



### Big bang

Simon Singh, author and Imperial graduate, talks to *Felix*, page 20



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### Incredibly good fun

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# Felix



The student newspaper of Imperial College ● Established 1949 ● Issue 1307 ● Thursday 25 November 2004 ● www.felixonline.co.uk

### Speaker van

The infamous 'speaker van' has returned to South Kensington. Its passengers try to sell poor quality merchandise to passing students.

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### Deadly drugs?

The pharmaceutical industry took a blow last week as an investigation concluded that five household drugs may not be safe.

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### Drunk sportsmen

"ACC bar nights have become some of the most eagerly anticipated events each term and also one of the greatest success stories in many a year."

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### Ballet legacy

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### The week in sport

Two reports from the prolific Thirds football team, plus rugby, hockey, netball and lacrosse.

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The Imperial Thirds football team

## Departments break rules on working hours

By **Dave Edwards**  
Editor

Students in a number of College departments are having to attend lectures and tutorials at times supposedly reserved for humanities classes and lunch breaks.

According to the Imperial College website, "on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in the autumn and spring terms there is a two-hour break at midday for the lunch-hour Humanities Programme".

However, some students have regular lectures, tutorials or labs between noon and 2pm. In the worst cases, first year students attend lectures

and classes continuously from 10am until 6pm.

First year aeronautics students have lectures from 10am until noon and 2pm until 6pm on Tuesdays, with two hours of mathematics in between. The mathematics is officially 'optional', though it is strongly recommended and, according to one student, "essential if you didn't do further maths [at A-level]".

The student, who wished to remain anonymous for fear of his department's reaction, added: "I've only just moved to London and started university, and this is just too much".

Andrew Sykes, a third year chemistry student, has lec-

tures all morning on most days, followed by a lab session from midday until 5pm. He told *Felix*: "It's silly, and it's running me into the ground. The official line is that you don't have to be in labs all the time, but you do - it's an

**"Certain times of day should be kept free..."**

unwritten rule".

First years studying electrical engineering and information systems engineering have a range of lectures at noon on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Meanwhile, some students

in the chemical engineering and mechanical engineering departments have regular lectures or tutorials between noon and 2pm.

Professor Rees Rawlings, the ProRector for Educational Quality, told *Felix* that he was disappointed to hear about the issue, continuing: "The situation is quite clear. Certain times of day should be kept free for these activities. By now, all departments should be aware of this and timetable their activities accordingly."

Prof Rawlings stressed the importance of allowing students to follow humanities and language courses, and said that when informed of

problems like this he would always follow them up with the departments concerned.

Sam Rorke, Deputy President (Education and Welfare) of Imperial College Union, said that leaving the period between noon and 2pm free is "a very sensible College policy" and that he would be "working with departmental representatives to ensure that this rule is upheld".

● **State of the Union, page 8**

● **If you have lectures, tutorials or labs between noon and 2pm (or after 12.30pm on Wednesdays) contact felix@ic.ac.uk**

## Capturing the wild on film



Swedish photographer Peter Lilja's image from the Etosha National Park in Namibia, winner of the 'Dusk to Dawn' category at the 14th BBC Wildlife Photography Competition, currently on show at the Natural History Museum in South Kensington. Report: page 7

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# Felix

Issue 1307

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## NEWS

# Speaker van makes unwelcome return to South Kensington

By Dave Edwards  
Editor

The infamous 'speaker van' has returned to South Kensington, its passengers pestering Imperial College students as they attempt to offload poor quality goods.

The van's driver and passengers call students over as if to ask for directions, claim that they have had a delivery of speakers rejected and then try to sell them at a 'knock-down price'.

In the past, the speakers have been found to be broken or of very low quality. According to *Felix* issue 1248, buyers were asked to take the salesmen to cash machines,

and physical threats were made against those who refused to make a purchase.

*Felix* has been made aware of two independent sightings of the van, attempting to sell the speakers to Imperial students and graduates, in the past week. Various different vehicles may have been used.

College Security have strongly advised students to stay away from the van(s) and the passengers. Unfortunately, very little action can be taken against them at present.

● If you see the 'speaker van', note the number plate and contact us at felix@ic.ac.uk



The infamous 'speaker van' caught on camera outside Imperial College two years ago

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# Foxhunting, football and our future king

Emily Gwyer on the week's biggest national news stories

I don't know about you, but I am getting very weary indeed of Iraq at the moment and have consequently not been reading about it as assiduously as I should. So this week, you're getting hunting, charities and football.

Nobody who picked up a newspaper or turned on the TV this week could have failed to notice that hunting has finally (almost) been banned. A nice game of bill ping-pong was played between the two Houses of Parliament before the Speaker of the Commons finally invoked the Parliament Act and the Bill was passed.

The Parliament Act is invoked rarely (usually for important constitutional changes and the like) and was put in place to assert the power of the Commons over the Lords. Usually, a bill is read in the Commons, debated and then passed or reject-

ed. If passed, it moves to the second chamber, the Lords, for discussion. The Lords then send the bill back to the Commons with changes to be made and suggestions.

The Parliament Act overrides this process - despite the Lords voting against banning hunting last week (but by a surprisingly small majority), the bill was still made law by the Commons. And that was that - 700 years of hunting banned. Or was it?

The furious hunt supporters vowed immediately to take the fight to the high court. *The Telegraph* is a supporter of their cause and commented that this was class war combined with another national trait: "the class warriors were victorious because they formed an irresistible alliance with those who labour under the illusion that foxes are sweet". Most newspapers

pointed out the fact that the vast majority of people in the country really don't care one way or the other about this issue, finding it a diverting but ultimately pointless way to spend time in Parliament. One *Guardian* columnist went so far as to say that he "couldn't bear to hear another word about it".

Prince Charles also seems unable to keep himself out of the papers - for all the wrong reasons - at the moment. He was embroiled in another scandal this week when a leaked memo he had written to his staff appeared to suggest that people should know their place and not aspire to things of which they are not capable. Of course, as a man who has earned every position, medal and penny that he has, and has in no way been gifted it by Mummy, he has every right to go spouting



In the news: Prince Charles

off like this. But did he actually say that? It appears that this may have been (surprise surprise) whipped up by the tabloids, who scented a second juicy class warfare story of the week.

The memo, it seems, actually says that young people should not expect success to be handed to them without hard work and a talent for what they are doing. *The Sun* and *The Mirror* treated it as an amusing spat between the Government and the Prince,

whereas *The Daily Mail* saw it as a battle between the Labour party (historically republican) and the monarchy, after the education secretary Charles Clarke criticised the Prince and called him old-fashioned.

*The Guardian* and many other papers saw nothing wrong with what the Prince said, although he obviously is not the person to say it: they thought that "some jobs are better than others; not everyone will get one of the good ones. The overwhelming majority of people will not find fulfilment through their jobs. They will find it through activities outside their jobs, or friendships within their jobs, or they will not find it at all. Expecting otherwise is delusional."

The debate seems to be dying down now as the Government are reputedly keen to forget

the whole business, but what has come out of it is that the Prince really, really needs to keep his mouth shut like the Queen can, and that he also really, really needs a better PR team.

Finally, the football. I love football, have had a season ticket in England for six years and did my final year in Barcelona (where some of you may remember I wrote an article about going to a football match and being shocked by the racist chanting). I am too depressed to write much. All that occurs to me is yes, my impression when I lived there was certainly that the Spanish are racist, but really, we are certainly not the nation who should be casting the first stone and getting all self-righteous and moralistic about it, as the racist abuse aimed at Dwight Yorke on Saturday shows.

# Business

business.felix@ic.ac.uk

## Decision on deadly drugs

As you read this article, **Numaan Chaudhry** asks you to consider your intake of drugs – legal and illegal

The pharmaceutical industry took another blow last Friday as it dealt with the effects of an investigation by Dr David Graham, a reputable US Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) authority.

Dr Graham's preliminary investigation ended with the conclusion that five household drugs may not be safe, despite their approval by health authorities during their initial stages of production. As a result, almost £7bn of stock value in the industry was blown and the equity market receded to a value of just 4805 after it's recent peak following George W Bush's re-election.

The FTSE 100 also declined but still remained above the landmark 4760 level. The five perpetrating drugs, all of which face the remote possibility of gradual withdrawal from the markets, are Vioxx, Crestor, Accutane, Serevent and an unnamed cancer drug made by Roche Holdings. However, the FDA has been reluctant to back Dr Graham's claims absolutely, having previously dragged its feet in a similar situation when claims were made that anti-depressants could be dangerous if taken by youths regularly.

Vioxx, a drug claiming to soothe the effects of arthritis, was the trigger for Dr Graham's enquiry into the pharmaceutical industry as a whole. The maker of Vioxx, Merck Plc, initially denied the accusation that 28,000 heart attacks and deaths were caused by the drug.

Crestor, one of the drugs at the centre of the investigation and an effective anti-cholesterol drug, is forecast to account for 22% of the earnings of AstraZeneca by 2008. This, of course, had an immediate impact on Astra's shares, which were down 222p at £21.45, and futures derivatives. The £3.7bn loss in share value was the highest of the sector, with the fall estimated at almost 10%. What makes this particularly worrying to Astra executives is the dependence they have on Crestor's contribution to revenues, an estimated \$1bn in 2004 alone.

Dr Graham considered the drug risky and urged the FDA to probe further into it's chemical make-up and effects after he highlighted the potential of Crestor to cause muscle and kidney damage. To ensure a total annihilation of the drug, Europe's health



**Inhalers: notorious sources of Serevent, a drug now found to mildly inhibit average blood pressure**

and drug regulators initiated a review of Crestor's recommended dosage.

Serevent is currently used by a minority of asthma sufferers worldwide, but its effects on blood pressure caused GlaxoSmithKline's 4% drop in share price. Despite the fact that Serevent accounts for under 1% of Glaxo's sales, £2.8bn of Glaxo stocks lost value last week. This was attributed in part to charges being filed by... you guessed it... Eliot Spitzer (see last week's Business section). Having increased his net to

the pharmaceuticals industry, the New York Attorney General filed charges against Glaxo for its reluctance to reveal data from trials that indicated an increased chance of suicidal behaviour among children taking one of its flagship drugs, Paxil.

Accutane, as well as Pfizer's Bextra and Abbott Laboratories' Meridia, were also suspected of causing serious after-effects. The manufacturer of Accutane, Roche Pharmaceuticals Ltd, categorically denied the possibility of psychosis, a dis-

ease that raises thoughts of suicide, being an effect of Accutane. However, the market showed no mercy as it steamed across the whole board of pharmaceuticals, ripping down the peak stock prices of all the manufacturers.

Another drug has also been hitting the headlines recently, but with a more sinister underlying purpose. Afghanistan is leading the war for narcotics, it seems, after the country's output of opium shadowed the minimal amounts produced in Africa

or Eastern Europe.

One in ten Afghans are involved in this lucrative trade, which is actually one of the main sources (60%) of the country's GDP. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan has over 130,000 hectares of poppies. Opium trade in Afghanistan ceased during the US war on the Taliban and has only recently started generating revenue for the country. The cultivation of opium and its subsequent benefits to the country is deceptively fruitful; many are now question-

## Latest from the Square Mile

### DrKW stays

DrKW, the investment banking arm of Dresdner Bank AG, a subsidiary of the Allianz Group, reported operating profits of 162m euros in the six months ending in June. Although down 40%, and having been approached by three interested parties, the Allianz Group does not intend to sell DrKW for a cash injection but is looking for a partner to align its strategy correctly with the industry.

### Asset-backed bonds

New issues in Asset Backed Securities have risen significantly as a result of increased consumer spending power and eager lenders. The \$660bn issuance, of which ABB's accounts for \$430bn, is increasingly worrying to the Fed as it reveals the depth to which the average US consumer is in debt.

### Chaudhry's ratings

A new credit ratings agency introduced earlier this week has changed its position on AstraZeneca from hold to buy. Although Astra has been hit hard by Dr Graham's findings (see main article), I changed the rating because of the increased drug trade from Afghanistan. An increase in heroin in the economy implies a surge in drug abuse and hence in medical services. Since the medical services use pharmaceutical companies as their primary source of medical, you can expect Astra's sales to rise and so will their share price!

ing the usefulness of ousting the Taliban if the conditions for terrorism are reappearing.

Three years on, Afghanistan is assessing if the benefits of the opium trade outweigh the risk of a new Taliban. Though much of their income is from foreign aid, Afghanistan still relies heavily on opium harvesting to fund infrastructure, development and education. However, this is exactly where the dilemma for Afghanistan comes in: if more warlords enter and rule the country, the development of Afghanistan and the democracy that the West has been trying to achieve will be lost yet again.

## FLOATING PRODUCTION

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On November 29th at 18.30 **Single Buoy Moorings Inc (SBM)** will make a presentation at Imperial College (Civil Engineering Lecture Theatre 208) to tell you what Floating Production is all about and what career opportunities it presents for you.

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# Science

science.felix@ic.ac.uk

## Is animal testing a necessary or unnecessary evil?

Animal testing is a controversial issue which is driving research out of Britain. **Emma Williams** raises the questions that must be answered if science is to stay

In laboratories across the world, animals are used to test different drugs and compounds. In some cases, these drugs are lifesaving treatments that will ultimately save many peoples lives. In others, it is a slightly different story, where animals are used to test cosmetics and other pleasurable products designed for our everyday use.

Is it right to use animals in this way, for human gain? Should we distinguish between the use of animals in cancer laboratories and the cosmetic industry? Is one right and one wrong; one better or worse? There are many questions to consider. For example, are there any alternatives? And do these experiments really work? This report will attempt to highlight the controversial issues and gain insight into the facts behind animal testing. And then it will be up to you...

Approximately 2.7 million live animal experiments were authorized in the UK in 2002. This may sound like an immense number, but it is half of what was carried out 30 years ago. One reason for the decline was the introduction of the Animal Act in 1986, stating that no animal experiments may be conducted if there is a realistic alternative. However, British law states

that any new drug must be tested on at least two different species of mammal, one being a large non-rodent. So where is the middle ground? And what is a realistic alternative?

Firstly, one should address whether testing on animals actually works and what is gained from such work. Many people have received vaccines for diseases such as polio, measles, mumps and tuberculosis (TB). We owe animal testing for the development of such drugs. Furthermore, antibiotics, HIV drugs, insulin and anti-cancer treatments which have helped vast amounts of people around the world are all tested and developed through the use of animals.

Is animal testing a 'necessary evil'? Is the use of animals comparable to allowing a human to die or suffer? Attempting to distinguish between what is morally right and wrong is difficult. Some would comment that human life has a greater intrinsic value than an animal. Legislation and strict government guidelines ensure that lab animals are protected from cruelty and mistreatment. But how much do we know about the stress-related effects of testing, even if treated well?

Many animals are put to



Animal testing: do we have to be cruel to be kind?

sleep before feeling any pain. Such procedures also follow strict rules and regulations on how to anaesthetise an animal prior to testing. Despite this, isn't the whole process traumatic for the animals?

Alternatives to animal testing include in vitro studies. This means studying the problem outside the living animal. For example, culturing cancer cells in a dish rather than examining live animals or testing in vivo. However, many scientists believe that in vitro studies are only a starting point to providing basic non-clinical testing. A clear picture is only gained when observing what is actually happening in an animal

model.

The use of as few animals as possible is the primary aim of most medical researchers. The search for alternatives continues and is guided by the 'three R's' principle; reduction, refinement and replacement. As mentioned before, there have been significant reductions in the number of animals used over the last 30 years. Refinement covers areas that include animal housing and veterinary care. While animals are still being used, it ensures that they are treated with respect and care. Replacement continues to strive to look for non-animal alternatives. Techniques such as in vitro studies can

replace some animal experiments. However, it will be some years until they can be replaced completely.

Furthermore, research institutes such as the infamous Huntingdon Life Sciences are pioneering the in vitro technology. Also, it is a supporter of the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME). So despite current needs for animal-based research, scientists do acknowledge that reducing and replacing animal testing is the future.

**"Animal rights terrorism was estimated to have caused £150 million of property damage over the last 25 years"**

Such controversial issues are always accompanied by supporters (both for and against). Many protests have occurred over various ethical issues. Recently, Cambridge University had to abandon plans for a primate research centre as costs had apparently escalated due to new animal welfare regulations and increasing security measures. However, the centre still could go ahead as planning permission is valid for 5 years.

Despite the announcement that the centre was going to

be axed, in July of this year animal rights groups challenged the decision for planning permission for the centre in the high court. The appeal was eventually overturned. Many medical research centres face similar costs concerning security against violent protestors. Animal rights terrorism was estimated to have caused £150 million of property damage over the last 25 years. Is it justified to attack scientists who are ultimately only doing their job? However, there are organisations that demonstrate peacefully such as Animal Aid and the National Anti-Vivisection Society, which strive to educate and promote animal rights.

To put animal testing in context, in the US 5bn animals were used in the food industry compared to 18m for research, both of which benefit humans. Can we, should we compare the two?

One could suggest that we all become vegetarians as well as stopping testing on animals. How far does it go? There is no easy answer to many questions posed in this article. But hopefully, by reading this you are now more aware of the controversial pros and cons associated with animal based research. At the end of the day, the answers and opinions are yours.

## Plastic bag overuse in the UK reaches epidemic levels

By Zoë Corbyn  
Science communication

This week I added three plastic bags to my ever-increasing collection. I did try to keep it to a minimum – but life got in the way. An emergency milk outing and before I knew it my pint had been bundled up in plastic (if only they would ask); it was raining and a newspaper without a bag would have been intolerable; and my new CD just had to come home in one of those dinky wee ones.

Based on this, my average rate of consumption is 150 bags per year. By UK standards I am actually doing well, as the average is 290 plastic bags per person per year.

Indeed, our plastic bag use has reached epidemic proportions. As well as littering our environment and blocking our waterways, plastic bags kill large numbers of wild-life every year. Birds, whales, seals and turtles, often mistaking them for jellyfish, ingest the bags. They do not

breakdown easily and stay in their intestines, causing pain and death. When the animals do die, the bags are released back into the sea: ready to be eaten again.

In an effort to curb our addiction, major supermarkets offer us 'lifetime bags' and in the past there were penny saving incentives if we brought our own. (Sainsbury's canned their 'Penny Back'

**"...the average is 290 plastic bags per person per year"**

scheme in July this year in favour of improved instore recycling points – apparently few customers were using the scheme.)

B&Q, however, are the first UK company to seriously integrate the challenge of plastic bag reduction into their company policy. Their new scheme is simple: for each bag customers request at Scottish B&Q shops, five pence is added to the bill,



Plastic bags: useful, but are we taking them for granted?

charged through a barcode on the bag. The money raised from the scheme goes to the 'Keep Scotland Beautiful' scheme. If the trial is successful, it could be launched at B&Q shops across England and Wales.

But B&Q are only one company. Surely, to really make a difference we need a plastic bag tax to apply across

the board? Surely we need Government action? Well, apparently not, and this is not likely to change in the near future.

Despite the well-documented success of our progressive neighbours across the Irish Sea (commencing in March 2002, the 15 euro cent per bag 'PlasTax' has resulted in a 90% reduction in plastic bag

consumption), the UK government has made it clear that it will not be following suit. The line is that, as plastic bags comprise only 1% of our waste, such a tax would be quite limited in dealing with the broader issues.

Yet while it is true that tackling plastic bags is only a small part of the waste problem, it is an important part because it can make people think twice. In terms of changing people's mindsets and instilling a sustainability ethos, it is a great place to begin. Bags may only be 1% of the waste stream, but they are a highly visible 1%.

