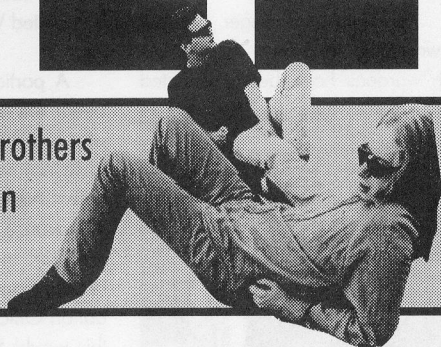


FELIX

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Elite admissions oust the lower classes

FELIX NEWSTEAM

Imperial has continually reinforced its position amongst the countries elite institutions - and a new report has revealed this can be largely attributed to an elite intake.

Rankings placed IC second worst in teh UK for bias against state schools, with only 53 per cent of its intake coming from comprehensives, just one percent more than Cambridge. The ranking was based on a projected figure which was correlated to the A-Level requirements of the intake. The College fared no better in the class stakes, ranking as the seventh most socially exclusive higher education institution with just 5.1% of its intake coming from the poorest neighbourhoods. However, as the Government formulates its strategy to tackle high drop-out rates, Imperial has little to worry about with a rate of only 3 per cent - a figure being closely related to the high entry requirements.

The figures, compiled by funding body HEFCE, are the results of a socio-economic analysis of admission figures for the 1997-98 academic year. They formed part of Higher Education's first ever performance indicators, and have highlighted the apparent boundaries that those from less affluent backgrounds face throughout university education.

The average 27.4 A-Level point score obtained by Imperial students will undoubtedly affect the demo-



Student hardship for the new age

Photo: Jonas

graphics of admissions according to ICU President Tasha Newton. Finding it difficult to identify a particular cause for IC's ranking (which accounted for each institute's entry qualifications) she stated, "A-Level results are an established and fair way of doing things and that means certain groups will not be admitted, but it is extremely concerning that those from state schools are excluded."

The College cites the community work, the Pimlico connection,

and the schools liaison scheme as major systems in their campaign to attract the best students irrespective of their background. Dr J Hassard, the physics department's school liaison officer explained "as far as recruitment is concerned, I can assure you that we neither discriminate against nor favour state schools. We always go on ability".

Unfortunately, contrary to popular belief, Imperial may not be doing its best in attracting the widest range of the best students.

Dr Hassard explained: "We do our best with open days and summer schools, but we get a smaller percentage of respondents from state schools than we'd like... We give UCAS seminars - but we find some private schools decline since they run their own extensive and intensive interview training, workshops on filling in forms, guidance on what counts... which are probably denied most to state sector pupils".

Dr Eastwood, Director of Planning and Management Information Systems, who is involved with the College's admissions, stated categorically that Imperial College certainly does not make it policy to exclude anybody; it is open to all who wish to come here and satisfy the minimum scholastic requirements. He pointed out "The one thing we will never do is lower our admissions criteria. It would be unfair to students if we did so - lowered entry standards might lead to students struggling and eventually dropping out", he stated, noting that "we do well on drop-out rates. When people come in, they stay here to complete their degrees".

The Government are expecting the Higher Education sector to take action over areas of weakness identified by the performance indicators, Imperial College Rector, Lord Oxburgh stated that "It is entirely appropriate for government to identify its priorities and for universities to respond, to the extent that they do not compromise their prime missions."

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Halls millennium night by torchlight

JIM GEACH

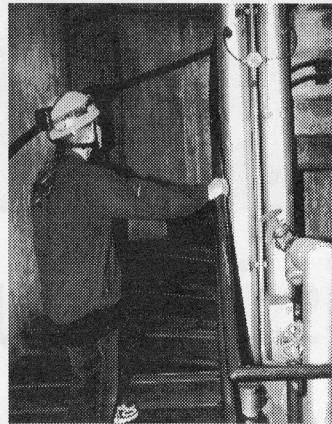
Students in College accommodation have been warned that, unless specifically stated otherwise, they will not be allowed to stay in halls over the millennium weekend - despite the fact that their rooms have been paid for. The Rectors Committee for Student Residences (RCSR) have made this decision based on fears of the possible failure of emergency services and utilities, as well as the "greater risk of health and safety issues" associated with the turn of the millennium. President Tasha Newton explained "Over the summer there was an idea from College that all students should be moved into one hall, to look after them all in one place". That idea has since been dropped by the RCSR and it has been decided that people should stay in their own hall, but should explicitly state whether they will be there or not.

Many students have expressed concern over the fact that they will not have the freedom of deciding at the last minute whether or not they want to stay in London during this period, and there has been a suggestion that College are in breach of contract on the matter.

Questionnaires were distributed to all halls in November, instructing

students to state 'yes' or 'no' as to whether they will be staying in Halls over the millennium weekend, of which only an estimated 600-800 were returned.

Residences Manager Sharine Brown stated in a letter to students that "wardens have been instructed



Happy new year Photo: Jonas

not to grant permission for any guests to be in Hall between 18.00 hours on 27th December 1999 and 18.00 on 2nd January 2000". The letter went on to say that failure to comply with these terms will be considered a "disciplinary offence". Kevin Butcher, Deputy President (Education & Welfare) commented that "barring students access to their rooms is unfair",

and the action is merely scare mongering by the College to prevent too many celebrating students staying in Hall over the millennium period, and thereby causing a heavy demand on a depleted Warden and security service.

A particular group affected has been the international population, who live a long way from home and have not seen loved ones for some time. One such student had arranged in advance for his girlfriend to stay with him in hall over the Christmas holiday, and up until the Accommodation Office stepped in, he was told this would be fine. Confusion set in when the letter was received, informing him that the guest would not be allowed. After some distress, it was established that as long as the matter of deciding to stay in Halls is sorted out locally (ie so the Wardens and security of the Hall know you are there), then there shouldn't be a problem. Mr Butcher explained "it is the Union's job to tell students this". Thankfully, that case has now been sorted out, and the girlfriend can stay.

ICU is currently attempting to rectify the mass confusion, and is trying to let students know that as long as the Wardens and security know, they are well within rights to have access to rooms.

In Brief

CAMBRIDGE FAILED BY INSPECTORATE

Leading teacher training institution Homerton College, Cambridge, has failed an inspection by the schools standards watchdog, Ofsted. The inspectorate said that two out of six of Homerton's postgrad training courses in physical education were "poor".

BEER IS GOOD FOR YOU - IT'S OFFICIAL

Belgian scientists have found evidence to suggest that teenagers' consumption of soft drinks rather than weak beer is linked to breast cancer. The study, reported in *New Scientist*, shows that levels of the blood sugar regulating hormone insulin rise rapidly after drinking

sugar-filled soft drinks, but not after drinking weak (about 1% alcohol by volume) beer, which contains more complex carbohydrates. Inappropriate insulin release during breast development is thought to be involved in cancer, although the mechanisms are currently speculative.

LEEDS AWARDED £20 FOR INNOVATION

Leeds University has been massively buoyed by an investment of £20 million from finance giant the Forward Group, designed to help academics to commercialise new ideas.

Alan Wilson, Leeds Vice Chancellor, said he was thrilled with the agreement, which had taken about 18 months to put together. A new

management structure will offer dedicated expertise to academics wanting to take their inventions to the market.

RESEARCH: IS IT REALLY WORTH IT?

Vice Chancellors have asked researchers to update a study of the relationship between basic research and economic performance, to further back-up their demands for more cash from the government. Although comprehensive work was carried out by statisticians at Sussex University in 1996, these findings have now been seriously questioned, as they apparently "over emphasised the importance of the ability of basic research to generate useful new information".

Tuition fees threatened Medical Library relaid

SUNIL RAO

The run-up to Christmas should see a bombshell dropped - at least as far as university education is concerned. The Cubie report is set to strike a powerful blow against tuition fees north of the border.

This report is expected to feature amongst its recommendations (if the Consultation Papers published by the committee are anything to go by) the abolition of tuition fees, the re-introduction of grants, additional support for part-time and graduate students, changes to the means-testing system, and increased loans for students in Higher Education. The committee has visited a number of Scottish campuses and has received hundreds of written responses to its Consultation Papers.

The publication of the report will see Imperial College Union joining forces with virtually every other university in Britain - regardless of affiliation with the Aldwych Group (the student unions of the "better" unis) or the National Union

of Students (NUS) - in writing to MPs, Downing Street and every national newspaper. According to ICU President Natasha Newton, the letter will include text to the effect that "given the findings of the Cubie Report, we hereby request an immediate enquiry into the current fees and grants situation for students hailing from England, Wales and Northern Ireland".

While it is true that a similar report has less of a chance of having its recommendations operated here in England (Scotland has very few independent (private) schools and the Liberal Democrats, who have always campaigned against tuition fees, have far less power here) it does appear that the report will still have significant repercussions on the way student funding is looked at here "down South". The fourteen-member Cubie committee has as its convener Andrew Cubie, senior partner of leading Edinburgh commercial law firm Fyfe Ireland WS and former chairman of CBI Scotland (ironically one of the bodies in favour of retaining tuition fees).

ANDREW OFORI

Worries over the Charing Cross library renovation, voiced at the Vice Principal's Question Time last week, appear to have been addressed by the Feasibility Study Group.

Staff and students from Charing Cross highlighted a number of issues concerning the planned overhaul and restructuring of the library building. They felt that the new plans would reduce access to reference material, increase noise levels and possibly disrupt students studying for exams. Many were particularly concerned with the lack of consultation between the planning group and the Charing Cross community, but there has now been some positive response from the students.

With these issues in mind the Feasibility Study Group convened to layout the plans for each floor. The committee, made up of senior medical professors, estates personnel, contractors and the ICSM President, decided that the majority of the library would be housed on the second floor. Made up of 151 work places, the second floor facility will

include reference materials, a photocopying room, video workstations, library offices and PCs. The first floor will house a smaller section of the library along with UMO and other administrative offices. There are also plans for two seminar rooms on the concourse.

Worries about the reduced number of PCs were allayed by the fact the amount will increase. A review of the desks dimensions answered concerns about loss of desk space and the problem of increased noise levels was solved, partially by the floor plans and partially by soundproofing.

Retaining its common room, the ground floor remains largely in tact, on the other hand the lower ground floor will be the new home to 70 networked PCs, a journals store, four seminar rooms, a gym, and two student Union rooms.

Becky England, the ICSM President described the new plans as "fairly positive" and expressed her intention to follow the development of the plans carefully, and keep the students informed of all developments.

East Meets West show trades on past successes

JANNEN VAMADEVA

The cultural mixing point of the year which promised to be all things good from the East combined with the best aspects of the West, resulted in the annual East meets West show. The show, organised by the Indian Society, combined dance, music and comedy in an exhilarating performance with a distinctive flavour and style.

After an hour long delay, the comperes announced the plan for the evening with rousing jokes to hype up the already raucous crowd. The classic medic vs non-medic line, though thoroughly over-used amongst IC people, still managed to get a rapturous reception from a sea of vibrant colours and traditionally dressed people.

The Indian Society attempted - but did not truly manage - to merge the two different (yet beautiful) cultures. There would be a western act



The dancers grace the stage

Photo:Jonas

followed by an Eastern act, but there was no real mixing or fusion the two. One would have hoped to see western music with a traditional Asian dance such as Kathak or Bharatnatyam. Surely that would show the progressive nature of the East in combining with Western tradition?

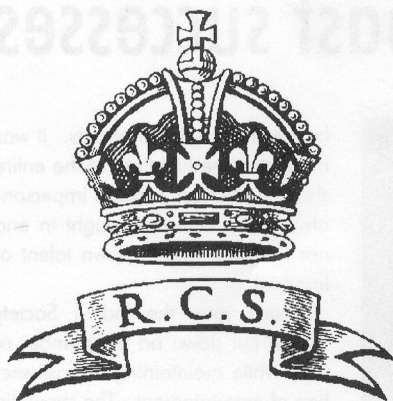
The traditional shows were all of a high standard - in particular Salman, Radhika and the dance routine Bugaboo. But why so many? One and a half hours to the interval is too long, and there is no need to do five versions of the same act. The impact of the show was weakened

by the sheer volume of acts. It was a pity that the highlight of the entire show, a Michael Jackson impersonator, was a dancer brought in and not from the home-grown talent of Imperial.

Next year, the Indian Society should cut down on the number of acts, while maintaining a cross-section of entertainment. The show did not really address the full breadth of Asia's heritage, and there were no oriental themes or bharatnatyam. Moreover, the show might have gained from the comperes allowing it to flow smoothly rather than intervening with their own brand of humour.

The show, although good and undeniably a success, can and should be made more professional. The aim of the organisers must be to develop the show - then the annual East meets West will truly be a spectacular combination of two great cultures.

Constituent College Unions



The history of Imperial is inextricably linked to the existence of the Constituent Colleges from which it was created. According to **Richard Taylor**, they represent our greatest asset - but an asset we're in danger of losing very soon...

One of Imperial College's greatest assets could be lost within the next few years unless students act now to save them. Constituent colleges are something that no other university has, and they have played a vital role in making Imperial College the fantastic modern centre of academic excellence that it is today. It is not without solid foundations that, in the ninety years since it was formed, Imperial has risen to become a name recognised and respected throughout the world in the fields of science and technology. It is through the constituent colleges and the traditions that are kept alive by the students of their respective unions that Imperial maintains its links with the formidable history of science in the Capital. It is these unions which I believe are in danger of disappearing.

You do not have to look very far to find a plethora of examples of how the CCUs enhance the lives of their students. City & Guilds and the Royal School Mines do a brilliant job of maintaining connections with both their graduates and relevant industries. The fact that the RSM Association is the acknowledged benchmark for excellence around the world in the mining and petroleum industries shows the level of prestige that at least one constituent college holds. Students have a group with which they can identify themselves - just by looking at the sales of 'Imperial Medics' and 'RSM' branded clothing it can be seen that the identity aspect of the CCUs is alive - at least in some quarters of the College.

Not all students in Imperial are the same. A quick comparison between Guildsheet, Prince Albert and Broadsheet - all of which are lapped up by their target audiences and shunned by the others - highlights this. It is not just different publications; the tastes and requirements of the students vary in many other aspects too. In order to deal with this, the people running the CCUs have recently decided that they need to attempt to provide every aspect of a Union, slightly tailored to their own students - but the idea that this approach is fundamentally flawed has been understood in the past. Very soon after the three older constituent colleges were brought together, their

students realised that certain aspects of their unions would benefit from centralisation and working together. Imperial College Union was created. However, even though this event took place the best part of century ago, the CCUs are still refusing to realise that this should have resulted in a drastic change in their primary role and *raison d'être*.

CCUs have their own presidents, offices, events, traditions and sports teams. Presently, they all state their primary role as "representing their students from an academic and welfare point of view."

"...CCUs are trying desperately to emulate every aspect of a union..."

You don't have to study this situation very hard to come to the conclusion that ICU is in a much better position to provide this core function. However, the CCUs insist on playing at providing some sort of academic and welfare provision, which is inevitably comprehensively out-classed by that provided by ICU. Even people who were at Imperial ten or fifteen years ago, at a time when the CCUs were much more successful than they are now, are amazed at the fact that today's CCUs are trying to emulate all aspects of a union.

One of the areas in which it is very easy to see the need for reform is the 'official channels' through which students, via their unions, communicate with the College on the quality of the education they are receiving. Under the present system, every year three CCU hacks stand for a position within their Constituent College Union called the Academic Affairs Officer (the medics have yet to adopt this system). It is highly likely that this person is someone who does not have the support of their peers required to be voted in as a Department Rep, and recent history suggests that they will then be elected on the basis of a handful of votes cast in a badly publicised and uncontested election. These people then go on to represent students on important College committees. Yet with a deputy president at ICU now responsible for education and welfare, the opportunities for change are now even more apparent - perhaps student representatives on College committees should be elected at ICU's Academic Affairs Committee or something similar?

If you are not a medical student there is a

good chance the first and last time you had any contact with your CCU was at your freshers welcome. The fact that a large proportion of what they attempt to do is duplicated by other groups (who do it better), gives rise to the popular opinion that the CCUs are ultimately pointless, and have no role to fulfil in the modern College structure. The argument that they have become outdated self-serving remnants of their former selves that eat up resources and do no-one any good is one which is all too easy to make. The next line of the argument usually suggests scrapping them, but this is not the solution. A fresh look desperately needs to be taken at the role, image and function of the CCUs - today's students have a very different attitude to those of ten years ago. For starters, they no longer come to university prepared to fail their degrees in order to put three years of dedicated effort into protecting their college's mascot.

The present situation and potential future of the CCUs is something that is of interest to the medics. They are even more proud and 'defensive' of their individual identity than other groups of Imperial students - indeed in many respects they far more to hold onto than the rest. At the moment I suspect the majority of the medics don't really see ICMSMU as a CCU,

but rather as an entirely independent and separate entity. There are many reasons why the Med School SU is bigger and better than the others, and though these are mainly connected to its recent emergence from a handful of independent organisations, it is also because ICMSMU fulfils the role played by Departmental Societies in most other departments. Although the Med School SU is by far the closest to running a 'proper' student union, they too have realms of their role which are duplicated and bettered by ICU. They too ought to be focusing on their core function - maintaining their own identity, culture and customs - and it would be a huge loss if these were in any way diluted by their proximity to IC. Ten or so years ago it would have been impossible to think that the traditions of the CCU's would have been reduced so much in significance as they have been in Mines, Guilds and the Royal College of Science. The way I see it, the medics have a lot more to lose than the scientists and engineers ever had. And although they are not yet in the same situation as the other CCUs, ICMSMU ought to be watching and learning from their mistakes.

Where are the solutions going to come from? How are we going to ensure that future

students can benefit from effective, lively CCUs? There is a need to streamline, rationalise, focus resources, and concentrate on key roles; if just some of this management speak was put into practice it is just possible that we could end up with some viable institutions that could survive well into the new millennium. We need to increase awareness of the CCUs massively - people should be aware that they are applying to, for example, 'The City and Guilds College at Imperial', yet at present the CCUs do not have a significant presence in either the College or Alternative Prospectus. Similarly, Medical School documents rarely refer to Charing Cross and Mary's as the great institutions which they are. Presently, people come to IC and then find out that they are also part of something bigger; an organisation with some substantial history and background. If the CCUs were more intimately associated with Imperial, then perhaps attitudes would be different - sports clubs are an important part of maintaining and promoting the separate identity, as are any other endeavours where students can represent their constituent college.

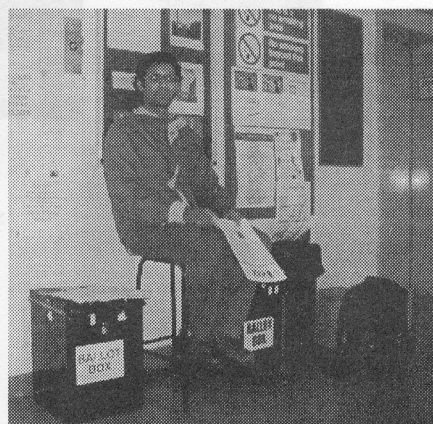
At present, the CCUs run some very important aspects of the union - for example, hosting the freshers welcomes allows them to provide the first impression incoming students get of the student body at Imperial. Dep Socs also fall under their jurisdiction, and these should be a key provider of ents and events tailored to their departments. While ICU's ents does what it does very well (namely Wednesdays, Fridays, Balls and Carnivals), quite what role C&G, Mines and the RCS should be playing - as the third tier in this system - needs to be clarified.

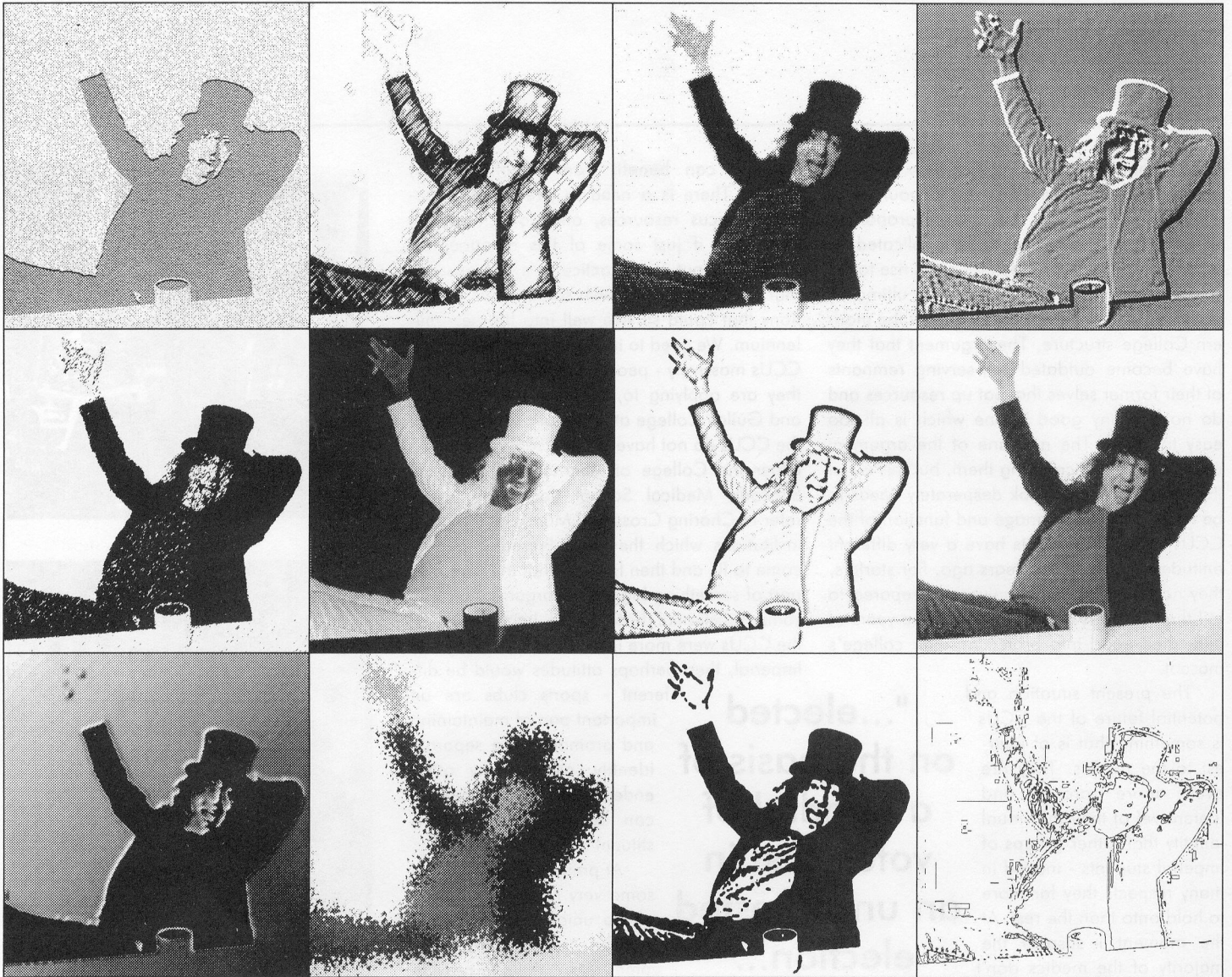
There are some brilliant facilities and opportunities provided by the Union in all its guises at Imperial. Too many students don't realise how fantastic ICU really is, and are too quick to criticise. Running the largest student venue in London and providing a haven of affordable fun in the capital is an excellent success that many other unions would love to be able to even come close to. The CCUs should be looking at how they can make a significant contribution to student life.

Which will be the first CCU to step back, look at the big picture and realise that - although drastic changes are required if they want to survive - they do have a lot to offer Imperial College?

Do you have an opinion? Any thoughts or comments? Then email felix@ic.ac.uk

**"...elected
on the basis of
a handful of
votes cast in
an uncontested
election..."**





"Thank God, you know, thank God for the pills."

Taslima Khan attempts to come to grips with the tragi-comic genius of Jerry Sadowitz

"GOOD evening Moose-Fuckers!" I remembered Jerry Sadowitz's infamous opening line that greeted the Montreal Comedy Festival audience as I waited outside his Camden Town home.

Although most recognisable as the front man on Channel 5's *The People vs Jerry Sadowitz*, Sadowitz is also an accomplished magician and stand-up comedian - his *Bib and Bob* comedy sketch show (written with Logan Murray) happily destroys any equal opportunities paragraph featured in job advertisements.

One of the sketches involves Sadowitz

being wheeled on stage as the paralysed actor Christopher Reeve. He is then launched out of his wheelchair wearing a red cape, in an attempt to fly. "*Bib and Bob* is just a bit of fluff. It's not artistic, but it reminds people that there is more to comedy than being neat and tidy. My only limitation is that there is a joke associated with a sketch - otherwise it's just a swear word or an action."

With all this in mind, Sadowitz at a distance is a disarming sight. Close-up, plainly annoyed and wearing a pine green dressing gown, he was frankly alarming. "Hi, erm, I've

come to interview you". Realisation dawned on Sadowitz's face: "I've overslept! Come in. Can you give me five minutes? I'll put some clothes on."

I sat amid piles of videos, CDs, playing cards and magic books. Sadowitz reappeared clothed: "Would you like some coffee? I'm having one myself. Help yourself to food" he said, gesticulating at the kitchen cupboards.

Sadowitz is 38. Born in New Jersey, USA, he moved to Glasgow soon after. Further

questions about his childhood are hand-waved away: "I had a much worse time than I would like to admit when I was younger. *Python* and magic kept me happy." Leaving school aged 15, he began to work in a Glasgow market, but stopped when he developed the illness St Vitus dance. "You start to go mental. You can't sit down, you can't eat. I used to go outside and cry. I took Valium and it disappeared. I thought 'thank God, you know, thank God for pills.'" I asked him to elaborate, but grabbing a pack of playing cards and shuffling them, Sadowitz replied: "It's all crap and unnecessary."

For a change of scene, Sadowitz moved to London, where he worked in Selfridges and later for BT. However, cutbacks lead to his dismissal, and, jobless and homeless, he returned to Glasgow, where he went to college and began doing stand-up.

Influenced by the anti-censorship style of Alexei Sayle, Sadowitz embraced the freedom of stand up - the freedom to say anything. "One day, I was standing up in my bedsit like the devil cursing the world. I remember saying: 'This is it. I'm going to go out in this blaze of hurt. I'm going to take every nasty thought in my head, every feeling and I am going to say as much of this as possible into a microphone.' It was almost like a fanatical revenge."

His break came in 1985 when he was asked to headline London's Comedy Store. This he did, travelling down from Glasgow every fortnight for two years. Audiences liked him, but the media and comedy promoters remained disinterested. "What I was doing was going down really well and I was a headline act, but no agent would approach me. In retrospect it was probably because the material was not of the politically correct variety enjoyed so immensely by the likes of Ben Elton.

"I actually thought I was doing something to move comedy one step forward in a new direction...putting comedy into a very open field - women, left-wingers and ethnic minorities. I'm a big coward offstage, but onstage, to the point of stupidity, I have no fear whatsoever. I went as far as I could go. I was dared to go out on stage and say 'Nelson Mandela, what a cunt.' I'll say it, but I need a joke to go with it."

Relocating to London, the promoter Malcolm Hardy became Sadowitz's manager. Bookings increased and things were looking up. But this didn't last. Sadowitz had created a comedy character called *Bing Hitler*, and the potential of the creation was spotted by another

comedian, Craig Ferguson, who produced an album of the same title, with similar material. According to Sadowitz, Ferguson admitted plagiarism and agreed to meet him with compensation money - but he didn't turn up. "I think it is quite a thing that I am still here and still sane. If I had to choose the saddest thing in the whole time I've ever been doing this - it was this time."

