume questioned Ghassan's motives in pushing through both 'New Solutions' and the new ULU constitution, in light of his new position. He also expressed anger at Mr Karian's lack of accountability to the students he represented, who had been paying his wages for at least the majority of the year. More specific complaints included Ghassan's refusal to call a GUC meeting until forced, his contravening of the ULU constitution in holding the two jobs at once, and his failure to give the required one month's notice before resigning.

These arguably trivial complaints may have led to Ghassan's description of QMW's Union officers as "petty politicians, who have nothing better to do than grind their axe," (*Felix* 1061) but Mr Hume was adamant: "We hold the moral high ground, I feel, without a shadow of a doubt."

In Ghassan Karian's absence, ULU Vice-President Tara Jefferson has stepped in as acting president until the end of July. In a brief interview with *Felix*, Ms Jefferson was downbeat and expressed her frustration at the course of events, claiming "It was brilliant when he was doing the work and not getting paid... We were getting maximum value out of Ghassan." Ms Jefferson went on to express her dismay at Mr Karian's forced resignation, and denied rumours that she too would resign.

Concerning the objections raised by QMW's Union officers regarding Ghassan's policies now that he was working for Labour, Ms Jefferson said "Perhaps they should have tried harder to win those arguments at the time." However, when pushed on whether Mr Karian's overt political affiliation was appropriate, Ms Jefferson conceded that the other ULU sabbaticals were all either apolitical or Labour Party members themselves.

Under the ULU constitution, the motion of no confidence

still had to be discussed at the GUC meeting even though Ghassan's resignation rendered the result entirely academic. Ironically, the motion was defeated by the narrow margin of two votes, so Mr Karian would have remained ULU president had he not resigned. However, Anthony Hume, the motion's original proposer, claims that if this had been the case, stronger arguments for sacking Ghassan would have been put forward and the result would have been radically different.

The repercussions of Mr Karian's resignation may well continue into the next academic year. Sarah White, ICU president and ULU president elect, will be denied the usual handover period of training by the outgoing president. This could conceivably knock-on to the incoming ICU president, Eric Allsop.

Ultimately perhaps only Ghassan Karian himself can claim any victory from these proceedings, as his rapid rise within the Labour Party seems assured despite the souring of his term as ULU president.

China to England by tandem for IC duo

BY ALEX FEAKES

An expedition by a post-doctoral researcher and her boyfriend who cycled from China to England reached its conclusion a few weeks ago when the couple finally arrived to a champagne reception in Ramsgate.

Dave Montain, a technician in the Physics Department, initially received the suggestion from his girlfriend Bronwen with surprise. Bronwen was nearing the end of a year's research in the Chinese capital, Beijing, and wanted to take the opportunity to do something adventurous.

"I'd been saving up for something like this for a while," Dave recalls, "but when Bron suggested it, I was a little surprised." – neither of the pair are dedicated

cyclists. The idea grew on him and he attended a course on bike building, and built their own tandem.

For the first month of their year-long trip they stayed in Beijing, then headed south through Vietnam, across to Nepal

and India. They travelled through Pakistan and Iran, which Dave described as "brilliant" and somewhere he would like to go back to, and then to Turkey. Everyone they met on their travels was friendly, and willing to help the unusual travellers. It seemed that everywhere they went they attracted attention, and were often chased by curious locals. In one Indian town they nearly caused a riot as onlookers crowded around.

When they reached Europe, they found that this feeling of being 'special' soon wore off, but they were glad nonetheless when they disembarked the cross-channel ferry at Ramsgate and were greeted by Bronwen's parents with champagne.

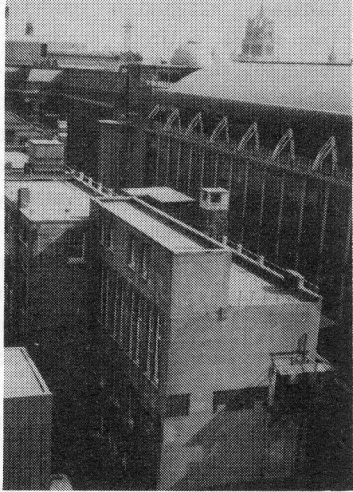


Dave and Bronwen met a Pakistani homeopathic doctor who cycled around the world in the sixties.

The Outs and Ins of '95 - '96

Andrew Dorman-Smith cuts the losses of the year, and sees what we've been left with.

1. The RCS II Building



Out (eventually): RCS II

Every year a number of subjects seem to reappear in *Felix* with such regularity that you wonder if they will ever disappear. Last year it was the unending spree of computer thefts and the on-off-on NUS referendum. This time College estates developments dominated the news.

While the proposed extension to the IC's boat club premises at Putney may have been one

building project which featured prominently, it was another of the Estates projects which really shone out as the issue that could not be avoided in 1995/6.

IC had been fortunate to obtain adequate funding for a new Imperial School of Medicine, but the logistics of the scheme didn't appear to follow as happily. As meaty arguments between the constituent medical schools and College continued over the provision of social space, planning applications were causing concern. The old RCS II building should have been demolished by Christmas 1995, but it was still standing three months later. English Heritage weighed in because the site was a designated 'Conservation Area', and it was mid-March before 'Green Light for BMS' graced the front page of *Felix*.

We were told of a wall of silence from college authorities as they plotted and planned in an attempt to wrest ICU from its

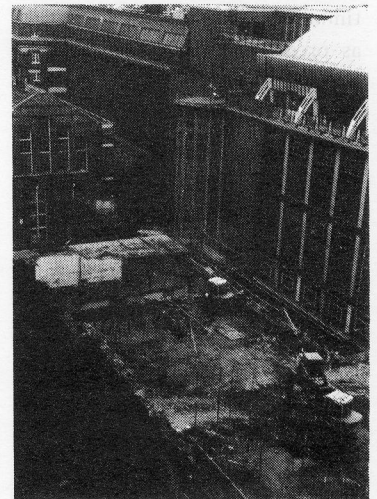
grip on the high revenue potential of Beit Quad. Since Biology would be departing to enter the new Biomedical building, the logic was that ICU should follow the botanists and zoologists out of the way, but this time into the sumptuous surroundings provided by the Sherfield building.

ICU sabbaticals and officials were not particularly receptive to College overtures, with one 'senior official' suggesting that there would be a staff sit-in if any pressure was brought to bear to vacate the Quad. In what was to be the first of many incisive quotations Sarah White, the then newly elected President, said that she was "extremely cross."

Communication started to improve with an "amicable yet frank meeting" between the Director of Estates Ian Caldwell, and the four ICU sabbaticals. But it seemed that rising costs had more to do with College's eventual decision to put the plans 'on hold' than ICU's preferences. Still on the ICU agenda was the adoption by College of the 'Beit

Option', enabling the Union to expand into some of the space vacated by the Biology Department.

Elsewhere on campus, preparations for the new library extension began with the appropriate degree of controversy. The first stage of the developments, excavating the concrete-filled basement, untactfully started as the third-term exam season got underway. "We think the worst is over," the Rector said.



In: rubble and building sites

2. Rag

Richard Willis, elected as Rag Chair at the AGM in June 1995, opened his year with a blustering attack on the return without compensation of a pilfered mascotry item. 'It's a bloody disgrace' he shouted as *Felix* showed Reggie, King's College stone lion, being handed back by the Royal College of Science.

The Rag man had barely settled into his new job when he himself graced the front cover with a report that he had given

away whisky and vodka at a fresher's reception. The matter was highlighted when one inebriated newcomer was found in a 'barely conscious state' by a College official. Happily the student recovered.

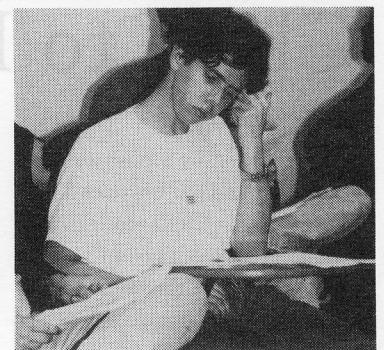
Mr Willis was less fortunate as he found himself subject to the full force of the disciplinary might of the Union, brought on in part by the embarrassment caused by the incident. While a technicality and an appeal looked like delaying his departure, the Rag Chair eventually preempted the outcome of the censure

motions by resigning.

It was just two weeks later that they were once again in the headlines, this time with even worse news. A missing £300 was the subject of this latest controversy as the rudderless group struggled to come to terms with "the mentality of someone who would steal from charity."

Jon Lambert took the helm, without a noticeable improvement to the group's fortunes. There was an incredibly poor turnout at the normally boisterous Mines Dirty Disco as part of a similarly disappointing Rag Week. Even the famous Beer Festival, a highlight in many IC student calendars, was under subscribed as the trend continued.

The final nail in the coffin of what must be one of their less auspicious years came with the



In: the lonely life of an ex-Rag chair

Rag Fête at the end of May. This has traditionally been held on the Queen's Lawn to show appreciation to those who have campaigned throughout the year and to raise even more money. With rain forcing the event inside, the crowds failed to materialise with a pitiful six students visiting the stands - a miserable end to a miserable year for Rag.



Out: the heady days of charitable success

3. Ghassan Karian

The Rag politicking was nothing when compared to the machinations at the University of London Union. Following close behind in the 'most mentions' category was that long-serving friend of ICU, that unavoidable Ghassan Karian (formerly called the ULU President). You could hardly have missed his transformation from 'friend of IC' to 'villain of the year.'

It all started with a soft focus study of a rather drunken Mr Karian and even more inebriated Sarah White – ULU/IC relations seemed to have a bright future. The Labour Councillor was pushing his initiative to overturn the NUS policy of fighting for a return to 1979 grant levels. He was not alone, with ICU's President attending his 'New Solutions' group in an unofficial capacity. What could possibly stop this budding relationship bearing fruit for both parties?

The cooling-off started in February, when Mr Karian attended a ICU Council meeting which was debating his proposal for a new ULU constitution. With accusations of "half-cocked appeasement," but still with the support of other ULU sabbaticals, his proposal was eventually accepted.

Next in the ULU/Karian saga came the revelation that ICU's own Sarah White was bidding to become Karian's successor. A result of 35-23 in Ms White's favour, even if she did think that it was "A bit close!" seemed a good omen for an ever closer relationship between the two Unions. But nobody was ready for the final slide into the mire through which student pol-



Out: friends together

itics seems only too happy to travel.

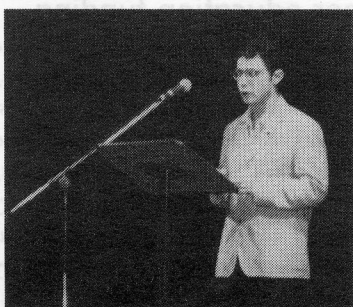
'New Labour' connections had been well-documented in previous issues, but Mr Karian's employment by Tony Blair's party came as a shock, especially as he still had two months of his contract to finish. Breaking agreements clearly did not pose a problem for the soon-to-be Labour spindoctor.

"I just don't understand him," Sarah was quoted as saying in one of her analyses of events surrounding the débâcle. The problem was that the ICU President would have limited training for her new role which the July handover period was supposed to provide. So far had they travelled from their drunken intimacies at the beginning of the year.

Worse was to come as Ms White was hard-pressed to stop ICU Council from forcing her to propose a motion of no confidence in her former friend. A compromise whereby she would support a motion only if it was proposed by others seemed to have got Sarah off the hook.

With friends rapidly falling away from the previously-popular Karian, the ICU compromise looked increasingly meaningless as a motion of no confidence became inevitable. The ULU President was now on the attack calling his opponents "petty politicians who have nothing better to do," insisting that he "would prefer not to have to do two jobs anyway."

The year of friction drew to a close with Ghassan Karian resigning his position before the vote of no confidence went ahead.



In: all alone

4. Higher Education Funding

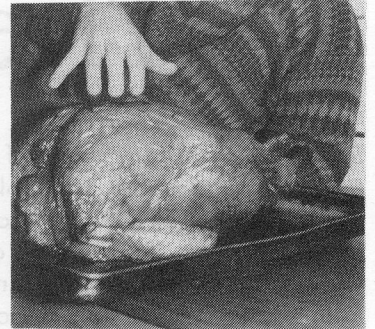
Beyond Imperial, the national debate on the future funding of higher education came to the fore this year. We learnt in December that Imperial was to lose £2million through the government's decision to transfer money from higher education to the primary and secondary sectors.

While Gillian Shephard was 'trumpeting' the action, those who had lost out were understandably feeling somewhat insecure. The Rector of Imperial College described the cuts as "derisory," and one vice-chancellor went as far as describing them as "an act of vandalism bereft of any strategic direction."

As some of the hardest hit universities were openly debating top-up fees as an alternative source of funding, opposition was mounting. The rather uncoordinated spectacle of the Durham's SU President suggesting one move, while Manchester's Student Union leader suggested another, may not have evoked optimism, but help was at hand from a rather unexpected party.

That well known opponent of student poverty, Her Majesty's Tory Government, scared of losing even more of its falling middle class vote, moved in behind the students against the universities. They insisted that there was "no need for top-up fees," and expressed concern over the suffering that tolls would cause those students from "less well off families." The Pro Rector suggested that the Government was "getting other people to do their dirty work," but College authorities admitted that they were seriously considering how top-up fees could be imposed.