Of course, I hear you cry: "what about my free bin liner?" You are not alone. The British Retail Consortium, in their staunch opposition, believe that if such taxes were introduced the demand for other single use bags, like bin bags, would rise dramatically. Certainly this seems to be the Irish experience. But, in truth, large proportions of plastic bags go straight

into the rubbish and are not reused in households anyway, and very few are returned to shops for reprocessing. A modest sum for a bin liner does not seem like too much hardship to me: when we pay for things we value them.

In the meantime, for those who feel a serious bout of 'bag-guilt' coming on, get your reusable calico happening and those three simple but albeit difficult words, "no bag thanks," may just be in reach.

**4 trillion** Number of all types of bags used worldwide annually  
**17.5 billion** plastic bags given away by UK supermarkets annually  
**100,000** marine animals killed each year due to plastic bags  
[www.myownbag.com](http://www.myownbag.com)

## SCIENCE

News  
in briefUS-led push for UN  
cloning ban falters

A divided United Nations on Friday voted against a US-led campaign to ban the cloning of human embryos for therapeutic uses, namely stem cell research. Instead, a non-binding statement was accepted, which calls on nations "to prohibit any attempts to create human life through cloning processes and any research intended to achieve that aim".

NASA launches  
cosmic blast hunter

A new space observatory has been launched to hunt down and study the most powerful explosions seen in the Universe since the Big Bang itself. The Swift satellite will detect and analyse gamma-ray bursts – very intense but fleeting flashes of radiation. Scientists think they may signal the birth of black holes, which are created when giant stars fall in on themselves.

China joins NASA  
in considering  
space exploration

China and fifteen other countries joined NASA officials to discuss how they might cooperate with US plans for human exploration of the moon and Mars. The Chinese delegation was invited, even though China is not among the countries participating in the International Space Station.

Fossil ape may be  
ancestor of all apes

An ape that lived 13m years ago in what is now Spain may have been the last common ancestor of all apes. The fossil provides a missing link between great apes and lesser apes such as gibbons. The creature, named *Pierolapithecus catalaunicus*, had a stiff lower spine and flexible wrists that would have made it a tree-climbing specialist.

Arctic people at a  
loss for words

What are the words used by indigenous peoples in the Arctic for "robin", "elk" or "salmon"? Many indigenous languages have no words for the new animals, insects and plants advancing north as global warming thaws the polar ice and lets forests creep over tundra. "We can't even describe what we're seeing," said the chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

## Could antimatter be used to create superbombs?

By Kate Wighton  
Science communication

Early last month, *The San Francisco Chronicle* alleged that the US Air Force was quietly spending millions of dollars on an antimatter weapons project.

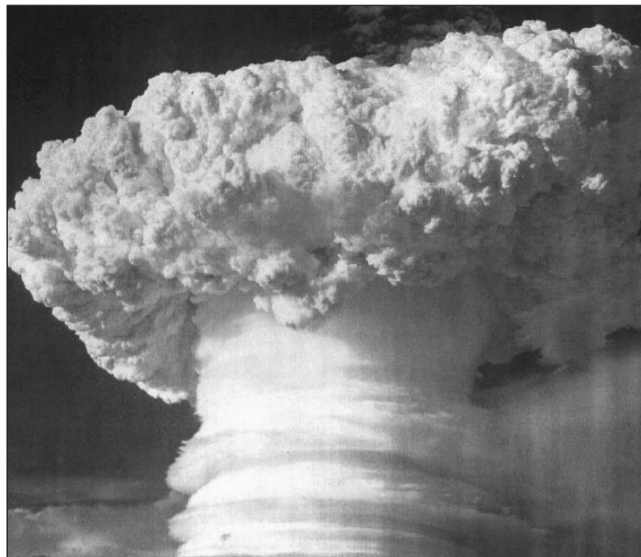
This program could produce the superweapons of the future. Antimatter bombs could be hand-held but also be extremely powerful – since half a gram of antimatter would release energy equivalent to that of the Hiroshima bomb.

The US Air Force were, the *Chronicle* claims, initially quite open about the project, but following initial enquiries, employees were forbidden to discuss it.

At first glance, this appears very alarming. But are antimatter weapons really possible?

First of all, what is antimatter? Antimatter first came to the attention of scientists in 1930, when as part of a theory describing the behaviour of electrons, Paul Dirac predicted the electron to have an equivalent positively-charged partner: the anti-electron. This was treated with some scepticism until 1932 when Carl Anderson actually observed a particle that behaved like an electron but was a positively charged – this was the first evidence of the anti-electron, or positron.

Since then, antimatter partners have been found for the other sub-atomic particles



Antimatter bombs would be devastating in theory, but would they ever work in practice?

that make up matter, such as anti-protons and anti-neutrons. When antimatter and matter collide, they annihilate each other to produce huge amounts of energy, hence the military's interest in using positron bombs.

Antimatter would produce 'clean' superbombs. Dan Bowerman, who works on the BaBar antimatter project at Imperial College, explains: "[using positrons] would be useful as basically all material matter on earth has many, many electrons so positrons would annihilate with them. This would give off lots of energy and no pollutants while causing much damage from the enormous amounts of energy produced".

CERN, which sits on the Swiss-French border, is the world's largest particle physics centre. The centre generates and investigates antimatter (although there are other institutions that generate antimatter – the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) being one with which Imperial is closely associated via the BaBar project). Rather handily, the CERN website contains the question: "Can we make antimatter bombs?"

Their answer was reassuringly to the point: "There is no possibility to make antimatter bombs".

Phew. The main reason appears to be that antimatter is incredibly difficult to store and can, therefore, not be

accumulated in high enough quantities. Bowerman explains: "it is relatively easy to create positrons, but storing them is another business and storing them over potentially long periods of time should be very difficult and also very expensive".

If antimatter comes into contact with matter, it will annihilate. Therefore, finding something to store them in (bearing in mind that our world is made up of matter) is very difficult. The fact that the particles bear the same charge and therefore repel each other makes things even more challenging.

Another tricky point about

**"...half a gram of antimatter would release energy equivalent to that of a Hiroshima bomb"**

antimatter is that there appears to be little, if any, antimatter in the universe. This has been puzzling scientists for years as it is thought that matter and antimatter were produced in equal quantities in the Big Bang. As we have no natural resource of antimatter as we do coal or oil, all antimatter has to be made artificially.

This involves accelerating particles to the speed of light in huge particle accelerators, and smashing them into smaller particles, some of which decay into antiparticles. However, these antipar-

ticles fly off in all directions at very high speeds. Therefore, only the particles that fly off in a certain direction can be caught, making the process of generating antimatter rather inefficient. The amount of antimatter produced each year at CERN could power a 100W bulb for just 15 minutes.

As the CERN website explains: "Scientists realised that the atom bomb was a real possibility many years before one was actually built and exploded, and then the public was totally surprised and amazed. The antimatter bomb on the other hand has been imagined by the public who want to know more about it, yet we have known for a very long time that it's not at all a practical device".

On the general topic of military research, Bowerman had this to add: "With enough resources, scientists can often come up with very clever technologies that you can't initially imagine and the military has the resources to make this happen.

He continued: "Let's hope that the costs remain very high and the US military dominance makes it somewhat pointless to pursue these technologies".

Therefore it looks, for the moment, as though we don't have to worry about antimatter weapons wiping humanity off the face of the Earth. After all, we already have perfectly adequate nuclear and biological weapons to do that.

## Science attempts to comprehend the mystery of beauty

By Sonja van Renssen  
Science communication

Science and beauty: two completely unrelated subjects you might think at first glance, the first cold and empirical, the second forever subject to personal opinion with no small dose of passion thrown in. However, at the Royal Institute on Wednesday 10 November, Dr Armand Marie Leroi, Reader in Evolutionary Developmental Biology at Imperial College, argued that science now provides a credible explanation for beauty in the human face.

This has not always been perceived to be the case. Until the Renaissance, beauty was defined by symmetry: the geometry of facial features in statues of the time reflects this definition of physical perfection. It was with the publication in 1871 of *The Descent of Man*, wherein Charles Darwin extended his concept of sexual selection from animals to man, that beauty was for the first time defined in scientific terms: as rare, particular and totally arbitrary.

Research since has reversed each of these original beliefs: scientists today believe that beauty is not what is rare but what is com-



More than skin deep? Science is trying to explain beauty

mon, not particular but universal, and not arbitrary but rich in meaning. For example, Sir Francis Galton, Darwin's own cousin, demonstrated that people tend to find an average face more beautiful than one that deviates significantly from the norm. Studies asking men to rate women in terms of appearance have shown cultural invariance. And who can doubt that beauty has meaning when we are beginning to speak of a "global standard of beauty" and there is a multi-million pound

industry devoted to it?

In addition to these three defining traits, there is one other that Dr Marie Leroi has identified as particularly interesting and of consequence for a complete explanation of beauty: its role as a certificate of health. A person lacking the scars of smallpox, free of an infestation of lice or devoid of scurvy is clearly more attractive than one who suffers from any of these afflictions. In modern British society, most of us enjoy a reasonably good level

of health. So why is it that there are still such significant differences in beauty?

The reason, believes Dr Marie Leroi, is that beauty today is largely a function of our genetic make-up (nature), rather than the environment in which we live (nurture). In a classic case of nature versus nurture, he argues in favour of a dominant role for nature: "a great deal of variation in beauty is due to variation in our genetic load...

**"Scientists today believe that beauty is not what is rare but what is common, not particular but universal, and not arbitrary but rich in meaning"**

we are all born with around 300 mutations that affect our bodies for the worse in one way or another... nearly all... affect the face".

The evidence for this theory comes from observations that people of mixed race are often extraordinarily beautiful. A good example is Saira Mohan, who featured on the cover of *Newsweek* in November 2003 as the most beautiful face in the world. Saira is a quarter Irish, a quarter French and

half Punjabi.

Dr Marie Leroi argues that her beauty stems from a lower than average number of mutations as a result of her mixed race heritage: because mutations are almost always recessive, they will only be expressed if two copies, one from the father and one from the mother, are present. The less genetically similar two people are, for example if they stem from two different races rather than the same, the lower the chance of them sharing the same mutations. If "beauty is the absence of imperfections" as Dr Marie Leroi contends, then the expression of fewer mutations in people of mixed race explains their greater beauty.

In this way, empirical science explains the subjective. Yet, it must be borne in mind that there is also a strong cultural component at play here. Would people of mixed race have been considered quite so beautiful in a less racially tolerant society of past times? Probably not. While Dr Marie Leroi's theory is very plausible in today's society, it remains to be seen whether it will stand the test of time.

● For details on upcoming events at the Royal Institute: [www.ri.ac.uk](http://www.ri.ac.uk)

# Shooting fish and jumping jackal flash

The 14th BBC Wildlife Photography Competition is on exhibition at the Natural History Museum. **Iain Taylor** reports on this and the wider significance of the art form

*“What makes the drama is the great swirling mass of frantic fish and the power of the charging sharks... this also creates the beautiful dynamic lines of movement and contrast of light and shade, silver and blue... To get such a shot requires great skill, knowledge and experience, together with the final, vital ingredient: artistry.”* Rosamund Kidman-Cox, judge.

Doug Perrine's spectacular photograph of two bronze whaler sharks in a feeding frenzy won him this year's BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award. Of the 18,500 photographs entered for the 2004 competition, his was deemed the most striking and memorable by the judges, and scooped the most prestigious award in wildlife photography.

The photograph was taken off the east coast of South Africa, on the Transkei 'Wild Coast' during the annual sardine run. Initially herded to the surface by a pod of dolphins, this baitball of sardines came under attack from gannets, tuna and sharks. Perrine was in the right place at the right time to get the shot, but admitted he was bumped by the 3.5m long sharks in the process.

He told *Felix*: “It was potentially dangerous – you have to think about the situation in advance and have strategies for the various things that could happen. The year before I took that picture, another photographer was badly bitten by a feeding shark and nearly lost his arm. It was an accident, not really the shark's fault, but not a good situation in a remote site... He was very, very lucky to pull through.”

Perrine's photograph, along with other images from this year's competition, is currently on display in an exhibition at the Natural History Museum, near Imperial's South Kensington campus. As with previous years, the standard of photography is outstanding, and the exhibition contains all the category winning images, runners-up and commended photographs. In total, 60 images have been enlarged and lit up, and will be on display until February, when they will begin a tour of the UK.

This year's competition has a real underwater feel to it and unlike other years, there are more sharks than big cats on display in the exhibition. Doug Perrine has a second photograph on display – again a bronze whaler feeding on a baitball. The innovation award went to Pete Atkinson with a clever photo of a grey reef shark just below the surface of the water, and a great

white shark shot is highly commended in the portrait category. Yet the exhibition has something for everyone – whether it is sharks, chimps, snakes, fungi, flowers, spectacular landscapes or the Northern lights, the range of images is possibly the most diverse in the competition's

**“The competition has something for everyone whether it is sharks, chimps, snakes, fungi, flowers, spectacular landscapes or the Northern Lights”**

recent history.

In the gallery itself, visitors to the exhibition are treated to atmospheric sounds that play while you view the photographs. Unfortunately, these don't quite work – you have to be lucky to be looking at a photograph to the appropriate sounds as they continually change to evoke different environments. Most of the time, the sounds do not match with what you are looking at. For example, you could be absorbing yourself in an underwater photo to the sounds of bubbles, only to be wrenched out of it by the screeching of (presumably) the golden leaf monkey on the other side of the exhibition. By the time you've reached the monkey portrait, the sound loop is back around to the bubbles again. Yet the beauty of the photographs dominates this exhibition, and the presentation of the lit up images in a dark gallery enables visitors to fully appreciate how spectacular they are.

The BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award continues to attract the biggest names in wildlife photography from around the globe, and previous winners in the competition include Frans Lanting, Thomas Mangelsen, and Anup Shah.

Anup Shah is represented by four images in this year's exhibition, and he won the animal behaviour category for an image of a golden jackal chasing flamingos. This award goes to the best image of a mammal actively doing something, and is judged on interest value as well as aesthetic appeal. The picture brilliantly captures a chase, and the jackal is nicely framed by surrounding flamingos. With ears pinned back and shoulders hunched, there is definitely something of Wile E Coyote about the scraggly subject as it splashes across the lake.

Shah had a successful academic career in conservation with many journal publications, but abandoned



Overall winner: Doug Perrine risked life and limb to capture this image of bronze whaler sharks and a shoal of sardines



Walk like Jesus: Anup Shah's image of a golden jackal won him the award in the animal behaviour category

academia to pursue wildlife photography. He passionately believes wildlife photography has conservation value, and explained to *Felix*: “Academic writing appeals to the rational side of humans whereas wildlife photography appeals to the emotional side. Once you get people by their hearts, you can win them over more easily.”

Spectacular images of animals in their environment have the power to generate an interest in wildlife and its preservation, perhaps having a greater impact for conservation than academic papers that are hidden in journals.

Perrine hopes his photo will generate interest in the conservation of bronze whalers. These impressive sharks are in decline, yet they are still

**“Academic writing appeals to the rational side of humans whereas wildlife photography appeals to the emotional side”**

hunted for 'sport' on deep-sea fishing trips around the coast of southern Africa. Based in Hawaii, Perrine is known as one of the world's foremost

marine wildlife photographers. His underwater career has spanned dive instructor, marine biologist and photojournalist for *National Geographic*.

He told *Felix* that he enters this competition “to win some recognition, hoping to get a little prize money and some publishing contracts”. The prestige of the award will ensure that the world's top photographers continue to enter this yearly competition.

The 2005 competition is underway and the organisers are keen to encourage as many people as possible to enter before the April dead-

line. You do not have to be a professional photographer to enter – amateurs have scooped awards throughout the history of the competition. As a professional, Doug Perrine has entered in previous years without success. His advice for the rest of us? “Don't give up. Persistence wins the game.”

This exhibition in the Natural History Museum is free to students of Imperial College (it would normally be £5), so there's no excuse for not visiting.

● **More of Doug Perrine's photos can be seen at [www.seapics.com](http://www.seapics.com)**

# Comment

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## Some things never change... but can they?

One of the news stories in this week's *Felix* is that the speaker van is back. Ever since my first year in 1999 (when dinosaurs roamed the Earth), the presence of dodgy white vans purporting to sell music speaker systems has hit the news pages of *Felix* every November. There's not really much that the police, or anyone, have been able to do recently. All we can do is ensure that students are aware of the dangers – which *Felix* is doing.

There's something else that doesn't seem to change on the news pages this week – but which ostensibly can: departments timetabling lectures when they shouldn't.

Two years ago, my predecessor took a proposal to the Senate (the College's academic governing body) requesting that Freshers Week be extended to become a full week (those of you who are not first years

will remember that teaching has traditionally started on the first Wednesday of the autumn term). The Senate had a 'lively discussion' and failed to agree on anything other than that the issue should be looked at.

Last year, my first as Union President, I successfully persuaded the Senate to only allow non-assessed induction lessons in the first week – and then only from Wednesday so as to give a bit more breathing space – and to make the Freshers Fair a full day event. Even then it took the third attempt, and much preparatory work with the Academic Registrar, to get it through. Of course, the academics complained and some departments (notably undergraduate medicine) didn't quite follow the rules, as they were traumatised by the prospect of having to redo their timetables.

### STATE OF THE UNION



**MUSTAFA ARIF**  
UNION PRESIDENT

Nevertheless, the principle was universally accepted and appropriate timetabling changes are being made

for next year to make it universal across College.

Some 20 years ago, the Union President of the day successfully lobbied the Senate to keep lunchtimes free. Under College policy, there should be no teaching between 12 noon and 2pm on any weekday. And there should be no teaching after 12.30pm on Wednesdays (the extra 30 minutes being to allow for finishing labs etc).

Why did the Senate set aside this time? Because university is about more than just studying for your degree – lunchtimes and Wednesday afternoons are set aside to pursue those other activities. So you've got no excuse not to participate in the diverse pursuits offered by the Union's clubs and societies.

Lunchtimes are not only used by the Union but also by the humanities programme. At Imperial, everyone

can study a humanities course or learn a language. Uniquely amongst science teaching universities, undergraduates here have a rich 'for credit' humanities programme they can engage in to broaden their learning. Sure we all came here to do 'proper' degrees, but a little social science every now and then is good for the soul. Visit [www.hu.ic.ac.uk](http://www.hu.ic.ac.uk) to find out what's on offer.

So why do some departments still schedule teaching at lunchtimes or Wednesday afternoons? Mainly because they haven't been told off as no students have complained. And that's why it's important that you do. There are plenty of ways to improve life at College (the Union's strategic review and QAA audit survey being examples), but at the end of the day we can only do our job if you actively tell us what affects you, rather than just assuming that we know.

## 2004 to 2008

### Survey

For those of you who haven't filled out the survey at [www.union.ic.ac.uk/survey](http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/survey) yet – why not? There are only a few days left to fill out the online student survey for planning the Union's future.

You'll have received an email from the about this on Tuesday, explaining that the Union is undergoing a Strategic Review – the biggest review ever undertaken of what the Union offers and how it can develop in the years ahead, ensuring that your Union offers the best service to you.

**You have a real chance to shape the future of the Union**

The Union is entering a huge period of review to ensure that we know what our members want. In the past we have invested in certain areas, but have never had an overall plan of where we are going and how we can improve and develop for the good of our members.

### Not to be taken lightly

So yes, it might be a hassle to fill out the survey, but this is an excellent opportunity. It is not a small scale scheme – we're dedicating a lot of time and energy into making sure your voice is heard. It's a very serious issue and we need your honest answers. So do have your say



**SAMEENA MISBAHUDDIN**  
DEPUTY PRESIDENT  
(FINANCE & SERVICES)

and contribute to the future of your Union.