New frustrations arose. BBC2 had accepted Sadowitz's series, *The Pall Bearer's Review*, "I was proud of that. I scripted it, practically directed it. Alan Yentob was putting his arse on the line. Against all the silly stories he may have heard about me, he still said: 'Give him a series'". But again, Sadowitz's success was scuppered. Yentob moved to BBC1 and *The Pall Bearer's Revue* was not re-commissioned. A *James Bond* parody with Channel Four met a similar fate. "It's not really Jerry being Jerry, is it? We want Jerry Sadowitz to be Jerry Sadowitz."

These disappointments and an acrimonious parting with Hardy, amid accusations of stolen earnings, culminated in Sadowitz quitting the comedy circuit: "I couldn't bear it." Even now Sadowitz rarely watches television: "I daren't because I'll see material which is mine. I happened to switch on the TV and *Hale and Pace* had started. The first fucking gag was one of mine!"

Disillusioned, Sadowitz worked in a magic shop for four years and continued to invent magic tricks. "I ended up staying at my mum's. It was like a sad European film. I had one year of sort of being happy when I was 22 and in the last couple of years because I've been working and I'm being treated with a bit more acknowledgement".

"I have this philosophy in life which is 'anything you want you can get, but if you want it too much, you can't get it'. The two things I really wanted were, firstly, enough success with comedy that I could get my own place. The other thing was women. I have been deeply unsuccessful with women. I regret not chatting them up, not talking to them and not playing the games that girls and boys play."

Sadowitz shuffles the pack of playing cards again, fans them out and asks me to remove

one. "You know, I might have studied physics or something. I would love to have found a cure for something." Suddenly a school boy grin: "You know...I've got this manifesto of sexual communism which I would love to see implemented, I really would. There isn't enough in it for women though. I definitely think the world would be a much happier place if men were being serviced more." He laughs: "I'm convinced!" I place the card in the pack in a different location; he shuffles the cards again and produces my card from the top and smiles.

But what else does Sadowitz enjoy? "I like all kinds of comedy. I adore Steve Martin's live stand up - he's fucking wonderful. Eddie Izzard, the Alan Partridge character - I think that's brilliant." And Sadowitz loves classical music: Mahler, Chopin, Debussy and Delius are favourites. "John Barry: he's my idol." Jumping off his chair, Sadowitz disappears: "I've a photograph," he shouts. I'm shown Sadowitz with his arm around Barry. "I'm not homosexual but I'd give him a blow job," he said, gazing at the picture. "Genius. It's from God," he murmured.

Hang on a minute, something doesn't quite fit - you believe in God? "Oh yeah absolutely. All religious texts are crap - they should be put in the bin. Religion is a man-made thing, God isn't." Isn't genius a result of 'increased' brain cell connections, I suggested. "No, it's God," Sadowitz replied.

From God to his funeral - how will Jerry Sadowitz say goodbye? Oddly, this question unleashes a surprising level of vitriol. "I wouldn't want anyone to find out until a year later - fuck 'em! There's no point in being passed over for everything you fucking do and then suddenly everyone goes, 'Oh, Sadowitz is dead - really?' That would be a very typical thing that would happen to me. I'd have a huge tombstone. It'll say 'fuck you and your fucking flowers. Go fuck yourself!'"

"Can I get you another coffee?" Sadowitz shuffles the playing cards again and shows me another card trick. I catch a gleam in his eyes and maybe, just maybe, I can see the six year old Sadowitz watching his first magic trick: "It's escapism even today. I've been homeless, but I've always had cards on me. With them I am very happy and I can forget everything. It gives me great control. Maybe magic's the future for some sort of happiness."

Jerry Sadowitz remains the only comedian to be punched whilst onstage at the Montreal Comedy Festival.

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"...I'd have a huge tombstone. It'll say 'fuck you and your fucking flowers'..."

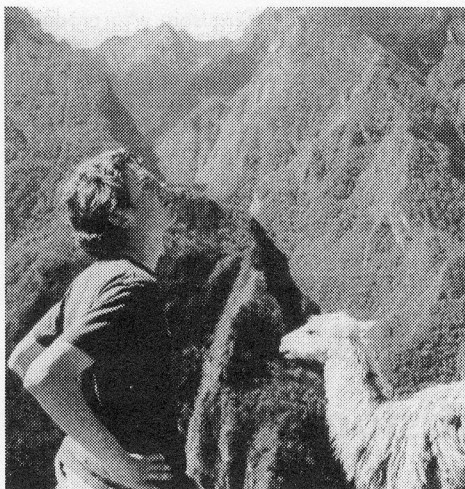
Lyng in a rain soaked tent on the verdant slopes of the Lake District, Tom, Alex and I inevitably knew that we were to return to the dense smog of the metropolis. If only we could have stayed in the salubrious surroundings of the windswept mountains... The conversation steadily rounded onto the subject of what-the-hell-we-were-going-to-do-in-the-summer-for-three-months - the idea of linking the two came quickly despite the numbness of our minds. On returning to London, the expeditionary machine rumbled into action. We discovered that one of our colleagues, Koen, had already done some research into the possibility of wandering around the Andes for a few days, and another fellow student, Andrew (a former rock climber) lent his input to the team effort. Having pulled together our ideas, along with an ambitious mountain climbing schedule, we set off to the IC Expeditions Board with our proposal. After half an hour of nerve-racking negotiations, it became clear that our plans were as watertight as a sponge....

As a group of inexperienced climbers, looking to scale the tallest tropical mountain in the world, the members of the Board had rejected us and told us to come back with some better proposals. Our appeals for sponsorship subsequently failed (though we did manage £10 worth of Burger King vouchers spent on a drunken night in Central London). Unfortunately, both Koen and Andrew joined expeditions that had been sponsored by the Expeditions Board, and our final team was reduced to four members: Tom, Alex, Paul and Tom's friend, Murray. To our great astonishment, one of our hopeful sponsorship letters was returned positively. One particularly generous little shop in St Albans had decided to let us look round their shop to see if anything might interest us. After a round of crafty dealing we walked away with almost £2000 of equipment at an astonishing 40% discount - such are the mathematical powers of IC students over mere mortals.... Almost overnight the distant dream had grown into fruition.

[preparation]

Acclimatisation to the extreme altitudes in the Peruvian Andes was paramount, and a trek in the stunning Cordillera Huayhuash with some American friends was deemed to be the ideal solution to this problem. The trek itself is another story, not without its own incidents, but there is little space for it here....

In order to augment our safety, it was decided that a guide would be required to provide his knowledge on Andean weather, mountain routes and the glaciers. The top mountain guide in the country recommended Maximo, and his enthusiasm for the task was second to none. Murray, however, had been ill since his arrival in Peru and had lost a lot of his strength. On our return from Huayhuash he had a pain in his lungs which turned out to be an infection, requiring him to stay in bed for four days taking antibiotics. As a result, our first peak, Pisco, was summited without Murray, and, although it was a relatively easy



ON TOP OF THE WORLD



peak, we did experience problems along the way, before battling our way to the top, to experience one of the best views in all of the Andes. The four of us arrived back in Huaraz the following day with a little more experience and acclimatisation behind us, before scaling Peru's tallest peak, Huascarán Sur.

Paul is an incredibly able bloke and he very soon earned my respect for his judgement. He's also a fussy bastard when it comes to food, so I was very glad when he took a keen interest in organising that aspect of our planned six days on Huascarán. He did a very meticulous job and turned out some fantastic meals in some extraordinary places.

The other issue of discussion was porters. I was personally of the opinion that we should not take them as it was (in a way) cheating - I wanted to climb this mountain myself. I could, however, see the very obvious reasons why it was sensible and was consequently passive when the others elected to take them. For Murray, however, there was no choice, as his weight had tumbled to 58kg and he simply had no strength left to carry his pack. The other danger was if one of us got ill, which would seriously jeopardise the chances of the others. Maximo came back with 3 unlikely looking porters: one a cook, one an experienced climber and one a pin ball machine!

[days 1 and 2]

The first day consisted of a 1200m ascent to base camp at 4200m. I had the squits, but through my experience trekking in Nepal (where the Delhi belly was a feature of everyday life) I've found the ideal cure: Dire Straits at high volume on the walkman! It was a very pleasant afternoon stroll with magnificent views, but rather distressing as we heard tale after tale from people descending who had failed to reach the summit because of high winds, altitude problems, crevasses and looming seracs.

The view that evening looking as we looked across the Rio Santa valley towards the Cordillera Negra (a range of snow-free mountains up to 5500m) was quite stupendous and did wonders for the already high morale of the group. We set off early the next morning for camp 1 (5200m). I was concerned that this step of 1000m was too much, especially for Murray who had been at 3100m for 5 days since the Huayhuash, and I still consider it nothing short of a miracle that none of us had any problems whatsoever that night. It was exceptionally cold and again we heard tales from teams sponsored by big name manufacturers of difficulties in the icefall just above camp 2 on the col. We were psyched, and our moods were buoyed by our lack of acclimatisation problems.

[day 3]

We set off very early, on our third consecutive day of clear blue skies, in order to make camp 2 before the snow had a chance to soften.

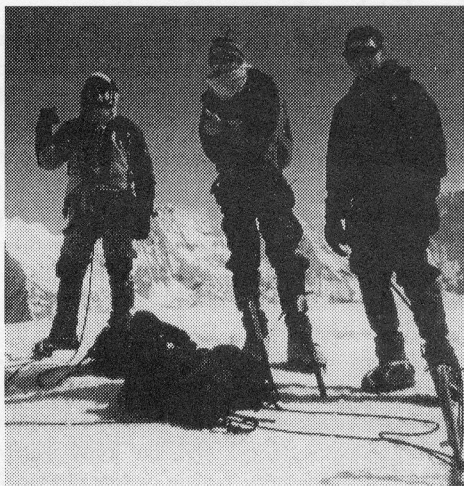
The wind was minimal but the air temperature was -20°C , and my feet quickly became numb. This was an incredibly exciting day - ascending very steep snow slopes, jumping crevasses and crossing avalanche-strewn slopes at 20 000 feet. We arrived at camp in winds of 30 knots and had some serious trouble pitching tent on a ledge above the icefall.

My feet had failed to thaw out since 6am and now, at 2pm, I was getting slightly concerned about frostbite. The star porters boiled some water, which I put in my water bottle in the bottom of my sleeping bag. My concern grew, as I could not feel this bottle - which was too hot to hold by hand. It took 45 minutes before I was able to feel anything. This was an agonising wait and once again the dangers of mountaineering (which I'd only previously read about) became reality.

Miraculously, none of us were experiencing any altitude sickness at all. Murray and I were chatting with nervous excitement as we were perched 850m below the summit of a mountain we'd been training to climb for four months, at the crux of an expedition we'd been planning for six more. Another bowl of mash, a few tunes from Dire Straits and we drifted into a light sleep.

[day 4]

At 1.30am the gale force wind was threatening to blow in one side of the tent. The air temperature was -25°C and we were wearing every layer of clothing possible, just trying to stay warm. The five minutes it took to stick on crampons and attach the ropes nearly proved disastrous, as every part of the body froze if it wasn't moved about violently. We were quickly off up the mountain, spurred on by adrenaline, the cold and an overwhelming drive to get to the summit. We met two Americans sitting in the snow as we ascended by the light of a full moon - they were extremely bright and chirpy despite the conditions. We continued past them, up 45° snow slopes towards the icefall at 6200m, but as we got closer the magnitude of the seracs towering above us (which had looked so small from camp 1) became apparent. Route finding immediately became extremely difficult, and we continually ran up dead-ends between seracs which threatened to topple at any moment. We figured the only way up was to climb about 7m vertically up the side of a serac. We waited while Maximo lead the climb and the cold bit through our clothes. I had not felt my feet since 2am. Of more concern was Murray's condition - he was starting to show signs of his lack of acclimatisation and was weakening rapidly. With great difficulty and effort we arrived on top of the serac, and within ten meters we were confronted by a crevasse three meters across, at the base of the vertical face of another serac. We debated this with Maximo, shouting against the wind whilst snow was driven into our faces, freezing our cheeks and making it difficult to speak at all. We held a firm belay on Max and he jumped across this crevasse, throwing the points of his crampons and ice axes into the face



GIANT CLIMBS IN PERU



of this serac, then traversing the face before collapsing in the snow, exhausted by his effort. With the safety of Max's belay the danger was taken out of our leap - but the effort to traverse the serac wasn't. We still had 400m to ascend, and the icefall showed no signs of relenting.

A few more crevasses, however, and we were through, with nothing but steep snow slopes between us and the summit. As we belayed each other up the final stages the sun rose. Warmth started flooding into our toes, fingers and faces and with just a couple of hundred meters to go nothing was going to stop us. The shadow of the twin peaks of Huascarán Sur and Norte was cast out like a pair of enormous breasts across the Cordillera Negra. The scenery was breathtaking. By this point Murray was moving incredibly slowly, stopping every ten paces and crouching over his ice axe. Shortly after 9am we reached the summit, a moment of absolute exhilaration. I threw my arms involuntarily around Murray, then Paul, Alex and Max as we came together on the domed peak of Huascarán Sur. The wind hadn't relented, our cheeks and feet were still frozen and Murray was in a terrible state. After a few photographs we started our descent. The wind made communication impossible and as we descended in solitude we could each try to digest our achievement. It was a quite wonderful feeling of elation and fulfilment.

As we descended, we passed a lone climber about 300m below the summit taking a peculiar line and going very slowly. It was still early in the day however and to get through the icefall alone would have taken some skill. He was clearly an experienced mountaineer and Max waved at him in acknowledgement so any concerns I had were immediately relinquished. He was never seen again. The circumstances were extremely peculiar. His Irish friends in the tent next to ours greeted us on our return to camp 2, and never put out an alarm call - so as we spent the rest of the day relaxing in our tents we assumed he'd come down safely and there was no cause for concern. On reflection this does seem an incredibly avoidable tragedy and it'll always be in the back of my mind - should we have said something to him to persuade him to come down?

[day 5]

This was probably the most difficult morning as the adrenaline had passed, the dangers were now minimal, it was bitterly cold, the wind was stronger than the previous morning and we had to pack up camp. We all accepted it, got on with the task in hand, and then got out of there as quickly as possible. As we took our crampons off at the snowline it occurred to me how extraordinarily lucky we had been, not only on Huascarán but also with the treks, the people we'd met, the weather and absolutely everything. We descended 3km that day into Musho, where we bought the porters a few well earned beers before heading back to celebrate in style in Huaraz. Roll on next summer for more of the same!



The Great Wall - Photos Gareth

WHAT I DID ON MY HOLIDAYS

The first British school expedition to China took place last July.

Gareth Morgan helped to lead it, and this is what he thought...

China's another world. It's not just the distance or the different culture. There's something intriguingly other about the whole experience of a trip there. The similarities are there, but in a way they add to the sense of being far from home. Not that I'm overly sentimental about England y'understand, but everything that you see is viewed through the filters that are part of the point of reference we call our own. I can't even hope to do justice to a country of a billion people in this article, only to describe the glimpses of the country and culture that I've seen.

When my old school asked if I'd be interested in joining their expedition to China, I jumped at the chance. Three weeks in one of the world's most diverse and compelling destinations was too good an opportunity to miss, even if it left me too broke to do a great deal else that summer.

So, along with seven Year 12 (lower sixth in old money) students and two teachers, I found myself sat in an Air China 747, with only a vague idea of what to expect. Economy flights are much of a muchness; if you've been on one, you've seen most of what they offer. No views ('cept cloud) and not a great deal in the way of entertainment, especially as most of your friends have taken the opportunity to catch up on sleep, diaries or whatever. This one was alright. Ten hours later we bounced down in Beijing.

Our first contact with Chinese officialdom was fairly painless - just the briefest of glances at our group visa and passports and we were through. Shame we didn't get stamped, but you can't have everything. It was lucky for us that it was brief, because the heat and humidity in Beijing had come as quite a shock. It was overcast, but must have been over 35°C. The air here seemed to have been marinated in

diesel for a few hours before being slowly pressure-cooked, so none of the moisture was lost. It was heavy, muggy and distinctly worrying, although it never really got any worse.

Beijing is China's political and cultural heart. Substantially rebuilt when the Communists took over in 1949, it is a combination of ugly apartment blocks, glittering skyscrapers and building sites. Reminds me of somewhere not a million miles away, actually. And everywhere there are adverts. Hoardings sprout in every available space, and neon signs decorate many buildings. Beijing's twelve million people seem to throng the streets - everywhere seems busy, bustling with frenetic energy. The impression is of splashes of colour in a sea of grey, although this was probably due in part to the unbroken cloud cover.

We took a minibus to our hotel, picking up a few basic words in Mandarin from our guide on the way. A combination of fatigue and wonder at our new surroundings kept us fairly quiet. We found enough energy to go out for a meal and a drink, and were impressed to find a Starbucks Coffee shop across the road. Nice. Chinese food is among the most diverse and interesting in the world, and although we only tried a small selection it was certainly an experience. More importantly, beer is cheaper than bottled water, and really rather good. It's generally a pleasant, easily drinkable lager that, for an average of 30 pence a bottle, is a damn fine idea. This is more than can be said for their spirits, which resemble cheap and nasty paint stripper. Laughably cheap, though.

The Forbidden City is one of Beijing's most famous landmarks, and it's certainly impressive. The Emperors' home and court from the fifteenth century until the end of the Empire in 1912 is a huge complex

of halls and courtyards, intricately decorated and thick with tradition. It was our first encounter with China's rich history and with the tourist presence that envelopes most of China's attractions. But more of that later.

Next stop was Tian'anmen Square, which is as potent a symbol of modern China as anything I've come across. It's huge - a vast paved area flanked by the massive parliament building and Museum of People's History, which sports a big neon countdown to the handover of Macau in a couple of weeks. Tian'anmen Gate, at the northern end, would look massive anywhere else, but looks slightly odd with a huge portrait of Mao Zedong on it. Mao's Mausoleum sits on the square, looking out of place and reducing the impact of the square's size. We didn't take the chance to go in and see his body, which is taken out of a freezer every day for the thousands of tourists who visit the square. It was impossible to forget the massacre there ten years ago, despite the families of tourists and recent renovation. It was decidedly bleak and unfriendly on this dull Tuesday morning, but it would have been impossible to miss it out and I'm glad we saw it.

It was nice to get out of Beijing

to see the Great Wall. It's impossible to describe it effectively, but it is unimaginably long, stretching off across steep hills over both horizons. The effort and expenditure required to build, maintain and man it are awesome. It's by far the biggest and most impressive waste of resources in human history - millions of men, hundreds of years, and it achieved precisely nothing. Invading armies merely avoided it, bribed the guards, or came in from the other direction. It makes the Millennium Dome seem almost worthwhile in comparison.

We saw two sections: one reconstructed stretch near Beijing, which was stunning but a little tourist-ridden. Later we stayed at a small village a bit further afield and walked on some original, 2500 year old wall. This was lovely: deserted, we ran over spectacular scenery in mute testament to its builders skills. The thick mist obscured the surrounding hills but added to the atmosphere and sense of isolation.

After being soundly thrashed at basketball by a local village school, we returned to Beijing. Another day of sightseeing, including the Temple of Heaven and the Summer Palace, then we took a sleeper train to Shanghai.



The Terracotta Army, Xi'an

My first impression of Shanghai was that it's like Beijing, but more so. Bigger, shinier, newer, brasher, louder. The colonial history has left it even more Westernised than the rest of China, and after forty years of Communist neglect, it's come back to life with a vengeance. It's great. Across the river from the old waterfront, the Bund, there used to be fields. Ten years ago the area was designated a Special Economic Zone and there's now one of the most attractive and impressive cityscapes I've ever seen. Shanghai is heading towards being one of the world's biggest economic centres, and the recent Asian economic problems don't seem to have slowed it down. There's a sense of urgent ambition about the city - they're in the process of building a new underground network from scratch, for instance, and the one line that's open is really rather nice. Definitely a city to check out as the nightlife scene expands.

Shanghai - and indeed most big cities - seems at first glance to be marginally less Communist than, say, Washington DC, which is somewhat surprising. We weren't expecting China to be more capitalist than Britain. There are aspects of life which are classically Communist, but I'm still not sure what Chinese Communism is. There's a different collective philosophy on life, but whether this is due to the people's politics or not I don't know.

There is some evidence of Governmental control: there is no free press for instance, and the newspapers and TV news have a distinct ring of propaganda. There are also police and military personnel around everywhere, but this isn't necessarily a bad thing.

After a few days in Shanghai and some nearby cities, we flew to Xi'an for one of the trip's high points: the Terracotta Army. This archeological site shows some of the best and worst aspects of tourist sites in China. In the late 70's, farmers discovered a buried army of pottery warriors, dating back to around 500BCE, when the first Qin Emperor ordered them to be interred with him to guard his tomb. There are several thousand, arrayed in battle formation in a series of huge pits. The Army is an incredible sight - each warrior is individually crafted to resemble a member of the army, from ordinary soldiers to generals.

The site itself, however, is a bit disappointing. There are huge aircraft hanger-type buildings over the pits, which detract from the spectacle of the Warriors, and the whole area seems a little sterile. Even a few archaeologists working on the figures would have made a big difference, but although work is clearly ongoing, we didn't see any of it. Worse though are the hordes of souvenir vendors who surround the site, making it an effort to even get in without inadvertently buying a small heap of tacky merchandise. They're fairly minor gripes, but because it was a similar story at so many places that it started to get very annoying.

Although we'd specifically asked for a low cost trip where we could get as much of a feel for real life in China, we didn't really get it. What we did get was the whole tourist treatment: nice hotels, pre-arranged meals, comfortable transport (except for minibuses; I've never had an enjoyable minibus journey in my life, and don't expect to) and a general showcasing of China's media-friendly face. We did manage to see a little of what life is like for the hundreds of millions of ordinary Chinese peo-



The Temple Of Heaven, Beijing

ple, though. A trip down the Grand Canal gave us some impressive views of Soviet-style heavy industry, and out in the countryside people farmed as they have done for millennia. I even saw people leading water buffaloes by pieces of string.

Leaving Xi'an we headed to Sichuan Province to climb mountains and see pandas. It's a beautiful area, and it was great to get out and do some real walking, even if the locals were occasionally somewhat depressing. Seeing girls in platform shoes walking the other way doesn't do a great deal for your self-esteem when you're kitted out in Gore-tex and boots. We climbed Emei Shan, one of China's holy Buddhist mountains. Unfortunately it rained the whole time we were on it, although it cleared up after we came down. There was an incredibly, eerie chorus of insects on the lower slopes: a coherent, undulating wail, rather than the cacophony usually associated with cicadas and suchlike.

We also did the only charitable deed we managed to arrange in Sichuan. China is notoriously unresponsive to foreign charities, and although we tried to link up with groups like WaterAid, we had considerable difficulties. We did manage to visit a fairly remote school, where we met some of their more disadvantaged students and sponsored them for a year, as well as donating several kilos of assorted stationary. It was a fairly minor gesture, but we wanted to at least put something back into the country.

The Wolong Panda Reserve is a National Park among Sichuan's mountains, and there's a breeding centre an hour or so's drive up a spectacular valley. Giant pandas are not the world's greatest evolutionary success stories, and as there are only about a thousand of them left, due to the destruction of their habitat, they're going to need all the help

they can get. They're lovely creatures: big, docile, expressive, and easy to fall for. Although run by the WWF, the centre seems a bit of a forgotten project. It's a bit basic in places, but they're building a series of semi-natural enclosures where the pandas can enjoy much more freedom and space than their current, somewhat cramped, cages. They're having more success breeding pandas there than anywhere else, though.

Our final destination was Guilin, where the limestone scenery is world-renowned. There are literally thousands of small hills sticking up from a huge flat plain, and seen together they're breathtakingly attractive. Rows of hills fade into the distance, giving the area an ethereal quality that matches the pace of life in the fields and villages nearby. We took a cruise up the river to Yangshuo, a village that's just in the nice, backpacker-friendly phase of a tourist revolution. The view of a night-time thunderstorm silhouetting the hills is one that I hope to keep with me all my life.

So that's about it. China's a fascinating place, and I only scratched the surface of what it has to offer. Travelling independently would cost a lot more than we paid (I'd budget around £2-3000, including travel, mid-range accommodation and all the places we visited) but would be a worthwhile and fascinating experience. There are opportunities to teach over there, which could be great, but I'd take care about who you arrange it through. And for anyone whose career involves a lot of travel, I'd definitely recommend Beijing and Shanghai as being worthwhile destinations. I can't think of another country with such a range of experiences and contrasts as China, and if you're thinking of going travelling there are few more intriguing destinations. Go for it: you only live once.



A giant panda at the Wolong Reserve, Sichuan Province

The Billion

So you've got your killer internet idea - how do you go about turning that into cash? company into a billion dollar business in under twenty years. In a world exclusive,

What is your vision for Psion?

The core answer to your question is this: if you were an artist in the 1870s then I would say you better get yourself to Paris, and get involved with what was going on in the Impressionist School. There is a time and place where human activity in certain areas takes off. In Theoretical Physics, the era between 1899 and 1939 was incredibly fertile in Europe (in Germany, Britain and Denmark particularly). In my time, this area of micro-computers is changing the world. Its perhaps one of the most profound revolutions in human history. Like the Iron Age or the Industrial Revolution - perhaps more so even. I wanted to be involved in that because it's fun creating the world, changing the world, being at the forefront!

One of things that you've managed to do successfully is to run a public company. This is something that is harder that it sounds, particularly for people who found and run their own companies. For instance, Richard Branson famously withdrew his Virgin Group from the stockmarket. It is even more difficult for technology stocks, where development and market forces can change so rapidly. How have you managed to do this with a company where software development has been at the core of your business?

I wouldn't say that's true anymore. It has been a core theme, but the company is much broader now. It's got a whole range of activities. I would say that the core behind the company now is innovation. We are an innovation company, where we combine our understanding of this technology in the future with market needs as they are going to be in the future and bring thing this together. We are marketing technology and we use software, design and engineering. And we outsource many of these things as well. So the core competency is technology marketing.

You mentioned that there is a time and a place for certain things in history. Do you think that the fortunes of Psion would have been greater if you had re-located Psion to the Western United States. Because of the other Companies that are there, which you would

be feeding off, and also because of the massive amount of capital that you would be able to attract, wouldn't it be a better place to be?

I don't think that's true today. I don't think that capital is an impediment. There is a pool of availability of capital. That could have been a factor twenty years ago - certainly in the early 80s the availability of capital was very limited. I think that the answer to your question is yes, and I did contemplate relocating to Silicon Valley or the San Francisco area. Actually, I spend a lot of time there - that was were it kind of came from, because I was living and working in Los Angeles, and I was up in San Francisco a lot of the time, so there is an involvement there, too. But it is true that if Psion had been located there I think that it would have been an easier journey for us to travel.

On the other hand, there are very European aspects to consider. There is no reason today why these things can't be done in Europe. There is the infrastructure that's here, there's the capital, there's a lot of very educated, creative people capable of delivering what's required - but they don't. I think part of the reason why they don't is because in Europe we are less excited and interested in the future. There is too much looking back over our shoulders. There is too much interest in heritage. There are people like Simon Jenkins, for example, who write all over the place and live in an Old Men's Club somewhere and look back at some kind of golden, historic era of Victorian England. So there is a lot of that. I mean, I myself like to look forward I suppose that is why came into this business. And Americans are terribly excited by the future and creating the future. So yes why aren't there more European companies. One of the things I like to talk about is trying to encourage the young entrepreneurs, young business people, students, whatever. The opportunities are terrific - you just have to go out there and believe that you can do it.

Now it's an interesting question, this question about Silicon Valley and about location.

