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The complete cost of NUS affiliation

Andy Sykes
Editor-in-chief

The financial arrangements surrounding the NUS affiliation fee and the legacy of leaving the University of London Union (ULU) were revealed this week.

The sabbs were briefed about the possible cost projections a week ago, but were told that the information was to be kept confidential, as "it concerned an ongoing negotiation between two, if you like, corporate identities," in the words of Jon Matthews, Deputy President (Finance & Services). The figures appear to have leaked to numerous non-sabbaticals. Mr Matthews, when asked if the figures had been made available in the past, stated that he believed so, but did not know in what committee or what paper they had been made available. Ashley Brown, *Live!* editor, attempted to locate these figures in Union minutes and papers, which are available online, but was unable to do so.

The figures are divided into two parts. The first set of figures concerns the affiliation fee the Union will have to pay if the student body votes to join the NUS in the upcoming referendum. This number is based on the money the Union receives from the College to provide its services (called the subvention) and the number of students who are members of the Union, and is capped at £52,000.

The second part of the figures concerns the fee the Union must pay ULU as part of the withdrawal agreement. Although the College is to be awarded its own degree-

awarding powers separate from the University of London (UL), it will still have students on degrees affiliated with UL, and therefore must continue to pay a fee to ULU to use the services they provide.

The figures reveal that the first year cost of the NUS affiliation fee is predicted to be £35,000, and that the fee paid to ULU will be £78,000. As College pays this fee directly to ULU, that will leave the Union needing to find £35,000 to cover the NUS fee. Whether or not the College will step in to help carry this financial burden is not clear yet, and John Collins, the Union President, has been meeting with College officials, including the Rector, Sir Richard Sykes, and the Deputy Rector, Sir Leszek Borysiewicz to discuss this possibility.

The second year's figures show the ULU fee dropping to £45,000 from £78,000, while the NUS figure increases to around £42,000 from £35,000. These figures do not include additional costs, such as the replacement of services that were once provided by ULU, predicted by Mr Collins on questioning by *Felix* to be "around £10-15k". It also does not include the likely income from sales of the NUS Extra card. £4 of every £10 card sold is return to the participating Union. To cover the above cost, the NUS Extra card would have to be bought by more than a quarter of the student body, something that seems unlikely given IC student apathy and the negative feeling that the Extra card has generated among many students' unions, with the NUS actively attempting to block students without the Extra card from receiving the

Extra discount.

Mr Collins stressed that the eventual departure from ULU would pay for the NUS affiliation fee, and cover the loss made in the hypothetical first two years of NUS affiliation. As the ULU affiliation fee decreases over time, the NUS affiliation will increase to the cap of £52,000, likely to be reached within three years. Assuming all students at the College currently on UL degrees will have completed these within five years, *Felix's* back-of-an-envelope calculations suggest that after three years, the Union begins to break even, compared to simply paying for the ULU affiliation fee.

Mr Collins also promised that NUS affiliation would bring savings in the training of Union officers of "a few thousand pounds," further off-setting the initial expense.

Mr Collins did point out that the Union has a sizeable cash reserve (estimated at around £1m), as well as numerous other contingency funds it can draw upon to pay the fee. However, this cash reserve is currently set aside to cover the cost of the Union redevelopment, which is estimated to have cost £1.25m so far. Mr Collins said that the College should be footing the bill when it arrives, but the money has not been provided yet.

This reporter would like to remind its readers that *Felix* is bound by the Union constitution's regulations on referenda, and therefore is not permitted to hold an official opinion on the NUS referendum. This reporter would also like to remind readers that the Union's constitution requires that you think before you vote.

Ex-editor wins Guardian award



Rupert Neate (pictured), last year's *Felix* editor, walked away with the top prize at the Guardian Student Media Awards 2006, being named Journalist of the Year. The prize entitled Mr Neate to six weeks' work at the Guardian. *Felix* also picked up the award for Student Newspaper of the Year, beating rivals such as Cambridge University's *Varsity*.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 2

Tanaka snubs Union

Attempts to work with the Business School have ended in failure

The Tanaka Business School have been obstructive in a number of the Union's activities in the past month.

In recent weeks, Deputy President (Graduate Students), Shama Rahman, has been looking into locating available space within the College to procure for the long-promised postgraduate common room. It is understood that Miss Rahman approached the Business School to see if she could gain access to the Tanaka cafe for more than just those students studying within the Tanaka Building. Miss Rahman's request was politely denied by the Tanaka authorities, leaving the cafe exclusive to the students that study there.

The Business School has also managed to irritate the Union in a number of other ways recently. A number of "clubs" have been formed, under the umbrella name "Tanaka Industry Clubs" (TIC). These include the recently-founded Imperial College Entrepreneurs, and the older Imperial Entrepreneurs. Both of these clubs had tried to get space at Freshers' Fair, but were denied as they were not Union-affiliated clubs.

Of the club members that this reporter has spoken to, many of them were unaware of the benefits being a Union-affiliated club provides, such as financial help, training in



The Tanaka Business School sets itself apart from the rest of College

running clubs, and the backup of the Union should anything go awry. Some members said that the Business School was actively encouraging clubs to work with Tanaka, and not with the Union - one member even went as far as to say that he'd been told the Union was "crap".

The establishment of clubs by College bodies is somewhat of a grey area. The Union's constitution says that the Union shall exist, and it shall be responsible for the running of clubs. It does not, however, say that the Union shall be the exclusive organiser or authority for clubs. Eric Lai, Deputy President

(Clubs & Societies), has spoken to the Business School regarding this matter, though no clear decision has been reached.

Last year, *Felix* was prevented from being distributed in the Tanaka cafe. The bin that the newspaper normally resides in was removed, and attempts to re-establish distribution in the building have failed.

The Business School's patron is himself no stranger to controversy; Gary Tanaka was arrested in July 2005 on charges of defrauding a former client of £5m, which he allegedly used for various philanthropic purposes.

A winner is *Felix*



From left to right: Lauren Laverne, Alex Antonov (Science), Shaun Stanworth (aka the Hoff), Chris Miles (News), Saba Shafi (Design), Hannah Theodorou (Food), Emily Lines (Arts), Samantha Perera (Fashion), Rupert Neate (Editor, 2005-6)

Felix scooped the top two prizes at the Guardian Student Media Awards 2006, held in Old Street on Wednesday.

The newspaper had been nominated in the Best Student Newspaper category, and *I Science*, the companion science magazine, had been nominated in the Best Student Magazine category. Rupert Neate, last year's *Felix* editor, and Chris Miles, last year's news editor, were both nominated in the Best Student Journalist category, and Mr Neate was also nominated for Best Travel Writer.

On Wednesday's awards ceremony, Mr Neate won the overall Journalist of the Year award and will spend six weeks working for the Guardian as part of the prize. Mr Neate was also runner-up in the Best Student Journalist category.

Felix beat other student newspapers, including the favourite, *Varsity* (Cambridge University's student newspaper), to win student newspaper of the year. The judges were very impressed with last year's *Felix*, describing it as "remorselessly campaigning with a sense of humour and significant news values."

I Science, *Felix*'s companion sci-

ence magazine, won runner-up in the student magazine of the year category, with Cardiff University's *Quench* winning the category.

Other notable winners from around the city included UCL's *Cheesegrater*, which won Best Small Budget Publication. *Cheesegrater* has often been praised as being a fearless exposé of idiocy in UCL's management, as opposed to the rather toothless *Pi*. Goldsmiths College's newspaper, *Smiths*, won student publication design of the year.

Rupert Neate, when contacted by *Felix*, said: "I couldn't be more pleased, it's fantastic. I'd like to thank everyone who worked for *Felix* last year; it is an award for all of us. Together with *I Science* we have proved that scientists can write. I'd also like to thank College for giving us so much to write about."

Andy Sykes, current *Felix* editor, commented: "I think those of us that worked with Rupert knew that he would go far in the world of journalism. His courage and tenacity in constantly questioning both the Union and the College authorities marked him out as the most politically active editor in years."

Hustings is a farce once again

The NUS hustings held on Tuesday at the Charing Cross campus was cancelled part way through the proceedings due to a lack of attendance.

After more than an hour of nervous whistling and foot tapping waiting for the audience to arrive, the hustings was called off. The two teams were scheduled to argue their points of view regarding the

current college hot topic, but instead decided to prop up the bar, alongside the students who were enjoying an evening drink.

The hustings, held in the Reynolds Bar, was unfortunately scheduled just before a comedy night, meaning attendance was even poorer than it would usually be.

Hustings have a long tradition of being seen as a waste of time by

most of the student body. The hustings for the Council elections in the JCR drew ire from those quietly lunching there, with only the RON campaigner, Stephen Brown, managing to gain the attention of the crowd.

Hustings to the RCC clubs was also farcical, with candidates shouting over people and a general loss of order.

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Floating in money

"A company wishing to issue shares for the first time must do so in an Initial Public Offering or IPO. This is the act of floating, and makes privately owned companies into publicly owned companies."

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BioBricking it

"Within a few short weeks, the team had decided that they would attempt to build the world's first molecular oscillator. Even to have reached such a decision so quickly was impressive."

PAGE 7

Switch everything off

"Turning your thermostat down by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10 per cent and save you around £40 per year."

PAGE 8



Cracking bangers

"And, as you might expect, this professor of kitchen science has his own laboratory with all kinds of experimental apparatus that would not be amiss in the typical university chemistry department."

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Fabricated highlight

"All in all, this night at Fabric was the best I've ever had, a million times better than Radio Soulwax at Canvas, which was just pure hell, and probably better than any club night of this type I've ever been to."

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Horrific astrology

"This week you will actually pay attention to the highlights box on page 2 that I slave over at the last minute, each and every fucking week only for you to skip to the rest of the bloody newspaper."

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How to crash a bus

"Hockey the next day was a little less than balanced. There were many cries of 'I'm going to puke!'"

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Gaming on the beach. Are World War Two FPSs duller than seawater? PAGE 32

Clamp down on student behaviour

David Ellis
News Editor

Students at many universities have been forced to sign contracts to ensure good behaviour.

In Nottingham the two universities, Nottingham and Nottingham Trent, have problems with the way their students get along with their neighbours. Drunkenness, vomiting and half eaten food litter appear to be the main irritants.

A spokesman for Nottingham Trent university said: "To enhance the relationship between student and community, we actively support the 'Sshh' campaign – an initiative designed to educate students of the importance of remaining respectful of the local communities and residents of Nottingham.

"The campaign aims to deal with issues such as noise and litter but to also encourage students to feel part of the community rather than separate from it."

Whilst being educated, the students are also required to sign a contract just as students arriving at Chester and Oxford University do.

One in six students drop out of study at some point during their course. Most drop outs come from new universities, established after 1992. The cost to the taxpayer is estimated at around £50 million.

A spokesman for Chester University said: "It is our belief that a fair balance should be struck between the responsibilities of a university to provide a quality standard education, with well-qualified lecturers and first-class facilities, and reciprocal duties of students to participate actively in their studies by attending lectures, undertaking required preparation and submitting work on time.

"The document is designed to protect the legitimate needs of our conscientious students, and to safeguard its resources from potentially vexatious claims."

Meanwhile Dr Gillian Howie, a senior lecturer at the University of Liverpool said: "Two league tables giving a measure of university performance are retention and qualifying grades. There is an easily demonstrable relationship between attendance and grades.

"We have to infantilise the young adult to ensure that they attend to secure their grades.

"In the main, these contracts try to make explicit the fact that learning is not something that can be bought and that it requires application on the part of the student."

There are voices of discontent on the subject. Some believe university should be a liberating experience from the rigid rules set at school.

One of the most rewarding educational experiences of university is commonly said to be the way students must learn to balance their social life and their study to succeed. The introduction of contracts could water-down this experience potentially leading to less well-rounded graduates who are more dependent upon rules others set for them to follow.

This is potentially bad for top employers who generally prefer applicants who have a certain level of independence and take initiatives for themselves.

Marcel Berlins, a visiting professor of journalism at City University in London said: "Most objectionably, they remove from students the right to exercise any discretion, to work out for themselves what's best for them, to be responsible by their own volition and not because they have been forced into it."

Wes Streeting, NUS vice-president for education was quick to make a link with top up fees, he said: "This is a clear knee-jerk reaction to the introduction of top-up fees, which may result in more students making complaints as they seek to ensure they get full value for their £3,000.

"Our greatest worry is that contracts could mean that students have no course to redress



A drunk student relaxes in the park after a stressful day of exams

should they have a substandard experience.

"The term 'contract' implies responsibilities on both sides. Unfortunately, while the contracts we have seen outlined a number of requirements for students, they have remained vague on what is required of universities in terms of standards."

This contrasted with Dr. Howie, who commented: "During the last 10 years universities have been

subjected to extraordinary measures to prove and evidence quality in teaching and research.

"Despite the fact that the length of the working week exceeds that which is recommended by Europe and stress suffered by academic staff is amongst the highest in the country, we have remained committed and believe that education is key to a vibrant economy and even more importantly, to a flourishing way of life."

Study shows grades do not reflect achievements



Graduates at Central Lancashire

the differences between courses.

On average students claim to spend 25.7 hours per week studying, but medicine and dentistry students work up to ten hours a week more than the average, while mass communication students study five hours less than the average.

The study also focused on younger students. 15,000 first and second year students were involved in the study, which also asked questions about the work trends of third and fourth year students.

There are concerns that the degree grades are not a fair representation of the achievements of students on their courses. This could cause skewed intake to employers when students seek graduate jobs after leaving university. Many institutions, particularly those connected with the finance sector, use grades as a screening method.

Hard-working students applying from scientific backgrounds at older institutions, such as Imperial, might be screened out, whilst less hard-working students from newer universities might get through the initial screening procedures.

The finance sector employers rarely entirely disregard students with lower grades. Normally employers warn applicants severely about the limited chance they have of getting a job if they did not gain at least a 2:1 at university. There are real cases of applicants gaining competitive positions, such as at Investment Banks, without the required grades. Such applicants often have to resort to having some sort of exceptional experience that sells their talents and relegating

their degree grades to the bottom of their CV just to get an interview.

Bahram Bekhradnia, of HEPI, said: "If students are putting 32 hours a week into engineering and 21 hours a week into business studies, is a degree telling you the same thing about the universities and the experience the students have had? You can get a 2:1 with different amounts of effort."

Drummond Bone, of the vice-chancellors' group Universities UK, said: "There is no national curriculum in higher education, and so we should not be surprised that different courses at different institutions involve different use of facilities, contact hours and so on."

The authors also noted that 60.9 per cent of students of physical sciences at Plymouth University receive a 2:1 or first-class degree for working 20 hours a week.

An appeal

Felix is planning to look at the effects British foreign policy is having on students at college.

If you are an Imperial College student who is also a Palestinian, Israeli, Iraqi, Iranian or Afghan national, and would value the chance to take part in the investigation, then we would like to hear from you.

Feel free to send an email to David Ellis at news.felix@ic.ac.uk. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

National decline in female applicants

Out of the 48,138 UK applicants who applied for full-time study at university by 15th October, there were 365 fewer women.

The trend is only an early indication; the deadline for application is 15th January. Some feel the trend is worrying since increases in student numbers in recent years have been mainly due to an increasing number of female students, who now constitute around 55% of the UK total.

The early deadlines are for Oxbridge applicants whose numbers rose by 4.3%, apparently showing an "immunity" to top up fee developments. The figures also show a 3.6% rise in foreign applicants with applicants from Poland up 28.5%.

The chief executive of UCAS, Anthony McClaran, said: "On balance, these first figures for 2007 entry are encouraging."

Higher Education Minister, Bill Rammell said: "These figures show the underlying trend in applications, after the small reduction last year and following a larger than usual increase the year before, continues to be upward.

"The critics of the new fees system, who claimed applications would plummet, are being proved wrong."

The "small reduction" he referred to was the fall of the 2006 induction by 15,000 students. This put his claims about the new fee system into question.

Applicants to England from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were down 9%, 2.1% and 4.3%.

Gemma Tumelty, President of NUS said that the government had portrayed the fall applications as "a



Female students are already scarce at Imperial College

glitch", and added: "We genuinely hope they are right. We do not wish to see any more students missing out on the benefits a degree education can bring.

"They may be able to pass off this year's drop in applications as a one-off, but two years in a row would be a clear and undeniable reflection of the negative impact that top-up fees are having on participation rates."

IPOs: when companies go public

Craig Lukins & Emily Tam
Business Correspondents

If a company needs to raise cash, it does so by either borrowing (in the form of loans or bonds) or selling portions of the company to investors. These portions, known as shares (or equity), give the bearer ownership of a part of the company's assets and profits.

A company wishing to issue shares for the first time must do so in an Initial Public Offering or IPO. This is the act of floating, and makes privately owned companies (for example, a company owned by one individual) into publicly owned companies (companies owned by their shareholders). Shares in private companies cannot be obtained without the consent of the owners, whereas shares in public companies can be bought by any member of the public and are traded openly on a stock exchange.

There are several different ways in which an IPO may be carried out. In a placing, the most common method of flotation, the bank advising the company, will contact institutional investors (for example, the managers of pension funds who have a significant amount of cash they wish to invest for the good of their clients). The bank will offer to sell a portion of the company's shares to such an investor for a price determined by the bank.

An offer for sale is a more expensive method, due to the publicity



The trading floor, where billions of pounds switch hands instantly

required, and is generally used for very large companies. However, under recent rules, this method may be combined with a flotation by placing. Firstly, a company sets out its operations, including an offer price per share, in a detailed prospectus. In a conventional offer, investors wishing to buy shares at the offer price then apply to do so before the deadline. After the deadline, the shares are allocated and the company receives its cash. If the offer is oversubscribed, each

investor may be given fewer shares than applied for or shares may be allocated by ballot. In a tender offer, no price is given; rather, the investors will give a price themselves. After the deadline, the investor with the highest price will be given shares first, and so on until all the shares have been allocated.

The price offered per share in a placing or conventional offer for sale is set by the advising bank. Usually, this is marginally lower than the price it believes it can ob-

tain. This causes a rise in the price of the shares when they begin trading, reflecting well upon the company. If every penny were squeezed from the shares in the IPO, the share price may fall when trading begins, making the company look bad and possibly being worse in the long run.

The amount of capital raised by a company depends on two factors: the prospects of the company and the state of the market. The latter is difficult to control; for example, the Bank of England may increase interest rates, making the market nervous and less willing to buy shares in the company, harming its flotation. To protect against this uncertainty, companies will have their shares underwritten. Underwriting is the process by which an investment bank (acting as the underwriter) will, for a fee, agree to carry the risk of any shares that are not sold (i.e. if the offer is undersubscribed). In the event of this, the bank will buy back any unsold shares so that the company can be sure that all their shares are sold and the flotation is a success. When issues are successful and there are sufficient investors to buy the stock, the underwriters stand to make a substantial fee; however, a poorly received offer can cost underwriters millions of pounds.

Clever tactics may also be used to help flotations. Greenshoes help keep share prices up after trading begins. Known as an over-allotment

option, this is best described with an example.

The underwriters for company A sell 1 million shares in an IPO, plus an additional amount, say 100,000, that the underwriter short sells (selling shares that you don't own). When shares begin trading, if the price falls, the underwriter will buy 100,000 shares from the market to cover the short selling. The act of buying shares pushes the price back up, and leaves the underwriter with a profit (as they bought back from the market at less than the price they sold at). If however the price rises, the underwriter is left with 100,000 short sold shares that they must cover. Instead of making a loss by buying these from the market, the underwriter exercises the greenshoe, which allows them to buy 100,000 shares from company A at issue price (the price they were shorted for). Greenshoes are so named because such an option was first granted to underwriters by the Green Shoe Company.

Some of the most publicised IPOs include Google, who floated in August 2004, with an offering of \$1.7 billion, ICBC (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China), who successfully completed the world's largest ever float of \$21.8 billion in October this year, and the 1987 issue of British Petroleum, that was so poorly received by the market it cost its underwriters millions of pounds to buy back its undersubscribed shares.

Spark A Company lights up

Last Thursday Imperial Entrepreneurs (IE) followed their hugely successful launch event with an even hotter one to mark the start of their Spark A Company (SAC) program.

James Murray Wells, founder and managing director of Glassesdirect.co.uk, was the featured speaker, an outstanding choice to launch SAC as this program hopes to inspire students to do exactly what he did – getting his venture going and making a success of it. At 23, James has grown Glassesdirect from starting with £1000 to a business expected to turnover over £3m this year in just two years. Undercutting his high street rivals by up to ten times, Glassesdirect has sent shockwaves through the optical industry, a market worth over £2.4 billion a year in the UK. In 2005 he won the UK Shell LiveWIRE Young Entrepreneur of the Year award, Credit Suisse Entrepreneur of the Year award, and Enterprising Young Brit 2005 and attracted press coverage in publications including the FT, The Sunday Times, and The Daily Telegraph. In addition, of the top 50 entrepreneurs of 2005 as rated by startups.co.uk, he beat Sir Richard Branson, Sir Alan Sugar, and Stelios Haji-Ioannou, to come 1st place.

James told students how he remembers having had a few brilliant business ideas before, which he let pass him by. However when he had his latest eureka moment he decided to finally do something about it and take that idea all the way to create a concrete business. He started researching the glasses sales model, questioning it, wondering why a

pair of glasses should cost around £150 when they contain "less metal than a spoon". Soon he realized that the high cost did not come from the raw materials or suppliers but from the high street shops who inflated distributor prices to make big profits. After researching the feasibility of his idea he recruited 8 other university students and turned his parent's home into his office during the early stages of the start up. He nostalgically remembers cables running from bedroom to bedroom, up and down the stairs, and his mum making "bacon sandwiches in the kitchen" for his new employees. Sales began to come in almost immediately, and the business began to grow. He is now planning an international expansion to take place sometime next year. He also told of how in addition to all the well known obstacles of setting up your own business straight out of university, he has been experiencing mounting pressure from big high street

retailers who try to push him out of business. His exhibits included legal notices from lawyers, letters and faxes from suppliers unwilling to deal with him, and even disturbing (yet quite funny) recorded telephone conversations with insider 'double agents'.

The event was followed by a sumptuous reception at the trendy Med Kitchen on Gloucester Road. It provided a fun and flamboyant networking opportunity where ideas and business cards were fiercely exchanged. Members from all main entrepreneurship societies were there: Cambridge Entrepreneurs, Oxford entrepreneurs, LSE entrepreneurs, and Imperial Entrepreneurs came together and discussed entrepreneurial interests while enjoying chilled white wine and Mediterranean-food starters. John Wilson from Folio Partners said, "It was great to see so many students bursting with ideas and enthusiasm to run businesses."



James Wells (glassesdirect) and Alex Backshall, IE creative officer

Entrepreneurs' launch party

Sumon Sadhu
Business Correspondent

It's unlikely that in your entrepreneurial lectures at Tanaka you've ever heard starting a company likened to firing a Bazooka, but Charlie Osmond's opening salvo of "Ready, Fire, Aim?" will long go down in the memories of those that were present at the spectacular launch of the Imperial Entrepreneurs society on the 19th of October.

Together with Alex Tew, founder of Milliondollarhomepage.com, and Michael Smith of Firebox.com, the trio set the scene for an engaging night of anecdotes and fly-on-the-wall accounts of starting up. Smith entertained the audience with how a drunken night of chess inspired Firebox's first ever product, the shot-glass chess set, and how the site embarrassingly almost went out of business when their original name, Hotbox, was found to be the domain of a popular adult site! Alex Tew, creator of milliondollarhomepage, surprised many of the audience by playing down he was a one-hit wonder and explaining that before setting up the milliondollarhomepage, his entrepreneurial drive started at the age of 12 selling comics and at 17 setting up the largest community of beat-boxers in the world on humanbeat-box.com. Alex also dropped hints of his next venture, which plays on his original theme of the pixelated phenomenon but enables the user to share money generated by the site.

All three speakers were keen to stress that while luck had played a part, had they not taken the plunge

while still being a student they would have undoubtedly ended up being stuck on the career hamster-wheel and many times worse off financially.

The buzz and energy of the evening spilled over into the lavish afterparty in the Tanaka bar, allowing many Imperial Entrepreneurs members to network and bounce ideas with invited entrepreneurs and investors over copious amounts of Cobra beer and snacks. The guestlist spanned many well known companies, including the BBC, MTV networks, Vodafone, and the Sunday Times. The night provided a genuine opportunity for Imperial students to look beyond the gloss and hype that surrounds how entrepreneurship is presented and get inside the personalities of the entrepreneurs at the event. The event was described by Simon Stockley, head of the MBA programme at the Tanaka Business School, as "the best student event I've ever been to", and by IE member Frank Mayne as "the epitome of cool!"



Michael Smith from firebox.com

Dawn of a gaming revolution

Felix talks to Owain Bennallack from Pocket Gamer about a whole new gaming world

Mike Cook

Whilst you might hear plenty about gaming's conquering of the mass market and its final acceptance by the majority – indeed, you may even hear it from *Felix's* own games section – it isn't quite that simple. Yes, plenty of people play games, but are plenty of people gaming? *Felix* talks to Owain Bennallack, editorial director of gaming website Pocket-Gamer.co.uk, about gaming and its acceptance in society. Are we all actually playing along?

What do you think of the Game On exhibition as a kind of turning point in gaming's acceptance?

I haven't actually been to the latest Game On, but I think it's a good idea. I went to the original one back in the Barbican, and it's interesting to see an art institution behind something like that. I think people have been talking about games in a cultural sense for some time, but it was definitely an interesting moment – perhaps turning point is a bit strong, but important nevertheless.

Do you think that the exhibition is more about the past then, or the future?

When I walk around the Science Museum, I think about the future. What it does is it illuminates the present, in the same way that science fiction does. Even though you're looking at something like *Defender*, and then *Ghost Recon*, you're being made aware that this medium that was seen as quite quirky and hidden is actually following a timeline of its own, and there's no reason it's not going to keep progressing.

You're a fan of *Guitar Hero*?

Definitely a fan of the idea, I don't think I'm any good at it though!

What do you think gives it, and games like it, such an appeal?

Well I think it's interesting in general when you marry a real world

artefact to gameplay. It can never be underestimated how much people are turned off by joysticks and keyboards. If you talk to a non-gamer and ask them if they want to play a game, they might say no. But if you ask them if they want to dance on a dancemat, or shake maracas, or hold a guitar and play it, they'll say: "Yeah, of course, because I know how to play a guitar." They don't want to go and learn how to do something, they just want to have fun. Everyone gets music, and everyone can instantly relate to something like *Guitar Hero*.

The controller on the Nintendo Wii is something quite simplified too. Is that a sign that there's some realisation of this?

You really can't go simple enough. The Wii controller is, to an extent, a barrier of its own. But it's more intrinsically fun too, because you're following around with its actions somewhat. I mean, bemused girls – bemused gamers – are going to want to play a backhand on the Wii tennis games, and they won't be able to because of the way it works. It's still a step forward.

The girl gamer demographic definitely seems like the biggest target for companies to grab.

The problem the industry has in general is that people get into gaming when they're young males, and it becomes a flatter consumption as those gamers get older. So to keep the market expanding, you've got to look for new demographics. But I think there's something inherently masculine about the existing game mechanics – learn to beat this, overcome this challenge, be rewarded with something that helps you get on. There will be gamers that disagree with that, but I think it's an inherently masculine mindset.