### Clubs and societies

Each Chair/President of a club or society has been sent a Clubs & Societies questionnaire. Please return these as soon as possible and consult your committees and members so that we can get as much information as possible to improve this large area of the Union's activities.

### Bribery

And if that's not enough, then we'll resort to bribery – all students who complete the online survey will be put into a draw to receive a number of prizes. These include a Sony Playstation, travel vouchers from

STA Travel, a meal for two at Moti Mahal restaurant and some beer.

Imperial College Union is here for you, but this can only work if you're there for us.

### And finally

You'll notice towards the end of the survey there are questions relating to QAA (Quality Assurance Agency). The Union is writing a statement on behalf of our students to go the QAA and this is an important part of their audit of Imperial College. This is a process that the College is taking seriously, so to allow us to represent your views, complete the survey. Visit [www.union.ic.ac.uk/survey](http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/survey).

# Contribute to the future of Imperial College and your Union

Go to: [www.union.imperial.ac.uk/survey](http://www.union.imperial.ac.uk/survey)  
and fill in the survey today, have your say,  
and have a chance of winning a Sony Playstation,  
a travel voucher from STA Travel, a meal for two  
from Moti Mahal or some beer!



COMMENT

# Elections around the world

After George W Bush's triumph, *Felix* analyses the Australian and British elections

The US election has been run and won. There's been plenty of analysis on this result, but what of the nations that have been supporting Bush's war on terror?

Surrounding the US elections are democratic events in the two countries that have supported the US most strongly since 9/11. Australia went to the polls in early October this year, and the British general election is hotly tipped to take place within the next six months.

While Australia voted in the context of a then undecided America, Britain's electorate will vote on Tony Blair in light of a Bush victory. How much influence is exerted by the US polls in these two countries? What balance of domestic to foreign policy was struck in Australia, and what balance will be found in Britain? Does the US and the war on terror exert any real influence at all in these two countries?

## AUSTRALIA

By Duncan Pearse

Do you remember those posters the anti-war crowd put up following the Spanish elections in March? They listed the three names "Aznar, Bush, Blair". Aznar was crossed out to signify the 'no Iraq war' vote that had just swept the Spanish President from office.

As we now know, the poster makers have not had the chance to cross off George W Bush's name from that list. It's also a good thing for them they didn't list the name of John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister. Like Aznar and Blair, he's been a big supporter of the war on terror since 9/11, and sent troops to Iraq, but in the Australian elections which were held on 9 October he won a historic fourth term of office with a swing to his conservative coalition government.

Before I go on, I must declare an interest here - I am a member John Howard's Liberal Party, and have worked for them in the past in Australia.

For the uninitiated, Australian democracy is based upon the Westminster system, with national government terms lasting three years. The parliament consists of a lower house with 150 seats, and a directly elected upper house with 76 Senators.

In the 9 October elections, the Howard government (a coalition between the Liberal and National parties) was asking the people for a fourth term in office since sending the Labor party to opposition in 1996. At a time when a government is normally regarded as tired and stale, the people gave the Liberal Party a 3% increase in its primary vote, with the coalition enjoying a 1.8% swing on a two-party preferred basis. The coalition's majority in the lower house increased from 14 seats to 24 seats. Many Coalition seats that were once marginal now suddenly enjoy a buffer of 5% or more. Simultaneously, the Labor Party's primary vote continued its long-term slide, losing five seats. Crucially as well, the Government won a majority in the Senate - the first time a government has achieved this in

around twenty years. This result was not a landslide, but it was in the ballpark.

Before the election, the 'peace' crowd were licking their chops, just waiting to see yet another of Bush's international allies bite the dust over Iraq as Aznar had done earlier.

Post election, the malcontents' line was that the only reason for the government's return was that Iraq hardly featured in the election campaign. This is supposed to explain why the electorate didn't give the PM the whipping they'd been gagging to deliver for three years now.

True enough, there was plenty of focus on domestic policies during the campaign: a government scare campaign on interest rates, the significance of which was overplayed by Labor after they lost; a disgraceful attempt at voter bribery by the government with a \$13bn budget surplus spending spree, which backfired as the public rightly saw this spending as irresponsible; and finally, Labor's deal to snag Green preferences in return for saving old growth forests, resulting in logging workers feeling betrayed by Labor yet again and voting conservative.

All of this - especially the Green issue - was very important to the government's win, but none of it meant that Iraq and the war on terror were irrelevant to the voters. If the public were as furious about our involvement in the war on terror as the anti-war crowd claim, then they wouldn't simply forget that anger because of some domestic issues arising during a six-week election campaign.

Given that Australia does have troops in Iraq - and that their presence is physically small but politically important for President Bush - it was surprising to see during the campaign that the war as an issue was notable only by its absence. As I have mentioned, those lamenting Labor's defeat claimed this was the only reason Howard had won.

Really? And what if Howard had lost? I have no doubt that the 'peace' crowd would have seen it as a punishment of Howard for going into Iraq, despite its absence from the campaign as an election issue. You can't have it both ways, folks.

I'm more inclined to believe that Iraq was not an election issue because the debate on the war on terror and national security had been run and won by the Government a long while ago. There is a strong argument to say that campaigns themselves don't actually influence many votes at all - what matters are the impressions formed by voters over the years leading up to the election.

Against this background, it is reasonable to argue that voters approved

of the Government's backing of the war on terror - Afghanistan, Iraq and all.

John Howard openly supported Bush's war on terror, and still does. Just about every issue that surrounded the Iraq war here in the UK was replicated in Australia - no WMDs, intelligence failures, enquiries into intelligence failures, accusations that the Government had lied about the reasons for going to war, and so on. Australia's involvement in Iraq took place under the full glare of public protest and criticism, so there was every chance for the Government to look bad over the whole affair, and every chance for voters to punish it at the ballot box.

Sure, Australia had thousands of people marching against the war on the same weekend as a million or two protested in London. But what the anti-war crowd have never grasped is that that says nothing about the people who didn't go to protest. Maybe they agreed with the protesters. But maybe they didn't - and after the election we've seen in Australia, it appears to me that a lot of people who stayed home actually didn't agree with the 'no war at all costs' line, while those who did hit the streets were probably not going to vote for someone like John Howard anyway.

Earlier this year, Labor leader Mark Latham sat down to a radio interview and 'announced' that Labor's policy was to bring the Aussie troops home from Iraq by Christmas. Then there came the questions - would that be all of the troops in the area, or just the ones actually on the ground in Iraq? What about the fact that many of these troops were there to protect Australian aid workers in the region? With the passage of time more and more of Latham's front-benchers struggled to answer these questions.

Also very telling were the disappointing results for the Greens and the other left-of-centre minor parties. This went very heavily against the pattern of Australian voting. Usually, the punters like to take out insurance - especially when electing a conservative government. If someone like Howard is going to be their Prime Minister, then the voters will usually give the upper house the balance of power to a minor party just to keep the Government in check.

The results were disappointing for the Greens, whose quasi-religious worship of the environment goes hand-in-hand with their opposition to war. Their primary vote did rise from 5% to 7%, but they did not win a lower house seat, nor did they gain the Senate balance of power as they had hoped. If the voters wanted to

temper Howard's support for the war on terror with increased Green presence in the Senate, they had their chance. Instead, they gave a Senate majority to the Howard government.

In a nutshell, the voters didn't want to be bribed with big election spending, they didn't want 'troops home by Christmas' gimmicks, and they didn't want any power to go to the anti-war minor parties. Against that background, it's no wonder that Labor did not buy a single TV advertisement slot to campaign against the Iraq war. They knew the game was up long ago in this debate. In short, the Australian public support the war on terror and their alliance with the US - and have done for some time now.

## GREAT BRITAIN

By Barry Edmonstone

Having seen the electoral fortunes of two distinctly pro-war anglophiles, we must now look forward to the British elections in May. Tony Blair and the Labour party will be defending a majority of 159 seats, which in a 659 seat Parliament is a large margin to play with, especially given the nature of the core constituencies that Labour hold. The Labour party has, however, been criticized, much like Howard and Bush, for its policies both at home and abroad.

Since the beginning of this Parliament, the Labour government has forced through a number of contentious issues. These have covered a broad spectrum from foundation hospitals, through university top-up fees, to anti-terrorism legislation, regional assemblies and now the hunting bill. These issues have all led to protests, the likes of which have not been seen since the late 1980s. Not only that, but each of these issues has managed to anger a different section of society - from young to old, from rich to poor and from north to south, no-one has been left untouched.

On the international stage, things are not much better - Afghanistan, Iraq and the EU debates have not been vote-winners either. Afghanistan and Iraq have been seen as reckless wars in support of an overly aggressive superpower. Although the charge of being led to war by others is overly critical, British troops are yet again dying in foreign field. This is something that we should all stop to remember this week. From a constructive position, the issues over the next few months will be creating a lasting peace and extracting our troops in a safe manner. However, many feel that this is a task beyond the powers and abilities

of our government.

The EU has played a secondary role due to the crisis in Iraq, but the view of most to Brits again seems to be out of step with the Government. In the European elections, the outlook for Labour was decidedly gloomy. In the last nationwide test of public opinion before the general election, Labour were soundly beaten by the Conservative party, 27 MEPs to 19. Not only that, but the UK Independence Party (UKIP), a marginal party at best, polled a massive 16% of the vote, only 6% behind Labour and forcing the Liberal Democrats into fourth place. This should have sounded a warning bell about a rise of parties on the right of the political spectrum. Yet no change in the Labour position seems to have been forthcoming.

It is surprising then to see that the Government still has so much support, even when most of these issues go against the grain of the public at large as well as against the beliefs of the 'traditional' Labour voter.

In May, Tony Blair is expected to win his third term of office with a comfortable majority of between 30 and 75 seats. This view seems to have been strengthened given the Bush victory and the recent result from Australia.

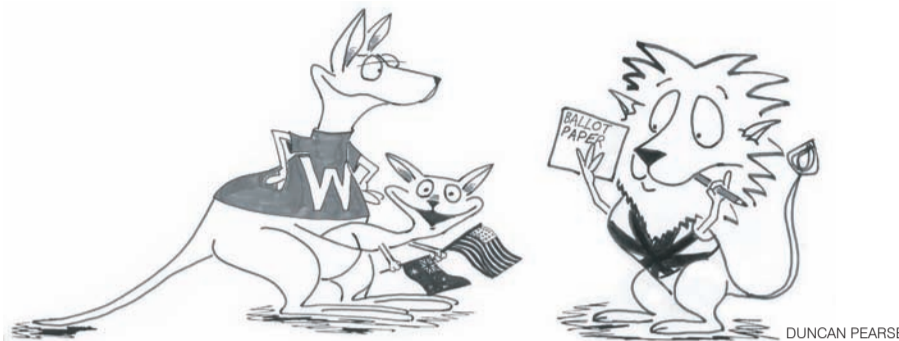
The question remains: how can such a range of unpopular decisions lead to another parliamentary majority? Well first we have to consider the strength of the opposition.

The Conservative party should be the main challengers in this election, but they are a party in disarray. They lack confidence, ability and a proven winner. At the end of the day, Michael Howard will always be remembered as a loser who went down with the Major government.

So we look further afield to the Liberal Democrats, the up and coming political party with the popular view of the war in Iraq, and the choice of the young professional. Well, that's how they would like to be seen, but it's not really the case. Although they will make the largest gains at the next election, and could possibly become the official opposition, they will not make the gains they require to affect Labour's majority. The minor parties may pick up seats here and there, but the lack of cohesion in all of these organisations will undoubtedly be their downfall.

However, the most important factor will be the voices of the voters we have yet to hear. These are not the protesters or the politically motivated, but the silent majority who have had enough of pandering to the most vocal minorities. This group has been the deciding factors in both the Australian and American elections and they are cautious centre-right voters. This is a much-maligned group, especially in Britain, but we will certainly hear their voice at the next election. They voted for Blair in 1997 and have supported him since. They are unhappy, but they have not abandoned the Labour party just yet.

The Australians and Americans have decided. It will be our choice in less than six months, and the only way to change things that you don't agree with is to go out and vote.



## COMMENT

felix@ic.ac.uk

# Is Spain a racist country?

After racist abuse was suffered by England footballers against Spain last week, **Nacho Quinones**, President of the Imperial College Spanish Society, and **Andrew Voak** give their views

Last Wednesday, in the England versus Spain 'friendly' match, we witnessed hundreds of Spanish fans whooping and making monkey noises towards the English black players.

First of all, as President of the Spanish Society, I would like to extend a formal apology to those football fans and everyone else who was offended by Wednesday's 'show'. It was indeed a shameful spectacle that has fired up a strong response from the English press, which unfortunately has condemned the whole of Spain as being a nation that tolerates racism. Headlines published in tabloid and broadsheet alike highlight this, including the *The Daily Mail's* "Give Spain some pain" or *The Times's* "The toleration of the intolerable".

A contributing factor to the scandal was a racist remark made by the unsuspecting Spanish coach, Luis Aragonés, whose comments about Thierry Henry were caught on a microphone. The coach was promptly made to apologize, but no further disciplinary action was taken. This decision to keep a coach who has been recorded as making an unofficial racist statement is certainly controversial, as the coach is ultimately the face of the Spanish team. He certainly does not represent the country's attitude, which has been "condemned categorically" by a spokesman from the Spanish government.

It must be said that Wednesday's events are not common at football matches in Spain. The league includes players from a wide variety

of ethnic backgrounds who are exposed to the same amount of insult and praise as the Spanish white players. Last Wednesday has certainly not helped Madrid gain many supporters for its 2012 Olympic Games bid, but should the action of some bigots be extrapolated to the whole of the Spanish population? Are the Spanish racist, or does football bring the worst out of people?

Sadly, discrimination has not been fully eradicated from any society. Racism and football have regrettably walked hand in hand before Wednesday's game. Let us not forget, for instance, that only 20 months ago the English fans were recorded chanting "I'd rather be a Paki than a Turk" at the infamous England versus Turkey game in Sunderland.

Discrimination in football extends beyond the issue of racism. On two independent occasions, gay players have been driven to suicide in both England and Italy, due to the abuse received from football fans.

These and other examples of the more extreme consequences that result from any form of abuse directed to social and ethnic minorities leads to the conclusion that such forms of discrimination must be dealt with. Proposed international actions as a result of this game range from the enforcement of a closed doors game for the next international Spanish match to a complete ban on Spanish football displays outside the country. What actions are to take place are unknown at the time of writing, but whether such bans are a solution to the problem is a matter

of opinion.

Pointing the finger at a whole nation does not bode too promisingly as a way to deal with racism. Interestingly, *The Times* simply says "you just can't do that," referring to racial abuse against black players. So are we to believe that the primary reason against being a racist bigot is that it is not politically correct? To brand the whole of Spain as racist is not constructive, and will only result in greater alienation and tension.

Racism is a great problem that must be dealt with on a larger scale, beyond football matches, inside classrooms and work places. Newspapers should condemn the action of the Spanish football fans, not the whole of the country. That is a form of discrimination in itself.

# Imperial and the environment

As some new 'green' technologies begin to appear around campus, **Joseph Bull** argues that Imperial College is not doing enough

Some may have noticed the emergence of a number of brave new technologies on the main campus in recent weeks and months, the

signs of a green feeling making itself manifest quietly.

Notable examples would include the solar cells on Imperial College

Road, waterless urinals in the Sherfield basement, and (more cryptically) a passive cooling system on level five of the central library. At present they may be token, but these peculiarities are the forerunners for a movement that could benefit all of us; so not only do I think we should get excited about them, but we should actively ask for more.

Now don't worry, although I'm an environmentalist I'm not going to get all ethical, just practical. By generating our own electricity on campus (using solar cells) we are not buying it in, which could feasibly pay for setup costs and maybe even give returns over generator lifetime. Equally, by cutting down on electricity consumption in the first place (waterless urinals, passive cooling), we will save thousands of pounds per year. Surely a university so in need of money that it needs to charge its students hefty tuition fees would want to save as much as possible elsewhere? Think what the newly freed thousands of pounds could do for our Union!

Then there's Imperial's public projection. Most people walking past will be impressed by the fact that we can employ cutting edge and developing technologies, and are willing to venture forward in a way that merges efficiency with ethics. Not only do the government have grants for the implementation of renewable energy technology, but I imagine that it is the kind of thing that would attract more students. With £350m being spent on new buildings and refurbishments over the next five years, and £70m being spent on existing buildings each year, there must surely be scope for increasing the amount of renewable technology used within the College?

The general environmental reasons for wanting to reduce 'fossil fuel' dependency, water use, unnecessary waste and energy inefficiency should really speak for themselves: in the long term, it isn't just a question of ethical qualms about damaging the world around us, but quite possibly one of societal and even human survival. This

may seem like a slightly extreme outlook, but may I point out the perhaps microcosmic examples of Easter Island and the Mayans, both societies that collapsed and died out through over-exploitation of their environment.

Realistically, these are issues that the College can easily address, but doesn't on a large scale. New buildings like the Tanaka Business School seem to have had absolutely no environmental impact assessment carried out on them prior to construction. Maybe this is the kind of thing we should be asking for, as students at, and technically customers of, the great Imperial machine.

The world is changing. The environmental movement has the potential to grow, as people and businesses around the globe realise the true nature of this most powerful, important and above all excellent of beasts. All I propose is that we encourage our university to swell these green ranks; for the sake of its students, its economic interests, and the planet at large.



Lunch time only, in Da Vinci's  
£2.60 Specials change daily!

Dishes include:  
Pasta, Vegetable Puff Pie,  
Burritos, Roast Chicken and  
Sausage & Mash

imperial  
college  
union

Valid until December 17

Cut and bring with you to receive your free drink

## Letters to the Editor

### Palestinian posters

Dear Editor,

Posters mourning the death of Yasser Arafat, Palestinian Leader were put up around college last Monday by the Palestinian Society. The Posters were apolitical, and did not have any textual comments related to the 'cause'. These posters have now been taken down.

I believe that either individuals or a group of people at Imperial have taken objection to these posters. If this is so, I think this is something

that should not pass unreported and should be made aware to the readers of the *Felix*.

There seems to be some form of political vendetta against the very presence of Palestinians or those who support their cause, at Imperial. I think that neither the college nor the union has any such stand hence it is something that needs to be investigated and rooted out of our institution.

I understand that the Palestinian Society who made the posters tried to make it as apolitical as possible

and conform to all the rules & regulations set by the union and college on placing of posters in college.

I strongly believe that this is an issue that needs to be covered by *Felix*. I understand the apolitical nature of the Imperial College Union itself, but it is also under obligation to represent the points of views or issues that affect its students.

Yours Sincerely

Zaki Nuseibeh  
Electrical Engineering II

Send your letters to felix@ic.ac.uk. This is the page where you can make your voice heard on just about any topic. Letters may be edited for length but not for spelling or grammar, and are printed at the Editor's discretion

# Around Campus

felix@ic.ac.uk

## Is this really relevant to us?

**Nichola Hawkins** explains why Wye students should take an interest in the Union's strategic review and voice their opinions

As a Wye student, one comes across a lot of things that are being publicised College-wide, regardless of the fact that we couldn't possibly travel the 70 miles in time between lectures, or at all to return after 11 at night. College and Union events are listed, from careers talks to ents nights, along with meetings, feedback and elections for the people who organise them.

To a point, Wye students will say it's nice to know what's going on, but after a while they develop a very rapid 'irrelevance reflex'. That is to say, they decide in an instant whether the latest piece of information being thrown their way has any bearing outside the M25, and if not, immediately ignore the poster, turn the page or press the

delete button.