One of the things that our industry is about is facilitating. Computers, communication, the internet and so on is the death of distance, so I throw it back to you, does it matter whether you're in San Jose or London or

Taipei, now that the world's kind of collapsed into the global village? I think it does to an extent - I only wished that we galvanised ourselves in Europe to participate in the industries of the future. I spend a lot of time persuading government - for example, I'm on various government committees trying to encourage this, and I sit on the council of Science and Technology, which reports to the Cabinet. I guess one of the things that I particular care about is what are the policies and actions - things that government can do to facilitate this interest in Science and Technology, and the creation of new enterprises rather than the retention of old ones.

For instance, this summer the Cabinet published its e-commerce report. E-commerce is an exciting area, where a lot of people can see the potential of the numbers and a lot of people haven't figured out how to make a profit out of it. The current strategy seems to be playing the numbers game. For instance, the company everyone knows is Freeserve. It started off and after 9 months they had about a million people registered on their website. But when you sit down and look at the numbers, you see that something doesn't quite add up: it had a turnover of 2 million and a loss of 1 million. Yet it was valued at nearly 2 billion pounds? Now, your new company Symbian is in this industry, in the sense that is in the communications arena. What are your views on the opportunities?

I think that Symbian is potentially in one of the most important spaces, by which I mean economic market spaces that are going to evolve. And that's why there is a lot of interest in it. What Symbian will facilitate is wireless mobile access to the internet. And it looks like it could end up with some of the core software technology that is going to facilitate it. So yes, we are always moving and we have to keep moving on. If we stop moving the terms of our perception and thinking and so on then that's bad news.

Psion has also got very high values and a lot of that can be associated with Symbian. We're valued at something over a billion pounds - but we are a very different animal from the likes of Freeserve. We've actually got a long track record of creating products - suc-

Dollar Doc

You wouldn't go far wrong listening to David Potter, the man who has turned his Felix managed to get an interview with him just before the recent COMDEX show

cessful, profitable and cashflow generating products. Almost all of our capital, assets and cashflow come from retained profits, not from flotations raising vast quantities of money. Now, I have to express serious doubt about the valuations being put on some of these very young start-up ventures, often where the business model is unknown. In the case of Symbian, there is core technology which has enormous potential value. Even if it's successful, there are still questions about who will win in that space. Some people think it will be Microsoft. I don't think so, but the game's not played yet. What it does have is good core technology to go with a huge customer base to deliver that, because of all the cellular mobile phone companies. So that's kind of real.

Everybody is doing a dot com company. Actually, what I would point out to you is the following - this demonstrates that the economic system is very healthy. And I'll tell you why - it's only fairly recently (over the past few years) that the investing institutions, fund managers, pension companies, and insurance companies (who have to think in the long-term in terms of financial assets) suddenly began to wake up and realise that the internet, not to mention technology as a whole, was going to play a very important role in the future economy of the world.

So, the trustees and fund managers and institutions developed policy saying that this is going to become huge. We have to invest in it. It has to be part of our portfolio. And we therefore need our portfolio to have x percent involved in high technology and internet stocks. So they then said to their fund managers 'go out and make that happen'. The fund managers went out, looked for the stuff and they couldn't find enough of it. Now some of the first laws of economics tell you that if there is very high demand for something and not enough supply the price goes up. So what you have is absurdly high pricing of all manner of potential companies in that area. Which of course is totally unfounded. It's daft, and a lot of money is going to be lost there. However, think about it from an economic point of view. By putting the price of these potential investments so high, it's attracting resources - people, money, capital, development staff, management, etc - into those very

areas to develop that industry. And so the economic system is just doing it's job. Unfortunately, a lot of investors are going to lose a lot of money in about two years time (or whenever), when the supply of new e-commerce companies and investments swamps demand. And then I leave it to you to figure out what is going to happen, the price is going to fall and you can then begin to get a balance over a period of time. This is actually what is going on. The valuations of some of these investments is absurd. With these new one and two year start-ups, there is no knowledge as to whether they have a business model or not. And so a lot of money is going to be lost - but some of those companies will succeed.

What are your views on the transfer between universities and start-up companies? It seems much better now than it was at the time you were at Imperial. So in fact there are no real barriers anymore - the infrastructure, resources, capital, and people are available. So, do people just need to have the drive, if they actually believe that there business idea has the potential?

I think that is correct and I think that these are cultural attitudes. More and more people are kind of interested and they do want to participate in this new world. Of course, it's not just information technology - if you take biotechnology there are huge opportunities there, and the same is true in many other areas. So yes, I think that the universities are striving for better practice, and some of them are succeeding well - and others are fuddy-duddy and slow.

Now there are three areas that I would criticise in the university environment. One is that universities can be very slow to respond to employment needs and to new disciplines. So we don't have anything like the number of departments and resources and staff required to train people in software, for example. It's a huge area, and it's very exciting. There are new ideas about information and artificial intelligence and the brain, both human and artificial, and it's psychology. There's a whole bunch of areas that are coming together and we are very backward - our universities respond very slowly to external demands and I think that's a fundamental problem.

The second problem with our universities is that we have got an increasingly unitary system. By unitary I mean a single type of institution that has been created. That's very bad. We need diversity among our institutions, instead of all of them copying each other.

The third element which I would say is there as well is that there can be, there has been historically, a division in British culture between what I'll call 'pure science' and application. There is a prejudice against the ideas and applications of men and women in science. As opposed to God's ideas...

Such as the basic laws of physics?

There is an attitude there which says that the pursuit of science for it's own sake is good. Yet the pursuit of the application of science and technology is somehow bad. We don't value it in the same way as Americans do. Engineering disciplines, applications of whatever kind, software...these are considered lesser kind of subjects. And I illustrate that by saying that the science lobby in Britain is enormously strong and has great influence. But we don't have proper institutions, or any kind of lobby, in applications and technology, and we are very weak. And that's what differs between us and the America.

Do you have an example of that kind of lobby in America?

Well it's everywhere. You've got to kind of look at the infrastructure. The influence of the semiconductor manufacturers on the universities and on government is substantial. Indeed, when faced with a crisis from the Japanese 10 or 12 years ago, there was great support from the government. Look at MIT and it's Media Lab and all that's going on. That is another example where people are really interested... I mean MIT is one of the great universities of the world, so is Stanford. And they are massively involved in these new disciplines. It's difficult to find many British universities who are... There's nothing equivalent to the likes of MIT or, for that matter, Austen, Texas. So it's just not networked through the universities and government and business in the same kind of way. It's a cultural issue.

Seeing the light

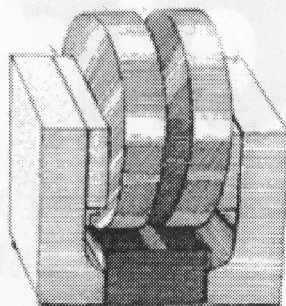
As the 20th Century draws to a close, we are one step closer to the elusive quantum computer.

An international collaboration of scientists from America and Japan have made another crucial breakthrough in the development of a quantum computer.

The idea behind a quantum computer is that, instead of using electrons to carry out computation, it would use photons, allowing it to take advantage of quantum effects. For example, the "many worlds" interpretation means that when a particle is made to decide between two possible routes, the universe splits into two parallel universes. The quantum computer might even be able to use superposition in order to carry out calculations in several universes simultaneously.

Teams of researchers worldwide are working on all the elements required to build a complete quantum computer, but until now they had been held back by the fact that there was no way to manipulate photons precisely. However, the international team have now developed a device which allows only one particle through at a time, using an effect similar to a turnstile and the fact that when a high energy electron drops to a lower energy, it releases this energy difference as a single photon.

J Kim and his colleagues at Stanford University utilised a phenomenon unique to the quantum world. First described by Robert Oppenheimer in the 1920s, the so-called Tunnel Effect states that due to quantum uncertainty, an electron can and will pass through a physical barrier and appear on the other side. Therefore, if an electron "tunnelling" from a higher energy state to a lower energy state could be held somewhere in the middle, in a sort of quantum well, the subsequent arrival of another electron would be prevented, as the occupying electron would repel the oncoming electron due to its negative charge. The original electron could then be



Could this be the computer of the future?

allowed to carry on its path and the resultant jump in energy states would release a single photon, which could be detected using sensitive equipment.

The scientists were able to do this by placing two semi-conducting silicon wafers close together, doped with different elements. On one side the doping elements bond with the silicon to leave an excess of electrons, and hence a negative charge. On the other side, the silicon bonds to elements with too few electrons, creating a positive "hole" for the spare electrons to jump into.

Electric currents are used to control the passage of the electrons into the quantum well by adjusting the voltage and hence the amount of energy given to the tunnelling electron. The whole apparatus has to be kept just above absolute zero (-273°C) to stop thermal vibrations contaminating the system.

The results from this experiment proved that the number of photons emitted can indeed be regulated. This in itself shows the validity of quantum theory and could also be used to miniaturise computer components to the nano scale, offering a new way of processing information.

SU-YEN THORNHILL

"Public perception of science has never been lower"

Opinion: *Lindsay Gilmour attended Bernard Dixon's lecture at the Institute of Biology*

Former New Scientist editor Bernard Dixon gave the Charter Lecture for the Institute of Biology at the Royal Society on 24 November. Stating that scientists are ultimately dependent on public support for funding, he tried to explain how science journalism, and the way that scientists themselves talk to journalists, could help to change things.

However, Dixon hi-jacked himself by spending nearly an hour in opposition to campaigning journalism. The 'GM food furore' has clearly been bothering him, but his blanket accusations that journalists had no idea what they were talking about rather fell apart under his own summary. Dixon concluded that there are ten reasons why the British public don't want GM food on the shelves until more testing has been done, and not in the middle of the countryside - controlled conditions only please. I won't list all ten, but trust me, only one actually has anything to do with the science.

It really is time that the image makers of science, people like Bernard Dixon, realised that 'GM' is not really a scientific debate, and that if they ally themselves with it unconditionally then they can only further tarnish the already creaky trust that the public has in scientists. Come on folks, for once let's exert a bit of that reasoned, rational approach that science is meant to be so good at and admit that the GM debate is about distrust of corporate America, dislike of agribusiness, recent food scares, environmental worries and general resentment of something which we are told is no danger but aren't offered any choice about.

And by the time all those issues have been sorted out, the scientists doing the work might have some more conclusive results about possible allergic reactions, dangers to Monarch butterflies and the rest of it. Then we can have the science debate - but not until then.

IN THE NEWS

Nasa are coming to terms with the loss of the \$165m Mars Polar Lander. 1999 has been a disastrous year for the agency, coming just 10 weeks after the loss of the Mars Climate Orbiter caused by an embarrassing mix-up between metric and Imperial units. In July the entire space shuttle fleet was grounded for 5 months following serious wiring failures which came close to destroying Columbia and killing its crew (including Eileen Collins, the first female shuttle commander). The agency has also seen its budget slashed for the 7th successive year, large job cuts, setbacks to its replacement for the ageing shuttle fleet and yet more delays to the International Space Station project.

Nasa are hoping for better luck on the 11th of December when shuttle Discovery is scheduled for launch in order to repair the Hubble Space Telescope, which has been shut down since November following the failure of a gyroscope. The 9-day mission has faced a number of delays, and as Felix went to press was facing yet another delay, with the discovery of yet another wiring fault.

IBM have announced plans to build a new \$100m supercomputer. Called Blue Gene, the machine will run at about 1,000,000GHz, and will be used in order to study the formation of protein molecules. The project is expected to be complete in about 4 or 5 years.

Intel have announced that a bug exists on their Pentium III chips which can cause problems with a computer's start-up sequence. Although the bug is expected to affect only 2-3 percent of PCs, Dell suspended all orders and manufacturing of their systems in order to further evaluate the fault.

The EU has proposed handing over the power to make decisions on biotechnology to the World Trade Organisation. The WTO's primary concern is always free trade, which it considers more important than the environment or public health. There are likely to be strong objections to the proposals from several EU governments.

The skeleton of a baby Tyrannosaurus Rex has been discovered in the US. The juvenile probably weighed about 500kg (a quarter of an adult), but still had powerful teeth. The discovery will help the understanding of the dinosaur life cycle.

Edinburgh council has set up a laboratory dedicated to testing for genetically-modified foods. It is designed to ensure that restaurants and cafes are complying with tough new laws on food labelling, and is expected to recoup its £20,000 cost within a week - in the form of fines.

JC

The State of the Union

Christmas is finally nearly here. I'd better make this a good one, as it could be the last for sometime given the number of College systems which run off elderly computers - we may all be having an unexpected holiday! I have decided to ignore the political updates and go with some of things I haven't had a chance to put in thus far.

Did we all notice the by-election come and go? Have to say I had completely forgotten until I got a phone call from the *Sunday Sport*, asking me if I wanted to get my [breasts] out to celebrate. (No, I didn't, by the way.)

In late October I went into the ladies loos in the west wing, the ones quite a long way from everything, and knocked on the door of a cubicle which had been quiet for some time. To my mild amusement, when I looked through the window I could make out two people, one dressed, one partially dressed. I barely had time to think to myself, what kind of person takes their clothes off for liaisons in a public loo, when a hand shot out to cover

By Tasha Newton, Imperial College Union President



the glass. 'Hello', I said, 'Are you alright?' 'I'm being sick' came the reply. By now I was looking under the door where I saw one pair of shoes and one pair of socks. (What kind of person takes their shoes off - just how long had they been here?) 'What are you doing?' she asked me! 'I'm wondering who you're with.' I replied. 'My husband'. So I left them to get dressed and waited until they came out. I asked for ID and, to my amusement where it so often says student, this time it said staff. How interesting! Wishing to be PC, the Union

manager and I asked her to come in for a 'chat'. The letter came back to sender. It turns out that this woman had left College two months before (there is no record of her ever being married or engaged). Of course, we never knew who the bloke was.....

Most of my brainpower in heated meetings goes on not using four letter words. These are often replaced by five letter alternatives. I was at one such bigwig meeting, enthusing away about student rights and the Union being poor, when the chairman took a question

from one bigwig present. He asked simply if the Union President could explain what she meant by '...the idea being a pile of pants'. Of course this is not a one-way thing - one bigwig, expressing concern that the College could be persuaded to go in the wrong direction, declared he did not want to be 'sucked off in that fashion'.

Drugs are a very serious issue, until the Union sends a guy called Joynt to the committee (97-98), or a chap called Weed is in trouble (another Uni). Perhaps the RSM president would like to get involved - are you free Mr Cockayne?

And finally, thanks go to the CCS for their help over the summer. I phoned them to help me access my email - it responded not and I didn't know that I could get it over the net. Having explained, over the phone, that I could not get my email, I waited while he conferred with a colleague. Eventually they said 'Could you email us a problem report, so it goes into the system?'

A very merry Christmas to you all. Tasha.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT

First or Second Year?

Not applied for financial support from SLC?

You need to contact your Local Education Authority (LEA) now!

Not doing so within four months of the start of your course (or the start of your second year for those who started in 1998) may lead to difficulties in applying for financial help in future years.

For help and a contact for your LEA call the DfEE Student Support Information Line 0800 731 9133.

Also - if you have applied for financial support and have not supplied your bank details you may not get your next instalment!

Contact Student Finance for a form

Help and advice is also available from Student Finance Office (334, Sheffield Building, South Ken) or iCU Reception (South Ken). Contact Student Finance (x. 58010), Kevin Butcher (x.58064) or Martin Thomson (x.48067).

Term may nearly be over and the Carnival not far away.

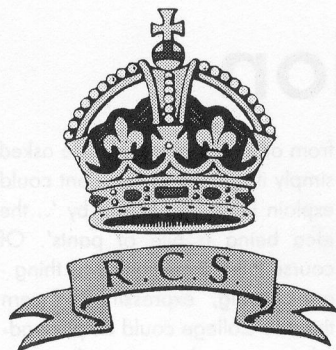
Remember iCU is open after term finishes. Help, advice, support, information and representation is still available during the vacation.

Walk in, call or email.

Kevin Butcher, Deputy President (Education & Welfare), dpew@ic.ac.uk, int. ex. 58064, (07956) 502618

Martin Thomson, Union Adviser, m.m.thomson@ic.ac.uk, int. ex. 48067, (020) 7594 8067

Tasha Newton, iCU President, president@ic.ac.uk, int. ex. 58061, (020) 7594 8060



RCS Union

You are sleeping during a particularly interesting lecture (aren't they all?) when, all of a sudden things start to go all wobbly and, before you have time to reach for the Alka-Seltzer, a mysterious figure with a gaudy green cloak, an incredibly long beard and (amazingly) even longer toe-nails is standing in front of you.

The mysterious, yet oddly merry, stranger speaks: "Do not be afraid."

"Oh dear," you think, "Christ has been reborn and I'm going to be commanded to go and take a present to him."

"No," replies the figure, "I am the Ghost of RCSU Past. I have come to show you how RCS events have been celebrated before, to invoke a sense of nostalgia and make you feel guilty so you come to the next ones."

The ghost then takes your hand (and stabs his nails into your palms) and leads you through a dark corridor which has miraculously appeared under the seat two rows in front of you. You gradually regain your senses and see a charming scene laid out in front of you.

"Ah, the Freshers' Barbecue. I remember it as though it were only yesterday. The dreamy smells of summer were still in the air, as was the aroma of those free hamburgers."

"Yes, happy days," replies the ghost, "and look over there."

Your gaze wanders off to the

left where you see the serenely lit Union Bar and the Freshers Bar Night in full swing. More worryingly, you see yourself swinging around the room in an uncontrollably happy frame of mind, after consuming copious quantities of free beer. Bearing this in mind, you carefully ignore the Ghost of RCSU Past (GORP) as he nods towards the images of the Freshers Pub Crawl and the South Ken Ten, and move onto the Freshers Dinners.

"Wow, there I am, enjoying my formal dinner - don't I look like an idiot in that suit? And there's Theta, and the Dean, and all those nice Freshers I met, like Bob Hatchett. Poor old Bob. He was frustrated that he couldn't get onto the ICU football team. Thankfully, he contacted the RCSU and learnt about the RCS Football team, so he joined up and they're doing really well in the ULU league. If only the other CCUs plucked up the courage and took them on. And over there is the Careers Forum, where they explained to me the best way to go about getting a job."

"You'd better take a pause now," interjected the GORP, "or your listeners will start to lose interest."

Your view starts to wobble as you see yourself on Jezebel, the RCSU's fire engine, collecting money for Mencap.

"But there's so much more. There I am on the London-Brighton Run. The President is about to fall off the fire engine! Wake up Mr

President, sir!"

"He cannot hear you," says the GORP. Forgetting this you unsuccessfully try to suppress a laugh as the President is surprised to be woken up - and even more surprised to fall off and to be taken to hospital. A copy of BroadSheet spirals into view.

"Ah, I remember how BroadSheet has kept me awake in lectures, with its witty reviews and science news. That £10 prize crossword has kept me amused for hours and the free Christmas angel (flat packed with instructions from ICU Origami Club) was great fun.

You're really beginning to enjoy yourself when suddenly the light fades...

"You have now seen the past," says the GORP while fading out, "and now you must face th..."

Almost immediately, a large female form appears in front of you. You carefully check to see if it is indeed female. You decide to reserve judgement.

"Welcome back to the present," says the figure in a strangely high pitched voice, "where I, the Ghost of RCSU Present, am supposed to show you how RCS events are celebrated now. Unfortunately, due to a slight miscalculation, there aren't any events within the next three days, which means my bit is going to be quite short. Bye."

"Oh," you think, "but I may as well ponder my involvement. Are there any societies I can get involved with? Could I send something to BroadSheet?"

Before you can continue any further, another presence becomes, er, present.

"Greetings," says the shadowy figure in a hilariously bad evil accent, "and welcome to the future. Your future. You are about to see what will happen if you stop going to RCSU events."

"Ha..."

"Don't talk! Just watch. You can ask questions later when I distribute the problem sheets."

The scene cuts to a swish hotel where the RCS Annual Dinner is in full flow (just like the wine).

"Notice, you are not there. You're missing out on the disco, the speeches, the mascots and the revelry. And here, at the Academic Affairs Forum - everyone is enjoying themselves, getting their problems sorted out, nibbling the nibbles, but where are you? In your room. Alone. Friendless. Alienated."

"Ok, ok," you burst in, unable to control yourself, "but what can I do to stop this from happening to me?"

"Isn't it obvious? Keep joining in with the RCS events. Enjoy yourself - it's your Union, so use it."

There is a flash of light and you wake up. Suddenly everything makes sense. You leap out of your seat (much to the consternation of the lecturer, who is unaccustomed to displays of excitement during his lecture), reach into your bag and pull out a large lump of overripe brie to distribute to those more needy members of your class.

Forthcoming Events

Tuesday 18 January
12.15pm - Academic Affairs Forum

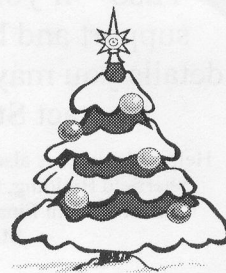
Saturday 19 February
RCSU Annual Dinner at the Rembrandt Hotel. Tickets £30 RCS students (other students welcome), £45 non-students. The price includes wine, port and a disco. The dinner is black tie.

Contacts

RCSU - rcsu@ic.ac.uk

Mailing Lists

Send an email with "subscribe <listname>" (without the quotes), where <listname> is either rcsu-matters or rcsu-list to Majordomo@ic.ac.uk.



Break Point

Wondering where I'd gone last week? Well, I had only just begun to enjoy my new-found celebrity status, when the death-knell was abruptly sounded. I'm talking about the one thing which is sure sign that a well-known person is about to be consigned to obscurity for ever - I was asked to switch on the Oxford Street Christmas lights. My career is obviously over, before it even got going.

Whilst I was on Oxford Street, I took the opportunity to do a little Christmas shopping. Whilst it would, of course, be wrong of me to divulge what Santa may be bringing to all you good little girls and boys (and medics), I thought I'd guide you through some thoughts I had concerning the more prominent members of our happy College family.

Having been given a peerage for his birthday and Wye College

out of the blue, the Rector must have thought that Christmas was over early. However, Breakpoint can exclusively reveal that Santa is still planning to fill Ron's sack this year. The intended gift? Why, just what he's always wanted - a small brown-field site on Gower Street. Ripe for redevelopment, this site is currently occupied by some sort of new-age traveller commune, who call themselves the Unilateralist Communist Luvvies (UCL for short).

Closer to home, and having made some serious errors in costing out his new model village (particularly the model hospital and sports hall), wee Ian Caldwell is apparently in need of a calculator. Breakpoint is only too happy to oblige, and has bought him one which (luckily) is not capable of dealing with negative numbers.

It is always being said that we

should look after the elderly during this festive season, and so Breakpoint has managed to purchase life membership of the Garrick Club for Simon Baker. As well as providing somewhere warm for him to go during these cold winter months, he will find the company just to his liking: plenty of cantankerous old farts bitching about how good it all used to be.

Taking a break from Central London, I went to GenTech Labs (just outside Cambridge), where they are offering various bits of genetically-engineered human tissue at very reasonable prices. I was able to get quite a bargain on a single brain cell, which will make the perfect gift for the members of ICU Council - they can put it with their existing one (and therefore have two to rub together). Perhaps this can serve as the beginning of a collec-

tion - don't hold your breath.

Finally, Dave Roberts, my kind and understanding boss, deserves his magnum of champagne to help him celebrate the turn of the Millennium. Breakpoint understands that Mr Roberts was teetotal until I started contributing to Felix. I would like to wish him all the best in his new-found drunken state.

Feeling self-satisfied with a good day's shopping, I clambered awkwardly into the back of my limousine (why don't they make them easier to get into?), and told James to head for home. However, I still couldn't shake the niggling feeling from my head that I'd forgotten a most important gift. It was only when greeted by my guard-dog that it hit me - and so it will give me great delight to send a signed picture of myself to Miss Natasha Newton. Merry Christmas all.

BMS CRACKS - UP

Kevin has noticed that it has been quite chilly in the BMS recently. He expected that such an intelligent building would have realised that winter was coming and it would be getting cold. However, like everything else in the building, the heating system is ridiculously complex and cost far more to install than a simpler system that would have done the job better. The recent problems could have been solved by simply turning on the under-floor heating system, but it appears that either the building or its masters are reluctant to do this. Their fears are due to the fact that, as the heating was not turned on last year, turning it on now may crack the floors...

TEQUILA

Recently, at one of ICU's bars, Kevin's attention was drawn to a student who had just purchased a large number of shots of tequila asked if the bar had any salt and lemon. The simple "No" she received from the barman contained a hint of: "We're the largest student venue in London - not another Firkin clone." Whilst Kevin agrees with this sentiment, it did show him that some students want more from their union's bars. Here in the centre of London you don't have to go far to get some ideas of how we could inject more fun into ICU's bars. Just imagine what a difference an ice blender, cream and chocolate could make to the cocktails.

DARKNESS

Like many people reading this column, Kevin is suffering from a severe lack of daylight. Emerging from the lab or a lecture at five to find out that it is already an hour after sunset can't be psychologically good for anyone. Kevin realises that putting the clocks back appears to be a brilliant idea at the time you actually do it - especially if like most people you happen to be

Mish Mash

A Mostly Harmless Column by Kevin, a random entity who knows nothing about nothing

in the situation where this permits an extra hour drinking or an extra hour in bed. Kevin has been trying to find out why the nation insists on having this moment of short-term pleasure, knowing it is going to result in a whole winter of darkness. He believes it has something to do with either Scottish farmers or reducing the selection pressure on the young of our species. Kevin finds neither of these explanations for the loss of his evenings acceptable. Perhaps the

devolution of Scotland has been the first step in solving the problem - to be followed of course by the creation of the Scot's own time-zone.

LIE IN

Kevin was amazed to learn that, in some universities, nine o'clock lectures were rare occurrences. At one institution, student's attendance at morning lectures had got so low that the university started to reschedule them for later in the day. As a consequence the university ran out of time in the week. Instead of forcing its students to get up in the morning, the decision was made to hold lectures on Wednesday afternoons. This move infringed on time previously set aside for sports and other clubs and societies activities. Warwick's largely apathetic student body did little to attempt to counter the university's move.

CARELESS COFFEE

It has come to Kevin's attention that one of ICU's Deputy Presidents has carelessly mislaid his coffee table. Anyone who has recently acquired a black circular piece of furniture should contact Kevin.

To comment or contribute:
<http://come.to/mishmash>
or email kevin@ic.ac.uk

FELIX

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Feedback

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS...

Dear Dave

I finally felt intrigued enough to reply to something that you wrote about in Felix. Your editorial on the meaning of Christmas was interesting if not anything else.

Jesus Christ is an historical figure. Whether or not you believe that does not change that fact. I would be interested to hear how you feel you can prove that Jesus never existed As to whether or not you believe the claims that he made about himself that is a different fact, but there are very few people who would like to argue the point that he never existed.

To ask the question as to why the celebration of his birth is important to this country (and the world) shows a complete ignorance of the history of Christianity throughout the last 2000 years and the effect that it has had on world history. In the countries where Islam and Judaism have been important forces there are social events surrounding the respective Holy days.

Please tell me which majority of the population do not believe in Jesus Christ. Muslims, Hindus and Christians all believe in Jesus in one form or another. The fact that the academic world has been permeated by a naturalistic philosophy of the world does not mean that the majority of the population believe it or that the philosophy is correct.

Ranti Atijosan & Sarah Davies

To the editor,

It saddened me greatly to read your statements in the editorial about Christmas and the new year.

The first thing that struck me was that you wrote that Jesus was a mythical figure. I can under-

stand that some people do not believe the claim of Jesus that he was/is God. However, to claim that he did not exist at all is to go against all the evidence. I would suggest that you not only read the bible, but read some of the works of Josephus, a first century secular historian who wrote about Jesus and the following that he had. This is a historical source from the time!