But in many ways, this is an old issue. There are stats now that *Nintendogs* has sold in Germany and in the UK, around 50% of those many, many copies to women.



Ex-Felix editor Owain Bennallack from 1994-5 (right) and now (above)

Is that a misnomer then? Is there only one type of 'gamer', or are we looking at different kinds of players?

Already you can see the market fragmenting for traditional games – people who play FPSs don't necessarily want to go out and play platform games. In the past, two people with an Atari 2600 would have played similar games. But as games diversify, *Quake* fans are now a world away from *Singstar* fans. They're different audiences, and they all want different things

from a game. The main issue is to get people who can think in new ways to make games.

***Felix Science* has a pair of tickets for the Game On exhibition to give away. To win them, be the first person to email science.felix@imperial.ac.uk with the answer to the following incredibly tough question:**

Which games website does Owain Bennallack currently edit?

A biog



One of just three Europeans placed in a recent top 50 Most Influential Games Journalists survey by Next Generation, Owain Bennallack started his career at Future Publishing. He soon moved on to a stint as deputy editor of videogame culture giant *Edge*, before specialising in the games development side of the industry. Owain edited the European developer magazine, *Develop*, from its inception in 2001 until February 2006, leaving to set up publishing company Steel Media. Now running Pocket-Gamer.co.uk, a site dedicated to handheld and mobile gaming, he also chairs the Develop In Brighton Conference advisory board, and still finds time for consultancy projects with several leading developers and games publications.

Owain's first experience of journalism however was here at IC, where he cut his teeth on *Felix*. Spurning the fourth year of his Computer Science degree, he was *Felix* editor 1994-5, which in those days also meant running and in-house printing press business, with full-time staff. He considers the whole experience 'absolutely valuable' and points out that his immediate IC media contemporaries include BBC TV presenter Declan Curry and New Scientist features editor David Cohen, plus a host of others who now work as freelance or staff editors and journalists.

Is it finally game over for the fat controller?

Mike Cook

There was a time when you could tell you were in a highbrow discussion if someone mentioned the word 'demographic' and 'gaming' in the same context. Gaming was its own demographic – there wasn't so much a supply and demand relationship as there was a parasitic one. Gamers waited for the games, and then when they arrived the gamers would play them and

wait for more games. Nowadays it seems – for financial reasons or other – that demographics is one of the bigger puzzles in gaming.

As part of the Science Museum's ongoing events schedule, Nicolas Rodriguez from Kuju Studios gave a talk last week entitled "Dancemats And Joysticks – Who's Playing Now?" In it, he charted the rise and development of game control mechanisms, and talked about the barriers that were now set up to

new gamers. "In the past, gaming was simple," he explains, flicking up a simple button-and-paddle system onto a projector, "you move the paddle, you press the button and aliens die."

The important thing, Rodriguez says, is that we understand what we're doing. "There's a one-to-one relationship between what we do with a controller and what happens on the screen. That's why games like *Guitar Hero* work. You tell people they have to play the guitar, give them a peripheral and..." he mimes a few power chords on a well-modelled air guitar, "...they know what to do."

Crucially, he explains, the reason that the games industry doesn't see the problem is because they grew up with the problem. Keyboards and joysticks aren't just techniques that the industry has got used to, it's something that is genuinely thought of as the best solution. *Steel Battalion's* release in both the Eastern and Western markets came

with the largest controller known to gamers at the time, with around 40 buttons and two joysticks. But as Rodriguez explains, part of the game becomes the control system itself. And mastering it is not something many gamers want to do.

"What I want to ask is: has the controller become a barrier to innovation and new gamers?"

It seems like a distinct possibility. The key problem – picked up by many others in the industry – is that gaming got too obsessed with itself, and with its romantic notion of sweaty teenagers in their bedrooms. Far from being something they shied away from, they embraced it. There was a thrill in the hard-core, the complicated. Joysticks became glorified, and t-shirts now bear the long strings of button combinations from famous game cheat codes.

But as time goes on, it comes around to bite gaming in the rear.

The key is to get people who aren't gaming into this market

which is still a newcomer at only a few decades old. But as you do that, the market changes. Is the aim to bring new gamers into old hobbies, or to create a different kind of gamer? Rodriguez thinks that the solution comes in getting people to try the medium out. "People move on. They might start on *Nintendogs*, but they're going to end up playing *Trauma Centre* and other games."

Rodriguez sums up the division quite neatly, against the backdrop of a painting of a street, with children skipping and playing ball games.

"Some of us don't want to game," he says. "Some of us just want to play."

With the next generation of gaming on our doorstep, those people may have more opportunities than ever. But it's still a topic of discussion, and one that the Science Museum and Game On hope to consider over the coming weeks, as they discuss the psychology, the brand names and the challenges of modern gaming.



Too inaccessible? The infamous *Steel Battalion* controller

Honey, I shrunk the technology

Hannah Dufty

First it was Nature, then New Scientist, and Scientific American, but so far so normal for a Science news story. But when The Guardian, The New York Times, and The Economist start running features on the same subject, it's time to sit up and take notice. But what is this big news? What is iGEM? *Felix* delves into the new field of synthetic biology to bring you perhaps the most exciting news this century.

iGEM (international Genetically Engineered Machine) is an annual competition for undergraduate scientists originally set up in order to address a simple question. Can simple biological systems be built from standard interchangeable parts and operated in living cells, or is biology too complicated to be engineered in this way?

Research of this kind falls under the new 'synthetic biology' banner. Waclaw Szybalski of the University of Wisconsin believes this work represents the beginning of a new era in engineering and biology: "The work on restriction nucleases not only permits us to easily construct recombinant DNA molecules and to analyse individual genes but also has led us to a new era of synthetic biology where not only existing genes are described and analysed but also new genes arrangements can be constructed and evaluated."

This cutting edge area of research is a combination of engineering and biology. Scientists unite to break down biological systems into their constituent parts and then engineer new systems from them, much like the components of a circuit are constructed within electronics. This allows the power of the cell to be harnessed and engineered to produce wide ranging results.

Dr. Kesling at the University of California is devising a way to synthesise artemisinin (an antimalarial drug) cheaply. Currently this drug is extracted from a type of wormwood mainly found in china and producing the chemical by standard chemistry is highly impractical due to the number of complicated steps involved, making the chemical expensive. Armed with a \$42.6 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, a partnership between Amyris Biotechnologies, the Institute for OneWorld Health, and the University of California; Keasling is developing a method to use cells as a 'factory' to produce artemisinic acid, which can then be converted to artemisinin. The goals of synthetic biology are far reaching, including building biological systems that process information, manipulate chemicals, fabricate materials, produce energy, provide food, maintain and enhance human health and the environment.

One such project is making cellu-

losic ethanol, used to produce carbon neutral fuels. At present this is produced by fermenting sugar and starch, but the process is inefficient due to yeast not being unable to digest the 100 per cent of material. However some species of fungi and bacteria can do this job and it is hoped by identifying the genes that enable them to do this job and reassembling them into a new pathway it will be possible to produce systems able to digest the whole plant.

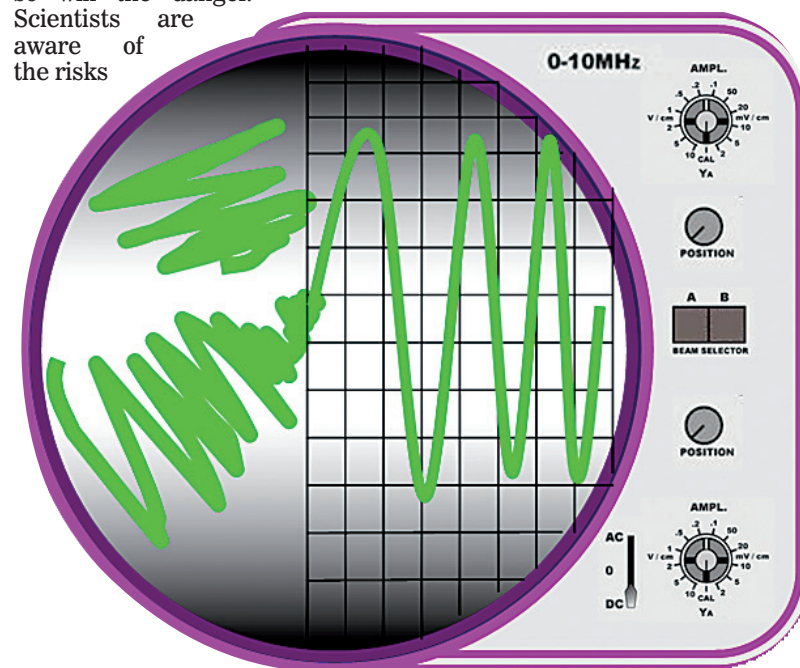
For some synthetic biologists the proof of their field is not an artificial metabolic pathway but an artificial organism. This is precisely what the man who first sequenced a whole organism's genome is planning to do. He believes he will be able to "synthesise a working bacterial genome from scratch in two years." Dr. Venter and Hamilton Smith are first creating a stripped down bacterial genome at the Venter institute in Rockville. He has been scouring the oceans for bacterial genes, his current collection clocking in at 6 million.

Of course this kind of science doesn't come without it's risks. Currently the highest risk is a biohacker or political terrorist using the metabolic pathways to their own ends. Another would be accidental escape of the organisms. "New organisms can't pass the exam of evolution any way. If they were released they wouldn't survive in the natural

world," Vincent Rouilly reports. As one of the seniors working on the iGEM project he naturally defends the developing and exciting field. There is no risk-free technology, but synthetic biology has an extra twist – the risks can breed. Currently the risks are very low due to the lack of survivability of the pathways and organisms created in the lab. Naturally, as understanding grows, then so will the danger. Scientists are aware of the risks

involved and are promoting public debate over the issues to prevent early legislation.

As the field grows synthetic biology becomes more able to produce chemicals and organisms which were previously hard to create or find. With its wide ranging application and initial exciting success who knows what the future holds for synthetic biology?



The future of synthetic biology? IC iGEM team's BioOscillator



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IMPERIAL VOLUNTEER CENTRE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH IMPERIAL COLLEGE UNION

Imperial College wipes the floor

IC team beats Cambridge, MIT, Harvard, and Tokyo to second place in the prestigious iGEM competition



The victorious Imperial team: weighed down with certificates and trophies after entering the world's first molecular oscillator into the iGEM competition

Colin Barras

Picture the scene. It's summer 2006. Undergraduates, exams successfully navigated, head off to roam the world, free from the toil of university for three long months. But look closely; there are still signs of life in the Bioengineering Department. Hidden away in a small corner of the building, a team of undergraduates and postgraduates are working on a new research project in collaboration with Professors Richard Kitney and Paul Freemont. Their brief is a demanding one. In just ten weeks they have to show that simple biological systems can be built from standard, interchangeable parts and operated in living cells. The results were presented at the iGEM (international Genetically Engineered Machine) competition in Boston last weekend. On the eve of their flight to Boston, the team took time out to talk to me about their work intensive summer.

So, why did eight undergraduates decide to forego the pleasures of the summer break to work on Imperial's iGEM entry? "I don't think any of us had any idea how much work was involved," admits Farah Vohra, a biomedical engineering student. "But the competition simply sounded interesting," adds Christin Sander, also a student in biomedical engineering.

Within a few short weeks, the team had decided that they would attempt to build the world's first molecular oscillator. Even to have reached such a decision so quickly

was impressive. "Getting familiar with the ideas was a huge hurdle," says Farah. John Chattaway, a biology student agrees: "we spent the first week just finding out about synthetic biology!" This is an obvious problem for the team. In the US, where the study of synthetic biology began five years ago, many students are taught synthetic biological principles in their lectures. US colleges choose their iGEM teams early in the year, giving these teams a running start when the competition begins. Will Imperial adopt a similar approach to this in future years? "That would be a good idea. A very good idea," says Farah.

But back to the oscillator. I ask the team to explain the potential applications of their system. "If we treat the oscillator as a clock we can control other things in the system; make sure things happen at periodic times," Farah tells me. This conjures up images of a biological computer in my mind. Jiongjun Bai, an electronic engineering student, agrees: "this could revolutionise our way of thinking about materials. So in future we won't need transistors or semi-conductors; everything can be built from biological materials."

Not all of the iGEM teams have chosen this line of inquiry. "MIT have made some smelly bacteria," says Farah. I'm not sure quite what to make of this, but the examples are coming too thick and fast to raise questions: "and Cambridge have made some bacteria that fight. The culture changes colour

as one population becomes dominant," Farah continues. "It's like a war game," adds Jiongjun, "there are lots of innovative ideas. We are at the competition to impress."

But this is no ordinary competition, I suggest. There is a surprising level of openness, with all teams providing regular progress updates on the Internet. "It's all on our wiki," Farah explains, "so other teams can look at it and use it to help with their own research." "Yes, the competition promotes openness," adds Christin, "so everyone knows what's going on. It's not a strict competition."

A key feature of Synthetic Biology is its strong cross-discipline approach. The undergraduates on the iGEM team are drawn from electrical engineering, biomedical engineering, biology and biochemistry. I wonder if it was easy to work together. "It's been an experience," says Farah diplomatically. They all agree with this. Christin explains why this approach is important: "the concepts people bring with them are different. And the way to approach a problem; that's different too. But that's the point. To try to gain the advantages of the different fields." I probe deeper into the contrast between the engineering and biological approach. "We found that the engineers were thinking 'OK, this is what I want to build', but the biologists were working at the DNA level, thinking 'OK, but what have we actually got, and what can we do with it?' They had limitations in mind whereas the engineers

probably didn't," says Christin.

These contrasting perspectives are evident during the interview; there are a number of disagreements about the answers to my questions, reflecting the different academic backgrounds on show. But it always remains very friendly, an amazing accomplishment considering the team have been working together intensively for several weeks. I ask if the experience has been worthwhile. "We learnt a lot," says Christin, "not just about synthetic biology, but about general research." My own undergrad summers were spent earning much-needed cash to pay for University. Did the experience gained make up for this loss of earnings? "Oh, we did get paid," John corrects me. "Yes, but it wasn't proportional to the input though," comments Farah. Truly, then, these undergrads have learnt some valuable lessons about the nature of scientific research.

As *Felix* was going to press, we heard that the Imperial iGEM team had been named the overall first runner-up at the competition in Boston, beating many other well established teams along the way. They also won first prize in the Best Documentation and Best Measurement and Part Characterisation Categories. This is a fantastic achievement for the team, considering that this is the first year they have taken part in the contest. Ninth university in the world? After this week's iGEM competition, the other eight had better start watching their backs.

Get involved

Looking for something to do this summer? Want to get involved with the fastest growing new science since the dot-com revolution? Imperial College is now recruiting team members for its entry to the 2007 iGEM competition. Students from all disciplines will work on the project over the summer before jetting off to present their work at the annual Jamboree at MIT in November.

iGEM (international Genetically Engineered Machine) is a competition set up to explore what it is that makes things alive – whether or not we can just break life up into a series of constituent components.

Involving all disciplines from biology to engineering, it involves trying to 'engineer' biological devices by using standardized parts called "BioBricks". New BioBricks are released every year as the science advances, so each year students are working on the cutting edge.

Visit http://parts2.mit.edu/wiki/index.php/Imperial_College_2006 to read more about this year's entry or send an email to igem.imperial2007@gmail.com for more information about this year's entry.

Climate rally hits the spot

Hannah Theodorou
Chair, Environmental Society

Saturday saw over 20 Imperial students flock to Malet Street to join the student branch of the 'I Count' climate campaign, organised by People and Planet. 2,000 students took part, joining the 22,000 already in Trafalgar Square to listen to the likes of Miranda Richardson, Si-

"I Count because the world is facing its greatest man-made threat ever: climate change." – David Attenborough

mon Amstell and Ashok Sinha, the Director of the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition talk about their fears and ideas about climate change.

The I Count campaign calls on both individuals and politicians to do their bit to reduce our impact on the environment and the climate. Their main aims are to call on the government to:

- Take a lead on the global stage, working for an international agreement to cut climate pollution. World-wide this must be in decline by 2015.
- Cut the UK's emissions by at least 3% year on year.
- Help the poorest countries get

access to clean energy, help them cut out poverty and deal with the climate disasters they are already facing.

The rally was timed to co-ordinate with the forthcoming international talks on climate change in Kenya where delegates will try to find ways to widen the UN's Kyoto Protocol, capping emissions of greenhouse gases by 35 industrial nations until 2012.

Over a decade ago, most countries joined an international treaty - the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - to begin to consider what can be done to reduce global warming and to cope with whatever temperature increases are inevitable. Recently, a number of nations have approved an addition to the treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, which has more powerful (and legally binding) measures. However, this is no guarantee of government action on climate change. The UNFCCC secretariat supports all institutions involved in the climate change process, particularly the COP, the subsidiary bodies and their Bureau (UNFCCC.int).

Hopes were high among campaigners that their voice will make a difference but only time will tell.

Get involved

Contact Environmental Society at ic.esoc@gmail.com, or visit these sites:
www.icount.org.uk
www.campaigncc.org



The People and Planet student rally marches towards Trafalgar Square to add their voice to the 'I Count' campaign. Over 22,000

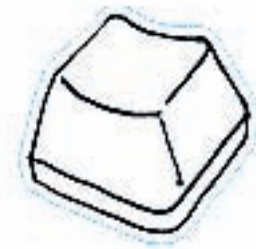
Eco...

Environmentally friendly



Recycling

Have you seen the bins for recycling around college? Re-think your rubbish, and don't be brash with your trash!



Saving electricity

Energy production is the greatest contributor to carbon dioxide emissions. Turning off lights you don't need could save 370kg of carbon!



Face your Elephant

In your lifetime you will discard over 31,000 drinks cans, drive more than 722,000 miles, and flush away 119.1km of toilet paper. This is your own personal carbon elephant, and it's time you confronted it.



Four wheel drives

These gas-guzzling, sloane-mummy carrying, carbon-emitting mobile factories are going to be taxed beyond belief! Hurrah for that. However, some will argue that the divide between the rich and the poor will increase exponentially.

Eek-o!
Environmentally awful

Embracing the power of switching off

It will probably come as no surprise to most that leaving appliances on standby uses a considerable amount of energy. According to the Energy Saving Trust (EST), 10% of the UK's electricity bills (about £300 million a year, or £37 per household) is used by TVs, VCRs, and DVD players left on standby. This doesn't take into account all the other culprits including mobile chargers, laptop cables, stereos, and washing machines along with many others. Extra energy usage results in increased carbon emissions, a gas that has been shown to contribute to the greenhouse effect and consequently a global climate change. The EST estimates that DVDs and VCRs produce more than a million tons of CO₂ annually. While manufacturers can considerably reduce the standby power of an appliance, few do so despite a new voluntary EU initiative.

So what can we do about it? Any steps individuals take will add to the solution rather than the problem, as well as saving on household energy bills. For example, if every standby button on TV sets and videos in the UK were switched off we would save the power equivalent to the annual output of a large power station. And, if every household changed just two ordinary light bulbs for energy efficient ones it would save enough electricity each year to power all the street lighting



Street lighting: changing two bulbs in every house to energy efficient bulbs could power this for a year

in the UK. The steps are small but the impact could be huge. Other tips from the EST include:

1. Turning your thermostat down by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10 per cent and save you around £40 per year.

2. If you're not filling up the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher, use the half-load or econo-

my programme

3. Only boil as much water as you need (but remember to cover the elements if you're using an electric kettle).

4. Always turn off the lights when you leave a room.

Imperial College's Environmental Society is currently planning its second Green Week; this year's

theme is Energy and the measures both the college, its staff and students can take to reduce their energy usage including promoting the 'Power of Off'. If you're interested in getting involved, in any area be it publicity, planning, design or just being an extra pair of hands during the week email ic.esoc@gmail.com and we'll welcome you onboard!

Comment & Opinion

NUS referendum special

Why vote No? Do it for your club!

Former ACC Chair Eric Lai argues that IC's clubs and societies have a lot to gain from voting No next week



Eric Lai

Many people have commented on the NUS referendum so far, covering everything from discounts to representation. This time round I want to cover the things most people care about – clubs & societies. I know that this extra money that we are saving from ULU could do a lot of good for clubs. Last year I was ACC Chair, responsible for ensuring that all of Imperial's sports clubs were running smoothly. I also organised the odd ACC Barnight, which seem to have gained a certain notoriety. This is why I feel so strongly about why Imperial students should vote No! to joining the NUS.

Far too many people dismiss us as "apathetic." Quite the opposite is true in fact. Imperial College has one of the highest club participation rates in the country. They are all run by dedicated volunteers and members turn out regularly. This is evidence of a student body who relishes getting involved, not one that lets the world drift past them. Just because you don't give a toss for union politics (lets face it, who does?) it doesn't make you apathetic.

The NUS will tell you that they can make your clubs better (in fact, they did on Live! last week at live.cgu.net/editions/nus/1318). For sports clubs, they might tell you that the NUS is the only student

organisation involved with the 2012 Olympics, so we'd better affiliate to get involved. Lets not forget that British University Sports Association, which we affiliate to, have been involved from the start.

Finally, they'll say how much better our student media could be with the support they can provide – they've even launched their own student media awards. All this for only £52,000!

But this is an argument for the NO campaign, so there must be a catch. According to the Association of Managers in Students' Unions: per head, Imperial College Union is one of the best funded unions in the country. We have more clubs and societies than any other union, and our sports clubs are active and successful. But there is always room for improvement, £52,000 could give our clubs that extra bit of funding that could make all the difference.

Sport Imperial are also involved with the 2012 Olympics and have been so from the beginning. This year the College and the Union have set up a Sports Federation, bringing in a new staff member dedicated to sport and using College's resources to strengthen our sports clubs. We have the resources of a juggernaut with half a billion pounds of turnover per year at our disposal for sport. The NUS has a turnover of less than £4m – less, in fact, than ICU itself.

The NUS student media awards are all very well, but Imperial's student media is doing quite well by itself. Over the summer Stoic TV, our student TV station, won best broadcaster at the National Student Television Awards. Felix has been short-listed in five categories at the Guardian Student Media Awards (and won two top awards), and IC Radio is in the running in two categories at the Student Radio Awards. There are plenty of awards open to all students, without the NUS having some of their own.

Now for the money bit! Affiliation will cost £52,000 and we have 250 clubs. That's an average of £208 per club. It's also roughly the budget for the whole RCC, the whole medicals union or the following put together: Arts & Ents Board, Media Group, SCC, RSM, City & Guilds College Union and the Royal College of Science Union. Perhaps we could give Cheese Society some money for Cheese in the process. Other options include employing additional staff to reduce the workload of our volunteers, so they can spend more time running activities and less time doing paperwork.

The NUS Extra card also comes with strings. I was recently at University of Westminster which has 25000 students and after a month they have only sold 2000. Extra staff had to be hired and new laptops had to be purchased to admin-

ister the scheme and we will probably have to do the same. Imperial students can get discounts at a lot of places including HMV, Odeon, VUE, Cineworld, and McDonalds. NUS are campaigning to get these companies to give exclusive discounts to NUS extra card holders. Do you really want to spend £52,000 on a organisation that actively campaigns against the interest of ALL students?

Since I started talking about their campaigns, let's not forget about the lecturers strike. The strike affected thousands of students across the country, many have struggled to find jobs due to results or exams being late. Who was it that supported the strike? The NUS. They would rather stick to their dogma than act on behalf of thousands of students who faced the prospect of not being awarded their degree, endangering many conditional job offers. Were they aware that students were suffering?

One member of their executive was. An emergency motion was tabled at the start of their conference basically saying "this is important, lets talk about this first". The Conference voted against this, taking less than 30 minutes to reach their decision. Do we really want to join this bunch?

Leaving ULU is no reason to waste £52,000, vote NO! to have more money available for your clubs and societies this NO!vember.

"Affiliation will cost £52,000 and we have 250 clubs. That's an average of £208 per club"

Now I'm a believer – I'd vote Yes!

President of Edinburgh University Students Association and former NUSceptic Tim Goodwin explains why his opinion changed, and why he now recommends that Imperial students vote Yes next week



Tim Goodwin

It's funny to think that a little less than two years ago I was in the middle of a bitter battle with the NUS to 'save' Edinburgh from becoming one of its faceless members, and now I'm writing an article in support of a YES vote. I feel a little bad to be honest, a bit like I'm somehow betraying someone or something, but what really drives me is the knowledge, as a sabbatical, that joining NUS is the right thing to do.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying that NUS is a perfect organisation. There are still faults within the juggernaut that is the National Union. Decision-making can still be dominated by factions, procedures and processes are still bizarrely complex, organisation is still unfeasibly poor, and communication is still not up to scratch. These are all the things that I, as the head of a NO campaign canily entitled 'Students Against the NUS at Edinburgh (SANE!)', campaigned on.

But what I wasn't really thinking about (or rather, what I was shy-

ing away from at the time) was the fact that you can't reform something from the outside. You have to get into something to criticise it. There's absolutely no point in standing on the sidelines shouting about how rubbish something is unless you're prepared to roll up your sleeves and get involved. Yes NUS can be (at times) inefficient and a touch shady. No that doesn't mean we should dump it and move on. NUS is reforming itself. We can only influence that, and make sure it happens, if we are there. If Imperial joins now, you can all play a massive role in reforming our national union. That, of all things, should be a draw.

When I was running the NO camp in Edinburgh we spent a lot of time talking about beer and discounts. I am convinced that the things that really mattered to students during the referendum were beer and discounts. If we joined, would they get cheaper beer? Would they be able to get student rate in clubs back home? Would they get the blessed NUS discount card? But if you ask me now, none of those things really matter.

What does matter is what we are doing as a student movement. The government has scrapped grants and introduced loans, fees and variable fees. This is a hard time for higher education and we must all work together to fight for what is right. It's old, it's clichéd, but it's true: together we are stronger than

when we are apart. If we all come together to fight for our rights then we stand a much better chance of winning. If we remain fractured we will get nowhere. That is how the government has trodden on us for so long. We need a national voice, and NUS really is the only show in town.

"Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying that NUS is a perfect organisation"

Got anything you would like to share with our readers?

Please send all contributions to comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk

“I just cannot betray their interests”

Southampton President Ben Rogers talks to Stephen Brown about why the welfare of Southampton students is best served keeping their union out of the NUS and why Imperial students should vote No

Why did Southampton leave the NUS?

Southampton left the NUS in 2002 because it was considered very bad value for money. Southampton could not see any clear reason to spend the affiliation fee and after investigation we found out that we could do everything the NUS supposedly does for us in-house. The ‘National Voice’ that we had never listened to us and was far too radical to represent our students.

How much have you saved on affiliation fees and how have you put the money to better use?

Since we left, we have saved over £200,000.

We have built a state of the art radio station, our AU budget has dramatically increased, we have doubled our own Welfare and Education campaigns budgets (so we can run Ed/Wel campaigns our students want to see and ask for, not some NUS forced campaign), we have doubled our own external campaigns budget, we have refurbished our nightclub and bars and we are about to start on a capital project to refurbish our shop.

We have hired more members of staff – a postgraduate coordinator which has greatly improved our representation, and a course-rep coordinator which means we have a very effective rep system set up now. These are things that make a difference to student’s day to day lives on campus. They care about getting a degree, having a good time, and getting a job.