I dare say some students will be flicking through this very newspaper and ignoring every page but this one. So why am I using the one page they will look at to waffle on about just the sort of thing they don't want to read?

Those of you who read last week's *Felix* will have heard about the Imperial College Union strategic review. Everyone else: wait! Hold that irrelevance reflex for a minute!

This plan will determine the long term plans of Imperial College Union over (and beyond) the next four years: what it should continue doing, what it should do more of, what it should do in a completely different way, and what it shouldn't bother doing.

But what you need to know is that for these purposes, 'Imperial College Union' does specifically include Wye, and for that matter all other campuses too.

The next part of this review will be a College-wide survey. Now, the words 'College-wide' have probably set off alarm bells again, but the good news here is that someone (me) has already gone through the survey with a Wye-relevance filter.

Wye students will be given their own, specially adapted version of the questionnaire, asking not only what use you might actually be making of South Kensington activities and services, but what you would rather have down at Wye.

The Union want this review

to help them serve all of their members, including those not based at South Kensington. They want to know if you know what's available up there, and if there is anything you would like to make use of sometimes, and if so what is stopping you from doing so. They also need to know how many of their members would actually use facilities in South Kensington following various proposed improvements: for these questions, a 'no' is just as useful as a 'yes'.

Wye College Union Society want this review to give them some information relevant to them, too. What do you like about the Union in Wye? What could they do better? What areas do you think are under-resourced? Again, this is just as relevant to those who don't

use the Union, in order to say why you don't use it: saying what would make it more suited to your needs or tastes, or even letting us know here and now that the suggestions would not help, is all useful.

I realise that not everyone in Wye has this irrelevance reflex: some are keen at least to read about everything happening in London, even if they can't get to all of it, and of course their views are important too; it's just that they are less likely to need telling. If you are one of those students, this is a valuable chance to say which aspects of South Kensington life you would like to experience, and what if anything is stopping you, so efforts at campus communications and inter-campus events are focused on the

areas you want.

Your Union wants to go in the direction that you want, but can only do this if you say what direction that is.

So please do look at the questionnaire. Some parts do only apply to students who have been to various places or events at South Kensington: these parts are labelled, so students with a well-developed irrelevance reflex can take full advantage of that and skip straight to the next section. All we are asking is that you find the parts that are relevant to you: we guarantee they are in there.

Everyone completing the questionnaire will be entered into a prize draw, so the chance to win a PlayStation, a holiday voucher or some beer could also be relevant to you.

# PCs and monitors for sale

**Felix upgraded its computer equipment earlier this year, and our old computers and monitors are now for sale. We have:**

**1 x Optiplex GX150 PC.** Pentium III processor, 1GHz, 64MB RAM. **£120**

**4 x Optiplex GX150 PCs.** Celeron processor, 800MHz, 128MB RAM. **£60 each**

**2 x Visionmaster Pro 452 monitors.** 19inch screen. **£75 each**

**3 x Visionmaster Pro 411 monitors.** 15inch screen. **£40 each**

**If you are interested in buying any of the above, please contact us at [felix@ic.ac.uk](mailto:felix@ic.ac.uk)**

Prices are exclusive of VAT where applicable

# POSITIVELY red:

HIV-AIDS WEEK AT IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON



**TICKETS FOR  
UNION EVENT  
£4 IN ADVANCE  
ONLY**

saturday 27th november:7pm  
**paint it red [at the union]**  
feat. djs [urban music soc]  
& break dancing [funkology]  
tickets from jcr tuesdays & thursdays

tuesday 30th november:6pm  
**debate [read lecture theatre]**  
developed countries have  
not helped developing countries  
effectively in the fight against AIDS

wednesday 1st december:6pm  
**vigil [queen's lawn]**  
speakers, candles & reflection

thursday 2nd december:7pm  
**play [tanaka business school]**  
perspectives on AIDS



proceeds go the terrence higgins trust

**SHAG TAG** ♂

**SHAG TAG** ♀

<b>At: dBs</b>	<b>Union</b>	<b>£3.00</b>
<b>Fri Nov 26</b>	<b>Ents Card</b>	<b>£2.50</b>
<b>8pm &gt; 2am</b>	<b>Guests</b>	<b>£3.50</b>

**VODKA TWISTEE SHOTS**

**Vodka Twistees two for £2.50**

**imperial college union**

The Union encourages you to drink responsibly

**DRAM SOC** PRESENTS

# A Dad's House

TICKETS:  
£4 STUDENTS  
£6 OTHERS

1<sup>ST</sup>-4<sup>TH</sup>  
DECEMBER

DOORS OPEN  
7:15  
PERFORMANCE  
7:30

IMPERIAL COLLEGE  
UNION CONCERT HALL

**imperial college union**

TO RESERVE TICKETS GO TO  
[WWW.DRAMSOC.ORG/TICKETS](http://WWW.DRAMSOC.ORG/TICKETS)

# What's on

felix@ic.ac.uk

## THURSDAY 25 NOVEMBER

### VERY IMPORTANT FELIX PUBLISHED

10am onwards  
Pick up the next issue of your student newspaper from your department or the Union building.  
Contact: felix@ic.ac.uk

### WORKSHOP CRIME PREVENTION

6-7pm  
Willis Jackson Hall Common Room  
A talk held by a Met Police Crime Prevention Officer. Topics will include personal safety, mobile phone security, new students in London and safety when out clubbing. Free Crime Prevention CD ROMs will be available, and the police will be issuing personal alarms. Don't let yourself become a victim of crime!  
Contact: l.bryant@ic.ac.uk

### CLUBS AND SOCIETIES THAI FOOD FESTIVAL

6pm onwards  
Main Dining Hall, Sherfield Building  
£8 ThaiSoc members; £10 non-members  
Experience Thai food with great varieties in a relaxing environment. Knowing that the weekend is so near, why not come along to try six dishes with friends?  
Contact: pb302@ic.ac.uk

### FILMS THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

6pm  
Union Concert Hall, Beit Quad  
£3  
The wanted criminal Riddick arrives in Helion Prime and finds himself against an army that plans to convert or kill all humans.  
Contact: cinema@ic.ac.uk

### FILMS THE TERMINAL

8.45pm  
Union Concert Hall, Beit Quad  
£3  
An eastern immigrant finds himself stranded at John F Kennedy airport and must take up temporary residence there.  
Contact: cinema@ic.ac.uk

## FRIDAY 26 NOVEMBER

### UNION EVENTS SHAG TAG

8pm-2am  
Beit Quad  
£3  
Vodka Twistees two for £2.50 at this delightfully named event.  
Contact: union@ic.ac.uk

### UNION EVENTS SAILORS AND SHOWGIRLS BOP

8pm  
Reynolds Bar, Charing Cross Hospital  
£3 dressed as a sailor or showgirl, £4 otherwise  
Cocktails all night, a *Finding Nemo* treasure hunt, walk the plank with Captain Jack Sparrow, and a tug of war. The first 100 people get a shot of rum.  
Contact: matthew.cauldwell@ic.ac.uk

### CLUBS AND SOCIETIES SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CONCERT

8pm  
Great Hall  
£2.50-£7  
Music by Tchaikovsky, Berlioz, Sibelius and Larsson.  
Contact: ruvandhi.nathavitharana@ic.ac.uk

## SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER

### UNION EVENTS OSC FIVE-A-SIDE WORLD CUP

1-4.30pm  
Westbourne Green Complex (near Royal Oak tube)  
The qualifiers have been decided, now come and support your country in their quest to be crowned Imperial's football world champions!

### HIV/AIDS WEEK PAINT IT RED

7pm  
Beit Quad  
£4  
Featuring DJs from the Urban Music Society and break dancing from Funkology. Wear something red! Proceeds go to the Terence Higgins Trust.  
Contact: ramya.ramaswami@ic.ac.uk

### CLUBS AND SOCIETIES ICSM ORCHESTRA CONCERT

7.30pm  
St Augustine's Church, Queen's Gate  
£3 students, £5 others  
Saint-Saens' *Danse Macabre*, Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5* and second year student Olivia Shields playing Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto*.  
Contact: zoe.little@ic.ac.uk

## MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER

### UNION EVENTS COCKTAILS AND PALAIS

Reynolds Bar, Charing Cross Hospital  
New look Monday nights! Come down to Reynolds in Hammersmith every Monday night for cocktails and then

get your wristbands to dance the night away at the Palais - £3 from the Reynolds, £4 on door. Yes, the Palais, it's back! Monday nights are now bigger and better than ever before.  
Contact: shumonta.quaderi@ic.ac.uk

## TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER

### HIV/AIDS WEEK DEBATE

6pm  
Read Lecture Theatre  
Discussing: "Developed countries have not helped developing countries effectively against AIDS". Well versed and knowledgeable speakers have been summoned. Expect a fantastic debate.  
Contact: ramya.ramaswami@ic.ac.uk

### UNION EVENTS STA TRAVEL QUIZ NIGHT

8-10.30pm  
Beit Quad  
FREE  
The quiz is a bit of a tradition at the Union, with cash and beer prizes on offer. Get a team together and see how much you really know.  
Contact: union@ic.ac.uk

## WEDNESDAY 1 DECEMBER

### HIV/AIDS WEEK VIGIL

6pm  
Queen's Lawn  
Speakers, candles and reflection.  
Contact: ramya.ramaswami@ic.ac.uk

### UNION EVENTS DRAMSOC presents 'A DOLL'S HOUSE'

7.30pm  
Union Concert Hall  
£4 students, £6 others  
To reserve tickets, visit [www.dramsoc.org/tickets](http://www.dramsoc.org/tickets).

### UNION EVENTS CHEEKY

8pm-1am  
Beit Quad  
£2  
Flirty current chart music and party classics.  
Contact: union@ic.ac.uk

## THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER

### VERY IMPORTANT FELIX PUBLISHED

10am onwards  
Pick up the next issue of your student newspaper from your department or the Union building.  
Contact: felix@ic.ac.uk

### HIV/AIDS WEEK PLAY

7pm  
Tanaka Business School  
£4  
Perspectives on AIDS  
Contact: ramya.ramaswami@ic.ac.uk

### UNION EVENTS DRAMSOC presents 'A DOLL'S HOUSE'

7.30pm  
Union Concert Hall  
£4 students, £6 others  
To reserve tickets, visit [www.dramsoc.org/tickets](http://www.dramsoc.org/tickets).

## ALL WEEK

### FILMS: VUE CINEMA, FULHAM BROADWAY

**THE INCREDIBLES (U)**  
Fri to Thurs: 12noon, 1pm, 2.40pm, 3.40pm, 5.30pm, 6.30pm, 8.30pm, 9.15pm. Fri and Sat only: 11.30pm. Sat only: 9.20am, 10.20am. Sun only: 9.20am.  
**THE FORGOTTEN (12A)**  
Fri to Thurs: 2.10pm, 4.30pm, 6.45pm, 9pm. Fri and Sat only:

## Running an event? Tell us about it!

Felix will print your listings free of charge. Just email [felix@ic.ac.uk](mailto:felix@ic.ac.uk) and tell us:

- the name of the event
- who is running it
- the time
- the location
- the cost (if any)
- a brief description of the event
- a contact email address

11.10pm. Sat and Sun only: 11.50am.

**BEYOND THE SEA (12A)**  
Fri to Thurs: 12.10pm, 2.50pm, 5.40pm, 8.10pm. Sat and Sun only: 9.30am.

**AFTER THE SUNSET (12A)**  
Fri to Thurs: 12noon, 2.20pm, 5pm, 7.15pm, 9.30pm. Fri and Sat only: 11.45pm. Sat and Sun only: 9.50am.

**TAXI (12A)**  
Fri to Thurs: 5.50pm, 8pm. Fri and Mon to Thurs: 12.50pm, 3.10pm. Fri and Sat only: 10.30pm.

**THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE (15)**

Fri to Thurs: 5.10pm, 7.50pm. Fri and Mon to Thurs: 2pm.

**BRIDGET JONES: EDGE OF REASON (15)**  
Fri to Thurs: 12.30pm, 1.30pm, 3.20pm, 4.10pm, 6.10pm, 7pm, 8.50pm, 9.40pm. Fri and Sat only: 11.20pm. Sat and Sun only: 10am, 11am.

**FINDING NEVERLAND (PG)**

Sat and Sun only: 11pm.  
**THE GRUDGE (15)**  
Fri and Sat only: 10.40pm.

**BAD SANTA (15)**  
Fri and Sat only: 11pm.

**SHARK TALE (PG)**  
Sat and Sun only: 10.30am, 12.40pm, 3pm.

Imperial College  
London

# Sign up now!

Why not get active in the community whilst you're at Imperial College London? It doesn't matter if you work or study in Imperial - volunteering will have always something to offer you! We have over 250 volunteering opportunities in our database, so there should be a project for you.

The easiest way to get regular updates about volunteering is by signing up to our mailing list. You will receive all the latest opportunities on a weekly basis, directly to your email inbox. Simply send us an email to [volunteering@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering@imperial.ac.uk), clearly stating that you want to receive the weekly news bulletin and we will do the rest!

Imperial Volunteer Centre



Linking opportunities

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH IMPERIAL COLLEGE UNION

Imperial Volunteer Centre  
South Kensington campus  
Union Building  
Beit Quadrangle East Basement  
Prince Consort Road  
London SW7 2BB

# Clubs & Societies

felix@ic.ac.uk

## RAG to raid London... again

### RAG

By Chris Jackson  
RAG Chair

This is the last time this term that my words will grace these pages. I am going to use this article to advertise our final major event of the term, the one that needs as many of you as possible to join in. It will be fun, I promise you, as previous participants will testify.

On Saturday we are raiding London on behalf of The Mercury Phoenix AIDS Trust, who are one of our main charities for this year. For those unfamiliar with the concept of a 'raid', it is as follows:

1. Get a group of friends together and sign in at the Union from 11am onwards,
2. Go out into London with collecting tins and a list of wacky challenges and collect as much money as possible
3. Bring the tins back to

the Union where they will be counted and prizes awarded.

Past challenges have included forming a conga in Trafalgar Square, tiddly-winking the length of Oxford Street, riding the horses of the apocalypse at the Trocadero and streaking through the Bank of England.

These are just to give you a flavour of the wackiness that is expected of you. The challenges for this year may be similar, they may be different.

Come along to the Union from 11am on Saturday to find out what they are.

Finally, thanks to everyone who contributed to the balloon race for Children in Need and to everyone who helped on the day. After a long morning on the controls of a helium cylinder, all the balloons were launched last Friday lunchtime from Beit Quad. News on prize winners will follow when we start receiving balloons back!



RAG raiders do the conga in Trafalgar Square

## Mountainbike mayhem in Wales

### CYCLING

By Rob Hansen

On Friday 29 October, eight of the club's finest packed up the minibus for a weekend of biking mayhem in North Wales on the awesome, fully marked out trails of Coed-Y-Brenin.

Andy, chief club roadie, decided to join us for the weekend too, hoping to do some serious lycra-clad ripping up of the remote roads of north Wales.

After successfully escaping the congestion of rush hour London, we made good progress until we got to Wales, where dual carriageways have not yet been discovered and our vehicle was a grossly underpowered knackered old Union minibus, which struggled up several inclines in first gear!

We eventually arrived at around midnight at a village called Trawsfynydd, famed for its nuclear power station, where we had booked a 'Norwegian log cabin' for the weekend. We drove through the town three times before finally admitting we didn't actually know where to go and telephoning the lodge. Unfortunately, with none of us able to pronounce the name of the town, communicating our location proved problematic. Anyway, we finally found the place, complete with central heating, a kitchen and shower, with *Chillout Moods 4* playing in the background and free beer! No freezing our arses off at the Imperial mountain hut this year!

On Saturday morning, we were greeted by sunshine and clear blue skies and headed to Coed-Y-Brenin, stopping briefly in Trawsfynydd for a bacon butty after parting company



An Imperial cyclist in Wales

with Andy and his road bike. By 10.30am we were hitting the trails. First up, the MBR loop - a medium length but action packed route.

We all set off together initially but then agreed to split into two groups after the initial climb gave most of us a rude awakening (most notably Seb on his single speed jump bike!) The climb made

way for an awesome single-track descent, which was just a taste of what was to come. The MBR loop is a prime example of what all mountainbike trails should be: smooth, gentle climbs with a mixture of fast, tight, highly technical and highly engineered descents that cry out to be attacked. Fantastic, but extremely hard on our bikes - and with our large group it wasn't long before we had our first breakdown, a slightly buckled front wheel following a rather comical unintended off-piste excursion. Punctures, chain breakages and gear problems followed soon after.

Having completed the MBR loop by lunchtime, we decided to do the slightly less technical but scenic Red Bull loop in the afternoon. Although less challenging from a fitness and skill point of view, it was every bit as enjoyable

as the MBR loop, with the harsher, bumpier and rockier descents providing an equally thrilling experience at speed, with some serious air to be had too. Too much air for some - several members of the group experienced some spectacular rider-over-handlebar crashes!

We got back to the log cabin in the evening, finding Andy sitting patiently in the warmth, having finished his 84 mile morning ride around Snowdonia hours ago. He revealed he had bumped into some "friendly" Imperial medic mountaineers, who just happened to be on his route over Mount Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales.

Later, we decided to go for a pub dinner, only to discover that none of the local pubs served food! Unfazed, we drove to the next town where after much searching we found a pub style restau-

rant... and an off licence.

Sunday was another fabulous day, with not a sign of cloud in the sky. Andy once again hit the road, whilst we headed back to Coed-Y-Brenin. With many of us still sore from the first day's riding, we decided we would split into two groups, with a couple of us doing the epic 34 mile Karrimor loop - a long, hard and really scenic route winding deep into the hills with the occasional highly technical singletrack section - whilst the others would do the slightly less demanding Sport loop, an 'all the fun bits' route.

With none of us able to have showers, the six hour journey home was an interesting one to say the least! All in all, a highly successful weekend. Next up, Scotland...

For more information and a full report, visit [www.union.ic.ac.uk/acc/cycling](http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/acc/cycling).

## Chess Club enjoy winning start to year

### CHESS

By Anup Sinha

The Chess Club has had a very good start to this season, thanks to good organisation and the enthusiasm shown by its members. We have won every game we have played so far, in both the ULU League and the Middlesex League. We are always looking for more players for the teams so, if you think you have a decent skill level at chess, please email [chess@icl.ac.uk](mailto:chess@icl.ac.uk).

We will be holding a tournament in a few weeks time. Here, chess club members can participate to win £20 or more. The matches can be played at your convenience; you do not need to come to the club if you cannot. The format of the tournament will be like this:

- Each player will play five games played over the year
- You can play the games any time you want (but before April 2005)
- The format of the tournament will be Swiss
- After the five rounds, the winners will be decided.
- The winner will get £20 and runner-up £10. These prizes will be confirmed depending upon the number of entrants.

Please email us if you want to take part.

The Chess Club will organise various other events like this, with members getting the opportunity to play our resident grandmaster in January. We also offer various subsidies to our members, such as free entry to ULU competitions. If you are not a member, it costs only £5 to become one, but you should get back more than that over the year.

The Chess Club is organising a Christmas Dinner for its members. We are also trying to organise some fixtures against Oxford and Cambridge to determine who is at the top of the game.

In our first ULU games of the season, we beat King's College London 4-2 and then outplayed LSE 5-1. This was a very good result, as we were beaten 6-0 by LSE last season, who then went on to win the League.

In the Middlesex League, where we have failed to have a convincing performance for the last few seasons, it was pleasing to win 6-2 against Hendon in the opening match. We then went on to win 5-3 against Hendon and 7-1 against Harrow. The team beat our arch-rivals, LSE, last week 8-0.