I also found your remarks about thanksgiving interesting. Again I feel that you showed a lack of knowledge about this festival as well. Thanksgiving was set up by Abraham Lincoln to remind the people of America what they owed to God (the Christian God). So here we have two festivals that, at their fundamental level, are about Jesus Christ, so to celebrate them any other way is to remove the truth from them.

As for Christmas, what is it all about?? One has to ask that if Jesus was God, why did he become human?

The answer is a humbling one. It is that all the things that we do that break the law of God, every single one of them, are deserving of death, and there is nothing that WE can do about it. But God did not want to leave us in this state, and so, became a man, one that did not break God's law. He then died in our place, paying the price for our crimes. He then was resurrected from the dead so that we can be with him when we die, should we choose to.

What everyone has to decide is whether this is true, because if it is, the consequences are huge. It involves a massive choice..... choose not to follow Christ, or choose to follow Chist. This is not something to be taken lightly, it is the biggest choice that anyone ever takes. I would suggest that this Christmas, everyone should think about what the whole thing is about and make their decision,

Yours sincerely,

Andy Haden

Dear Sir,

I have just read your editorial about the meaning of Christmas, and felt compelled to reply. The vast majority of historians would disagree with you about your belief that Jesus is a mythical figure. that is the equivalent of saying that Julius Caesar or that your great—grandfather are mythical figures. there is plenty of evidence outside the Bible itself that verifies that Jesus Christ of Nazareth lived and died on a cross in Palestine 2000 years ago. Where most people dispute the reality of Christianity is not over the existence of Jesus, but over his resurrection, the fact that he is God and furthermore, that he is alive now. Christians believe that there is enough evidence of the resurrection of Christ to believe what he said about himself, what he came to do and what the future holds, and to put their lives completely in his hands.

I'd also like to say that I agree with you that organised religion is a very bad thing; it leads to ultimate disillusionment, a permanent treadmill and emptiness. That is why Christianity is so amazing; it is not an 'organised religion' but about being involved in a personal, loving relationship with God Himself, through faith in Christ. No other religion offers this; all other religions have standards to meet and things to achieve. Christianity asks for none of this; there is nothing that you have to do to know God and enjoy all his blessings, except repent of your disbelief and believe! the consequences of your choice are massive.

Christmas and Easter are both celebrated the world over and most people don't realise what was really going on. The world has distorted the true meaning of Christmas into "Winterval", and Easter into chocolate. Maybe subconsciously people realise that Christmas is important and needs to be cele-

The deadline for letters intended for publication is Wednesday 12 noon - drop into the portacabins or email felix@ic.ac.uk. Letters may be edited for length but not grammar or spelling.

brated, but refuse to wonder why and just have fun. A baby was born in a stable in Bethlehem, the Son of God, who came to save every person who ever lived from the deserved anger of God against us all - we have all turned away from him and dedicated ourselves to other things; money? ambition? sex? social standing? He came 2000 years ago to save you, dear reader, he is even now knocking on the door of your heart. This is the most important decision anyone ever has to make; do you choose life or do you choose death?

I think it is probably fairly obvious that I am a Christian myself; if anyone wants to know more you can contact me via email (r.beal-preston@ic.ac.uk) or come to a CU meeting on Thursday evenings in Huxley. or come along to our mission next term and ask some questions!

Have a wonderful Christmas!
Yours sincerely,

Rosie

LET ME IN, LET ME IN

To whom it may concern,

Having consulted numerous residents of Imperial College Halls, there is a consensus of unrest and frustration emerging regarding the restrictions being imposed on residents over the Millennium period. Having been obliged by our contracts to continue to pay rent over the Christmas holiday period, despite the fact that many people will be returning home, it now transpires that the normal conditions of our rent are also being changed. It is a shame that students are being taken advantage of by being made to pay rent over this period, whereas during the Easter and Summer breaks, when the halls can be readily let to other students, there is no choice but to clear out. This is not, however, the major gripe of most residents, merely a sad reflection of apparent obsession, over and above the welfare of the students, of the College for financial gain.

The main concern of many residents regards the change to

the conditions of rent during the Millennium period for no apparent reason. It transpired, unsurprisingly, that as many people were interested in being in London over the Millennium, the halls were likely to be a lot fuller than they usually are over the Christmas holidays. So the College, with pathetically poor wisdom and far too late for the much needed foresight which could have prevented all this, hastily posted a rather blunt questionnaire. When exactly will you, the resident, be in halls over the Millennium period? Once this data had been collated, one was then informed that no guests would be allowed in halls over the period 1800 hrs on 27th December 1999 to 1800 hrs on January 2nd! Perhaps it was too much to assume that the relevant body would realise that no one wants to spend the Millennium alone. Many of those who had indicated that they would be here wanted, unsurprisingly, to bring guests. This is also leading to bad feeling between students and staff. Any students who do bring guests will be subject to full College disciplinary proceedings.

We have been hugely disappointed by the apparent ineptitude displayed by whoever has dealt with this. It is frankly laughable and we think that those who are "in control of the situation" need to have a long hard think about their handling of events. We would suggest that perhaps these measures have the very real potential to cause far more harm than good?

Yours, not at all threateningly,

Peter Harris & Jake Alexander

AND FINALLY...

Dear all,

In return for being good little boys and girls this year, you can all expect very generous treatment at Christmas, and an extra specially large present on Christmas Day itself. Make sure you keep up the good behaviour next year, otherwise no pressies for you...

Santa

Editorial

Well, I finally seem to have found the way to generate some feedback to my editorials - just suggest in passing that you're an atheist and, hey presto, instant full mailbag. Anyhow, I have no desire to poke fun at anyone's belief system - as long as you believe in being fundamentally nice to ever other person on the planet, I'm happy - so I'll just say thanks for the response.

HALLS LOCK DOWN

I'm living in Selkirk Hall this year, and a few weeks ago I received a copy of a questionnaire under my door, apparently pertaining to College's planning process for emergency service coverage over the millennium. Now, I don't know about you, but to me the word "questionnaire" signifies no particular sense of urgency or importance about a document, and consequently I filed it under "when I've got five minutes" (a file which is rapidly taking over my entire room). As a result, I was somewhat surprised to find another letter under my door last week, informing me that not only could I not have any guests over the Millennium, I wouldn't be allowed in either. Huh? I won't be allowed into the room that the Union have paid for and to which I hold a key? Something's wrong somewhere, and I'd like to know if anyone in the Union knew anything about this before I did, because someone or other has definitely been treating the paying residents very badly.

Less annoying but far more amusingly, the letter went on to advise everyone who would be staying in hall over the vacation that "total power shutdown is very unlikely...but if you are planning to stay in hall, we recommend that you purchase a torch". Gulp.

MANY THANKS

I realise that what follows is going to sound somewhat like an Oscar Night acceptance speech, but nonetheless there are a massive

number of people that I want to thank for helping to produce Felix this term...

Firstly, thanks to everyone who has written, reviewed or photographed anything. The driving force behind Felix's increased size this year is an increased number of very enthusiastic and reliable writers. Secondly, thanks to you, the readers - when I'm feeling tired and down on a Monday morning, the crowd of people who practically mug me to get their copy as I'm doing my delivery round makes me realise that there is at least some point to what I'm doing. And thirdly, thanks to my parents for putting up with my moaning down the phone every week.

Now to the specifics. Thanks to Andy Ofori for putting up with my constant nagging and occasional shouting. To Chris Ince for making me smile even when I just want to curl up in a ball and hibernate for six months. To Gareth Morgan, for being uncontrollably enthusiastic and chirpy, even at five in the morning. To Tom Leggett for reminding me of me three years ago. To Russell Cumber for putting up with the endless piss-takes - you don't have to be apologetic all the time. To the games crew, Andy, Ben and Mark, for appearing out of nowhere and putting up with me griping about the marks. To Ben Fisher, for completely outstripping my expectations. To Will Dugdale for his company on long Tuesday nights. To Helen Clark for providing a spark of normality, punctuality and calmness to an office sorely in need of them. To James Holian, for simply being an amazing guy - honestly, you'd be wasted in consultancy. Finally, thanks to Marie - I've been asked countless times what the title "Deputy Editor" is supposed to mean, and I guess the best explanation I can give is simply to say that you're the one person that I know I couldn't produce Felix without.

Thanks one and all - you're a great bunch, and I only hope that I'll be running down the same list of thank you's at the end of next term.

Dave

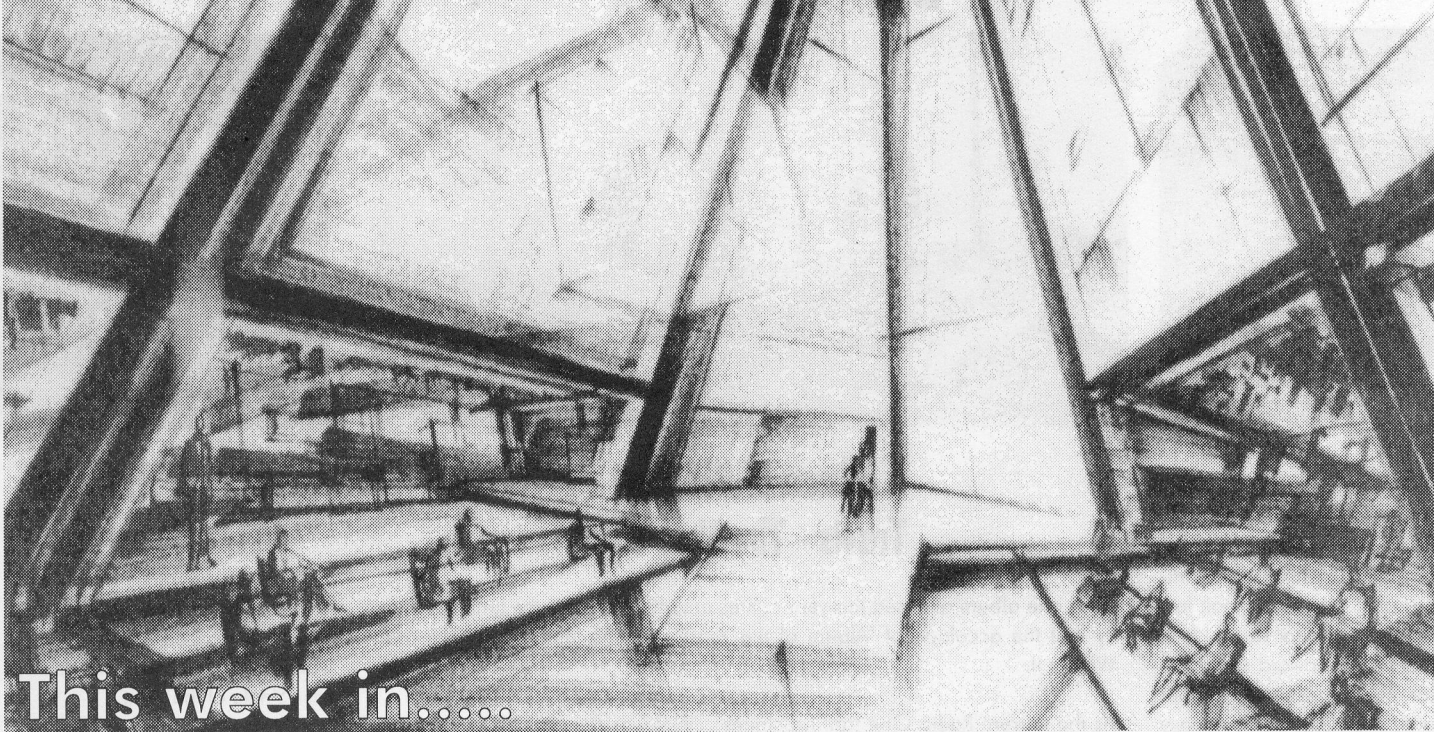


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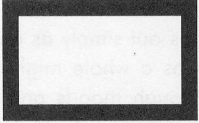
Welcome to the reviews




This week in.....

frequency 

Review of the year
Chemicals
Rampage

screen 

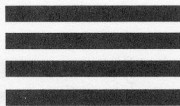
Dogma
Mystery Men
Alice et Martin

react 

Freespace
Worms
Age of Empires

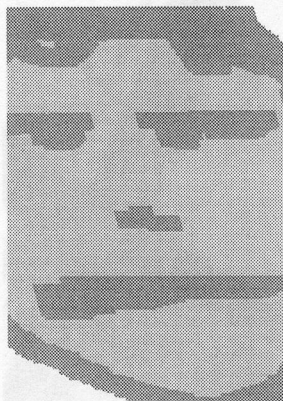
method 

Dirk
Ken Adams
Faces

books 

Getting Better
Book News
Coming Soon...

frequency



1999 - that was the year that was. And what a year it was. Music has never been better (we won't mention that number one) and as we look forward to next year we all know there's an upward trend. As for the Christmas number one, hopefully the re-release of *Imagine* will take the mantle. It may be an old tune, but I'll be surprised if there's a better tune in the running. Please though God, do not let Cliff win the race...

.. frequency ... have a good one

As well as wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, the frequency editorial team of James, Thom and Boycey would also like to say a big thank you to all our readers. We've had a great time writing reviews and compiling these pages and we hope that you've had just as much fun reading them. We also hope that you don't disagree too much with our music of the year choices, and we hope you can find one or two delights in our stocking filler selection. There's also a few reviews of new music, but December releases are rarely the best. There's also the small matter of the new Oasis album due for release in February. If ever there was an opportunity for an album to define the music of a new decade this is it. So good luck Noel, I hope you can do it.

Album of the Year Travis - *The Man Who*

Only one album released this year comes anywhere near to the timeless quality that the accolade of "Album of the Year" requires, and Travis' *The Man Who* is it.

As the current Radio One trail proclaims, 1999 was the year of Travis. Stepping out of nowhere, they have been rewarded with massive album sales, a string of top twenty singles and across the board critical acclaim. More importantly, they're hard to pin down - one review summed them up as Radiohead meets Oasis (depressed sigh meets anthemic chant, I guess) hardly does anyone any favours. Certainly they have Radiohead (circa *The Bends*) inspired moments, but then they're a lot more indie and, frankly, a lot more mainstream - you only have to look at the singles charts for proof, where you'll find that *Turn*, *Driftwood*, *Writing to Reach You* and *Why Does it Always Rain On Me* have notched up incredibly impressive figures for a band that practically no-one had heard of twelve months ago.

Ultimately, *The Man Who* stands out simply as an outstanding collection of songs. The feel of the album as a whole might not be perfect - it jumps around rather than flowing through moods and styles as a classic album should - but the tracks themselves are simply superb, and it's worth spending your eleven quid just for the singles alone.

All music has its own place and time (I'm a confirmed believer in the concept of owning music for every mood), and this album sits happily next to my stereo, awaiting stressed out nights or panic stricken days, when I can throw it on, melt into my bed, and simply calm the fuck down. Idyllic.



Dave



James

Single of The Year TLC - *No Scrubs*

With a lyrical delivery worthy of their beautifully scribed words, it is no wonder that TLC win the prize of Felix Single of the Year.

1999 was a great year for TLC. They recaptured the popularity of their *CrazySexyCool* era and then surpassed it with massive amounts of radio and MTV play. *No Scrubs* and the later-released *Unpretty* were songs from the top draw and both had girls and boys across the world singing along. Not only were the tunes excellent, but the lyrics were catchy and had more meaning than those found in most other popular tunes.

No Scrubs takes the prize though as the best of the two. It's original, stylish, beautifully executed and almost perfect in every way. Its universal appeal stamps the mark harder, and I'm taking no arguments about this being Single of the Year.

stocking filler recommendations

Basement Jaxx - *Remedy*

House music for the masses, the Jaxx splashed a style of their own across the UK this year. The singles from the album also improved as the year went on, with the *Jump and Shout* conclusion breaking more than a few ear drums

Beck - *Midnite Vultures*

Beck does it again with this latecomer. It's a cocktail of influences and a delight on the ear.

Blur - *Thirteen*

Not quite album number thirteen, but Blur are getting close. The quality still shines after all this time and if you get this I promise you'll still be listening to it in ten years time.

Death in Vegas - *The Contino Sessions*

A slow burner in the sales charts, but another excellent collection of songs that work extremely well together

John Digweed - *Bedrock Mix*

Shortly edging out Sasha's *Global Underground Ibiza* mix, this *Bedrock Mix* takes dance music mix of the year. The *Bedrock* clubnight at Heaven also wins a prize as Felix's Best Club. Nice going John.

Eminem - *The Slim Shady LP*

He's ruse, he's bad and your mum hates him. So buy this for your little brother and watch *World War Three* commence. It's what family gatherings are all about.

frequency



Fun Lovin' Criminals

Mimosa
(EMI)

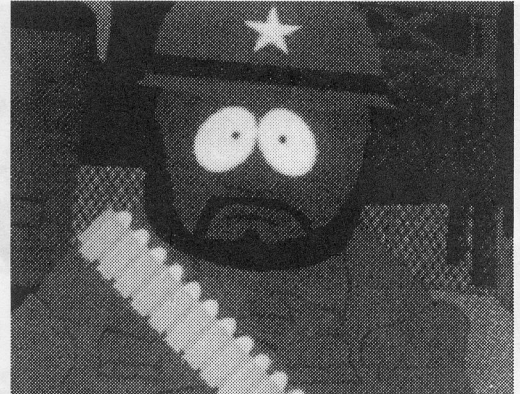
Lounge music. Lounge music... hmmm. It's along the same lines as elevator music, airport music and musak in the kitsch stakes, although there's a certain quiet cool about it. I mean, it's a pretty uptight cat (work with me on this one, okay) that can listen to lounge music for any long stretch and not fall asleep. You've got to be a real square not to relax to it, man. (Come on, give me a break, I'm trying to be cool and with it. I'll just stop it, shall I?)

Cool lounge grooviness is all well and good but when it's presented by one of the most laid-back bands ever as an alternative to their more pop-cool orientated sounds then you have to wonder. I'm always a bit suspicious when a band release an album of b-sides or unreleased numbers unless (a) they've split up or (b) one of them has died, as Queen do regularly. Oasis did *The Masterplan* last year and I felt that it was an excuse to make more money from their fans even though they couldn't be arsed to write a new album, and I have that same feeling about *Mimosa*.

To kick off, we've got five (count 'em) tracks taken from the album *Come Find Yourself*, and even one of those is a cover. All five are different versions, mainly titled *Schmoove*, but out of eleven tracks it's a hell of a large number. The rest are covers of a variety of musicians but all have a distinctly Vic and Bob club-style about them. I am perhaps being a tad harsh on what is, in all a fair album. There's an Ozzy track, *Crazy Train* that's pure piss-take, and a cover of the Sinatra song *The Summer Wind* with a guest appearance from Echo and The Bunnymen 's Ian McCulloch. All the FLC alternative versions are rather fun to listen to, with Huey on *Scooby Snacks* sounding as though he's one step away from a coma and a general feel throughout the whole album of them not actually giving a shit. *Mimosa* will certainly appeal to FLC fanatics but there's more than just that. The album is sufficiently different for it to be a worthwhile move for even a part-time fan to give it a listen. I still think that it's another cheap way of making money though.



Christian



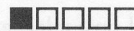
South Park

Mr Hanky's Christmas Classics
(Columbia)

Poo. What a great word. Try saying it out loud, especially if you're reading this during a lecture. See how many people look at you and laugh. This album is mostly about shit and coincidentally most of it is shit. Okay, so it's funny the first time you hear it, but the second listen becomes tiresome very quickly. First song, a primary school snigger-along. Second, an over-offensive racist/blasphemous ditty. Then the tuneless singing of a Christmas carol by South Park characters. Repeat these themes for fifty minutes. Nice. Don't get me wrong, I love South Park, but this thing is more reminiscent of the ICSM publication, Prince Albert - smutty whilst being completely devoid of humour. Perhaps it's meant to offend and shock, but I just found it plain dull.

The high point of the album is an absurd Meatloaf send up, *Swiss colony beef log*, sung by Cartman, but the rest of the music can be generously described as being TV-advert quality. This CD deserves to be reduced to ashes along with all the rest of the cheap cash-ins released in time for Christmas. Even the mandatory Chef song is dire.

Verdict: 5 stars for the first listen, 0 thereafter. So Felix gives it one, and recommends that you steer well clear.



Hardy

more stocking filler recommendations

Gomez - *Liquid Skin*

Gomez set themselves among music's major players with this release. *Liquid Skin* is an excellent follow up to *Bring It On* and every self-respecting student should own both.

Groove Armada - *Vertigo*

As they'd say themselves, 'if you're fond of sand dunes...' you'll adore this chilled offering from these London boys. It also includes the new ICU anthem *I See You Baby*, but unfortunately you'll have to buy the single to get the thumping Fat Boy Slim remix.

Moby - *Play*

Moby's *Why Does My Heart Feel So Sad?* ran *No Scrubs* close for Felix's Single of the Year. *Play* is a fabulous record with all the usual Moby twists.

Mogwai - *Come on Die Young*

Lyricless and slow, this album is not one for the depressed or easily upset. Its release was also ignored by many but this is a work of art.

Beth Orton - *Central Reservations*

This probably deserved to win the Mercury Music Prize (the winner of which passes without a mention here).

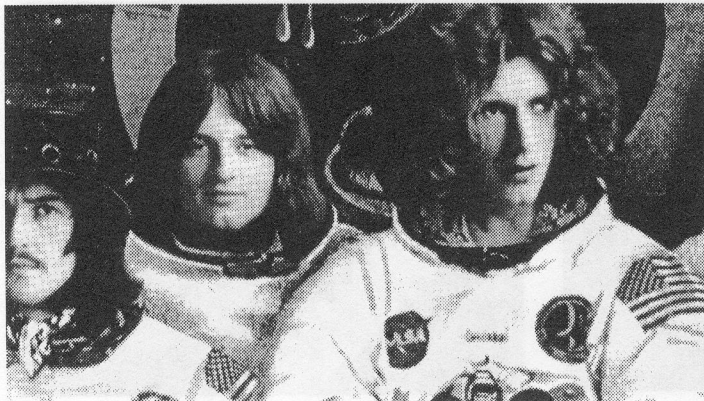
Stereophonics - *Performance and Cocktails*

They may sound a bit too much like Radiohead did five years ago, but all is forgiven considering the catchiness of the songs.

Mercury Rev - *Deserter's Songs*

Not from this year, but as this my favourite from 1998, this superb album manages to squeeze into this box. It's a beautiful album both musically and lyrically, and the composition is at times simply breathtaking. It's also better than anything to come out this year, and that's saying quite a lot considering the quality on these pages

frequency



Led Zeppelin The Best Of - Volume 1 (Atlantic)

Okay, I've got my hands in the air and I'm more than willing to admit that I'm a huge fan of the Zep. I'm going to be slightly swayed by nearly anything that has the best rock band ever playing on it, but I'll be fair. Have you ever been asked, "But WHY do you need that super-rare import version of that album? All that's different is the colour of the title"? I have, and the only response I can muster is the old beauty that being a fan of such sad proportions is like being addicted to crack. You always tell yourself that you'll stop but you NEED more and each time you get it, the buzz is that little bit weaker. This is pure speculation on my part since I have never been and am not addicted to crack cocaine.

Anyway, *Early Days* is a compilation of what Jimmy Page (producer of the album and guitar legend) thinks are the best bits from Zeppelin's first four albums. It contains such classics as *Rock And Roll*, *Dazed And Confused*, *Whole Lotta Love* (the original version of the *Top Of The Pops* theme) and the inevitable *Stairway*. In fact the entire album could be titled *The Beginner's Guide To The Mighty Zep* because there's not a bum track on it. All the ingredients that first had me hooked are there: Robert Plant's screeching vocals, Pages killer hammering of the Les Paul (among others) and the incredible coupling of John Paul Jones' keyboard and bass wizardry with John Bonham's psycho drumming. As a feat of production and musicianship the sound can't be faulted, there's even a movie of *Communication Breakdown* on the ECD. I'm in Led Zep heaven...

And then I think a little. Why, in light of past releases of the boxed set of four CDs in 1990 and a Remasters double album in 1993, do we need another greatest hits selection? Are the coffers of Led Zeppelin Inc. empty? I think not. Do those wonderful people at Warner Music wish to do the public a favour? Don't make me laugh. All it boils down to is money, and people wanting more of it, and in that respect, *Early Days* is a stinker. In all the other ways though, this is a superb album of thirteen classic songs from the world's greatest rock band.



Christian

Music Meeting Time Change

Due to James having too much work to do music meetings will be moving back to the much more friendly time of Friday lunchtimes at 12.30pm. To join up just come along to a meeting in the portacabins or contact James on music.felix@ic.ac.uk



Talking All That Jazz! And there goes the London Jazz Festival

Well, as planned, I made my way to two of the concerts at the London Jazz Festival I'd written about a few weeks ago. My selection took me to see Taj Mahal, and Dianne Reeves at the last gig of this year's LJF.

The first concert was very good, with the blues legend in the perfect mood, doing his thing brilliantly, accompanied by six African musicians on very strange instruments (Malian koras anyone?). But the second concert certainly went beyond my very high expectations. Dianne Reeves sure is the girl of a preacher man! Amen to that! She preached the righteous path to a mesmerised crowd who kept asking for more. Full of tracks from her new Blue Note album, *Bridges* (recommended to anyone whose hearing is still working), the long concert was very diverse in style. She was able to switch from the bluest of moods playing Duke's *Mood Indigo* in duet with her bassist, to some heavy-beat scat numbers when the bassist opted for his electric bass guitar instead of the traditional double-bass, and the percussionist was on fire.

She has a great interaction with the audience too, and the atmosphere was fabulous. It reached its peak in my opinion when, on a slow blue number, people spontaneously started snapping their fingers in rhythm. At that moment you could really grasp the passion of the crowd: they needed to express their emotion but where exactly in the timid, quiet but catchy mood of the melodies sketched.

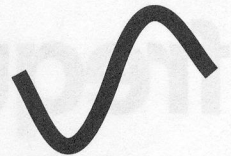
Arguably, the best two jazz singers in the world right now are Dianne Reeves and Diana Krall. And if you've missed Dianne, go and listen to Diana! Her previous UK concert in November last year sold out at an amazing pace, so get a move on! By the way, I'm just mentioning this because I've been asked the question, is it possible to dance to jazz music in London? Catch the 'messin' around' soiree at the Jazz cafe (near Camden tube station) every Saturday. It's £8 and goes on from 10.30pm to 2am. You'll have great fun.

And let me add a little bit of advice here. If you want to buy a few albums (I'll hopefully have a few reviews soon) here are the cheapest stores in central London: Steve's Sound at Newport Court (close to the sex-shops!) in Leicester Square, and Honest Jon's at 276 Portobello Road. Don't buy anywhere else, you'll pay more.

Finally I'd like to wish you all a happy holiday and if can't be good be careful, and remember that above all else you must keep it jazzy

Etienne

frequency



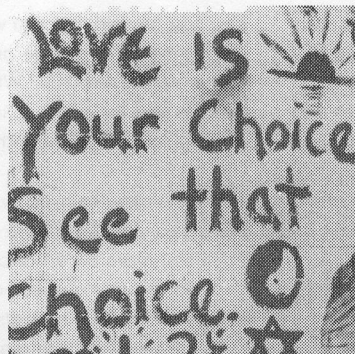
Progress
Everybody
(Manifesto)

It is the song from the advert, but I cannot remember which one, which says something for the way the tune subliminally sinks into your brain. No doubt it will be appearing on every Ministry of Sound album for 2000. Four out of five and single of the week



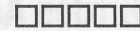
Charlatans
My Beautiful Friend
(Universal)

If I had a lead singer worse than that of the Stone Roses, I certainly wouldn't ask them to sing a song this slow, with so much emphasis on them. However, Burgess manages to mould with a guitar riff that could easily carry the song by itself and for the Charlatans the result is surprisingly moving.