This is what Southampton University Students Union aims at doing, and we do it very well, far far better than we ever could in the NUS.

Why were you asked to leave the balcony at the NUS conference?

Funnily enough I went to NUS conference to sit on the balcony and learn about their democracy and how they do things.

I became increasingly disillusioned and frustrated with their whole process and this was climaxed by being thrown off the balcony. It was during the “ban Coca-Cola” motion – someone on the balcony from a radical group got upset and started screaming at the chair of conference. As a consequence the NUS President decided to throw the 100+ people off the balcony because they couldn’t deal with one person. This is the way the NUS manages and handles things – abysmally.

What was going on at the conference?

NUS Conference was the single biggest joke I have ever seen in my entire life. I saw their National Exec explain how they were in £500,000 of debt and get off scot-free. Nobody holds them to account. If I ran Southampton into a relative £50,000 of debt I would be grilled and most likely sacked!

I saw the NUS waste time on useless ‘No Platform’ policy and I saw them prioritise the Coca-Cola debate over the AUT debate. As a result, it left them in such a mess last year and thousands of students were disrupted.

Several Unions were so upset with the NUS’ stance on the AUT strike and their lack of democracy that they threatened to disaffiliate. That was very nearly the end of the NUS and their so-called effective ‘National Voice’.

Do Southampton students have problems getting discounts?

Very rarely. Businesses care about student trade, not about the NUS logo. Any club or business that our student have a problem with normally one letter or phone call from the Union President explaining the situation about the NUS and the problem is solved.

You may have more money, but surely this leaves your Union isolated with no external influence?

‘No external influence’ not at all – we are having an influence right now! Southampton wants a National Union, but it has tried for so long to change things from the inside. But nobody listens. If you are not in a faction you are marginalised. If you do not have the support of Labour Students and the other main factions your motion will not get through. The only way the National Union will change is if student unions start to leave. Why do you think they swarm campuses whenever a referendum appears? They need the money to survive. Withdrawing this money forces them to listen. Southampton has ‘been on its own’ for 4 years and just last year alone our President met with the head of the AUT, Sally Hunt and was on BBC Breakfast News putting our students views across during the strike. There are many ways to get a national voice you just need to be proactive about it and be proactive when working with other Unions.

What is your opinion on the NUS attitude to top-up fees?

I think that recent articles have severely damaged the NUS’s stance on tuition fees. The government

now believes that the NUS have been scaring students off higher education by not promoting the benefits they bring to the poorest students. The NUS has been scaremongering by presenting a doom and gloom picture about student debt.

Even on its National Demo, where we had a chance to unite, the message was, again, confused and conflated with many banners saying different things. Some were shouting for a totally free education, some were shouting for not lifting the cap on top up fees, some were shouting against top-up fees as a whole, some were shouting about the war and how they should fund education with this money instead – where is the united message?! This kaleidoscope of opinion just blurred any sort of united messages the NUS wanted to give. Hardly worth paying £50,000 for!

What about the rumour that several Unions threatened to disaffiliate during the lecturers strike because of the stance the NUS was taking?

The NUS was originally supporting the lecturers in their pay claim. However the NUS never discussed what its stance should be at conference (too busy talking about no platform policy and Coca-Cola) and several Unions were outraged. Led by Exeter Students’ Union a break-away group was almost formed. Around 30 students unions were so disillusioned they threatened to withdraw their affiliation fees until the NUS discussed its stance. This is the sort of ‘collective action’ and ‘national voice’ that Imperial can buy for only £52,000 a year!

Describe your typical NUS delegate and National Exec member. From what I have seen the typical NUS delegate follows a very predictable set of steps. Step one, forget about all the people you represent. Step two, join a faction that interests you. Factions are groups of ‘buddies’ that have similar interests and all gang up and club together and make war with other groups of buddies with interests sometimes that differ at only a microscopic level.

Step three is to tow the party line and vote how your buddies vote, or you’ll be kicked out of the buddy circle. And that is where representation and democracy fails within the NUS. A candidate can come forward with really good ideas and who really could change things... but they will never get voted in if they don’t have the support of the buddies. And you get support of buddies by towing their line and saying things they want to hear... and then, again, this is where representation fails.

If you are in it for yourself, NUS is great because you have so many new friends to make. You have loads of opportunity to run for all these exciting positions. Everyone claps and cheers you when you decide to re-affiliate, as was the case with Edinburgh. If I was in it for myself, I would take Southampton back in today... but when I remember the students I represent, and the state that the NUS is in, I can’t do it, I just cannot betray their interests in this way.

I urge all Imperial students to vote no! You will always be able to find like-minded unions, like Southampton, to work with.

Eight common myths about the NUS exposed



John Collins

“On balance I think that the benefits of affiliating to the NUS easily outweigh the benefits of staying outside”

If I had been around during the last referendum, I would probably have voted “no”. Back then there were serious concerns about the structure and finances of the NUS, along with unanswered questions regarding ICU’s ability to pay the affiliation fee. Since then the financial and political climates within both the NUS and ICU have changed, which is why I have changed my mind and now support the “yes” campaign. In spite of these changes, I am still seeing many of the old arguments against the NUS resurfacing even though most of them no longer apply to this debate. So, even if your mind is set, please allow me to guide you through some of the myths that I personally believe no longer apply to this debate.

“We can’t afford the affiliation fee”: We currently pay £79,000 each year to affiliate to ULU. When we leave ULU next year, we could, in theory, use this money to pay for the £52,000 NUS affiliation fee, leaving plenty of money spare. The key point is that, unlike last time, clubs funding and beer prices would be completely unaffected if we affiliate to the NUS.

“If we join then I won’t be able to buy Kit Kats from the Union shop”:

The ICU Executive has categorically ruled out affiliating to NUSSL (the NUS buying consortium that imposes these restrictions) so we will still be able to sell Kit Kats, Pepsi, Real Ale and anything else that takes our fancy.

“The NUS is in debt”: Thanks to major restructuring in recent years, NUS finances are now sound and the organisation is no longer in debt. Dun and Bradstreet, who specialise in risk assessment, named the NUS “one of the most financially viable organisations in the sector” last year.

“The NUS is dominated by political factions”: The majority of NUS students and officers, including the current President and several Executive committee members, do not overtly support any political party and stood for election as “Independents”. Furthermore, although there are political elements within the NUS just as there are within Imperial’s student body, the consensus within NUS is that there has been a shift towards the centre-ground within recent years.

“NUS conference is dominated by discussions on foreign policy”: Thanks to recent changes, the vast majority of time at conference is allocated to issues that affect students

as students. The reforms introduced last year require 75% of conference debating time to be devoted to students’ unions, welfare, education and the NUS itself. The remaining time is used to discuss other issues that students wish to raise (e.g. Climate Change, Make Poverty History, the fair-trade movement and so on). For the record, none of the motions passed at the last conference mentions “Palestine”, “Iraq”, or “George W Bush”.

“We could work with other independent unions as an alternative to joining the NUS”: 98% of students in Higher Education are represented by the NUS. Those in England that aren’t affiliated are Southampton, Sunderland, Northampton, the Open University and us. The notion that we could form an alliance with these disparate institutions to somehow provide a counterbalance against the rest of the country is frankly ridiculous.

“The NUS top up fees policy is different from ours”: This is simply not true (for details, see my “Live!” article). Anyway, we are and always would be free to disagree with the NUS, and from time to time some affiliated unions do.

“You’re doing this because

you’re a career politician vying for a job in NUS”: I am supporting the “yes” campaign because I don’t believe that it is in our interests to be the most isolated student union in London. When we leave ULU next year we will lose our links with the few student unions that we regularly interact with (e.g. LSE, UCL, Kings, etc). This isolation will harm our Union and reduce its ability to do its job, representing the views of its members. I have no intention of running for an NUS position (this year’s deadline has passed anyway!). Besides, I have had enough of student politics so I am off to find a proper job.

So I say let’s give them a chance: I accept that the NUS has its faults – all organisations do (including ICU). However, on balance I think that the benefits of affiliating to the NUS easily outweigh the advantages of staying outside. If we join and find that the NUS really is not for us, then we can always hold another referendum in a couple of years. At the end of the day I see that NUS as a group of students, not too dissimilar from us, who work tirelessly to ensure that the voice of students is heard so that the lives of those we claim to represent can be improved.

Tumelty: "I'd like to speak for you"

Gemma Tumelty is the NUS National President and the first from a post-1992 university. She was previously a sabbatical officer at Liverpool John Moores University and graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Applied Psychology



Gemma Tumelty

"You can change that, you can speak to me, so that I can speak for you. How? Just vote yes to NUS"

I've been president of NUS since July 2006, and already since then, I've spoken as the voice of students over 100 times. I've got the right to speak on behalf of UK students because I lead the National Union of Students UK, a democratic organisation where policy is decided at our Annual Conference, the largest democratic conference of its kind. The NUS President speaks on behalf of the largest democratic student movement in the world. I've spoken to Ministers, to Government officials and to numerous broadcast and print media. When I'm asked to speak, what I say reflects and represents the 'voice of UK students', the sad thing is, when I'm thinking of what to say, I never think about Imperial's words, what Imperial students want, what Imperial students need. I've no way to hear your voice, you don't talk to me, you are not my member. You can change that, you can speak to me, so that I can speak for you.... How? Just vote yes to NUS.

I want to say how much I am looking forward to the upcoming affiliation referendum at Imperial. It will give this generation of Imperial students a chance missed by the generations before – to sign both themselves and their union up to the wide range of benefits that NUS offers. It has been 5 years

since students at Imperial last had the chance to decide on their membership to the National Union, and a lot has changed in those 5 years, both in the education sector, but more importantly inside NUS.

The last few years in NUS have been spent making the work of the National Union more relevant to the needs of our members (students' unions) and our member's member's (students) – just like you. NUS is widely recognised as the leading educational pressure group representing students throughout the UK.

We talk weekly to the government on behalf of students, we talk daily to the media on behalf of students, and we talk hourly to a wide range of national bodies and organisations such as Universities UK on behalf of students. We are the recognised national voice of students across the UK, and right now, not only are Imperial College Union not part of that national voice, the concerns and views of Imperial Students are not considered. This is your chance to change that!

NUS campaigns and represents on all issues that affect students as students, but we also do much much more. I recommend that those of you who want to know more look at our two websites www.officeronline.co.uk and www.nusonline.co.uk. Here are the

highlights:

We campaign

- We carry our campaign work on a variety of student issues including fairer funding systems, better student housing and healthcare.

- We have active liberations campaigns: LGBT, Black Students', Womens and Students' with Disabilities.

- We provide official representation to government and national bodies.

- NUS representatives sit on governmental committees and provide evidence which is used to shape policies and inform legislation.

- We produce research on student issues for publication, to raise public awareness of issues affecting students today.

We strengthen local union activity

- We have a Development Projects Unit, allowing your student activities to benefit from training, to network and share ideas through Stadia.

- We provide research and information, support and advice for your union officers on virtually any area of education and student life, from housing to franchise courses, student funding to women's issues. There are also special projects on accommodation costs and student health.

We Make Commercial Sense

- We produce the NUS Extra card, which gives students a range of high street discounts from clothing to music and computers. The Extra card will bring in an additional £1,000,000 to students' unions across the country, with 40 per cent of the profits of the Extra card being channelled directly back into local students unions to be spent as each local union deems best.

The list goes on.... but I'll leave it there. I believe that students at Imperial will benefit enormously from joining with hundreds of other unions to campaign for those things that affect us all. As we set up and develop the London Student Assembly to ensure the voice of London students is articulated directly to the GLA, as we continue to meet with TfL to enhance and sharpen the discount package for London students and as we continue to lobby locally and nationally on behalf of students, I'd be delighted to be able to speak out for you too. Not only that, but as NUS President I know more than anyone, that my organisation can never reach its full potential until we can truly claim to speak for every student, in every college and university. I hope you will use your vote in this referendum to bring that vision closer to reality.

My experience of the NUS and its campaigning



Tom Page

I wrote in *Felix* recently about my concerns with NUS, and my belief that come the referendum the vote should be NO! Firstly, it would be terribly arrogant of me to assume to know much about Imperial College Union at all – I have been here for all of six weeks and in that time have had little opportunity to delve into ICU. So, you might ask, how can I have the audacity to state I know what's best for the union regarding NUS?

The answer to this is simple – I have plenty of NUS experience, and spent a year as the sabbatical president of Durham Students' Union (DSU). It is NUS that is broken, not Imperial. However, I would not recommend mouldy food, a derelict property, the music of James Blunt or NUS to anyone, simply because all of these things are a detrimental item to acquire regardless of your current status.

One of the concerns raised has been that we would have no representation should we not join. This argument doesn't hold water for two reasons. Firstly, it is indeed possible to have a voice as a single union. While the Higher Education Act 2004 was being discussed Durham got several BBC interviews, including national news at six, they interviewed us in our Union, we got spots on local radio and they did a follow up peace on TV with us after the bill was enacted.

It's worth emphasising that we

were just one union – all of this was arranged without NUS. It's also interesting to see people describe Imperial students as apathetic as several have done to me – exactly the same charge was constantly laid on Durham students. We can still have a voice – all it takes is work from the ICU sabbs, and I see no evidence that they are not capable of this.

We need not work on our own – there are many unions who I'm sure would be happy to work with us on targeted campaigns. We are, of course, still able to work with our friends at other colleges in London on relevant issues – good unions will work with other unions because they agree on a key principal, not because they happen to be a member of NUS.

When the topic of our voice on the national arena is raised we also need to look at a second point – is NUS the voice we want? Last time I wrote I talked about the dysfunction of NUS' annual National Conference (NC). I don't want to pretend there is nothing more to NUS, but it's critical to realise that NUS policy is decided by NC, and effectively by NC alone. The regional conferences (of which there are three a year) are a better opportunity to talk to NUS exec members (known as the NEC), but they have no policy-setting power. This means that NUS principles for the year are decided by the farce of National Conference.

It is for this reason that the only line NUS will take on the student funding issue is that of no-fees and full grants. When I attended one of the Mass Lobbies of Parliament I was inside Parliament, speaking to MPs and trying to convince them that the bill on the table was broken and needed fixing. Some on the NEC were helping, but others seemed much more interesting in protesting outside. When one of the NEC sat down in the road outside Parliament and in-

"We shouldn't join NUS because there's nothing better of comparable scale."

so-doing infuriated the (otherwise highly supportive) members of the public it made me want to cry.

The atmosphere of NUS conference means that one of two motions get passed – the so-obvious-it-hurts motion, e.g. "To work positively to improve the student experience in halls of residence", something you'd hope NUS would do even if they had no policy on it, or the rousing rhetoric "Continue campaigning for...grants covering living cost [&] an end to

all methods of charging for their education"

Neither of these two types of motion are terribly helpful. One does what they'd do anyway, and the other is understandably popular, but avoids having a proper debate about what we will and what we won't accept as a funding proposal for students. One cannot usefully engage with politicians or other opinion-formers without a well thought out policy. While at Durham NUS were great at providing me with placards and posters, but very poor at providing me with anything to actively engage with the decision makers.

One of the biggest troubles with NUS is that the constituent unions are all so different – a Further Education union receiving next-to-no money and with no facilities is in an entirely different world from a large HE union. They will often have very different policy views, which is partly why when NUS make policy it's so bland or populist – it's about the only way you can get an agreement.

I don't think this is a voice that will actively speak for Imperial. We shouldn't join NUS because there's nothing better of comparable scale. It's a terrible reason; one that is logically deficient. However much we might desire it, we cannot fix NUS by joining it. We can, however, spend the £50k+ a year on projects in welfare, campaigning and facilities and get the very best for students at Imperial.

"We can still have a voice – all it takes is work from the ICU sabbs"

No marketisation, says NUS

NUS VP Education Wes Streeting explains the NUS opposition to variable fees



Wes Streeting

“Imperial students need to be clear: a full market in Higher Education will damage access to Imperial College more than most places”

The introduction of ‘top-up’ tuition fees this year has tripled the cost of Higher Education for thousands of students and will see the class of ’06 graduating with debts in excess of £30,000. This is just the thin end of the wedge of a project of marketisation that seeks to pass the cost of education onto individual students and their families. Already, some vice-chancellors and rectors, including Imperial’s very own Richard Sykes, are lobbying for this cap to be raised – or even lifted altogether.

This term, NUS mobilised over 10,000 students from across the UK for a national demonstration and rally in central London. This is not the centre-piece of our battle to prevent the lifting of the cap, it is merely the beginning. Over the next three years we will be building the research, evidence and arguments we will need to win, building in our campaigning action with a focussed, strategic and targeted lobbying campaign that will see the inboxes and mailboxes of every Peer and Member of Parliament full in the run up to the crucial parliamentary vote in 2009.

Imperial students need to be clear: a full market in Higher Education will damage access to Imperial College more than most places. Your rector has already made it clear that he will charge as

much as he can to generate more income. NUS argues that Imperial needs additional funding to remain a world class scientific institution; NUS does not argue with variable funding for institutions, but we do oppose variable fees for students.

There are other challenges facing the education sector. Over the next two years I will be sitting on the Universities UK delivery partnership steering group, bringing together stakeholders from across the education sector, to fundamentally reform and reshape the Higher Education admissions system. Just another national body NUS attends; but with it, the chance to implement a post-qualification application system that will radically level the playing field to ensure that every applicant to university is treated fairly.

We have also been playing a leading role in the reform of the degree classification system, quality assurance mechanisms and have board seats on the Quality Assurance Agency, Higher Education Academy and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

All of this work nationally, has a direct impact on students locally. Only by being members of NUS can you shape it.

Some in this referendum campaign will argue that ICU doesn’t need NUS, that its parent body is prestigious enough to guarantee

that the voice of Imperial’s students will be heard anyway. As a former president of Cambridge University Students’ Union I can tell you from experience that from the press (where it matters less), to the education sector and government decision makers (where it matters more), NUS is the only body with the collective clout to make a difference and affect policy change. NUS is the only show in town.

Some in this referendum campaign will argue that ICU doesn’t need NUS, that its membership of the Aldwych Group (students’ unions of the Russell Group) can guarantee you a national voice without the need for NUS affiliation. As a former chair of the Aldwych Group I can tell you from experience that as a body for bringing similar students’ unions together to share common experiences it’s a useful forum, but in the media and within the education sector, it barely makes an impact. NUS is the only body with representation in the right places to make a difference and affect policy change. NUS is the only show in town.

In the faces of the challenges ahead, you need a strong national campaigning voice to represent you on the issues that matter. We want you to play your part at the forefront of the largest student movement in the world. Vote YES to the NUS.

Vote Yes to NUS, says Shiv Chopra

From the very first day at University I was disappointed. Not because I had joined a University renowned for its poor male: female ratio and its fake ethos of “Work hard, work harder” but for the fact that we were not part of the NUS.

At the time I did not know of the history behind IC’s link with the NUS or realised it was something we had to pay to join. For me and my post sixth form mind, NUS meant one thing and one thing only...discounts!

I believe that it is this very point that our students, especially our new freshers, associate the NUS to. For many years I have felt the bitter rejection of my Imperial College swipe card at the tills and the situation is only getting worse! Only last week at Subway sandwiches, the very staple diet of many a student, began to enforce discounted prices on those bearing the NUS card only. How dare they prevent me from enjoying a toasted BMT at a cut price! Yet, if we are not members of the club we cannot reap the benefits. Yes, HMV and Virgin have begun to tackle this problem by creating their own student cards but I would rather carry one single card than a card for every single store I go to.

I hate to think of the amount we could have saved throughout our student lifetime, if we had access to the card sooner? This fact is now becoming more important for our new cohort of students as they pay tuition fees currently at nearly four times the amount set a few years ago. Imagine the situation for medical students or those continuing with their studies...over five years of financial pain.

The card is just one aspect of the NUS, what about their representation? Let me now refer to Tom Page’s article in *Felix* on the 3rd of November. His experience at the National NUS conferences paints the organisation as farce with members there for their own political gains. This maybe true, but surely with a force such as Imperial College attending these conferences as well as a new look NUS system in place, things can only get better.

I strongly believe that Imperial needs to be part of a support network and cannot afford to stand alone after we leave ULU. The NUS will also aid our relationship with the British Medical Association (BMA), as the NUS provides strong representation for medical students within the BMA. Last year it seemed that the BMA were not supporting London medical schools in the recent job application scheme. More direct links to the organisation will create a stronger voice for Imperial and London at a national level.

Yes the NUS will cost, but it costs less than ULU which we’re leaving and frankly we get more for our money. The NUS has its faults like any organisation but Imperial being part of the group will only strengthen it and more importantly, strengthen us. So vote for representation, vote for savings and vote for a stronger Imperial! Vote Yes on November 14th.

Self-destruct, then we’ll join the NUS



Stephen Brown

“If they grow up I might consider voting Yes in the future, but only if the new HE-England NUS doesn’t have the cheek to charge for use of its discount card”

I’ll get my own personal opinion on the referendum off my chest first. I urge you all to go out and vote NO! next week. I think that affiliating would be a huge mistake and a poor use of the limited resources we have. What both sides of this debate seem to agree on is that the NUS needs reform. The only quibbling seems to be over our ability to drive this change. The starry-eyed Yes! camp seem to think that the addition of 12,000 of us will result in massive changes. Naturally, my colleagues and I from The A-NUS Coalition are somewhat more sceptical about the influence that Imperial will have in such an inefficient monolith.

However, no-one has said what they mean by reform. I have a funny feeling that some might class it as renaming the influential Labour Students faction as “New” Labour Students. The more I have studied the NUS the more horrified I have become with how useless an organisation it is in its current form but I do recognise that it has potential. Who wouldn’t want a strong national student body that was effective in representing us? I don’t want you to think that A-NUS are pessimistic, so im going to lay out my main concerns with the NUS and what could be done to address them.

The main problem with the NUS is that it is dominated by factional interests. This is what happens when you put a load of people who are politically inclined in one room. They seem to feel the need to gang up along religious or party political lines (you get the odd independent,

but they always have to attract support from one of the large groups, the so-called “Independent” President only won because of the support she secured from Labour Students). In the age of online voting, why do we need to have NUS Officers elected by only those who attend conference? To me, the NUS method will only result in officers and policies even further alienated from the people they purport to represent. Why not open voting on senior officers to all students? Surely this is far more democratic than letting a handful of self-interested politicians pick “their” person?

Now that we don’t have lackeys propped up by some incredibly fashionable left-wing pressure group in charge we can consider problem number two The NUS represents far too large a cross section of students. Most affiliates are sixth-form or FE colleges. Do they not get pissed off with them banging on about top-up fees all the time? I, somewhat flippantly, asked a member of the Yes! campaign what exactly Imperial College had in common with a lot of the other NUS members, his reply was “we are all exempt from council tax” (one of the historical achievements of the NUS, sad thing is they have done so little since they are still parading it as an example of a triumph). Whilst he is spot on, this is hardly a massive overlap. Perhaps he could have followed up with “oh, and we all use pens and pencils?” The current grouping is just too large for it to be an effective lobbying group for us. The NUS must spit into independent HE and

FE bodies.

Another elephant in the room is that the NUS has not come to terms with devolution in the UK. As a proud Scotsman it pains me to say that it needs to tell the Scots to go home. There is no more need for delegates from Scottish unions to attend National Conference than there is for delegates from a foreign country now that education policy is now the responsibility of the parliament in Edinburgh. A student in London needs to speak to Westminster, a student in Glasgow does not. End of story. I suspect the only reason that my countryman are allowed to stay is because senior NUS officers love to grandstand to students in disaffiliation referendums that they “represent 5 million students.” This is just another example of the NUS being more about political ego-stroking than ordinary students. As a staunch (British) unionist it is funny saying this but NUS Scotland should break away completely.

Now the creative destruction of the NUS is complete. We have 4 separate bodies, two north of the border with these parts enjoying far greater influence than the whole. The NUS will only be effective if it has the respect of students and politicians. At the moment I suspect that both groups consider it to be a laughing stock. So vote NO! and send them homewards to think again. If they grow up I might consider voting Yes in the future, but only if the new HE-England NUS doesn’t have the cheek to charge for use of its discount card. Vote NO!

NUS Referendum

Voting takes place this week

This week sees one of the most important votes on the future of the Union for many years. It is important that you do vote and also make an informed decision. For those of you who missed the hustings last week, please take time to look at both sides of the argument.

If there is not enough discussion in this issue of Felix, then why not look at the excellent NUS Referendum mini-site from Live!. You can access this by going to <http://live.cgcu.net/nus>.

Voting takes place, as always, online at imperialcollegeunion.org/vote.



0000 hrs Tuesday 14th November
Online voting opens.

2359 hrs Thursday 16th November
Online voting closes.

1900 hrs Friday 17th November
Referendum result announced.

Union Building Redevelopment

Update on the work schedule

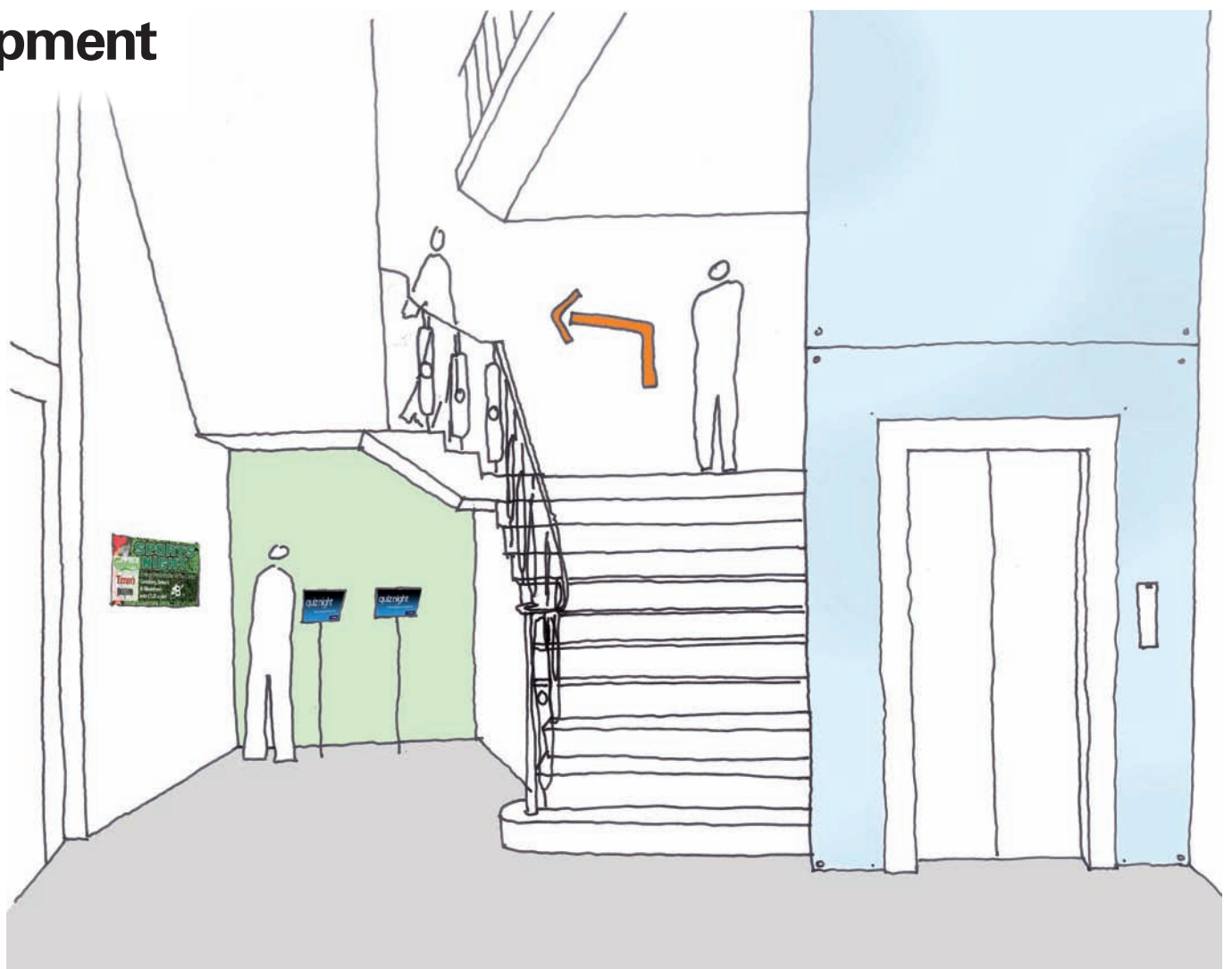
As all of you who have visited the Union this year will realise, there is an extensive program of works taking place in the Union Building. The work started on the 1st August and initially work was focused on da Vinci's. This work included new doors to the Quad, new paving approaches for disabled access to all doors, and the removal of the raised area within the bar.