The Imperial College Chess Club consists of a



Chess: Imperial students seem to be rather good at this game

diverse group of students from all years. We meet every Wednesday at 7pm in Seminar Room 3, located on the third floor of the Union

Building. We are always looking for more talent. It would be great to have you participating, whether you are a grandmaster or an absolute

beginner.

Please email [chess@icl.ac.uk](mailto:chess@icl.ac.uk) with your queries, and visit [www.union.ic.ac.uk/chess](http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/chess) for further details.

# Free beer and sportspeople do mix

## ATHLETIC CLUBS COMMITTEE

By Tim Aplin

Starting from modest beginnings after being reinstated last year, ACC bar nights have become some of the most eagerly anticipated events each term and also one of the greatest success stories in many a year.

This term, with sportspeople ranging from basketball to boat, from weights to windsurfing, from the three karates to the two kung fus to the one kickboxing, our beloved Union bars were once more filled to the rafters from opening to closing with students galore!

The concept has always been simple – you had to be a member of an ACC club (ie a sports club for the non-hacks amongst you) and for £3 on the door the free alcohol flowed until we ran out. Frequent patrons of the bar night will testify to the extraordinary quantities pre-purchased by the ACC executive, and the licensee on the evening was quoted as saying “we had to move another five barrels [approximately 440 pints of lager] for paying customers because you drank so much!”

The response this time was overwhelming! To all who came along, thank you! For those who missed it, shame on you... but fear not, the laurels are not being rested on. Plans are being drawn up, and I can feel the air tingling with anticipation already! By Thursday morning, rumours were abound that the next bar night was going to be on the last Wednesday of term. When pressed for details, the organiser, Morten Olesen, neither confirmed nor denied the rumours, claiming they had been started and were being fuelled by certain members of staff eager to follow up on the success generated by the event. He preferred instead to offer the following soundbyte to readers: “I don’t remember a night like that at the Union since my first year!”

It should also be pointed out that although the beer was flowing and the bars were overwhelmed, the night passed without any major incidents.

Kudos and applause to the man of the moment, Uncle Morten Olesen, for organising a top-notch ‘gathering of like minded people’ and giving the younger students a taste of what Wednesday nights should be like.



The scrum at the bar: vast quantities were consumed by ACC club members on their recent bar night



Sportspeople in dBs

# Music

music.felix@ic.ac.uk

## Old frontmen never die

The Specials' frontman brings us his new record, complete with obligatory star guests, while Reuben give away their last couple of singles for free

### SINGLE REVIEW

#### Reuben

Lets Stop Hanging Out /  
Stuck In My Throat  
Xtra Mile  
★★★★☆

Everyone's felt it – that teenage angst that makes you slam doors and throw things at the wall. Most people grow out of it, but some manage to make a career out of it.

Reuben are a strange mix of those bland, radio-friendly guitar bands that have sprung up everywhere, the growling misery of a nu-metal band, and the chirpy self-destructiveness of Lit without the chirpiness. With relentlessly driving guitars, monotonously intoned vocals and ever-present but strangely unobtrusive rage, they've got a formula that will propel them to temporary fame as this year's hottest band – and indeed is in the process of doing so.

Their lyrics deal with arguments and misunderstandings, full of a low-lying lethargic depression that could go either way, into suicidal grimness or homicidal madness, and provides the most fascinating facet of this two-song album sampler. Catchy but not particularly memorable, interesting without displaying an awful lot to be interested in, Reuben play simplified, gimmick-free rock, and do it well but without sparkle. You'll probably like them. Just not with any kind of passion.

Anna Novitzky

### ALBUM REVIEW

#### Neville Staple

The Rude Boy Returns  
Rude Boy Music  
★★★★☆

Nostalgia: ain't it wonderful? It enables old artists to come back and make a killing on rose-tinted memories. We have seen a deluge of old artists making comeback albums this year, getting in on the current retro trend. So far we've had Brian Wilson of Beach Boys fame releasing his 'lost' album, *Smile*, and Morrissey doing the rounds with the rather limp *You Are The Quarry*.

Now we've got Neville Staple, lead singer with classic seventies ska band The Specials, returning in the light of renewed interest in retro music and the ska movement, with The Specials' music being used in car adverts and the rise of US bands such as Less Than Jake.

But unlike some recent comebacks, *The Rude Boy Returns* is far from the cheeky cash-in that some might expect. Instead we have a collection of music that easily equals the best material The Specials recorded. Much of what's on offer here is unashamedly poppy, not unlike 2-Tone disciples Madness – such as *Since You've Been Gone*, and ode to enjoying the freedom of splitting up – but each song is strengthened by the catchy, woozy horns (which were a main staple of a Specials song), and the identifiable



Neville Staple: "It wasn't me, officer, it was them!"

ska rhythms in the guitars.

Refreshingly, there are still songs that pack a social punch and make keen observations. *Place In Life* is a cynical look at politics and the lies we are told ("...But if you don't believe me, then check the manifesto / Just blah blah blah and blah blah / The truth, I don't think so!"), whilst *Pressure*, reminiscent of The Specials' *Nite Klub*, quickly makes clear that the main character in the song is a heroin addict.

Surprisingly, a slew of guests enhances the songs rather than provides names to advertise them. Former Damned drummer Rat

Scabies provides the ska beats for the aforementioned *Pressure*, and they also team up with former Clash guitarist Mick Jones on one of the standout tracks, *Do Nothing*, which is also one of the finest examples of musical craftsmanship on display. Clocking in at over seven minutes, thanks to the layered sections and tightness of the piece, it remains a gripping piece of revolution rock rather than a long winded flop. Listening to it, you can close your eyes and immediately transport yourself to south London, such is the strength of the song.

The flow of the album is spoilt

by some embarrassing attempts at dance music. A remix of Lead Belly's *Cow Cow Yicky* comes across as a dodgy Europop theme, and an ambitious attempt at Indian ska on the closer *Nachma* unfortunately boils down to a dull, by the numbers R&B record with no personality to it.

These failings can't detract though from one of the surprises of the year, a comeback album that packs as much punch as one from today's young whippersnappers, and without the hype machine spoiling it. Consider it an essential for ska fans, old and new alike.

Matthew Hartfield

### LIVE REVIEW

#### RockSoc Gig Night

dBs

★★★★☆

In retrospect, it may have been a little foolhardy to hold the second RockSoc band night of the term on the day after bonfire night. Torn between the twin temptations of an evening of live rock music and the many spectacular fireworks displays on offer in our fair capital, many people seemed to have gone for the explosions and pretty colours; truly, it was a tough choice. Still, the bands were willing despite the sparse crowd, and those who made the effort got their money's worth.

Despite a shaky start – nerves seeming to get the better of them at times – Imperial's very own Jazz and Rock Society band, The Phly, delivered an enjoyable set. Laid back and jazzy, they played simple but effective rock that brought to mind the White Stripes without the gimmicks. With beefy, murky nuances and female vocals that were rich and strong once they got going, there was more than a hint of delta blues. Although it began to drag towards the end and the audience remained resolutely unmoved by

all enthusiastic overhead clapping and soulful kneeling down, we can look forward to good things from The Phly. Once they get themselves some confidence.

Only Joe were of the ripped-jeans-and-messy-hair school of bouncy punk that isn't always quite as wacky as it thinks it is. Displaying outlandish instruments from turntables to a clarinet, they sounded like a fuzzy and uncoordinated version of Madness, perky but inefficient and slightly confused. Entertainment value was gained by the untimely death of the bass guitar – leading to a brief instrumental interlude while another was procured from the next band – but their seeming inability to sing in tune with each other dragged it all back down. Full marks for the home-made banner, though.

The pattern of random destruction was continued when part of the PA system exploded during Gin Panic's set, but they rose above it admirably. Purveying funky, purebred rock music, like the Red Hot Chili Peppers only harder and without the stupid noises, they were tight, smooth and exciting. Complete with crazy, standing-on-the-drum kit antics, they managed to combine spacey, prog-like melodies and nasal, Muse-esque vocals into a surprising mix that really rocked

out. They were interesting, engaging and as hard to describe as they were to ignore.

Victims of Noise are aiming for the stars, but they do fall a bit short for now. They worked hard – and indeed played hard – but it all seemed rather forced at times. Rock tinged with punk, they relied

on fast riffs and loud shouting along with manic pogoing and semi-nudity. It was all danceable enough, in a Rage Against The Machine sort of way, but they came across as the sort of band who get their postures and poses all sorted out before they start on the music. All completely inoffensive and likeable, but lacking

in any real substance.

So, the bands ranged in quality but a generally good time was had by all. A cheap, cheerful opportunity to experience live music in your very own students' union. Next month, if there aren't any fireworks, you should come along.

Anna Novitzky



Victims Of Noise: serious, hairy, and apparently pretty good



# Sun, sand, and... music

Felix reports back on the wonderfully relaxed Spanish festival experience that is Festival Internacional de Benicàssim

## LIVE REVIEW

**Festival Internacional de Benicàssim**  
Benicàssim, Spain  
★★★★★

This reviewer starts in the ancient Spanish city of Girona, inland from the Costa Dorada. The date is August 4, 2004. Primarily host to sun, booze and sex seekers from around Europe with aims to satisfy all these demands during the course of a two week bender, I was able to add live music to my list, for I was starting my second trip down the coast to one of the greatest, and certainly the most civilised music festival in Europe: Festival Internacional de Benicàssim, known by the abbreviation-mad Spanish as FIB.

Radiohead, Björk, the Cure, Blur and Moby are just a few of the essential live acts which have honoured FIB with their music over the

tivity that hits it during the festival period. From early August, the town warms up with a fashion, a film and a fringe theatre festival, during which the FIB goers arrive to get good value from their ten-day camping passes. For those festivalgoers for whom domestic facilities have always been an issue, rest assured that there will be no problems in Benicàssim. Over the years, three purpose-built camping zones have been created around the town, in small woody areas. Each site has yet more concrete blocks housing permanent toilets, showers, a bar and food stands. Most of the camping areas are shaded by the forest's thick canopy. This is of great relief, as I am convinced that in direct sunlight, the campers would die and the tents would melt.

Musically, this year's line-up was slightly more obscure than in years before, and designed for the open-minded music lover. Had we not arrived too late for Thursday night's



FIB: the festival is between the sea and some glorious mountains

time!

Friday night started late evening with Kings of Leon and Snow Patrol, finishing up with headliners Air and the originators of electronica, Kraftwerk. The German group's latest stage show features four guys in suits fiddling with their laptops. Whatever was going on in the Kraftwerk machines was resulting in electronica with flawless attention to detail, timed and mixed to perfection. The digital graphics in the screen show were in everyway as tasteful and experimental as the original tracks such as 1975's *Autobahn* and 1983's *Tour de France* still seemed today.

On Saturday evening the Scissor Sisters did their stuff in one of the tents. I am not a huge fan of their first record, but in Spain they caught the festival crowd just at the right time for a pickup, as they did at Glasto, and set the ball rolling for a memorable evening spent with the likes of Soulwax, Teenage Fanclub, and a revitalised Primal Scream. Lou Reed took the main slot on Saturday. With a low key five piece band, including the inspirational cellist Jane Scarpantoni, Reed had reworked and in several cases slowed down his old tracks, such as *Walk On The Wild Side* and the *Perfect Day*. His set list was laced with material from last year's album, *Raven*. All was carried off with reliability and professionalism from an artist whose passionate and personal song writing has enriched

creativity in the music industry for over 30 years.

British retro rockers Franz Ferdinand were one of the big names of Sunday night, but more inspiring were the shows from old timers Brian Wilson and Lambchop. Lambchop ooze personality and built up an extraordinarily close relationship with the crowd, inducing a good half-hour encore. How refreshing it was to see the band packing away their own gear at the end of the gig! Chemical Brothers were headlining, and they did not disappoint, managing to squeeze every last drop of enthusiasm out of their crowd.

So, is it all about the music? Yes and no. On Monday night, *2 Many DJs* and some noteworthy others played out the festival on Benicàssim beach. As you look around the party, the international side of FIB is nothing but fascinating. This year, in addition to some extremely friendly señors and señoritas, I met Germans, Italians, plenty of French and loads of English. People who have been or played at FIB know how special it is. It was once described by Huey of the Fun Lovin' Criminals as 'the most chilled out festival in the world'.

In publicising FIB, I am probably breaking some term or condition, as it remains a secret for many people. However, it would be more of a crime if I were to lie low, as Benicàssim proved this year, for the tenth time, that it is an essential date in the diary of world-class music events.

**Dominic Passmore**



Air: Gallic dreampop has the power to control the moon

ten years of its existence. With this fine track record, the tenth anniversary of the festival was not to be overlooked. The decidedly mediterranean FIB organisers were several months later than their European rivals in updating their 2003 festival website to a 2004 website, and even more fashionably late with the confirmed band line-up. This did not deter me from booking a couple of 120 euro tickets for the five day weekend beach party.

Heading down from Girona airport, having spent around two quid on budget flights, my girlfriend, her girlfriend and I followed the Costa Dorada and Costa Brava on our way to my favourite, the Costa Blanca. Relying on buses, trains and coaches, we eventually reached Benicàssim via Tarragona and Castellón de la Plana, both worth at least a flying visit.

Benicàssim, 100km north of Valencia, was once upon a time a holiday place for the higher ranks of Spanish society, offering them empty beaches, clear sea views, and a spot of social climbing. Not so today. The sea front is a concrete nightmare, the views are eclipsed for all but the newest tower block, and there's not even a sniff of the smart Valenciano socialites.

This is irrelevant, for Benicàssim is the perfect canvas for such crea-

pre-party, we would have caught Ash opening the festival. Not to be, as we also missed Felix da Housecat, an American DJ better known on the continent than here in Britain. Most days at Benicàssim begin with rock bands from around 5pm, with headliners coming on close to midnight. The bands give way to DJs who play well into the morning. The last DJs come on at 6am, but this is Spanish



Kings Of Leon: a wonderfully photogenic band, now with material written by the actual band members

## A summer single, in November?

### SINGLE REVIEWS

**The Mad Staring Eyes**  
Crazy / What Am I Supposed To Do?  
Up All Night Recordings  
★★★★☆

It's not that often that you come across music that just makes you sit and giggle. When you do, though, it's a terribly uplifting experience.

The Mad Staring Eyes are a four-some from North London who combine manically intelligent lyrics, laid-back guitars and bizarre humour into deceptively simple rock that is, frankly, completely and utterly bonkers.

With spacey melodies harking back to David Bowie and occasional thumping bass lines and deliciously weird phrases reminiscent of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, they embrace eclecticism with refreshing abandon, standing out from the bland morass of current fashionable rock bands with their sheer peculiarity. A hint of politics and a good dose of irreverence make it all up into a fascinating and unpredictable experience that is never quite what it seems.

Sometimes morose but always wry and ironic, amusing and enlightening but just a little grubby, The Mad Staring Eyes are a fun-loving bunch that will take you on a thoroughly enjoyable ride and have you coming straight back for more.

**Anna Novitzky**

● **The Mad Staring Eyes will be playing in dBs on 4 December, as part of a RockSoc gig night. Get down there and check them out**

**The Polyphonic Spree**  
Two Thousand Places  
Universal  
★★★★☆

The Polyphonic Spree are fantastic. This song is fantastic (despite being two years old if you've seen them live in that time).

As well as being in two thousand places at once, this song tries to do two thousand things at once. They're singing about nothing new, but who would want 25 people moaning about the Manchester weather?

Somehow bands are lumbered with the default setting of 'depressing', like it's cool to be in despair. Against this musical landscape, the Polyphonic Spree do the brave thing and embrace all that is brilliant about life. This can be daunting, but somehow the Spree make you feel as if you can rise to the challenge.

The B-side, *The Best Part*, is again upbeat but a bit long considering that the A-side accomplishes its task in 150 seconds less time.

The faithful cover of *Happy Xmas (War Is Over)* is pretty and includes a children's choir. But at a time when a bank balance is being tried, do we need reminding that Christmas is just round the corner? Oh, and Bush was re-elected, so no way is war over. The Spree fail to make an imprint in the song, but it's always hard to do that with the greats.

**Matthew Hoban**



## Hundreds and thousands

A couple of weeks ago we printed the results of *DJ Mag's* Top 100 DJs poll. The legendary Mr Farrell passes comment...

And so another year has passed, the votes have been counted and yet again Tiesto is top of the pile in *DJ Mag's* 'Top 100 DJs in the world' poll. But what does it mean, if anything?

Is trance really the dominant force in the global music industry, do the trance mafia actually have that much influence in clubland, is techno dead, do people still actually like prog, does anyone stand a chance of knocking the big T off his top spot anytime soon, what the hell is dance music anyway, does anyone care any more and is it possible to be a drug addled OAP non-DJ and still be considered one of the top ten best DJs in the world?

If your perspective on the dance music industry comes from this annual poll, then the answers are yes, yes, yes, mystifyingly so, no, \*shrug\*, it seems so and only in America.

But how true to real life is it if

we assume for a second that the dance industry just about resides on the verges of 'real life'? In fact, it's not that far from the truth, you just have to be aware that we get a severely distorted view of the world over here in Blighty, and much more so in London.

On a global scale, trance is huge. Forget England for a second and you have Australia, the US, Holland and Uruguay (no, seriously) at least, where trance is as big as it has ever been anywhere, not to mention the seemingly never-ending appeal of Ibiza. Beyond that, techno will never die, it can't. It is such a catch-all statement and covers so many varied styles of music that it is constantly evolving and will never be the same from one week to the next. Likewise house and all its connotations, even prog.

But my issue is not with the genres represented, but the actual DJs. The top ten has been astonishingly



**Oakenfold: Plays in America lots**

static for the last three years that I can remember; there were only two new entries this year and only another three in the following ten. Is dance music really this static and predictable, or is it our tastes that don't change?

Personally, I take a much more cynical view. The whole list is a great big popularity contest, fairly unquestionably, and much like Union elections the winners are decided essentially by who has the most friends. But no DJ has that many

'friends', so they influence people in other more subtle ways, by having many radio shows, both internet and real, getting unsuspecting mangled members of the public to sign up to their mailing lists and then sending them emails that subconsciously make them want to vote in the DJ poll, and by playing gigs to excessively large numbers of people, like the Olympics.

It's all part of the game of course, and being at the top enables you to get the big gigs and the radio shows, but once you're there, is it then just a matter of who has the best PR people and do the top dogs then just rest on their laurels and trade on the title? Is the value of the poll any less because of it? And will it ever swing in favour of the 'better' DJs rather than the more popular ones? Inevitably, the answer is a despondent no.

But should we be grateful that more people than ever are vot-

ing, and that more people seem to care now than before? Even if Paul Oakenfold can get in the top ten, having publicly declared himself finished with dance music and hardly played a single gig all year, shouldn't we just be pleased that people still care enough to vote in their tens of thousands? Because isn't it only through public shows of unity like this that young talent comes onto the scene and forces the bigger names to take the extra steps forward and move up a gear, to push the boundaries of our art and improve life for everyone?

Well, yes. It takes time, but yes. So in the meantime I suppose we will just have to make do with the back-slapping and vacuous popularity contests, however shallow they may seem on the surface – a forced grin and bitten tongue is a small price to pay. I still think Paul van Dyk should have won though.

**Dominic Farrell**

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# The legacy of Frederick Ashton

The Royal Ballet pays glorious tribute to its Founder Choreographer on his centenary

## Ashton 100

Royal Ballet  
Royal Opera House, WC2  
Ballets celebrating the work of  
Sir Frederick Ashton  
Tickets: £4-£82

There are myriads of productions gracing London's stages. There's a bit of everything: comedy, musicals, drama, dance, opera and more. However, in my opinion, one production stands out at the moment: the Royal Ballet's revived *Sylvia*. You will be hard pressed to find anything more gloriously enchanting on any stage.