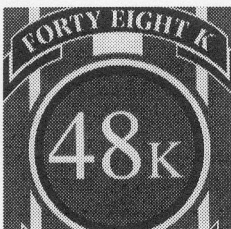
Type O Negative
Everything Dies
(Roadrunner)

Taking a heavy metal band, slowing down their verses by adding a piano and over producing the song in an effort to make it as consumer friendly as possible is not the formula for good music, as this song proves. This is the work of very shoddy workmen and to give it more than zero would be unfair on the rest.



Agent Sumo
Sunflowers
(Seeds)

Agent Sumo proves to more of a double-o agent than a flabby wrestler. This is a disco house track that tacks a bit of big beat on top. The effect is excellent as the beats get you dancing. Watch out for more of these guys in the coming months.



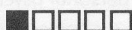
N-Influence
Sweet Substance
(48K)

For those of you who haven't quite got enough of this through the summer, here's a bit more Euro House. It's too late in the season and there's nothing remotely unique about it. This is from an Oakfold label as well proving that even masters can mess up sometimes.



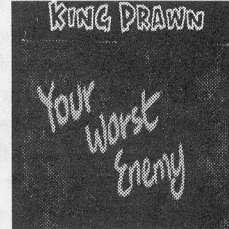
Tom Jones & Cerys
Baby, It's Cold Outside
(Gut)

It's a big question, and the question is why? The pair decide to take us back to a smoke filled cabaret and no matter how good they are individually the decision to sing this song is almost as bad as Cerys' dress in the video. Does Jones just love the limelight, or does he honestly believe that this tune is worth singing?



TLC
Dear Lie
(Arista)

After their two successful singles taken from their album *Fan Mail*, TLC have opted for a ballad worthy of the likes of Westlife and Boyzone. They don't however have the fan base of screaming girls and don't drip with quite enough cheese. No *Scrubs* is Felix's single of the year though and *Fan Mail* is definitely worth checking.



King Prawn
Your Worst Enemy
(Spitfire)

Given the name of the band and the singles packaging, I was expecting another terribly commercial attempt at the number one singles spot, similar to Mr. Blobby. Instead Green Day have gone extremely ska. It works well, if you're into that type of thing.



...Singles reviews
by Disco Stu ...

frequency



Fun Loving Criminals @ Brixton Academy

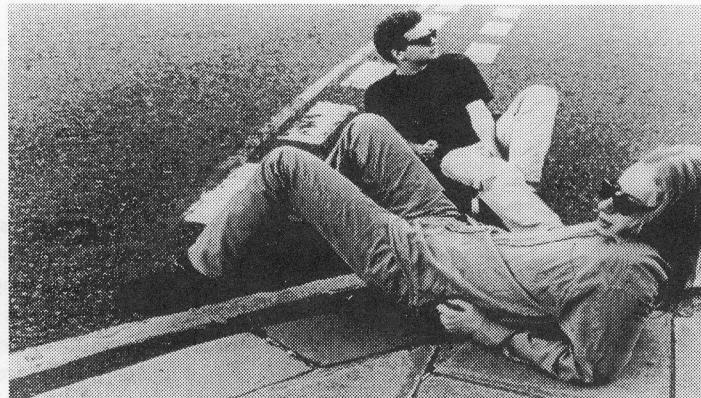
The Fun Lovin' Criminals are cool. By that I mean that it is they themselves that are cool and not just their music. They love playing their music and it shows. They love performing in front of a crowd and it shows. Not only do they love it but they also know how to bring the best out of themselves and put huge smiles on the faces of the crowd, ones which were probably still there two days later. Saturday night at Brixton academy was an experience that started not so much with a bang, but more of a 'uh-huh' as The King played support. He wasn't particularly bad, but neither did he sound as if he should have escaped the top end of the pub circuit. The crowd were good-natured enough to give a small amount of applause but they really just wanted The Criminals to come on stage.

However, after the King had finished his set we had to wait a while longer as we were treated to a screening of *Maui homicide 2000* - FLC's new 20 minute short film. Imagine if you will a bunch of guys deciding they wanted a bit of a laugh and had the money to film a few amusing notions they had floating around their head. Imagine a seventies cop show shot on a dodgy handheld camera with the actors taking the piss. That was this film. Every single moment of the film Huey and Fast were carrying, and drinking from, a bottle of Corona. Even when they were jumping over bushes with a pistol firing from one hand, in the other would be a bottle of beer. Nice. By all rights the film should have been as boring to watch as one your mate had made while pissed on a Saturday afternoon but somehow it turned out to be something of a cult classic...

When the Criminals finally came on they did so with a roar and started as they meant to go on - loudly. Listening to their albums beforehand I wondered if some of the songs would transfer well to a live gig but after hearing them play I found out how wrong I was. FLC had - for want of a better phrase - "toughened up" some of their songs so that they played better in front of a live audience, and it worked amazingly well. Their mellow songs were still mellow but the songs that had lain somewhere in between mellow and jumping were elevated to that higher level needed for a live gig. There were no bad points in the whole set but of course the classics such as *Scooby Snacks*, *King of New York* and *Big Night Out* got the crowd shouting more than the rest. The final song of the set was the best ever version of *We Have All the Time in the World* (10 times better than that found on *Come Find Yourself*) and it left us begging for more, but unfortunately our two hours was up and we had to make our way back to the tube.

This was the best concert I've been to for a long while and it just confirms my view of Brixton as the best London live venue - I can't wait for both my return and that of the Criminals.

Tim



Chemical Brothers @ Brixton Academy

Hey boy, hey girl, hey you what you doing here? Hey freak left over from the days gone by of grunge and psychotic episodes. Hey teenie bopper in the corner WHAT ARE YOU WEARING? Hey want some pills? Or Es? Or something to last the night (Charly anybody)? Oh yes it's all under one groovy roof. It's laser supreme with dodgy burgers and fries to go... here we go!

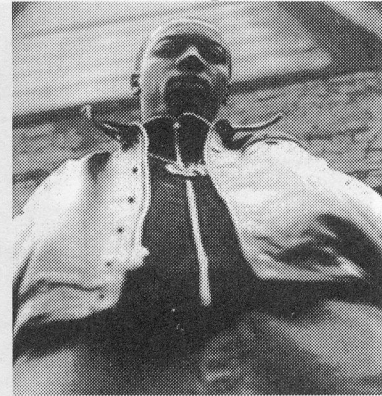
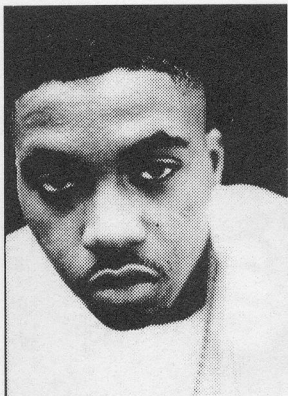
Two years after the hype over 'electronica' and its subsequent failure to meet the music industry's desire for the 'next big thing', electronic music is, nevertheless, more a part of our musical consciousness than ever before. That is, if your consciousness can cope in an environment such as this. You bought *Block Rockin' Beats* because your friends had it, but can the move from the relatively safe realm of the warehouse party to that of the ticketed rock concert do the electronic culture any good?

This is no ordinary venue. The Academy has a lingering sense of darkness about it, that and the lack of a queue makes you think something isn't quite right. Oh why oh why didn't you tell me they were on at 1am? James Holroyd doesn't do the venue any justice, but has a few nice moments, and finally lets Sasha tease the crowd. You know that tune, no you don't, and it's cunning, a seamless montage of body shaking beats and bass lines with no direction. But you have to leave it to a couple of unassuming-looking Mancunians to blow the roof off the Academy (complete with castle and lanterns). But, mind you, with all of the flashes of assaultive bright light that were directed at the audience from the front of the stage, you might think that the group didn't want anyone looking in that direction to begin with. Buried beneath a veritable elektrobank of synths, sequencers and drum machines, Tim Rowlands and Ed Simons took the sound system to the limit, twisting and bending their tracks almost to breaking point. The lights came to life at 1am with a bottom-heavy take on *Hey Boy Hey Girl*, leaving the audience barely time to recover before launching into a seamless flow of *Block Rockin' Beats*, *Under The Influence*, *Out Of Control*. You have to admit the clash of cultures in the music (and in the venue) - a warm sound stemming from a love of rock and roll perhaps, 60's psychedelia, remnants of big beat lost in the transition from *Dig Your Own Hole* to the undoubtedly excellent *Surrender*.

The best thing about the Chemicals live is they look like they are having a great time, but the party isn't just on the stage. It's on the dance floor. It's all around us. Anyone who wants to argue that 'this sort of music' doesn't work in a live environment - give it up. There wasn't a flat foot in the place. Go direct your personal psychosis at the latest Spice Girl gone solo and her ilk. Who needs a choreographed dance routine and scantily clad men waving their arses on the stage? Not me. So here I go...

Marie

frequency



Nas Nastradamus (Columbia)

Nas drops this latest catalogue of street rhymes in the wake of *I am...* his recent masterpiece, which blew-up Stateside as well over here. He faces the future on this latest joint and if it was easy listening you were looking for you best keep searching. Ghetto star he may be but it's the project-life that fills his lyrics.

Nastradamus, the track released off this album, is not the greatest advert, with its weak hook and slack vocals. The rest does get better, but not a whole lot, the laid-back flow kills the hardcore rage that had heads nodding to *Hate Me Now*. Tracks like *Family* featuring Mobb Deep and the dope *Some Of Us Have Angels* give the album some appeal, but it's tough to get excited about some of the blatant fillers that break-up feature tunes.

Nas does no damage to his reputation consistently laying down rough rhymes with a true gangsta edge, but this latest offering couldn't live up to the mastery of *I am...*, the lyrics are just as tight, but the production, the collaborations, and the beats just don't do it.



AWOL

Karl T goes on the Rampage break out with frequency's new hip-hop column

Yeah! That's right a true playa has arrived to tell you what's the deal with the slickest industry around. It's time for the new generation. The Bomb has exploded and faded away. Are you ready for the RAMPAGE.....

Since hip hop blew up and rocked the foundations of the music industry, enough people have been dissing it for the supposed underworld connections. Every month we see yet another of the hip hop industry's playaz up in court, what's with that? Earlier this month it was the turn of the Don Jay-Z to hit the pen, he's accused of stabbing the head of Entertainment, Lance Rivera, at Q-Tip's release party and then punching Entertainment's head of promotions in the face. Apparently Jay-Z held Rivera and his outfit responsible for bootlegging his new album *Vol 3...Life and Times of S Carter*, which is set to drop in a few weeks. They saying he looking at 25 years - he better fucking not be, the industry has suffered enough

Wu Tang's Ol' Dirty Bastard's recent arrest shows that when the big names come out talking about how the police live on their ass, they ain't lying. Last month he was sentenced to a year of rehabilitation, fined and given a year's probation, firstly for threatening a bouncer, and secondly for wearing a bullet-proof vest - what the fuck? That's right wearing a damn vest, not only that he's the first person to be convicted of this new state law forbidding felons to wear body armour. Apparently he's an example for me he's a damn good example of the shit major MCs have to face.

During the millennium madness we can expect to see some hot albums appearing at our stores, from beyond the grave The Notorious B.I.G releases *Born Again* featuring a killa collection of collaborators including Nas, Lauryn Hill, Jay-Z and of course Puff Daddy. Lil' Kim gets in on the action with *Notorious K.I.M.* DMX and Easy Mo Bee are also set to release their new albums and the Madd Rapper will bring us *Tell 'Em Why U Mad*.

Ice Cube has completed the sequel to the cult movie *Friday*, Craig and Debo return, but this time they're out of the hood and ripping it up in the suburbs. They spent all of five minutes naming, calling it *Next Friday*, but the soundtrack is meant to be bangin' featuring some huge names.

Karl

Massive Loud Giveaway

This week frequency has a batch of twenty-five Loud Record samplers to give away. Featuring WuTang stars Raekwon and Inspectah Deck as well as rap gods Mobb Deep this compilation provides quite a treat for your walkman. The best thing is that there is no question to answer, so to get a copy for yourself just pop into the Felix office and pick up your free copy now. Nice.

Inspectah Deck Uncontrolled Substance (Loud)

From the depths of shaolin comes the highly anticipated Inspectah Deck with his solo LP *Uncontrolled Substance*. The necessary ingredients for a head laceration album are provided in this well produced compilation of ear splitting tracks. The beats, which are sweetly provided by the RZA, Allah Mathematics, Tru Master, and the Rebel INS himself, complement the intricate verbal assaults provided by this highly multi-talented individual. An honour role student, a football and basketball player shows the diversity of this lyrical MC.

It is with great relief to see that the album is finally in the shores after problems that his label LOUD Records had with its distribution. And all that I can say is that the wait was definitely worth it. With H.O.T.T tracks like the trumpet-laced *Movas & Shakers*, the head bumping *Uncontrolled Substance*, to the smooth and chilled out *Trouble Man*, Inspectah's skill as a rhyme spitter with serious repercussions is re-established.

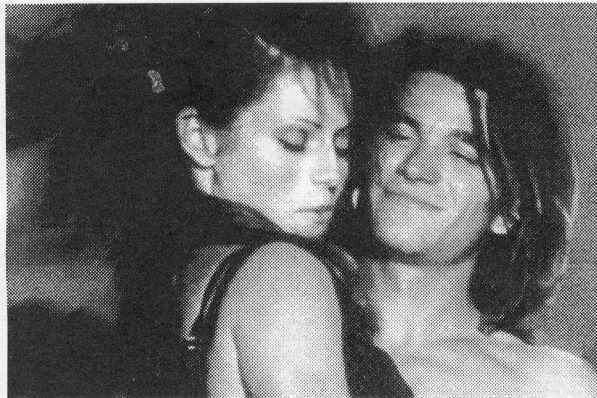
For the true Hip-Hop, Wu-Tang fans this album is definitely a must buy as Inspectah shows that the conglomerate is nothing but alive and still representing bringing that original flavour from the streets live and direct to your headphones.

The album features the likes of Street life and U-God, keeping the Wu-Tang feel through he album. The official release date is the 27 December, acquire if you dare and feel the wrath of *Uncontrolled Substance*.



DMG

frequency



Highrise @ home

Everybody's heard about it. The biggest and most raved about (OK, so Fabric's big too) club in London opens its doors every Thursday night to a horde of beat-seeking, style-loving students, and creates what is arguably London's biggest student night. Admired from afar, home really does make it. With the recent arrival of one of, if not the biggest external video screens in the capital, and the incredible amount of style whipped up in having escalators to take you into this demon of a superclub, home really does complement its sleek 1, Leicester Square address, and it just seems that little bit more special.

Despite only opening three of its eight floors on student night, the dancefloors on levels two and three, accompanied by the balcony up on four provide enough space to accommodate a significant sector of the London student population. The chill-out rooms, bathed in their veils of pastel light, are like something from a sci-fi movie, whilst the cloakroom is a sequence of elliptical holes in the wall, shrouded in low tone colours, its function only apparent when you see the guy's head appear through one of them. Weird science, but it works well. Not a normal inclusion in a club review, but the toilets were as art deco and stylish as the rest of the place, and with a giant slanting glass pane functioning as all the urinals, and top name sprays and cosmetics by the astoundingly clean washbasins (I'm assured the ladies is just as chic), it deserves a mention.

As for the tunes; the second floor slammed out some grilling drum 'n' bass early on, but most of my time was spent up on three, full on house and hard house, with residents Tayo, Junior Cartier, and Stuart Lovell, alongside Paul Arnold and Justin Robertson, sharing the floors with beats a plenty, the crew capably satisfying the hardest clubber.

Perhaps the night's only flaw is that in amongst the regimental efficiency of the whole layout, and the awe-inspiring perfection that defines home, there's a bit of a lack of soul, and it's treated more as an experience than a good night out. But, if you've got a 10-3 slot free on your Thursday night, a fiver to get in (£2 all drinks inc. Red Bull and Smirnoff!), and you want a serious clubbing spectacle, then get down to *Highrise*, it's highly recommended and you'll have a top time. Blinding!

Pete



Fabric @ Fabric

Fabric and home are both London "supper-cubs" which attempt to bring back the title of best club in the UK to London. They opened within two months of each other and their Saturday nights offer similar music. home is open till 3 and at 3 the music shuts off the lights go on and everyone is told to go Home. Fabric on the other hand has a 24 hour licence and finishes at 7ish on a Saturday and until home is late licensed there is literally no comparison between the clubs.

Fabric is a dark moody underground space with brick lined walls and three differing dance floors. It used to be a cold store for Smithfield market and the tradition of keeping things cold has been continued with the largest and most effective air conditioning I have ever seen in a club. Fabric also has the longest queue I have ever seen at a club, even the guest list queue was 20 minutes long and as the club was rammed inside it couldn't have been long before they were counting "one in one out" if they weren't already doing so at 11:15.

Sasha has a monthly residency with Fabric and performs on the first Saturday of every month in room 1, along with Craig Richards and Muzik magazine's 'up and coming DJ of the year' Lee Burgess. Hybrid were the main draw in room two, were best described as bit like faithless, and truly excellent. Music then varied from drum 'n' bass though mashed up break beats to James Brown across rooms 2 and 3. Unfortunately when Hybrid came off stage at 1:20 the already busy main dance floor became unbearably crowded. For a club of this size the main room should be at least 50% bigger than it is. Having said this the much vaunted body sonic or vibrating dance floor was not just a gimmick but added another dimension to the mixing, one excellent moment when the floor began vibrating more as the kick drum faded in was enough to prove this.

Sasha was due to play 2-4 and when he put down the headphones at 4:20 it was still debatable that home might be better. Lee Burgess followed on and proved he was better than any home resident save Danny Rampling and Oakenfold (the former better watch out). However, Sasha came back on unexpectedly at 5:30 to a nicely busy but no longer crowded dance floor. He found another gear and proceeded to have a 'who can make the crowd go off most?' contest with Burgess till 7:20. The question was not 'is this the best club in London?' but 'is this best club in the world?'

One of the best things about Fabric is the value. There may be somewhere else you can get a bottle of beer for £2.50 at 4:30 on a Sunday morning in London but Harts food and wine isn't exactly my idea of a good night out. The unisex toilets and chill out beds with 8 people on are unfortunately not as pery as you would think, but the over crowding means that the IC geeks will have a rare opportunity to come into close bodily contact with a woman. Fabric is crowded and arriving 20 minutes before opening and queuing for an hour is inevitable, but for £12 and a 7am tube ride home (same price as Equinox and cheaper beer) you can't argue.

Alex

frequency



Rulin' @ Ministry of Sound

Ministry is probably the most well known club in London (well known for the music, well known for the sound system, well known because it's well known). The question is whether it lives up to its reputation. Once you're passed security you enter a red-lit corridor with the music pumping at the other end of the tunnel. As soon as you're in you follow your ears to the main dance floor on the left, which is the heart of the Ministry. You can't help but give in to the stunning sound quality of the American House tunes mixed to perfection by resident DJs Jazzy M and Erick Morillo or the other top guest DJs. All tastes are catered for depending on the night you go and with six massive speakers strategically placed in the main, it doesn't matter where you happen to find yourself dancing.

Last Saturday was no exception. Jules Papp kicked off with a 3 hour set with an increasingly high tempo throughout, although there could have been more variation. Towards 3am the crowd was getting really big, the venue really packed. Clubbers could be spotted everywhere with shirts undone and water bottles in their hands, absorbing the music. Then Tim Deluxe came on and continued in the right direction by increasing the beats and the volume. The next three hours consisted of the definition of deep house with his special effects flying all over the place. Finally Jazzy M finished the night off with yet another three hour set consisting of more relaxed tunes.

When you needed to chill out, you could either go into the main bar where the music is softer and slower, or into the small bar and have a drink (having said that drinks are predictably expensive, water is £1.90). Then again, if you're lucky enough to get yourself into the VIP bar then that's definitely the best option. Not only does it have its own cloakroom and toilets for its VIPs, but best of all it has an entrance to a small section way above the dance floor. From there you can enjoy the music even more while having the privilege to see your favourite DJ mastering the decks.

Deep House was not the only thing available. In the Main Bar softer more commercial house was being played, but this did not stop people from dancing on the bar. Right at the end you had the Smartie Party where another mixer and the live percussionist merged the tunes into wild frenzy of body shaking beats. The lighting effects on all three dance floors were average to say the least. But the stage dancers definitely made up for it (especially if you had the chance to see them warming up from the VIP bar).

I recommend getting there before half past eleven and waiting for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour (to avoid the massive queues), so by the time you get in you will be able to have a good look at what you like. The dress code is a lot less strict than I thought - loads of people had black trainers on but if you want to be on the safe side then wear something smart and casual.

Not even the £15 entrance fee is a good excuse not to have visited MoS at least once on *Rulin'* Saturday. If you fall in love with the place, a membership is £40 and that includes an album, free entry to five select club nights, reduced entry on all nights, the chance to skip the queue and some other random offers.

Henry



Millennium Clubbing

The 31st of December 1999 sees the clubs of England charging what might at first seem ridiculous amounts of cash. However, if you've got a spare hundred quid lying around you could do a lot worse. Remember to account for consumables when wallet stuffing though!

Friday 31st December 1999

Ministry of Sound; £130

The most well known and expensive of the lot the Ministry has its usual line up of top DJs. Your ticket gets you free champagne on entry and a gift pack when you leave with an opportunity to win a trip to Ibiza in the summer.

Fabric; £99

Basement Jaxx, the Scratch Perverts and the Freestylers play at this top venue. With doors open from 8pm until 8am and some 'special surprises' you cannot go far wrong with this.

Home; £99

With Home shortly to become a household name this night has to be good. Paul Oakenfold plays live on Radio 1 and Carl Cox plays live from Sydney. The ticket does not include any free drinks but they promise that prices will not be raised for the occasion.

Gatecrasher; £107.50

An extravaganza unlike any other with 25,000 people in the largest ever portable structure and the likes of the Chemical Brothers, Sasha and Judge Jules doing their stuff.

Slinky; £65

Bournemouth's finest hosts 16 hours of overpaid DJs on ISDN links getting paid several times over for doing the same as usual.

Renaissance; £110

Held in 18th century Italian gardens, this night at least has some originality with some exclusive DJs in the form of Dave Seaman and John Digweed.

Cream; £99

Held in London at the Brixton Academy and in Cardiff at the Wales National Ice Rink as well as the original Liverpool venue this features Fatboy Slim, Pete Tong and Sasha - again.

screen



Odeon Kensington Millennium Give-Away

To celebrate the end of a millennium and the start of a new one, the Odeon Kensington have kindly donated a three-month movie pass to Screen's Christmas stocking. As it's the season of good will, Screen will give this amazing present away to one lucky reader. Just think - three whole months of movies and no studying. Forget those tutorials and passing your degree, you could just become the film buff of the year. Eat your heart out Jonathan Ross.

Ok, so now you need a question. Hmmm, what question would be worthy of such a prize? Here goes

Name the actor playing Scrooge in *The Muppet Christmas Carol* being shown on Christmas Eve

So now it's the usual procedure, just e-mail your answer to

film.felix@ic.ac.uk

before 12pm on Friday and you could be seeing every film when you want, how you want, for the next three months.

Odeon Kensington decided enough is enough and introduced:

£4.50 STUDENT CINEMA TICKETS

Proving ODEON Cinemas are no VIRGINS when it comes to propositioning students!

THE OFFER!

1. Bring valid student card
2. Visit Monday - Friday and/or Saturday Late Shows
3. Show student card
4. Pay £4.50
5. See film
6. Enjoy

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Offer valid at ODEON Kensington only. Offer may be withdrawn without prior notice. Admission is subject to Odeon Cinemas' Standard Conditions

Dogma Competition

To celebrate the release of *Dogma* and the Christmas holidays, Screen have five Smirnoff 'Buddy Mary' kits to give away. These kits contain a miniature of Smirnoff, a miniature of tomato juice, and a sachet of pepper, all in a special *Dogma* bowl.

Dogma opens nationwide on 26th December, so at least there's one good film to go and see over the festive period. You can also check out *Dogma* on-line at

www.dogma-movie.co.uk

To win a Buddy Mary kit, all you have to do is the usual - answer the following two questions and e-mail both the answers to

film.felix@ic.ac.uk

before 12pm on Friday 17th December, or you won't have a chance of winning anything. Without further ado here are the two questions to be answered:

- 1) Name the Oscar winning film that Matt Damon and Ben Affleck previously starred in together
- 2) Name the movie that first brought Kevin Smith to everyone's attention

Don't despair if you don't win a Buddy Mary kit as we also have some *Dogma* posters to give away for the lucky runner-ups.

For those of you who didn't know or couldn't find out the answer to last week's question, here it is

Q's real name is Major Bothroyd

The five lucky winners of a pair of tickets to see the new James Bond flick *The World Is Not Enough* are

Caroline Law
Emmanuelle Evain
Umerah Akram
Gregory Mann
Lionel Ramone

Please call by the Felix office before the end of the week to collect your prize.

screen



Mystery Men

Mystery Men stars Ben Stiller (*There's Something About Mary*), William H Macy (*Pleasantville*, *Fargo*) and Hank Azaria (of *The Simpson's* fame) as superhero wannabes trying to prevent crime in Champion City. The problem is that superhero wannabes are exactly what they are. They have no extraordinary powers of their own. The team includes Ben Stiller as Mr Furious, who gets bad when he gets mad; William H Macy as The Shoveler, whose power is, you guessed it, using his shovel to batter people senseless; and Hank Azaria as The Blue Raja, who throws silverware with deadly accuracy. Therefore, when supervillain Casanova Frankenstein (Geoffrey Rush), kidnaps Captain Amazing (Greg Kinnear), the only real superhero in Champion City, the *Mystery Men* have to come forth and produce the goods. Along the way, they are able to enlist the services of 4 more 'superheroes' (played by Janeane Garofolo, Kel Mitchell, Paul Reubens, and Wes Studi) of which Paul Reubens, as The Spleen, is most impressive, utilising his powers of lethal flatulence.

Mystery Men seems to be a movie that looks better on paper than on the screen. There must have been some mishap that occurred when the script was passed from the screenwriter to the director. The first time director of this movie is Kinka Usher, who has previously helmed music videos and TV advertisements, and it shows in his hyper-kinetic style of directing and attention to visuals rather than to the story.

That's not to say that there isn't anything to like in the movie. On the contrary, the script provides many laugh-out-loud moments, which are delivered well by all the actors involved. Ben Stiller, William H Macy and Janeane Garofolo are standouts, as is Paul Reubens (of *Pee Wee Herman* fame). William H Macy is fast becoming one of the best character actors in Hollywood and Janeane Garofolo is always a joy to watch. Unfortunately, however, Eddie Izzard is woefully underused in an evil henchman role, as is Claire Forlani (who was last seen, in *Meet Joe Black*) as the love interest.

At 120 minutes, *Mystery Men* seems a bit too long to hold everyone's interest and the 20-minute finale is typical of a \$70 million studio film, where every penny has to be shown on the screen. Which is a shame. A more down-to-earth ending would probably have been more befitting to the movie, but who's going to argue with a big Hollywood producer? All in all, an enjoyable enough movie to watch where the minimum number of brain cells need to be used.



Alice et Martin

This is one of those bizarre French films that meander from scene to scene until they eventually (and unpredictably) end. The acting is mostly extremely good but it is let down by the directorial style of Andre Techine.