The political posturing increased as a divided Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals decided to impose top-up fees in the run up to the next General Election. Imperial College's Rector did



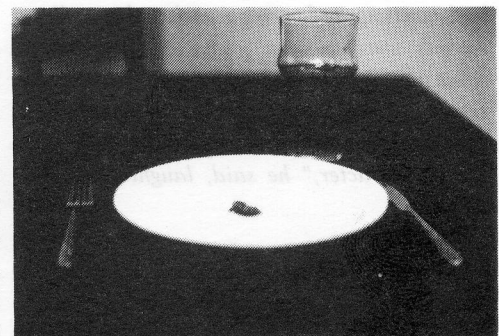
Out: fat of the land

not support this move, insisting that "IC has no intention of charging a £300 fee."

Whatever the real feelings of this disparate group of University and College heads, the desired effect was achieved with the Secretary of State for Education being manoeuvred into an embarrassing 'backtrack' by the high profile campaign. With disagreements between Government Ministers themselves, the Tory's education 'policy' looked in increasing disarray.

But while Richard Wilson, of 'One Foot in the Grave' fame, was getting elected as Rector of Glasgow, the National Union of Students had greater issues to consider. The great funding debate – whether the NUS should still demand a return to 1979 grant levels – continued to dominate proceedings at student gatherings.

When Douglas Trainer, the moderate Scotsman, was elected to be next year's President, it looked as if last year's decision would be overturned. With the ubiquitous Mr Karian insisting that, "The [present] policy is unachievable and will not address the problems we face," the long-standing, and much-criticised, policy was summarily abandoned.



In: let them eat cake

The View of the Tower

Sir Ronald Oxburgh, Rector of Imperial College and Science, Technology and Medicine. A man with a lot to answer for, I reckoned. It was to be an interview of tough questioning and hard-hitting journalism. But as soon as I was shown the tomato plants in grow bags on the balcony of his Sherfield balcony, I fell apart. So here it is: our Rector appeared to me as a sincere, caring, enthusiastic and eminently approachable man who left me in no doubt that at least *part* of the Powers that Be really do care more than we give them credit for.

So I apologise for the following: after a year of this I'm blatantly in not much of a state to fight any more battles. I suspect that this man could have easily persuaded me that it would be best for students to dig up the library at the start of the exam season every year. Alarming, my predecessor wrote something similar last year, too. Perhaps it is simply that after a year of ever-mounting cynicism Sir Ronald Oxburgh's honesty and frankness is refreshingly straightforward. For one thing, of all the people in the Sherfield Building I have questioned over the past couple of years, the Rector is the first to admit to a mistake. He is certainly the only one to use the phrase 'enormous cock-up,' although I think he said to not quote him on that.

Estates development

I started well, asking whether the current estates developments, particularly the construction of the biomedical sciences building and excavation of the library during the exam period was indicative of a caring and sensitive student-focussed college. He had an answer for everything: the digging up of the library basement was, indeed, much noisier than anyone had anticipated. Apparently the college records were incorrect, and the contractors came across areas of solid concrete which were simply not present in the plans. They then had no choice to bring in pneumatic drills. "It builds character," he said, laughing, "I live beside it."

We haven't really got much choice, given that the first medical intake arrives in October 1998. We have to have everything ready at least six months in advance so that

the departments can be ready and so that the library is set up – we can't have everything half finished and half done when the intake arrives. You may think that people have been badly inconvenienced – and they have – but not half as badly as they could have been had we not bent over backwards. We've spent an awful long time trying to schedule work in such a way that the inconvenience would be minimal. In a few cases that came unstuck, where it was outside our control.

But in some cases, on the grounds of student inconvenience, we have changed the overall plans. We have delayed the health

Some of our halls of residence, frankly, I'm ashamed of...

centre: we thought we had it planned in such a way that it would give the best result all round, but what hadn't been recognised was that the noise in the lower part of Southside would transmit throughout the Southside structure. Perhaps that should have been recognised, but it wasn't foreseen. We had planned to move the health centre across over the summer, so that it would be up and running for next September. It won't be ready now until sometime in the autumn term – there will be disruption in the service then. So whatever you do, you're actually going to lose out somewhere or other. In the end, we have to say, 'it's Hell for us, but won't it be nice for those who come after?'

It's going to be miserable for the next three or four years. But we think the worst is over on the BMS site. There's going to be quite a bad period next year when enormous tankers and lorries are going backwards and forwards, pouring concrete on the structure, which will probably last four months. But once they've got the basic structure up it will actually be much quieter, because the work will mostly be internal. The library will be going on in parallel, but mostly out of term: a lot of it will be done this summer.

Campus renaissance?

The overall building program that is underway preparing Imperial for its medical school and taking the College into the twenty first century, has been dubbed 'the campus renaissance.' So what's that then?

Looking at the college as a whole, this

surge of building offers the opportunity to give the whole campus a face lift in a way it has not had for twenty years. Frankly quite a lot of the campus is getting pretty run down – if you come here every day, you tend to accept it. But on a worrying number of occasions people have come and looked round, and they've also been to some of the newer universities, with their very attractive accommodation and settings, and they've said "Well, I'd rather go there." We can't afford that. We are unlikely ever to compete with the best for accommodation, but we've got to maintain a particular decent standard, and I think we're getting perilously close to falling below that at the moment. Some of our halls of residence frankly I'm ashamed of, and we really have to do something about that.

The union move

It was the way my year started: fear and loathing from my new employers, concerned that they were to be moved to the concrete monstrosity that is the Sherfield building so that Beit Quad could be turned into a conference centre. Or something like that. What was it all about, and where are we now?

Fundamentally the union was opposed, I think probably for the wrong reasons, to moving. We looked at the cost of moving them over here, and it was going to be very substantial. If the Union had said "yes, this is a great opportunity," (and I think it was, I think they've blown it, to be quite honest) saying "we want to do it, we want to make this work," we would have said "okay, we'll try to find the money." But it was not worth pushing it. It was a jolly expensive idea.

But there are many different ways of doing it. We can expand the Union facilities over there: it's pretty clear that we're going to have to find more meeting rooms and things of that kind, and we're going to have to give quite a lot of thought to that. It may be that we can provide some Union society rooms over here in Sherfield.

Higher education funding

We are in the privileged position of having a Rector who also happens to sit on the Dearing Committee, which has just met for the first time to consider the whole area of higher education funding. Will Sir Ronald be trumpeting the cause of the elite science and technology establishment, I wonder, or representing the common or garden undergraduate-in-penury in an expensive part of London?

I don't consider myself as representing

Sir Ronald Oxburgh spoke to Rachel Walters of his perspective on Imperial over the past year.

anyone. I see myself bringing what experience I have of universities, in different parts of this country, in different parts of the United States, and in different parts of Europe, to a massive national problem. In looking at the composition of the committee, no doubt those who set it up tried to make sure that there was sufficient breadth of experience, so that all important aspects of the problem would be looked at. I have a particular affinity toward research orientated universities. Everyone is selected bringing their own experience, but that's different from representing a particular group.

I think the principal uncertainties of the year are external... these are the things we are exposed to when we have really only one lump-money sensitive customer for the greater part of our services, which is the Government. The really dramatic reductions in funding is absolutely amazing: student financing has dropped by about 25% in real terms over the last decade.

I suppose, fundamentally, I would like to see a system where tertiary education was a basic right for those who wanted it. But the economic situation and the rapid expansion of higher education makes this an unrealisable objective. Under those circumstances, my own personal preference, without having seen any of the alternatives, is for some sort of graduate tax on those who benefit. It would need to be spread over a longish period, and delayed until they were sufficiently well established to pay it – in other words they had actually seen some benefit from higher education in terms of salary increase. But the difficulty is that it is very unattractive to politicians, because they wouldn't see the benefit of it for ten years.

The Chancellor is concerned about the public sector borrowing requirement, and what you are talking about would put a big loan on the PSBR. So what a government that went that way would do, would be to actually set up something first class, the benefits of which would be felt by two governments down the line. Although it's probably the right thing for the country, it's not necessarily something that is immediately appealing for a government with a financial problem.



It's not a simple problem. But these are the problems we have to look at.

The Rector's year

So how was it for you? What events stand out in Sir Ronald Oxburgh's 1995-96?

In the year as a whole a number of great things happened, but I think winning *University Challenge* was really great, probably giving the college a greater shot in the arm than many other changes. What delighted me was not only that they won, but that all sorts of people said to me, "What a nice group!" People who didn't know the College were rooting for them to win because they were such decent people. I thought that was tremendous; looking back on the year that has

Winning *University Challenge* probably gave the College a greater shot in the arm than many other changes

to be one of the highlights.

Looking back earlier, we finally got agreement from the various medical institutions to join us, then obtained the funding for the new building, getting over £40 million for it. At the same time, we were able to attract a first class principal for the new medical school, poaching him from Edinburgh, and then got planning permission to then get everything underway. Of course, this medical school, there are going to be big problems with it: any initiative which brings together tribes with

different customs: everyone's customs are long-cherished, and dearly held: the problem is they are all different! So melding this group into a coherent working whole, but on the other hand finding a way of not submerging their individuality is a challenge.

The overwhelming impression that comes across from a conversation with the Rector on the future of Imperial College is that, while we're certainly not short of ideas for improvement, we are sadly lacking in the capital to realise them. In the course of an hour we discussed building new halls of residence, expanding the sports centre and the Union, redesigning the inside of Sheffield to make better use of the space, landscaping the Imperial College Road and Queen's Lawn area and building a car park in Dalby Court. The potential sources of funding ranged from the National Lottery and Medical Research Charities to the Private Finance Initiative and the Millennium Fund. He described the BMS building as the last of its kind, simply because it will be built with £40million from the Higher Education Funding Council. The other major project underway, the refurbishment of the library, will be largely funded by a bequest.

I imagine Imperial is hardly alone amongst universities by appearing to be an institution deprived of the freedom to determine its own destiny, scrabbling for finances to realise its goals.

The State of the Union

The once scorned Friday night Ents are almost invariably packed full by 10pm. The refurbishment of the bookstore in the early nineties turned a reasonable trading outlet into a major going concern. A referendum held last year on rejoining the National Union of Students received an unexpectedly loud voice calling for autonomy to be maintained. If not actually fighting off the mythical demon of disinterest, is Imperial College Union at least making inroads into determining its own future?

The academic year began with the Union stubbornly refusing to budge on a College proposal to move them to the Sherfield Building. ICU now looks likely to retain its Beit Quad premises, but with an influx of hundreds of medical students beginning in 1998, the scope for expansion looks limited. College are planning to put management of the bookstore out to tender, potentially depriving the Union of it's major non-Governmental source of funding at a time when capital funding across the spectrum of Higher Education is set to drop by 50%.

With the benefit of a year's hindsight, the Sabbatical Officers of 1995 -1996 consider what future there is for the Student's Union of Imperial College...



Sarah White, ICU President

Our location seems a lot more secure than it did a year ago, which means we can think about our future. The uncertainty which was hanging over our heads meant that we couldn't go ahead with projects such as the refurbishment of the Ents lounge. Now we are getting things up up scratch: our long-term aim is to get to a public Ents license, so that we can have bar extensions with more ease – the University of London Union can keep their bar open until 1am whenever they like. And we would also be able to use more of the building, and get bands in.

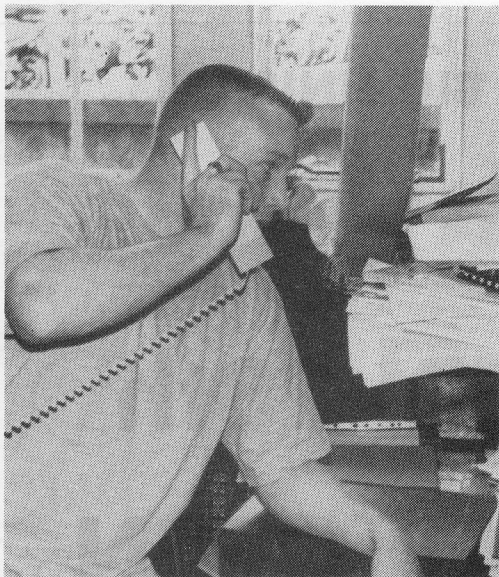
"Last summer was horrible, but it made us think about things a lot: think about how we use the building, and how we can improve it. It forced us to question why we are here, and we're coming up with constructive responses.

"I think it's quite likely that we will be able to get some of the Beit basement space when Biology move out: there's nothing else to put in there! All we can do with the existing space is improve the service, but we can't expand on what we do.

"We're also considering what else we do, and how we make students more aware of what's on offer: there's no point in waking them up by putting posters up saying 'Come to the bar.' The resource centre should be good. It will hopefully have phones, a fax machine, photocopiers and computers and all the things clubs and societies need. They'll pop in and think, 'I know, I'll pop into the advice centre and sort out that dodgy contract while I'm here.' The easiest way of telling someone what you do is to show it to them – make them walk past it.

"The big issue of the future will be coping with the cuts in higher education funding. Whether you go somewhere with a decent sports' hall is less important than whether you are there at all."

"Last summer was horrible, but it made us think about things a lot: think about how we use the building, and how we can improve it. It forced us to question why we are here, and we're coming up with constructive responses."



"The next five years are fucking crucial. The situation looks brilliant from one angle, and dire from another."

Tim Townend, Clubs and Societies

We're as certain as we'll ever be that we will be staying put in Beit. Ideally we would like to expand into some of the ground floor at the front of the Quad. The promise of some basement space would be significant. It might end up as some kind of a bargain; College could put money into it, and in return control it over the vacations. If we get that, it will give enough room to expand the ents lounge into the Print Unit, and possibly move the snooker rooms into the basement too. And if the new sports' centre goes ahead, we could convert the gym into rooms for clubs, societies and welfare. The basement area is huge: apart from anything else, it would give us more storage space, and that's one of the biggest problems we've got.