This work was finished in time for Freshers' Week and further improvements will be made to da Vinci's over the Christmas break, when new bespoke furniture will be installed thus completing all planned work for this phase.

The central core work will provide:

- a new 13 person lift to comply with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements.
- new doors on all floors that conform with the DDA.
- an extension of the mezzanine on the 2nd floor to support the shaft for the new lift and provide changing rooms for a new gymnasium to be constructed on the 3rd floor in a future phase.
- sympathetic refurbishment to retain, as far as possible the character of the early twentieth century parts of the building in its unique tudor revival style.

Unfortunately due to unanticipated construction issues, including the discovery of small areas of asbestos, the work has been delayed. However, the contractors are confident that current progress, including Saturday working when possible will get the programme back on track. All work is expected to be completed by early March 2007, when the lift car will be installed. Access to the central core will be available from next term.



Vacant Council Positions

There are four positions vacant on the Union Council that we will be electing at the next Council Meeting this Monday.

Welfare Campaigns Officer (1 position)
Postgraduate Engineering Faculty Councillor (1 position)
Undergraduate Natural Sciences Faculty Councillor (2 positions)

Elections will be held on Monday 13th November at 18:30 in 220 Mechanical Engineering. If you wish to stand for any of these positions then please contact John Collins at president@imperial.ac.uk.

Want Some Extra Cash?

Casual Jobs Available

If you live in Halls, we are looking for some outgoing and sociable party people.

We need a team of Hall runners to help us promote our ents and venue.

Interested? Contact Yun at bigmouth@imperial.ac.uk



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[24th November 2006]

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Friday 10th November 2006

in the east end **the cooper temple clause** a guide to ripping from CDs **gig listings** reviews



femm
felix music monthly

femm

Friday 13th October

Matty Hoban Music Editor in-Chief
Jenny Gibson & Thomas Whitson Public Relations Music Editors

reviews 4



Raconteurs at Brixton Academy: "As they play it's clear to see that they are true musicians toying with their songs throughout the set, deconstructing them and adding new depths to the album tracks."

features 6



Casey Cohen, founder of the Yellow Bird Project: "I'm not trying to change the world, I'm just trying to make a difference in people's lives in the same kind of way that these artists do."



"It is full of art students, bad haircuts and tight-fitting garments. So naturally it is a hive for numerous musos and brilliant, small gigs, *Femm* takes you on a magical journey through London's East End." PAGE 10

Also in this month's issue we interview The Cooper Temple Clause and Battle at a recent gig at Camden Koko. We have a page devoted to listings of gigs that you may not have known about. The listings is a new feature so any apologies for inaccuracies and limit to the coverage. If you can help then come and join the team!

editorial



Matty Hoban

Hello and welcome to another *Femm*. This one proves to be bigger than the last with a tasty amount of musically-related goodness for you to munch

down on. Not only do we have more content to give you we also have some Diesel Music Awards 2006 canvas bags to give to you. We have a lot of them and I can't remember why, someone may have been drunk and logged onto Ebay. Anyway, all you need to do to get a bag is e-mail music.felix@imperial.ac.uk with the title, "I would like a Diesel bag so don't make me bleed you!" It's that easy, so e-mail us to get a nice hard-wearing bag to carry your overly burdensome books in.

According to some of my friends, my photo makes me look fatter than in real life. I can assure you that in reality I am hunky, 7'6" Portuguese body-boarder. But this is irrelevant. I also said in *Felix* last week that I was going to put in a feature of the independent music media in this issue of *Femm*. I'm sorry to inform you that said article will not feature until December since I ran out of space in this issue. I hope you can wait until then.

I have noticed lately that this new genre called 'New-Rave' seems to be on everybody's lips (or just NME's). It does make me guffaw that having a guitar band use acid house sirens (The Klaxons) is the ba-

sis for an amalgamation of shit indie and even shitter rave. Hard electro is the only way to go, and that rhymes so it must be true. But in fitting with the mention of this new genre I decided to unearth the part of London where a lot of this hyperbole came from ie, Shoreditch and Hoxton. Sure enough, Trash is on New Oxford St but a lot of the scenesters have emerged from the east. I actually like a lot of what is happening in East London at the minute with various alternative and avant garde shows happening. I know the idea of Imperial scientists embracing those good-for-nothing arty types is repugnant, and truth be told a lot of those artists are tedious (just watch Nathan Barley), but only good can come out of it. Otherwise they'll keep inventing genres and drive us all insane.

There is another Kids Will Be Skeletons gig night on Thursday 16th November with Yuchi from Brighton headlining and two brilliant London bands (Silent Front and The Sailplanes) supporting. £2 to get in and a lot of fun and giggles to be had. Come on down and pester me, or hug me, I like hugs. Have a good read.



Gregory Mead

So, you're hoping to get that shiny new 15,000 GB mp3 player that fits into your wallet for Christmas, but alas, all your music is still stuck on the archaic format of a CD, or even worse the prehistoric vinyl record. What's more you don't want to use the crappy ripping software that comes with either iTunes or God forbid, Windows Media Player to convert your favourite tunes to computer format.

First things first, this beautiful article will not only teach all you crazy kids how to rip a nice mp3 and what all those weird options mean (using some decent free encoders) but we'll also show a few clever ways of getting rid of that pesky DRM protection you get on iTunes mp3s that you've bought from their online store so you don't have to use one of those stinking iPods to listen to it, and you can even send them to your mates if you feel like running some sort of charity.

Hooray, let's start with the illegality. Remember kids, downloading music is illegal and it destroys *everyone* involved in the music industry especially the directors of the big record companies who might only earn a £34m salary this year because of it, so if you try any of this, you are going straight to hell for eternity. Sweet.

MP3 encoding can be confusing for the newcomer, although since we're at Imperial College, I'm sure most of you know everything there is to know and could probably program your own encoder with your eyes shut, but I'm writing this article for the benefit of those who can't do that (yep, geologists and the dudes at Wye). Who would like to be a bit more adventurous than use the built in ripping software in their media player, and enjoy the host of new options available to you when using a good compression software. So before you start, go download EAC (Exact Audio Copier) and LAME encoder (all links at the end of the article), I assume you all know how to install some software so we won't go through that part,

just install EAC and unzip the LAME encoder into its directory (or anywhere else you won't delete it). Now open up EAC and go to EAC then Compression Options and select the External Compression tab. Now select 'use external program for compression' box, select LAME from the dropdown menu then below that, find where you've unzipped the LAME encoder .exe file to. For the bitrate select 192 or above (unless you want horrendous quality tracks), you can also select variable bit rate which basically increases the bit rate in certain, more complex parts of a song, and reduces it in simpler parts making for a smaller file size.

If the instructions for installation were too brief I apologise, but there is a configuration wizard and help files you can use if you need more info, so onto the actual stuff in the program. If you look in the compression options there's a host of useful things, most of them pretty self-explanatory so just check them out, one nice option is you can select your own format for file naming of the mp3's and you can even save the uncompressed .wav files if you want to fill your harddrive up with maximum quality music. Once you've decided all your options, just put your CD in the drive and rip away. You can even use the FreeDB option to automatically detect your album and name all the songs correctly.

Another handy function of the program is being able to compress stored .wav files into mp3 so if you've decided to record some vinyl onto your pc using an audio cable or are stealing music from MySpace by recording it, you can make it into a nice, small mp3 and not some hideous 60Mb .wav file. Once it's ripped and compressed, bask in the sound of superior, un-Apple/Microsoft tainted mp3s.

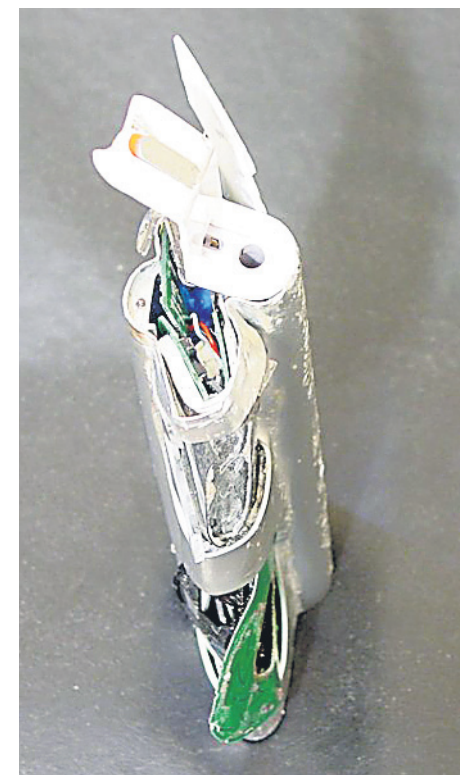
For those of you who prefer to buy your mp3s directly from iTunes Music Store and bypass those stupid CDs, you may have noticed that some of their files have that annoying Digital Rights Management protection on them, meaning you can't play your mp3s on anything other than an iPod, or a couple of computers with iTunes installed. That's a bit annoying so our next section is how to remove it, resulting in lovely playable mp3s (although instead of doing this I'd suggest you just buy your mp3s from e-Music or some other store that does not claim ownership of the items you've paid for). We're going to ignore the ultra-time-consuming method of real-time recording of the mp3 as a .wav then re-encoding it, that's just silly unless you only want to do a single song.

The first method is the simplest, but also results in a small (although sometimes inaudible) loss in sound quality. Just burn your album of mp3s as an Audio CD then simply rip it back to mp3. This will remove any DRM from the files leaving you with proper mp3s, but is unfortunately somewhat wasteful of CDs (unless you use a re-writable CD), time consuming, and as mentioned, re-encoding an mp3 results in a loss of quality (imagine making a photocopy of a photocopy and re-

peating that thousands of times, the final image would be totally horrendous).

Of course, if you want to go all out and unlock your mp3s completely without any loss in sound quality then you can, by using some clever script that does it all automatically for you! There are two lossless DRM removal programs available, the first (and best) is JHymn which is a free protection removal program, that even keeps the metadata of the tracks (song name, track number, album etc.) in the resulting mp3. Unfortunately this only works with iTunes 3, 4 and 5 so if you're using iTunes 6 you need to use the second removal tool available, QTFairUse 6. The only drawback with this one is that it's a Python script, so you need to know some stuff about that to actually use it, also it doesn't keep the metadata from the tracks, so you'd need to go through all the mp3's re-naming them, but then, who cares? That'll only take 30 minutes or so for your whole collection.

Using these tools is the best and quickest way to unprotect your mp3s. It takes much less time than ripping a CD, and does not lose any sound quality. So, what are you waiting for? Throw away that crappy iPod with its retarded battery and go buy a decent mp3 player. And one more thing, remember kids, don't aid music piracy, sharing 15,000 audio tracks online is silly, plus you might get in trouble as Apple have more money than you poor students for lawyers. There are consequences to going around and being careless with artistic works.



It's a flattened iPod and still looks nice

bitrate



James Millen

If there is one thing that strikes the fear of God into me it is the hyphenated word 'singer-songwriter'. I would rather fill my brain cavity with whole pickled monkey testicles via my nose than have to listen to Damian Rice, Katie Melua, Jack Johnson, K T Tunstall, James Blunt, Joss Stone, Jamie Cullum etc. I'm not even sure if all of them write their own songs. When these people decide they want to go solo they seem to lose all imagination, all vision and a big chunk of the enthusiasm that was necessary for them to get where they are.

However, a band can also be a very stifling place creatively. Often there is an individual who has the real talent, which is diluted by his or her band mates wanting their share of the action. Like any team there have to be compromises, and in many cases this leads to the total implosion of the group. Another consequence of this is that it tends to lead to a band having a 'sound'. In the vast majority of cases you can tell the band solely by their music (vocals are often distinctive, so ignore them for now), which is not always a bad thing. By album six however it's pretty trying, and boring! Bands are in a market, they are providing a service, they have a responsibility to be interesting to listen to.

So the thrust of this article is that all singer-songwriters are crap, and all bands are crap. Give up now, and take embroidery classes.

Actually the thrust of this article is that there are many one-man bands out there who have kept the torch of innovation burning, and with a bit of effort maybe you could be one of them. I was prompted to write this

idea down (which has been rattling around in my head for a while) after seeing the Alt Music Soc's first Kids Will Be Skeletons club night at the union. The first band on was in fact one man (Black Static Transmission, www.myspace.com/blackstatictransmission), but you would never have guessed it if you were blindfolded. He built up an exciting wall of post-rock noise with just a guitar (um, and a universe of effects pedals) and a looping device.

A current favourite of mine is Jeremy Warmlesley (www.myspace.com/jeremywarmlesley) who has just released his saintly album *The Art of Friction*. He writes using a guitar and a laptop, to create wonderfully fractured, inventive indie music. Often it's bursting with energy, and I love the way he mashes instruments to bits with his computing machine. Another bedroom genius is everyone's favourite diminutive indie-disco mop head Tom Vek (www.tomvek.tv for a change). Similarly to Mr Warmlesley he composes using a bass guitar and a computer, but cuts a funkier sound. In some places his debut *We Have Sound* is scratchily retro, in others dirtily modern.

There are a host of laptop wizards, but that's not really the point I'm trying to make, I'm talking about the people who strictly are

singer-songwriters (touring with session musicians doesn't count) but not shit. One of the most unique voices in music belongs to Martin Grech (www.myspace.com/martingrechofficial), who on his MySpace page is described as "Alternative/Industrial/Progressive". On his first album *Open Heart Zoo* he showcased his amazing screaming falsetto amid itchy alternative rock, and, ahem, epic soundscapes. His live shows were getting progressively more frantic and heavy, so by his second album *Unholy* he was producing dark industrial metal, with so much space that it was truly a special and unique album. Doesn't sound your cup of tea? Well he also frequently peppers his fans with haunting one-man-and-a-guitar EPs.

So there is some listening fodder for you. Do you play the guitar but are not skilled enough to get your ideas out of your head? Try using a computer to help you, think outside the box. A technophobe? Then there are actually a few good traditional singer-songwriters out there (Liam Frost, Devendra Banhart, David Ford, Tom McRae). Maybe in a few years people will be getting excited about your music, and you won't have to split your earning five ways!



Devendra Banhart looking whimsical, prizes for guessing what he is entranced by



Hugh Mansfield

Modern music is dreadful. They don't make it like they used to. This is just noise. You can't even make out the words. Bring back rationing and/or hanging. And so on, ad nauseam.

Accusations of dumbing down or such-like in music have been around every bit as long as music itself has been - no sooner did Pope Gregory come up with plainsong than congregations started muttering that it was a poor successor to monotone chanting and couldst thou turn it down, some of us are

trying to fast here. Not that this afflicts only the one medium - for one thing, apparently television has been going downhill ever since its inception, which would suggest that such classics as *The Black and White Minstrel Show* or *It's That Man Again* stand head and shoulders above the dross peddled out decades down the line such as *Cracker* or *The West Wing* rather than being a sheer embarrassment even to contemplate.

It's only natural for people to claim that things were better in their youth because, often, that's true for the individual. But increasingly common is a trend for youngsters (such as our esteemed music editor himself) to come out with the same old sorely-misguided nonsense.

The simple truth is that the music that lasts is that which is most popular at the time and, unsurprisingly, is most likely to remain popular in the present day. Consequently, all that is remembered of any bygone era is that which was popular, which is why *Citizen Kane* is still watched to this day, whereas *How Green Was My Valley* isn't. As a result, we end up comparing the entirety of modern music, which is fresh in the memory (for better or for worse), with the enduring classics of any given era, rather than comparing like with like and considering the dregs of each every bit as much as the cream.

Conversely, those who dislike the popular works of the present every bit as much as those of the past (such as, say, me) find

the enduring works to be unbearable suggesting that, in fact, modern music is far better than that of any previous era. This, too, misses the point - the weird and unconventional works of an era are, by and large, forgotten or worse still, unrecognised even at the time. This makes tracking them down very difficult indeed and stumbling across them is essentially impossible.

In an age where getting hold of certain releases is a lost cause even within the week of their release, even despite the ease of modern distribution and the wonders of internet piracy, what hope is there of finding an obscure work of genius released decades before? Or even of knowing about it, given the lack of the modern paper-trail that comes with all-but the most low-key of self-released works?

The tragedy is that while the works of Buddy Holly or Abba are likely to endure fair longer than those of the Tornados or Lieutenant Pigeon, even those are amongst the lucky ones still to be remembered. Those who claim there is in some way a deterioration in popular culture miss out the crucial factor - that there is a range of choice to modern media that is increasingly no longer available to older works as time goes by, so no matter how good it may seem to some, it is nonetheless dreadfully limited and those who lose out in such situations are most certainly not them. How terribly selfish.

The Raconteurs thrill in Brixton

Femm enjoys indie super-groups, grating and some disco panicking

Raconteurs

The Brixton Academy

The Raconteurs have done a lot to impress the music world in the year they've been together. Their debut album *Broken Boy Soldiers* hit the top ten, reaching number two in the UK and gathering plenty of critical acclaim along the way. They've played a string of massive gigs and festivals including a mind blowing set at The Leeds Festival. Tonight's show was to be no exception, continuing their fantastic year.

After a great warm up from Norwegian folk/retro-rock support act Bigbang, The Raconteurs hit the pitch black stage with their Wild West entrance song. With only one album behind them I wonder how they will possibly be able to fill an entire hour and a half set, they'd have to play *Broken Boy Soldiers* in its entirety - not that that would be a bad thing, it's a fantastic album.

After their prolonged feedback laden entrance, they begin with *Intimate Secretary* a brilliant song that gets a huge and well deserved response from the sold out Brixton Academy. The show continues in much the same way, with the crowd clearly loving the sheer showmanship that the band displays. Playing through the majority of the tracks on their debut album flawlessly, even the complex vocal harmonies are perfect, they seem to mesmerize the entire crowd for the next hour.

As they play it's clear to see that they are true musicians toying with their songs throughout the set, deconstructing them and adding new depths to the album tracks. They even take on a cover of Sonny Bono's *Bang Bang* to great effect. Again they toy with the track breaking it down and adding to it, almost doubling its length. For a finale *Blue Veins* was a fantastic choice; it's slow twisting intro builds to a fantastic crescendo that is even more magical live than on CD.

As the crowd slowly filed out of the building you could tell they were more than satisfied by tonight's performance, and who wouldn't be? A fantastic band of talented musicians playing what can only be described as a magical set.

Thomas Whitson

TOM WHITSON



Ah the famous problem of who is going to solo first, solution: no solos



The Grates

King's College London SU

The Grates, a three-piece band from Brisbane, Australia, are known for their simple, catchy and energetic songs. Pop, certainly, but good pop, and positive comparisons have been made to both be your own PET and Yeah Yeah Yeahs. With that in mind, this gig was no disappointment. It wasn't sold out, and despite being at the barrier there was plenty of space. Fans (many of them from Australia) were really only to be found in the first row or two of people; this gave the gig a wonderfully relaxed atmosphere - "I'm so relaxed out here I'm actually meditating" Patience, lead singer - although I think it would have been more fun had the room been filled with fans, which would have had more the atmosphere of a party, that I think would have better suited The Grates.

That said, they soon won people over. I felt that their choice of first song, *Trampoline*, was a good one. It set the tone for the rest of the set - Pae, relaxed maybe, but still doing her trademark dancing and jumping around the stage (while singing - with breathlessness thankfully, and perhaps surprisingly, absent). Alana, the drummer, seemingly enjoying every minute of the song's catchy drumming.

Even The Grates do have some songs in which dancing as Pae does would be clearly inappropriate. However, she obviously still wanted to do something. In the case of *Rock Boys*, she twirled this baton thing with a ribbon on the end (anyone in Juggling Soc

care to tell me what it is?), to good effect, I thought. For much of *I Am Siam* she knelt down at the front of the stage and sang to the people in the first row. For *Howl*, she passed the mic to the crowd and let them take over the howling at the end. For me, it is this is what makes The Grates really special live. They have a real connection with the crowd, even with one that doesn't particularly know them, and make people enjoy themselves.

Finishing on *InsideOutside*, it was obvious that they weren't going to leave without playing first and most famous single, 19 20 20 (although they have been known to skip an encore in favour of a drink with fans) - so the wait for the encore was brief. Playing

ROBIN ANDREWS



The Grates (top); The Bishops (bottom)

just two songs in the encore (*Seems enough to me* - Ed), the crowd (even the majority who weren't fans) became excited with it's distinctive guitar introduction was played, along with Pae's distinctive 19, -20, 20 bunny hops.

Not long after they went off-stage, they soon appeared, mingling amongst the remaining crowd. What was great was that it really was mingling - a few autographs and photos, obviously, but mostly just chatting with fans. This is something that really couldn't have happened at, well, most gigs, actually, and I think it really added something to an already grate, sorry, great evening.

Dominic Conquest

Panic! At The Disco

The Brixton Academy

Panic! At the Disco entered my musical world sometime this summer, and after having listened to their album countless times without the initial excitement wearing off, I was happy to find tickets at a reasonable price on Ebay. The main hall was completely full as soon as we got in, which was surprising as most people generally snob the support band. It turned out that there was a good reason for this not being the case this time, as The Sounds, a female fronted eighties-style pop-rock outfit, were definitely worthy of a support slot for Panic! and provided entertainment beyond their catchy, dance-oriented brand of rock. The lead singer, who seemed to have had a good few drinks before the show, put in a great deal of energy into the set, which led to her standing on top of the drum set licking her hand and hitting her arse with it during the last song!

After their 25 minute set, the general excitement grew amongst the groups of 12-15 year old girls (which I must admit seemed to make up most of the crowd) resulting in loud screeching throughout the hall. The lights went off before Panic! came on to start the set with a double opener consisting of *It's Time to Dance* and *London Beckoned Songs About Money by Machines*. Both tracks were clearly crowd favourites which got everyone jumping about. This was followed by *The Only Difference Between Martyrdom and Suicide is Press Coverage*, another

one of their ridiculously long-titled tracks which followed the previous two in terms of intensity. The effort the band put into the show and the energy they transmitted were fantastic and there is nothing to criticise about in that respect. The burlesque set design and dancers they had arranged seemed to go down very well with the audience, with the highlight being two very good looking dancers coming on stage to start an in-promptu dance routine with the lead singer.

The tracks came at a very quick pace, with introductions and spoken moments being very rare throughout the whole gig. However *Lying is the Most Fun a Girl Can Have Without Taking Her Clothes Off* was described as a song about 'angry sex', which got an already excited crowd going crazy.

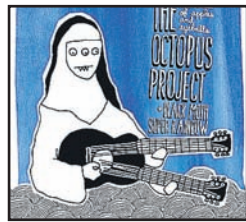
Most of their best tracks seemed to come at the beginning of the show, and I was quite surprised at the lack of greater enthusiasm when their no.1 single *I Write Wins Not Tragedies* was played. This was probably because of the excessive radio airing that it has received in the last months. In any case it was played back to back with *But It's Better When We Do*, due to the matching chello intro and outro respectively, which worked nicely.

Having just released one album so far, Panic! quickly started running out of songs, and resorted to playing two covers to add length to their set. These were *Karma Police* (Radiohead) and a Smashing Pumpkins track. The crowd seemed reasonably pleased with the choice of tracks, but they did not bring out the same reaction in them as panic's own songs.

The set finished with *There's a good reason...* which was not the best of songs to end a show with, and it was obvious that an encore was to follow. This worked well due to the inclusion of a new track, which only the most hardcore of fans knew but went down well with everyone else too. The final track *Thank God for Esteban* was another dance song which meant their one-hour set finished on a high note. Overall the evening was fun and the effort and energy the band put into it made it worth the money spent on the tickets. I would definitely see them again next time round!

Luca Laraiia

album reviews


Octopus Project/Black Moth Super Rainbow

 The House of Apples and Eyeballs
 ★★★★★

Two names separated by a slash tend to indicate that the record is a split; for the less savvy among you, this is when broke bands get together and do a record together, cos it costs half as much. Like, duh. Anyway, this isn't one of those. This is monster of a collaboration.

Our heroes; Texas-born many-piece The Octopus Project have been pitting man (guitar and live drums) against machine (fucked up synths and samples) since 2002's slightly mechanical *Identity Parade*, with the follow-up, 2004's *One Ten Hundred Thousand Million*, seeing them finally get to grips on the whole digital/analog thing. Black Moth Super Rainbow are a somewhat elusive collective from Pennsylvania, who've been knocking out Boards Of Canada-inspired weirdness with their own unique psychedelic twist for a couple of years. This fantastically titled record is the baby of both bands, and (thankfully) takes each band's strengths and combines them into some kind of ninety-foot-high nuclear-powered superband. No, I'm not high. From Black Moth Super Rainbow, we get crackling synths and pretty melodies; The Octopus Project provide the perfect foil in the form of gorgeous live drums and swathes of alternately beautiful and destructive guitar work.

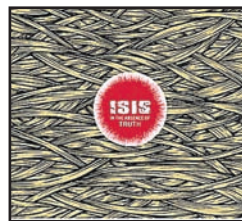
The opener is signature Octopus styling, all big chromatic synths and ferocious drumming. What's new is the sense of restraint; left to their own devices, TOP would probably have mangled the thing beyond all recognition under a metric ton of guitars (cf. *Music Is Happiness from One Ten Thousand...*), BMSR bring an assload of synths to the party to keep some melody in there.

Marshmallow Window sounds like the BoC we all miss; wistful, tape-decayed analog burbles and snappy, distorted drum thumps. El Milq throws four seconds of grinding noise at you, before morphing into jazzy, cymbal-heavy drumming and delicate guitar work that could have come right off Do Make Say Think's excellent *& Yet & Yet*. Linking these tracks together are short yet fully-formed little experiments, bringing to mind the link pieces on BoC's seminal *Music Has The Right To Children*. Sometimes, however, these are deeply tedious, like the pointless warble of *Helium Tea*, or the nonsensical noise of *Copying Soup Onto Sexy Birdy* (although that's an excellent song title).