This year is the centenary of the Royal Ballet's founding choreographer, Sir Frederick Ashton, and in celebration a large selection of Ashton ballets form the core of the Royal Ballet's season.

You may find it surprising, I know I did, but ballet is really something of a 'new art' to Britain. The first two permanent companies were set up during Ashton's lifetime, 1904-88, including what has become the



Sir Frederick Ashton at work, choreographing the Royal Ballet.

Royal Ballet. Sir Frederick had a hand in setting up both of these early companies.

Having started his ballet training in secret, Ashton rose to prominence as a dancer, but most notably as a choreographer. He was prolific, but did not like to have his work documented, something he was to regret in later life as it became clear to him that this would somewhat impede his works' chances of survival after his own demise. Many of his ballets have remained in the repertoire from their premiers, such as *Cinderella* (score by Prokofiev) and *La Fille Mal Gardée* (music by Hérold but "freely adapted and arranged" by John Lanchbery), but some such as *Sylvia* have been very nearly or entirely lost. This has made the revival of *Sylvia* all the more triumphant.

Lovingly recreated from sketches, archive materials and the memories of dancers who performed the roles during Ashton's lifetime, *Sylvia* is a truly spectacular achievement. The role of *Sylvia*, and so the entire ballet, was created for Margot Fonteyn, the most talented and sparkling dancer of the age who was also honoured by the Royal Ballet with the title of "Prima Ballerina Assoluta", in the fifties.

The score for the ballet is by Léo Delibes, of *Lakmé* fame (the *Flower Duet* hijacked by British Airways is from this opera), and includes at least one piece that most will recognise: the *Pizzicato*, which incidentally is also the music to which *Sylvia*'s showpiece dance is set.

*Sylvia*'s plot is simple and classic. The hero, Aminta, a shepherd, falls in love with the unattainable *Sylvia*. *Sylvia*, one of the goddess Diana's huntresses, does not return Aminta's affections and shoots him. Miraculously, the god Eros saves Aminta and also makes *Sylvia* fall madly in love with him. However, *Sylvia* is also admired by Orion, and in her besotted state is then abducted by him. As we all know, Aminta's love must triumph so *Sylvia* is able to escape Orion with the help of Eros and be reunited with her 'true' love. However, a final hurdle to hap-

**"Sylvia does not return Aminta's affections and shoots him"**

piness exists, Diana, who doesn't condone such liaisons and so must be won over.

Three pairs of dancers take the principal roles of *Sylvia* and Aminta, and the role of Orion is also rotated - ballet is, after all, a beautiful but hugely physically demanding art form. The three trios are as follows: Darcey Bussell, Jonathan Cope, Thiago Soares; Zenaida Yanowsky, David Makhateli, Gary Avis; Marianela Nunez, Rupert Pennefather, Viacheslav Samourov. While Darcey Bussell is undoubtedly the most recognisable name in the list, the cast that has received most critical acclaim has been that

lead by Marianela Nunez. However, no cast has gone without praise.

I had the pleasure of seeing the ballet, quite recently, with Darcey Bussell as *Sylvia*. Yes, she was a little tall, and at times (particularly in the final Act, if I am to believe the gentlemen sitting next to us) rescued from near catastrophe by Jonathan Cope (Aminta), but none of this took away from a thoroughly enjoyable performance. To be perfectly honest I didn't notice the near catastrophes and I'm sure that outside of the very knowledgeable section of the audience few will have done so either - we were all too busy being swept away by the sheer beauty of the entire company's performance.

Not only is the production visually striking as a result of the dancers and the choreography, the costumes and the scenery are also stunning. The costumes and scenery have been reproduced to be faithful to the original production and so have a beautiful feel of fifties elegance and grace about them. The colours are wonderful and the costumes, whose details have all been hand painted, as delicate as can be.

*Sylvia* runs until 3 December. If you can at all get tickets then do so, you will not be disappointed. If you cannot manage to see *Sylvia* then there are many more Ashton ballets to be savoured this season. Check the Royal Opera House's website, [www.roh.org.uk](http://www.roh.org.uk), for details and cast lists. One should really not pass up such an opportunity to discover, rediscover, or continue to enjoy the



Dame Margot Fonteyn, Prima Ballerina Assoluta, during a rehearsal with Sir Frederick

ballet, or indeed to see the likes of Darcey Bussell and Carlos Acosta, who is only with the Royal Ballet as a visiting principal, dance.

Paola Smith  
Arts Editor

● Booking will open for the Royal Opera House's Period Three of their season on 7 December. Period Two is currently booking online, in person at the box office or by telephone on 0207 7304 4000

# Behind the gloss of the finished product

Emily Lines discovers the difficulties Degas experienced with complex architecture

## Art in the Making: Degas

National Gallery, WC2  
How did Degas work?  
Admission FREE

The newest exhibition at the National Gallery is the latest of the *Art in the Making* series, and investigates the inner workings of the artist Edgar Degas (1834-1917).

Degas was, as well as being a major developer of art in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the first modern artist whose works were bought by the National Gallery, in 1918.

The exhibition comprises 26 works, both fully completed and studies, and probes into the methods employed by Degas in creating his art. Degas used more conventional methods than many of his contemporaries for preparing his pieces. He would produce many technical studies before starting his final piece using linear composition and monochromatic layers, and only then adding the layers of colour.

The exhibition analyses closely

several works, most interestingly *The Young Spartans* and *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando*. The presentation of the former includes a full-scale study made around 1860 and an X-ray of the final piece showing significant changes made to it stretching over 10 or even 20 years. Such insight into the mind of the artist is extraordinarily rare; you can see how he changed his mind about the composition of the piece, the positions of the figures, and even the changing of the faces from those of classical figures to more playful faces of Parisian street urchins.

*Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando* is a striking picture of a famous performer of Degas's time swinging by her teeth. The development of this painting includes several studies of the figure herself, and one of the complex architectural backdrop of the piece. Indeed, examination of the piece suggests that Degas had great difficulty with this aspect, and in the end employed an architectural draftsman to help him get it right.



A study made by Degas of a figure for one of his paintings

The exhibition also includes a video that better explains Degas's methods, including his use of tracing paper to create the series *Russian Dancers*, his essence painting and his use of monotype, a method he practically invented. Insights into his famous waxwork modelling,

which he turned towards the end of his life as his eyesight became increasingly worse, are also given, and the exhibition includes the model *Dancer Looking at the Sole of her Right Foot*.

This exhibition allows so much insight into the workings of Degas,

it almost seems like it is deconstructing a genius. However, when you think of the methods he invented, the complexity of his preparation and the attention he paid to every detail of his works, it's impossible not to walk away in awe of this master.



books.felix@ic.ac.uk

# Books

## Less is Moore?

You've all seen the film: now you can read the book. **Marc Warner** and **Damien Stephenson** did just that, but perhaps wish they hadn't bothered



*The Official Fahrenheit 9-11 Reader* declares itself to be "the must-read book of the must-see movie box office smash". It's really not. If you've seen the movie you've already covered the two fifths of the book, dedicated simply to the transcript of *F9-11* the movie in a far more digestible form. Given that the book costs £8.99 and Michael Moore has said on occasion

that he has no objection to anyone downloading *F9-11* the movie for free, I suggest that at the very least you skip this section.

It bothers me, though, that we're being charged at all for the book when Mikey 'man of the people' Moore is so desperate to get his message across. Surely the internet is the perfect medium to publish such a work? But I guess when you've got repayments to make on a \$1.2 million apartment in Manhattan's plush East Side you can't afford to be too generous.

The second part of the book sees Moore "fire back at the critics with his own 'Fact Bible' to prove that it's all true". Sadly it's beyond the scope of this article to meticulously comb through this part of the book. I will, however, recommend the website [www.davekopel.com/Terror/Fiftysix-Deceits-in-Fahrenheit-911.htm](http://www.davekopel.com/Terror/Fiftysix-Deceits-in-Fahrenheit-911.htm) for an in depth analysis of the 'fact bible'.

I will try to summarise it in more general terms. To start with, the 'fact-checker' comprises 56 pages out of the 342 in the book, which is disappointing given that it's the only new content written by Moore. Even the handful of responses that are

### The Official Fahrenheit 9/11 Reader

by Michael Moore  
(Simon & Schuster)

★☆☆☆☆

included carefully dodge the issues in typical Moore style. He meticulously addresses non-points, issues which never even called his integrity into question in the first place, whilst ignoring the parts of a particular issue where he has chosen to totally subvert the truth.

A typical example of this is the segment detailing the apparent vested interest that George W Bush had in the construction of an oil pipeline in Afghanistan. Moore's original assertion in *F9-11* is that the visit of the Taliban to Texas while Bush was governor was to strike a deal to construct an oil pipeline in Afghanistan, and furthermore, that the war in Afghanistan was fought simply to secure that pipeline. As the company that originally proposed the pipeline, Unocal, has links with Vice President Dick Cheney, in Moore's eyes the conspiracy is complete.

However, many critics point out

that the Taliban's visit to Texas had absolutely nothing to do with Bush and that documents show that Unocal had completely abandoned the idea of building the pipeline in 1998, long before the introduction of US troops into Afghanistan.

In response Moore's 'fact-bible' asserts that Unocal issued a press release, saying that "Halliburton Energy Services had been providing a variety of services in Turkmenistan for the last five years [1992-97]". Brilliant Mikey! The word 'Afghanistan' isn't even mentioned, nor is any activity after 1997, some four years before Bush allegedly invaded Afghanistan in order to secure the development of this pipeline. This is supposed to convince us?

Michael then wants us to know how he's changed people's lives. This involves 37 pages of emails to Moore that really can't be of interest to anyone outside the production crew of *F9-11* and Moore's immediate family. I could forgive one or two but I am genuinely at a loss to explain what anyone is going to get out of 31 almost identical emails about how the sender's dad, who was previously chairman

of the Republican party, signed up to buff John Kerry's numerous and undoubtedly well-deserved medals after he'd seen the film or some similar inconsequential rubbish.

Of course the best thing about this book is how laughable Michael Moore's vision of his own self-importance is, now that the elections of Tuesday 2 November have come and gone. This is particularly illustrated in the essays and cartoons at the end of the book. All portray Moore's notion that he was somehow going to change the world with his film, an idea that seems especially quaint now.

The American people that Moore so loves to insult and ridicule evidently aren't as stupid as he thinks, and cannot have their minds changed on crucial issues just by watching (or indeed reading) 122 minutes of rantings by a tubby mid-westerner.

Sorry Mike, but the game's up, you didn't change the world. But hey, maybe none of this would have happened if you and thousands of your followers hadn't voted for Nader instead of Gore in 2000... or was that really all just a dream?

## Books Interview: Simon Singh

To promote the release of his new book *Big Bang*, Imperial graduate and author of *Fermat's Last Theorem* Simon Singh stopped by to talk to Felix Books.

Your latest book, *Big Bang*, is quite a wide-ranging look at cosmology and physics in general. Do you have a favourite area of this subject?

To be honest, it was just a relief to get back to some physics! *Fermat's Last Theorem* was great fun to do, but I appreciated the opportunity to write about something different

in this book. I think it's important to write about some of the history behind the pioneers of cosmology, and I like to talk about the people involved in such important ideas.

You studied physics at Imperial back in the mid-1980s. Do you have any fond memories of your time here?

I particularly remember Bob Joseph, who I believe is now the head of admissions here. Whilst there isn't one particular famous physicist or lecture here that inspired my interest in the subject, I'm pleased to say that I've been encouraged by a succession of fantastic teachers. I've always thought that the teaching at Imperial is excellent. The country needs more good teachers though!

Do you remember reading or writing for *Felix*?

I remember *Felix* very well. It was edited by Pallab Ghosh when I was here. I also used to edit the physics newspaper, which was known as *Schrödinger's Cat* back then.

What advice do you have for a budding popular science writer?

Writing is a lot easier to get into than television. It's great that you don't need any special equipment to start: just a pen and paper or a computer at home. I've tried to build a little humour into my lectures



Simon Singh: just like Madonna? Nearly, but Madonna doesn't have a degree in physics

recently, especially as not everyone is as willing to give science a chance as Imperial students are! I've learnt a lot about my style by giving lectures across the country and to a variety of different audiences, each with a different attitude to science.

Finally, having written about cosmology, do you think your career is going to continue expanding

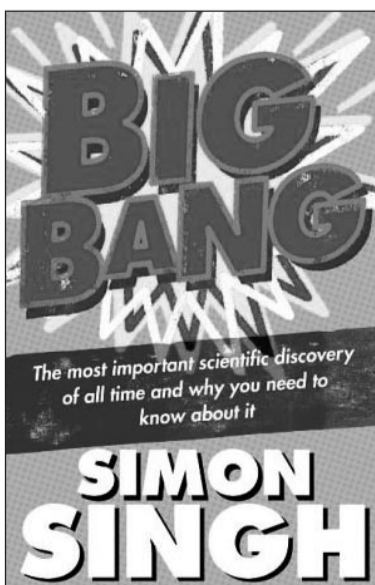
indefinitely or might it collapse back in on itself?

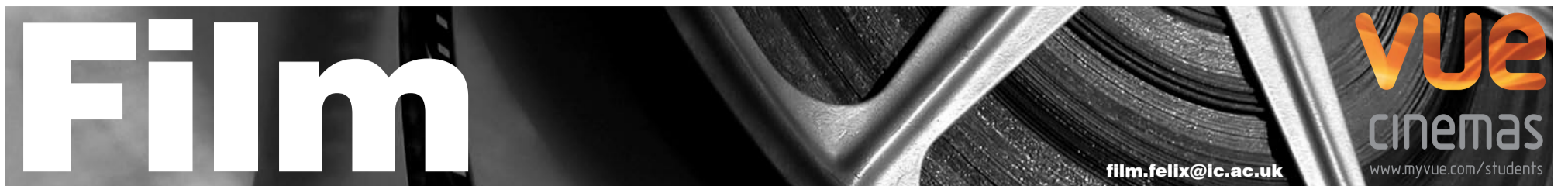
Well, I'm hoping for infinite expansion! However, I'm enjoying reinventing myself every few years, a bit like Madonna I guess. Each time I move on to a different area, it's like researching another mini-degree, which is a great way to work if you're interested in lots of differ-

ent things like me. This way I can expand for a while and then move on to another 'universe' and then expand again.

Multiple Madonna realities... what an interesting image.

● Simon Singh was talking to Martin Smith and Nicolas Osman





Film listings: see  
What's On, page 13

# Incredibly good fun

## The Incredibles

Director: Brad Bird

Starring: Craig T Nelson, Holly Hunter,  
Samuel L Jackson, Jason Lee

Length: 121 minutes

Certificate: U

Released: November 26

★★★★★

Some of you may be rather sceptical about the sixth instalment from Pixar Studios. The past five offerings, the *Toy Story* movies, *A Bug's Life*, *Monsters Inc* and *Finding Nemo* have all had similar formulae. *The Incredibles* has something else to offer though, another dimension to it.

It was a big gamble on Pixar's part to bring in former *Simpsons* director Brad Bird. This is the first submission from Pixar that has used only 'human' characters and breaks the mould of mismatched buddies and road trip formula. Pixar cannot seem to put a foot wrong though. Once again, they have created a visual marvel, laced with intelligent humour that should, and will, appeal to the masses.

*The Incredibles* tells the story of Mr Incredible, aka Bob Parr (Craig T Nelson), who is one of many superheroes. That is until Mr Incredible catches a suicidal jumper who is less than grateful, leading to a wave of lawsuits and legal compensations that make superheroes unwelcome. The Government is forced to intervene and run a Superhero Relocation Program, so that they can all lead normal and anonymous lives. They become another face in the crowd.

Several years down the line,

Bob and Helen, formerly Elastigirl (Holly Hunter), live in suburbia hell raising three children: Dash (who can run at the speed of light), Violet (who can turn invisible and form force fields) and Jack Jack (not even potty trained), while trying to fit to the norm.

All is not what it seems though. Bob is desperately unhappy in his mediocre and immoral monkey-suit job, unable to help anyone without his bureaucratic pen-pushing boss breathing down his neck. Dash is itching to use his gifts in a competitive nature. Violet is depressed, finding it hard to find her place in high school and feels, quite literally, like the invisible girl. Meanwhile, Helen is stressed, working hard to keep her family constrained to normality and trying to keep her husband in check from returning to his old lifestyle.

**"Once again, Pixar has created a visual marvel, laced with intelligent humour"**

One day, out of the blue, Mr Incredible receives a mysterious call, offering the chance to play the good guy again...

*The Incredibles* is another example of Pixar's mastery of popular animation. This is family entertainment at its best. However, it does seem to lack the innocence of *Toy Story* or *Monsters Inc* and isn't as magical as *Finding Nemo*. This is probably because it is a story about human beings (of sorts) who do

have a loose connection with this reality.

The heroes themselves aren't highly original. Frozone (Samuel L Jackson) is the most obvious reference (*Iceman*). There are links to *The Fantastic Four*, *The Flash* and *Captain America*. There are also references to *James Bond* movies, with the island hideout of the villain Syndrome (Jason Lee) synonymous with various Bond baddies. Edna (Brad Bird) is also a reference to Q and Syndrome to *Dr No*.

The comedy is intelligent; some of you maybe surprised at how smart this movie is. In particular, *The Incredibles* answers the age-old question of 'cape or no cape?' with an amusing monologue from Edna about how dangerous capes really are. The script is well written and delivered. The voice casting is adequate but not 'incredible'. Frozone is the best cast out of all of them. Perhaps some bigger names would have added nicely to a movie that has visual appeal and intelligence. The running time is rather long, with some parts of the film slightly dragging, though not peripheral, as the background history is needed to understand each character's torment.

The visuals really are breathtaking at times, in particular the detailed fluids and dazzling light. The sheen and textures are simply astounding.

*The Incredibles* is a different offering from Pixar. It is markedly more mature in tone and approach, and should be highly enjoyable for all generations, male and female.

Alan Ng  
Film Editor



A different kind of family vacation

## Who will walk away? Perhaps our reviewer should have

## After The Sunset

Director: Brett Ratner

Starring: Pierce Brosnan, Salma Hayek, Woody Harrelson

Length: 100 minutes

Certificate: 12A

★★★★☆

Diamonds are a girl's best friend, and they most definitely are Pierce Brosnan's. A diamond master thief, Max Burdett (Brosnan) has never been caught. He has the best moves and the best alibis. His girlfriend Lola Cirillo (Salma Hayek) is his accomplice in disguise. With only one of the Napoleon diamonds left to be stolen, the couple retire to the Bahamas where they can have anything. They are multimillionaires after all.

An ocean liner has docked on the Bahamas displaying the diamond cruise and the third Napoleon diamond, the only diamond the two master thieves have allegedly not

stolen. Was this his plan all along? Was this the set up for his next scam? Will he achieve his last big score or continue with boredom in restless retirement? Not only that, but Max is being followed by FBI agent Stan Lloyd (Woody Harrelson). Max has fooled Stan too many times, and he won't be tricked again.

*After The Sunset* is slicker than other caper comedies such as *Oceans Eleven*; you would have to expect that with Pearce Brosnan being cast as the lead. This *James Bond* superstar carries all the style the film needs. He is the perfect diamond thief - like him, they show that element of sophistication. Diamonds are an upper class to normal thieving.

The film is worth watching just for Salma Hayek's amazing body, which is shown off in tiny little bikinis for a large proportion of the film's running time. It looks a lot better than in her days as *Frida*.