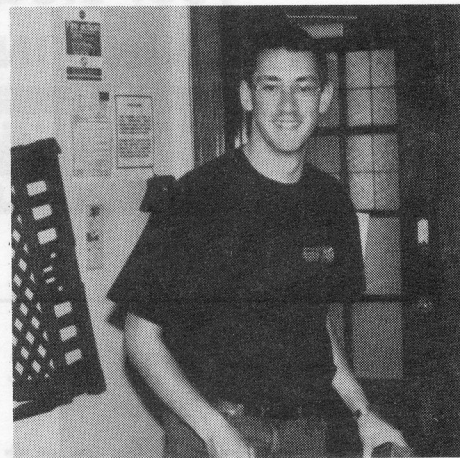
"To sum it up, we can get space, but we can't get money, which is an improvement on last year, when we couldn't get either. So we need to make our own money, and that's under attack as well. We just don't know what's happening with the future of the bookstore. At the moment we're working on a proposal for what we would offer, assuming it goes out to tender. The benefits of us running it far outweigh the benefits of anyone else running it, but no doubt the argument that it's better to keep the money within the IC community will fall on deaf ears."

IC is sorted academically: IC's student development is not. We're in a brilliant position, if only we can develop ideas. The clubs and societies have a massive base of activity, and we have nice venues and good facilities, especially if the refurbishment of the Ents lounge and the development of the sports centre goes ahead. We have the foundations, but we need to invest in student development. ICU is there to enable students to do what they couldn't do on their own, but if we're so insular we never look out, we'll never get anywhere.

"We need to consolidate our position, decide what our key functions are, and focus on them. It's like a war: if we defend on all sides we will end up losing on all sides. The next five years are fucking crucial. The situation looks brilliant from one angle, and fucking dire from another. I think that's why the staff are really happy on some days, and then miserable as Hell the next.

"IC academically is second to none, but students haven't got the support network that they would have if they went somewhere equally demanding, like Cambridge. The one-to-one system there means that if you miss a single tutorial there is someone worrying about you. I guess that's why employers like IC graduates: they haven't been spoon-fed. But we do need improvements in our tutorial system. If they don't change attitudes, we're never going anywhere, and it's ICU's job to make sure those attitudes *are* changed."

"We can get space, but we can't get money, which is an improvement on last year, when we couldn't get either."



Matt Crompton, Finance and Services

I like to think that Felix is continuing to improve its role as a bridge between College and students. There's so much happening at the moment, and because we're not a particularly confrontational student body, much of it goes by without any chance for discussion. Besides, I think that College would get a lot more support for the positive developments if there wasn't such a strong perception that so much is completely underhand.

"What I find slightly worrying is that the current location of the Print Unit is the one prime target for the extension of entertainment facilities. It would be a very great shame if we were moved to some inaccessible grotty basement. The current location is bad enough, but I'm not sure if we are a priority as far as the Union is concerned! Being completely selfish, a move to Sheffield would have been superb for us: we were looking at a purpose built 2-level print shop in the middle of things. But then I wonder if it could ever have happened: where were they going to get £15 million to pay for a students union in these days when everything is either funded by the PFI or the National Lottery?"



"Where are you going to get £15 million to pay for a Students' Union in these days when everything is funded by either the PFI or the National Lottery?"

Rachel Walters, Felix Editor & Print Unit Manager

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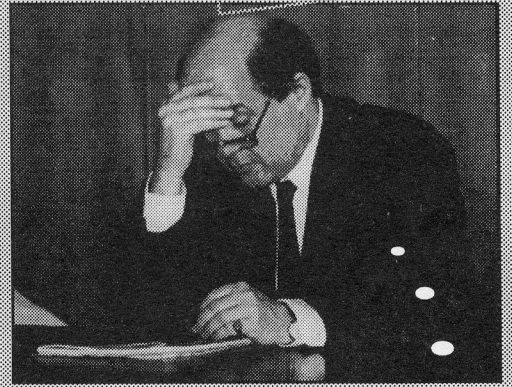


"Situations vacant" it said, white on black. This is for me, I thought, this is what a soon-to-be-sitting-his-Finals-dreaming-about-what-he's-going-to-do-next type person needs, a vacant situation into which I can slide, without comedy, and without an incumbent. I read on: "No experience required" - even better, since in my experience, my experience to date was minimal, (my girlfriends past had always said that I was a man with "no experience") - this must be for me! What was next? "Luxury accommodation." Superb I thought, fully furnished, well appointed, perhaps a penthouse flat? (A subtle irony here). I paused, put down the ad and took a few sips of coffee. "Felix Editor / Print Unit Manager," I mused, hmmm, I could do that. Four months later and soon-to-be-editing-Felix is sitting his Finals, interspersing bouts of revision with visions of fonts, front pages and what-the-hell-are-you-doing-get-back-to-work-you-procrastinating-fool. Six mind-numbingly exhausting exams in a week and it's more-or-less over, bar the shouting, drinking and gad-it's-rushing-up-on-me-and-I-don't-know-the-first-thing-about-editing-how-the-hell-do-you-recharge-the-photocopier-cards-oh-good-grief-my-typing-has-gone-dyslexic-damn-collating-machine-go-back-whence-you-came-and, and, oh, *everything*.

Actually, I'm quite looking forward to it.

When running around the various halls of residence that surround Princes Gardens in a fit of campaigning fury, my prime purpose was to meet the people who read Felix each week. It had occurred to me, while tweaking the news pages late one Wednesday evening a few weeks beforehand, that what people read in Felix -

Why on Earth?



Good grief!

A little Felix philosophy

what I was writing or editing - must make an impression. This was borne out when, after knocking on doors and relating my breathless banter, the occupants would ask me questions, wanting to know more.

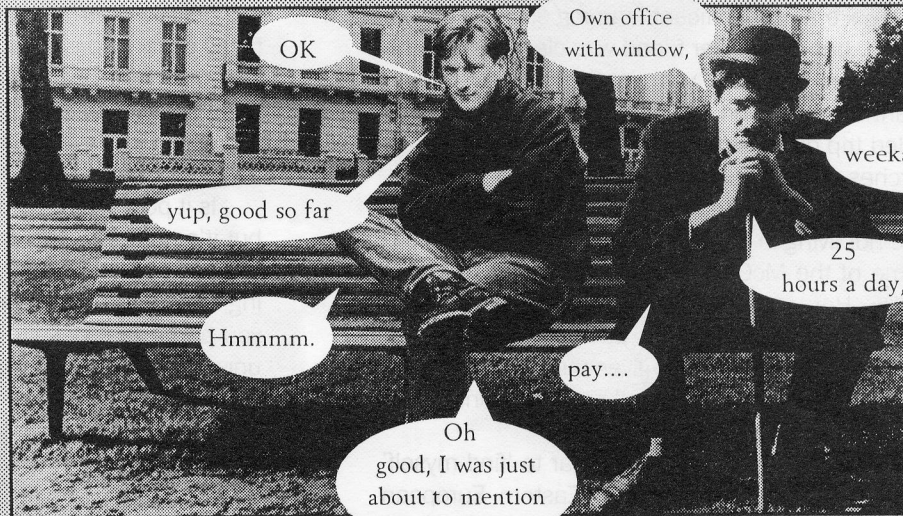
This primitive 'meeting the public' exercise was very satisfying, and reassured me that the enormous number of Felixes that we distribute each week weren't just picked up by cleaners. It showed that people were reacting, taking in what was reported, and ruminating on what piqued their interest. In a way, they were taking part in their Felix, keeping their end of the unwritten, unspoken contract between the writers here and the eclectic masses beyond the office doors.

And that process is mirrored every time they move to pen a letter or tap a key, allowing them to participate in the production side of Felix, stepping across the invisible line that marks out the readers from the producers in the relationship. Some have been moved to come and see for themselves, trying their hand at a review, picking up a news-assignment, reporting on a hockey match or whatever - they are engaging themselves in Felix, and reflect a little of themselves into the reading.

So the reader-mannequin acquires a bit of life in its perusal of Felix. Felix gains in the participation of its readers. Felix and readers alike benefit when they interact.

How will you interact with Felix? How will you benefit?

**PR
ES
CI
EN
CE**
by Alex Feakes



OK

Own office with window,

4 weeks holiday,

yup, good so far

25 hours a day,

Hmmmm.

pay....

Oh good, I was just about to mention that

“What went *wrong*?”

OR

How not to impress Graduate recruiters

George Best recalls a story when he returned to a hotel room with a sack full of cash he had just won in the casino; he was completely pickled and waiting for him on the bed was the current Miss UK. A bellboy enters the room and takes one look at George, faded football star, and asks, “What went wrong?”

George laughs. The bellboy doesn't get it. “What went wrong?”

The question has haunted me for a week now. Wrong! Wrong?

The investment banker interviewing me was referring to my CV, which he acknowledged as ‘excellent’ up to the point of graduation, but apparently ‘wrong’, thereafter.

So what had I done (wrong) in those three years to upset the banker?

It seems that there was a preconception on his part that intelligent graduates, if they do not enter further academic research, automatically choose to go into a large company with an established graduate training scheme. One is expected to be indoctrinated whilst still at a tender age and acquire the mind sets and skills which will lead to a successful career. And why not? Thousands do it every year so it must be good.

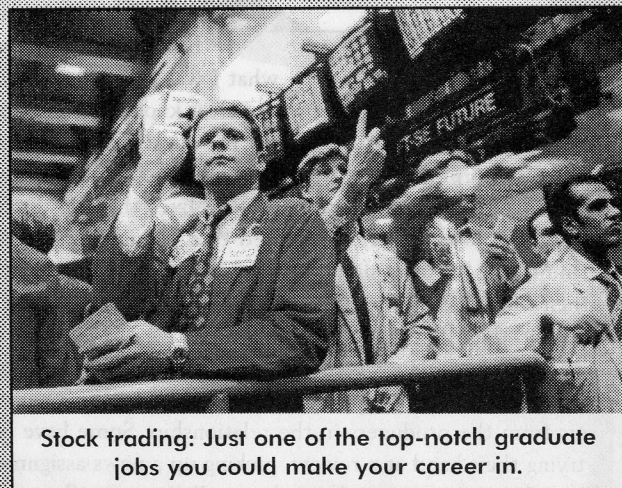
Needless to say this was not the pattern that I adopted. Like a handful of selfless individuals, I did a sabbatical at my university students' union, partly under the assumption (delusion, actually) that any future employer would recognise the unique experience as a significant learning environment. A few did, but my banker friend was clearly under the impression that one year in the students union meant an extension of undergraduate life; a dope fuelled trip discussing Marx, punctuated by demos, marches, sit-ins and body painting.

In the end I managed to convince him that we were not living in the 60s but his approach reminded me of the McCarthy Communist witch hunts in the US. Here was a man making me feel that I had done something wrong; in pursuing a little independence I had apparently given the impression that I was not a decent citizen and could certainly never be a part of his organisation.

Of course, had I taken the year to ‘find myself’ across Africa, or mingled with Eastern European Bohemians clutching an outline of my new book, then everything would have been fine. My mind

would still be untouched by the ideals of another company and therefore I would be just as malleable. In addition I would have gained a hard edge to my character. At the very least I would probably return with an experience I could recall which would answer a question on one of their 300 page application forms.

Not everybody joins one of the large companies initially, and not everyone goes globetrotting or to Parliament immediately after graduation. A few



Stock trading: Just one of the top-notch graduate jobs you could make your career in.

accept jobs with much smaller companies and those people have no less trouble when they want to trade up. The problem now of course, isn't lack of ‘real’ work experience, but experience in too many areas, too quickly. You may have had responsibility and faced extreme pressure, worked weekends and late into the night even, but you won't have had the ‘depth’ you see. Stick at it a few more years then re-apply. Goodbye. Thank you for your interest in our company.

Is it possible to beat the Blue Chips? Well, yes, but it's not easy. The easiest option is of course to join them. Accept the high salary, structured training, and enviable prospects for the future. After all, you admit that despite the occasional pressure at university, it was basically a doss, and now you're ready to face the world. What better Baptism of Fire than to work into the hallowed domain of a giant multinational, or large accounting and consultancy firm? Any guilt you may have carried for missing lectures and copying work will be absolved in the purgatory of graduate training. Only then can you enter

White Collar Heaven, and take stationery home without asking.

You never wanted to be an accountant? Yes, but you never really know until you try, do you? And the salary's rather good (the salary potential is unmatched). You studied zoology and did your project on genetic mutation in *Drosophila melanogaster*? Who cares? Haven't you read the graduate literature? We accept ‘any discipline’ and besides, we pay more than teaching!

And so you will learn about valuation of stock at historic prices; recording of cash flow under SSAP 21 regulations and a brief history of accounting beginning with the Medici family.

I'm not denuding accountants, or anybody else who takes on such a job for that matter. As a matter of fact I'm partial to an accrual or two myself. However, it is the case that some graduates accept such jobs in the hope that they will find them interesting. Many do, but a few don't. And it isn't easy to leave a job with attractive benefits and potential even when it is *dull* (as a friend of mine is discovering); it's easier to resign from the Mafia citing ‘incompatibility with my duties as an impending snitch’ as the reason.