My favourite track on here, if simply for the sunshine-filled joyfulness of it, is *Psychic Swelling*. Coming on like The Go! Team in dayglo, the track rides the drummer's thumping, 60s soul-aping breakbeat and a dirty, unfiltered bassline, which the BMSR dudes throw a cheekily cute little melody over the top that ends up being thunderously backed up by a shedload of classic Octopus guitar noise.

It's rare that you get collaborations that play upon the strengths of both sets of artists involved, and even rarer that the resulting collaboration sounds better than the records each individual group has put out, the usual result being that the record sounds like it was written by committee. With this work, though, it's hard to tell where one band starts and the other begins, and certainly going to back to each individual band's work it becomes clear how close they were aesthetically to begin with. That's probably why this record succeeds, and does so in excess of anything I was expecting. Along with the Clark record I've been spinning for the last month, this is going on my "keeps from 2006" list.

Andy Sykes


Isis
 In The Absence of Truth
 (Ipecac Recordings)

★★★★★

Emerging from the Boston scene in the late nineties, Isis took a slightly different path from most of their contemporaries, infusing doom-metal influences into hardcore punk to make a new brand of music, widely referred to as 'post-metal', although I like to think of them simply as representing a more aggressive offshoot of post-punk. Whatever you want to call them, I'm afraid this album hasn't made it any easier, but what can be agreed on is that this is Isis' first serious stab at making an impact on the mainstream, erm, alternative scene.

Ah, a sell-out album you say! Well no, actually. For sure, 'true' metal fans may feel that this album is a bit of a let-down, and there's no denying that the crushing distortion and growled lyrics experienced on their past releases has given way to more reverb and sullen crooning. Not the greatest voice in the world, (and I wish they had used more of the female singing that gave Oceanic such an epic feel) but it fits the rhythm-heavy mixing and the effectively deliberate drowned-out feel. The keyboard usage has gone up, but that industrial sound on their early material has morphed into oft spaced-out, modern progressive rock; complete with more pretentious sounding song titles and jazzy interludes. The gravitas is still there; this is by no means a happy record, but still a more accessible one. Much in the same way with the last Opeth record, this may be Isis-light, but it's still Isis nonetheless.

So then, this is unashamedly an alt-rock album, with catchy riffs galore, and the long shoe-gazing instrumentals given their own tracks on the CD. The concept album idea used in earlier albums seems to have gone more or less out the window. But like everything else they've released, this is still a beautiful record (and in an acceptable form to more casual rock fans). Of course, it's also a brazen grab for Tool's fan base, whom incidentally they are opening for in the good old US of A. And somehow, they have managed to beat Tool's *10,000 Days* with an album that mixes angst and maturity in perfect measure.

Alex McKittrick

single review

Cassie
 Long Way 2 Go
 (Bad Boy)
 ★★★★★

If Cassie is guilty of one thing it is making irresistibly catchy urban pop. *Me&U* seduced us with its minimal yet dangerous production and now the repetitive horn loop on *Long Way 2 Go* was sent from pop heaven to drive us out of our already overloaded minds.

Long Way 2 Go doesn't hint at further vocal ability or deep and meaningful lyrics but careers have been made on less. Janet Jackson, for instance, isn't considered an amazing chanteuse and gets away with speak-singing/moaning on her records, but she indisputably deserves every hit she's had.

Similarly, Cassie's music isn't about to change anyone's life anytime soon but then again we really shouldn't expect that from a female model who has just turned 20.

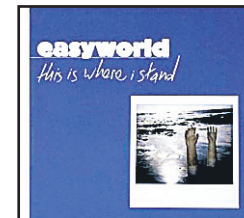
One person who also deserves a mention is her talented collaborator/beat-maker, Ryan Leslie, who is responsible for inspired production on both singles and most of the material on her self-titled debut album. We need to appreciate the producers that still

bring the heat at a time when even Pharrell is shooting blanks.

Maybe Cassie does get a bit more credit than she should for the doing not very much at all but if the music is this good she must be doing something right.

Jemil Salami

classic album


Easyworld
 This Is Where I Stand
 (BMG/Jive)

During my time at Imperial I have met some people with exceptional music tastes. I've had the pleasure of being subjected to the old Alt Music Soc's scorn in my first year (the Alt Music Soc is now very accepting and friendly, thank god that's changed), I've experienced Matty's hairy music editor love, as well as that of his predecessors. I've got naked at Panic! @ the Roxy, and tried my best to look cool at Trash, I've seen Bloc Party in fancy dress on Halloween and I've been disturbed by Liars wearing nightdresses, bear gloves and lycra. But something I am always picked up on is my brutal ignorance of 'old' music.

Now to me 'old' pretty much means before 1995, the oldest band I listen to are Radiohead. People have almost killed me in the past for not listening to Nirvana, Hendrix, Dylan, anything from the 80s, Motown, The Beatles, Classic Rock, Prog (the first time round), Glam, Led Zepplin, The Who, Ska etc. It's just one of my many charming idiosyncracies.

But now that it's been six years since I first obsessively followed a band, and three whole years since I started uni, I feel that I actually can look back on some bands with nostalgia and inspire some of you who are more open minded than me to look them up.

I am going to start with my favourite indie-pop band of all time, with their best album. I am talking about Easyworld, and their debut *This is where I stand*. Two boys and a girl, one giant ego, one high pitched voice, one EP and two albums, a trail of fairy-wing wearing teenage girls crying at the split, this is their legacy. Granted, songwriter and front man Dav Ford now has a solo career, but Easyworld are definitely dead.

The band stuck to their winning formula of guitar/keyboard, bass and drums for their debut. The album begins with Dav growling and sighing, before breaking into one of the goddamn happiest songs I've ever heard *Try not to think*. We're talking upper register three part harmonies of loud, cheerful power chords, and lyrics like "I don't know why, but I just, loooooove everything about you". It was being 16 for me.

But Easyworld's music was decidedly bittersweet. Who can forget the almighty cry of "You make me want to drink bleeee-aaaaacchh!" at the beginning of *Bleach*, which also contains one of my all time favourite phrases, "Choke on happy, drown in joy". In fact the whole album is less about love, more about women making Dav feel so depressed and belittled he just wants to lay down and give up.

The whole album is brilliant. It's loud, upbeat, lyrically vicious and just so young! I love it, you'll love it. It has so many classics, *Junkies and Whores* brings me to the verge of tears every time I hear it, and *You & Me* oozes fuck-you cool. It's a shame the band self destructed under not wanting to play *Bleach* (so damn selfish - Ed) every night. Oh well, such is life. Check it out, and if you know me I definitely won't make you a copy.

James Millen



Two schools of Brit-rock collide

The stalwarts of the 'Brit-rock' scene, The Cooper Temple Clause are back with new material. They recently played at KOKO with support from Battle, an up-and-coming band from the new school of indie-rock. **Jenny Gibson** and **Tom Whitson** catches up with the former and **Sam Lombard** has a word with Battle.



Having been dropped by their label and losing bassist Didz Hammond to Dirty Pretty Things, The Cooper Temple Clause have had a difficult time throughout the last couple of years. Prior to their gig at London's KOKO, we interviewed Kieran Mahon of the 'Clause and found out about their new album, touring, and what they think about being a 'trendy' band.

Are you looking forward to this gig and the tour?

Yeah well the London shows are normally the pinnacle of the tour and this has come quite early. We've only been on tour for a week, so its going to be quite scary, we haven't done as many shows as we'd like in preparation. The last three shows have been really good so we're looking forward to hopefully taking that sort of energy to a bigger crowd that we haven't played to like this for ages. We're officially from Reading, but we've always had a good rapport with London. We basically got spotted playing at the Bull and Gate at Kent-

ish town so we've always appreciated what London's done for us and the scene that it's always had.

Are you playing some of you the new stuff from your forthcoming album?

It's about fifty-fifty. Obviously people have heard *Damage* that we released as a free download a few weeks ago and *Homo Sapiens* which is on YouTube and our MySpace page, so hopefully they're be aware of those ones. And the rest of them they don't know, but they still go down well. People don't really have a clue what's going on but we play new old new old so people don't get alienated

The new video from *Homo Sapiens* is great-was that your concept?

No it was a treatment that was sent in. We liked this one and it was quite fitting with the theme of the lyrics, which is about using power and looking into how man has corrupted various positions with the power that he has been in, so we wanted to show in the video us killing corrupt dictators and politicians. That's the side that didn't come out too clearly and the producers were more into the random killings. We were looking at films like *Sin City* as a reference point with a comic book style with the white blood splat-

tering. Looking back at our videos they're quite eclectic and a bit weird, which is exactly the way we'd want it. If there's anything that we don't want it's to be predictable and formulaic. There's talk of the next video of maybe continuing on from *Homo Sapiens*. At the end we get dragged away and we may get dragged into the new one, but I can't reveal any more on that I'm afraid.

The lyrics are very ambiguous and not very definitive do you want to keep it so people can make up their own conclusions.

I am not the main lyricist, but I think what's great is that we've always wanted it to be open to interpretation, and *Make This Your Own* is all about that. It's about reading into the lyrics and applying them to your own life and seeing how you can take solace in them. That's the great power and comfort of music. When you're feeling down or happy you might get something out of it. It's all a bit clichéd, but from the experience of our fan-base being so supportive we've seen how important it is really that our fan-base are the ones that we give it to and we're handing it back to them. When you've been in a position where you've been abandoned by your record label and been to places that are quite dark and depressing, the one thing that gets you through it is the support.

Battle are supporting you tonight? Did you choose them yourselves?

Yeah we had a few options. We wanted someone that we thought would attract people but also that our fan-base would like. I'm not sure if we have the right balance, I need to see them a couple more times to make up my mind. They're really nice guys and we're getting on well which is the most important thing. And they're a support band that doesn't take up too much time sound checking, or have too much stuff on stage like we have. Its working out well, so hopefully tonight will be good.

What sort of things to do you get up to on the tour bus?

Well it's a very claustrophobic, coffin-like atmosphere. There're 5 of us in the band and 5 of the crew. We usually just drink lots of red wine and beer, and watch some DVDs. We've been watching *Brass Eye* lately, which is brilliant, and *Jam*. I also like *Arrested Development*, so we watch a lot of that; *Family Guy*, *South Park*. Essentially it is like a big

dormitory environment I suppose. If possible we don't stay on the bus, we go out, but on long journeys you have to keep yourself busy. You have to baggy the best bunk so the first person there gets the best bunk. On one bus we did have a double room at the back and our tour manager just took it straight away, so selfish. It did have an office so he could do his work in.

People are always under the illusion that the Cooper Temple Clause is quite a trendy image band, how do you view that?

Well I think we've always felt a bit alienated from the trends that go on and we've always remained outside them because we don't live in London and obviously we've always had our own sound that isn't based on any bands that are around at the moment. We've probably got most appreciation for bands that less people have heard of like dEUS, Mogwai, Sigur Ros, more instrumental a lot of the time, post rock experimental bands. But that's not to say we just listen to that. There's a lot of mainstream stuff we listen to.

What do you think of Dirty Pretty Things? Did you approve of bassist Didz's move?

I think they're very musical. Of course it was hard to approve of it at the time, because you feel a little bit hurt, but we've certainly kept up communication. He's coming tonight and it's all amicable. He felt that he had to move on and he was living in a different place, with different friends. Quite gradually you just realise you can't be in the same group any more, but I don't hold anything against them. I like Dirty Pretty Things, I still need to see them live. I've seen them on TV and in videos but I still want to see them live. They remind me of some good parts of Elvis Costello and the Clash and that's a really good thing.

The Cooper Temple Clause's new album *Make This Your Own* is out in January. Having listened to their new material during their headlining set at KOKO's, it is bound to be a well received follow on to 2003's fantastic *Kick Up the Fire and Let the Flames Break Loose*.

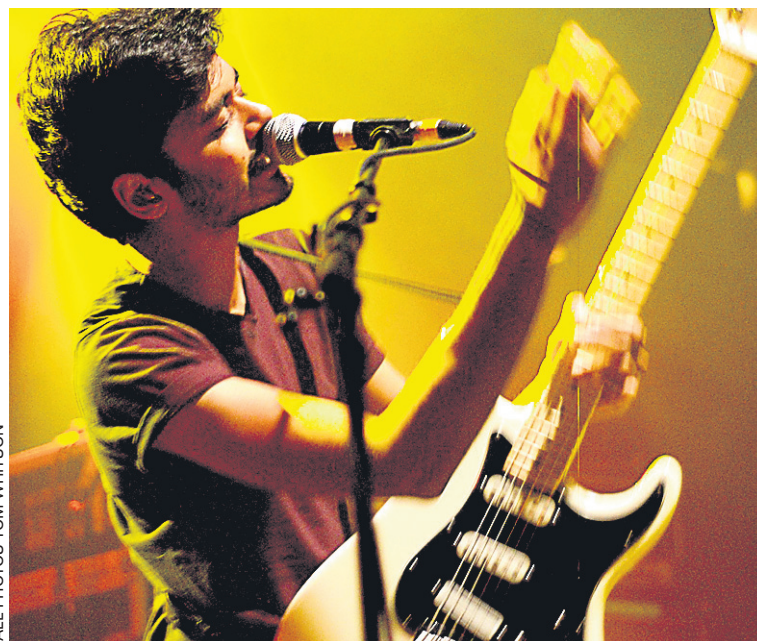
ALL PHOTOS TOM WHITSON



Ben of The Cooper Temple Clause (top right); The many, moody faces of TCTC (above)



ALL PHOTOS TOM WHITSON



The lead singer from Battle before slamming his guitar into his bits (left) and then screaming from said collision (right)

Battle, KOKO, and an all-access pass - a good setup, for a very good night. For those of you who aren't in the know, Battle are a four-piece band from London, and KOKO is a reasonably sized venue in Camden.

Battle opened with *Beautiful Dynasty*, a b-side from one of their four single releases. They appeared onstage in a lazy manner and gradually added their input to the drummer's (Oliver Davies) enthusiastic beat. Looking around, only half of the crowd looked as if they had heard anything of Battle before. Not that it mattered; since by the second song I was fairly convinced that every single person in the venue was almost addicted to the sound.

Although the vocals could have been more audible they sounded sharp, and the band looked as if they were enjoying the set just as much as everyone else. After the set we wandered backstage to find the band.

Sitting in the green room casually talking to the Cooper Temple Clause (the next performers and, indeed, the headlining act), and the lead singer from Bloc Party (just there to see the gig), was nowhere near as surreal as I felt it should have been. Half of Battle wander in and collapse on the couch. Having had to cancel the previous night's gig in Nottingham due to illness, they stay only for a brief chat then head off to get some rest, leaving us with guarantees that the band's other half will reappear at some point.

After drinking a fairly substantial amount of Cooper Temple Clause's vodka, we find James and Tim (lead guitar and bass guitar). After congratulating them on a fantastic set we got down to an interview.

So about 8 months ago now I picked up your single *Tendency* out of our papers' review box and thought it was pretty damn good. But I haven't been able to find much more of your stuff. What's out there? Is there anything on the way we can look forward to?

Really? That'll be 'cause most of them are limited releases, but there's a mini album coming out on Monday (23rd) - 7 tracks for you.

What about a full album?

It'll be out next year, were not quite sure when yet. Basically what happened was we had an album all ready to go but we've been writing quite a lot of new songs and some of the songs we'd recorded were getting quite old.

I mean you've got your whole life to make your first album, that's what they say. It's a bit scary so we said we'd build up a fan base and write some wicked songs. So we took some of the tracks off the album to make this mini album and we've got some new songs on there as well.

The actual LP is now down and ready for finishing touches to about 7 tracks, but we've been writing a load of new stuff that we're really happy with.

Yeah, that new track you played tonight was immense; I think I was the third one? We were a bit nervous about that one 'cause we'd literally just finished it.

Well if it helps we thought it was up there with *Tendency* (second released single). You've done a fair bit of touring over the last few months, best gig of the summer?

Erm... It was the little shows, the funny little ones. We did one in Aberdeen in a trendy pub it was really small and there were a load of sofas at the back with people just drinking wine. But there was just something about the sound and the way we played and connected.

I mean tonight's gig was good but, well I only get nervous now when we play London cause all your friends and family are there and everyone's expecting so much of you.

I count about 9/10 months now you've been Battle, is that right?

Nah, I think it's been longer than that. I mean we released our 1st single in September last year (*Demons*). I guess we changed our name just before we were signed.

What were you called to begin with?

Well we were called Killing Moon, but basically it was a shit name so we were like, "We've got to change it!" So we did and I'm glad we did. We moved forward away from that one.

So does the name Battle mean anything in particular for the four of you?

Yeah it does actually, it does. Its sort of the idea of struggling against the odds, I don't just mean in terms of your career as the band, that'd be self indulgent. But you know all good art is born out of some sense of dissatisfaction. I mean if you're happy and you're sorted and you're already rich, that's when bands get shit and when your art gets shit. So it's sort of the idea of struggling and battling against the odds to achieve your dreams. We all think we're in a good band, but we'll never be the band we want to be.

So, a year's time maybe your own headline tour, what venue in London would you like to be playing at?

In a year's time? That's a hard question. I mean, I don't want to be one of these bands that shoots to the top, and so far we haven't, it's been a steady build. All we've got is our songs and in our heads we've done so much. But really we only have two singles released, I think when we get the album out it'll put everything in context and we'll build from there. But to answer the question, I'd love to play the Astoria. We don't want to shoot off and do huge venues yet and the Astoria still has that intimacy. We've played a few bigger gigs and it's like, "What's going on?"

So the next few months what's in store for battle?

Well, we've got the rest of this tour which is quite long, then a few days in Ireland and then we're doing the Warehouse Project in the old Boddington's Brewery (Manchester)

Do you have a timescale for getting back into the studio and getting some of the newer songs recorded?

I think we're planning to finish the album in January, so this month and next month we're going to do a fair few demos then take a bit of a break over December and knock it out fairly fast in January.

So how did Battle come about, how did you all meet?

Well Jamie (guitar) and Jason (vocals) were at school together. We went to uni together specifically to form a band. It sounds very fanciful, and it was very fanciful, but after a bit we met Tim (bass) and more recently, about a year and a half ago, we met Oliver (drums). I don't know why but it's always the drummer that's hard to find.

One final question and then I'll let you get to the aftershow. What's your favourite drink?

Favourite drink? Orange juice! Or water, I love water.

That's not particularly rock-'n'-roll, no alcohol?

Jason and I are basically tee-total you see. Got drunk too much at uni, embarrassed myself one to many times.

I wish these guys the best of luck, because I really would like to see them a year from now with their own headline spot somewhere like the Astoria.

EP review

Battle
Back to Earth
(Transgressive)
★★★★☆

To complete our commentary I thought it suitable to review Battle's latest release to encourage you to go check them out. This EP features 7 tracks, their longest release to date, the majority of which are taken from previously released 7-inches and singles. Not that there's anything wrong with that, as the tracks form a great mini album serving its purpose of introducing Battle to the world.

Speaking of it's length, NME described the EP like premature ejaculation, over frustratingly quickly. It's hard to disagree with this statement due to the sheer quality of the tracks on the EP - it's clear right from track one that Battle write great songs.

Hard as it is to choose from the 7 tracks my personal favourite is *Tendency*. There's something about the way Jason Bavanandan sings the clearly heartfelt lyrics. Something that frequently shines through on the EP is this raw emotion that inspires Battle's music - a rarity in the modern world of manufactured bands.

Tom Whitson

Guitars, giving and some chari-Ts

Ignore the poor pun in the title, The Yellow Bird Project is a project that has inspirational artists and bands designing T-shirts. The profits from the selling of the shirts goes to various charities. **Matty Hoban** speaks to one of the founders and sheds some light how such an interesting premise came about and what the future of the project will entail.

This may sound petty and cheap but I know I'm not the only person who gets annoyed by the charity representatives who harass you on the street. I am a charitable person, and I have done quite a bit of volunteering for various causes including Amnesty International. It actually depresses me that I have to say no to a charity due to having barely any money, and they make me feel bad for it. It is exploitation. So any time I see an inventive and genuine charitable cause I get enthusiastic about it. One such cause that has come to my attention recently is called the Yellow Bird Project, a Montreal-based community.

The premise is simple; bands and the project design T-shirts together, sell them and give the proceeds to charities of the artists' choice. It is a brilliant way of promoting a great musical community and contributing to something good whilst giving the fans a cool-looking T-shirt. The artists involved are predominantly from across the Atlantic (not as many from Montreal's impressive scene as yet) and include: Hayden (a Canadian singer-songwriter); Stars (gorgeous Canadian indie-pop); Clap Your Hands Say Yeah (ubiquitous indie-rockers); Devendra Banhart (folk king who was the first to get involved in the project); Wolfmother (Australian psychedelic-rock); King Creosote (makers of Scottish folk-inspired bliss); Joseph Arthur (singer-songwriter from Ohio); My Brightest Diamond (Michigan-based sometime Sufjan Stevens collaborator); and Rilo Kiley is soon to collaborate. With a wide array of artists, there should be a lot of appeal.

Femm managed to get in touch with one of the founders, Casey Cohen, and learn a bit more about the project. With such a unique project, I was interested in what inspired him to do it. "Music is what inspired me initially. I have always been profoundly influenced by music. It motivates me to get in touch with myself. When we identify with something that we are passionate about, it helps us lead a more authentic life. Then we start thinking about how important it is to help others. So in some way I believe that music can be a catalyst for helping others. So many people are inspired by music, and I wanted to find a way to harness that inspiration, and push it in a charitable direction."

I'm sure many of you who are reading are genuinely interested in music and share his vision and feel the need to do something but might find it difficult to get in touch with artists or organize something but Casey assured us that, "Sometimes these bands are busy on tour or recording, and it can be difficult to correspond with them. But invariably we get through to them, and they're always really encouraging and supportive." Starting the project like this means finding artists who would share the vision and Casey says, "I approached a group of my favourite artists, who I thought would be willing to do this in the first place. They tend to be the more introspective poet types, who have the capacity to reach out to people on a more humane level."

Whether you like the music or don't, as you are entitled, I'm sure you can agree with the causes, which vary from The Teenage Cancer Trust – Wolfmother's charity of choice – to Art for Change, a charity promoting social progression and justice through art, a cause to which Clap Your Hands Say Yeah want to donate. Casey informs me that, "Most of these bands have chosen charities which are really personal to them, and I think that that is something else that gives this project special meaning." With this message of charity, it becomes obvious that they aren't

working through the big, brash and ultimately superficial statement that Live8, amongst others, does. Sure, they were promoting the very good cause – the end to poverty – but seeing huge Nokia ads and big, corporate rock stars who make far too much money stumble onstage after a coke binge and talk about dying children, this didn't sit well with me. With this project, a message of community gets carried through and as Casey says, "It is not just about fundraising, it's also about facilitating a community of artists, and spreading the word about their music." It is a cohesive and progressive vision.

This vision starts small and he [Casey] is the first to acknowledge this, "I'm not trying to change the world, I'm just trying to make a difference in people's lives in the same kind of way that these artists do. When I spoke to the director of Le Chainon, the local Montreal women's shelter, she told me that they were short on food reserves, and that with 1000 dollars they will be able to help serve nutritious



Clockwise from top-left; Stars, King Creosote, Wolfmother and Clap Your Hands

meals to their guests. So I know that's we're making a difference in people's lives, and music is the catalyst which enables us to do that." The huge actions of ending poverty should start small, without the bureaucracy, and gain momentum by giving people something to believe in as opposed to hearing Razorlight's latest single and going home unaffected.

I asked Casey about the future of the project and I was informed of the short-term plans like, "Rilo Kiley's T-shirt will be ready in a week or so. Other artists who have confirmed are Jose Gonzalez, Raine Maida (from Our Lady Peace) and Chantal Kreviasuk, and Holly Throsby. We're also going after another group of bands, so people should continue to visit our site for updates." The website is www.littlebirdproject.com and you can find out about the charities to which the bands have selected and you can purchase the T-shirts for £15 including shipping. When asked about longer term plans such as shows to promote the project, he said, "This is something that we have

been thinking about and maybe at some point down the line we will try to put on a benefit concert. At the moment we have our hands full, but we'll see what happens. I guess it would seem like the next logical step though." I look forward to when they can group all the artists together and put on a great show.

On a more personal level, I asked what his favourite artist was, out of all of those on the project. He replied that, "I love all of them, and I go through so many phases," but he conceded that, "I would probably say my favourite has to be Stars. At least they rank highest in my iTunes top 25, I know that much." I think I'd agree with him, they make wonderful and addictive music and the T-shirt they designed has a cool design of someone sleeping with their headphones on with stars radiating from the headphones. Let's hope the Yellow Bird Project makes as much of an impact on people as the music, because that's what it all comes down to, passion about music.



Livin' it up in the east side

It is full of art students, bad haircuts and tight-fitting garments. So naturally it is a hive for numerous musos and brilliant, small gigs, *Femm* takes you on a magical journey through London's East End. We cover Shoreditch, Brick Lane and Hoxton; the epicentre of the avant garde. **Matty Hoban** leads the exploration and confusion at the newly invented 'New Rave' scene, which doesn't really exist. There are also thousands of noise-rock shows and art galleries to choose from.



Brick Lane where you can pick up some tasty, late night bagels

East London is synonymous with vibrance, diversity and contemporary culture. Where South Kensington is cultured in a traditional and stuffy sense of the word. You won't find many small gigs with exciting new music in the Royal Borough that often. I heartily suggest you get to know the other side of the Capital as soon as possible. Here's a short guide of places where exciting things are happening at certain venues. This guide is done by postcode to break everything down.

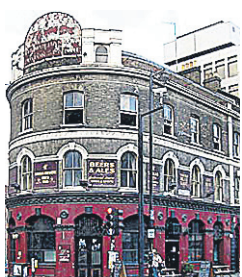
EC1

333
333 Old Street
EC1V 9LE

It is essentially a nightclub for the art school crowd who like their artful dance-noise. One of the places to have spawned the so-called 'New Rave' scene as it has nights that play noise, avant garde mixed with electro and whatever is cool that week. It's all a bit of fun really, just don't take it all too seriously. Go to www.333mother.com for more information.

EC2

The Old Blue Last
39 Great Eastern Road,
EC2A 3ES



Just round the way from Old Street station, this dark pub has a delightfully shabby upstairs which hosts many a fine show. Bands such as Foals who are too electro for school have been playing their recently. Promoters such as Unluck Recs have been putting on gigs with a slant towards noise recently. The Arctic Monkeys also played here many a moon ago. The venue has gained note for its cheap hire cost, so cheaper gigs, which can only be a good thing.

Plastic People

147-149 Curtain Rd
EC2A 3QE

Once home to the club night And Did We Mention Our Disco but now that night no longer exists. It has become a bit of a centre for the combination of repetitive dance rhythms and electro combined with guitars. Guitar music which you can dance to is not a new thing but it was done especially well there. You can have a look at what else they have on at www.plasticpeople.co.uk.