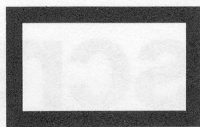
Juliet Binoche (*The English Patient*) plays Alice, with such conviction that her ability to interpret difficult roles shines through. Unfortunately, Alexis Lore's screen debut as Martin is not so impressive. His confusion and anguish comes across as merely moody. Many of the smaller roles offer more than the main ones in way of believability. One such role is Benjamin's. Played by Mathieu Amalric, Benjamin is a struggling, homosexual actor who is more or less disowned by his family.

Ten year old Martin, the son of an extramarital affair, is persuaded by his mother to live with his father's family. After his father's death ten years later, Martin is distraught and disappears for months. He eventually reappears in Paris at the apartment of his half-brother Benjamin. Here he meets Alice, his brother's flatmate, and immediately becomes fascinated with her. Martin begins a career in modelling and after some success moves out of the apartment into a nearby hotel. Soon Alice overcomes her initial hesitancy and falls in love with Martin. She moves out of the apartment and into Martin's hotel. However, when Alice becomes pregnant Martin falls into a coma with shock (who wouldn't?). Alice has to fight for his sanity as the truth about his father's death comes out. The end is generally very depressing as Alice ends up alone and pregnant, and Martin moves between a mental institution and jail.

The detached style of the film makes it hard to empathise with the characters, and the rapid personality changes seem random. There are also too many short sequences that add nothing to the general story. On the up side, this film has been released in French with English subtitles, rather than dubbed into English. I can only imagine how much worse it would have been with uncoordinated, monotonous voices as well.

If you are an avid French film fan it might be worth you popping down to Cine Lumiere to see this film as overall it is technically a good film that just lacks soul.

screen



Dogma

To fans of *Mallrats*, *Clerks* and *Chasing Amy*, *Dogma's* Boxing Day release will come as a fantastic Christmas present. However, whilst the similarities between those first three movies were utterly apparent, and thus the creative mastery of writer/director/actor Kevin Smith was plain for all to see, his latest movie marks a major change. Instead of the usual twin threads of unrequited love and comic books, this time the movie is utterly given over to taking the mickey out of organised religion in general, and catholicism in particular. However, whilst the movie has garnered a massive amount of criticism and abuse from Catholic groups in the US, it's actually an incredibly religious movie, infused from head-to-toe with some old fashioned "wouldn't the world be a better place if we were all nice to each other" morality. *Life of Brian* this certainly ain't.

Weird, however, it certainly is. Far and away the most off-the-wall movie I've seen this year, *Dogma's* biggest downfall is actually the fact that it tries far too hard to be off-beat - Alan Rickman's visible demonstration of his asexuality (don't ask) or the sewage monster (very bad effects) or the appearance of Alanis Morissette as god (most odd) or any one of a thousand other examples grate horribly (so much so that you'll want to close your eyes for an instant and pretend that you're somewhere eyes), and simply don't work. On the other hand, the originality of the piece is also its triumph. Yes, it's a old-style road movie (complete with regulation all star cast), and yes, there's a certain feeling of déjà vu attached to some of the characters (Kevin Smith fans will be cheering the return of Jay and Silent Bob), but nonetheless, it's so damn weird that you'll have your eyes glued to the screen from start to finish.

The one true flaw is Kevin Smith himself. As his previous movies have shown, he writes tightly woven, introspective dialogue - not action chat. So, when the pace of the movie is cranked up a notch, and the characters find themselves in imminent peril, they'll still be found offering immensely complex diatribes on random bits of backstory - which just feels wrong. He needs to learn the art of the punchy one-liner (and get some better special effects) if he's ever going to make it to the real A-list.

The real reason to see *Dogma*, however, remains the comedy: Jay and Silent Bob are, of course, classic comedy characters; Chris Rock (as the thirteenth apostle, sent back to earth to put some ethnic diversity into the Bible) can wisecrack with the best of them; and Alan Rickman (as the voice of god) is sublimely sarcastic. Even Ben Affleck and Matt Damon (reunited on screen for the first time since *Good Will Hunting*) manage to tweak their usual amiable "guy next door" personas into a pair of psychotically comic forms. So, whilst some of the religious gags aren't necessarily all that funny (with one or two spectacular exceptions), Jay and Silent Bob alone make for an incredibly entertaining ride.



□□□□ Dave



Cotton Mary

What do you expect of a Merchant Ivory production? The answer is probably either a period masterpiece or an overlong bore. *Cotton Mary*, though it has a lot of interesting aspects, is unfortunately a prime example of the latter. Endless repetition and plot-lines that take ages to reach their obvious and predictable resolutions, turn what could have been an interesting eighty minute movie into a two hour boring stinker.

The film is set in India in 1954 and begins with Lily Macintosh (Greta Scacchi), a British madam, giving premature birth. The psychological shock leaves her unable to breast feed, and the child is about to die (a rather anachronistic starting point for a story in our days of high-tech food). *Cotton Mary* (Madhur Jaffrey), an Anglo-Indian nurse at the hospital, takes the baby to her crippled sister, whose breast saves the baby's life. Lily invites Mary to move to her grand country house and become her nanny. She says "yes, nothing can stop me", and that can be taken as the basic program for the rest of the movie. She manages to convince the madam to throw out her right-hand man, and basically takes over his job, gets her friends employed in the house and starts to wear her madam's clothes, shoes and jewellery. But in the end everything turns against her...

The greatest weakness of the movie is the screenplay. The dialogue becomes pretty monotonous towards the end, the plot moves around in circles and some scenes are dragged out and repeated again and again, (with only slight variations) until the audience wants to cry out: "Get on with it! We've seen that already!" In particular, Mary's plot to overcome the servant Abraham comes to mind, which is initially quite clever, but is shown in such never-ending detail that someone really ought to shoot the director. And the end, which (according to production notes) "exposes each of the main characters' conflicting English and Indian identities" (as if waving the Union Jack were enough to do so), doesn't seem to belong to the rest of the film. Apparently it tries to give a twist to the plot and bring the problems of Anglo-Indians in the fifties (which are depicted earlier in the movie) to a stunning climax. Unfortunately, the reality isn't stunning and, even more unfortunately, the problems of Anglo-Indians weren't really depicted earlier in the film, more or less appearing out of the blue at the end.

So why does this film get two stars? Some of the acting is excellent, especially by Greta Scacchi as the psychologically torn and beaten Lily Macintosh and by Laura Lumley as her amazingly un-annoying 10-year-old daughter Theresa. The cinematography is beautiful and original (what else would you expect) and the greatest saving grace is definitely the music, a stunning mixture of familiar and exotic sounds with a couple of well-placed God Save The Queens. Listening to the soundtrack for two hours would definitely be a more pleasing experience...



□□□□ Mark

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A WHOLE NEW WORLD



Half Life : Opposing Force (PC)

Yep, the expansion pack to the best game of last year is finally here. But was it worth the wait? Does it live up to expectations?

The answer has to be a resounding YES. Gearbox, the developers, have kept everything that was good about the original, and added so much new stuff that the mind boggles.

This time round you're on the side of the soldiers from *Half Life*, battling the aliens that are pouring through the dimensional rift opened in the first game. The storyline and scripted sequences are well up to the exceptional standards set by Valve. The best part by far, however, has to be the new enemies. From the dart spitting aliens with metre long claws, to the infuriatingly intelligent Black Ops soldiers, every creature looks just right and is a real bastard to kill.

This expansion pack is nearly as big and complex as some complete games, and the attention to detail is incredible - just watch the intro sequence and you'll see what I mean. If you own *Half Life* then go out and buy *Opposing Force* now. If not, well, then buy *Half Life* at the same time.



Ben



MS Flight Simulator 2000 (PC)

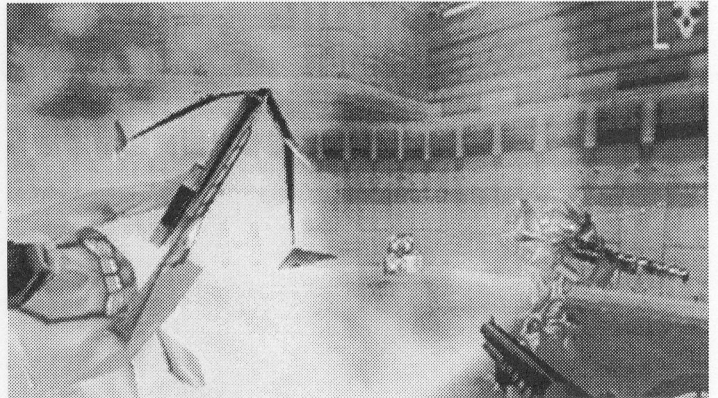
FS2000 is civil aviation flight sim of epic proportions, with maps of pretty much anywhere in the world and aircraft from the ancient Sopwith Camel to Concorde. The 2000 edition is bigger and more detailed than the 98 version, and if you are a serious flight fanatic or looking to practice for a private pilot's license then this is an excellent product.

The graphics are greatly improved over the 98 edition, as long as you have a ninja PC to play it on. There are loads of graphical glitches and loading pauses however - but then this is a Microsoft product.

The important thing about this game is that it does give a sense of actually flying, unlike some flight sims on the market. With the huge amount of content in the game you can do whatever you want, from aerobatics to instrument landings. There really is no better civil flight simulator on the market.



Ben



Turok: Rage Wars (N64)

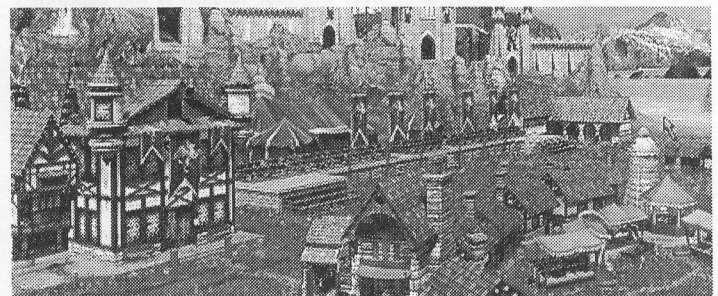
Rage Wars is essentially a multi-player game only. There isn't really the comprehensive one-player 'Quest' mode that we are so accustomed to in 3D shooters. Gone are the maze-like levels, single-life monsters, and non-replenishable ammo dumps. Say hello to custom-built combat arenas, instant resurrection and reappearing ammo.

Rage Wars premieres the use of computer bots in a console 1st person shooter, and it works a treat. Lets be honest, playing 2-player *Goldeneye* ain't that much fun, since there's no chance of you creeping up unawares on your opponent. *Rage Wars* adds that essential tenseness by creating up to three bots to come and play. Its clever AI, with the bots actively seeking out the power-ups as well as their opponents.

Rage Wars is the finest console multi-player shooter I've played, with many different game styles to choose from. Graphics and sound are good; instead the game falters on the lack of a true single player-game. Consoles just can't compete with PCs when it comes to 3D blasters, and you'll find that even the likes of the ageing *Quake 2* are still streets ahead of this.



Viv



Armageddon's Blade (PC)

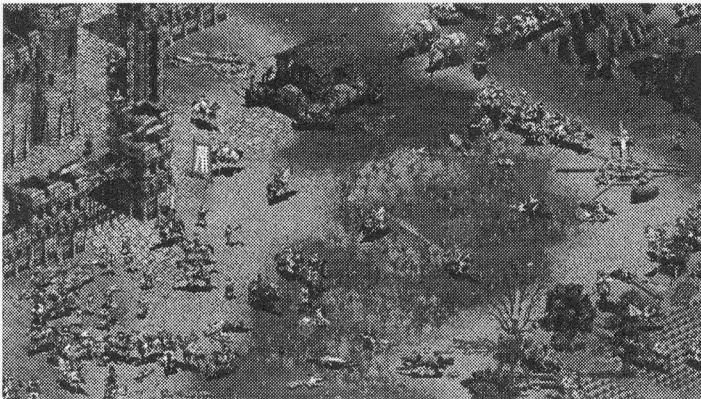
This is the expansion pack for the brilliant *Heroes of Might & Magic 3* (one of the best strategy games around). For the ignorant out there, *Heroes of Might and Magic* is a strategic turn based game in a fantasy world (cue Goblins, Dragons, Elves and all things magical). You control a hero who has to raise an army to defeat the opposition castle or vanquish some terrible monster.

The game is highly addictive and easy to pick up. The interface is simplicity itself and the graphics and music are pretty good too. There are six new campaigns, which are pretty challenging (or at least I find them quite hard) and will have you playing for hours on end. If you like *Heroes of Might and Magic 3* then this expansion pack is well worth the money, especially the challenging campaigns. Like *Heroes of Might and Magic 3*, love *Armageddon's Blade*.



Mark

react



Age Of Empires II: The Age of Kings (PC)

For strategy gamers, *Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings* is one of the longest awaited releases this year. I will now reveal if this sequel is worthy of its illustrious predecessor, one of the best real time strategies around. Those of you familiar with the first edition, *The Age of Kings*, will find this quite similar on the surface (why mess with perfection?). In fact, it is the same as the first version with improvements. It is a larger game, has additional strategic features and the graphics are pretty spanking too.

In *The Age of Kings* you guide your people through the Middle Ages in 1000 years. This time you expand your kingdom and increase your level of technology, controlling one of 13 mighty civilisations such as the Celts, Vikings, English and Japanese. You have to conquer the world, usually through a mixture of shrewd tactics, military strength, diplomacy and commerce. There is no one way to win this game - you can have the biggest army, the best economy or you can build a wonder of the world. Along with a technological tree of more than 100 nodes, this game has endless options.

One of the great improvements over the first version is the expanded combat system. There are different military formations so that you can hide your archers behind tough swordsmen - this was an annoying feature of the first game where you had to change formation every second, because the archers got ahead of themselves and thought they could take on heavy cavalry and go home to tell their kids.

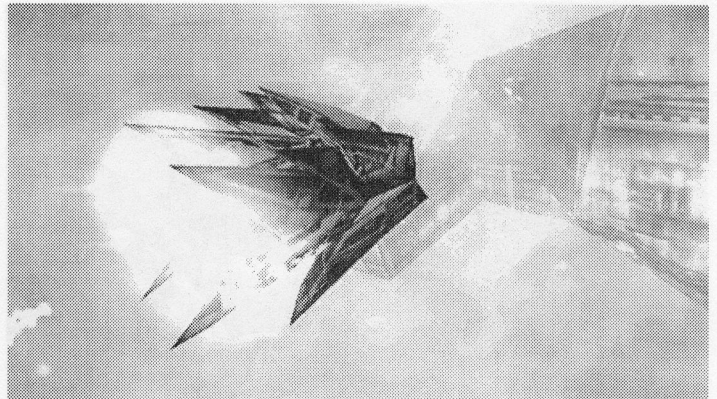
As an alternative to beating the living daylights out of your opponent, you now have the choice of trading at your own market or setting up trade routes with your allies (much more civilised I'm sure).

There are many extras to this game that add to its gameplay. Production queues, improved navigation points and customisable hot-key systems have been added. In addition, more audio cues make empire management easier. Map shortcuts like gathering points make it easier for players to organise their forces and plan their battles. The campaigns are story based and focused on historical figures, such as Joan of Arc, William Wallace and Ghengis Khan (although the Scottish accent used in the William Wallace campaign is dubious to say the least...but kicking the English is always fun)

I thought this game was brilliant. It has a user friendly interface with many neat functions. The gameplay is addictive and challenging. In my opinion, this is simply a complete game. If you liked AoE I then you will love this. If you like strategy games then you will love this. If you just like decent PC games then you will love this.



Mark



Freespace II (PC)

There's something about the idea of space combat that captures the imagination. Ever since the original *Star Wars* movies, kids all over the world have dreamed of being Luke Skywalker, of actually flying a tiny little X-Wing against the mighty Star Destroyers. *Freespace 2* lets you recapture that excitement.

The storyline is pretty basic, but that isn't the point. This game is about massive deep-space dogfights between swarms of fighters, bombers and gigantic capital ships. Imagine your most hectic *Quake 2* deathmatch, substitute space superiority fighters for the characters and you're some way to imagining the excitement of a big *Freespace 2* brawl.

OK, so it's not set in the *Star Wars* universe, but then most *Star Wars* games are crap anyway. What *Freespace 2* gives you is action, action and then more action. Playing the original *Freespace 1* got so carried away in a dogfight once I snapped my joystick and fell off my chair, and the sequel is even better.

While the original *Freespace* was an excellent game, there were a few problems with it. It had capital ships, but they were a bit wimpy for their size. In *Freespace 2*, armed with beam lasers and flak cannons as fighter defense, and studded with assorted missile launchers and turrets, capital ships are big trouble. The graphics have also been improved greatly since the original with some really funky-looking new ships to fly. Turn the sound up loud, switch all the lights off and you could almost be in Alpha Centauri. Get a decent surround sound system for your PC and the explosions come from all around you - better than a movie any day.

To play properly does require a decent joystick (preferably one that doesn't snap too easily) with lots of buttons, as trying to press keys on the keyboard while avoiding being blown to bits is way too difficult. The game is very 3D card dependent, but with graphics this good it is worth the investment. Played over a LAN or on the internet it is even more fun - there is a huge following of the original *Freespace* on the web which I am sure will spread to the sequel.

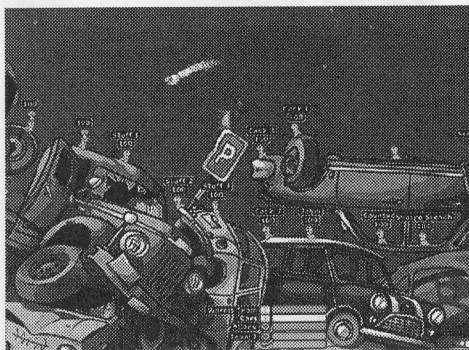
In some ways, this is a little too similar to the original to be a truly great game. Some of the new features in the sequel should have been included in the original, and *FS2* still lacks any sort of experience system for your wingmen (who remain completely anonymous throughout the campaign). But *FS2* is still so much fun it is definitely a game not to be missed. Fans of the first game will love it for giving them more of what they love, and, after a few missions, new players will soon see what all the excitement is about.



Ben

In association with

gameswire.com
A WHOLE NEW WORLD

 The logo for 'react' features a stylized target symbol (a circle with a smaller circle inside) to the left of the word 'react' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font.


WORMS ARMAGEDDON

Worms Armageddon (PC, PSX, N64, GBC, DC)

These little critters have been around in various computer game incarnations since the early days of 1995, and this latest manifestation is Team 17's final worm offering to the world. The game has been released on every machine and coincides nicely with the Xmas rush.

The idea behind the *Worms* series is to take a squad of the creatures into action against other player and computer controlled teams, and to be the one left standing at the end. The action is played out within a 2D landscape and players take it in turn to unleash their arsenal of weapons amongst their rivals. Only one worm is controlled at any instant and there is a limited time to move it into a tactical position and then fire. Much judgement will be required on your part if you want your bazooka shot to land on the enemy's head (taking account of the wind), or your grenade to explode at the critical moment as it drops down that tunnel your foe is hiding in.

The landscape itself is both a potential soldier's goldmine and a tightrope walk over hell. While weapon crates and first aid drops will improve your health and array of barmy weapons, one false move and you'll be taking a high dive into water - and the little fellas certainly can't swim. One mustn't forget the mines or oil barrels either. The fantastic thing about *Worms* is that every game you play is different. There are some cool pre-defined landscapes to play on, or alternately you can randomly generate a level from the billions of possibilities available. Each time you start your team will be haphazardly scattered across the terrain, sometimes situated in decent vantage points, sometimes on dangerous cliff edges where all it takes is an embarrassing prod to send the little chap to his doom. Explosions eat away at the environment too, so the gameplay will actually change during each contest. All of this means that getting from one side of the land to the other is rather tricky. Unless you are good with a ninja rope or bungee cord (or else have a jetpack) you'll have to rely on skillful aiming to get at the pesky blighters hiding from you in the distance.

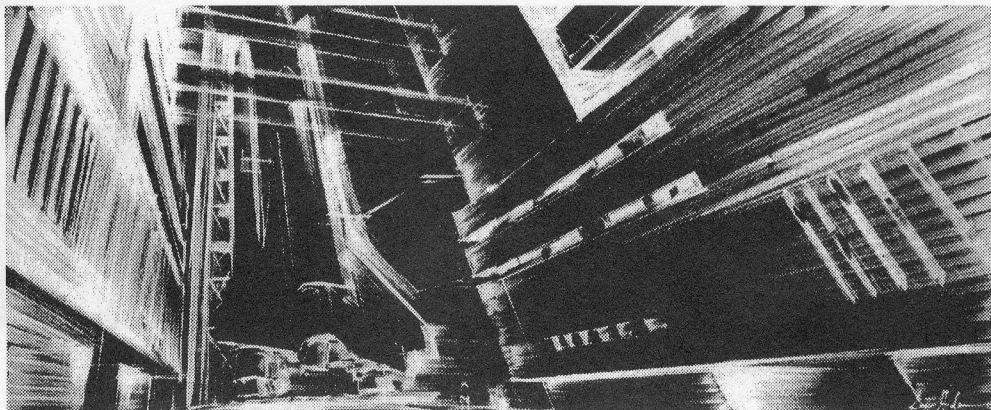
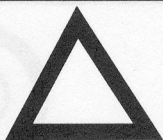
The whole feel behind *Worms Armageddon* is cartoony and cute, a smart move that makes the game appealing to everyone. Colourful and simple, the graphics are effective (by the way, the screenshot to the left is from the Gameboy version), and you'd be ruining the atmosphere if you had the sound low. The weapons are even wackier, with over 50 available, including super sheep, banana bombs, pneumatic drills, miniguns, mad cows, and holy hand grenades to name but a few.

In contrast with the cuteness, players are likely to get fraught during play. The fact that you name your own worms - personalising them - makes you feel more responsible for your team and means that you will do *anything* to win. When playing other humans, this calls for the making and breaking of alliances and basically hammering everyone you can at any opportunity. Luckily, the light-hearted relief uttered by dying worms may contribute towards alleviating the stress that builds up in multi-player binges!

The development team have certainly stretched the 2D concept of *Worms* to the limit and it's refreshing to see that such a simple idea puts to shame much of the graphically orientated 3D material on the market. As a single player game you may tire of the gameplay rather quickly, and it would have been nice to be able to zoom out and see the whole of the landscape at a glance. The controls on the N64 version are also questionable. Rest-assured, however, that the juice you can squeeze from *Worms Armageddon* as a multi-player fest will quench your gaming thirst for ages.



method



Festive recommendations

Christmas is a time to release the child within, and here is just a taste of the festive fantasies this season:

Dick Whittington

There are no talentless big personalities playing the title roles, just traditional panto. So strap a spotted handkerchief to your stick and make the trek out to Greenwich. Greenwich Theatre

The Night Before Christmas

.....and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. It's often like that at Fringe venues, but I'm sure it will be different, as Santa's visit ensures free toys for kids.

Riverside Studio (age 2+, Nur)

Cinderella

This is on at three different venues -but which does the slipper fit and which are the ugly sisters?

Hackney Empire / Blue Elephant / Tricycle

The Nativity

The world's most famous story?

Young Vic

The Snowman

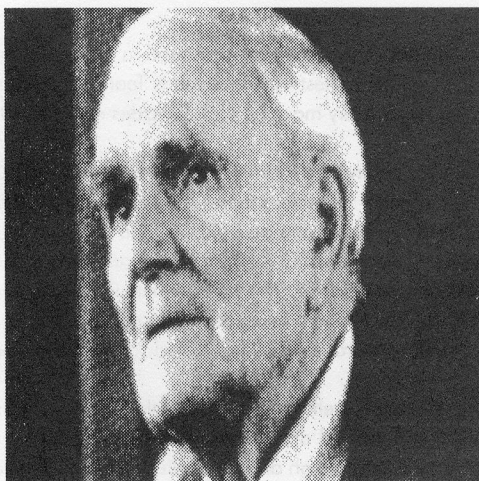
Walking in the air of Holborn. The beautiful (silent) story of Raymond Briggs' classic.

Peacock Theatre

I would like to say a big thank you to all those who have contributed to the arts pages this year. If you would like to help next term, then make a resolution to see theatre and galleries for free in the new year - all you have to do is write what you thought of it. We meet every Friday at 1.00pm in the Felix office. Alternatively, email benjamin.fisher@ic.ac.uk.

Happy Christmas!

Moonraker, Strangelove and other celluloid dreams: the visionary art of Ken Adam



Serpentine Gallery
Until 9 January 2000
Free admission

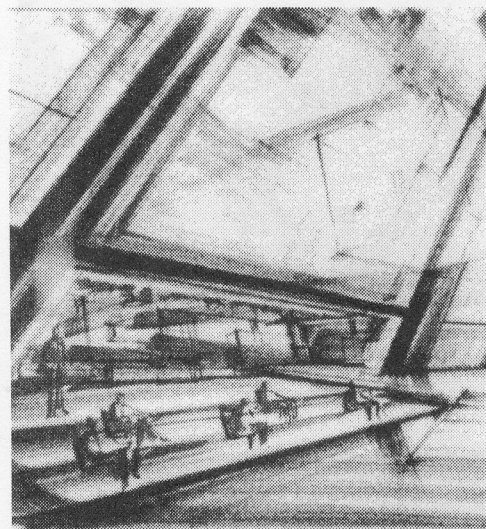
The name's Adam. Ken Adam. Ken Adam, the latest artist exhibiting at The Serpentine was the real-life Q. He was the production designer behind the Bond films and all those other self-consciously hip flicks of the 1960s. From his original sketches of the sets through to photographs through to excerpts of the films themselves, we see his work for *Dr Strangelove* (1963), *The Ipcress File* (1965) and numerous Bonds (*Dr No*, *Goldfinger*, *Thunderball*). Without doubt, Adam helped capture that entirely mythical 1960s zeitgeist of style over substance on celluloid. In the cinema, Q took all the credit for the Aston Martin DB5 with ejector seats, but in reality we must thank the imagination of Ken Adam.

Ken Adam invented the concept of the Bond baddie's giant HQ, and then took it to new heights of silliness, eventually going into orbit with *Moonraker* (1979). All this makes you realise just how much the success of the 007 films depended on the unsung Ken. Without him, they would all have ended up as rather dreary stories of a prehistorically sexist contract killer.

Ben

Careful, 007! All this blinding Bondery seems just a little out of place in such a small and sedate gallery as The Serpentine. This is a fine art gallery, yet it is difficult to see 007, M, Q, SPECTRE and chums as fine art! This exhibition would surely be more at home in the Museum of the Moving Image (MOMI) on the South Bank.

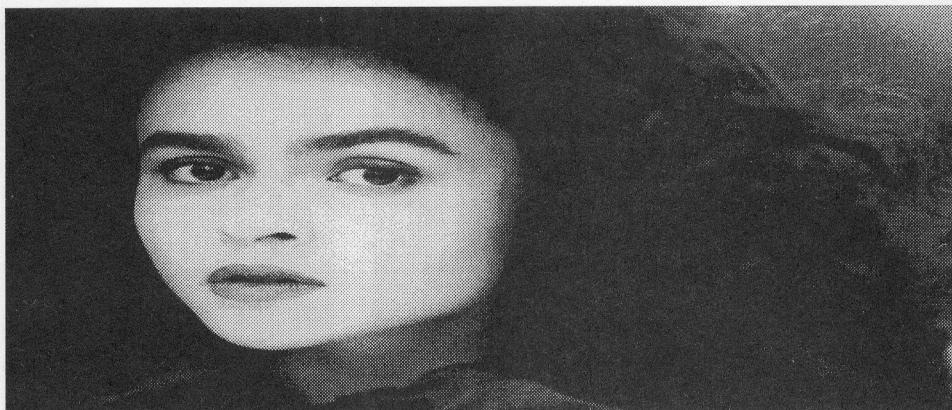
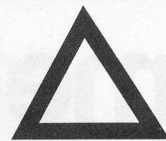
While techno-sets are his first love (he was an RAF fighter pilot in WW2 and is a self-confessed aeroplane fanatic), he is also a master of lower octane thrills. He did the East European prison cum West London warehouse in *The Ipcress File* and the sets in *Sleuth* (1972) and, more recently, *The Madness of King George* (1995). His latest design project is for the Millennium Celebrations in the city of his birth, Berlin.