And I don't think I'm being too immature. There's no doubt that we all have to make sacrifices when it comes to the job market. Ideal jobs, perfectly consistent with personality and interests rarely exist (do you know anybody who tests cannabis for £100,000 a year?). Sacrifices have to be made and there has to be an acceptance that any job will have a degree of mediocrity which was never expected, regardless of the type or size of company.

All of which suggests that we should give more thought to what we want to do while we're studying. Another fatherly observation of my investment banker interviewer. Few must be the people who leave university with the job they expected when they entered. Three years of exposure to a multitude of experiences take their toll. Scientists, in particular, find disillusionment creeping up, as the full (in)significance of their work is realised. A friend of mine turned down a clinical psychology post to trade options in the City for that very reason.

It isn't all doom though. Two extremely happy people I know actually accepted those dubious sounding ‘medical sales’ posts, expecting to find

themselves on the end of a ‘phone all day, when actually they are paid to push Prozac across Europe. The most content person I know graduated with a 2.1 in biochemistry, and for the last three years has taken home £150 a week (cash in hand) for serving Chinese food to people in the Midlands. His ambitions are obviously small, and he represents a tiny minority of graduates. Most of us require some sort of intellectual challenge greater than pouring hot water in a carton to the ‘fill level’.

Perhaps the best option then is to do several jobs in a short time? This was my option, partly because I knew I'd be returning to College. But you'll have realised from my introduction that it wasn't exactly greeted with the enthusiasm I expected. Apparently, I had been given the chance to redeem myself for indulging in student politics, and by not choosing obtaining some ‘gainful work experience related to my chosen career’, I had shown a lack of planning capability.

His phrase of ‘chosen career’ alarmed me. The thought that a job could be The Chosen One for me, suggested a pre-ordination and inflexibility in what I was able to do. Had my ideal job been ‘written’, when I was a new born? Were the details contained in some ancient text like Prospects 96 B.C? Would I spend my days travelling like David Carradine in *Kung Fu*, attempting to find my ideal job? This interviewer certainly made it appear so. Even telling him I had no regrets and would do the same again (save a misdemeanour or two) vexed him further. He twisted his face, scratched his head and made me feel like a scientific curiosity for my ‘unconventional’ behaviour.

So now what? You've slain the corporate dragon and, driven by an inexplicable passion, you've realised all along that your vocation lies in street theatre. Except you get bored after a year and now, a little more mature and level headed, you want a ‘real’ job.

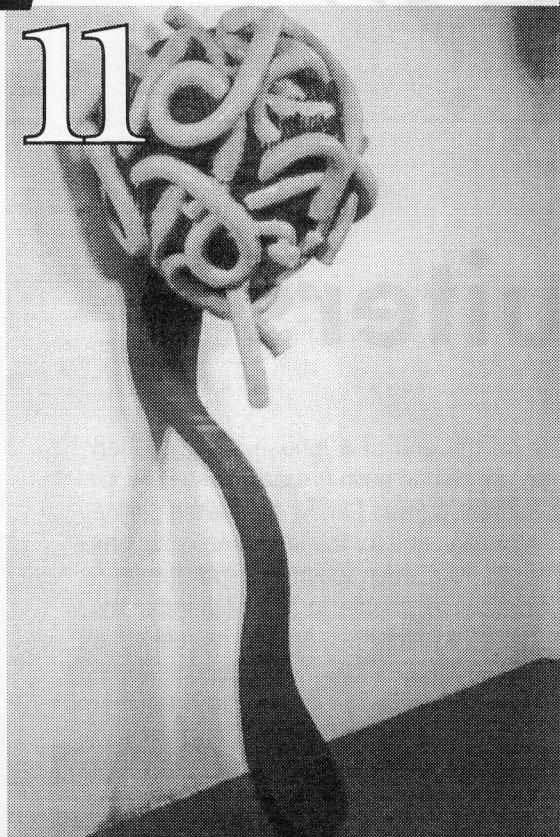
Oh dear. We are back at square one. So we fill in the form and go to the interview.

Only when you do, think of Besty, his life and experience. And laugh when the pinstriped bellboy from personnel glances down your CV and asks, in his most sombre and sympathetic voice,

“What went wrong?”

by Nooman Haque

fili



claes oldenburg: an anthology
Heyward Gallery, Southbank until 18 August.
£5, £3.50 concs.

Some of you might remember a Question of Sport round, now abandoned, in which the contestants had to identify an object from an extreme close-up picture. In the same way, Oldenburg selects mundane consumerist objects and in the pop-art tradition, uses them in a way that is entirely different and much more interesting than that intended. Unlike pop-artists before him, he does this not by stacking lots in a pile, but by making them HUGE. Ice lollies become furry giant teddy sized sculptures whose ridiculousness makes them brilliant. A speared meatball is made man-sized and is brought wholly out of context.

Claes' work is amusing, intelligent and fun. It is not a case of questioning the artistic value of the work, because it's so appealing. Go and see it - if there's any child left in you, you'll enjoy it.

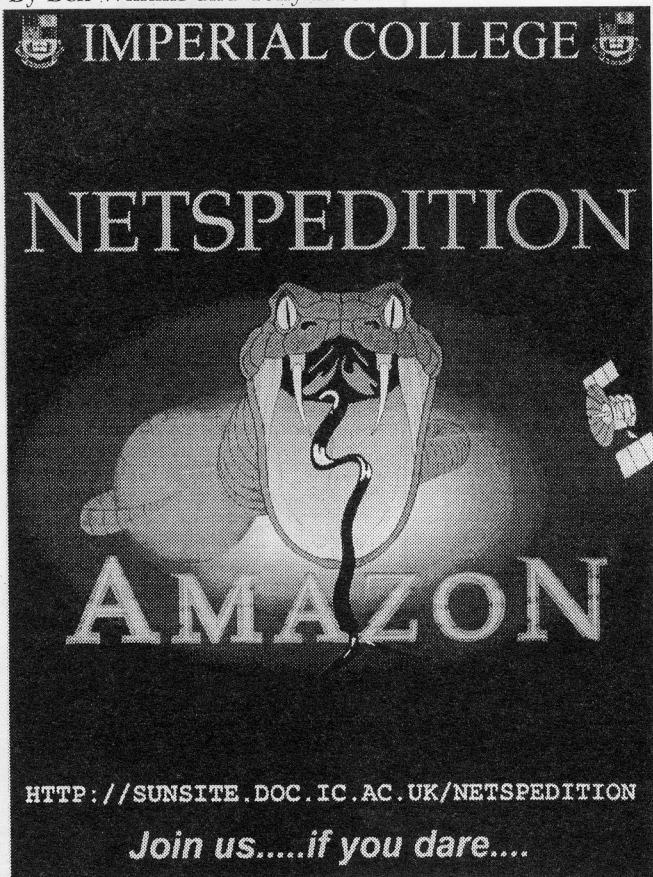
laes
o l d e n b u r g



Fancy a trip to the virtual jungle?

inSci@ght^o

By Ben Wilkins and Tony Heenan



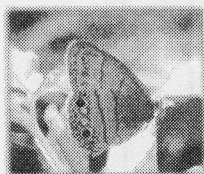
IMPERIAL COLLEGE

NETSPEDITION

AMAZON

[HTTP://SUNSITE.DOC.IC.AC.UK/NETSPEDITION](http://sunsite.doc.ic.ac.uk/netspedition)

Join us.....if you dare....



What do two aeronautical engineers, a biochemist, a materials scientist, a physicist, a Venezuelan entomologist and a lap-top computer have in common? Give up? Well, they are all about to embark on a unique expedition to study butterfly populations and the Orinoco river in Southern Venezuela.

What makes this venture, called Netspedition, unique is that they will be using the latest in portable computer and satellite technology to transmit each day's results and their experiences to Imperial. Back at IC, a support team will release the data onto the Netspedition web page. Netspedition was the brainchild of Matthew Lewis, one of the six who will be going this summer. "The main idea was to go on an expedition. I've always been an Internet fanatic, and I wanted to find a way to combine the two."

After landing at Caracas, the expeditioners will meet up with the sixth member, the entomologist from the University of Zulia in Venezuela. The six will then hire a bush plane

xvii

Imagine trying to carry out your scientific research in a tropical jungle: forty degree heat, high humidity, snakes, insects etc. The logistical problems involved would deter all but the most intrepid of scientists. But what if the field operation was connected to the internet? Wouldn't it be possible for many of the researchers to stay at home, remain in the comfort of their offices and take part in the field operation exclusively via the information super-highway? The only problem now is how on earth do you set up and maintain an internet link in the middle of a jungle...?

which will take them as far up the Orinoco River as possible. From there, they will open their rucksacks and unpack three 18-foot foldable canoes, paid for by the Harlington Trust. They will then travel by canoe along the river through a remote area the size of Wales. In total the team will spend six weeks together away from civilisation.

The primary goal of the expedition is to show that it is possible to transmit from the jungle. To do this the team will be using a lap top computer and a 'sat phone' - a \$35,000 mobile phone which was lent to them by California Microwave. According to Tony Heenan, using it couldn't be easier:

"You open the box, unfold the satellite dish and away you go."

Along the way the team will measure characteristics of the river such as temperature, pH and conductivity. Simple chemical analysis will be used to determine the levels of salinity, hardness and nutrients in the water. The idea to study butterfly species diversity came from an ex IC student, now at the Open University, who read about the expedition on the Internet. The team will be studying how the local conditions such as light, and river parameters affect the species diversity. All their results will be fed into the computer, along with their location, as given by their satellite global positioning system. Scientists from all over the world will be able to analyse the results and feed back comments to the group. Tony Heenan believes this technology could "open up new methods of remote research on a global scale."

Before the team can start to study the butterfly population, they will have to catch them. These days this is a lot more sophisticated than running round the jungle with nets. Instead they will use something called a fruit trap, which is basically a 14-inch plate covered with rotting fruit with a net above it. Those butterflies which

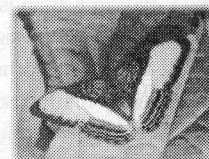
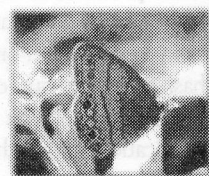
find rotting fruit irresistible will be caught when they try to fly away. Unfortunately, 90% of butterflies don't like fruit. So how will the team catch these? "By running around the jungle with nets," says Tony Heenan.

But he stresses that these experiments are by no means trivial. "You don't demonstrate the potential of this technology if you do Mickey Mouse science... As far as we can tell, nobody has been there for the express purpose of studying butterfly populations before. People just don't know what's there. The chances are we'll come across maybe a dozen new species."

If the team find a species which is new to them, they will send images of the live butterfly to the collaborating scientists who will try to identify it. Eventually the specimens collected from the Orinoco will end up in the Natural History Museum and the Museo de Artropodos in the University of Zulia.

Along with the scientific objectives, Netspedition intends to be the first truly interactive expedition on the Internet. As the team journeys through the Amazon, sounds, images and video of the flora and fauna, the diverse animal life and of the scenery of what is one of the most beautiful regions on this planet, will be digitised using a CCD camera and the multimedia facilities of the lap-top. This information, along with a continuously updated log of their daily life, will be released onto the Web site. It will be possible to e-mail the expedition team, ask them questions and help them with any simple decisions they might face.

Would you like to get involved in Netspedition? The team are still looking for students and staff to help maintain the Web site and also provide scientific support to the team in the field. Why not check out the web site at: <http://sunsite.doc.ic.ac.uk/netspedition> and then get in contact with the relevant team member. Join us if you dare...



simon baker

And now, the end is near, and so I face the final deadline. After 9 months and nearly 20,000 words, I have run out of opportunities to vent my spleen on you, the good folk of Imperial. I have also reached the end of my degree. Not averse to the odd cliché, as you all know by now, I must say that it has gone incredibly quickly.

My friends, I'll say it clear. I'll state my case of which I'm certain. In October 1993, little old me pitched up at Linstead Hall, found the bar and the rest is history. I arrived as a young, happy-go-lucky idealist and leave as, well, form your own opinions. I've seen people, buildings and, of course, signs come and go, the latter not necessarily on a one-in-one-out basis. *Felix* certainly hasn't missed out change over the last three years. Many of you will remember this august publication under the stewardship of my dear old friend Beccy 'as vital to the running of *Felix* as David Mellor is to the Elite Model Agency' Land, who printed one of my letters criticising her under the banner, "Will he ever shut up?" Clearly no. Last year was a dramatic improvement under the control of Owain Bennallack, though I did have cause to rattle the cage of Mr Marcus Alexander, aka 'Frater Fiam'. A blind seven-year old could extract more meaning from the Portuguese version of the Maastricht Treaty than some of his writings, but there you go. As for this year, modesty forbids me to be specific, but I must congratulate Rachel on a brilliant job and thank her for giving me this space with which to amuse and entertain you, I hope, throughout the year.

And more, much more than this, I did it my way. Regrets, I've had a few. And I'd had a few that fateful night at King's a few weeks ago. Dance like a demon, I tell you. It does seem a shame that despite the way we avidly followed each other's careers, Ian Caldwell and I never met. I put it down to some swine pinching all the Rector's dinner invitations from my pigeon hole. When it comes to College Estates I did what I had to do and saw it through without exemption. I planned (members of said department unsure of this word's meaning are referred to a dictionary) each charted course of action, each careful step along the satirical byway. Who am I kidding? Attacking Estates was like shooting fish in a barrel, as taxing as stealing candy from a baby. I suspect that all the noisy building work around College will be suspended now that the exams are out of the way, since we wouldn't want to disturb the paying guests over the summer, dear me no.