E1

93 Feet East
150 Brick Lane
E1 6QL



On Brick Lane along with a multitude of beigels, you will find this venue. It has a plethora of great music and has a lovely outdoor bit on the cobbled streets that Brick Lane is renowned for. It is a quite a big complex of rooms with a nice atmosphere as can be seen on the website, www.93feeteast.co.uk, and you can take the virtual tour. The music is varied and can range from all varieties of the experimental.

Vibe Bar

The Old Truman Brewery, 91 Brick Lane
E1 6QL

Again on the cobbled road that is Brick Lane you can find in an old brewery yard, the entrance to the Vibe Bar. This venue has a main room which has some sort of a stage and does look a bit yuppie. There is also a back room with some drapes and curtains. It is an unusual venue in that it bears the appearance of somewhere to go listen to 'ambient' house, yet there have been some very alternative shows put on there. Worth a visit when there's a gig on, such as every third Tuesday in the week when A Badge of Friendship bring their free shows of alternative and noise-rock.

Spitz

109 Commercial St
Old Spitalfields Market
E1 6BG



A venue, bistro and gallery, Spitz can be found to put on Jazz acts to anti-folk in the upcoming Herman Dune show. Probably a venue that reflects the cosmopolitan nature of the East End very well. Admittedly, I haven't been to many gigs at Spitz but when I have been, I have enjoyed them immensely and I found the atmosphere quite relaxing. Low are to play there early next year, but it is already sold out, so it is pretty pointless me telling you.

Gramophone

60-62 Commercial St
E1 6LT

I only recently discovered this bar with an underground venue. It again has a bar which looks like it is frequented by yuppies and bar prices reflecting their clientele. The venue is quite nice and intimate but there aren't many shows at their of note but when there is, check it out.

E2

Fleapit
49 Columbia Road
E2 7RG



Despite the name, it is actually quite a nice little venue which is the size of a living room. It is a bit of a walk down some back roads away from the main Shoreditch area. They do however put on nice electronic drone/noise shows on there with the promoters called De Sonis, you have to get there early since the capacity is 50.

Catch

22 Kingsland Road
E2 8DA

It has a bit of a brown and bland exterior but fear not as this boozer has been known to put on some very good shows. The nearest tubes are Old Street and Shoreditch. It can be quite hard to find out what is going on so just going there can be one of the easiest ways. However, if you have a snoop around enough you'll find that a lot of angular indie and alt-rock gigs can be found at Catch or Catch 22 as I (and a few other misguided people) call it. It is part of the East London show experience in my opinion as I do love guitar music.

N1

Hoxton Bar and Grill
2-4 Hoxton Square
N1 6NU



A pretty grim venue if I'm going to be honest. This venue was newly used by Plum Promotions who used to put on shows at the Water Rats and put some on at Betsey Trotwood. There will be the occasionally good band playing but often it is ear-fodder. This venue is for bands that are a bit gritty and could potentially be something but still are stuck in the toilet circuit. So if you want to see them whilst they're still small and then show off about it later, go to the Hoxton Bar and Grill.

Hoxton Bar and Grill
2-4 Hoxton Square
N1 6NU

The Macbeth has a lot of noise-rock and angular indie-rock shows organised by the likes of Chaos Vs. Cosmos (the members of the band Collapse). It is also very good for the odd free Sunday avant-garde gig with various arty ventures going on. I wish I went here more.

November 10th

Dolls House, They Drove Me To It at *The Orange Club*
TV On The Radio at *Koko*
Paul Simon at *Wembley Arena*
Um, Loz Koleszko, Ascoltare, DJ Scotch Egg, Man From Uranus at *Barden's Boudoir*, £5
Deaf Stereo at *The Fly*, £5/£4 adv
The Humanity at *The Macbeth*, £5
D'Silva at *Borderline*
Decoration, You Me The Switch at *Metro*
We Are Scientists at *Brixton Academy*
Five O'Clock Heroes, Kingsize, The Skills at *Brixton The Windmill*

11th

Less Than Jake, The Living End, The Dropkick Murphys at *Brixton Academy*
Jacksons Warehouse, States at *The Orange Club*
Yo La Tengo at *Forum*
The Loves at *London Pleasure Unit*

12th

My Chemical Romance at *Brixton Academy*, £17.50
The Delanies at *The Fly*, £4
Beirut at *The Luminaire*
Lazarus Clamp, Last Harbour at *Bloomsbury Bowling Lanes*, £5

13th

The Victorian English Gentlemens Club, You Say Party! We Say Die! at *Cargo*
untitled1961 at *Pleasure Unit*
Piney Gir, Darren Hayman, My Toys Like Me at *Notting Hill Arts Club*, £6
The Flaming Lips, Midlake at *Hammersmith Apollo*, around £20
MV&EE Medicine Show at *Red Rose Comedy Club*

14th

Incubus at *Astoria*
586, Look See Proof, Infants at *Buffalo Bar*, £5/FREE to members
Scarlet Soho at *Notting Hill Arts Club*, £6
Half Cousin at *Soho St. Moritz*, £5
1990's, CSS at *King's Cross Scala*
Tiger Force, Plastic Passion at *Old Blue Last*, £5/£4 cons
Rebus at *The Montague Arms*
Danbert Nobacon, Striplight, Jon Langford at *The Luminaire*, £8
Youthmovie Soundtrack Strategies, Blood Red Shoes, Adam Gnade at *93 Feet East*
Pacific Ocean Fire at *The Social*

15th

Boysnighout, Fuck Off Machete, District at *Camden Barfly*
My Device at *Brixton The Windmill*, £3
Aereogramme, This Town Needs Guns at *Water Rats*
Headless, Shimmy Rivers and and Canal at *Old Blue Last*, £4
No Hope Astronaut at *Camden Underworld*

16th

Leave The Capital, The Dodgems at *Camden Barfly*
The Sam I Am at *Brixton The Windmill*, £4/£3.50 adv
Luke Haines at *Camden Lock 17/Dingwalls*
Spank Rock at *King's Cross Scala*
Stop It You're Killing Me at *Buffalo Bar*
Rancid at *Brixton Academy*, £16
The Priscillas at *100 Club*
Lorraine, Touriste, Members of the Public, 747's at *SeOne*
Junior Boys, To My Boy at *Cargo*
Martin Grech at *The Fly*, £7
Kids Will Be Skeletons: Yuchi, Silent Front, The Sailplanes at *Imperial College Union*, £2

17th

Shady Bard, Yndi Halda at *Water Rats*, £5
Love Ends Disaster! at *The Macbeth*, £5
Shuffle at *Metro*, £6/£5 flyer & cons
Talk Taxis at *The Fly*
My Luminaries at *Cargo*
They Came From The Stars I Saw Them at *Barden's Boudoir*
Ulrich Schnauss, Alberta Cross at *The Luminaire*
The Whip, Xerox Teens, Digitalism at *Cable St Studios*, £10
Roland Shanks at *Brixton The Windmill*, £4
The Open Mouths, Applicants at *The George Tavern*, £3
Silver Rocket: Econoline, In Flight Program, Swound at *The Buffalo Bar*, £6/£4 flyer/student

18th

Taking Back Sunday, Anti-Flag, Alexisonfire at *Brixton Academy*, £20
Adam Gnade, The Monroe Transfer at *Notting Hill Arts Club*, Free
Subtle, Culprit One at *ULU*
Senses Fail at *Brixton Academy*
Striplight, Jon Langford at *Brixton The Windmill*, £6
The Khe Sanh Approach at *Bull and Gate*

19th

Slayer, Lamb of God at *Brixton Academy*, £29.50
Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso U.F.O., Hunting Lodge, Duracell, The Early Years at *Corsica Studios*, £8 adv
Thomas Truax, Borderville at *Water Rats*, £4.50
Infants at *The Fly*, £5
The Destroyers at *Notting Hill Arts Club*, £5

20th

Slayer, Lamb of God at *Brixton Academy*, £29.50
Union Of Knives at *The Fly*, £6
Evanescence at *Hammersmith Apollo*
V//Formation at *Brixton The Windmill*, £4

21st

The Rocks at *Camden Barfly*
Fade To Sepia at *New Cross Inn*, £3
Muse at *Wembley Arena*
Joseph Washbourn at *The Fly*, £6
The Seal Cub Clubbing Club at *Camden Barfly*
Future Corpses at *The Vibe Bar*, Free
Jeremy Warmesley, Absentee at *93 Feet East*
Micky P Kerr at *Putney Half Moon*

22nd

This Et Al, Snowden at *Metro*
Plastik at *Camden Dublin Castle*
The Leatherettes at *T-Bar*, Free
Espers at *Bush Hall*
Haven at *Madame Jo Jo's*, £8
Muse at *Wembley Arena*
Les Ruprettes at *The Comedy*, £5/£4 flyer & cons

23rd

Rose Kemp at *The Luminaire*, £4
James Yorkston at *Forum*
Circulus at *Camden At Proud*
Wild Beasts at *Metro*
Karim Fanous at *White Hart*, £2

24th

Viking Moses! at *ICA*
James Yorkston at *Shepherds Bush Empire*
Kaputt, Trafalgar at *The Macbeth*
The Tailors, The Left Outsides at *Buffalo Bar*, £5/£4 adv

AntiProduct at *Borderline*
586 at *New Cross The Venue/Basement Bar*
Primal Scream at *Hammersmith Apollo*
My Vitriol at *Koko*

25th

Napoleon IIIrd, Junkplanet, Pagan Wanderer Lu, Revolution74 at *Water Rats*, £5 door / £6 advance
Bono Must Die at *Shoreditch Bar Music Hall*, Free
Protosoul at *Metro*, £6/£5 flyer & cons
Fingathing at *Cargo*, £10/£8 before 9.30pm
Gertrude's Storm at *Pleasure Unit*, £5
Mr Scruff at *Forum*

27th

Soapbox Story, Noah & The Whale at *The Old Queen's Head*, £4/£3 flyer & cons
The Killers at *Brixton Academy*
Tool, Mastodon at *Wembley Arena*

28th

The Killers at *Brixton Academy*
Just Jack at *Cargo*
Monkeyrush at *The Comedy*, £5/£4 flyer & cons
Bullet for my Valentine at *Hammersmith Apollo*
My Luminaries at *100 Club*
Headland, Hours at *The Fly*
Applicants, This Town Needs Guns, It Hugs Back, I Was A Cub Scout at *93 Feet East*, £5 adv/£6 door
Stuckometer at *Old Blue Last*, £4
Jeffrey Lewis, Nina Nastasia, William Elliott Whitmore at *King's Cross Scala*
Tom McRae at *Islington Academy*, £15
Brian Auger's Oblivion Express at *The Pigalle Club*

29th

Adam Kesher at *Brixton The Windmill*, £5/£4 adv
Albert Hammond Jr at *King's Cross Scala*
Rapid Fiction, Lovers Electric at *The Vibe Bar*, Free
These Arms Are Snakes at *Camden Underworld*
The Mescalitas at *The Fly*, £6
Wet Dog, Shimura Curves, No Bra at *LSE*, £4

30th

Electric Eel Shock at *Islington Academy*
Don Caballero at *King's Cross Scala*
Dr Filth at *Buffalo Bar*, £5/£4 flyer & cons

1st December

Girls That Scratch, Vanilla Godzilla at *The Enterprise (Barfly Acoustic)*, £4/£3 NUS & concessions
Pussycat Dolls at *Wembley Arena*, £28.50
The Priscillas at *Boston Arms*
Mokita, The Requiems at *Metro*, £6/£5 flyer & cons
The Fairies Band, Hey Gravity! at *Water Rats*, £5

2nd

The Zutons at *Roundhouse*
Primal Scream at *Brixton Academy*
Viking Moses! at *Spitz*
New Found Glory at *Astoria*, £16.50

For more listings we recommend you go to Ents24.com for a huge, comprehensive list of what's going on. Our list is limited through time and study constraints and we try to give you an idea of what's on.

what's going on?

KIDS WILL BE SKELETONS

brings to you:

yuchi

lo-fi post-grunge-punk three-piece from brighton
myspace.com/yuchiyuchi

silent front

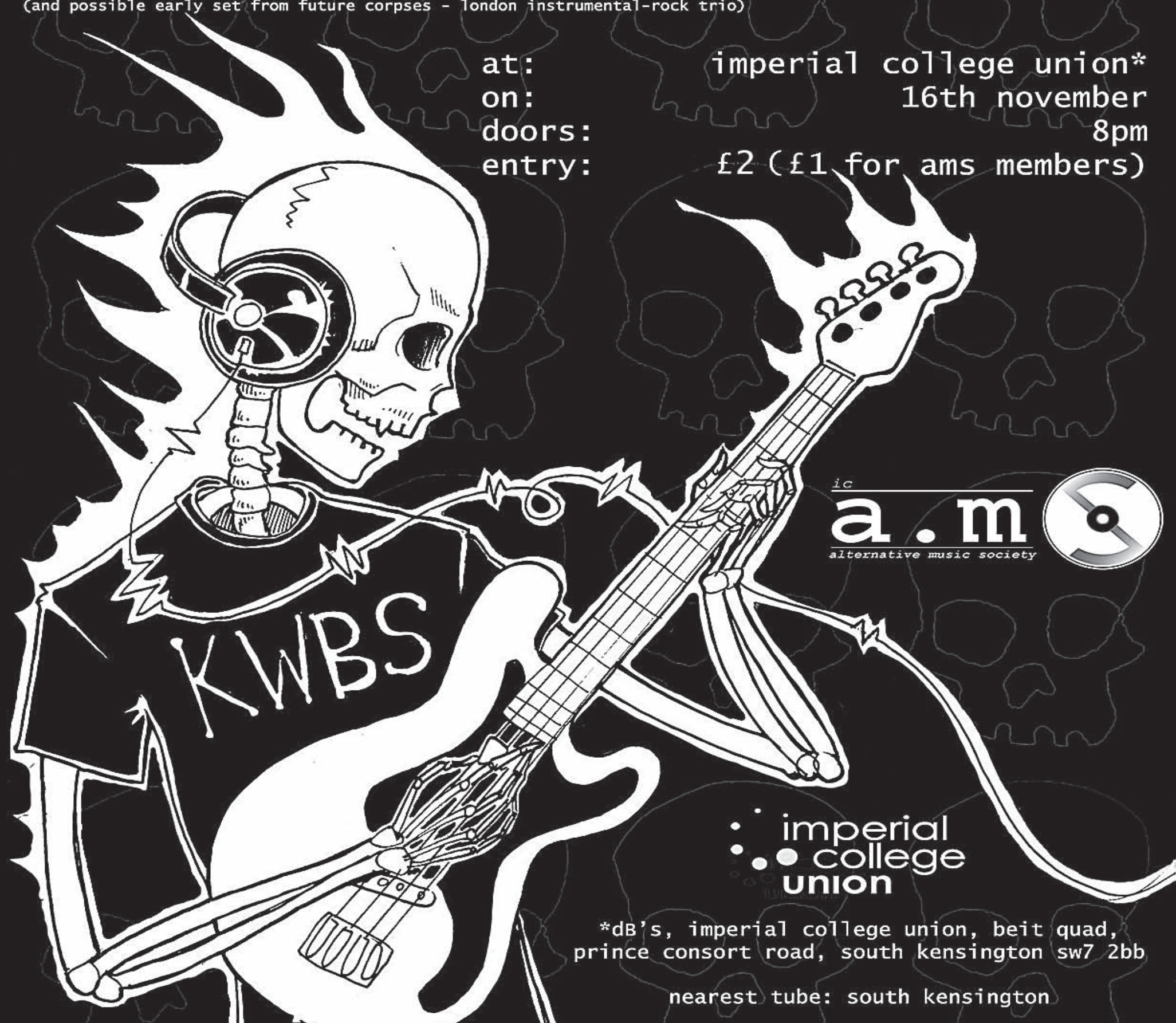
post-hardcore brilliance from london
myspace.com/silentfront

the sailplanes

alt-rock via sonic youth and sleater-kinney
myspace.com/thesailplanes

(and possible early set from future corpses - london instrumental-rock trio)

at: imperial college union*
on: 16th november
doors: 8pm
entry: £2 (£1 for ams members)



*dB's, imperial college union, beit quad,
prince consort road, south kensington sw7 2bb
nearest tube: south kensington

end of femm

It's party time once again!



Alex Baldwin
Nightlife Editor

Good evening disco dwellers! Hope you enjoy the page this week and every single one of you enters the competition, as it's a guaranteed great night out, I swear! I'm going to dedicate the rest of this column to a vitriolic rant, enjoy.

As you will read in our review of this weekend's entertainment at Fabric, last weekend was somewhat of a let-down for your poor nightlife editor, as my excursion to Fabric was cut rather short. Well, not 'short' exactly, since I did spend a significant portion of Friday evening standing in the frost-bound wasteland that is Farringdon. Although tantalisingly close to the entrance after an hour and a half in the queue, we had to say enough is enough and make our sorry way home after being warned of at least another 45 minutes waiting, which would have pushed the total queuing time up to the whopping two and a quarter hours!

All in all, I didn't mind too much, since I was kept entertained by my lovely friends in the queue (on another note: I've been told I have to apologise for claiming my house's strobe light as my own in last week's issue, since only a quarter of the feeble black box is owned by me) and, of course, it was sort of my fault for arriving so late in the first place, if thirty minutes after the club opens could be considered 'late'. What did annoy me however is the circumstances surrounding this gargantuan queue.

Fabric had decided not to sell advance tickets for this event, so only members of their paid subscription scheme Fabric First could be guaranteed quick and easy entry. Sure, this rewards loyalty and that's good to an extent, but they certainly didn't need any of that to attract people to this night. What the scheme really does is alienate people who have come for the music rather than the club itself, which is surely a better reason for going.

After having stood in the same spot in the regular queue for 40 minutes, my friends and I were asked by a person in the Fabric First queue "is this a drum and bass night?", which sums up my sentiments quite concisely.

I love you really though, Fabric!

The Belgians invade Fabric

Belgium's finest export descend upon Fabric and they've brought some friends too

Radio Soulwax Weekender
Fabric
★★★★★

Hooray, so we're back at Fabric again, only this time it's a Friday night, and I can drink to my heart's content. These guys have really been treating us recently, with Adventures In The Beetroot Field the week before, which if you read the review last week you'll know was amazing, followed so closely by the mighty Radio Soulwax Weekender, which your dedicated reviewers managed to get over to and check out last Friday, and yes – it was super sweet.

On arrival, I must say that this was definitely by far the most popular event I'd ever seen happening at Fabric, the main queue stretched all the way back to Farringdon tube station (which is a very long way indeed) with some dedicated fans waiting for up to 2 hours just to get in. Our beloved Alex unfortunately was one of them, but he decided to give up after an hour and a half when some guy from the huge crowd of Fabric First members being allowed to join the queue in front of everyone else asked if it was a DnB night.

This event was definitely as popular as the Radio Soulwax event at Canvas a few months previously and, despite the huge queues, I must say it was seriously better organised, since once entering the club you could actually move around, and they didn't oversell it by 50% resulting in loads of people who had already bought tickets not

actually getting in (at least the people who went home disappointed on Friday hadn't also wasted £25).

Anyway, enough about that and on with the actual club review. We managed to get in just before midnight which unfortunately meant we missed a few acts including the hilarious Uffie doing a live set with her French DJ boyfriend Feadz. Based upon what she delivered the last time I saw her playing live (and her horrendous new tracks *Hot Chick* and *In Charge*) I wasn't too upset at missing her. Despite this, we were lucky enough to catch the end of the Our Disco DJs' set which, by the looks of how packed the room was for them, must have been pretty awesome. What we heard of it certainly confirmed this, since they pretty much played all my favourite tracks in a row (I can't wait for December 1st when they return). They were a perfect support for Soulwax, setting an awesome atmosphere in the main room.

Now, since I'd seen Soulwax Niteversions at the Reading Festival last year I knew what to expect: they were performing their *Niteversions* remix album live, but having seen them before made no difference, the sound and lighting at Fabric were much better than Reading, as was the atmosphere. They were set up on stage in front of their trademark pink and white stripy background, with big spot lamps behind them, shining out to the crowd. Room One was totally packed out with gyrating masses of people dancing to the guitar-led electro and I must say it was pretty damn fun. They performed all the tracks from the album, mixed to-



I imagine Soulwax could afford a longer sofa if they wanted one



Vitalic has since improved on this rather drab set-up from Reading

gether in the correct order which was nice, since you knew what to expect (I don't like surprises) and the only thing that was a bit strange about their set is that they didn't include any of the female vocals like they did at Reading, which made tracks like *E-Talking* and *NY Excuse* sound a bit weird. Oh well, they were great and they are still great.

We decided to hang around in Room One some more, to catch MUSTAPHA 3000 aka Erol Alkan play one of his sets. It was nice and pretty similar to the one he played at the Escape Festival in Wales, much more electro in style than his Trash sets (predictably) although there were a few remixes of some indie type tracks in there. At least I think so, although to be honest I don't remember a single track he played, but we stayed around until 2am so it can't have been that bad!

When 2am finally came, it was time for Vitalic, delivering his futuristic style of uber-electro. This was going to be good! We arrived just in time for the start of his set; the room was completely packed to maximum capacity, although we managed to push forwards into the middle, it was a bit of a squeeze. He was standing on stage with only his face visible, lit up with blue UV lights reflecting off his shiny bald head behind a big translucent screen with crazy moving images projected onto it. Lights, strobes, disco balls and high tech 4D-flashing-sweeping-multicoloured-spinning-lasers galore (yep, they exist

sometimes) darting around the room also contributed to the atmosphere, making for a set far better than the last time I saw him live, where he was just standing behind a table playing tracks and looking very French. The set lasted an hour and he mixed all his best tracks together including my favourites *La Rock 01* and *My Friend Dario*, as well as a few others from the likes of Justice and The Gossip. He seems to be one of the only people I've seen that can play 4 different tracks of this kind simultaneously and not make it sound completely terrible.

I'm pretty sure Vitalic was the last act we witnessed completely, although I do believe we went to listen to 2ManyDJs doing their thing in Room One for a while and they were awesome as expected. A sweet selection of electro mixed with some classic non electronic stuff combined with their high speed DJing style made for an extremely varied set (listen to their album *As Heard On Radio Soulwax Pt.2* and you'll see).

All in all, this night at Fabric was the best I've ever had, a million times better than Radio Soulwax at Canvas, which was just pure hell, and probably better than any club night of this type I've ever been to. For sure the best night out I've had this year. Next time those Belgian dudes decide to take over Fabric I strongly suggest you go check it out. A final word of advice: arrive early or you will be disappointed!

Uffiesaurus

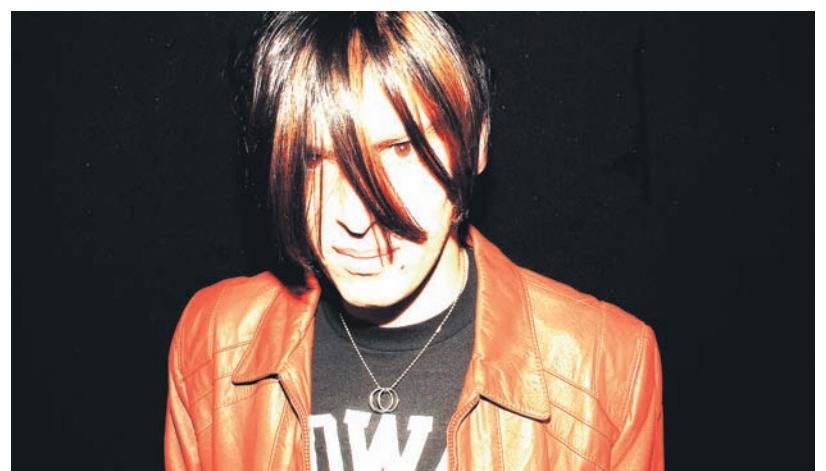
Win 2 tickets for Bugged Out! on Saturday 18th November

From the beginning, Bugged Out! has been the first to champion some of the biggest names in electronic music, with names gracing the Bugged Out! flyers including Daft Punk, Derrick Carter, Chemical Brothers, Dave Clarke, Green Velvet, DJ Sneak, LFO, Squarepusher, DJ Hell, Miss Kittin & The Hacker and many more.

On Saturday the 18th of November, the main room will be headlined by Tomas Anderson, who is joined

by Damian Lazarus, Claude Von Stroke and Gucci Soundssystem. In the lounge are JD Twitch (Optimo), JoJo De Freq, Man Like Me, Hannah Holland and Radioclit. Finally, over in AKA, Love Triangle Music records present Williams and Pitch & Hold.

You could experience all of this excitement with the two free tickets we're giving away simply by sending us an email to the address at the top of the page.



Erol Alkan, resident DJ at Bugged Out! with an horrendous haircut

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Summer Intern Programme - Wednesday 17th January 2007

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Spring Insight Programme - Wednesday 31st January 2007

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The Imperial fashion collection

The beauties of Imperial come out to play. Don't worry, you're alright to gawp. It's all in the name of charity

PHOTOGRAPHS BY EMERSON VIGOREUX



Emily Lines
Arts Editor

Picture the scene: Friday evening at Imperial, the library's empty and the union is dead. But in the Sheffield building, something amazing is happening.

The Wye Fashion Society is putting on a show, and there are more beautiful people in the Great Hall than it has seen all year.

Showing collections by eight different designers, the show aimed to raise money for the development charity World Vision, as well as bring a little glamour to Imperial.

Models were exclusively recruited from Imperial, and clothes and accessories from a range of men and women's designers, many of whom were influenced by African patterns and material.

My favourites included the gor-

geous jackets from Jewels by Lisa, the twisted copper and amber necklaces by Zovala, and a cute slash-backed dress with Victorian lace by Arrogant Cat, which was auctioned off to one very lucky guest.

The organisers did an amazing job; other auctioned items included a box at an Arsenal match for eight people and a digital camcorder, and it all went towards raising a lot of money for World Vision.

There was live music throughout the evening, and dancing from a group of Imperial students.

The show ended with a collection of World Vision t-shirts adapted by Mr King Apparel, which were modelled to the tones of the gospel group IDMC, who got everyone up and dancing. It was a fantastic night's entertainment, and I sincerely hope the society does another sometime soon.

Bottom left, top left and middle: Outfits from the Rukyfracks collection. Above: Dancers entertain between designers

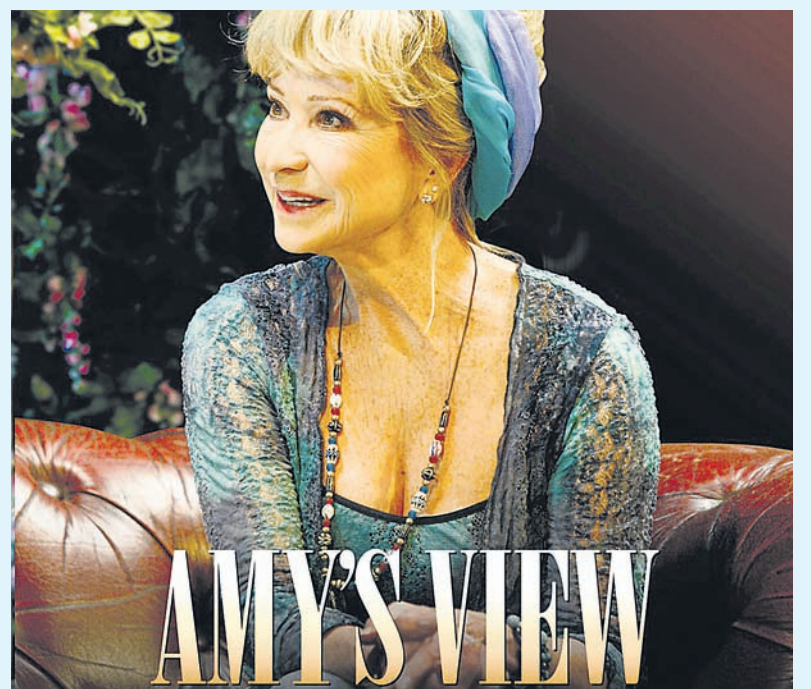
Competition


We have two pairs of tickets to *Amy's View*, which opens this week at the Garrick Theatre, and stars Felicity Kendal (of *The Good Life* fame). To win, tell me: **Who was Felicity Kendal's Good Life co-star?**

- a) Richard Briers
- b) Richard Madeley
- c) Cliff Richard

Email your answer and contact details before Tuesday to: arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

You can also get the best available seats for just £25, a saving of up to £20. Just call the box office on 0870 890 1104 quoting 'newspaper offer'. For more information, visit: www.amysview.co.uk





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Thinking New Perspectives.