As the new century dawns, we have a lot of great cinematic moments to thank Ken Adams for. Just think of that endless round of Bond movies no doubt due to be pumped out this Christmas! But the question is: can an exhibition of still pictures ever do justice to his moving pictures? The answer is simple: no.

William Burns

method



Faces of the 20th Century



National Portrait Gallery
Until 30 January
£3.00

At the beginning of the 20th Century the world had the potential to become many things. Its destiny could not have been predicted by the inhabitants of 1900, and the route to 1999 has been influenced by so many millions of individuals. The National Portrait Gallery is all about bringing us literally face-to-face with the people of our time. Its pictures are immensely revealing of the individuals behind the names, both famous and obscure.

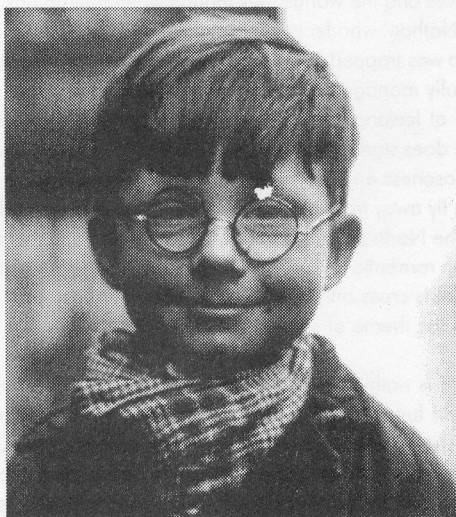
No portrait medium is more candid than photography. It is a medium which has brought us ordinary people enlightenment and empowerment. It has brought the whole world into our view. Here, ten people have been asked to select their ten faces of the century. Like all "top 100s", this selection is a little esoteric. It reflects the world-view of the selectors, who range from David Bowie to Lord Putnam via Anna Ford and Professor Steven Hawking.

The quality of the photos is unsurprisingly superb. Always intimate and personal, these pictures humanise their subjects, who include

names like Henry Moore and Noel Coward.

Lord Sainsbury has selected pictures of Britain's enduring artists and writers - Thomas Hardy, Benjamin Britten, TS Elliot and Henry Moore - while Vivienne Westwood mainly chose people who wear her clothes. These include Helena Bonham Carter, and rather self indulgently, a model wearing Westwood's fake Crown and Ermine next to the Queen wearing the real thing.

Whether or not one agrees with the choices, each selector makes a convincing and thought provoking case for their group of ten. Steven Hawking chooses British scientists as significant contributors to our century: Rutherford, Turing, Bertrand Russell, Flemming and Dirac.



All of these photos reflect the rich heritage of 20th Century Britain - her artists, scientists, statesmen entertainers, and thinkers have exerted tremendous influence over our world, and our cultural tapestry is vibrant and strong. My personal favourite photos were those of Samuel Becket, Noel Coward and Vivienne Lee - you can choose your own.

Tom



The Merchant of Venice

National Theatre
20th Dec - Mid January
£7.50 Student Standby.

Not having a clue what this play was about and knowing only that it was to last three and a half hours, I did wonder if I would actually be able to follow the story and stay interested for the duration. As someone who finds Shakespeare difficult to read without those helpful little publisher's notes on the side, it was pleasantly surprising. Seeing it acted out is different. It helps a great deal in understanding the dialogue, and even if you can't keep up with every single line that is spoken, you soon begin to sit back, relax and watch the action.

The play does start a little slowly, as we are introduced to a multitude of different characters. Although the play centres on several serious themes (principally love, money and prejudice) it is quite lighthearted and humorous throughout. Through Trevor Nunn's direction, the humour of the dialogue is enhanced by the actions, facial expressions and even accents of the actors on stage. Antonio, the Merchant of Venice himself, actually has a thick Northern accent, and others include African, Polish and Spanish.

A well chosen cast, all dressed in 1950s style clothing also contribute to giving this play the success it has achieved, reflected in its recent move to the much larger Olivier Theatre. It was sold out when I went to watch. The star of the show for me had to be the character of Portia, played by Derbhle Crotty. Her acting was excellent, stealing the majority of laughs during the performance, and one scene in particular, centred around a Spanish Prince visiting as a suitor, ended with the audience erupting simultaneously into laughter and applause. Although at times you wonder how much of the three and a half hours is left to go, by the time you leave you might just want to get a copy of this play and read it for yourself (if you haven't already) - I know I might.

Hina

method



Dirk

ICU Dramsoc
£4
Union Concert Hall (Finished)

Dirk, based on Douglas Adams' *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, is a somewhat bizarre, occasionally random, but fundamentally interconnected play.

The plot is... interesting, with several plotlines coming together with some force at the finale, but is basically a murder mystery with more twists than might be expected. There are a few departures from the book, but, with the exception of the near-unforgivable omission of the Electric Monk, they're fairly cosmetic.

The acting is excellent, with Andrew Prowse playing Dirk with all the self-assured eccentricity he deserves. Paul Smith's Michael is an impressive villain, quoting Coleridge and brandishing a crossbow like a man possessed. The fragmented nature of the plot does tend to leave the audience a little perplexed, but then Richard, the other main character, spends most of the play in a state of some confusion. Joe Wakeling lends him an air of upper class bewilderment - think Hugh Grant in a Hunter S Thompson novel.

The effective staging and confident production make this an impressive performance of a potentially challenging play. Extra marks are deserved for the cheesy Americanised recap of the first act and the inspired (if mad) Schrödinger's Cat scene. Nice one.

Gareth

Etcetera Theatre
£5 conc.
Nearest Tube: Camden Town

The Etcetera Theatre is a tiny little affair above a pub in the middle of Camden. I estimate that a "full house" would comprise maybe 20 people, if they were all good friends and didn't mind being jammed up against each other. But don't let this put you off - despite the fact that the actors perform about two metres away from you, they have perfected that middle-distance stare, as if they were performing to an audience spread through some cathedral-like auditorium. In other words, it is intimate but not too intimate.

The play involves four main characters, all Londoners, immersed in their own particular daydreams. There are only four actors, and as they play the main characters as well as the various supporting roles, it can be a bit confusing as to what's actually going on at times. This is compounded by a minimal multi-purpose set, but it just means you have to pay a little more attention. The short scenes take us through one day and one night of the character's lives and the worlds they inhabit when their minds start to wander. There is Nathan, who feels terribly lonely and is obsessed with the story of a man who was trapped in an Antarctic weather station for many months and successfully managed to overcome his loneliness. There is "Jason", a checkout girl at Iceland. She seems to be in a world of her own anyway, but when she does start to fantasise she dreams of meeting Eskimos, dressing snugly, closeness and feeling loved. The third character is Annie, a girl who wants to fly away from it all. She wants to be single and dreams of flying away to the North Pole in a balloon. The final character is Nicholas, a poor man with romantic dreams of being a Russian revolutionary. All of the character's paths cross only briefly throughout the piece, but their dreams are united by the theme of snow.

Even though it is nothing groundbreaking, the play is charming, thought-provoking, and funny, and should be judged in the context of the whole experience. The pub above which the theatre is located, the Oxford Arms, is a very authentic and agreeable little venue. It has all the attributes that a good pub should have: atmosphere, grimy toilets, English-speaking bar staff and pissed locals plying you with cigarettes whilst telling you about their brother Colin who was the middle-weight boxing champion in 1962. Additionally, the cast of the play hang around the bar afterwards, so you can ask them to clarify any bits of the plot that you were unsure about.

All in all, a recommendable little evening. Especially if you want a bit of variety in your life.

Caspar

Mds

Bloomsbury Theatre
£3.00
December every Year. (Finished)

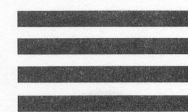
This is what a student review ought to be like - it was funny and fun. The UCL medics drama society - known as MDs (Manic Depressives) - get up on stage and dance, sing, generally piss about, and shamelessly plagiarise. With a much better script than is generally expected at reviews - mostly written by one Mark Lewis - the cast rose to the challenge (yep, there are loads of jokes like that). There was a huge number of ridiculous characters including Robin Hood, Maid Marion, Friar Schmuck (you dirty boy you), loads of very evil / mad people and the King himself - in his many guises.

MDs produces the same kind of Christmas fun and frolics every year to raise money for Middlesex Hospital. If you are expecting some high drama or something that is suitable for the kids then you're bound to feel that you made a mistake. But the acting was good enough to carry the jokes to those in the audience not mates with half the cast, and there were hardly any "in" jokes only fathomable to medics. It was a good Stephi (rhyming slang)-always high spirited and at times flashes or real quality (and breasts).

You've missed it this year but Mds are back every year and they're well supported and well worth it.

Ben

books



Things Can Only Get Better, John O'Farrell

Sub-titled *Eighteen Miserable Years in The Life of A Labour Supporter*, O'Farrell looks back at his time as a Labour Party member and activist during the years of Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

We follow him from his days as the only Labour boy at his middle class school in Maidenhead, to trying to prove his left-wing credentials in University - and failing miserably:

'It was so outrageously sexist,' said the girl from the Labour Club afterwards. And I agreed with everything she said because I was hoping to get off with her at some point later in the evening.

The book is very funny in parts and written with a definite English wit. For someone who is not very familiar with the British political scene in the late 70's and through to the 1990's this book does serve as an interesting, if obviously biased, introduction. O'Farrell sees the Labour Party as a group so intent on the issues and making things better for the English populous that they are totally out of touch with what is required to win an election. Tony Blair can attest to the fact that this is certainly no longer the case.

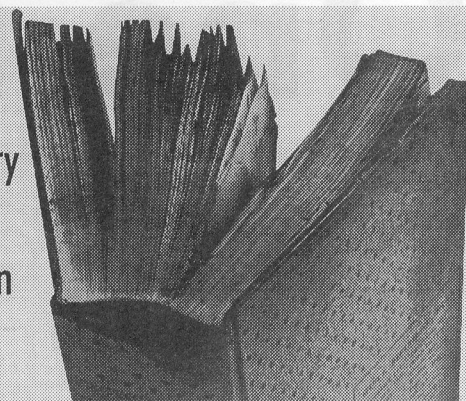
The book is also made doubly interesting by the current predicament that the Conservative party finds itself in - mirroring the Labour party of the 80's who could do no right.

O'Farrell's seemingly unjustified love of the party is only overshadowed by his apparent loathing of his nemesis Margaret Thatcher - the Falkland's are seen as a tragedy not because of the ravages of war but rather because they got her elected again. O'Farrell characteristically discusses his impression of the war:

The news informed us that Argentinian prisoners of war were assisting the British army in locating land mines. Which I presume meant some sergeant major shouted at them 'Right, you dago bastards - you go, play football, that field over there.'

Overall a very funny read expressing a very English approach to party politics, growing up, and devotion to a losing cause.

Helen's Literary Events in and around London



MONDAY 13th

- **SHERE HITE** Waterstone's Imperial College 12:00 - 12:30. The author of the controversial *Hite Reports* will be signing her new book about the problems of business and sexual politics. A chance to attend an author event right on your doorstep! Free
- **MAPPING THE MIND**, Waterstone's, 203 - 206 Piccadilly 19:00 - 21:00. An evening with the author Rita Carter, discussing her magnificent new visual guide to the human brain. Free (Book in advance), 0171 851 2400 Tube: Piccadilly Circus
- **GOODBYE TO ALL THAT** Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank 19:30. On the brink of a new millennium, seven wonderfully diverse writers, including the novelist Maeve Binchy, share what they will most regret leaving behind and what they are happiest to see the back of. £8, students £5, 0171 960 4242 Tube: Waterloo

TUESDAY 14th

- **MILITARY INTELLIGENCE BLUNDERS** Waterstone's, 1 Whittington Ave, Leadenhall Mkt 12:30 - 13:30. A hugely controversial book by former military intelligence officer John Hughes-Jones, giving an insider's view of some of the greatest intelligence blunders of recent years. Free, 0171 220 7882 Tube: Bank or Monument
- **NOT YET THE DODO** Terrace Restaurant, British Library, Euston Road 18:15 An evening of musical entertainment with Paula Wilcox, Miles Richardson and William Blezard celebrating the verse of Noel Coward. £9, students £7.50, 020 7412 7222 Tube: Kings Cross St. Pancras
- **WINNER'S DINNERS** Waterstone's, 203 - 206 Piccadilly 19:00 - 21:00 Michael Winner, the Sunday Times' columnist, has become one of our most influential food critics. He will be discussing some of his best and worst dining experiences. £2, 0171 851 2400 Tube: Piccadilly Circus

FRIDAY 17th

- **MICHAEL PALIN** Waterstone's, 203 - 206 Piccadilly 12:30 - 14:30 The last chance to see the comedian and globe trotter who will be signing copies of his latest book, *Michael Palin's Hemmingway Adventure*. Free Tube: Piccadilly



One night Stringfellows (almost)

Last night (17th November 1999) I had the pleasure of spending an evening in Stringfellows and, as a result, I think that my life has been subtly changed. I would like to share this experience with you, the reader, because I think you will be quite amused and, be you male or female, I refuse to believe that you don't harbour at least some curiosity for what goes on in London's must well-known and high-class strip-club.

I have made the decision to write this anonymously because I do not want to be accused of bragging, which I will inevitably do shamelessly throughout this article. I also know that I will fail to present the facts with any professional journalistic objectiveness, so right from the outset I will state that it shall not be my intention to do so.

First of all, I will begin by saying that the entire evening was made possible by a person whose identity will, of course, remain anonymous, and secondly that the amount of money I spent (despite heavy subsidy from aforementioned benefactor) will remain undisclosed.

We entered Stringfellows at around 8pm and were shown to a table which had been booked for us. On first impression we could have been at a normal restaurant. Everything was slightly cramped due to the number of extra tables that had been put in for the football, and the décor was a little kitsch – mirrors, drapes, soft lighting and that kind of thing – but apart from that it wasn't out of the ordinary. Unless, that is, you count the girls wrapped expertly

around several strategically placed poles in various states of nudity.

At this point I need to interrupt the narrative and say something about these girls, who will inevitably crop up quite regularly throughout this article. I fear that I might exhaust my supply of superlatives when describing them, and as a result you will become blunted to them, which is why I will describe them only once, right here: these women were absolutely fabulous – they were creatures who populate only your most daring and unspoken dreams; the kind of females who cause car crashes when they walk down the street. I think you get the general idea of what calibre of woman I'm talking about.

So there I was, trying heroically to concentrate on my steak (which, incidentally, was superb) whilst beside me some breath-taking expanse of naked flesh was twisting lasciviously to the rhythm of the music. It was deeply surreal, and to actually eat my whole plate took me a long time. As we finished our meal and the wine and beer began to smooth over our nervousness, women who had been hovering discretely behind began to close in on us. The first to approach was a Russian beauty named Tania, who sat down at our table (and I will openly admit right now that I am deeply in love with her). The way she made contact was typical of most of the women that night. They would approach you unabashed whilst locking their eyes into yours, a welcoming yet suggestive smile curling their lips. Then a long arm would drop over your shoulder and she'd casu-

ally introduce herself:

"Hi, my name's Claudia, what's yours? Are you having a good evening? Would you like it to get any better?" After a bit of self-conscious mumbling, I quickly got the hang of chatting about some inanity (without too much ogling) and successfully kept up the pretence that this was some sort of "normal" conversation. The girls were extremely quick at identifying our benefactor as the most well-off in our group, and thus he initially got all the attention, especially from Tania. But, since it was so early in the evening, there was a large surplus of females, so there were always...erm...enough to go around.

After I finished my meal and had gotten over the disappointment of Tania's initial lack of interest, I decided – as there was a large screen on the wall behind me – that I would watch the football for a bit. So there I sat, cigarette in one hand, Belgian lager in the other, trying to see some of the game, whilst out of the corner of my eye a half-naked Mediterranean stunner was doing very innovative things with her pole – and I was asking myself, does it get any better? The answer turned out to be yes.

I noticed that our benefactor had slipped Tania a ten pound note, and she was asking us all to move our chairs back. She positioned herself in front of one of our group and proceeded to slowly dance and strip, whilst a profound silence descended over our table. I will not attempt to put her actions into words, as I would not do them justice; I will merely say that

it was a full ten minutes before I realised that my mouth was still open. Whilst a younger version of Jerry Hall had the rapt attention of my colleagues across the table, I struck up a conversation with a red-headed girl who had wandered over. I asked her about her job (clichéd, I know) and she answered with surprising frankness.

She said that she earned around £600 a night and that she worked three nights a week. She also explained that whenever she worked she never failed to get utterly smashed from all the drinks that the punters bought her. Furthermore, she said that she absolutely loved her job. I have to confess that I felt sorry for her - she was only eighteen (the youngest in the club, she proudly informed me) and when she said that she really liked her job, I sincerely think that she meant it. It struck me that most of the other girls were very professional in their attitudes and in the way that they saw the jobs as a "necessary" evil. I'm sure that most of them do enjoy it to some extent, but they also realise that there's more to life than being ogled by sweaty, overweight, inebriated, middle-aged businessmen. This girl, however, really didn't appear to see the bigger picture, and seemed to have reached the pinnacle of her aspirations. However, it sounds very cynical and judgmental of me to say that (probably because it is very cynical and judgmental), so I think I'll leave it at that.

After the meal was over, we were escorted by a throng of beauties from the "restaurant" area into the "club" area downstairs, and made

ourselves comfortable in the executive chairs. A £110 bottle of whiskey was ordered, and we foolishly set about quaffing even more alcohol. I was tremendously pleased to notice Tania appearing again, and with sweaty palms I delved into my wallet for a ten pound note. She accepted it with a gracious smile that made my heart melt, and took me by the hand to lead me to an empty sofa. There I sprawled with a drunken grin on my face, as she proceeded to engrave herself (in Dolby Digital and ultra-high resolution) straight into the most private and guarded areas of my mind.

When you have your first dance, you feel extremely awkward about what you should be doing with your arms, face etc. Do you smile constantly and risk aching cheeks the next day, or do you watch with a cool detachedness, periodically raising one eyebrow to signify your appreciation. To be honest, by my second or third dance, considerations like these had been cast into utter insignificance by the sheer amount of alcohol I'd guzzled during the evening.

The clientele was almost exclusively male, and I was astonished to see a "normal" woman sit down at the table next to ours with some male companions. At an advanced hour of the morning I casually leant across, tapped her on the shoulder, and stated that I had compiled three theories as to why she was in this place. Tell me, she said, raising her eyebrows. And so I did - I had concluded that she must either: 1) have an exceptional amount of self-confidence; 2) be of the lesbian persuasion; or 3)

be mad. She laughed, indicating that 1) she was not offended and 2) she must have been as pissed as me. Then she proceeded to explain that she was in fact none of the above, but was in fact Scottish. I told her that one of her male companions looked very much like David Gilmour (of Pink Floyd fame), but she assured me that he was not, because he was in fact the Managing Director of the Bank of Scotland. Having received this particular piece of intelligence, and feeling that I was possibly a little out of my depth, I gracefully thanked her for her time and turned back to talk to my slightly less illustrious friends.

The rest of the evening blurred together into one blissful and hedonistic haze, but I will spare you any further details. I seem to remember that I fell in love all over again, this time with a sublime creature from Sweden, but I cannot remember fully, and do not want to present you with falsehoods. The last thing I do remember is confessing to Tania that I was not a management consultant from New York, but was in fact a slightly overwhelmed and very drunk student from Imperial College. As I recall, she forgave me.

At 3 o'clock in the morning we finally staggered onto the street, and I began to think about lectures at 9.30, the hole in my bank account, and the fact that my world would ever be the same again.

Comments and feedback should be directed to anon.author@hangover.co.uk (and yes, that is a real address).

The man, Stringfellow, the myth, the truth

The Felix Essential

David Roberts examines the highlights (and the turkeys)

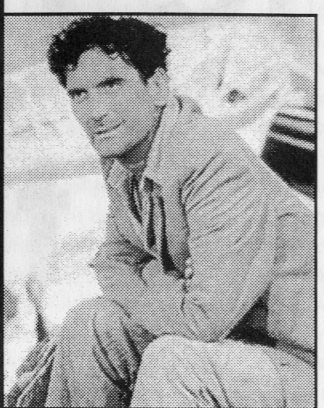
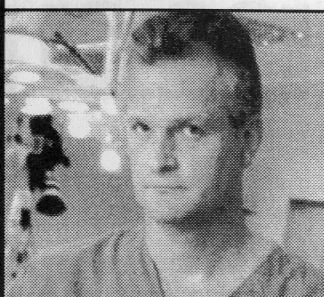
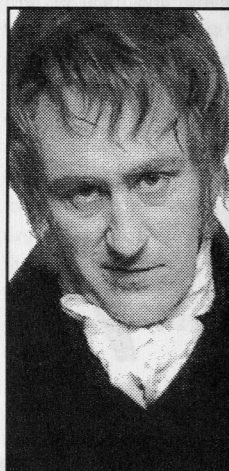
Well, where do I start? It's two weeks to Christmas, I've got stack of research material in front of me, and it's time to determine the answer to what is always the most important question at this time of year - is there any decent TV on over Christmas and New Year?

A rapid perusal of my primary sources (the perfect combo of Radio Times, TV Times and What's on TV) shows that, somewhat unsurprisingly, the schedules are almost identical to last year, complete with Christmas special's from every high-rated show, wall-to-wall movies (of wildly varying quality) and not a hint of religious broadcasting. The one big change from the norm is on New Year's Eve, when the BBC seem to be making a concerted effort to blow the entirety of next year's licence fee in one fell swoop, whilst ITV wheel out the celebrities in an attempt to hang onto some credibility after their eclipse fiasco.

But back to the beginning. Christmas TV is primarily about one thing - movies. This year offers up a massive selection, but sadly the usual strongpoint (big name premiers) is worryingly absent. BBC1 offers up underrated Tom Cruise actioner Mission Impossible [9pm, Boxing Day], lame Denzel Washington vehicle Courage Under Fire [9pm, Tuesday 27th] and the amazing Heat [9pm, Tuesday 21st], and BBC2 throws in the (dangerously arty) Italian awards-fest Il Postino [8.30pm, Christmas Day]. ITV, as far as I can see, doesn't have anything to offer at all on the premier front.

However, with Sky's movie channels now showing every film on the planet years before they hit terrestrial TV (I can't even be bothered to run through the list of amazing flicks that are available via satellite over the festive period), the standard of movies is far more important than their vintage - and as a result BBC2 hammer BBC1, ITV and Channel Four squarely into touch. On Christmas Eve, they line up Some Like It Hot [6.10pm], Clueless [10.15pm] and the original Cape Fear [11.50pm]. Of these, the first is undoubtedly the best - Marilyn Monroe's entire reputation and iconic status for the rest of the century has been built on her appearance here, and it's also Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon's finest hour - but all three knock spots off anything on either of the main channels over the festive season.

Not content with one evening of fine movies, however, they follow it up with a simply outstanding schedule of classic movies on Christmas Day itself. Indeed, the daytime schedule looks like it has been put together by my mum, with Gene Kelly's ground breaking musical An American In Paris [8.05am], the extraordinarily cheesy Bing



Crosby vehicle White Christmas [3.15pm] and one of the greatest movies of all time, Singin' in the Rain [5.10pm], all slotting themselves in nicely around presents and food. Then, as if that wasn't enough, the film geeks paradise continues with Il Postino [8.30pm] - arguably one of the best foreign language films of the nineties - and Citizen Kane [11.45pm] rounding off the day. And whilst, admittedly, much of this can hardly be counted as proper festive viewing (with the obvious exception of White Christmas), if you haven't seen any of these movies before, they're definitely worth watching whilst you try to work off the inevitable feeling of bloatedness.

If, however, you don't share my passion for classic forties and fifties cinema, there is another option. The true point of Christmas is catching up on childhood, and fortunately there are plenty of opportunities to do so this year. Amongst the most obvious films that spring to eye are Disney's Tron [5.30pm, New Year's Eve, BBC2], the impeccably lame-but-enjoyable The Goonies [3.20pm, Bank Holiday Monday, ITV] and, one of my childhood faves, Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. And whilst it's not entirely in the same category, Muppet Treasure Island [1.50, December 28th, BBC1] also embodies the same degree of childish stupidity, and is definitely worth a watch.

Alternatively, there are some great kitsch seasons on Channel 4 (as ever), first amongst which is the chance to see every original Godzilla movie ever made, and come to terms with the amazingly sharp contrast between these man-in-a-suit classics and the travesty that was the ultra-budget Hollywood version. Godzilla [1.05am] and Godzilla Rides Again [3.05am] kick the set off on Christmas Eve, and the series continues for the next week, peaking out with Godzilla vs Mothra [1.55am] on Bank Holiday Monday. The cult value of this piece can be instantly recognised from its Radio Times listing alone - "Horror adventure. After surviving a battle with King Kong, Mothra the giant moth goes to the aid of the Peanut Sisters. Japanese with English subtitles." Class.

There is, however, more to Christmas than movies. No, I'm not talking about religion, I'm talking about Christmas Specials. The relative worth of a variety of competing series can always be gauged by the placing and length of their Crimble one-offs - if your special is on December

Christmas TV Guide

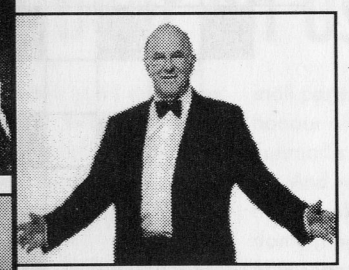
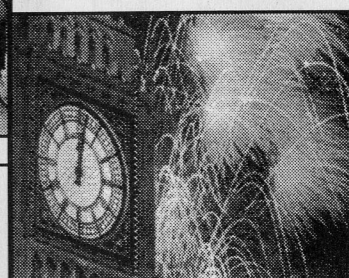
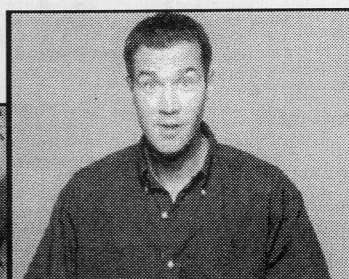
of this year's Christmas and New Year television output

20th, you know that you're definitely B List. Moreover, with Only Fools and Horses finally a thing of the past, the Christmas Ratings Crown is once again up for grabs. Realising their obvious strengths (ie sitcoms), the BBC have chosen to give the prime slots over to The Vicar of Dibley, which airs four times over the holidays (on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Bank Holiday Monday and New Year's Day) - which may or may not turn out to be a good idea... The Royle Family [10.30pm] and They Think It's All Over [11.10pm] are the other winners in the scrap for the Christmas Evening slots, whilst Christmas Eve offers the much more terrifying prospect of Dale Winton and that annoying camp bloke from Airport on the same schedule, with Winton's Wonderland [10.35pm] and the Airport Christmas Special [8.30pm] topping the bill. Gulp. Oh, and (as ever) the seasonal Casualty special [8pm, Boxing Day, BBC1] promises a mix of Santa's with broken legs, miraculous recoveries and dubious doctor-nurse relationships.