The post of ULU President being occupied by Ghassan Karian is also regrettable, although I hear he has now resigned, giving me yet another excuse to spend some money in Southside Bar. I have long held reservations about him, confirmed by his moonlighting for Uncle Tony Blair,



but his response to the no confidence vote was beyond belief. How dare he compare his disgraceful behaviour with the course of action taken by Lady Thatcher in 1990. She was effectively the victim of a *coup d'état*, whereas this despicable rat has shown that he couldn't give a toss about the people he represents or the post he occupies.

I also wish that I had intervened in the ConSoc fiasco earlier. It all seems such a long time since these pages were filled with letters from the legendary triumvirate of Bayley, Boon and Summers, firing off salvos willy-nilly like a machine gun with Parkinson's. They moaned about the national press, they moaned about the College press, they've even moaned about each other. In fact, they attacked everyone except the people who they're supposed to, namely IC Labour Club. Such was the self-destruction achieved by these three clowns that they have been forced to remain tight-lipped for the rest of the year for fear of further embarrassment. All this at a crucial time in British politics, where a little debate would not have gone amiss. We can but hope that next year's incumbents do a better job, and let's be honest, that is not the greatest challenge facing mankind.

Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew, when I bit off more than I could chew. After receiving the first letter of complaint in the first term from Sarah White about New Solutions, I thought that I'd be a bit clever. She moaned that I hadn't read any of the relevant documents, so I immediately asked for copies, hoping that she wouldn't have them. Of course, she did, and kindly provided me with one. She also tipped me off about a meeting at Goldsmith's College (issue 1043), attended by Mr Karian and some of the most left-wing people on the face of the Earth, which proved to be very enjoyable, so no harm done. Anyway, I must wish Sarah all the best for next year, safe in the knowledge that she will do a better job than him at ULU and stay the distance. *But through it all, when there was doubt, I ate it up and spat it out,* which brings me nicely to College Catering. When I was at school, an article I wrote about school dinners got me hauled up before the Headmaster to explain myself. It is therefore reassuring that things are dealt with a little more rationally at Imperial. Criticism is at least accepted, but mismanagement and inefficiency seem to get the ostrich head treatment of blissful ignorance. It would be great to think that one day the current outfit might be booted out after competitive tendering. We can't go on propping up the MDH to the tune of nearly £200 000 per year, a loss partly disguised by selling mediocre sandwiches at vastly inflated prices in the JCR and the efforts of Southside Shop, where multinational corporations could be bankrupted buying the weekly groceries. Is it unreasonable to expect hot and

"I suspect that all the noisy building work around College will be suspended now that the exams are out of the way, since we wouldn't want to disturb the paying guests over the summer, dear me no."

“Oscar Wilde was absolutely right about being talked about. It has been very enjoyable”

last diary

Wednesday 26th

Standing Room Only. Semi-finals. 1st match 4pm. 2nd match 7.30. Both matches live on the biggest screen in College.

One last chance to enjoy a full on Frolik! Bar 'til midnight, disco 'til 2am. Free.

Thursday 27th:

Cocktail Night. The best way to warm up for the final day of term! Da Vinci's. 5-11pm.

Fri 28th:

The end! You can start early as Da Vinci's is open all day from 11am before you lose it totally at the biggest, hottest event of the year – the Summer Carnival.

Three floors of huge entertainment: three bands, four rooms of music, guest DJs, a tarot card reader, top decor, string quartet, jugglers, a free glass of Archers and lemonade, 2am bar, BBQ and a Cocktail Bar. All for just a fiver. A limited number of tickets are still available from the Union Office and Da Vinci's bar.

<http://www.su.ac.uk/Ents/ents.html>

XIX

cold meals which are both edible and affordable? I think not.

I loved, I laughed and cried, I had my fill, my share of losing. Up until recently, the fortunes of the England football team had closely followed my stunning success on the National Lottery. While I still throw money away on a weekly basis, the expected upturn following the replacement of Anthea Turner by Bob Monkhouse having failed to materialise, the boys with three lions on their shirts are now playing better than I can ever remember. The stunning demolition of the Dutch last week was incredible, and the sound of Rule Britannia bellowing out of Wembley was deeply moving, *and now as tears subside, I find it all so amusing.* To think they did all that, and may I say, not in a shy way, that game will go down as one of my greatest sporting memories, and I am sure I am not exaggerating. By the time you read this we should be in the semi-finals, having despatched Spain, but let's not tempt fate. On the basis of their current form, they could and should win it, which would give the country an incredible boost and remove the self-doubt that many have about Britain (or should that be England, as my celtic flatmate has observed?). We can but hope. If they do win, John Major could do worse than call a snap general election to take advantage of the rampant feel-good factor which would sweep the country. It worked for Harold Wilson after 1966 and I see no reason why it wouldn't work again.

England's resurgence on the football field

could not have come at a more opportune time, given the beef ban and the resultant tide of Euroscepticism. Those of you who have closely followed this column will realise that I am as likely to jump into bed with the federalists as Elle Macpherson is to jump into bed with me (realism had to dawn eventually), as over the year I have had cause to question the path which has been chosen for Europe by France and Germany. It is frustrating that the debate in Britain is split between the extremes of monetary union or out, both of which are very damaging aims. We are accused of anti-European behaviour over the beef ban, but let us not forget the way that France helped prop up the entire GATT Agreement to secure what it wanted for its farmers, almost causing the collapse of five years of painstaking negotiation. I refuse to take lectures on co-operation from countries whose self-interest is so fiercely defended regardless of anything.

And that's yer lot, kids. May I thank everyone who has read my humble prose over the year and especially those who have commented on it with ideas, criticisms or praise. Oscar Wilde was absolutely right about being talked about. It has been very enjoyable and, I'd like to think, made a few ripples on the Imperial pond.

For what is a man, what has he got, if not himself then he has not. To say the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels. The record shows I took the blows and did it my way. Yes, it was my way.

a summer reading list sandals

Looking through the four bookcases which I can now justifiably call my 'library', I am reluctant to single out those books which I like a lot from those I like a little less. What follows is not so much a list of favourites as a selection of recommendations, and if you notice a propensity towards a certain genre, you are correct. I make no apologies.

Whatever you read, have a good summer!

Iain Banks: *The Crow Road*

The 'archetypal' Scottish Novel, of a young man finding his way and the settling of old family feuds. A mixture of the macabre, black humour, a few deaths, and an atypically upbeat ending make a very readable novel.

John Brunner: *Stand on Zanzibar*

If you want to understand the origin of 'road rage', then this chronicle of overcrowding is very convincing. The unique style, which uses extracts from fictional books, takes a while to get used to, but pays off. And I wish there really *was* a book called 'You're an Ignorant Idiot'.

John Crowley: *Little, Big*

Sleep, dream and the lethargic pace of life are the basis of this story of Faerie in the modern day. What really distinguishes this book are the embellished pages and the language: "The room seemed larger than it was, or was smaller than it looked, he couldn't decide which."

Simon Ings: *Hotwire*

Sentient cities, manufactured organisms and technology-ambivalent societies are the scenery. The foreground is a story of misunderstood love, and the blurring of the distinction between natural and manufactured.

Ursula K. LeGuin: *The Dispossessed*

The story of one man's development of a meta-physical communication theory, set against the juxtaposition of two ideologically opposed societies. As each system tries to manipulate him, he becomes convinced that neither is best. LeGuin argues that solutions are not found in ideals.

Nicholas Royle: *Counterparts*

The lives of an aspiring actor and a tightrope walker are interwoven through dreams and other blurrings of reality. Although very readable, it's not for the squeamish.

Neal Stephenson: *The Diamond Age*

Although somewhat tongue-in-cheek, this novel of education in a high-nanotech, stratified society still has real ideas to discuss.

Kurt Vonnegut: *Slaughterhouse 5*

A man is forced to confront his memories of the Dresden firebombing. The possibly heavy philosophy is digestible due to the self-deprecating style, and the "so it goes" refrain.

Roger Zelazny: *Doorways in the Sand*

Aliens disguised as marsupials, a Möbius-twisting machine and an eternal student. If you want weird and wacky, they don't come much more so than this.

film: kingpin sarah tuner

I hate comedy. I really hate it. Especially when otherwise talented actors are made to look stupid by playing ridiculously unbelievable and foolish characters. So I'm afraid to say that before I had even seen this film I had decided that I was not going to like it. But seeing it didn't change my mind at all.

Thankfully, I managed to drag a friend along (with a sense of humour), who pointed out that it did have some good points. The film revolves around the unconventional life of Roy Munsen (Woody Harrelson), an ex-bowler with only one hand.

At a time in his life when he is particularly down on both luck and money, Roy stumbles upon Ishmael Boorg (Randy Quaid), who seems to share his enthusiasm and talent for the game. He decides to coach Ishmael for a tournament in Reno which, if he wins, will make them both rich.

However, to his horror, Roy discovers that Ishmael is Amish and wants nothing to do with him. So he poses as an Amish visitor from Ohio, and goes to Ishmael's family farm to convince him to leave. Since the family has financial problems, and will lose the farm if they don't come up with enough money to pay off their debts, he finally gives in, in the hope of returning home as a hero.

On their way to Reno, this unlikely pair manage to pick up a beautiful companion called Claudia (Vanessa Angel). Although things go wrong from that point onwards, the film still manages to have a happy ending: Roy and Claudia fall madly in love, and drive off into the sunset together.

I could summarise this film in a few words: Boring, stupid, pointless and totally unbelievable. As my friend said, "She'd never have fallen for him in real life". I admit that some parts are almost funny, but that's the nicest thing I can say.

film: back of beyond sandals

This film, set in the Australian middle of nowhere, is worth seeing due to the beautiful scenery and the watchable characters. However, when it comes to a well-paced plot or good dialogue, it fails noticeably.

Instead of what could have been a powerful depiction of Aborigine dreamtime, it delivers a cliché ridden romantic slush. By the time we get to the supposedly meaningful revelation at the

end, it is not so much a surprise as an explanation of the artifices of the plot. It is more of a surprise that a very Australian film puts an Irish band – the Cranberries – as the closing track.

Despite the criticisms, the film is watchable due to the stark landscapes and the relatively good acting of otherwise dire lines. One of the financial backers of this film was the Australian Tourist Board, which may explain a lot.

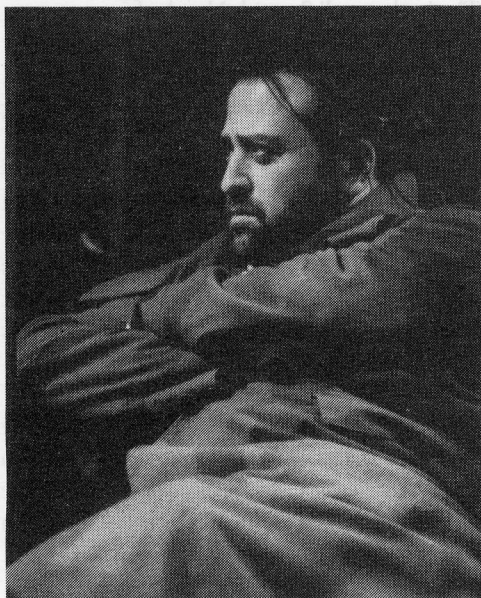
theatre: who shall be happy adrian thurston-gordon

If not everyone, who shall be happy? This is the question asked by playwright Trevor Griffiths, regarding the imprisonment and subsequent unlawful execution of Danton and who and what he represented in the triumvirate of the French Revolution. Danton, plausibly played by Stanley Townsend, is held in prison guarded by Henry (Kuluinder Ghir) and he tries to convince this simple guard to carry a coded letter to his wife, in order to be rescued. Henry may be simple but he's not stupid, and he plays along, allowing Danton to bribe him with ever increasing sums.

Danton has been placed in solitary confinement in one prison, whilst an actor pretending to be Danton has been placed in another prison to confuse the many would be 'springer'. Our prisoner, pretends to be the actor, in an attempt to convince Henry that his letter is innocuous. However, when Henry apparently starts to believe that Danton really is the actor, Danton is incensed and starts to act the part of Danton with passion to prove that he really is the liberator of the people. Henry plays another game with Danton, and he asks him to act some more. Danton claims that to continue would make him cry, but Henry tricks him into a further presentation because he hopes that this prisoner

truly is Danton. Henry shares the same revolutionary dream that he heard Danton expound, years ago.