CREDIT SUISSE 

In pursuit of the perfect boiled egg

Cooking + science + bald, domed foreheaded, self-confessed culinary alchemist = molecular gastronomy

Edward Wawrzynczak

I have to begin this review with a warning – watching *In Pursuit Of Perfection* could seriously titillate your taste buds. This new eight-part cookery series features the ‘flavour-of-the-month’ chef Heston Blumenthal demonstrating how to ‘perfect’ everyday dishes, such as pizza, spag bol, and fish and chips. The secret – believe it or not – is science. Blumenthal is a self-styled ‘culinary alchemist’ who practises the art of ‘molecular gastronomy’. This hi-tech approach to cooking is all about understanding how to pre-

pare and combine ingredients to optimise the way food looks, smells and tastes. Hold on, I can hear you ask, isn’t this what cooking has always been about? Well, yes – even Blumenthal admits that what he does is old-fashioned cooking with a bit of science thrown in.

As the proprietor of The Fat Duck, which has been awarded three Michelin stars and was voted ‘best restaurant in the world’ in 2005, Blumenthal is famous for innovative dishes that bring together unexpected combinations such as snail porridge and bacon-and-egg ice cream. So you can figure out

that he is a seriously smart cook and not a man to trifle with.

And, as you might expect, this professor of kitchen science has his own laboratory with all kinds of experimental apparatus that would not be amiss in the typical university chemistry department. Indeed, he looks comfortably boffin-like with his domed forehead, safety goggles and thermal gloves. The white uniform he wears is, of course, common to both kitchen and lab.

In pursuit of the perfect banger, Blumenthal and his team experimented to find the right combination of meat, casings, filler, spices, seasonings, flavourings, and preparation conditions. If I simply mention that you need to use pork thigh to retain moisture, oak-smoked back fat for the authentic barbecued taste, and water flavoured with oven-toasted bread, you will gather that this is no ordinary cookery programme.

In fact, this programme is so extraordinary that it is difficult to figure out who it is aimed at. The lab-concocted recipes are quite impractical – if not impossible – for the average cook. And the details do not appear on the BBC website so that you will fail to reach sausage heaven, even if you are a dedicated chef, unless you buy the inevitable recipe book.

Seeing Blumenthal standing by a gas chromatograph and sniffing



Eddie Wawrzynczak as Blumenthal’s sous-chef back in the day when they worked together in London’s The Whopping Sausage

aromas – “I’m getting candyfloss, molasses, even a slight ‘figgy’ note, also a note of overripe banana” – reminded me of those pompous, so-called expert pundits of the wine world. The posturing was made even more amusing by the fact that much earnest investigation failed to displace Golden Syrup as the essential ingredient of treacle tart.

On balance, the first programme of the series was well made and was suitably light and entertaining fare. But, despite the novelty of the science angle, it failed to avoid the clichéd and outworn format of

the genre. So if the cooking is a little tedious to watch, the recipes a stretch to execute, and the science a bit of a gimmick, why should you watch the series?

The answer is straightforward. Anything that takes the trial-and-error out of cooking, and makes you better at it, is worth knowing about. And Blumenthal knows his stuff. *In Pursuit Of Perfection* offers up enough useful tips to make it worth following. Believe me, I’ve tried some of the recipes in my laboratory – er, kitchen – and the results were excellent.



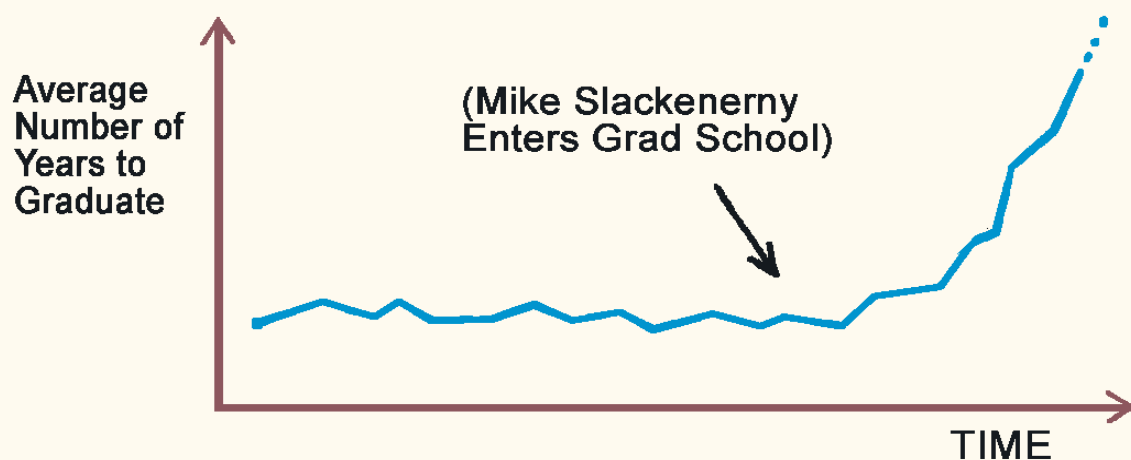
A Michelin star cross’d food lover. Heston Blumenthal recites his soliloquy before downing the poisoned espresso



Heston Blumenthal practises his next award winning recipe at home in his luxury kitchen

PhD Comics

DEPARTMENT STATISTICS



In pursuit of the perfect boiled egg

Cooking + science + bald, domed foreheaded, self-confessed culinary alchemist = molecular gastronomy

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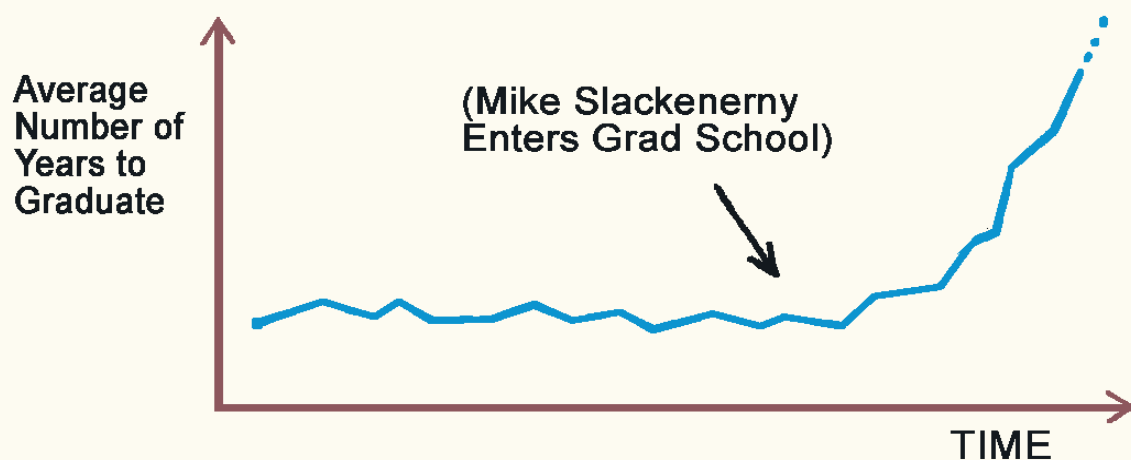
A Michelin star cross’d food lover. Heston Blumenthal recites his soliloquy before downing the poisoned espresso



Heston Blumenthal practises his next award winning recipe at home in his luxury kitchen

PhD Comics

DEPARTMENT STATISTICS



I, Gamer



Michael Cook
Games Editor

War, then. You'd be forgiven for thinking that Felix Games is choosing themes by virtue of how easy it is to write comedic headlines for them, but with *Company of Heroes* still holding its own in the UK charts, and *Call of Duty 3* coming to consoles over the next few weeks, war is on the mind of the UK gamer once more.

A lot of the time, realism in games is a secondary issue. Does a headcrab splat convincingly when hit with a crowbar in *Half-Life 2*? Have they really modelled the walking mech suits correctly in *Battlefield 2142*? Designers often claim that 'if reality was that much fun, people wouldn't play games,' but certain kinds of reality are very close to a gamer's heart.

Thankfully, I've not experienced real war yet. And unless some sci-fi prophecies start ringing true, it's unlikely I'll ever have to take up arms for my country – or indeed, my planet – in my lifetime. So maybe when creating a game that's as visceral and hard-hitting as *Call of Duty 3*, it's acceptable to go for the easy shocks, to rewrite the path of history with a few Hollywood set-pieces?

Or maybe it's here that reality becomes more important than ever. Because just as we struggle to record the experiences of war veterans before the last of them pass away, we also have a duty to communicate them to new generations in an accurate way. War shouldn't be a skip and a hop through the exciting parts, with the trials and tribulations missed out. If we're not telling the story properly, then we may as well not tell it at all. There's a reason why people play *Call of Duty* over *Unreal Tournament* – they want reality.

And it's this perhaps, more than war, that is this week's focus. With the release of *Medieval 2*, real-time strategy and history textbooks collide more beautifully than ever before.

Maybe it's sad in some cases that we're striving to put reality in games so that we don't have to go out and live life for ourselves? It's possible that that's what contributes most to the stereotype of the reclusive gamer. But at the same time, it's also so that we can show to others what more terrible things are, without them having to go through the horror itself. Is that a good thing? Get in touch.

Boom, boom, boring boom

War games follow war games, but what *is* it good for, anyway, asks Michael Cook

Silence, at first. The lapping of the sea against metal. Your first connotation, as Gamer, is that of the seaside. The gentle summer. Without warning, we fade in to a seaside that definitely is not Brighton promenade.

Maybe it was *Half-Life* fading in people's memories, or maybe it was simply the first-person shooter well on its way to becoming the most popular genre in gaming. Whatever the reason, the Omaha Beach Landings in *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* became a defining moment for videogaming this decade.

Whilst watching a scientist get mauled by a team of scripted soldiers was one thing, having the technique used to tell a story of real soldiers, real divisions, real events, was something else entirely. Story-led gaming, in that moment, took a huge leap forward.

Skip a few generations of gaming on, and World War Two seems to be stumbling somewhat. *Call of Duty* does D-Day, and... it's a bit like *Medal of Honor*. *Call of Duty 2* does D-Day, and it's also a bit like *Medal of Honor*. But with more cliffs. Is War still hell? Or has it just become mildly irritating?

World War Two has a lot of stories on offer, and most development companies are good at finding new ones to revisit. *Call of Duty* might return to the beaches of France, but at least it had the decency to change venue. *Company of Heroes* not only gives us a different viewpoint – this time from a real-time strategy context – but it also struggles to give a different feel to shooting members of the same army over and over again. *Call of Duty 2* takes you through Africa with the Desert



Quick! It's Generic Soldier 4 - and he's in trouble! Are we losing an emotive connection with our games?

Rats or drops you in the middle of the defence of Russia. *Pacific Assault* in the *Medal Of Honor* series took us to the other side of the world, breathing life into battles not seen or fought by gamers before.

It's interesting to look at *Half-Life* – often seen as the classic example of first-person gaming used to tell an emotive story – and consider why it and its successor had such an impact. What are the memorable segments of *Half-Life 2*? Is it the gun battles that were fought in the Water Hazard chapter? Is it fending off the army of headcrabs at the bottom of Ravenholm's mineshaft? Or are these experiences secondary to the power of meeting Dog for the first time, to stepping out of the station at City 17 in the introductory se-

quence, to seeing Alyx and Barney chat with each other and respond convincingly? What you find is that, whilst the fight sequences and the high-octane action was enjoyable, we also remember the quiet moments as being just as important in terms of telling a story.

And telling a story is what war gaming is about. *Band of Brothers* did nothing particularly new in terms of special effects when it was aired on the BBC. But what it offered in comparison to *Saving Private Ryan* or *A Bridge Too Far* was a feel of the evolution of a unit. The fallen soldiers didn't respawn at the start of the next battle – something that crippled the immersion of *Brothers In Arms*. Nor were the names just placeholders for real

personalities – you were witnessing real men, the stories of people who were still alive today to tell their tale.

Maybe World War 2 is a theme that can't be overdone. *IL Sturmovik*, *Battlefield 1942*, *Medal Of Honor 2* – these games range from massively multiplayer, through to air simulation. They cover topics from the defence of Russia to the French resistance. Perhaps there is a variety available that can be exploited indefinitely. But unless developers such as Treyarch learn that explosions and accents alone don't make a compelling experience, war gaming will remain just a game. Soon, there won't be anyone left to point out the difference between reality, and our experience of it.

Time to expand your sim-ple tastes

The add-on culture lives on with *The Sims*. But can it really go on for much longer?

Matthew Keyes

You know what I like about cheese? I mean, there are plenty of things I like about cheese, don't get me wrong. The main thing I like about it is that when I've bought some cheese, I know that the cheese is going to be there should I come and need some. And I'm vaguely aware that I could make my own cheese using a few simple ingredients, some time, and some skill.

To leave the cheese metaphor at the roadside (I think we can all agree that it's done its bit), there are no expansion packs for cheddar. If I want a different experience, or something new, or just more of the same, then I go out and buy some more cheese. No matter what I do, it's still the same dairy product.

Maybe the availability of new games is what's making us so bitter about the stream of expansion packs to *The Sims* and its sequel. Once upon a time, expansion packs were almost a necessity, they were expected to come as the developers had finished the hard task of coding and someone out there could actually sit down and design something fun and challenging.

But then people decided that they'd rather have more. More graphics advances, more sophisticated artificial intelligence, shorter production cycles, higher production values. Less controls, more control. More to master, less to learn. As the demands rose, the need to constantly rejuvenate not only the level design, but also the technology surrounding the game, became immense. Expansion packs were delayed by six months and turned into sequels, and soon the practice of creating standalone mission packs became the reserve of epic role-playing games and games which were cut short in the first place to meet release dates.

Until *The Sims*, of course. *Livin' Large*, *House Party*, *Hot Date*, *Unleashed* – at first, the packs seemed sensible. Then obscure. And then it was quite clear who they were pandering to. Maxis had found their target market like a particularly obvious piece of Red Leicester in a vat of Stilton. Girls played the *Sims*. A lot of girls.

And we're not generalising here; it's true to say that *The Sims* and *The Sims 2* has become a game largely played by girl gamers. And

as noted in Felix Science this issue, gaming demographics are a tricky business. It turned out that *Sims* players didn't just want to buy expansion packs for the hell of it. They also enjoyed the way it let them play.

Expansion Packs for games such as *The Sims* – a game without missions to speak of in the first place – means adding new items, occupations, abilities and things to see. It's about expanding the game universe, and giving the player more things to tinker with. To most gamers, it seems like money-grabbing. But to the community of *The Sims* – and as communities go, it's one of the largest and most dedicated on the net, churning out hundreds of user-created bits and bobs each day – the expansion pack gives them a way of customising their playing environment, and filling the toybox with new things.

Your average player won't like it. But the way *The Sims* uses expansion packs is unique and brilliant. At the end of the day, not even the most suggestible gamer will play a game that isn't fun. So the question is this – can 16.8 million gamers be that wrong?



Art once again imitating life

Chivalry, shanks and shoulder pads

There never was a good war. Unless you use elephants, explains Andrew Dunn

This week sees the release of Creative Assembly's latest swords-and-sieges-and-squalor opus, *Medieval 2: Total War*. For someone like me, who has lost entire weekends to its predecessors (and I still think of the Pope as someone to assassinate rather than the leader of one of the world's most influential religions), this is one of the events of the year, and I'll probably spend half of the coming month believing fervently that I am the King of England. Despite being Scottish. Part of this is down to the fact that the *Total War* games have the immersive qualities of an Olympic swimming pool, surrounding you with period detail that nonetheless retains a humorous touch. The rest is down to the *Total War* games being so much fun to play, and unique at that.

Creative Assembly's mastery of the empire-building-and-battling genre is so complete that it could be called a monopoly. For many companies, this would be an invitation for them to rest on their *Rome: Total War* branded laurels, but CA soldier on with improvements and perfections to their existing formula. Granted, *Medieval 2* will not be the quantum leap that *Rome* was, but even at the shallowest level, *M2:TW* is a different beast. Graphically stunning, you could almost believe that you were actually witnessing medieval battles if it wasn't for the whole 'floating in the sky

with a mouse cursor' thing; leaving eye candy aside, the game is implementing such things as religion and trade in a more complex (yet accessible) way than ever before. But even the most ardent fanboy would be hard pressed to claim that these are monumental advances. No-one is going to wax lyrical about being able to rig Papal elections in the same way that they did when *Shogun: Total War* first introduced us to the wonders of tactical battling on a grand scale, or when *Command & Conquer* let us loose on the tank rush (which was actually fashionable once upon a time, a bit like shoulder pads and the British Empire). Is the strategy genre as a whole losing its progressive edge?

Command & Conquer is a good example. Back in '97, when men were men and I was still in primary school, I loved the C&C games. Dearly. Whether detailing strange cartoony sci-fi terrorism or strange cartoony sci-fi Soviets, I couldn't get enough of them. But with the announcement of the so-called 'third' in the series, I find that my anticipation has upped sticks and moved to the Cotswolds for its retirement. No matter what I read of C&C 3, I can't get excited about it. Mention this to people and they treat me like I'm some mad heretic. It's a game that seems to be riding entirely on the success of its predecessors with a bit more bump-mapping thrown in



Total War, yesterday. Not pictured - our intrepid writer, cackling

for good measure - and to me, this just isn't good enough. It has both tank rushes and shoulder pads! Could it be any less appealing?

Similarly, other strategy games are failing to push the envelope in many ways. Some developers try to nose ahead of the pack with cinematic spectacle, tanks and people swearing, some just slap together yet another sub-Tolkien fantasy setting and hope like mad that the punters will buy it. Others genuinely try to innovate, whether it be *Supreme Commander's* modelling

of war on an unprecedented, epic scale (albeit with a disappointingly generic sci-fi coating) or the *Total War* games' marriage of real-time in-depth tactics and ruling the minutiae of a country.

Whether the strategy genre can evolve and keep us interested remains to be seen. All I know is that for the coming month, you can steer clear unless you're willing to call me 'sire' and send me emissaries detailing the level of public order in Rouen. The rest of you peasants can go hang.

Out now

Either by complete coincidence, or shrewd marketing, *Call of Duty 3* (below) is released on the Xbox 360 just a day before Remembrance Day. As our feature on the opposite page suggests, it's still the same old explosions and gunfire - but by the same token, it's still a visceral, exciting experience that's not to be missed. Releases on other platforms follow in the coming weeks.

If you're finding that a little bit too frantic, however, you may wish



CoD3: Tanks and stuff.

to distance yourself from the action a little with *Medieval 2: Total War*, a triumphant - graphically, if nothing else - return to familiar territory for developers Creative Assembly. If you're used to charging everywhere with the biggest unit you can find, then you're in for a shock. But if you've experienced *Total War* before, you can expect improvements on everything important. Almost.

Tony Hawks returns again with an unusual subtitle, this time performing some 'Downhill Jam', which Felix Games is informed by a reliable expert to be 'hip' and 'illing'. The game itself is a welcome change from American Wasteland, a sequel that left a lot to be desired in terms of playability. Expect a Wii-exclusive version soon, too.

Oh and - look! Some more sequels and expansion packs too. It's that comforting time of year

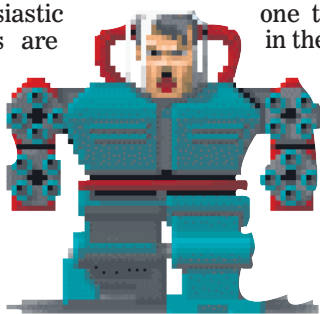
War has never been so much fun!

Tasteless or intelligent design? Tony Plana loves the smell of satire in the morning

Art imitates life, as they say. A century ago, the idea of rushing two large bodies of men towards each other was still thought of as a pretty neat idea, and easily the most intelligent way to fight a war. Now, the missiles we're firing at enemy nations are only marginally less intelligent than the ones pressing the big red button to launch it. And for gaming, too, the war genre has evolved a lot in its short life.

If you're reading this, chances are the only wars you've lived through were either cold, or at best lukewarm. War isn't something we instinctively relate with the real world very much. But it's also likely - if you've been gaming for any length of time - that you'll have played *Command And Conquer: Red Alert*. Of course, humourously leather-bound Soviets and slightly over-enthusiastic female commandos are a slightly skewed portrayal of warfare. But *Red Alert* wasn't exactly alone in painting a surreal view of fictional - and non-fictional - warfare.

Cannon Fodder



War Has Never Been So Much Fun! - in terms of setting the stylistic tone for a game, you can't get much better than that. *Cannon Fodder* is generally recognised as being ahead of its time in that regard, as well as few other fields, such as its relationship with the press. "Make sure you do not buy this shameful game" was the Daily Star's reaction to the game, after the British Legion complained it had used the Corn Poppy on the game box. Maybe this wouldn't have been so contentious a move if the game itself hadn't largely based itself around making a joke of war and modern warfare in general. Between that and *Wolfenstein 3D's* historically-ambiguous Robo-Hitler (I'm told that the jury is still out as to whether or not Adolf was in possession of a mecha-suit), it's a wonder anyone took anything seriously in the early nineties.

But it wasn't all grammatically-incorrect German and cute soldiers bleeding to death. When *Platoon* was released in the late eighties, only a decade after the Vietnam War had come to a close, the game that

followed shortly after attempted to bring some of the feel of the film to gaming too. Hard though it was to convey political opinion with a palette of 16 colours and just about enough memory to remember what level the player was on, *Platoon* was one of a number of war games that didn't suffer from the caricature age of videogaming. There was no need to dumb down the message, or dilute the experience any further than the technology already had.

And though we highlighted *Cannon Fodder* earlier as being an example of light-hearted war gaming, that's a highly unfair view of the game. *Cannon Fodder*, despite being demonised for 'glorifying' war, actually aimed to satirise the view of war perpetrated by Vietnam and the Gulf. Tiny pixelated recruits queued up to be enlisted next to a hill where hundreds of graves marked the fates of the last crop. It was unnervingly violent, certainly, but never intended to mock.

It's possible - if cynical - to say that war gaming got stale as its popularity grew. But whatever the cause for change, the past is rich with counterexamples. There was the cartoon-like side of the death and destruction, but there was also a lot of seriousness, and plenty of



War - your results may vary

designers who had something to communicate to gamers. What is it good for? If what war games have become is anything to go by, perhaps very little. But both *Cannon Fodder* and *Wolfenstein* represent a kind of playful enthusiasm for the genre that may have been lost in the endless drive for realism and grittiness. Maybe the lesson to learn from the past of gaming, much like the past of war itself, is that a load of explosions doesn't get you anywhere useful at all. Nowadays, bombarded with a numbing stream of cod-Private-Ryan sanitised 'war horror', we can't help but be numbed by it. In an age of blood and gore, maybe we need a few robo-suits.



TH:Downhill Jam: We jammin'

where people are suddenly realising that there are a mere forty-five days until Christmas, and thus Novembermas is upon us, and the add-ons must flow! They vary from the cheap-and-cheerful *Sims 2 - Festive Holiday Stuff* to the not-cheap and decidedly-unnerving *Buzz Sports*. It's not that we're against the idea of turning your living room into a Weakest Link studio. It's just that we'd rather the game was actually hosted by Anne Robinson. And that's saying something.

Failing that, you could regress back to the childhood spirit of the winter playground, and pick up a copy of *Pokemon Mystery Dungeon* and relive the days when Blastoise could actually hold his own, with the nerds in the yard. You wanna trade cards?

Corrections, Felix Games 1362

The article "Retro Review - 42 All-Time Classics" was not written by Jesse Garman as printed, but by Chris Hemmen. Apologies, Chris.

"Kupo? Kupo!"

- Mog, Final Fantasy

Vote yes to the NUS!

1 NUS provides a national voice - without it Imperial will be the most isolated student union in the country

2 NUS means student discounts nationwide - discounts which simply aren't available to non-members

3 NUS achieves great things for students - like the biggest student discount ever: Council Tax exemption



"Money is not a major issue this time round so this referendum comes down to a clear choice: should we be leaders in the student movement or should we be powerless bystanders?"

John Collins, CGCU President (2004/05)



"Joining NUS will provide representation and support for Imperial's students' needs on a national level."

Sameena Misbahuddin, ICU President (2005/06)



"One card to find them, one card to bring them all and in the darkness bind them: unity and support from others will only strengthen our students at Imperial College. Vote yes to the NUS"

Shiv Chopra, ICSMSU Vice-President (2005/06)



"Now I don't know about you, but I don't like being gagged. What I do like are cheap discounts and getting into clubs whose bouncers don't know what Imperial is."

Kilian Frensch, PSU President (2005/06)



"Only by joining the NUS will Imperial students be able to take their place where they belong - leading national opinion on student issues, not aimlessly following the agenda set by others."

Ben Harris, PSU Education Officer (2004/05)



"Despite what the 'NO Campaign' might tell you, the Aldwych Group, for all it's strengths, will never replace the NUS in winning for students."

Brian Duggan, Chair of the Aldwych Group

join us
the campaign to join the NUS

vote online at union.ic.ac.uk/vote
between 14th and 16th November

nus.yes@imperial.ac.uk

vote no!

Below are **The A-NUS Coalition's** first 15 reasons why you should **vote no!** in the referendum. We will be distributing these around campus over the coming week. All those who contact nus.not@ic.ac.uk having collected all 15 flyers will be entered into a prize draw. The winner will receive either a bottle of champagne, crate of beer or Waterstones gift voucher (you choose!) in exchange for your collection. Happy hunting!

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.1

The £52 000 a year affiliation fee could be used to increase funding for our clubs and societies.

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.2

ICU card: free
NUS democracy card: £52 000
Optional NUS discount card: £10 per student. Less than half this fee stays with ICU.
Total potential cost to ICU and its members: up to £76 000

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.3

nus affiliation fee: £52 000
ICU grant to ICSMSU 2006-07: £49 000

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.4

The Ancient Group of Scottish universities - Aberdeen, St Andrews, Edinburgh, Dundee & Glasgow - successfully campaigned against tuition fees.
Only Aberdeen was in the NUS.
Exactly how does this represent a victory for the NUS?