So how does ITV intend on countering this challenge? Well, they too have gone for their strengths - in this case the ability to throw truck-loads of cash around. So, prepare yourself for the infuriatingly gripping must-see TV that is Chris Tarrant setting new records for annoyance three times in one night with Who Wants To Be A Christmas Millionaire [6pm, 8.30pm, 10.30pm] splattered across the Christmas Day schedule. If someone doesn't win the million this time around, I'll be very, very surprised... On a (slightly) more highbrow note, there's also the regulation ITV drama's, with A Touch Of Frost [9pm, Christmas Day] winning the prime slot ahead of Heartbeat [8pm, Boxing Day] and The Bill [8pm, Christmas Eve].

However, looking five inches to the left in my Radio Times (I have, by this stage, abandoned the other two listings magazines as utterly inferior publications) suggests that ITV are going to be blown out of the water across the board in this year's ratings battle. The main problem is that, no matter how much cash ITV wheel out, they're never going to be able to match up to the financial might of the BBC Costume Drama department - and consequently, the BBC's two part adaptation of David Copperfield [7pm, Christmas Day & 6.25pm, Boxing Day] will blow the puny opposition out of the water. As ever, ITV might win the ratings war for 90% of the year, but when it comes to holidays and special occasions, the BBC always comes up smelling of roses...

There are, of course, five freely available terrestrial channels, so I guess it's only fair to briefly assess what the rest are up to. Well, like I said earlier,



er, every channel is (sensibly) playing to its strengths. Thus, BBC2 goes for classic movies, classical music (Cecil and Bryn at Glyndebourne [6.50pm, Christmas Day]), opera (Falstaff [7.30pm, December 22]), and documentaries (Arena [9pm Christmas Eve, Boxing Day and Bank Holiday Monday]). Channel 4, similarly, know their place, and thus focus their energies on being off-beat. In the lead, as ever, comes their alternative Christmas Message, which, this time around, is to be issued by Ali G - so expect a few more reference to punani than you'd usually find in the Queen's Christmas Message... Aside from that, they can offer shed loads of quality documentaries and cult TV, and a few decent films. Finally, there's

Channel 5, who, to be honest, seem to have given up already. Their usual repertoire of bad movies, soft porn, bad quiz shows, and, of course, Night Fever [7pm, Christmas Day] is in place, and indeed they seem to be hanging much of their Crimble schedule around Suggs. Quality.

Finally, we come to the Millennium itself. Despite the endless stream of parties, massive all-nighters, burning rivers, etc, etc that we're all being plagued with at the moment, the big TV companies seem to have taken the decision that what we're actually going to want to do for the big night is stay in and watch it all on television. Whilst this is probably the case for many of our parents, I hope it won't hold true for very many of us, so I won't dwell on this section for too long.

As ever, the BBC seem to hold all the trump cards. Although the concept of sitting through twenty-seven hours of non-stopping programming, watching the new millennium dawn around the world, hardly sounds appetising, the simple fact that they seem to have hired their entire star roster and have live link-ups to every spot on the planet will probably make for moderately entertaining viewing (well, apart from the links to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope). Meanwhile, ITV have brought in their "serious" faces in an effort to lend the proceedings some gravitas - that's right, they've hired Trevor McDonald. No contest - there's not even the usual choice of Angus Deyton, Clive James and Jools Holland...oh, but there is Suggs again, this time with three hours of Night Fever. I'm outta here - merry Christmas, and a happy new year.

The Felix Crossword 1161, by Turnip Henry

Across

- 2. Cut edges off yield. (4)
- 5. Golly! Going round in pot, fluent in many countries. (8)
- 8. It's a coincidence that spoilt pants cheapen. (12)
- 11. Strike leads to alcoholism. (7,3,6)
- 17. Chastise Tory MP. (4)
- 18. Pudding is also mine. (8)
- 19. Expend tie: make it appropriate. (9)
- 21. Computer psycho? (6)

- 22. Cab goes back in to company for a fag. (7)
- 23. She's realigned. (9)

- 27. Mock dismay at travel company party. (6)
- 28. Relaxing room. (6)

- 29. Spawn goes to California through Rome. (6)
- 30. Misdemeanour within company concerning betting. (6)
- 31. Steer my moustache. (9)
- 33. Instrument sounds cool in Christmas. (7)
- 34. Don't want rubbish! (6)
- 35. Bedroom attire almost had Windows being careless. (9)
- 37. To rant after the French are so indulgent of... (8)

- 38. ...author sounds sarcastic. (4)
- 39. Cradle goes over due to flatulence. (4,3,4,5)
- 43. Yank simian tool. (6,6)
- 45. I too rant about moving around. (8)
- 46. Fishing gear: it exists, I hear. (4)

Down

- 1. Element and material make a pencil. (6)
- 3. Range of colours may offend yours. (7)
- 4. A brilliant move on vouchers. (6)
- 6. Indian darkens skin before I go past entrance. (8)
- 7. Bitter sweet. (4)
- 9. Tight infolded hem undid during dream-time. (6,2,3,5)
- 10. Big bad wolf celebrates 39 across, perhaps. (4,3,5,4)

- 12. "Die, Lisa!" Ed bubbled, being perfect. (9)
- 13. Fruit is enviromentally friendly, maybe to determine condition. (9)
- 14. Food container might stop you. (6)

- 15. Half-moon house on the M25. (12)
- 16. Stale calcium makes you wrong. (12)
- 18. Fantastic change of state. (8)
- 20. Before time of fasting, iron copper was dirty. (8)

- 22. Green-blue duck. (4)
- 24. A charged particle that sounds like it belongs to a Greek island, is slowly getting bigger. (9)
- 25. Dig up princess who dispatched nothing to ICSM graduate. (9)
- 26. Roger: not right about the giant. (4)
- 32. We ably renovated a local legality. (3-3)
- 36. She heard Rene go back after catalogue. (8)
- 40. He throws out this seat. (7)
- 41. Mad one irritated demigod. (6)
- 42. Lusty river. (4)
- 44. Humour before tea? Er, you're babbling. (6)

FIRST CORRECT ANSWER OUT OF THE HAT ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON WINS A £25 BOOK TOKEN

Hello, hello. This is my little pressy to you all. I know it looks a bit bizarre, and I feel I should also warn you that some of the words are a bit obscure, but they are all real, so I hope this keeps you occupied during this last week of term. Happy Christmas, and I'll have a new (less obscure) one for you next millennium.

Answers to 1160:

Across: Natasha, Tsunami, Ticker, Fungal, Ninja, Loch, Cloud, Etna, Hammer, Apathy, Blur, Solid, Abel, Linen, Muesli, Easter, Lateral, Skidoos.
Down: Netball, Tactic, Horn, Sofa, August, Illegal, Wanton, Homer, Chess, Doped, Extra, Abysmal, Planet, Allures, Upbeat, Bistro, Lira, Neck.

Win an Olympus voice recorder

The gadget

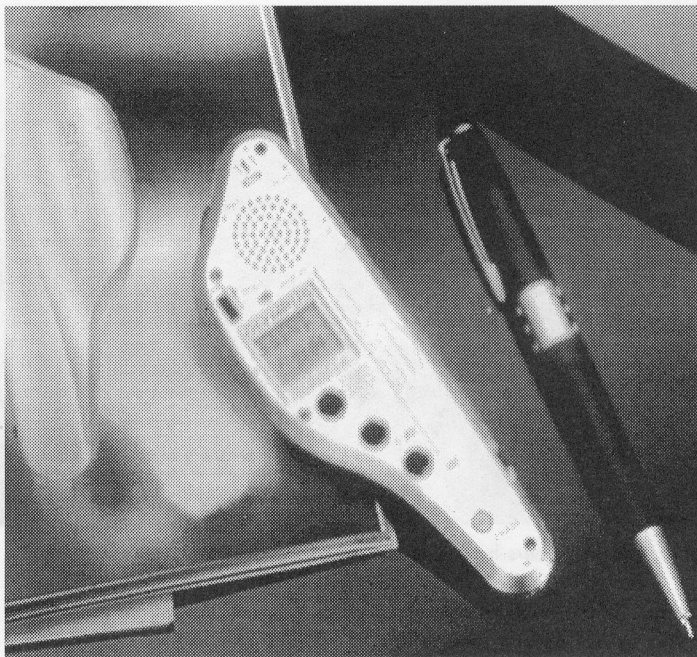
Question : what would every self-respecting gadget-lover of the next century want to be seen with?

Answer : the futuristic looking Olympus V-90 digital voice recorder - and it's here now.

Upholding it's creator's reputation as a maker of stylish products for the digital world, this pocket-sized wonder is other-worldly in it's spacey, golden shell. The V-90 is so beautifully styled it begs to be held.

This handy device has three separate "folders" that can each store ninety-nine individual recordings, on a fully integrated 8MB memory chip. The V-90 can hold from 33 minutes (in standard mode) to an impressive 90 minutes (in long play mode) worth of recordings.

The V-90's LCD panel shows which folder is currently active and indicates the date and time of each recording. For the fast-paced organiser user, the alarm clock function is great for wake-up calls and appointment reminders. Better still, its voice activation feature means no time-wasting to select the function, as



the intelligent V-90 only records when you speak, and doesn't when you don't - clever, battery saving and ultra-efficient.

Weighing in at under 45g, the V-90 is perfectly pocket-sized, but with technology that looks this good, you won't want it hidden under wraps for long. The V-90 is available for just £99.99 (inc VAT). For stockist details, call 0800 072 0070.

Why you want one

Point one: these items are damnably cool. Point two: they'll happily record your lectures for you whilst you do what lectures were made for - ie catch up on some sleep or tackle the Felix crossword. You can then take your recording home and listen to your lecture on fast forward (which has the added bonus of making him

sound like a member of *Alvin and the Chipmunks*.

Bring these two points together, and you have the ultimate in practical cool. No hassle, no effort, no need to be awake (or indeed sober, as the controls are childishly simple).

How to get one

As mentioned earlier, these classy pieces of kit are available from all good high-street retailers™. However, those of you who are strapped for cash (and who aren't looking forward to a sudden rush of generosity from Santa this year) may reel somewhat at the price tag. Fortunately, therefore, we have one to give away to a lucky reader. All you have to do to win is tell us, in no more than fifty words, how you'd use yours, and why you should win.

Email your answers to felix@ic.ac.uk before the end of the millennium to be in with a chance of winning - don't forget to include your name, your course and your year. The winner will be announced in the first edition of next term. Good luck, and Merry Christmas!

Funmail says have a beer on us.co.uk!

Considering the frankly risible response to this competition thus far, I feel it's only fair to offer you a second chance to redeem yourself..

Funmail, the free web based email service offering a selection of over 8000 domain names (the bit after the @) to use as an email address, challenges you to dream up weird and wacky alcohol inspired domain names and get plastered as your reward for doing so!

The best domain will be added to the existing Funmail service - check it out at www.funmail.co.uk - so that everyone can benefit from your creativity, and the winning creator will receive a crate of beer with our e-thanks.

Funmail already offers you great addresses for when you're drunk from you@mashed.co.uk, you@pisshead.co.uk to you@out-of-it.co.uk, but want some more because, for some strange reason, university students seem to be quite taken by them!

Send as many ideas for 'drunken' domain names as you want to felix@ic.ac.uk, or drop your suggestions into the Felix Office (in the portacabins by the back of Physics, hidden behind the liquid nitrogen tank).

The winner will be the person who comes up with the most inventive domain name, as chosen from the entries received by our Fun-

mail panel. The prize is a crate of beer and the honour of having your domain name added to Funmail's list.

And while you're about it, go to www.funmail.co.uk and sign up now. Funmail offers domain names to use as email addresses covering every mood, event and occasion. Email just got more fun.

The Rules:

- 1.) The judge's decision is final
- 2.) The prize cannot be substituted
- 4.) Only registered students and staff of Imperial College may enter the contest



funmail



Outdoor Club

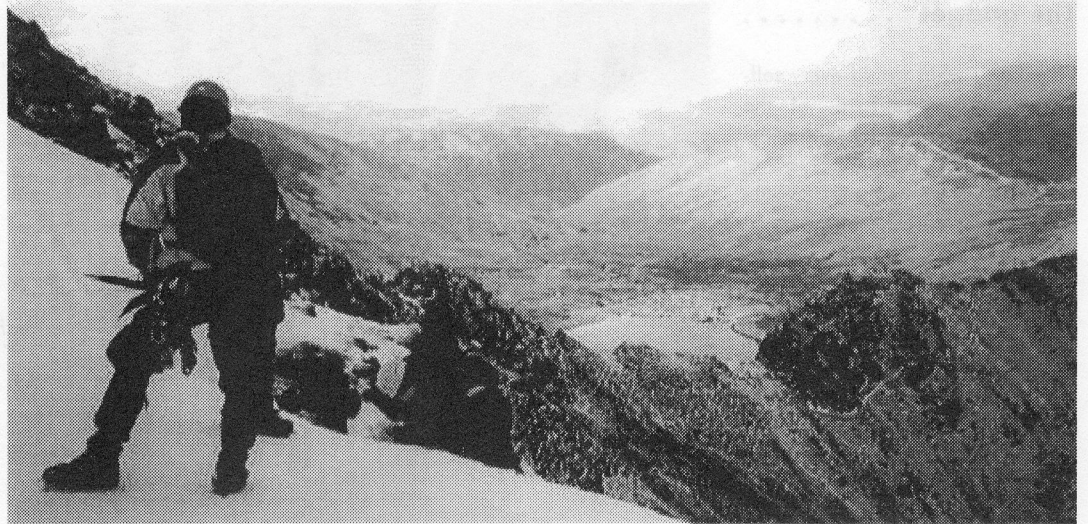
STEVE JOLLY

Sawrey's a very long way from IC, but it has showers, a piano and nearby mountains, so we went there anyway. After a leisurely six-hour drive up the M6, we arrived at about 1am and sprawled in heaps all over the floor. Awakened on Saturday by the welcome smell of breakfast, we decided to split into two groups: the more experienced members to find a grade three scramble up St Sunday Crag in Patterdale; the others (ably led by Pudding Officer Mallet) to stroll (stride?) along Striding Edge and up Helvellyn.

Taking a shortcut, the scramblers ably wheezed up about a thousand feet of 45 degree grass to the actual craggy bit of the hill. Easily negotiating the incompetent fools making up other parties they soloed their way to the top in an irritatingly short (but amusing) twenty minutes, delayed only by Steve and Jeremy's (successful) roped attempt to haul themselves up a Severe pitch just off the route. The number of other parties around made traditional climbing calls between leader and second ambiguous, so they pioneered the use of (extremely) random quotes from Round songs: cries of "I like bananas because they have no bones" and "Potato Waffles" echoed around Patterdale.

Meanwhile, the striders were being hauled inexorably at break-neck pace along Striding Edge by Mallet (this is the man whose idea of a little run involves thirty miles and ten major peaks...). Reaching the top of Helvellyn in record time, and undeterred by a horizontal hail-storm (and, he claims, flying fish fingers), the long-suffering other members of the party were persuaded to just wander down Glenridding and then up to Stick's Pass and then...

Back at the hut that night, Mallet put on his Pudding Officer's hat and sprang into action. In less than no time a six-course meal for twice the number of people on the trip was on the table (really - I'd list them, but there were too many). An hour later, the six-course meal was still on the



table, club members having spent the intervening time alternately eating, rolling around the floor moaning (generally about the seafood in the paella) and making remarks along the lines of "Never again!" and "OK, this is getting ****ing stupid." That done, we all pissed off down the pub to throw darts at each other.

Sunday morning. Six professional maniacs jumped at the chance to indulge their Neoprene fetishes by donning wetsuits and climbing into canoes; the rest took a car over to Coniston to do some more scrambling. After a half hour drive and half an hour working out how to put the canoes together in the pouring rain, the canoeists found the right river and paddled away downstream. After an uneventful trip across Rydal Water, we had three miles of flooded river, white water, low branches and our own lack of skill to negotiate. Casualties: minor branch-induced bruises all round, two rubber mallets, one hat, and a nice ninety degree bend in the supporting poles of one of the canoes (hitting things head on at full speed is bad, Jeremy). Reaching Windermere just as the weather got bad enough to stop the ferries, we went across to a nearby bank for lunch and a piss. We then had to decide how to get back to the minibus, left five miles upstream. Eventually, half of us paddled back over to Ambleside and Andy legged it from there.

The weekend's fun was far

from over, mind you. That afternoon, just as Mallet was serving up a second six-course meal from the remnants of the first, a menu from the nearby Sawrey Hotel appeared mysteriously with an SOS written on it: Ian's car had conked out when he tried to take it through two feet of water ("It's a diesel! It's waterproof! Look..."), and five members were stranded in the middle of nowhere. Steve

sped to the rescue in the van, and Damo, Ian and the car went home on the back of a breakdown truck.

Do you like cheese? Do you like peas? You'll love the Outdoor Club. Meetings every Thursday; 7pm; Southside Upper Lounge, or email us on the address below.

Contact Steve
outdoor@ic.ac.uk

Canto Villanella

CARINA LOBLEY

Tuesday November 30th was the occasion of the inaugural concert of a new Imperial College-based chamber choir, Canto Villanella. Despite choosing one of the more unusual performance venues in college - the balcony above the entrance to the BMS - the event was well-received by a large and appreciative audience.

The programme was a mix of old and new, from early music by Byrd and Tye and arrangements of English folk songs by Holst and Vaughan Williams, to Cole Porter's 'Let's do it' and Youman's 'Tea for two'. The half hour long performance attracted comments ranging from 'Excellent - this choir can really sing' to 'could we have this every week'. Despite there being only ten singers, the choir projected well, whilst each of the voice parts blended together.

The group both further enhances and adds an extra dimension to the already strong music at Imperial College. The concert took place in the same week as that of the Imperial College Symphony Orchestra, in which many of the singers already play. The choir already has firm plans to record their first CD in February, has a number of other high-profile performances lined-up over the coming weeks, and also hopes to sing at both functions and receptions.

Their well-received debut will be followed up by a performance of Christmas carols in the BMS foyer on the last day of term, Friday 17th December, at 1pm. The choir can be contacted by e-mail at the address below.

Contact Carina
canto_villanella@hotmail.com

Fifths top the league

Football - fifths

IC V 2
SOAS II 0

With the Christmas break fast approaching, and 3 league games and 1 cup tie still to play, we knew we had to take the chance to establish ourselves at the top of Division 5. SOAS II started the day 3 points behind us with a game in hand, so it was a vital game to win - but we went into the game missing a keeper and our long range expert, JP. Answering the call, however, was Stuey Cook, back for another IC appearance in goal - and later on in the bar of course...

The game started in bright sunshine, and SOAS quickly got into their stride, dominating the early exchanges. We were forced to defend, but the back four of Buzz, Skippy, Sol and Tiger stifled the attacks, and Dino and Vas up front kept their defence wary. With about half an hour gone, the ball fell to

soffie at the edge of the box, and he released a fierce shot towards goal, which took two wicked deflections before ending up in the net past a stranded keeper. The weather then took a turn for the worse, with freezing rain and a strong wind, making the rest of the half a non-event.

In the second half it was again an even contest, although some inspired substitution work almost left us with an injured tiger and no-one left to come on. And after taking a boot in the nose, skippy shed more than a little blood for the 5th team cause. The second goal arrived with 20 mins or so to go; Dino won possession on the half-way line and, running on, left the SOAS defenders in his wake. A cool shimmy sent the keeper to ground, leaving Dino an easy finish and his 12th goal of the season.

So, 2-0 final score, which puts us emphatically on top of the league.

Millennium Marathon

Athletics

After getting up at some god unearthly hour (ULU) men's team, won the final UK marathon of this millennium, albeit with the race divided into three nine mile legs. Yes, this was the Luton relay marathon.

We travelled on the slowest train in the world, with Frank Butcher managing to disturb the rest of the team by announcing that he had managed to get a photo of a 14 year old girl and that he had nearly gotten off with her 15 year old sister...

In freezing cold conditions and with plenty of ice under foot, the men's team's first leg was run by Imperial's Stan Ron. An unofficial course record gave the second leg runner, Imperial's XXX Gaffer, a 2 minute 26 second head start on the rest of the field. The third leg runner, Frank Butcher (from Imperial, naturally) was given a 9 minute 45 second head start over the next relay

team. Surely even Imperial's Cross Country captain could not lose this? Imperial, under the heading of ULU, duly won by over 10 minutes.

There was also a female ULU team, which again consisted mainly of Imperial runners. Ruth (the only non Imperial student) ran the first leg of the day, producing a strong result. She was followed by Sicky Sarah who had to run and a new find from Imperial, Gavina, who managed to produce a time which is probably a female course record.

Other than all of us being knackered by 2pm on a Sunday, the only significant news about the journey home was the fact that Sicky Sarah informed to the whole team (and her fiancée Daisy Boy) that she was pregnant. Congratulations guys, never thought you had it in you mate!

All, in all, a very successful day for ULU. What would they do without Imperial?

IN BRIEF

Fourths Football

IC IV 4
RHUL IV 2

After a string of five defeats we badly needed this win to lift our spirit and to qualify for the next round of BUSA. We started slowly, and the first goal came from the head of Justin, who soared miles above the defence to open his account for IC. Once again, however, we failed to hold our lead, and Holloway equalised soon afterwards.

An inspired substitution led to our second and third soon after the interval, and with some excellent passing and rock solid defence from new boys Pesh and Pooven, the game was ours. Holloway did pull one back, but we showed great determination, remained solid, and nearly got another, thanks to some great work by Nima. Eventually, however, it was Kurt who finished the game off, with a screamer into the corner to make it 4-2. Great result.

Boat Club

The newly housed women's rowing team were out in force at the British Indoor Rowing Championships last week.

Each event consists of a 2km rowing machine race, and first off were the Under 23's. Alison, Caroline and Kelly all set off hard in the lightweight category, with Alison leading the way to victory and Caroline just missing out on the silver. Meanwhile, in the heavyweight class, Jessica landed the bronze. A further BUSA gold came from captain Lindsey in the open lightweight event, where she finished seventh in a field containing some of the country's top athletes.

Elsewhere last week, Alison, Emma and Jess also romped home with victory in the Senior 2 coxed 4's at the head of the river race. Despite a raging head wind and a severe crash during the race, they still beat off the Cambridge girls in a time of 23.02.22.

Womens Basketball

Once again, we hit a wall as we played against King's (how did UCL manage to beat them?); this leaves us 3rd in the league. However, we still have a chance to grab the title if we beat UCL next term.

As friendly as it was supposed to be, the game against Oxford was still very tense, especially when Dorothee, our top scorer, rebounder and blocker, had to leave the court after her 5th foul. Our defence remained tight, but it was a more difficult in attack, and Oxford started to come back in the game - but fortunately it was already too late.

Well done and thanks to everybody for their contribution to this team - the commitment of this year's players has improved the achievement of team dramatically. A special thought for Meredith, who was only at IC for the autumn term and will not be among us in 2000.

Seconds Hockey

IC II 1
ICSM II 1
IC win 4-3 on penalty flicks

What a game - nailbiting stuff for seventy minutes. We had the best of the first half, constructing many attacks and converting one of them to go in 1-0 up at half-time. The fire and passion of the first-half continued into the second, and when ICSM got a lucky equaliser we rallied hard, but couldn't quite find the target, and the game finished 1-1, sending it to penalties. Five brave men stepped forward: Jamie's went into the top left corner; Andy's top right; Paul's low middle; Giles' low and crap; and Tom tied it up, to leave the game 3-3 after the five. Up stepped Dr Mong, facing sudden death, and a heroic effort flew into the top corner of the net. The pressure was on our makeshift goalie, Twat. The flick was near perfect, he dived... and with an outstretched stick he edged it around the post. Hurrah!

SPORT

Massive Sparkes Cup win for Guilds

Rugby

C&G 106
RSM 14

It was a cold and stormy day as the all conquering City & Guilds took on the Miner's team. Thunder shook the field as the players took the pitch, and the start of the match was delayed as Dave Gol chased Penguins off the pitch...

Playing with the wind, C&G dominated, especially in the forwards, where our clear weight and strength advantage was obvious. After a number of knock-ons, the first of many tries

was scored as the forwards crashed over for Howard to touch down. Shortly after this, a second try was added by Will Stevens, as he belly flopped over from a few metres out. Many tries followed, and the rest of the half was a scrappy affair with the miners stealing just one opportunist try.

Guild's second half account was opened by Akira, as the forwards showed their strength with a 25m drive from a line-out. By now the contest was over and C&G turned on the style as Ally Jefferies went over after an inspi-

rational dummy, only to be followed up by a nicely worked Dave Gol try. At this point Nippy stepped up to drop kick a conversion attempt. He missed. Shortly afterwards he again showed his kicking prowess, punting the ball to the opposition backwards (as usual).

C&G's final tally was an embarrassment, and with the game rapidly becoming pointless the ball was intercepted inside the 22 after a no look pass. The miners started crying so we gave them a conciliation try at the death.

Mixed results for mixed team stars

Mixed Volleyball

RHUL 0
IC 3

It was a good start to the week. The IC players travelled a long way to play Royal Holloway but returned home with a huge grin on their faces. It was a good solid performance which kept the opponents out of the game the whole time. Indeed, the result was never really in doubt, thanks to the superior ability of our players.

Courtney was killing the ball to the opponent's court all the time; Sandrine was like a defensive wall, constantly stopping any attacking attempt from RHUL (I think they were getting annoyed with it...); and Lucia got the MVP award due to her brilliant display as a setter. Then we had MariaJo in great shape, together with the incredibly consistent Phot and our two Constantinos making sure the job

would get done. Special thanks to Courtney - such dedication - and her family who came to support the team (all the way from the States).

UCL 3
IC 2

OK, it had to happen sometime. After a total of nine matches without a loss, the club finally failed to beat the opponent of the day. The game was an incredibly close affair, with three out of the five sets being decided by the minimum margin.

UCL brought a very strong team, with some players performing at a level not usually seen in mixed-team competitions. Nevertheless, our team fought hard - very hard indeed. We won the first set with no major difficulties, but then they came back and got the two that followed (the third set was extremely close and could have

gone either way). Major tactical re-organisation of the team was carried out, and we clinched the fourth set with relative ease. In the decisive set, a series of unforced errors on our behalf made the balance of the match tip over to UCL's side, with a final set score of 15-17. It definitely wasn't fair, though, since we were the better team - ask anyone...

Never mind, the team played well and clearly showed we have reasons to be confident regarding our future in this competition. In particular, there was a spectacular attacking display by the captain, Constantinos, and some groovy improvisation by Etienne, whose imaginative setting kept the opposition on constant alert. Oh yes, I almost forgot - a thousand thanks to brave Magali who, despite being terribly ill, still managed to come and play the whole match for the team (who needed her badly).

SCOREBOARD

BASKETBALL (Womens)

IC I	57 - 16	RUMS
IC I	31 - 41	Kings
IC I	72 - 34	GKT
IC V	48 - 44	Oxford

FOOTBALL (Mens)

IC I	P - P	LSE
IC II	0 - 2	UCL II
IC III	1 - 0	Wye
IC IV	P - P	UCL IV
IC IV	4 - 2	RHUL IV
IC V	2 - 0	SOAS II
IC VI	0 - 6	RSM II

RCS 5 - 2 LSE VII

FOOTBALL (Womens)

IC I 2 - 5 GKT I

HOCKEY (Mens)

IC II	1 - 1	ICSM II
(IC II win 4 - 3 on penalties)		
IC III	plenty - 0	RVC

RUGBY (Mens)

C&G 106 - 14 RSM

Volleyball (Mixed)

IC I	3 - 0	RHUL
IC I	2 - 3	UCL

Attention!

IC Cricket Club

Net sessions at the MCC Indoor School begin next term (sessions run from 9-10pm every Thursday from January 20). All standards welcome.

All protective equipment provided - just bring whites. For more details contact Yann Lewis at y.lewis@ic.ac.uk