The set, lighting and design is as excellent as the directing and writing, but this story doesn't get to the heart of the Revolutions problem which was not, "Who shall be happy?" but who shall be 'unhappy'. It was a question of ideological vision, tantamount to the rise and demise of a culture and a people and consequently a nation.



celluloid guide: until friday

warner west end
0171 437 4347

fargo
12, 2.20, 4.40, 7.10, 9.40

secrets and lies
12, 2.50, 5.40, 8.40

the juror 1.30, 4.00, 6.50, 9.30

executive decision 12, 3, 6, 9

girl 6 1.30, 4.10, 6.40, 9.10

copycat 12.40, 3.20, 6, 8.50

trainspotting
12.50, 3.05, 5.05, 7.10, 9.20

tube; leicester square
£7.50; £4 mon-fri before
5pm

uci whiteleys
0171 792 3303

the rock 11.50, 12.40, 2.50,
3.40, 5.50, 6.30, 8.45

the juror
1.30, 4.10, 6.50, 9.35

how to make an american
quilt 1.10, 3.50, 6.30, 9.10

up close and personal
12.15, 3.25, 6.15, 9

tube; leicester square or
piccadilly circus
£7.50, £9, £4 1st perf mon-
fri

b
a
c
k

the bush
0181 743 3388

who shall be happy
mon-sat 8pm
tube; shepherds bush or
goldhawk road
£9.50, £6, concs
until 29th june

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s



celluloid guide: until friday

odeon kensington

01426 914666

the rock

12.20, 3.20, 6.20, 9.20 [L]

sense and sensibility

1.15, 6.45

richard iii 4.15, 9.45 [L]

now and then

2.10, 4.40, 7.10, 9.40

secrets and lies

11.55, 3.00, 6.05, 9.10 [L]

from dusk till dawn

1.50, 4.25, 7, 9.35

muppet treasure island

1.30, 4.10

up close and personal

12.40, 3.35, 6.30, 9.25 [L]

[L]=late fri-sat 12.15

tube; ken high street. £7, £6,

£3.50 before 5pm mon-fri,

£4 before 5pm sat-sun

mgm fulham road

0171 370 2636

eye for an eye

1.40, 4.10, 7.10, 9.40

up close and personal

12.40, 3.30, 6.20, 9.30

secrets and lies

12.10, 3.10, 6.10, 9.10

how to make an american

quilt 1.30, 4.20, 7, 9.40

tube; south ken then bus

£6.20, £3.70 students and

before 6pm

mgm chelsea

0171 352 5096

the juror

1.15, 3.55, 6.35, 9.20

rock 1.10, 3.50, 6.30, 9.10

beautiful thing

1.05, 3.10, 5.15, 7.25, 9.30

the birdcage

1.20, 4.05, 6.45, 9.20

tube; south ken then bus

£6.20, £3.70 students and

before 6pm

chelsea cinema

0171 351 3742

fargo 2.20, 4.30, 6.40, 8.55

tube; sloane square then bus

£7, £6, £4 (£2.50 concs) 1st

perf

renoir

0171 837 8402

the confessional

2, 4.15, 6.30, 8.50

blue in the face 1, 3, 5, 7, 9

tube; russel square

£6, 1st perf £4, concs £2.50

film: beyond the clouds magpie

Beyond the Clouds is made up of four stories about tragic love. Short scenes, narrated by and starring John Malkovich as a film director, link each story seamlessly.

Story 1: Chronicle of a love affair that never existed. As the production notes puts it, "The strange story of Carmen (Ines Sastre) and Silvano (Kim Ross-Stuart) whose sexual desire is so strong that the act itself is a desecration". They have both been touched by love, despite only meeting twice in three years. Their love remains unconsummated at their reunion and Silvano leaves Carmen undressed on the bed.

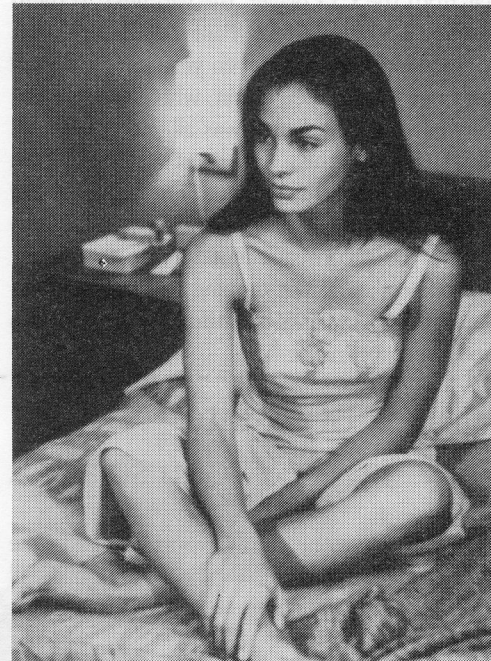
Story 2: The girl, the crime. A director (Malkovich) meets a sales assistant (Sophie Marceau) in a shop. Fleeting glances (between the two) turn to uncomfortable stares. He leaves, she follows and she tells, "I killed my father - stabbed him twelve times".

Story 3: Don't look for me. A married man (Peter Weller) has an affair with a young woman (Chiara Caselli). Exasperated by his inability to decide between his wife or the young seductress, his wife leaves him. She moves into a rented flat and meets Carlo (Jean Reno) whose wife has just left him and taken all the furniture with her.

Story 4: The body of dirt. Vincent Perez chats up Irene Jacob and walks with her to church. He suddenly wakes up in the church

and desperately searches for her, he catches up with her and asks "Can I see you tomorrow?", she answers, "Tomorrow I...".

Depending on the way you look at it, the endings are either tragic or incredibly amusing. Despite being four separate stories the underlining tone of *Beyond the Clouds* is melancholy mainly due to Malcovich's thought provoking narration. This film is about love, and its novel approach makes for an interesting view.



film: beautiful thing matt crompton

If I had to name the worst part of *Beautiful Thing*, I'd have a hard job deciding between the soundtrack and the ending. Very much a feel good movie, it tells the tale of Jamie (Glen Berry) and Ste (Scott Neal), two teenage boys who fall in love. Two straight actors play the main parts and give a realistic edge to some of the awkwardness of the early steps of realisation, but the film's biggest fault lies in the speed and simplicity with which they come out. If anything the plot belittles the difficulties the boys would face in reality, especially in the uninviting setting of the

Thamesmead estate.

Coming out would be so much simpler if all mothers got used to the news of a gay son as quickly as Sandra (Linda Henry). There is a horrendously naff wailing violin soundtrack, with some Mamas and Papas thrown in from next-door neighbour Leah (Tameka Empson) and her drunken antics, but if you can ignore it the scattering of humour brings out a good laugh. In fact it is the humour which saves the film, with some excellent one liners from Sandra's prat of a boyfriend Tony (Ben Daniels). And the ending? Well, the less said the better.

video: jack and sarah kt

Richard E. Grant (*Withnail & I*) plays Jack, a successful lawyer married to the pregnant Sarah (Imogen Stubbs). After moving into their new house and having a house-warming party at which Jack gets hideously drunk, Sarah goes into labour. In the ensuing panic Jack is knocked unconscious. He awakes later to be told that Sarah has died giving birth to a baby daughter, whom Jack names Sarah. At first Jack turns to the bottle for comfort, but his parents soon make him face up to his responsibilities by leaving baby Sarah with him. During his adjustment to fatherhood he hires Amy (Samantha Mathis) an American nanny with too little experience in looking after small babies, resulting in several arguments between her and Jack. After regaining his feet Jack begins dating again but it

is only when Amy leaves, having told Jack she's fed up with being taken for granted, that Jack realises how much he has come to love Amy.

Richard E. Grant plays the middle-class, prospective father in the typical way: appearing flustered, over-protective, and totally unprepared for fatherhood. Dame Judi Dench plays Jack's mother a woman, who has no faith in her son's ability to cope with a new-born baby and certainly doesn't agree with his choice of babysitter.

The film, although dealing with rather tragic circumstances takes a rather light-hearted view of it and has some extremely funny scenes, the dialogue including some wonderfully timed sarcastic one-liners from Jack.

This video is well worth checking out if you're after a video which requires the minimum of concentration to follow the story-line.

album: the blue nile -

peace at last davros c. dick

Your faith can be sorely tested when the sign you've been waiting for is not quite all that you expected. So it was with me when 'Hats' (The Blue Nile's second album) was released in 1989, some six years after their first stunningly beautiful creation. The two now sit side by side, never far from the CD player, the gap next to them waiting to be filled by Paul Buchanan's next vision. And here it is, seven years on (and with only one tour to their credit, where the religious fervour of the audience was all-encompassing). But what of this, the latest offering? Best described as earthy, perhaps. The polish of the first two albums has been tarnished to a degree where the accompaniment for the first track, 'Happiness', is a foot tapping on echoing floorboards. And it works beautifully, growing into a rousing gospel praise-be.

album: 808 state -

don solaris bEA

808 State were one of my favourite bands of the late 80's, and tunes like 'Pacific' and 'Cubik' will always evoke happy memories. 'Ex-El' was a pioneering album and although they haven't released anything since 1992, 808 State have turned out some stonking remixes, notably of Bomb the Bass and Björk.

Unfortunately, this album falls disappointingly short. Occasionally they let loose and come up with some pretty good tunes, such as on 'Lopez' sung by James Dean Bradfield of the

Never before have the drums been left so barren of effects as on 'Love Come Down', refreshing in their simplicity. Not that everything on the album works; 'Holy Love' is the worst thing they've ever committed to tape, and thankfully short. Whilst the music is still largely resplendant, the lyrics are strangely limp. You can only sing love and yeah yeah yeah so many times before it becomes passé.

Redemption comes in the form of 'God Bless You Kid' and the obligatory sparsely-decorated 'Family Life'. These two are the true saviours but I now know from experience that the rest will reveal themselves in their own good time. When a Blue Nile disciple hears the strains of 'Tinsel Town in the Rain' emanating from his neighbour's house, he is seen to nod sagely - belief is never more powerful than this. Only the most hardened agnostic will not be swayed by at least some part of this album. Go on... light a candle (8)

Manic Street Preachers, and the 'Pacific' -esque 'Joyrider', but the rest of it is rather different.

Almost every tune comes over like a poor mixture of other people's work, sounding in turn like Mike Oldfield, Jah Wobble, Aphex Twin and predominantly the Future Sound of London. Breakbeats surface sporadically but apparently without purpose - their presence seems only to be a nod to current fashion.

At worst, this sounds like a cross between lift muzak and late-70's children's TV themes, with some beats thrown in. It never comes close to emulating the craft of its 'influences', and just ends up tired and cliché-ed. A big let-down (2)

gig: sleeper + longpigs +

octopus nick

It was an indolent night at Brixton Academy, with all three bands from the same label. First up was Octopus, who supported the Auteurs at their last London gig. They've improved vastly since then; the trumpets have tightened up and the lyrics are delivered with passion. The band play fairly middling songs which tend to become a little confusing at times, due to so many things happening at once. It seems as if all the band members are playing a solo simultaneously. Having said that, the final track of the set is the excellent current single 'Your Smile' and the band leave on a high note.

By the time Longpigs come on, Brixton academy has turned into a sweat box and the frenetic moshing encouraged by Crispin and co. does little to cool the air. Brilliant renditions of the brilliant tracks on a brilliant album makes the set, well, brilliant. The whole crowd join in with that scream from 'She Said' and the band leave the venue buzzing with excitement.

I have to admit it, I thought Sleeper were going to be crap live. How wrong can you be? The stage starts off in pitch darkness and sud-

denly guitarist Jon Stewart is illuminated by two piercing spotlights, frantically strumming the first chords from 'Dress Like Your Mother'. The drums kick in and then Louise appears - the kids go utterly bonkers. And this is just the start.

Louise commands all the attention, scampering round the stage like a rabbit on speed, and mad-man drummer occasionally stands up to beat the hell out of his kit. All this energy builds up into 'Inbetween', the Sleeper anthem. The crowd descend into total insanity - everyone in the gig is pogoing up and down, including the thirtysomething couples with their arms around each other. Most of the rest of the material is from 'The It Girl' but the old favourite 'Delicious' sends all the teenage lads into a frenzy, and one even makes it onto the stage.

Sleeper hammer through 'Sale of the Century', 'Lie Detector', 'Good Luck Mr Gorsky' and several more until the set ends with the loudest bit of feedback/random drumming I have ever heard. The encores were 'Shrinkwrapped' and the band's debut single 'Alice', a blast from the past if ever I heard one.

That's how wrong I was - top tunes, top lights, and a top bird - what more can you ask for?

singles: jason

tony monroe - open invitation

Sounds like a cross between Sleeper and Elastica, which has resulted in a very bland indie single.

the dharmas - three miles high

The singer sounds exactly like the one from the Blind Melons in this good track with country and western style violin.

ben folds five - where's summer b?

A song about the ups and downs of summer by this new American piano-led band.

jealous - not man enough

Totally unoriginal retro rock and roll at its worst which deserves to stay on the shelf.

dodgy - in a room

The first release from Dodgy's third album which has a strong psychedelic feel to it. Brilliant.

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singles: paul

stonysleep - this kitten is clean

If you like Sonic Youth's style of weird experimental grunge then you might like Stonysleep. Problem is that it's not really experimental when Sonic Youth have already done it.

dave clarke - no-one's driving

This really is top quality techno. If nothing else, buy it solely for the amazing hyperspeed Chemical Brothers mix. Sorry, but I've just got to go and dance round my bedroom...

goya dress - crush

Uh-oh, another of those breezy summertime indiepop singles. Sounds ace now but will doubtless be forgotten come September.

baby fox - jonny lipshake
Dreamy and dubby, Baby Fox could well be the next Massive Attack.

This song is just beautiful. Perfect chill-out music.

raw stylus - change

More of the same acid jazz from Raw Stylus. Dead cool, but you'd be better off buying the album, most of which is as good or better than this.

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album: porno for pyros - good god's urge paul

Jane's Addiction albums were always inspiring. They invoked emotions, whether it was the sadness of 'I Would for You', the angry resentment of 'Had a Dad' and 'Been Caught Stealing' or the mellow wistfulness of 'Mountain Song'. Every song made you feel something.

Unfortunately the same can rarely be said of Porno for Pyros, the current project led by ex-Janes frontman Perry Farrell. The problem for Perry is that his new baby will always be judged against the immensely high standards of its older brother. The sad truth is that Porno for Pyros seem increasingly unable to reach these standards.