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.5

By law every business who advertises a student discount must offer it to all students, not just NUS members.
You get student discounts for being a student, not for having an NUS card.

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.6

The NUS spent over £190 000 on last year's annual conference - a 3 day drinking and ranting session for a few wannabe politicians.

ICU spends roughly £500 000 per annum on Clubs & Societies. Thousands of students get to try something new from October till June.

Which is the better use of resources?

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.7

£52 000 would be more than enough to double the money given to the football, rugby, hockey and netball clubs.

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.8

NUS affiliation fee: £52 000
Annual printing costs of Felix: £50 000

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.9

NUS will this year be launching its own media awards.
Felix has 4 nominations in the prestigious Guardian Student Media Awards.
Stoic TV scooped the Best Broadcaster award at this year's National Student Television Awards
IC Radio was shortlisted for 2 National Student Radio awards.
Does our student media really need the NUS to thrive? What exactly does a group of politicians have to offer student media? Are the NUS just trying to pander to media clubs?

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.10

Southampton SU left the NUS 4 years ago and have saved over £200 000 in affiliation fees.

In the past 4 years Southampton SU have built a radio station, increased sports budgets and have had a complete refurbishment of their bar and nightclub.

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.11

Southampton SU left the NUS 4 years ago and have saved over £200 000 in affiliation fees.

Southampton SU have increased funding for education and welfare campaigns that their students want to see, rather than what the NUS thinks is relevant. For decentralised campaigning more responsive to our needs...

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.12

At the last NUS conference a hot topic of debate was working conditions in Columbia.

At the last NUS conference there was no debate on the lecturers strike. Delays to the awarding of degrees could have lost thousands of students their conditional job offers?

What are the priorities of the NUS?

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.13

nus affiliation fee: £52 000

Recreational Clubs Committee grant: £55 000

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.14

Imperial College is one of the worlds leading academic institutions.

NUS affiliates include:

Bolton Sixth Form College Students' Union
Newham College of FE Students' Union
College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise SU

What does Imperial College have in common with these places?

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

Reason to vote no! to the NUS no.15

The NUS believes that Media Studies and Sports Science students should get the same funding as those who study Physics, Engineering or Medicine.

Would it not be more sensible to target funding at those studying the hard subjects the economy requires rather than funding the more trendy courses that are less well respected by employers?

Do we really want ICU to support a fees policy that may not be in Imperial students best interest?

vote no!

Imperial College Union NUS referendum
November 14th - 16th 2006
www.imperialcollegeunion.org/vote

at the union

nov 10th - 23rd

▶ **Wednesday 15th & 22nd**

▶ **Thursday 16th**



SPORTS NIGHT

15th November - RAG Miss World
22nd November - Pirates Foam Party

Every Wednesday At The Union!
Carlsberg, Tetley's & Blackthorn only
£1.30 a pint



Free entry before 9pm, £1 thereafter, free cloakroom for sports bags

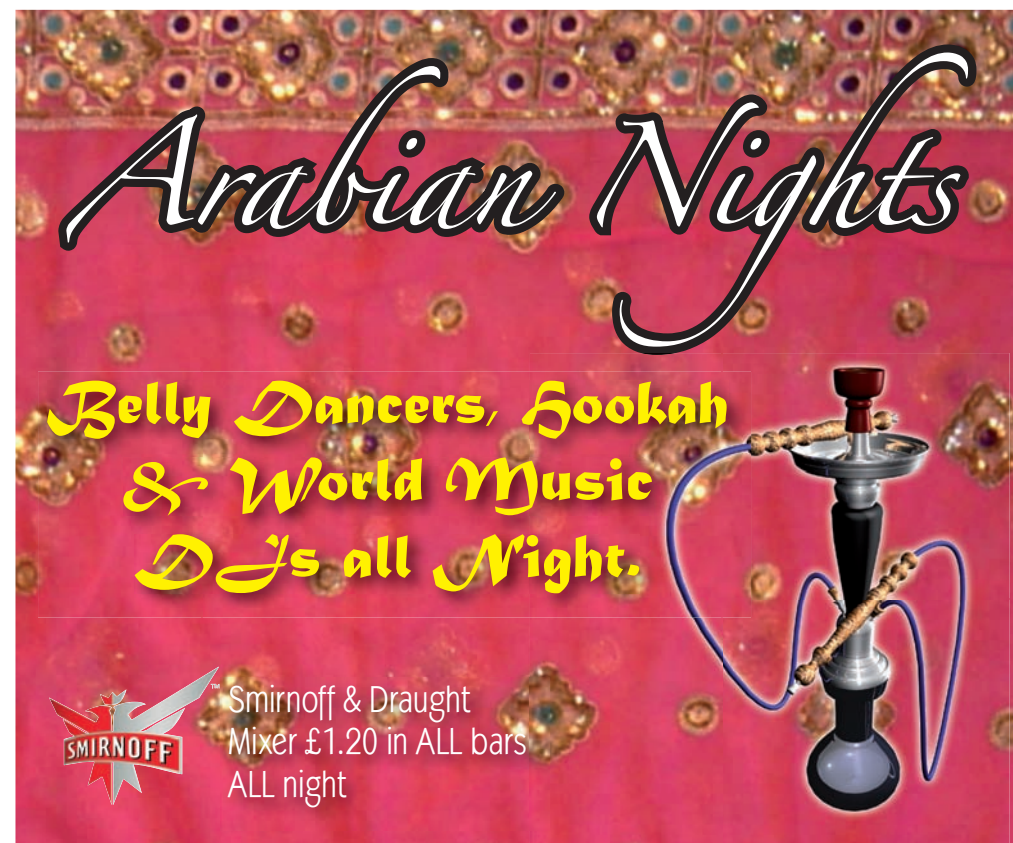


ic

a.m.


alternative music society

▶ **Friday 10th**



Arabian Nights

Belly Dancers, Hookah & World Music
DJs all Night.



Smirnoff & Draught
Mixer £1.20 in ALL bars
ALL night

▶ **Friday 17th**



Jazz & ROCK

BAND SHOWCASE

▶ **Also on this fortnight**

Fri 10th	Arabian Nights & Hookah
Tue 14th	Da Vinci's - Quiz Night
Wed 15h	Sports Night - Rag Miss World
Thu 16th	Alternative Music Night
Fri 17th	Jazz & Rock Band Showcase
Tue 21st	Da Vinci's - Quiz Night
Wed 22nd	Sports Night - Pirates Foam Party
Thu 23rd	Oculo Garden

▶ **Coming Up Next Week**



Oculo Garden

Sudoku 1,363

Complete the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 square contains the digits 1 to 9. E-mail your solution to **sudoku.felix@imperial.ac.uk** by **Tuesday at 9am**. We will randomly select a winner to receive either a 128MB USB stick or a crate of beer. You must claim your prize within a week.

	3		5	7				2
	2			3	9	6		
			6	8		7		3
			9					8
	4						2	
2					1			
3		6		1	5			
		2	7	9			6	
5				4	6		8	

Solution to 1,362

2	6	3	8	9	5	1	4	7
9	8	4	1	7	3	6	2	5
1	7	5	4	6	2	9	8	3
6	4	2	9	3	1	5	7	8
5	9	8	2	4	7	3	1	6
7	3	1	5	8	6	4	9	2
8	5	9	6	2	4	7	3	1
4	1	7	3	5	8	2	6	9
3	2	6	7	1	9	8	5	4

Jotting pad



Thanks to everyone who entered. A winner is you: **Adrienne de Souza**. Keep those entries coming in!

This Week's Stethoscopes

Scorpio (23 Oct – 21 Nov)



This week you grow back pains. Literally. An aura of hurt protrudes from the rear of your ribcage and whenever you brush past somebody in the corridor, you assume a posture akin to a howling warewolf, before raking your fingernails down their face.

Sagittarius (22 Nov – 21 Dec)



Unfortunately for you, nothing grows at all. A night of pranks sees you primarily on the receiving end (matron!). Everything including the fine downy hair on your feet is shaved and never regrows. You're so limp your fuckbuddy hangs you from the balcony.

Capricorn (22 Dec – 19 Jan)



Oh yeah, check m' flow. When I get on this mic I just spit all in one go. You muthafucker's dead hittin' on my bitch. With my finger on the trigger, it's starting to itch. This bullets got your name of it. BLAM, now you're in the muthafuckin' shit! BLET! BLET!

Aquarius (20 Jan – 18 Feb)



Shhh! Quiet, we must be silent. I don't think they've noticed me. Fuck, I'm sexy. I think it's because of my fort. Man, do girls dig my massive widescreen displays. Three girls in sight. I'm gunna target them, hunt them down and rape their ears. They want it. Hard.

Pisces (19 Feb – 20 Mar)



This week, you get lucky. Amongst all the negativity of this page, some cunt has to get lucky, surely? You win some World Cup tickets and everyone thinks you're cool. You sell the tickets for a massive fucking television. Everyone thinks you're a gargantuan prick!

Aries (21 Mar – 20 Apr)



Well, whadda-ya-know. Move over Planet Earth, look at this incredible bird's eye (damn, that fits perfectly and I haven't even finished the sentence yet - "bird's", geddit? Screw you then.) shot of a fine pair of TITTIES. Cleavage! Tit wank! Muffs!

Taurus (21 Apr – 21 May)



Dear The Horoscope, I was "amused" to see the alterations you made to my hilarious witticisms last week. Consequently, I will destroy you and everything you hold dear. Never fuck with me again. Lots of love, The Bearded Intruder.

Gemini (22 May – 21 Jun)



HOLY FUCKZORS! I've literally written six of these prophetic paragraphs and only just noticed the above! Damn! I just kekked in me Calvin Kleins and it's running down my third leg. I bid thee all; we must flee the omnipresence of The Bearded Intruder! Run!

Cancer (22 Jun – 22 Jul)



\$\$\$ WIN BIG! \$\$\$ Match three cockgobbling cowboys below to WIN! Scratch off the panel below:



Leo (23 Jul – 22 Aug)



ROFLCOPTERS. LOLLERSKATES. Err... Not so "roflcopters". I've just noticed a collection of pubes lingering in the air just above the desk! What the fuck?! It's not like this is a sperm bank and people are constantly whipping their todgers out. Jeez Louise.

Virgo (23 Aug – 22 Sept)



This week in labs a conical flask grows and grows and grows. By the time it has fully grown and grown, it engulfs you with its spout. The triangular shape nestling on your head has its own ecosystem. It's not long before monkeys swing from branches.

Libra (23 Sept – Oct 22)



Alice's friends: you're all thick. Supposedly, you can't read and you wear broken glasses that aren't just taped, they're fucking gaffer taped. Please, fuck off down a hole where the pungent aroma of donkeys' genitals that emits from your mouths cannot be smelt.

Felix Crossword 1,363

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
9						10						11		
12		13						14						
15						16		17					18	
19				20								21		
22		23				24		25						26
27				28								29		30
31						32								

ACROSS

- 1 In the kitchen, Edward mixed and condensed (9)
- 6 Enjoyable government issue mushrooms (5)
- 9 Nothing before large end (5)
- 10 Brutally slain with talons (5)
- 11 Twitch twitch in twitch (3)
- 12 First lord swallows charged atom (7)
- 14 Puzzle over anagram without a first thought (7)
- 15 Tramps in league with psycho boss (5)
- 16 Cold damage scrambles to be first (9)
- 19 Southern volunteer with Catholic in caper (9)
- 21 Be allowed onto atoll (5)
- 22 Fish boat in garage (3,4)
- 25 Rotate pi to mecca to uncover condensed work (7)
- 27 Allegedly works to deserve a vase (3)
- 28 A piece in pieces (5)
- 29 Seam containing a gram to register (5)
- 31 Twentieth sword in tent (5)
- 32 Weed source foundation (5,4)

DOWN

- 1 Army sounds honest but quiet (5)
- 2 That is, about a hundred diamonds (3)
- 3 Artist comes between king and the mayor's sea-monsters (7)
- 4 Point on alleged seer earns no money (3-6)
- 5 Float into 500th fissure (5)
- 6 Angle ten back in draughty stockings (4,3)
- 7 Annotator doesn't hesitate (5)
- 8 Lying about earnings is crooked, it seems (9)
- 13 Revolution rather than piece? (5)
- 15 Chief nobleman numbers a group (4,5)
- 17 Instruments from sun god after gold chest (9)
- 18 I go around truncated low ice house (5)
- 20 Proper drink for about a pound a litre in the east (4,3)
- 21 Cecil is confused about stalactites (7)
- 23 Nur (3,2)
- 24 One thousand rang for a stripped whale carcass (5)
- 26 Choose to let the European community disperse (5)
- 30 Head off after the German pair (3)

Scarecrow

In response to dozens of requests (and because the Guardian already do it so it must be a good idea), next week will see the introduction of a column on how to solve cryptic crosswords. So if there are any of this week's clues that you would like explained in it, don't hesitate to email your requests.

Since the weather has taken a turn for the worse, it seemed reasonable to have a wintry theme, much as I don't care for themed crosswords.

I do hope it's not too easy, as some people complained last time. No-one's ever happy.

Scarecrow

Solution to Crossword 1,362

D	O	N	O	R	O	A	C	O	N	G	A		
E	U	C	C	L	E	R	I	O					
C	O	P	Y	C	A	T	C	H	E	E	R	I	O
O	R	T	A	U	M	I	U						
N	I	I	N	V	E	R	S	E	V	T			
T	E	M	P	O	E	A	N	E	E	D	S		
A	E	N	T	T	T	I							
M	S	P	R	E	E	D							
I	A	C	E	B	S	E							
N	O	V	E	L	N	E	A	T	T	I	C		
A	A	A	B	D	O	M	E	N	Y	H			
T	I	N	U	B	D	L	A						
I	L	L	E	G	A	L	O	R	A	T	I	O	N
O	E	U	S	N	C								
N	E	V	E	R	M	S	A	B	A	T	E		

Send your answers to **sudoku.felix@imperial.ac.uk** or bring this page down to the *Felix* office in the West Wing of Beit Quad by **Tuesday 9am**. Each week, we'll choose a winner, who will receive both kudos and £10. Last week's winner is **Mark Wass**. Well done. You must claim your prize within a week. Everyone who provides us with a correct solution will get an entry into our prize draw at the end of the year.

Clubs & Societies

Shooting tiny little balls at people

IC's Airsoft club take to the fair fields of England with replica firearms; amazingly, they make it back alive

Nathan Roberts

Last Sunday was just another glorious day in the corps. for the battle-hardened members of ICAirsoft, as they made the arduous journey to the mecca of military simulation that is Tunbridge Wells. In this most unlikely of settings a day-long skirmish was taking place, one of several trips organised for members of ICAirsoft on a termly basis.

For those unfamiliar with the intense world of Airsoft, it can be best thought of as paintballing's more serious sibling, with the paintballs replaced by plastic ball bearings fired from replica firearms. A woodland skirmish basically consists of two teams in full camouflage gear running about a field/forest shooting at each other. In order to lend a more tactical edge to the conflict, objectives are set for each team, forcing them to work together to crush the opposition.

A total of 6 of IC's finest were brave enough to take on the world (and the 6a.m. wake up call in order to get there on time!). Even non-stop rain wasn't enough to put a

stop to the proceedings, and by the end of the day everyone had enjoyed a thorough soaking, along with several interesting mission scenarios. These included an assault on a vehicle convoy and a mission to retrieve the ingredients to make Snakebite, an activity more usually associated with drunken Sports Nights at the Union, which took on a whole new dimension whilst under enemy fire! Everyone performed well on the day, including several new members of the club, with this intrepid reporter (erstwhile ICAirsoft Treasurer) getting the chance to indulge in some lone-wolf Rambo-style shenanigans!

Despite a slightly chaotic feel to the proceedings, and the decidedly inclement weather, everyone involved had an enjoyable Sunday in the combat zone, and already the Committee are working on plans for the next excursion for ICAirsoft, which should be at the end of the Christmas term.

For more information, contact IC Airsoft at icairsoft@gmail.com



They may well look like real guns, but they're just replicas. At least, that's what they told the policemen

Kind of like pool, but with fingers

PakSoc organise a carrom tournament; the game itself is likely to have begun in India, and is centuries old

PHOTOS BY EMERSON VIGOREUX



Top: the carrom board, showing the "striker" piece. Below: PakSoc members take the game seriously

Ammar Waraich

Past experience has shown that Asian societies at Imperial have a strange tendency to largely host events that are lacking a cultural focus. IC Pakistan Society has therefore begun its series of events this year with a determination to move away from this and become a Society that is removed from the usual tried and tested events.

In line with this, the 25th of October saw IC "PakSoc" taking a trip to a restaurant in West London, but travelling in a traditional Tiara bus, educating students on the most prominent form of public transport in Pakistan, with a 3 course meal thrown in! More recently though, on Wednesday the 1st of November, PakSoc hosted a Carrom Board tournament. Best described as pool with fingers, it is essentially a board game where players must pocket their carrommen pieces before their opponent by flicking a white striker piece against their own pieces, with the final shots

needing the red queen piece to be potted. On the surface it may seem simple but as Emerson, *Felix's* photographer, will tell you, there is a lot more skill and mental rigour involved, as was also witnessed in the final matches of the tournament. The winner of the tournament won 30 pounds in cash with the second and third positions getting boxes of chocolates and a PakSoc pat on the back! The important fact though is that it was a huge success and everyone had a great time socialising over a few light hearted games.

To round up this term's activities and before next term's massive inter-uni art & culture exhibition; debate on the future of Pakistan; political lecture series; quiz night and the girls-only dholki raat, we are having our annual charity dinner event. This is going to be on the 29th of November and will include a sumptuous 3 course meal and comedy from some big names! Tickets will be on sale soon (email me on aaw204@ic.ac.uk for info) and I hope to see you guys there!

The rules of carrom

The aim of the game is to use your "striker" piece to hit your pieces, or carrommen, into pockets at the corner of the board. You must do this without any part of your body except your hand crossing over the board,

or the diagonal line extending from the board. You can pocket the red 'queen' piece at any time, but you must pocket one of your carrommen in your next shot, or the queen is returned to the board.

Mayhem on freshers' hockey tour

Late in the evening of 20th October, around 30 hockey players piled into two minibuses and headed for Shepton Mallet, Somerset. Fortunately only one minibus was harmed in the course of this adventure! High spirits were maintained through the 6 hour bus journey; with the help of a large bottle of vodka and runs round the coach on the motorway.

Moans of "I really need to pee!" were frequently heard from one of the party and some small children were mentally scarred by our signs, how could you Dan? We arrived very late at a small primary school hall and set about making our 'beds' for the evening. We all sat in a circle with sweets and tea (and red wine in some cases) and discussed the plan of events for the weekend.

Next morning, cold and sleepy, the teams prepared for a day of mixed hockey playing, and of course, drinking. After a couple of hours on the pitch, we made our way to a sleepy little pub for our curry and skittles lunch. At this point Shiv decided she didn't like the blue bus very much; showing her disgust by scraping it against a wall. (Note, licking your fingers and wiping the scratch does not bring the paint back!)

The highlight of the afternoon was when Jack's parents asked him where his bar name, "Daterape", came from. After a brief stop at some shops to purchase our white T-shirts for the evening and to decorate them in style, we were ready to hit the town!

It may be a long time before Wells forget Imperial College Hockey club. Funny stories include: Shiv hurling with extreme precision into a glass, scandal as two nameless individuals took a friendly stroll down a back alley, a certain male fresher getting far too drunk and rolling in various hedges on the way home, an elegant female fresher taking a wee stop behind a fence and Roxy demanding a kebab "even if it is made of horse!"

Unsurprisingly, hockey the next day was a little less than balanced. There were many cries of "I'm going to throw up!" and one poor fool fell in the mud on the way to the hockey pitch! This gave the opposition a slight advantage and both IC teams lost, unfortunately. However, we all happily clambered back into our buses for the journey back and promptly fell into drunken, but contented sleep!

Arabella Walker



Pictures from the Imperial College Hockey freshers' tour. Really though, calling it a "hockey tour" is just an excuse to cover up the fact they just went to get thoroughly rat arsed

Fresh blood helps ensure Rugby 1st XV victory

Men's Rugby

GKT 1st XV	25
ICURFC 1st XV	39

It wasn't a normal start for the 1st XV this week, with a reshuffle of the team that included seven new faces on the starting team sheet, and the shock news that we would have to take public transport to a game for the first time since my arrival at university. And this meant that there were no excuses for being late! As usual, few people arrived on time to meet at the union; some even forgot to read their emails and had a quick dash to South Kensington tube to meet up. But get there we did and we were on our way to play GKT, a side that has been in the league with us for some time now.

Upon arrival, the team had to travel through some shrubbery before finally emerging at the sports ground and the changing room.

Everyone was in a somewhat subdued mood after the disappointing performance last week, and so we were ready to prove to ourselves how good we can be. The warm up went smoothly. We were all fired up for the game and then we realised that there was a mile trek to get to the actual pitch!

From the kick off, IC scored a quick try through Mike, who simply glided and then ran away from the GKT defence, but this wasn't the last time GKT would see Mike, as he went on to score a further two more tries in the half and thus impressing his lady friend that accompanied him to the match. GKT did however manage to get one try in the first half, with a simple catch and drive from the lineup, something which they are well known for doing, but before the end of the half IC got a further try through Nathan to make the score at half time 22 - 8 to IC.

The second half started just the

same as it did in the first, except Flannan wasn't on the pitch, but was instead having a little sulk on the side line for being taken off to give the fresher James Pettit a run. Throughout the half, IC continued with their mouvement général whilst GKT were unable to stop the smooth, fast flowing, slick movement from both the forwards and backs. But GKT continued with their own catch and drive, getting a further two tries before the IC forwards figured out how to stop them.

IC were playing to a great standard, with great co-operation between the forwards and backs which resulted in a further three tries in the half, with old man Andjit getting two and James Pettit getting the other, leading to a final score of 25-39 to IC. There were some great performances from Dan 'not so little' Godfrey who managed to take two guys out with his massive tackles, and also from 'Man of the

Match' Remi who was quick and decisive over the field. In fact it was generally a massive improvement from last week, with even the forwards getting their act together.

The return journey turned out to be a rather enjoyable one for both sides, as we got the same train back, but one must feel a little sorry for the members of the poor general public who foolishly decided to get onto our carriage. GKT started off the festivities with 'sing fresher sing' to which their freshers obliged by serenading everyone to classics line Angel. This for some reason prompted our own freshers, Jo, Alex, Jim and James, to do their own rendition of 'Build me up Buttercup', which cheered up Flannan a bit!

Jovan Nedic



Won a fixture you'd like to brag to the rest of the college about? Send photos, match reports, results and any comments you might have about these articles to us at: sport.felix@imperial.ac.uk before 5pm on Monday evening

King's dethroned on their own soil

Men's Football
KCL 6ths 0 – 5 IC 6ths

With the season starting to shape up having come off the back of two convincing wins, it was in Berryfrikkin-far-lands, to face King's 6ths that Mooknellay's entourage would discover the impact our celebrity status would have on the division, and perhaps answer the eternal question "Where the fuck are we?"

The game started crisply as King's were eager to impose their authority. To be fair, it was KCL who were quicker to close down in midfield and were prepared to be more physical in their approach, getting so tight on occasions there was barely a layer of latex separating any two players. This effectively limited our opportunities with the nearest coming via a measured ball from a corner which Jo headed just wide of the upright. Much of the play revolved around our defense with goalkeeper Mike Pursey and defenders Jo, Ricky, Peter and Tony showing discipline and resolve to nullify the mounting pressure.

The game eventually descended into a bit of a scrap with the only highlight of the first half being the arrival of a cat pouncing from the shrubs by the end of the pitch to savagely maul a bird. With the desire to redeem a disappointing 45 minutes we took this as an omen of things to come for we too have been known to prey on fine birds and we too are familiar with pussies concealed within dense bush (with the exception of Fuge, whose antics last Christmas revealed he prefers to be ridden by a Brazilian), and we too belong at the top of the food chain with the small exception of the referee.

Whether it was down to a lack of fitness surfacing in the opposition or the discipline and quality within our own team I cannot say, but such was the dramatic change

in the second half that saying it was "a game of two halves" would be about as big an understatement as saying the phrase "a game of two halves" is a cliché. Philipp "a pun is too obvious" Mania, who managed to cover more moss than Tampax, began combining well with James Platt and Andriy "Shev" Gelman, securing midfield supremacy. Our passing began caressing every crevasse of the pitch as our play possessed the appeal often seen on Page 3 with moves guaranteed to raise more cocks than a chicken farmer and harden more nipples than frostbite.

The deadlock was broken not long after the restart when some neat attacking play down the centre drew out the keeper allowing Damien Phelan to drive a loose ball low into the undefended net.

The momentum began to snowball as chances began appearing thick and fast. The next opportunity arrived in the form of a cross from the left flank by Shev leading to a scramble on the King's goal line before Nam lumbered along carrying the grace of Borat in an antiques store to bundle the ball across the line. Persistent moans, however, lead to suspicions that the ball from Shev had actually curled out of play and that the keeper had two hands on the ball before it was forced into the goal.

The referee (a King's player), under heavy influence from the King's captain who appeared to have integrated his natural log to the ref in his search for Brownian motion, eventually conceded to demands and gave a goal kick.

However, our revenge was swift when goal machine Shev was played in to fire a first time shot past the keeper for 2-0.

At this point King's looked as likely to score as a non-6ths player with the line "Girl, you must have yeast, because I've got a fire in my pants and it's definitely giving rise to something!" With King's show-



The IC 6ths probably waiting to devour some dim-witted blond with their extra manly ways

ing about as much endurance as a Beckham haircut, it wasn't long before a short corner worked its way to the late arriving Philipp, to pull off a Zidane turn before producing a Lampard-esque chip from an impossible angle which clipped the underside of the bar and fell behind the line for 3-0.

King's were given respite when Platt's manoeuvre towards the ball, which can only be described as 'beat the gypsy', induced cries of handball resulting in a penalty. Unfortunately for King's, Pursey managed to produce an outstanding save to deny their captain any consolation and hold out for our third successive clean sheet.

Shev was once again at the helm of our most prominent attacks when a

neatly dinked ball in his direction allowed him to gently lift the ball over the on rushing keeper capping off a move which would have Kazakhstanis across the land exclaiming Wah Wee Wah! To conclude the goal rout, Hamish delivered a cleverly weighted through ball to the feet of Andriy who calmly slotted the ball around the advancing keeper, completing a hat-trick so fine, a 10 Giga-pixel camera would've had trouble maintaining focus. Several further opportunities came our way with Damien hitting the bar on one occasion, meaning the 5-0 score line was more a compliment to their defensive efforts.

The game ended abruptly when Hamish's challenge for the ball was met with another contesting fore-

head, which despite his eagerness to give head, lead to the Mook being escorted from the pitch suffering a bruised brow. Taking further meaning from the cat incident, our minds began scrolling through the pages of *To Kill A Mocking Bird*, prompting us to offer a sympathetic handshake and words of understanding whilst bearing no hidden agendas towards the generous post match plate of sandwiches we gratuitously woofed down.

To summarize, our general ability to endure 45 minutes of foreplay and go on to last the full 90, plus our intricate knowledge of 11 different positions, means satisfaction is rarely denied, on and off the playing field.

Nam Nguyen

AdLib

by Tevong You