However, if Brosnan wants to walk

around with his shirt unbuttoned to try and compete with Hayek, I suggest he goes to the gym or just buttons it back up again.

Director Brett Ratner (*Rush Hour*) has a great eye and the film scenes were a lot of fun to look at. However, it seemed like some scenes were missing. Stan Lloyd fell into the hands of a local cop (Naomie Harris) who seemed to be against him from the moment he appeared and paid him no attention whatsoever. Then suddenly she was in love with him. Did I miss something there?

The story line is fun and entertaining; all the characters were well cast and likable. Woody Harrison's goofy comedy humour clicks with Brosnan's persona in a strange but excellent way. When the two are on screen together they provide all the laughs of the film.

The film was effortless for Pierce Brosnan, on a Caribbean Island with Salma Hayek all over him, and it showed as he simply fell into the



Brosnan and Hayek kiss for 48 minutes of screen time. Supposedly

role. Salma Hayek seemed to be in the film for a jolt of sex appeal and little else. They must have had fun filming the scenes; there were lots of funny moments.

*After The Sunset* is forgettable entertainment. If you have time to kill, watch this film, or just wait until it comes out on video.

Melissa Parkinson

Last week's winner of VIP treatment at Vue Fulham Broadway is Dilraj Judge, Chemistry III

"I'm a sad little chemist, who needs to get a life and I love Alan"

## FILM

film.felix@ic.ac.uk

# Wars go away, paranoia remains

Several strong performances that are worthy of Oscars, but ultimately let down by an implausible plot

## The Manchurian Candidate

Director: Jonathan Demme  
Starring: Denzel Washington, Meryl Streep, Liev Schreiber  
Length: 130 minutes  
Certificate: 15  
★★★★☆

*The Manchurian Candidate* is a remake starring Denzel Washington as an ex-army major who is pushed to the limits of sanity to bring a high level government conspiracy to justice.

During the Gulf war in the early nineties, Major Ben Marco's unit came under attack. Marco (Washington) was knocked unconscious, but Sergeant Raymond Shaw (Liev Schreiber) manages to single-handedly kill all the ambushers. Years later Shaw, now a war hero, is running for the vice-presidential nomination and uses his apparently heroic actions as political capital. But things are not quite right: Major Ben Marco's growing uneasiness about what *actually* happened in Iraq leads him to uncover a web of deceit involving a major multinational corporation, brainwashing, and (and this is my favourite line in the film) "rich people funding bad science to put a sleeper in the White House".

It's a testament to Denzel Washington's acting ability that they decided to name the capital of the

United States and a state on the east coast after him. As he has done in films such as *Malcolm X* and *Training Day*, Washington tears up the screen with another effortlessly convincing performance. However, the best acting comes from Liev Schreiber, who tears up the screen, puts it in a shredder and uses the pieces to make a papier mâché Oscar, which I daresay is sitting on his mantelpiece right now.

This is a deeply political film. Perhaps not overtly political like *Fahrenheit 911*, it uses the medium of fictional representation to address very similar issues. In many ways,

**"With minute-by-minute twists there is very little you can take for granted"**

*The Manchurian Candidate* is a far stronger critique of American democracy than *Fahrenheit 911* was. What appears on the surface to be a smoothly run democracy disguises layers and layers of corruption and propaganda. In *The Manchurian Candidate*, appearances are always deceptive and with minute-by-minute twists there is very little you can take for granted.

At the same time, what lets the film down is the plot. It's not so much

Michael Moore as Mickey Mouse. Even your most ardent conspiracy theorist would pass this one off as 'a bit over the top'. Although realism has never been a core value for Hollywood, a degree of 'suspension of disbelief' is required so that the audience can stay on the ride. It all seems so unnecessarily elaborate – for example, why does Manchurian Global go to all this trouble with brainwashing and microchip brain implants when it could just bribe everyone with money or position. By applying Occam's Razor to this film, you'll quickly realise that it has a big gaping hole right in the middle of it.

In this day and age, it is good to come across a film that has a political message. It took Hollywood several years after the Vietnam debacle before it started making anti-war movies like *Full Metal Jacket* and *Apocalypse Now*. Hopefully in the next few years we will see more films that scrutinise the American political system and try to address the madness going on in Iraq.

At this stage, however, many of us are sick of hearing about the likes of George Bush, Halliburton, and the War on Terror – for people who have had enough of these issues, this is not a film for you. However, if you like your conspiracy theories fast, furious and downright implausible then *The Manchurian Candidate* is the film to see this weekend.

Darius Nikbin



The most oedipal movie around at the moment

## Being Julia could win Bening Oscars

### Being Julia

Director: István Szabó  
Starring: Annette Bening, Jeremy Irons, Michael Gambon, Shaun Evans  
Length: 100 minutes  
Certificate: 12A  
★★★★☆

To begin with, I went to a Friday late night show of *Being Julia* with a couple of my friends. We were the only ones in the theatre! As you would imagine, this was not at all encouraging. However, I did watch the movie without switching off my mobile phone! Add this to the first thirty minutes of a boring start of the movie during which the main characters were introduced, and you would have to try hard not to fall asleep. However, this boredom was soon washed away.

The movie is based around the funny novella written by W Somerset Maugham. *Being Julia* is about a theatre actress, Julia Lambert (Annette Bening), going through a mid-life crisis. She is married to a great director Michael Gaslin (Jeremy Irons), has a teenage son Roger Gosselyn (Thomas Sturridge), and has a talent that captivates her audience. She has a great and popular career, is in her fifties and can pass as a twenty-something actress. So what is going wrong?

Though it looks like she has it all, she is completely exhausted by being the only one in the whole play giving it her all. She just wants a holiday and is also very fearful of her

growing age. She is bored and looking for something to spice up her life. Her life and acting performances are inspired and turned around when she is seduced and starts an affair with the much younger gold digging Tom Fennell (Shaun Evans). Unaware of Tom's trick, Julia pays for his bills and gives him expensive presents. I was all perked up when I heard Tom's birthday was on 20 November, which was the same day I saw the movie and also my birthday! How coincidental can one get?

Throughout the whole film, Julia's dead mentor Jimmy Langton (Michael Gambon) is very much alive (more like a ghost) to her, reminding her of how everything outside the theatre is just a fantasy and isn't real. It doesn't help either when her son Roger tells her that "you have a performance for everyone. I don't think you exist. Even the things you say are second hand". It is a very touching moment and you can almost see Julia's façade clear away for a moment to reveal the person within, but only for a microsecond.

Julia's husband, who believes in being a "modern couple", is aware of her unfaithfulness but is completely OK with it as long as it doesn't affect her stage performance. He is too busy counting the cash. Anyhow, Julia sees the light when Tom turns his attention to a girl of his age, the beautiful-perfect-figured air-headed actress Avic Crichton (Lucy Punch). Avic tries to be a genius, acting as Julia. She goes on to take a

role in Julia's next play and also has an affair with Tom. This is exactly where the whole movie takes a twist and a new side of Julia comes into play.

The personal and tactful revenge, comedy and excitement of how Julia uses her gift to basically stand up and manipulate everyone who had screwed her keeps you interested for the remaining part of the movie. She might be glamorous, stunning and ladylike, but no one can fool her! She won't just take it when an upcoming younger actress takes her part without putting up a fight. She does this in a very intricately planned act consisting of making everyone else soar and then pulling the rug from right underneath them, just as they are touching the stars. You almost empathise with the other characters and yet you are rooting for Julia all the way. After all, this is what acting is all about. All is fair in war and the theatre.

The wonderful knockout acting of Bening is even considered by some to be worthy of an Oscar nomination. The movie basically shows how an actress copes with her theatre role and her normal daily life, which is kind of hard to distinguish. You really can't tell the difference when she is *Being Julia* or whether she is just using her acting skills. Her character really gets through to the viewer from her elegant and polite personality to a totally inhuman quality.

The director, István Szabó, visualises the 1930s well. He develops

each role in the movie. The only role that didn't shine as much would be the young lover Tom. His character is badly cast and there is the whole danger of his presence threatening the scenes with Julia. There just wasn't any spark between Tom and Julia, possibly because most of the time you are thinking, "yuck".

However, the director brings a warm and welcome palette of colourful cinematography and style. It is beautifully set and it is believable that it did in fact happen. There are no special effects that jump out at you and the whole scene of the movie is made to look very much inkeeping

with the time. The cars, costumes design, restaurants scenes, dance sequences and the whole production of the movie are very realistic. Even the way Julia's best friend tells her that "he plays for the other side" is so quaint. As for the script, it was perfect for Julia's mentor. The script has richness, smart writing and a density of the language. There are a lot of dialogue and a whole range of emotions.

Though the movie has a slow pace, it is a masterpiece. One to go and watch if you want to fancy yourself a literary!

Vidula Vinayagamoorthy



Such a riveting performance that even she is on the edge of her seat

# A tale of two Seans

You might need an epidural for this difficult delivery

## Birth

Director: Jonathan Glazer  
Starring: Nicole Kidman, Cameron Bright, Danny Huston, Lauren Bacall  
Length: 100 minutes  
Certificate: 15  
★☆☆☆☆

A rip roaring action adventure with extravagant special effects and a killer soundtrack is certainly not what you will get if you go to see *Birth*. Nor will you find a warm fuzzy love story promising that, in the end, all you need is love. Instead, you will find a dark brooding human drama that shows how people are never quite what they seem.

An ordinary man dies and just afterwards, somewhere in the same city, a baby is born. Ten years later, a little boy goes to the still-grieving widow, Anna (Nicole Kidman), and tells her that he is her dead husband. Anna was about to remarry though, until young Sean showed up purporting to be her dead Sean and telling her that he wants her back. Should she believe him, because he seems to know so much about her, or is he just a weird little kid with too much time on his hands?

Set in New York, the director, Jonathan Glazer, uses winter to symbolise Anna's still lingering

mourning as well as contrasting it well with the warmth and comfort that her family and new fiancé want to provide her. Glazer also captures New York high society and deftly uses a grand dame of cinema, Lauren Bacall, to portray Anna's wise, if distant, mother. Bacall definitely makes her presence felt in every scene she appears in.

Kidman, playing Anna, is almost brilliant. She gives the character the emotional fragility that she needs as well as the obvious beauty required. But watching her, I almost always felt that I was watching Kidman play another role rather than observing a completely new character.

The director effectively uses many close-up shots of Kidman's face to display her reactions to highly charged situations. Whilst this works for Anna because we know her general mindset, Glazer tends to over-use this technique to show the emotions of other characters who we know nothing about.

This includes Cameron Bright who plays young Sean convincingly and eerily well. You may remember him as the psychotic boy in *Godsend*. Here he doesn't have homicidal tendencies, but there is undoubtedly an undercurrent of instability with this kid. He interacts well with Anna, being open with her but at the same

time hiding from her his true purpose.

A lot goes unsaid in this film and there is a deep feeling of repressed emotion throughout, making it feel heavy and laborious. That said, I think it would have benefited from more dialogue, as there was potential for some great emotional exchanges between Kidman and Bacall when they came to odds.

So with its stellar cast and a creative if slightly unusual premise, what does this film really deliver?

**"A bath scene involving Kidman and Bright was booed at the Cannes Film Festival"**

Unfortunately, not that much. It starts off telling one story, changes its mind halfway through and takes on another. Its slightly supernatural tact eventually takes the easy option and gives us a simple and slightly disappointing explanation.

This doesn't make the most of the story's most interesting feature: the enigma of the boy Sean. The mystery of the story is also underplayed



All that freaking money and this is what my walls look like?!

because Glazer decides instead to focus on the emotional reactions of the character. He also falls short in concentrating on creating depth for the central characters whilst leaving the supporting cast rather two-dimensional.

Anna and her husband's relationship is never fully explored. This is a shame, since the film is based on the fact that Anna loved her husband so much that she suspends all rational thought and is prepared to begin a relationship with a ten-year-old boy.

This led to great controversy surrounding the film. A bath scene

involving Kidman and Bright was booed at the Cannes Film Festival, and it came across as awkward and unnecessary. Though this dominated the media due to its certain unsavoury nature, the emerging relationship it is trying to represent never quite gets off the ground.

Overall *Birth* is a strange little creation that boasts a strong cast, but even they cannot save it from itself. It had great potential but it never quite lives up to its promise and comes across as a slightly tedious story with no real point.

**Mandirassa Osakonor**

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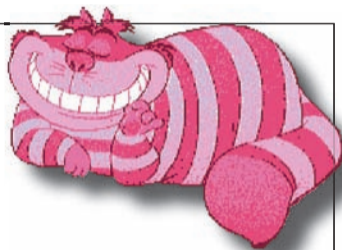
# Coffee Break

coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk

Coffee Break is back for another week, and Imperial is finally starting to loosen up, judging by Suzy's picture below. Or maybe it was the free booze...? There are another two issues this term to go, so send your entries in now to **coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk**

## The Chesire's Cat Cryptic Corner

Hello, and welcome again! There were quite a few answers to *RSA Magna*, which was pleasing. However, a lot of you seemed to think the answer to (d) was 'George Bush' when it was clearly his son, with a 'W'. Spelling problems, maybe?



### No. 3: Word Watching

This week we'll look at the meaning of some interesting words. However, no cheating please. Securely lock away all reference material before attempting this. Your intelligent guesses are welcome at the usual address.

#### FRITILLARY

- a. A pottery store
- b. A type of lily
- c. A secluded religious community

#### KAKI

- a. A Japanese tree
- b. A dull yellowish-brown colour
- c. A New Zealand parrot

#### DENIGRATION

- a. Ethnical cleansing
- b. The use of charcoal in art
- c. A defamation

## Whose is this god damn beautiful face?



Hello there my lovely ladies and gentleman. Miss Suzy Backhouse went on a little trip to the AVS sports night at the Union last Wednesday and look what she found. Yes you little piss-heads, look at you, its a disgrace. Imperial people having fun and getting drunk. This is just wrong.

However, it happens and I caught you in action. So, girl in the circle, email us and tell us who you are with some kind of proof, and you can get points, and a kiss from El Vino if you're lucky. Or me, if you're that way inclined.

## International Beats

This week we're bringing you a little lyrics quiz. Of course, just printing out some lyrics for you to guess would be far too easy, as you could just get them off the web, like we did. So, befitting an international college like Imperial, we've translated the lyrics into various languages and then back into English, with hilarious (well, not quite) results. We'll give you the language we translated it into, and a clue too. There are eight songs, with a point for each correct title, and a point for each artist.

#### Russian

I am a thin Shadow, yes, I am a real Shadow  
All of you Thin Shadys only imitate another,  
So a habit very thin Shadow please rise,  
Please rise, please rise

*CLUE: Blond haired 'gangster' doesn't want anyone to get mistaken for him*

#### Spanish

You were my sun  
You were my land  
But you did not know I wanted yourself completely, did not  
So you took an opportunity  
And did other plans  
But I bet you did not think that they would come to collide downward, not

*Ex-boyband star, who's a whole lot more credible since he left. A feature of girly calendars everywhere*

#### French

Woman  
To agree with me tonight  
'cos my sensation  
Is just right  
As us dance  
By the moonlight  
Be able to not see  
You are my pleasure

*A one-hit wonder for a French band with plenty of sexual magnetism, this still fills up cheesy dance-floors everywhere*

#### German

Therefore if you are solitary,  
you know that I wait here for you,  
I'm only a crosshair  
I'm only a shot away of you.

And if you leave here  
You left me, had broken, splintered, lie  
I'm only a crosshair  
I'm only a shot, and then we die

*Critically acclaimed Scottish band's second single, released early this year*

#### Dutch

Look around you, not in the sun  
Now you know that your times come  
And they said that it never for you would come

And oh my friend that you have not changed  
You have rough looks and live strange  
And I know that a taste for it you also have gotten

*More of a soap opera than a band, they still find time to release great singles like this, in between burbling each others homes and being crackheads*

#### Norwegian

I at one time got a girl  
Or I ought to say she at one time got me  
She displayed me her location  
Isn't it a great Norwegian tree?

She asked me to be  
And she said to me sit anywhere  
So I saw around  
And I commented there wasn't a chair

*A band that changed the world back in the sixties, this is from their 1965 album. The clue's in the language...*

#### Italian

A heart that's saturated  
Similar to a landfill  
A spot that slowly murders you  
Bruise that won't recover

I'll take a dispassionate life  
a handshake nor carbon monoxide  
neither alarms nor surprises

*Often derided as being miserable and depressing, this song is from their third album, rated by plenty of people as the best ever*

#### Latin

We were tender we were wrong  
We were correct always  
If you wish there was someone to say me upon  
She's one  
When you obtain from where you wanna go  
And you occupy occurrence you wanna occupy  
You're smiling  
When you said to anyone you wanna make known  
And you occupy the road you wanna run riot on  
Yeah  
You'll emerge so high you'll emerge winged

*Probably the most loved and hated performer on the British music scene around, this song's video was a figure skating parody*

## FUCWIT Answers: Issue 1305

There were four quizzes that week, none of them particularly difficult, so I'm surprised you guys didn't do any better. Anyway, answers...

#### Cryptic Corner: RSA Magna

Tony Blair PM, Virginia Bottomley, Margaret Thatcher, George W Bush.

#### Goonies never say die!

The Goonies rocked, so so much. It's a landmark piece of film-making, right up there with other eighties classics, *Back to the Future*, *Honey, I shrunk the kids!* and *Dirty Dancing*. If you've not seen these, please, go to Blockbuster, now! The answers were, in order:

Mama Fratelli, Mouth, Brandon, Mikey, Chunk, and the Imperial favourite, Data.

#### The Blair Film Project

Does anybody trust this guy anymore? The fact that he played a neo-nazi in film number 6 here is probably a major clue. He's probably a nice chap though, if a little creepy. Answers then:

1. *The Matrix*, Carrie-Ann Moss
2. *Austin Powers*, Mike Myers
3. *Fight Club*, Brad Pitt
4. *Ms Congeniality*, Sandra Bullock
5. *The Godfather*, Al Pacino
6. *American History X*, Ed Norton
7. *The Lord of The Rings*, Orlando Bloom

#### Dead or Alive

Nice and simple this one...  
Dead, Alive, Dead, Alive, Dead, Dead, Alive, Alive

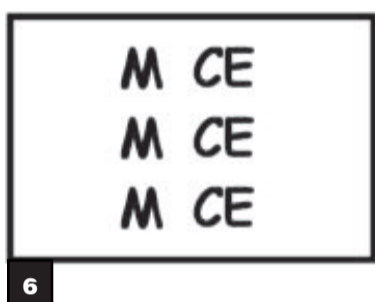
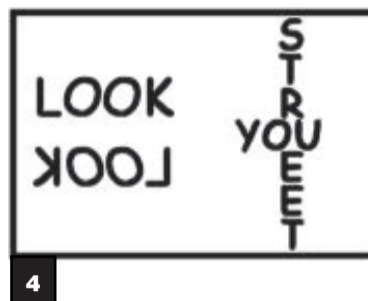
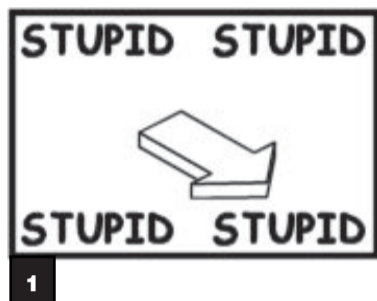


**COFFEE BREAK**

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**Coffee Break Cryptograms**

Here's something nice and easy for you (and us – virtually no time consumption doing this one, plus it fills a shedload of space) to think about while you're daydreaming in lectures. I think the premise is straightforward enough, so no explanation needed. Some of them are really easy, but we hope the others will keep you pondering for a little longer...