Don't get me wrong, 'Good God's Urge' is musically a very good album. Compared to the output of most other American alternative bands these days, it is brilliant. It's definitely better than the previous album, which was universally slated for its sheer mediocrity. The crucial point is that despite using many of the same musical styles and ideas of Jane's Addiction, the end product just doesn't quite hit the spot.

The new tracks touch on a new vein of psychedelia and blissed-out coolness but the sound is still the same. The overall impression is that Perry has calmed down, stopped being angry and has now gone all mystical. 'Tahitian Moon' and 'Kimberly Austen' stand out in this respect, and are the ones that come close to repeating past glories. The rest is good - occasionally 'rocking', occasionally beautiful - but rarely brilliant (7)

album: placebo - placebo jason

Placebo arrived on the music scene at a point when Britpop seems to have nearly run out of steam and a multitude of clone bands have swamped the charts. Undeniably there are still some very good Britpop bands out there but it seems that Placebo are heading in just one of the directions that new guitar-based alternative music is progressing towards.

The lead singer has a very distinctive whining voice and has spent most of his life in the tiny country of Luxembourg. There is an ever present sexual undercurrent throughout the album,

as in the possibly autobiographical 'Nancy Boy' where the lead singer's bisexuality comes to the fore. An immense feeling of sadness and sorrow permeates most of the record, particularly in songs such as 'I Know' and 'Lady of the Flowers', a trait seen in some great albums of the recent past such as the Smashing Pumpkins' 'Siamese Dream'.

There is another side to Placebo, heard in their debut single 'Bruise Pristine' and the current '36 Degrees', which are full of sheer exuberance and racing grating guitars. Placebo sound very progressive and the release of this album is bound to herald the emergence of more 'alternative' indie bands. Who knows, it might even do some good (7)

gig: dissident prophet vik

A few months ago I gushed forth phrases like "the best new band in Britain" about this unknown Brummie foursome. Well, they're still unknown but if anything they're getting better so it can only be a matter of time before others are saying the same things about them.

For a group who've been together for a relatively short length of time, they are disarmingly confident (note: not arrogant or swaggering). But

then you would be if you were all expert musicians who played rock songs which have more passion, more quality and more substance than you'd find in the dreams of almost any other band you care to mention.

That they can not play 'Unconditional Love', a *tour de force* of wrenching beauty, yet still play a set which lacks nothing (other than some crowd input, but then no crowd, no input) says everything about their output and their talent. May their musical reign be ushered in soon...

thanks: all reviewers - and everyone else vik

Okay, so this is my opportunity to come over all cheesy and soppy (that's a warning by the way, not an apology).

I just want to thank all the people (Alok, Andy Steele, Andy Thompson, Babe Magnet,

bEA, Caroline, the ever-mysterious Davros C. Dick, Ian, Jason, Jim, K.S. Pulaski, Little Jack Home-y, Lucas, Mark, Max, Mr. Happy, Mr. Trout, Nick, Paul, Paul Shore, and Rachel) who have contributed to the music pages over the last year and made life easier for me. Thanks also to Catfish for stepping in with the hatchet at regular intervals.

You can vom now...

What is she *like*?

The first time I met Rachel was around 18 months ago. It was less than a week into my term as DP(F&S) and Rachel came to interview me. Even at that early stage she demonstrated her eye for an interesting story as well as her passion for various metals (the interview was regarding the Union's plumbing!). It was here that I first witnessed arguably Rachel's greatest strength; her ability to charm the socks off absolutely anybody. Her natural friendliness and approachability have been a great asset to Felix throughout the year.

Editing Felix is a difficult job and Rachel has had her fair share of stress and frustration. From coping with the male dominated working environment (even by IC standards) through to balancing the views of College, the Union, various Clubs and Societies and individuals. This proved to be an impossible task, as highlighted by a remark she once made: "Since everybody regularly complains that Felix is biased against them – I must be doing something right!"

Throughout the year Rachel's dedication has been amazing. Many of us have worked a twenty hour day at some stage in our time at IC, but how many of us can claim to have worked these hours twice a week for most of an academic year?

Rachel's approachability has also caused her a lot of frustration. Regularly during the busiest time of her week somebody would request time to talk through an issue, often completely unrelated to her post as Editor. This frequently reduced her minimal mid-week sleep to none at all. In fairness, few people realise the effort involved in producing Felix every week, I certainly didn't last year.

If you feel this reads a little like an obituary then I apologise, but I suppose in a way it is. The Rachel Walters Felix dies with this issue, and very soon the Rachel Walters Iron Girder will come of age.

Dan Look

Apparently it's 'traditional' to write some nice words about the outgoing Felix editor in the last issue, and as one of the general no-lifers and permanent fixtures of the office, I've been nabbed as one of the men to do the job. Erm... what to say? OK, I'll be methodical about it;

1. Comparison with Other Felix Editors I Have Known

That only gives me Owain (last year) to compare to. Very different! More prone to passing out than Owain, and shorter too. Also more female. Rachel has been very successful this year in getting on with – and talking to – 'them upstairs' in the Union Office. This can only be a good thing, and I've been very impressed with the long-term attitude she has taken to money and planning issues. I've heard too many grim tales of Editorial Folly in the past, but this year I think Rachel has left a positive mark on Felix and the Print Unit. The Great Separation of Felix and Print Unit is upon us, and Rachel has also spent a huge amount of time ensuring that the Handbook gets produced more efficiently (or at all).

2. General Compliments on Character, Style and Punctuality

Rachel is - when not doing twenty things at once - one of the most disarmingly friendly people I have come to know at Imperial. She's coped with having to justify and defend Felix under attack from some quite hideously rude and two-faced people this year (no names) and managed to do so politely (although it's just as well they don't hear what happens when they leave the room).

Rachel is very supportive of her Felix 'lackeys' and has had to perform emotional open-heart surgery more than once this year. She's been more than just an Editor, but a great friend to many people, and I doubt whether I would have survived this year without her.

3. But is She a Babe?

Undoubtedly.

Mark Baker

So you read Felix this year – what did you think the person who organised it was like? Did you read those editorials and think "My God, what the heck are they on?" Or wonder at the belief that things could change? Or maybe you didn't even realise that Felix has a full time editor.

What many people don't recognise is the job's isolation, something that I still find incredible. The trouble is that when the Editor has to spend the vast majority of their time cooped up in a dreary office (as much as they may try to get out) the public all too often consists of the minority of readers who come in to complain.

Positive reaction from students or staff had a similar positive effect on Rachel as it did on last year's editor. As the year progressed it was frightening to see how Rachel's reactions to events became so similar to her predecessor's. Perhaps seventy-plus hours a week in this office has an effect that is impossible to withstand.

But can it be a year since Rachel bounded down the stairs in the Union ecstatic at her decisive victory in the elections? It seems like another lifetime when we were planning those hustings speeches which filled me with terror. Like everything else that resulted from her election, she managed to take it all in her stride. There is no doubt though that her time as Editor has had significant effects on Rachel, not all of them things that she might have liked. I suspect that it may be quite some time before Rachel is seen around the Union, or in College at all, after July. Disillusionment with vast tracts of College, the Union and journalism seems to have increased as the year has progressed.

For those of us left, it is sad that Rachel feels so strongly about getting out of Imperial since it was here that most of us met her. There aren't many people who can talk Irish politics and organised religion in an inebriated state and still vaguely make sense.

Andrew Dorman-Smith

LETTERS TO FELIX

Dear Felix,

I and the rest of the band "Urban Spice" were very suprised to read that our performance at the union on February 9th had won an award as we didn't know we'd been entered (*Felix* 1060). We would like to thank STOIC for sending the tape in and selflessly taking all the praise on our behalf.

We must all congratulate STOIC on their success as so many unscrupulous people these days would not ask the band before entering a video of one of their gigs into a competition now would they?

Urban Spice (Simon Wilkins, Stefan Finch, Rick Aldred, John Martin, Russel Stothard)

P.S. Do you know they charged us £10 for a copy of the video too!

Dear Felix,

I am extremely disappointed at the quality of your news reports. The article on the Iranian Society ban in last week's *Felix* (issue 1061) was full of inaccuracies, misrepresentations and even spelling mistakes.

First of all, I am not sure what your news team mean by the "incident in the Huxley building". Despite hot weather, poor air conditioning system and a late start imposed by the college security, the lecture went extremely smoothly, and no particular "incident" took place.

Secondly, I found your description of Dr Soroush (not Sonosh!) as someone who "is known to Scotland Yard" extremely offensive and derogatory. Dr Soroush is an internationally renowned thinker and philosopher who has been invited to some of the most prestigious academic institutions in Europe and North America. In any case, the fact that he spoke here at Imperial College can only add to the college's international reputation.

I very much hope that, in future, greater care is taken to ensure that college news is reported accurately and without distortion.

Yours sincerely,
A member of the audience
(Name withheld by request)

Dear Felix,

'We are sensitive to exam pressures, although some students may not believe that.' Ian Caldwell is so sensitive to exam pressures that as Head of Estates he allows the library to be taken over by workmen intent on making the life of those studying inside a misery.

Considerable numbers of students were so disrupted in their study over Easter Vacation by the horrendous drilling beneath Southside that some of them had to be given a second room in Weeks Hall. Maybe the fact that they have been monetarily recompensed leads Ian to the conclusion that he is 'sensitive' to student needs.

The latest, and most sickening incident of college's blatant disregard for students is the recently exposed 'Week's incident'. It just happened that work started at 8am each day and that a 'Let's impress the high and mighty' event was due to occur a few days later. The story may have been believable at the time, but how is the dispassionate Director of Estates going to live this one down?

If he is willing to stand up for what he did - and justify it - then maybe he deserves to be listened to, otherwise the man is exposed as a fraud. At the very least *Felix* should investigate every word of what he says before believing that the man is ever out for students rather than his precious VIP's and the plaudits of His Royal Highness the Rector.

Yours,
Disgusted of Southside
(name withheld by request)

Dear Rachel,

COMMEMORATION DAY 1996 -
CHANGE OF DATE

Please note that the date of Commemoration Day this year has had to be changed from Thursday 24 October to Thursday 31 October due to the Albert Hall being unavailable on the earlier date.

Yours Sincerely,
Jackie Sweet
Assistant Registrar

FELIX

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Suggestions for a final editorial, suitable for all occasions

a) One last irritable snipe back at the enemy

There are a few final ends to tie up: the Warden of Selkirk and Tizard Halls was quoted in an ambiguous context last week, for which I apologise. When he said that "there is no security in Halls other than that which the students provide themselves" I think he was trying to say that we are all responsible for those we let in. He was certainly not expressing any lack of confidence in security staff. But I have to say, Dr Hassard, that I would feel much more inclined to offer an apology if I had got the complaint directly from yourself, rather than second hand.

b) Luvvie tear-jerker

Mum and Dad: thank you for supporting me through it. I promise I'll get a proper job now. Inky: it's been fabulous.

c) Straight forward apology

I'm sorry: I tried to meet the students' complaint of "too boring!" and the staff complaint of "too sensationalist!" and failed at both. I'm moving on now - time for someone else to have a go.

d) Pathos-laden bid for the sympathy vote

It's been really, really difficult, and at the end of the day

maybe you all had very high expectations for what is still just a students' newspaper. If the Iranian Society speaker's name was misspelt, maybe it was because someone spent hours trying to track down a knowledgeable source before giving up to go to his Aeronautics lecture instead. We're tried our best.

e) Bid for freedom

Look, lighten up, will you? If you're not going to take it all with a pinch of salt and a healthy set of expectations, then I'm off. Up north to make girders for British Steel, actually. Wouldn't touch journalism with a ten-foot barge pole ever again.

f) Little-kid-meets-VIP awe

There was something tremendously inspiring about meeting the Rector. Somehow, and I don't know how, he made me feel really proud to be part of this tremendous institution.

g) Genuine nostalgia

I'm very, very tired right now, but I'm still not looking forward to saying goodbye to it all. I've had superb fun... and you know, there are bits of it I'm quite proud of.

h) All of the above.

Thanks for bearing with me.

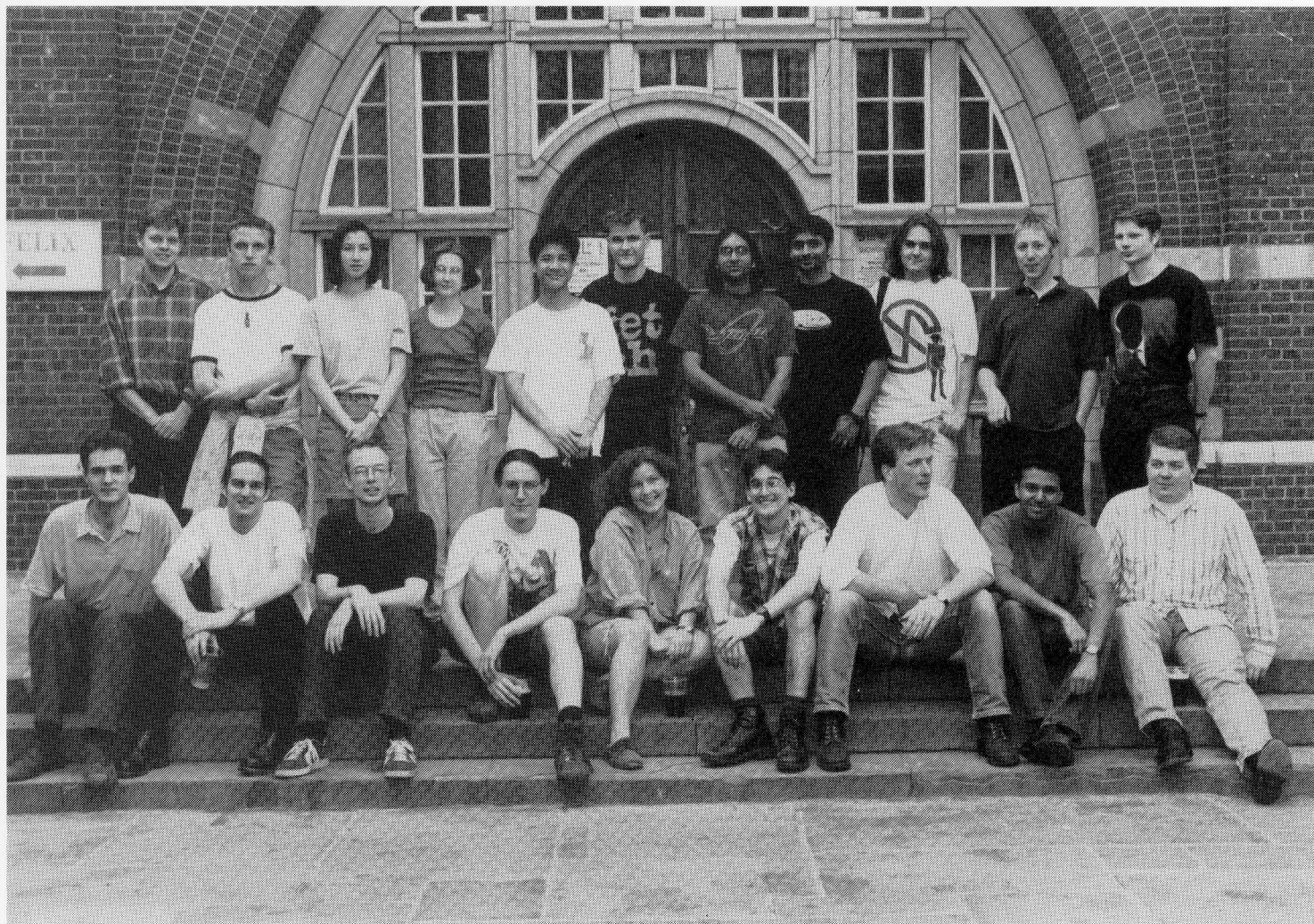
EDITORIAL TEAM:

NEWS: ALEX FEAKES FEATURES: MARK BAKER
SUB-EDITING: TIM ST CLAIR MUSIC: VIK BANSAL
CINEMA: WEI LEE PHOTOGRAPHY: IVAN CHAN
PUZZLES: CATFISH ARTS: JEREMY SCIENCE: BEN WILKINS
none!: MARK, TIM, JEREMY, ALEX, ROBIN, JON & MARK H
COLLATING LAST WEEK: ALEX, MARK, GIDON AND ROBIN

There really *isn't* enough room to thank all those who have contributed this year, even less so those who have supported, counselled and advised. The people who have been involved in Felix 95 - 96 have encouraged and inspired me, and a great many have become superb friends. What follows is 1600 words of in-jokes to thank just a few of them: it will probably not mean a great deal to anyone but those concerned, for which I make no apology. Allow me one last page of self-indulgence...

Thank you all. Rachel

Miles Ambler encouraged me to stand for the job in the first place and I still feel guilty that he didn't get his, but hey, he got the last laugh! • Is there anything that **Mark Baker** can't do? The ultimate in technical assistants, he was the one who actually got things done, and really is the person without whom it would never have been possible. What a starr... • So damning had **Simon Baker** been on my predecessors I was terrified to actually ask him to step over to the other side. I am still overwhelmed at his insatiable enthusiasm and perseverance long after I could be bothered to keep pushing the points. • **VIK BANISAL**: The most laid back man I've ever met, dedicated to the end, despite it being two days before his wedding! This man has more moral fibre than the rest of them put together, and I respect him immensely. • **Nat Barb**: Infectious enthusiasm, and a female to boot! Nat had an amazing knack of appearing just when there was no one else around. Thanks! • **OWAIN BENNALLACK**: What can I say? Hero, inspiration, mentor, person to take the piss out of... In retrospect I'm beginning to realise that I probably was quite useful to you, which might go in some small way towards returning the favour of giving me everything I have had. • The world is a better place for the idealism of **MARK BRIDGE**. I'm sorry I was too cynical for him. • It is a very great shame that Felix hacks of the future will never have known **Terry Briley**: our man on the inside; endlessly entertaining, but far more importantly someone who never hid the fact that he actually had rather a soft spot for students. • **Ian Caldwell**: Scapegoat '95 - '96. Single handedly helped achieve the one goal I really felt I made: to actually begin to tell the students what was going on. • I need say nothing other than that **Ivan Chan** is a truly lovely guy, who probably never realised how much 'Mom!' appreciated his straightforward dedication and enthusiasm. • The fact that the one major argumental upset I've had all year was with **Matt Crompton** is a very great shame, because I have much fonder memories of that day when we had our photographs taken on the roof of the chemistry building. I think he has done a great job, though I continue to be intimidated by the tidiness of his desk. • **Juliet Decock** was the great unsung behind-the-chaos heroine of the early days, and the person who I really deserved nothing from at all. Thank you. • The presence of **PAUL DIAS** has a lot to do with me being here in the first place. That he has hardly spoken to me since is, quite frankly, crap. • **ANDREW DORMAN-SMITH** never let me get away with anything without an argument, which was pretty cool: I'd trust this man with my life. The craic's been good, and I'll miss you. • I honestly don't know what to make of **ALEX FEAKLES**: normally people I like aren't quite so infuriating! Thank you: for putting up with being patronised, for wanting to be here next year, and for Robert Fisk on the sofa. • **Dipak Ghosh** was superb (until he disappeared!), happily gifted with the unusual combination of being really keen and a good writer to boot! • I wish I'd had the courage to ask **Mike Hansen** for help earlier; not many in Sherfield are so honest, even if it's not what you want to hear. • **Nooman Haque**: the most prolific writer I have ever met, and, in the end, not like all the other kids... • As Tories go, **Stephen Hamilton** isn't all that bad! Besides, anyone who turns up just when the interest is beginning to thoroughly flag and quite happily takes on the most tedious job of the lot gets my vote! • **Sarah Hickingbottom** is one of very few of my old friends that actually weighed in, which meant a great deal. • **Katie Hopkins**, **Jenny Ho** and **Adrian Berry** were the great cogs on the frighteningly reliable cinematic team. They were so remarkably efficient I never got to know them, which is a bit of a shame. Thanks for all the effort! • What's great, what's exciting, what's fabulous? **Mark Horne** is definitely one of the good guys from upstairs, and one who seemed to appreciate how it was. "Whatcha, sex-god?" • Somehow **Jane Hoyle** has managed to come to terms with the great fiscal mess that is the Felix/Print Unit finances. Tirelessly helpful: it was great to have her around. • I have enormous admiration for **Mandy Hurford** and appreciate the fact that she listened to what I had to say. Thank you for making me feel worthwhile! • The only problem I have with **Jon Jordan** is that he makes me feel thoroughly inept: this man seems to produce brilliancy in everything he touches. But I like to think a little of it rubs off, and besides, he made exceptionally good company last summer. • **Wei Lee** has been the most reliable of the lot (by a long chalk) this year. He could never really appreciate how high an accolade that is. • If only **William Lorenz**'s talent was matched with the willingness to sacrifice his degree in the way this place demands! He's taken some superb pictures this year. • Not every Felix editor gets their own personal management consultant: I got **Dan Look**, an endless provider of 'meaningful management information'. Suffice to say that I couldn't have done it without him. • **Michael Ludlam** is the only person who has really driven me to despair this year, so I thank him for heightening the experience. There's no point in working your third consecutive 100 hour week if can't have someone utterly unreasonable giving you abuse at the end of it. • **Joe McFadden** is just about the only person who didn't patronise me as if Thursday evening stress was a great sign of weakness. Thank you for your support • I find **GIDON MOONT** fascinating because he's interested in all sorts of things I'm not! Thanks for all you've done. • **Steve Newhouse** is the only member of the old school that made me really feel proud to be part of some sort of a heritage. Also an exceptionally useful information service! • Ah, the life of **Robin Riley**, late-comer on the news team and all round good bloke • **Claire Samuel** pottered in and out during second term with an enormously uplifting cheery smile and some rather good theatre reviews. • If only it didn't sound like such faint praise to thank **Tim St.Clair** heartily for being so thoroughly useful all year. Good luck in whatever you end up doing. • **Andy Sinharay**'s idealism and continual enthusiasm provided a motivating force at many of those times when I really couldn't be arsed any more. I'm really sorry he couldn't make it back in the end, but am touched that he cared so much. • **Eric Stables** will probably not remember the November morning he stopped me on the walkway at 8am on a Friday morning to tell me how much he enjoyed Felix. It helped immeasurably. • **Rody Thompson**: If not quite God, than certainly a god of some sort. • Things have changed since this time last year when I told **Jeremy Thomson** that he terrified me: If only he wasn't so damn unreliable! His enthusiasm has made it all worthwhile. • **Melanie Thody** has been saying supportive things at sporadic intervals all year, generally making me feel big and important. People like that help a lot! • Most misunderstood '95 - '96: **TIM TOWNEND** has really pissed me off a couple of times this year, but underneath that bulldozing exterior there is a highly motivated, enthusiastic, innovative and hugely intelligent man. If only he could learn the meaning of tact and diplomacy more might have realised what an exceptional job he's done this year • **Graham Trevitt** made me a lovely pizza once, and he has been a great escape. • There have been a couple of occasions when I have really wanted to thump **JONATHAN PROUT**. But when he was sober he showed a great knack for writing and at least he was funny when he was pissed. • **Andrew Tseng** told me smugly I was bound to end up as editor about a fortnight after I first walked into the Felix office. Thank you for your confidence in me! • I am forever grateful that **Louise Van der Straeten** indulged my game of playing shops whilst explaining VAT to me for the 17th time. Thank you for your patience. • **Sarah White** put up with me patronising here all year. This woman has remarkable patience and has been a superb ambassador • **Ben Wilkins** has provided the only part of Felix that I could say has been consistently excellent. He also has an inexplicable, but damn handy enjoyment of collating. And if that wasn't enough, he's a lovely, caring and hilarious bloke. • The first time I met **Piers Williams** I thought he was utterly horrendous: my first impressions have always been useless. Thanks for explaining all that Pub board stuff I knew nothing about, and good luck next year! • **Yvonne Woods** and **Ian Richardson**: thank you for feeding me. Emotional sustenance only goes so far!



Back, left to right:

Carlo Massarello (science), Paul Christian (music), Jenny Ho (cinema), Katie Hopkins (cinema), **Wei Lee** (advertising, cinema editor), **Andy Thompson** (printer), Jason Ramanathan (music), **Vik Bansal** (music editor), Robin Riley (news), **Jeremy Thomson** (arts editor, assistant printer), Adrian Berry (cinema).

Front, left to right:

William Lorenz (photography), Nick Osborne (music), Jim Wright (music), **Mark Baker** (features editor, layout and design), **Rachel Walters** (editor), **Tim St.Clair** (puzzles, sub-editing and proofing), **Alex Feakes** (news editor), Aunindya Sinharay (news), Andrew Dorman Smith (news).

Absentees deserving a special mention: Simon Baker (columnist), **Ivan Chan** (photographic editor), **Juliet Decock** (business manager), Nooman Haque (features), **Jonathan Trout** (sport), **Ben Wilkins** (science editor).

FELIX

ICU's Last Days in Beit Quad?

FELIX

endings & beginnings

FELIX

Hizb-ut-Tahrir Move into Imperial

FELIX

Rag Man Awash with Free Spirit

FELIX

Princess Anne at Elec Eng

FELIX

"Made In Britain" Estates Back Down on Sheffield Move

FELIX

Lanstead Scapegoated in Halloween Debacle

FELIX

Physicists Fuming Over Ban

FELIX

MP Mellor Sinks Boat Club Plans

FELIX

Students Snatch Intruder in Weeks

FELIX

Charity Losers Rag Week in the Red

FELIX

IC Loses £2 Million in Tory Budget Cuts

felixed

FELIX

Mary's 'mad cow' research success

FELIX

Medics threaten to block BMS planning bid

FELIX

Biomedical plans delayed again

FELIX

Fire services face funds cut

FELIX

Tories plan to abolish student grants

FELIX

Mayhew: IRA must call ceasefire again before talks

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Biomedical plans stalled once more

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Jokes prevail over issues at sabbatical hustings

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Sabb results 'predictable' Lowest ever turnout in ICU elections

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Voter's block clouds elections

FELIX

IC Boat Club banned from race

PRIVATEYES

CHINESE SATELLITE HITS RCS2

FELIX

IC universally unchallenged

FELIX

White next ULU President

FELIX

IC still ranks 3rd in Times league

FELIX

Labour party will abolish grants

FELIX

ICU "job shop" plans thwarted

FELIX

£6 million blown in Ariane disaster

FELIX

'No confidence' vote for Ghassan

Felix 95-96
 Editor: Rachel Walters
 Printer: Andy Thompson
 Thank you.

FELIX

95 96
 The year in review

none!

The Men's Room
 ALL MEN ARE BASTARDS!
 My boyfriend left me for an Equation!

Real-Life Drunken: I FOUND LOVE THROUGH THE INTERNET!
 Position of the Berrigat

Happy Hecoseppes for you and your man

Summer Fashion Guide