**FUCWITS**

It looks like the Management Slackers are storming into a bit of a lead here, purely by virtue of having entered more times than the rest of you. As much as we here at Coffee Break are all for equal opportunities, we are going to have to start docking the Slackers some marks because of their close ties to *Felix*; so come on Smith & Wesson, as their closest rival you need to do your best to close the gap (there's some easy points to be got this week, plus Slackers have been banned from entering last week's football quiz as they were present when we created it!)

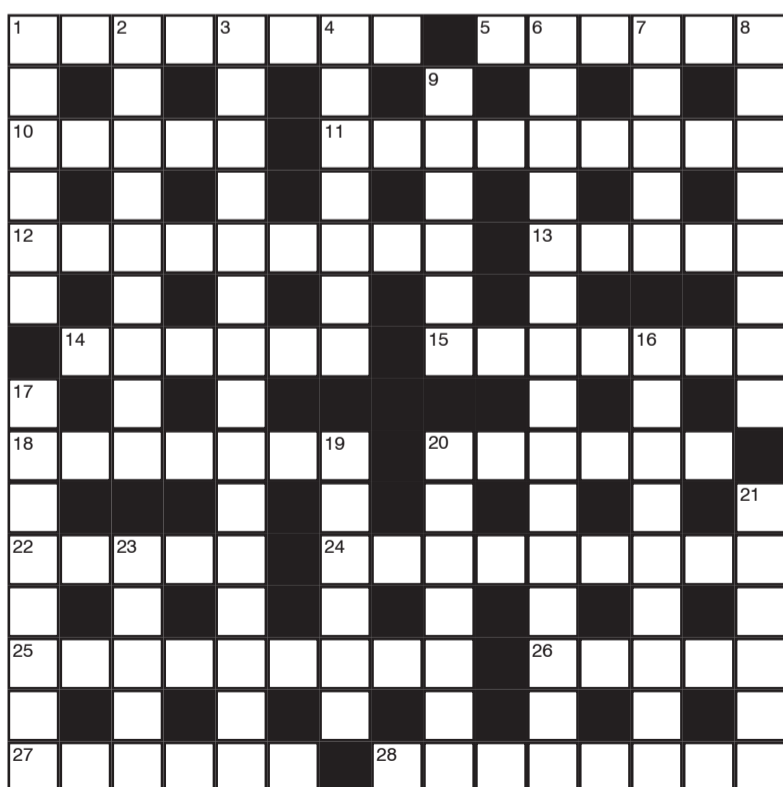
- This week:
- Word Matching:** One point for each correct answer
- International Beats:** One point for each artist and one for each title
- Cryptograms:** One point for each correct answer
- Whose Face?** 10 points if it's you and you have evidence to prove it

<b>FUCWIT LEAGUE 2004-5</b>	
Management Slackers	96 points
Smith & Wesson	51 points
Team Bulwer	42 Points
The B Team	22 points
See you next time	16 points
Natasha Kundi	10 points
Team Win	8 points

Send in your entries to [coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk](mailto:coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk)

**Felix Crossword 1307**

by Jabberwock



**Across**

1. Leaders signed contract without hesitation – concerning *The Sun*? (8)
5. A wise man (not posh) collects eastern pictures (6)
10. Birds initially dived underwater, clutching Karen's solution (5)
11. Furious, I expect no objection (9)
12. Stop dishevelled miner entering gallery (9)
13. Little girl is first to appear (5)
14. F1 pro admits high speed without hesitation (2,4)
15. God was in charge of this unfortunate ship (7)
18. I used to misspell "boring" (7)
20. Explosive sound upset porter (6)
22. Old Nick stars in a vaudeville (5)
24. Assemble at a great portal Greek entered? No, thank you! (9)
25. Duplicate twin (9)
26. Banish former spouse on French island (5)
27. Cut grass oddly, encroaching on outhouse (6)
28. Sinatra takes eastern way that is most direct (8)

**Down**

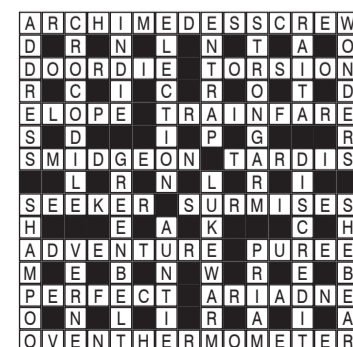
1. Rome, for one, admitted case was serious (6)
2. Invested with medal of honour, loyal princess departed taking the gold (9)
3. A lethal chamber may be required for this casino entertainment (7,8)
4. To 'ave anger is normal (7)
6. Satanic verses: "Oh, impale Stephen!" (15)
7. Roman leader caught in snares makes painful expression (5)
8. Complete thought not well exemplified by this clue? (8)
9. Peculiarity of dialect revealed by ancient church books (6)
16. Redhead traitor entertained by unsophisticated story (9)
17. Perusing "*Etude in G*" (8)
19. Decapitated Wilde? A heartless crime that's hard to come by! (6)
20. Soldier or member of clergy? Either way, a predictable customer (7)
21. Eliminate soldiers caught in aircraft (6)
23. Opinions expressed by arguing wives (5)

'Tis brillig again. Thanks to Karen for providing a solution to my last puzzle, and to all of you who tried but couldn't complete it. This week, 10 across portends some difficulties for her, involving certain birds of prey, if one is to trust the context.

This is probably an appropriate moment to warn you all against trusting the apparent meaning of clues. In particular, beware 1 across and 3 down. I also feel I should confess to having used the somewhat obscure abbreviation AC (ante Christum) instead of the usual BC (before Christ). Hope to hear from you!

**Jabberwock**

**Issue 1306 solution**



**Last week's winner is Oliver Butters. Well done!**  
Send your answers to [coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk](mailto:coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk) or bring this page down to the *Felix* office in the West Wing of Beit Quad. Each week, we'll choose a winner and print their name, thus providing them with almost unlimited kudos and self-satisfaction. Everyone who provides us with a correct solution will get an entry into our prize draw at the end of the year



SPORT

sport.felix@ic.ac.uk

# Football ladies secure victory

FOOTBALL

**Imperial Women's 1st 7**  
**Queen Mary Women's 1st 3**

By Alex McCredie

On a cold and wet Sunday morning, the Imperial ladies' football team came out for an exciting match against their old rivals Queen Mary.

Within eight minutes of kick off, Queen Mary scored,

putting Imperial into attacking mode after it was evident that they could do better. The defence swiftly put the ball up and Morwena in midfield took it dashing in from the left and neatly curled an equaliser from outside the box straight into the net.

Queen Mary hadn't given up just yet and stunningly scored ten minutes later, putting them 2-1 up. Imperial were not to be outdone when the club captain, Kathy, came

storming through with the ball down the middle and knocked the ball just over the posts. Jessica, the newest import from the Orange County, California skilfully took the ball out of midfield, dodged through their raging defence and shot at an amazingly acute angle to hit the crossbar. Seconds later she did it again and it went in.

The Imperial defence worked very hard to clear the ball after it was back with

Queen Mary. Maew headed the ball out, it was brought back in and then speedy Guilles got there first and cleared it over Queen Mary upfield. Aysha received it at the halfway line, outpaced all of the defence and nipped it in the bottom right-hand corner. With two minutes to go until half time, incredibly there was time for a fourth for Imperial. Aysha and Poppy had control of the ball, skimming it past defend-

ers. Aysha scored 30 seconds before the whistle.

Imperial's spirits were up and Aysha ran with the ball straight down the middle and passed to Poppy who smashed one in 15 minutes before the end. Queen Mary were still trying, but Alex, Guilles and Kath blocked their way. Rim, the goalie, with her cool head, smartly picked up a few stray balls. Five minutes before the end Imperial knew that they

were safe, juggling the ball between themselves. The defence pushed up, Maew ballooned a high one up-front and Aysha scored a drop goal to complete her hat-trick and secure the Imperial ladies' 7-3 victory.

Although everyone on the Imperial team made a strong contribution, the 'dame of the game' was Morwena Marshall for scoring her first goal for Imperial after years as an amazing defender.

# Sexy football

FOOTBALL

**Imperial Men's 3rd 3**  
**London Met Men's 2nd 0**

By Adam Williams

A new season brings a new brand of sexy football from Imperial Thirds. Shatters' dream was now being played out by a team of highly talented performers.

The newest opponents to stand up to the Thirds

were London Metropolitan Seconds. Although they had lost a couple of games in our BUSA group, we knew this wasn't going to be an easy ride.

There was barely a hair's breadth between the teams in first 20 minutes. The Imperial midfield looked strong with John and Has battling like warriors and Adam showing touches of unparalleled majesty. Eventually the break we needed came when Caruso

with his huge thighs played the ball to John who delightfully clipped it into the right hand channel for Leon to run onto. Leon's low hard cross found the ever willing runner John three yards out to score with an easy finish.

The two flying wingers Hideki and Leon were causing the Met defence all sorts of problems and the spearhead of the attack, John Scott, was as strong as ever holding the ball up and bringing oth-

ers into play. He did, however, miss a sitter from one yard out after Leon had again probed their defence before crashing a shot against the cross-bar. Luckily for John he was called offside so his blushes were saved.

The second half started with early pressure from London Met, but Imperial soon took control of the game with triangles aplenty in midfield, with full backs Jan and Tom wanting some of the sexy

footballing action. Caruso was solid at the back, James looked like a king amongst men in goal with awesome dominance of his area, and Shatters was just handballing at every opportunity, although he too was awesome.

The second goal came after a foul on Caruso during the mêlée at a corner brought a penalty. Ever the gentleman, Adam let Hideki calmly roll the ball into the bottom corner for two-nil.

A substitution brought off John and on came Perry to cause their tiring defence even more problems. A big kick from the superb James was killed dead by Perry before a mazy run flummoxed their defender. He then curled the ball into the far corner to make it 3-0.

All in all this was a fantastic day for the thirds who could now go out and celebrate on the Hammy Ten pub crawl. Carnage.

# Firsts hold off George's for victory

NETBALL

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**St George's Women's 2nd 38**  
**Imperial Women's 1st 40**

By Erika Kennington

Another Monday, another match for the Firsts. But unlike our first two ULU matches of this season (where we have been thrashed by the top two sides in our league) we had a genuine chance of scoring our first points.

Our opponents were St Georges Seconds, who we narrowly beat by four goals last season, and we were determined to not give them their revenge.

Having had an extra training session against a local team, we were feeling quietly confident. We got off to the best start possible in the first quarter, with textbook

moves and well rehearsed play quickly translating into a six goal lead. George's were literally left standing as we played some near-perfect netball.

Unfortunately this couldn't last, and their quarter-time team talk resulted in some very harsh tactics - double marking BOTH our shooters, so that the slightest movement (even to adjust a skirt), led to a 'contact' and a free pass to their team. Still, we didn't let this get to us, kept the defence tight, and held them to a draw in the second quarter, keeping our six goal lead intact.

For some unknown reason, double marking tactics were dropped in the third quarter (hey - we're not complaining), allowing us to play our own game, take control and double our lead. There was awesome shooting, beautiful interceptions, and some amazing set-pieces from the whole team - it was just a shame we had no audience to appreciate it!

So with a 12 goal lead, we knew the match was ours for the taking in the last quarter, but we also knew

that we couldn't afford to be too confident (for those of you not familiar with the game, a ten goal deficit can quickly be made up in about five minutes, and unfortunately a quarter is 15 minutes long!)

Sadly, Georges also realised this and set about like a team possessed. I'm ashamed to say that we nearly cracked! As the minutes counted down, so did our lead. Double-marking returned, we lost our rhythm, and George's picked up on every single mistake we made, punishing it with some flawless shooting.

With our lead down to two goals, we finally decided to do something about it, and eventually got the ball moving up the court once more. Some great shooting under pressure from Sam and Jen ensured that we hung onto our three points as the final whistle went.

Although everyone played well, special mention must go to JJ, newly promoted from the Seconds and voted man of the match in her first game with us. Finally I'd like to say a huge well done to the whole team - we did it!

# Seconds success

NETBALL

**Queen Mary Women's 3rd 7**  
**Imperial Women's 2nd 15**

The Seconds played their third match of the season against Queen Mary's third team. All the girls came closer together as a team and played fantastically, celebrating their second win with a score of 15-7! Well done girlies!

We arrived at the courts after walking through quite a scary park to find that the only available dressing area was

the men's changing room... hmm! Well, it was better than changing outside!

Doing drills helped us keep warm for the rough half hour we had to wait before playing. The match itself got off to a great start, with our star shooter Alex scoring four goals before Queen Mary even got on the score sheet! The match play was superb and the girls were on top form! A special well done to Jen for being a brave bunny after her nasty fall, cutting her hand yet still playing on!

Credit must also be awarded

to Alison and Chiara for their amazing defending, particularly Chiara for stepping in as GD - who knew such a short girl could stretch so far!! However, Alison, what a feisty little devil you are... watch out London, you don't want to be on the other side of her during a toss up!

Team spirit was high throughout the entire match, even though QM were getting a teeny helpful boost from a certain someone with a whistle! Congratulations to JJ for being voted woman of the match for the second time.

# Rugby rout

RUGBY

Sponsored by



**Chichester Men's 1st 14**  
**Imperial Men's 1st 39**

By David Jackson

The long sleepy journey to the south coast left the Imperial Men's First XV feeling a little jaded, however the metaphorical cobwebs were soon shaken off as they faced off against the tyrannical

horde of University College Chichester (UCC).

Within the first few minutes, Imperial had made their intentions known, as the enigma that is Jon Spencer glided through a hapless defence following a well rehearsed line-out. Secondly, Simple Simon Smith skilfully scampered, scoring superbly. Minutes later he doubled his tally, showing incisive rapidity and 20:20 peripheral vision.

UCC's only replies were penalties. A dark cloud descended however, as Marcus Wills was the recipient of a yellow card; shamefully he trudged from the arena a broken dejected man. Good defence from Imperial kept the half time score at 25-9.

Without speaking hyperbolically, insufficient superlatives

exist to describe Imperial's second half performance. The 'angelic' Gabriel rounded off a superb move where Andrew Towers *et al* showed intense pace, intelligent hands and integrity in the face of adversity.

Raphael added his brush strokes of genius to the Imperial canvas and demonstrated his full palette of skills, evading tackles from the UCC forwards and scoring two tries.

Spencer's metronomic boot was on song, converting 83.3% of tries. Other noteworthy performances came from Alex O'Rourke, Rich Aung, and the omnipresent Achi, captain for the first time. Man of the match Rich Williams tearfully proclaimed the day the happily of his short Welsh life.

Send your sports reports to [sport.felix@ic.ac.uk](mailto:sport.felix@ic.ac.uk),  
with photographs if possible!

# Sport

sport.felix@ic.ac.uk

## Under-strength Holloway overpowered

### FOOTBALL

**Imperial Men's 3rd 5**  
**Holloway Men's 2nd 0**

By Leon Thorne

After a fine win in the previous game against London Met, the Thirds' focus was turned to the vital encounter with Holloway Seconds. Winning this would mean leading our ULU league, but more importantly beating the team most despised (excluding the medics) by any Imperial footballer.

The game almost failed to take place, with Holloway trying their best to have it postponed before eventually turning up an hour late. This should have resulted in a forfeit, but ever the gentleman, captain Shatters offered to play a shortened game of 40 minute halves.

When the match finally kicked off, it soon became apparent that this wasn't the standard of opposition we were expecting. Holloway were missing some key players, and despite a quiet first 15 minutes a good win was on the cards.

The first goal came after Leon ran into the box and cut the ball back, leaving John Scott with the simplest of two yard finishes. John however had other things in mind, and in a moment of genius played a pass off the crossbar into the path of Tom Trump. Although his finish wasn't as stylish as the pass to find him, Tom managed to beat the 'keeper and make it 1-0.

The Scott's creative play in front of goal was a continued threat all game, with goal-



Imperial's third football team line up before their comfortable win over Royal Holloway last week

keeper and defenders always kept guessing as to how he would avoid scoring.

The second goal came after a pass back to the goalkeeper. The indirect free kick was played off by Hideki for Leon to drill low into the corner. Despite some further pressure, Imperial failed to score a third before half time and went in 2-0 up.

During the break, Shatters was forced into a substitution, Has refusing to play on due to the continual monkey noises being made by Tim and Adam. Although the sounds were not at all racially motivated and in fact part of a primitive mating ritual between the pair, the substitution was made and Perry was brought on.

The second half started

poorly, with the Thirds allowing Holloway to play more freely and have a short spell of pressure. Shatters and Caruso were forced into some last ditch tackles and 'big kicks', however this didn't last long.

Perry scored his fifth of the season after some good work from Hideki. The fourth goal came soon after with a nicely

worked team move. James quickly rolled the ball out to Leon who brought it up the wing before playing it into John. Perry then held off his man before sliding a pass across for Leon to slot into the far corner.

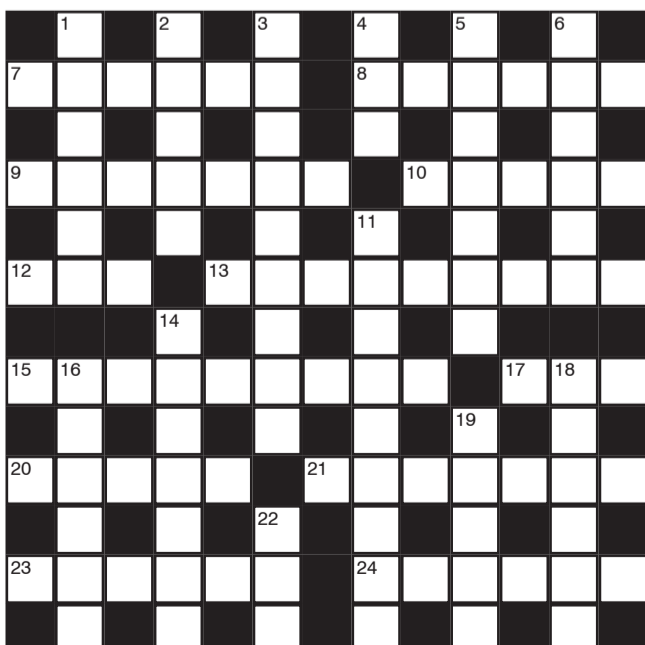
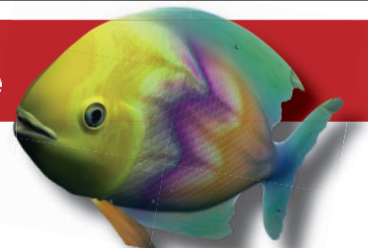
The fifth and final goal came with ten minutes to go, Hideki again providing a nicely clipped ball across

the box, which was firmly directed home by the head of Adam.

The game finished with the defence pleased to have kept a clean sheet and protected goalkeeper James from having to make a save. Despite this, a better overall performance will be essential for the next match, against Bucks Chilterns.

## Quick Crossword

by Fishface



### Across

7. Celtic dialect (6)
8. Street (6)
9. Snacks (7)
10. Room (5)
12. Question (3)
13. Alienated (9)
15. Junction (9)
17. Tide (3)
20. Strike (5)
21. Vehicle (7)
23. Old (6)
24. Intellectual (6)

### Down

1. Youngsters (6)
2. Excuse (5)
3. Supplementary item (9)
4. Vehicle (3)
5. Crying (7)
6. Tissue (6)
11. Life forms (9)
14. Medium (7)
16. Fail to carry out promise (6)
18. Song (6)
19. Songs (5)
22. Ovum (3)

Send your answers to  
coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk or bring  
this page to the Felix office in  
the West Wing of Beit Quad